

Midway School History
by
Mrs. N. J. Simmons

The summer of 1928 the Midway School House was built by Mr. Vaughn, brother of Bill Vaughn of the Prairie Center Community. The school board in charge was composed of Perry Benschhoff, chairman; Anton Fisher, treasurer; and (N. J.) Jasper Simmons, clerk. It became one of the 16 or 17 schools of District One which comprised an area of 14 miles east and west and 24 miles north and south in the north east corner of Goshen County.

Midway was located on the Torrington-Van Tassell highway approximately 25 miles north of Torrington and midway between Torrington and Van Tassell. It was also midway between opposing factions in the community, some of whom did not want the old Pleasant View school moved, and some who thought the new building should be more centrally located and so be more nearly midway between the children who would be attending. So Midway was a rather natural name for this new school, resulting, in now 45 years later, a number of people thinking he or she was the one who named the school.

Midway's first teacher was Miss Mayrene Moore of Morrill, Nebraska, now Mrs. Fred Combert of Mitchell. Its second was Miss Ruth Hayes, the late Mrs. Harvey Hanks; the third was Marguerite Holmes; and the fourth was Mrs. Eva Lou Millikan who taught there several years. Then followed a succession of teachers which included John Edgington, Mrs. Louie Scheer, Miss Ritter, Mrs. Edith Hunt, John Schindedecker, Mrs. Daisy Benschhoff, John Simmons and Mrs. Ruth Hirsch.

All of the grades were taught at Midway as needed, and on occasion one or two years of high school were given. Chester Goddard and Norris Bruce took high school subjects in Midway's first school year.

Families of children taught at Midway for much or all of their grade school career, and for some a year or two of high school were the Charles Goddard girls, Louise, Eunice, and Dorothy; the Joe McManaman children, Leo, Kathryn, and Mickey; the Morgan Norris children, Orpha Belle, Paul, Evelyn, and Gene; the Lester Gonsaullus daughter, Emma; the Louis Ewert daughter, Shirley; the Everette Bruce children, Eldon, Naomi, Dean, Annabeth, Ruth, and Kenneth; and the N. J. Simmons sons, Jasper, John, and Stanford.

Other families of children who attended for a period of time were the Clate Henderson girls, Pat and Maxine; and Charles Oberg children, Carl and Betty; Sid Clapp's step son, H. I. Davis; the two oldest Orville Ackerman children, Faye and Dean; the George Mundschenk children,

Clarence, Paul, Wilma, and Robert; the Godfrey Gehner children, Jack, George, Delores, and Marjorie; and the Dick Glandt sons, Richard and Dan.

Only those who have attended a country school can really know the joy and excitement that the children experience on lovely days out on the spacious sodded school ground during the noons and recesses. Besides the happy fellowship and play, the view extending to the far horizon out over the prairie countryside lifts the spirit.

For many years Midway served the area as its precinct voting place.

The Midway school house not only provided a place for secular education but it provided a place for Christian education also. For quite a number of years, the Midway Sunday School met regularly and the Bible was not only taught, but the good singing fostered a spirit of worship of the Lord. The school also sponsored wood programs, enjoyable socials and picnics, and all the community was invited and usually came whether Sunday School attendants or not. The Sunday School was also supported and attended by families outside of the Midway school community. Principal among these families were the Edwin Keimig, Glenn Lowitt, George Mundschenk, Art Carter, and John and Lee Simmons families, and Mrs. Eva Lou Millikan.

Midway community was also blessed by having a very faithful and Godly Baptist Colporter Missionary, Rev. Jesse Rickel, from Torrington, who preached at Midway once a month morning and evening, regularly. And regularly means regularly, seldom were the roads ever too bad or the storm too severe to keep he and his wife from keeping their appointment. And there were different visiting preachers who served the community including Rev. Schindedecker, Rev. H. I. Gull, and the American Sunday School Union Missionary, Paul Eiselstein. The latter brought in the fine Jewish convert evangelist, Rev. Gordon. The presence of the Lord was felt in the little unpretentious school house as it is in the lovely churches, and precious souls received Christ as Saviour and Lord there.

Sunday School and church services were last held at Midway in 1938. Thereafter church affairs of any kind were held at Burge, three miles north. They included American Sunday School Union Daily Vacation Bible Schools, winter Sunday Schools and occasional preaching services.

After the spring of 1949, the Midway building was no longer used as a school but continued for a few years as the Spoon Butte Precinct voting place.

May this building be an addition to the Torrington Fair property when it is restored and so keep the memory and value of the little one room school from completely disappearing from our American heritage?