

The Hazel Dell Township School #4

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The one-room rural Hazel Dell #4 school, also called the Oamek School, served the west central portion of Hazel Dell Township in Pottawattamie County, Iowa, north of Council Bluffs. It was located about three miles east of Crescent. The district occupied Sections 17, 18, 19 and 20 of Hazel Dell Township and consisted of hilly, partially wooded land on the backside of the Iowa loess hills. The school was located in the very center of the district, just southeast of the road.

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For general information about Hazel Dell Township schools, including a diagram of school locations in Hazel Dell Township, see my report *Boomer and Hazel Schools*.

For an 1875 map and a current map of Hazel Dell Township, see my report *Boomer and Hazel Dell Townships Overview*.

I would appreciate hearing from you if you have further photos with identifications. My contact information is in the *Acknowledgments and Sources* section of *Boomer and Hazel Dell Schools*.

Background

The first settlers in the area, in the late 1840s, were Mormons, most of whose names are lost to history as they moved on to Utah after a few years.

The Oamek School, the common name for the Hazel Dell #4 subdistrict school, was named for Chris Oamek, a freighter who acquired land near the future school site and moved to Hazel Dell Township around 1864. Before the Union Pacific railroad was built in the late 1860s, many freighters in the Council Bluffs area hauled cargo west from the Missouri River to Mormon settlements in Utah or to mining areas in Colorado. Plodding oxen or faster mules provided the motive power.

My mother, Leona (Larson) Christiansen, taught at the Oamek School for two years, from the fall of 1927 to the spring of 1929. Subsequently my aunt, Helen (Larson) Petersen, was the Oamek School teacher for one year in 1934-1935 before marrying.

During my mother's two years at the Oamek School, she boarded with the Howard and Dollie Smith family who lived about a mile from the school.

Joe Oamek, a son of Chris Oamek, had taken over the Oamek home place from his father. Clarence Oamek, a son of Joe, acquired a nearby farm in the late 1920s. Aunt Helen boarded with Clarence and Theda Oamek, who lived just northwest of the school.

Known Hazel Dell #4 Teachers

- 1927-29 **Leona Larson**, d/o Andrew & Maggie Larson of Hazel Dell, m. Alvin Christiansen
- 1934-35 **Helen Larson**, d/o Andrew & Maggie Larson of Hazel Dell, m. Victor Petersen
- 1943-44 **Mrs. Frances Bird**, boarding with Clarence Oamek at Rt. 4 Council Bluffs
- 1956-57 Mrs. Marie Ohlinger

1927-1929 Hazel Dell #4 Photo and Student List

My mother, Leona M. Larson, taught at the Hazel Dell #4 School for two years, 1927-1928 and 1928-1929. I have two of my mother's mementoes from those years:

- ✓ A photo, taken in the late winter, with the year unknown and the 21 pupils unidentified.
- ✓ A horseshoe-shaped pasteboard souvenir, probably from the spring of 1929. This souvenir lists the names of 16 pupils,

This souvenir lists the following as Hazel Dell Township school board officers:

- ✓ President, Peter Bondo (my great-uncle by marriage, lived in northeastern Hazel Dell).
- ✓ Treasurer, George T. Ford (long-term south central Hazel Dell Township resident).
- ✓ Secretary, H. P. Hansen (my great-uncle, a bachelor farmer in north central Hazel Dell).
- ✓ Subdistrict 4 director, Carl P. Jensen (lived about $\frac{3}{4}$ miles southeast of the school, father of Helen Jensen, a pupil who is listed below).
- ✓ Subdistrict 4 director, John Sales (lived about 1 mile southeast of the school, had nine children, all grown by 1927-1929).

