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Tattered Tidbits: Alpine Historical Society

A TEACHER TO REMEMBER

As school begins once again, many old timers in Alpine remember one of the best—Hazel Hohanshelt. Hazel passed away in 2004; however, her impact on Alpine's history will live forever. The following is from Beatrice La Force's book, *Alpine: History of a Mountain Settlement*:

“No account of Alpine's School system could be complete without special mention of Hazel Hohanshelt, who began teaching in the one-room Alpine Center School in 1928 when she was just out of schools herself. Loving the work, Hazel taught with energy and a flair all her own, inspiring pupils to try harder than ever before; this is what many parents say. For Hazel, teaching was not just a job with a long summer vacation. From each class she has kept mementos, photographs and memories admitting her involvement with the children she came to care about as she learned their problems, their talents and watched them grow.

While in the local school system, Hazel worked with her pupils in extra activities, organizing a harmonica band that performed on radio; a organizing and directing a school choir and taking them to community meetings when entertainment was wanted. Year after year it was Hazel who directed the school play for the 8th grade graduating class, while husband, Forrest, built the sets and put them up on the stage of the Town Hall and removed them afterwards. She often tutored after school, in her own home, free, pupils with problems in reading.

After teaching 34 years, Hazel retired in 1962. On Sunday, June 3 that year, the whole community turned out to honor her at a reception in the Alpine Elementary School auditorium. It is estimated that during her long career Hazel Hohanshelt taught over 1,000 children.

It was a cyclone that brought Hazel and Forrest Hohanshelt together in North Dakota. Her father, Don Alonzo Taylor, was in charge of repairing the cyclone damage to the town when Forrest came from South Dakota to work for him. Shortly after the Taylors move to Alpine to be near relatives, the Willett/Stephenson families, Forrest followed and again worked with Mr. Taylor on the Baron Long project in Viejas Valley. When Hazel finished college and came back to Alpine, they were married and have lived here ever since except for a year of travel. Forrest and Mr. Taylor built the Hohanshelt's first home, Stonecrest on the South Grade Road on the site of the first one-room schoolhouse built in 1881.

In 1962 they sold Stonecrest and built a new home on South Grade Road about half a mile around the bend west from the first one, where they had nine good years before Forrest passed away in May 1970. Hazel, true to her pioneering background, lives alone there.

Each one of us leaves his mark. Some more tangible than others, but all who have passed this way left traces of having been here, whether it is in a home site chosen, a name in an old record, or a name on a country road. Forrest Hohanshelt left his mark of fine workmanship in many homes and some public buildings in the community. Hazel left hers in the hearts and minds of dozens of children over many semesters she taught school in Alpine, beginning in 1928 in the one-room school in Alpine Center School until she retired in 1962.”

The auditorium at Alpine Elementary School was named in honor of Mrs. Hohanshelt. The plaque which adorns the auditorium reads, "This auditorium is named in honor of a pioneer teacher who taught two generations of Alpine's children. Hazel Hohanshelt. She began teaching in 1928 in a one-room schoolhouse where she taught all eight grades. In addition to the "3 Rs", she taught her students to love literature, music, and drama. With the help of her husband, Forrest, she put on numerous plays and choral events in this auditorium until she retired in 1962. For her hard work, enthusiasm, loyalty, and the love of her students and her profession, we dedicate this auditorium in her honor on the occasion of her ninetieth birthday. September 12, 1995."

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Hazel and Forrest Hohanshelt