

HILTON SCHOOL NO. 5
ROLAND TOWNSHIP
ONE-ROOM COUNTRY SCHOOL REUNION

June 22, 2009

Report prepared by Glenore Gross

Also available online at <www.rolandtwp.com/events>

The reunion was first mentioned last summer by Arland Nelson, who has lived in Alberta, Canada many years. I accepted the job of organizing it since I was a student who graduated in the final year it was open (1959), live nearby and enjoy history. With assistance from my sisters Doreen and Anita, and from neighbors Judy and April Nelson, Sharon Kamrud Haakenstad and Betty Hanson Tratebas, also Dwight Olson who provided the trailer for our float, we pulled off an enjoyable event.

The only drawback is that some who wanted to attend were unable to for one reason or another. This report gives a brief remembrance of who was there and what we did. A condensed report has been submitted to the Lake Metigoshe Mirror for publication. More could have been written!

Thanks to everyone for their interest in this bit of history, especially for those who traveled to “the hills” to take part in the parade and the reunion. It was a lot of fun to see you!

Glenore Larson Gross

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Several high school reunions were held during Bottineau's 125th celebration but I believe we had the only one-room country school reunion. It took place Monday at our Larson farm in the hills a couple of miles from the site of Hilton School No. 5. Twenty-three former students and two teachers from that school plus 21 spouses and guests gathered to share memories of those "good old days."

One honored guest was Rena Roland of Bottineau. Her book, "*The One Room Schools of Bottineau County*," identified the students and teachers who had attended Hilton No. 5. The school had first been in use from the early 1900's to 1923. It reopened in 1936 and from then until 1959 there were 62 students listed, 46 of whom are still living and half of them came to the reunion. Others had indicated they wanted to attend but couldn't. Someone in Michigan who twice was sent an invitation by mistake emailed back to say she wasn't the person we were looking for but added, "I hope you find the right person, because it sounds like your reunions are fun."

For ten of us the fun started with being on our float in the parade Saturday morning. The actual school building has been at a neighboring farm. It was in disrepair but still had the blackboard on the wall. Half of it was taken down and used on the float, along with a few school desks from different eras. Pictures of Washington and Lincoln like those on old school walls were added, as well as the alphabet in Palmer handwriting nicely done by Richard Gross. He also painted a likeness of the school on the front. Old school books were on display in apple crates and a lovely sounding old school bell was provided by Sharon Kamrud Haakenson. Stickers saying, "I'm a Country School kid" were given to many parade watchers who said they had also attended country school.



The fun continued on Monday with old and new friends to meet and greet in weather as close to perfect as North Dakota can offer. The meal offered was a Lunch Pail lunch with items that might have been brought to school in an old syrup pail. A wash basin and towel were available at the door. Homemade buns and bread were provided by "the bun lady" Judy Nelson, whose late husband Kenny had been a student. Sandwich fixings included mincemeat or chicken salad, with lettuce, pickles, mustard and mayo, or peanut butter and homemade jams from Larson farm fruits. Tasty home-baked cookies and brownies came from the ovens of Sharon Haakenson, Betty Hanson Tratebas, and Anita Larson Hovland. Apple wedges rounded out the meal. Water, coffee and Kool-aid were the drinks of the day.

When the school bell signaled "recess" was over, everyone met together in the coolness of the garage for the afternoon program. Charts had been prepared for stars to be given for Attendance, Participation and Deportment.



Questions had been prepared to trigger memories. One would lead to another and another, but the threat of getting black marks in deportment by talking too much kept things under control!

We learned that several got to and from school by walking across fields and through the trees, or on skis in winter. A favorite winter game remembered was "Fox and Geese." Some recalled putting a pole in the ice, tying a rope to the pole and a sled, then pushing someone on the sled who would get to go round and round. Some remembered the game called "Penny Stick" and reviewed the sequence of moves. Other games mentioned included Kick the Can, Anti-I-Over, Pump Pump Pull Away, Red Light Green Light, softball and swinging.

In the photo Connie is telling about her mishap of getting hurt rather badly on the swing.

Hobo Day was remembered as a “casual dress” day when we worked at cleanup and had a picnic. Lois Ydstie reported that their mother didn't think it was anything to bother with. “She worked hard to see that we were clean and dressed well and so she didn't think much of sending us to school in old and torn clothes.”