Below I have listed the 16 pupils named on the souvenir, arranged by family and preceded by their parents' names:

George Arnold and May Mitchell: Violet, William and Eugene Arnold

James Ervin Ford and Anna Mae Wright: Thomas, Viola, Leo and Joseph Ford

Carl P. Jensen and Carrie Larsen: Helen Jensen

Thomas Mustard and Mabel Eva Biggins: Dorothy and Eldon Mustard

Howard L. Smith and Dollie Rablin: Evelyn, Darlene and Ione Smith

Chris Sorensen and Mary Christensen: Gladys, Esther and Roy Sorensen

1934-1935 Hazel Dell #4 Photo and Identifications

My aunt, Helen (Larson) Petersen, taught at the Oamek School in 1934-1935. She was paid \$45 a month and paid Clarence and Theda Oamek, who lived nearby, \$12 per month for room and board. Helen taught the Oamek's sons, Norvin who was in the 7th grade and Orville in the 2nd grade.

In August 1935, Aunt Helen married Victor Petersen and gave up public school teaching. However, she later taught informally as a 4-H leader in Neola and as a post-confirmation class teacher at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Boomer Township.

The following photo taken during 1934-35 and provided by Helen's niece, Sylvia (Gidlund) Snow, included identifications.

In the back row:

Norvin Oamek, son of Clarence Oamek and Theda Hatton.

Derald Ratigan, son of Lawrence Ratigan and Sarah Diggle.

Helen Larson, the teacher, daughter of Andrew Larsen and Karen Margrethe Hansen.

Helen Jensen, daughter of Carl Jensen and Carrie Larsen.

Gladys Sorensen, daughter of Chris and Mary Sorensen.

In the front row:

Ruth Jensen, daughter of Carl Jensen and Carrie Larsen.

Orville Oamek, son of Clarence Oamek and Theda Hatton.

Betty Christensen, daughter of Raymond Christensen and Lela Hunt.

Vernie Christensen, son of Raymond Christensen and Lela Hunt.

Fay McIntosh, daughter of David McIntosh and Opal Fountain.

Junior McIntosh, son of David McIntosh and Opal Fountain.

The Families Represented on the Above Lists

George Arnold and May Mitchell: (Eugene, Violet and William were attending Hazel Dell #4 in 1927-1929)

The George Arnold family lived in Red Oak, Iowa in 1900, in Holt Co., Nebraska in 1910, and in Council Bluffs, Iowa in 1920 and 1925 before moving to Hazel Dell Township. They left Hazel Dell Township sometime in the 1930s.

George and May Arnold had four known children: Esther, born about 1911, Eugene, Violet and William. Eugene, Violet and William lived in Council Bluffs as adults. I don't know what happened to their parents, George and May, or to their older sibling, Esther.

- **Eugene A. Arnold** (12 Oct 1915 – Jun 1985) married Sylvia C. Vincent, the daughter of Charles M. Vincent and Lucy J. Brower of the Garner Township area.

Eugene established the Arnold Tool and Die Company on the west end of Council Bluffs. Eugene and Sylvia had at least three children.

Eugene and Sylvia possibly divorced, as he is buried in the Hazel Dell Cemetery and she is buried with her parents in Cedar Lawn Cemetery in Council Bluffs. Eugene subsequently married Sandra.

- **Violet Fern Arnold** (1 Dec 1917 – 11 Jan 2013) married Clyde C. Thorp (2 Jul 1912 – 6 May 1994), the son of Claud W. Thorp and Mary Lavina Hatcher, who moved from Harrison County to Hazel Dell Township between 1910 and 1918.

Clyde and Violet Thorp had six children. Later Violet married Pat Davis.

Clyde and Violet Thorp are buried in Cedar Lawn Cemetery in Council Bluffs.

- **William J. Arnold** (abt 1919 -) married Rosa (8 Jun 1920 – 10 Dec 2000). William worked as a cabinetmaker. He and Rosa lived on the west end of Council Bluffs. After retiring they may have moved to Mission, Texas.

James Ervin Ford and Anna Mae Wright: (Thomas, Viola, Leo and Joseph were attending Hazel Dell #4 in 1927-1929)

James Ford was the son of Joseph Ford and Phebe Voss and the nephew of Frederick Ford, an early settler of southern Hazel Dell Township. Anna Mae Wright was the daughter of William Henry Wright and Henrietta Clark and the niece of Frederick Wright, an early settler of northern Hazel Dell Township.

Around 1930 the Ford family left Hazel Dell Township and moved north to the Modale/Mondamin area in Harrison County. However, James and Anna Ford are buried in the Hazel Dell Cemetery.

