

On Sundays we attended services conducted by Rev. Kolstoe in a little school house located not far from Gilman Hegland's farm. Our pews were the little school desks. How thankful we were for the privilege of worshipping together.

One of our neighbors, Mr. Compton, went to Iowa on a visit and on his return he brought back three telephones, so Bishops, Comptons and Ericksons could visit over the line. It was a very simple instrument, just a circular box and in place of ringing or dialing, we would tap gently on the box and wait for a voice to speak. We were gradually becoming modern.

Quite often you hear old-timers like myself speak of the "good old days". We were young and strong with hearts full of love and hope and courage. In youth no task seems too great to perform and there is always that "hitching of one's wagon to a star".

We hear so much in these modern times of "keeping up with the Jones" — the Jones in those days had no more nor no less than the rest of us. We all had the same humble beginning; that of building a home in an unsettled community.

On Sunday afternoons we visited with the neighbors and occasionally we got together for a birthday party or a dinner.

After a few years we bought another farm, known now as the Reiersen farm, where we lived for six years. Our house there was built of logs, one story, with a small attic. The walls were whitewashed, not painted. Oh, yes, we enjoyed the luxury of a "cook shanty", a little shack built of logs, near to the main house, where I cooked the meals and did the baking. Of course, my two little girls loved to help.

On Sundays visiting pastors came to the different homes and conducted services. Rev. Oppegaard and Rev. Njus were two who served.

Some of us felt the need for a church and a parochial school so we decided to form an Aid and have meetings in our homes. The first meeting was held at the home of Mrs. T. O. Sordahl in December of 1910. This was the beginning of the Zion Ladies Aid, the name being suggested by Mrs. Sordahl. Three members were present at this meeting, Mrs. Sordahl, Mrs. Paul Sorenson, a grandmother of Paul Sorenson of Oklee, and myself.

Such were the humble beginnings of our Zion Ladies Aid. It is my prayer that our beloved Zion may press forward with strong and courageous hearts in the building of God's Kingdom on Earth.

Contributed by Mrs. Edward O. Erickson

JENNIE BOURQUE

(b. 1872 — d. 1962)

MY MOST UNFORGETTABLE RED LAKE COUNTY CHARACTER

In the summer of 1915 my family moved to Oklee. Our home for the first year was a small house just north across the railroad tracks.

The first house on Main Street just south of the tracks (where the Tom Mayernicks now reside) was the home of Ferdinand and Jennie Bourque and their two sons, Jennings and August. The Bourques were our nearest neighbors and Jennie became my mother's first friend in Oklee.

Mrs. Bourque had made her front room into a millinery shop. What a fascinating place that shop was to a little girl! She would fashion the silk, felt, or straw into

shapes. After the straw hats were fashioned, she would often put a dye on them with a little brush making them red, brown, or black. Then the trimmings of silk ribbon bows or bright flowers were sewn on.

However it was in story telling that Mrs. Bourque excelled. If she came to our house, my sisters and brothers and I would leave our play and rush in to hover around her chair to hear her tell those exciting stories.

Jennie Bourque was Jennie Bottineau before her marriage to Ferdinand Bourque, a homesteader who lived southwest of Oklee. Jennie was born in Osseo and moved with her parents, the Pierre Bottineaus, to Red Lake Falls.

Mrs. Bourque told many stories about her father and especially liked to tell of his naming Red Lake Falls. Stories about her grandmother who was the daughter of an Indian chief left us wide eyed. We laughed gaily as she told of her experiences as a teacher in the old Lambert school. She never failed to play the organ when we visited her.

She often described her wedding dress. As she talked, I could vividly imagine I was seeing that row of buttons down the front of her wedding dress, each button being a gold piece. What happened to those buttons? "Well," she said, "as we needed flour to make bread, I would cut off one button, take it to the flour mill, and give it to the miller for a sack of flour." What sad faces we would have as we pictured one button after another being cut off until not a one was left.

The Bourques' two sons were August and Jennings. Jennings had a scientific mind and was always inventing things. One invention of his was a doorbell for the millinery shop. If his mother was in the kitchen, which was just back of the shop, she could hear the bell if a customer turned a little knob as she entered the shop. What fun it was for me when Mrs. Bourque would let me go to the kitchen to hear the bell while she turned the knob. Since this was before Oklee had electricity, I don't know how Jennings made the system work.



Jenny Bottineau Bourque

Mrs. Bourque loved her two children dearly so it was a sad time when Jennings, a high school student, died very suddenly. For many weeks the sparkle was gone from those black eyes. But the kind heart of this lady reached out that very same year to a motherless 18 month old boy. She took Marvin Strande into her home and raised him with loving care. Marvin always speaks of Mother Bourque with deep affection.

August Bourque became director of the REA in Northern Minnesota and literally brought light into most of the homes in that area before his death in 1955.

Jennie Bourque closed her millinery shop in the 1920's, and she and her family moved back to the original homestead. Mr. Bourque died sometime in the 1930's.

When Mrs. Bourque was nearly 90 years of age, I visited her in Pioneer Home at Erskine. Her eyes were still as shiny and black as ever in a dark lined face topped with the whitest hair I have ever seen. She didn't recognize people then, but whenever anyone said, "Hello, Mrs. Bourque," she would begin talking of those days long gone by when she was a pioneer in Red Lake County.

Contributed by Alice Lindquist

GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATION

Early in the winter of 1960 the people of Oklee began planning the Golden Jubilee Celebration to be held July 2, 3, and 4th.

Tom Melby was elected chairman of the steering committee assisted by William Seeger, A. W. Nyquist, Bernard Remick, and Orlo Melby. Seventeen special committees were at work for several weeks before the event.

The alumni committee headed by Grace McManus and Selmer Walhaug assisted by Walter Asselin, Mrs. Joe Asselin, Adella Lindquist and Carl Quist was especially busy sending out invitations to former graduates and planning the banquet and program for the big event. It was held in the High School Auditorium on July 2nd with Kenneth Thorpe as master of ceremonies. Several members spoke and brought greetings from the various classes. It was a huge success as over four hundred alumni returned from distances as far as California and Washington, D.C.

Historical committees had been appointed for both the village of Oklee and surrounding townships and a beautiful book called "Oklee Community Story" was published and ready for sale at the time of the celebration.

A large parade took place on July 4th. All the business places, some of the townships, the two village churches and a few country churches entered their beautiful floats in the parade. St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church of Oklee won first prize for the best float. The day before a wonderful kiddie parade was held for the enjoyment of all.

An outdoor street program was held late in the afternoon of July 4th with Senator Hubert Humphrey as main speaker. Some of the pioneer business men and their wives were honored at this event. They were Mr. and Mrs. Peter Bergeron, Mr. and Mrs. Ole Melby, Mr. and Mrs. Nap Miller, Mr. and Mrs. Charlie Seeger and Mr. and Mrs. Nels Strande.

It was a gala event with men sporting beards and women and children dressed in pioneer costumes. A queen contest had