

Woman celebrates 100 years

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Clara Schieferecke started classes at the old wooden schoolhouse in Dresden, began her teaching career in a one-room country school north of Hoxie and ended it at the Leoville school before consolidation in the 1960s closed the district.



Clara, now

Mrs. Schieferecke will be honored by her family with a reception marking her 100th birthday from 2 to 3:30 p.m. Saturday at the Parish Center of Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Leoville.

Mrs. Schieferecke was born Oct. 4, 1908, in Dresden to John and Anna (Zodrow) Schroer. Her father owned the "middle elevator" in Dresden; she had two sisters, Dorothy (Olson) and Bernadine (Diederich).

She said that since her father's schedule at the elevator was not always regular, he would tie a note on the dog and send it home to let the family know when he would be ready for supper.

Her parents also owned milk cows. As children, she recalled, she and her sisters helped with the milking and delivered milk to customers in Dresden. The customers would leave money in empty jars to pay for the milk, she said, and once a customer found money in her milk and returned it for a fresh jar.

"We were excited when we got a new red wagon," she said, "but were reminded that it was mainly to be used to deliver milk."

As children, she said, she and her sisters had a playhouse in the hayloft of the family barn. When the family went places in their buggy, she said, her sisters got to ride on the buggy seat, but since she was the youngest, she always had to sit on the floor.

"I started school when I was 5 years old in a wooden school building in Dresden," she recalled. "My mother took my sisters and me to grade school in Leoville part of the time, where we were taught by the Sisters of St. Joseph. After completing classes at the two-year high school in Leoville, I went to Marymount College in Salina for two years, where I received a teaching certificate."

Mrs. Schieferecke said her first teaching job was at Green Valley School, north of Hoxie, beginning in 1927. She taught eight months for \$85 a month. The following year, she taught all eight grades at Center school for \$115 a month. It was while she was teaching at Center that she and her sister, Bernadine, bought a new coupe. In 1929, she taught first and second grades and also coached high school basketball at Dresden at a salary of \$90 a month. In 1930, she took out a professional membership in the Kansas Teachers Association.

A vivid memory was when the large brick Catholic church in Leoville burned in 1922. She said it was a cold day and there were few in church. She said that when someone smelled smoke, the priest said, "I think it would be wise to leave the church."

She said that they carried out a few items, but with no fire department closer than Selden, very little was saved.

"I remember after the fire," she said, "when the debris was cleaned up, it was the job of the children to clean the bricks, some of which were used in the present church building."

"Community entertainment was mostly Sunday dinners with neighbors, along with church activities, so when I started dating Barney, it was really as the result of becoming acquainted when our families got together. His family had moved to Dresden in 1919 from Westphalia."

She said he joined the Marines when he was 18 and served from

1923 to 1927. He served on the battleship USS California and was chosen as an aide to the commander in Hawaii. Their fleet was the first to go to Australia and through the Panama Canal, she said.

"We wrote to each other when he was in the service and continued our friendship after he returned, Mrs. Schieferecke recalled. "We were married on Oct. 22, 1930, and moved on the Schieferecke farm, three-fourths of a mile east of Leoville. Married women were not allowed to teach, so that ended my teaching career at that time."

The couple reared 11 children, and their daughter Mary said they were wonderful parents. She said the family milked cows, separated the cream, then shipped the cream from the railroad depot in Dresden, did their own butchering, raised a big garden, and canned their own food. The men went to the creek in the winter and chopped blocks of ice, which were stored in the cellar for use in the ice boxes. There was no electricity until the late 1940s, so they used Coleman gas lanterns.

"The folks let us play table tennis on the dining-room table," she said, "and they played with us. We also enjoyed playing softball with neighbor kids on Sunday afternoons."

Mrs. Schieferecke said she learned to play the violin from the Sisters of St. Joseph and took lessons at Marymount. She said she even played at the Old Bohemian Hall for dances.

Their family included: Dorothy, Angela, John, George, James, William, Mary, Annabelle, Theresa, Rose, and Paul. All five of the couple's sons served in the military and five of the girls became teachers. The sons chose careers in farming, machine work, teaching, insurance and the post office.

On June 4, 1970, a tornado swept through their farm, destroying their barn, quonset and several other outbuildings, but sparing their home.

The buildings were replaced, but later a fire destroyed their large, two-story home, which also was rebuilt.

After their children were on their own, Mrs. Schieferecke said, she went back to teaching school in 1959 in Leoville at a beginning salary of \$400 a month. She taught third and fourth grades for 12 years, before retiring.

Mrs. Schieferecke said she was an active member of the Leoville church, Daughters of Isabella Altar Society and Study Club, as well as the Dresden Community Guild and American Legion Auxiliary. Several couples living nearby enjoyed getting together for cards.

Before her husband died on Jan. 10, 1997, the couple had observed their 65th wedding anniversary and they enjoyed trips to Hawaii, Australia, Alaska, the Holy Land, the Panama Canal and Camp Pendleton, Calif., a Marine Corps base where he had been stationed.

Mrs. Schieferecke continued to live on their farm until moving to an assisted living apartment in Hoxie. She now makes her home at the Sheridan County Long Term Care Unit.

She said that the greatest changes she has seen over the past 100 years are improved roads, going from the horse and buggy to modern vehicles, television, and modern conveniences and machinery.

She said her advice to girls planning to marry is, "Love your husband and have a strong belief in God."

Mrs. Schieferecke has 32 grandchildren and 60 great-grandchildren. She said she still enjoys life and spends hours doing word puzzles, playing checkers and dominoes, and embroidering.

However, she said, "I can only do my exercises once a day."



CLARA (SCHROER) SCHIEFEREKE and her husband, Bernard (Barney) Schieferecke, (above) are shown on their wedding day on Oct. 22, 1930. The Dresden basketball team (below) was coached by Clara during the 1929-30 school term. Shown, from left: Clara, Leone McClain, Lois Simpson, Irene Foster, Blanche McMann, Zelda Sorrell, Katherine Welter and Betty Godfrey.



THE SCHROER SISTERS included, from left: Dorothy (Olson), Clara (Schieferecke), and Bernadine (Diederich). The girls were reared in Dresden by their parents, Jim and Anna (Zodrow) Schroer.