James and Anna Ford had five children: James Thomas, Viola Mae, Leo Byron, Joseph LeRoy and Floyd Ervin, born 1926. The three oldest children remained in the Harrison County area.

- **James Thomas "Tommy" Ford** (13 Jul 1916 – 28 Dec 2001) married Evelyn Lucille Layton (12 Jul 1922 – 24 Jan 1989), the daughter of Floyd E. Layton and Florence Eva Hunt of Harrison County.

Tommy and Evelyn Layton had seven children. Their son, Gary, is the son-in-law of my cousin and fellow-genealogist Elaine Hoyer of Blair, Nebraska.

Tommy and Evelyn Layton are buried in Calhoun Cemetery in Harrison County.

- **Viola Mae "Vi" Ford** (24 Jan 1918 – 24 Oct 1967) married LeRoy Sylvester "Roy" Donnelson (6 Jan 1913 – 10 Apr 1980).

Vi and Roy Donnelson had four children, three of whom are deceased.

- **Leo Byron Ford** (26 Feb 1920 – 16 Mar 2011) married Beulah Irene Donnelson (10 Dec 1921 – 9 Dec 2005).

Leo Ford worked as an auctioneer and livestock dealer for many years. Leo and Beulah Ford had three children.

Roy and Beulah Donnelson, who married Vi and Leo Ford, were siblings, being the children of George Henry Donnelson and Anna Myrtle Dean. Vi and Leo and their spouses are buried in the Magnolia Cemetery in Harrison County.

- **Joseph LeRoy Ford** (23 Dec 1922 – 26 Jul 2011) married Vivian and lived in the Baltimore, Maryland area.

Raymond Christensen and Lela Hunt: (Vernie and Betty were attending Hazel Dell #4 in 1934-1935)

Raymond and Lela Christensen may have lived about a half-mile east of the Oamek School on a farm owned by his father, Christian Ole Christensen. They had four children, Vernie Eugene, Betty, Kenneth and Shirley. In the late 1930s the Raymond and Lela Christensen family moved to Daviess County in northwestern Missouri.

- **Vernie Eugene Christensen** (28 Mar 1927 – 24 Apr 2011) remained in northwestern Missouri. He married Georgie Mae Trotter (28 Oct 1928 – 25 Jul 1997) in 1953 and had three daughters.
- **Betty Christensen**, known as Betty Olson-Brandvold, was living in Independence, Missouri in 2011.

Carl P. Jensen and Carrie Larsen: (Helen was attending Hazel Dell #4 in 1927-1929 and Helen and Ruth were attending in 1934-1935)

The Carl P. Jensen family lived in Section 20 about a mile southeast of the Oamek school. Helen and Ruth were their only children.

Carl Peter Jensen was the son of Niels Christian Jensen and Abeline Marie Christine "Mary" Jensen who lived on a farm in Neola Township several miles east of the Boomer Township St. Paul's Lutheran Church. His wife, Carrie Christine Larsen, was the daughter of Andrew Jorgen Larsen, a long-time farmer from west of Weston in Hazel Dell Township. The Carl P. Jensen family were long-term members of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Boomer Township.

The Carl P. Jensen family lived on an 80-acre farm in the Oamek School district. Around 1945 Carl and Carrie sold their farm and moved to Spencer, Iowa. Carl died in 1950 and Carrie subsequently married Jacob Peter "Pete" Christoffersen, a former member of the St. Paul's community. Carl and Carrie Jensen and Pete and Laura Christoffersen had been long-term friends.

- **Helen Elizabeth Larsen Jensen** (18 May 1921 -). I have no further information.
- **Ruth Irene Jensen** (30 Nov 1928 -) married Edwin B. Stehr (abt 1919 – May 1963), a World War II veteran from Granite, Oklahoma. Ed and Ruth Stehr lived in the Council Bluffs and Spencer area. They apparently had four children, the first of whom died at the age of one.

Thomas Mustard and Mabel Eva Biggins: (Dorothy and Eldon were attending Hazel Dell #4 in 1927-1929)

Thomas Mustard was born in Fremont Co., Iowa to Cephus and Aurilla (Welch) Mustard. Mabel Eva Biggins was born in Fremont County to Patrick H. and Rachel H. Biggins.