The favorite school lunch recalled was potatoes baked on top of the stove. Pie socials were popular. Men and boys bought what the girls made and that's who you had to eat with.

One teacher had planned a field trip to Minot, but when parents learned the students would be in the back of an open box pickup they wouldn't sign permission slips, so that didn't happen. Trips were made to Carbury for Playday in the earlier years and Bottineau for the county YCL gathering. Betty Tratebas recalled making a trip to Bismarck with Jessie Page, County Superintendent of Schools.

The final question drawn was “Is there something you've never told before that you care to share now?” To protect his reputation the person will be nameless here, but in the interest of clearing a conscience he told of the time he and his brother went back to the school after the teacher was seen walking home; for some unknown reason he felt led to tip over all the desks, leaving a big mess. The next morning the room was all cleaned up and nothing was said. The culprit had to sit all day facing the teacher, wondering if his punishment would ever come. Nothing was ever said and he has lived until now not telling anyone of his dirty deed. He said he figured his teacher, Emma Solper, was probably ahead of her time in using psychology. “I never did anything like that again,” he declared.

The afternoon ended with several making the drive over a rutted road to the site of the school. After 50 years one has to use some imagination to put the school in its place, but there are rocks to mark where the foundation was. The beautiful secluded setting will soon have children playing in it again, with a family now building a home nearby.



The oldest Hilton No. 5 student at the reunion was Everett Solper who was in 8th grade in 1936; others attending from that year were Evelyn Solper Hanson, Lyle Thompson, Helen Dunderland Nordgaard, Earl Thompson and Joan Emerson Wall. Susan Lystad Boucher stood in for her mother Joyce Emerson. Lillian Ronning Meyer started school in 1939 followed by Maynard Helgeson, Sharon Christenson Langehaug, Merle Larson, Floyd Larson, Arland Nelson, Barbara Ronning Bieleski, Judy Nelson for Kenny, Connie Emerson Pederson, Doreen Larson Moran, Glenore Larson Gross, Marlys Kamrud Habberstad, Sharon Kamrud Haakenson, Betty Hanson Tratebas, Odean Bakken, Dianne Solper Kuhl, Marilyn Nelson Strand, and Dennis Hanson. About half are from Bottineau, the rest traveled from Tennessee, Arkansas, Kansas, California, Washington, Minnesota, Michigan and Alberta as well as other North Dakota towns.

Guests included the one remaining mother of students, Stella Kamrud; the two teachers attending were Eunice Larson, 1949-50 and Joan Emerson, 1950-54. Since another school was called Hilton No. 5 in the two years prior to reopening this school, Lois Larson Ydstie who was in 7th and 8th grades then could take honors for being the oldest student in attendance. Anita Larson Hovland would have been in kindergarten at Hilton No. 5 if it had been offered; she attended Hilton No. 1 before busing to town started. Also attending were Earl Roland with Rena, Kenny Pederson, and spouses Vivian Thompson, John Wall, Sherman Langehaug, Delores Larson, Bonnie Larson and son Jeff with fiance Shannon, Becky Nelson, Larry Pederson, Richard Gross, Chet Habberstad, Reno Strand, and Dan Lovaas.

Many who attended made the comment afterward that this reunion “was the most fun of the whole weekend.” Now it's just a memory to add to the memory banks of our one-room-country school experiences.

HILTON NO. 5 STUDENTS WHO ATTENDED THE REUNION



1st row - Barbara Ronning Bielecki, Sharon Christenson Langehaug, Connie Emerson Pederson, Joan Emerson Wall (student and teacher), Eunice Larson Lovaas (teacher).
 Middle row - Glenore Larson Gross, Dean Bakken, Merle Larson, Marilyn Nelson Strand, Floyd Larson, Helen Dunderland Nordgaard, Evelyn Solper Hanson, Doreen Larson Moran, Earl Thompson.
 Top row - Arland Nelson, Lillian Ronning Meyer, Dianne Solper Kuhl, Everett Solper, Marlys Kamrud Habberstad, Dennis Hanson, Betty Hanson Tratebas, Lyle Thompson, Maynard Helgeson. (Sharon Kamrud Haakenson was missing for the photo.)

Hilton School No. 5 as it looked in 1957.
 Photo provided by Lillian Ronning Meyer.

After use as a garage for nearly 50 years the building is slated to soon be demolished.

