Long-Ago Schools Of The Chicot Area

"CHENEY OLD FIELD SCHOOL." In this picture, only a few of the students are known. In the front row, fourth from left is George Foreman. In the second row, second from left is Jennie Foreman, fifth from left is Jay Foreman, seventh from left is Mamie Foreman. In the third row, second from left is Martha Foreman, fourth from left is Philip Johnson and the gentleman wearing the hat is Alonzo Plummer, school teacher.

Do any readers recognize the other students in the picture? We would welcome your identification if you know them.

"READING, RITHING AND RITHMETIC" Part 8

By MISS MABEL THOMPSON

Mrs. Matilda Teal, called by pupils and parents, "Grandma Teal," taught school for a number of years in an old vacant house on the Alexor. DeVille place down in the pasture. Some years later J. C. Murray moved into the area from Abbeville where he had settled for a while coming from Water Valley, Mississippi, and bought this place from Mr. DeVille. All the old schools were one room schools and this was one of them.

Mrs. Teal, according to my information, was the mother of Charlie Richards of St. Landry, who ran a store and gin in the area many years. Many students attended here during the years. The late Henry Griffen told me he attended this school and the ones he remembers going there when he did were Mack, Andrew Mattie, and Myrtle Richards (we presume the teacher's children) Marion Sparks, Oscar and Arness Sylvester, Laura, "Black", Gabert, Elvina and Alonzo DeVille, and Marshall Vidrine. In later years there were Joe, Beulah, and Hulie Courtney, Dan and Elma Randal, Max Murray, the late Mrs. Mae Murray Johnson; Pearl; Maid; Irene, and Eugenia Siddith (Mrs. Teal's granddaughter).

Mrs. Mae M. Johnson told me that she was five years old when she went to school to Mrs. Teal. She said her father and mother thought she would cry and want to come back to the house which was near the school but she said she took her little red rocking chair to school, and was allowed to sit right by the teacher. If she got a little lonesome for her mother she said she would crawl in Jet's lap, and after a little loving was all right. Being allowed to sit by the teacher solved her problem.

Grandma Teal owned land back in the woods at the time, the place she owned I have told, is now the Charles Veilin Ranch. Later she owned land near the Mamou Cemetery. In some year while the school was going on these have been mentioned as going there Buck Holden, Areille DeVille, Emar DeVille, and Clinton DeVille. Edna, Lydia, and Ida Sylvester, J. B. T. Vidrine, Lola Holden, Mary Andrus, Carrie, Lee, Lillia Gilbory, Evelyn and Dave Courtney, Trudy, Audrey, and Leglie Murray.

"THE GAZETTE," MARCH 19, 1981

Somewhere about 1894 all the neighbors living in this section of Bayou Chicot got together and built a new one room school house on the South edge of the J. C. Murray land, just across the road from the Stephence store. Mr. Murray's niece, Miss Minnie Neal, from Mississippi, came to be the first teacher in the new school.

Some pupils who attended here during the school's existence were Archie and Bradley Rollins, Beulah Courtney, Leslie, Audrey and Trudy Murray, Davy and Evelyn Courtney, Lonnie Paul Erna; Ida, and Addie McGuir, Verna, Jack, and William Burgins, Lawrence, Simon and Mattie Franches, Buck and Lola Holden, Mary Andrus, Carrie, Lillia and Lee Gilbory, Ida, Willie, Josephine and Robert Murphy, Marvin and Farris, Richard, John and Emma Ellis, Clare, Maggie, Alice, Annie, and Pearl Rablh, the Haven Children--no one remembered their names.

The late Joe Sparczek told me he was sixteen years old when this school was built. Since every year was helping get the school ready and buying things for it he decided to buy the iron heater as he had a little money he had earned by working for some one. He told me this had made him feel proud and a "big man" as he had helped along with all the neighbors.

According to my information Miss Beulah Courtneu (later Mrs. Windes) Tatman was the second teacher here. No one knew how long she taught but Mrs. Lillian Thomas Ardoin was the third, teaching two terms, 1909-1909, 1908-1909. This school was called the Murray School, and by some "Newton" School. No one was sure why it was called this unless it was because there were two grocery stores close by.

Miss Katie Griffith taught here but we have no dates in these old one room schools the teacher had to teach every one who came no matter what grade or their age, she had no help, there was no such thing as "teachers' aids" back then, very few books and certainly no teaching aids. They had to do the best they could with what they had.

They had entertainment, and even in some graduation exercises. Pupils had to get their own supplies, as slate pencils and slates.

The boys and girls had to walk miles both in dust and mud so shoes posed quite a problem in large families. After warm weather a good many pupils went barefoot saving their shoes for Sunday. But no matter how bad the conditions, all attended as often as they could and did learn to read and write, some doing quite well.

I do not know how long this school was in session and there could have been others who went to one or both of these schools. Some students boarded with friends if they had no relatives in the area.

It was in Grandma Teal's school that Joe Courtneu told me of a boy who stayed in the primer eleven years went. But anyway the old teachers did remarkably well in their teaching.

When I think back on my early school days as well as those I went to school with, I think of the change there been no juvenile delinquency was that our parents had time for us. They were interested in us and how we were doing in school, they wanted to know where we were; and they just about did, too.

No one ever dared leave the house without permission. There was no running off to visit a friend without permission. But of course, our parents did not live so close then as we do today. My parents, and I am sure others did, too, always made us there when meals were served so we could all be together. Today this is not the case and I think it a bad trend.

Families need to have a time together and at meal time is the best time in my estimation. Back in the old days all boys and girls had some job to do at home, and they must do it.

Naturally if they worked some they probably were tired and wanted to go to bed at night and not be roaming the streets or countryside as we have our teenagers doing today.

Note: Houison Thompson is the correct spelling of the name of a teacher written about last week.

'To be continued next week.'