The Thomas Mustard family may have lived in South Dakota before moving to Hazel Dell Township before 1925. The Thomas Mustard family was living in Crescent Township in 1930, in Council Bluffs around 1936 and in Newton, Iowa in 1940.

Thomas and Mabel Mustard had three children: Thomas Gerald (28 Sep 1908 – 5 Jul 1988), Dorothy and James Eldon.

Thomas and Mabel Mustard and their sons, Thomas Gerald and James Eldon, are buried in Newton Union Cemetery in Newton, Iowa.

- **Dorothy J. Mustard** (abt 1916 -) graduated from Abraham Lincoln High School in Council Bluffs in 1933. I have no further information.
- **James Eldon Mustard** (3 Sep or 3 Oct 1920 – 18 Feb 1944) served in World War II with the 1st Special Service Force, a combined Canadian and American unit initially organized to carry out operations behind enemy lines. Eldon Mustard died of wounds in Italy, presumably received during the Anzio Beachhead campaign of early 1944.

For a fictionalized story of the 1st Special Service Force, see the 1966 book and the 1968 film *The Devil's Brigade*.

Clarence Oamek and Theda Hatton: (Norvin and Orville were attending Hazel Dell #4 in 1934-1935)

Clarence Oamek was the son of Joseph Oamek and Anna Rief who farmed near the Oamek School. Theda Hatton was the daughter of Jephtha Johnson "Jepp" Hatton and Martha Amanda "Mandy" Burgess who lived in New Mexico and Colorado before returning to Orange, Texas.

Clarence and Theda Oamek were married in Colorado and then moved to Hazel Dell Township. Around 1929 they moved to a farm north of the Joe Oamek farm. Here their last child, Dorothy, was born.

- Norvin Clarence Oamek (25 Nov 1922 – 28 Oct 2007) was in the 7th grade in the photograph. Norvin married my aunt, Alice Larson (1 Sep 1923 – 24 Jun 1954). Norvin and Alice had two daughters.

After Alice's death, Norvin married Marcella R. "Mickey" (Gates) Bogle (8 May 1926 – 5 Jan 2013). Norvin and Mickey had one daughter.

- Orville Kenneth “Buzz” Oamek (21 Nov 1927 – 21 May 2011) was in the 2nd grade in the photograph. Buzz married Joyce Hodge.

As adults, both Norvin and Buzz lived in Council Bluffs, and were city firemen.

David McIntosh and Opal Fountain: (Fay and David Jr. were attending Hazel Dell #4 in 1934-1935)

David McIntosh was the younger brother of William Cleveland “Clee” McIntosh of Rockford Township. For many years, Clee McIntosh and his wife, Augusta Rief, owned a farm in Sections 20 and 21 of Hazel Dell Township. I’m guessing that David McIntosh was a renter on this farm, and was thus living about a mile and a half southeast of the Oamek School. Aunt Helen taught David and Opal McIntosh's two oldest children, Juanita Faye and David Jr. David and Opal subsequently moved to Council Bluffs, and by 1940 were living near Honey Creek in Rockford Township. David and Opal had a large family of around 13 children, two of whom died in infancy.

Incidentally, David McIntosh Sr.’s sister-in-law Augusta Rief was the great-aunt of Don Thompson of Silver City and was raised in northwestern Hazel Dell Township.

David and Opal McIntosh are buried in the McIntosh Cemetery in northern Crescent Township.

- **Juanita Faye "Faye McIntosh** (2 Oct 1927 – 6 Dec 2002) married Mr. Clark and died in Hastings, Nebraska.
- **David McIntosh Junior** was born about 1928 and married June.

Lawrence Ratigan and Sarah Diggle (child Derald was attending Hazel Dell #4 in 1934-1935)

The Ratigan family farmed in various locations in Harrison and Pottawattamie County before moving to Council Bluffs around 1936. They had five children, Bernice, Vincent (married Esther Sorensen, see below), Irene, Ilene and Derald.

