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Teacher - Friend

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PUBLIC SCHOOLS

TEACHER - FRIEND

by
R. R. Chapman

In the fall of 1900 when I was thirteen plus years of age, I started to school at Union School District #3 in Custer County Oklahoma Territory. This was the second term of school I had attended in the territory, and next to the last I attended anywhere.

The teacher was Mr. John Kroth, a fine looking man of nearly thirty years of age and of Dutch ancestry, well educated for those territorial days and well suited for the job of teaching and training a houseful of fully alive boys and girls who were from adjoining states, and some from much farther away.

There were no standard school books in the territory at that time. Each scholar brought whatever school books he had, and the teacher made use of the books of the scholars who came from the states which were

represented by the most scholars — Texas, Missouri, and Kansas.

John Kroth was a bachelor — a farmer who had come to the territory from Holten, Kansas.

The pupils' ages ranged from six to eighteen years. The number in school any day was from forty to fifty youngsters in a one-room schoolhouse, and the subjects taught were from the primer to bookkeeping.

One young man by the name of Leo Sweringen quit school and went to work in a cotton gin where he got an arm crushed in the press. He soon returned to school and took up bookkeeping and shorthand.

There was never any trouble at school that the teacher couldn't handle: he was liked and respected by pupils and parents alike, and many of his flock went on to higher learning and responsible positions even to the University of Oklahoma; many became successful farmers and ranchers.

Mr. Kroth received \$35.00 per month as teacher and janitor. Through the school months he boarded out from Monday until Friday, for which he paid three dollars a week.

John Kroth was a fine man, and a worker. He taught only one term of school at Union. He went back to Kansas and married a Kansas girl; he brought her to Oklahoma where they lived and farmed for several years before going back to Kansas to stay.

John Kroth died and was buried in Kansas some twenty years ago.



November 25, 1900. John Kroth, middle left second row from back. Author, R. R. Chapman is pictured second boy from right with legs crossed.