- **Derald Ratigan** was born 26 Aug 1922. After serving in the military, he settled in Fort Worth, Texas.

Howard L. Smith and Dollie Rablin: (Evelyn, Darlene, and Ione were attending Hazel Dell #4 in 1927-29)

Howard L. Smith was the son of Alexander Hastings Smith and Emma C. Peterson, who were early residents of Hazel Dell Township. In 1902 Alexander Smith's holdings, in the Hazel Dell #4 and Hazel Dell #5 school districts, totaled 390 acres.

Dollie Rablin's father was William Rablin but she was sometimes known as Dollie Stageman, her mother being Nettie Violet Stageman.

Howard and Dollie lived on the Alexander Smith home place, about a mile east and south of Hazel Dell #4. Apparently the Howard Smith family moved to Council Bluffs in the mid 1930s, where they lived with his widowed mother.

Howard and Dollie may have later divorced, as Howard is buried in the Hazel Dell Cemetery with his second wife, Clara. I have no record of Dollie after 1936.

Howard and Dollie Smith had three children: Evelyn, Darlene and Ione.

- **Evelyn E. Smith** (30 Apr 1917 – 27 Feb 1994) married James L. Cox (20 Jul 1912 – 10 Jun 1994). James and Evelyn Cox had two known children.

Subsequently Evelyn married Calvin H. Lehmer (4 Jul 1929 -), the son of Harry Augustus Lehmer and Jessie Mae Breckenridge.

Calvin and Evelyn Lehmer moved to Oregon. Evelyn (Smith) Cox Lehmer may have died in Newport, Oregon.

- **Darlene H. Smith** (9 Feb 1919 – 15 Mar 2011) married Edwin E. Smith (abt 1910 -), who was born in Iowa to Ernest and Mary Smith. Edwin and Darlene Smith had three children, two of whom predeceased Darlene.

In 1955 Darlene married Sterling L. Snuffin (3 Feb 1908 – 12 Jun 1992), the son of Herbert Ross Snuffin and Ruth Ina Lacey. Sterling had two children by an earlier marriage to Gladys Naylor.

Sterling and Darlene Snuffin lived in Council Bluffs, where he was an insurance agent.

Darlene (Smith) Smith Snuffin is buried in Cedar Lawn Cemetery in Council Bluffs.

- **Ione V. Smith** (16 Jun 1921 – 5 May 1999) married James A. Foster (16 Jan 1913 - 1999). James and Ione Foster lived in Council Bluffs and had an unknown number of children.

James and Ione Foster are buried in the Hazel Dell Cemetery.

Anders Christen "Chris " Sorensen and Constance Marie "Mary" Christensen: (Esther, Roy and Gladys were attending Hazel Dell #4 in 1927-1929 and Gladys in 1934-1935.)

In 1920 the Chris Sorensen family was living in Council Bluffs, where Chris was a railroad worker. By 1925 the Chris Sorensen family had moved to Hazel Dell Township, where they may have originally lived in the southwestern part of Hazel Dell.

Chris and Mary Sorensen had four children, Esther, Roy, Gladys and a younger child, Frances, who died at age ten in 1935. In addition, Mary had a child, Helen V. Johnson, from an earlier marriage.

- **Esther Helga Sorensen** (8 Apr 1917 – 15 Apr 1999) married Vincent Ratigan (4 Jul 1914 – 23 Jan 1965), the son of Lawrence Jerome Ratigan and Sarah Lillian Diggle.

Vincent and Esther Ratigan lived in Missouri Valley, where Vincent was an automobile dealer.

Vincent and Esther Ratigan had four children, one of whom died in infancy. Vincent and Esther Ratigan are buried in Cedar Lawn Cemetery in Council Bluffs.

- **Roy Harold Sorensen** (5 Aug 1919 – 29 Nov 1988) served with the 9th Air Force in England during World War II. Later Roy was a fireman in Council Bluffs, eventually becoming a captain in the Fire Department.

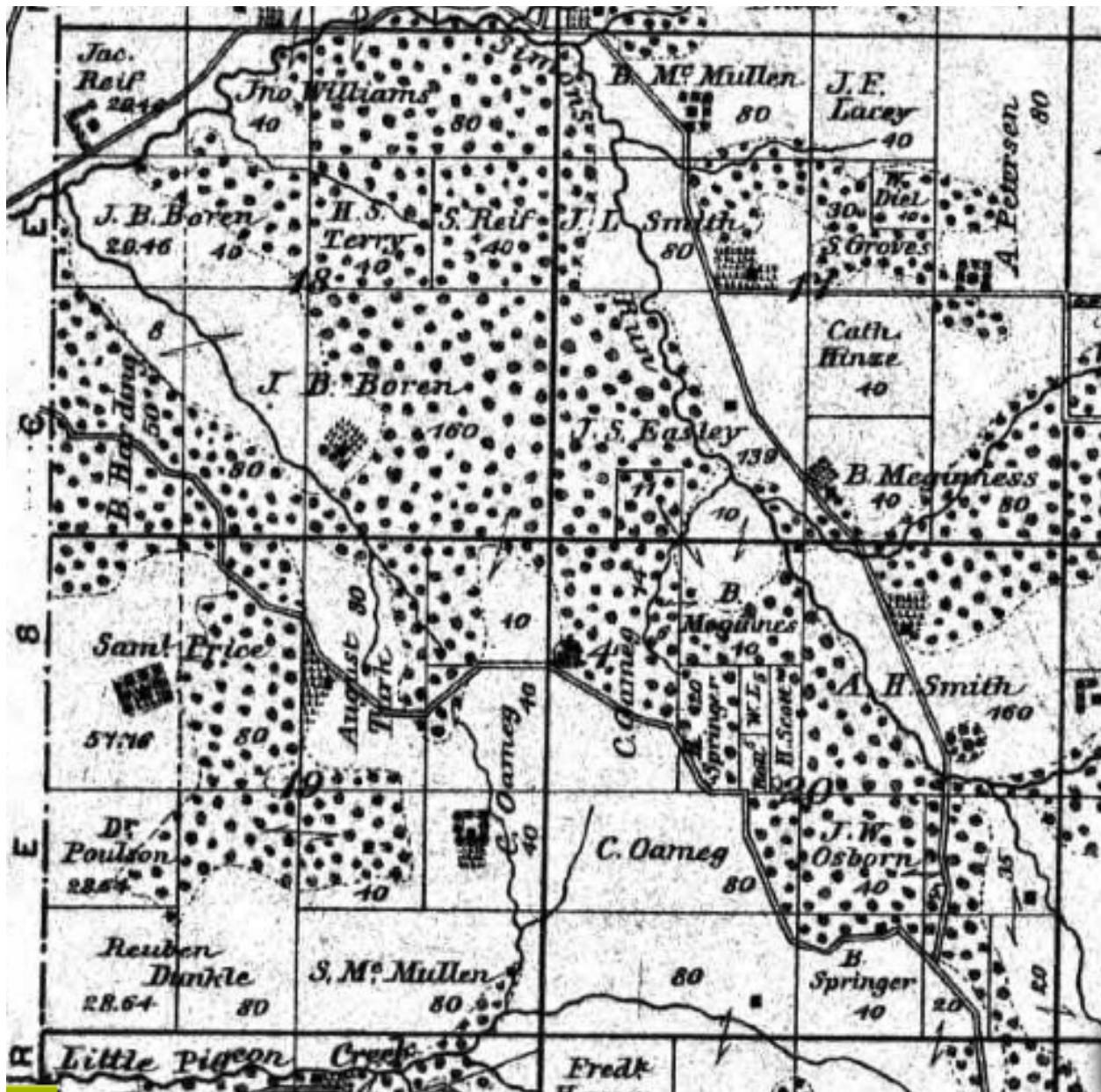
Roy's first marriage, to Irene, ended in divorce. Later Roy married Rose Coffey (23 Nov 1926 -). Roy and Rose had three or four children.

Roy Sorensen is buried in Memorial Park Cemetery in Council Bluffs.

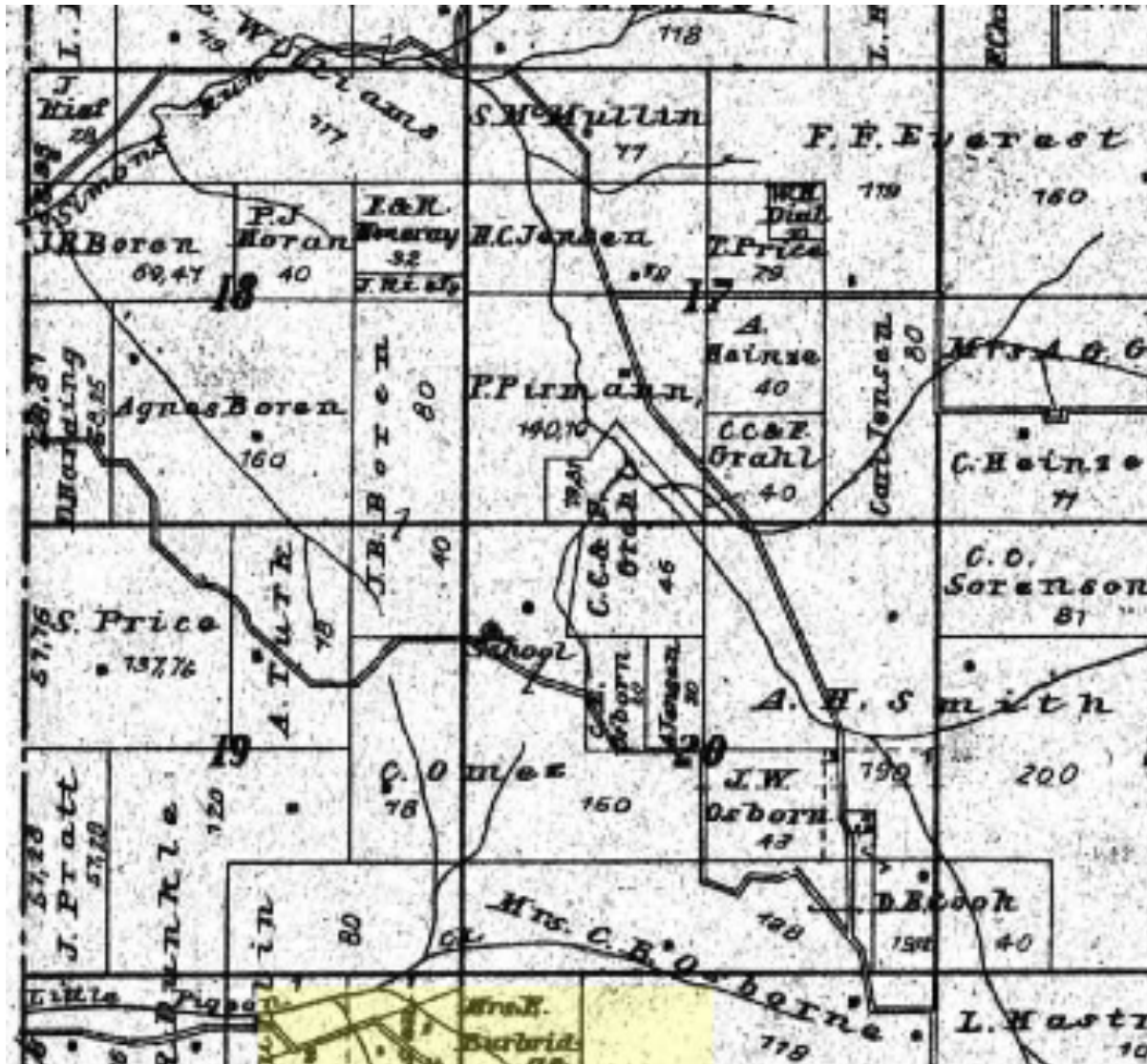
- **Gladys I. Sorensen** (24 May 1922 – Dec 1981) married Maynard Jensen (6 Mar 1920 – 29 Jan 1998), the son of Henry Jensen and Tena Nelson who farmed in north central Hazel Dell Township.

Maynard and Gladys Jensen lived in Council Bluffs and had two sons. Their son, Dennis, was killed in Vietnam at the age of 19.

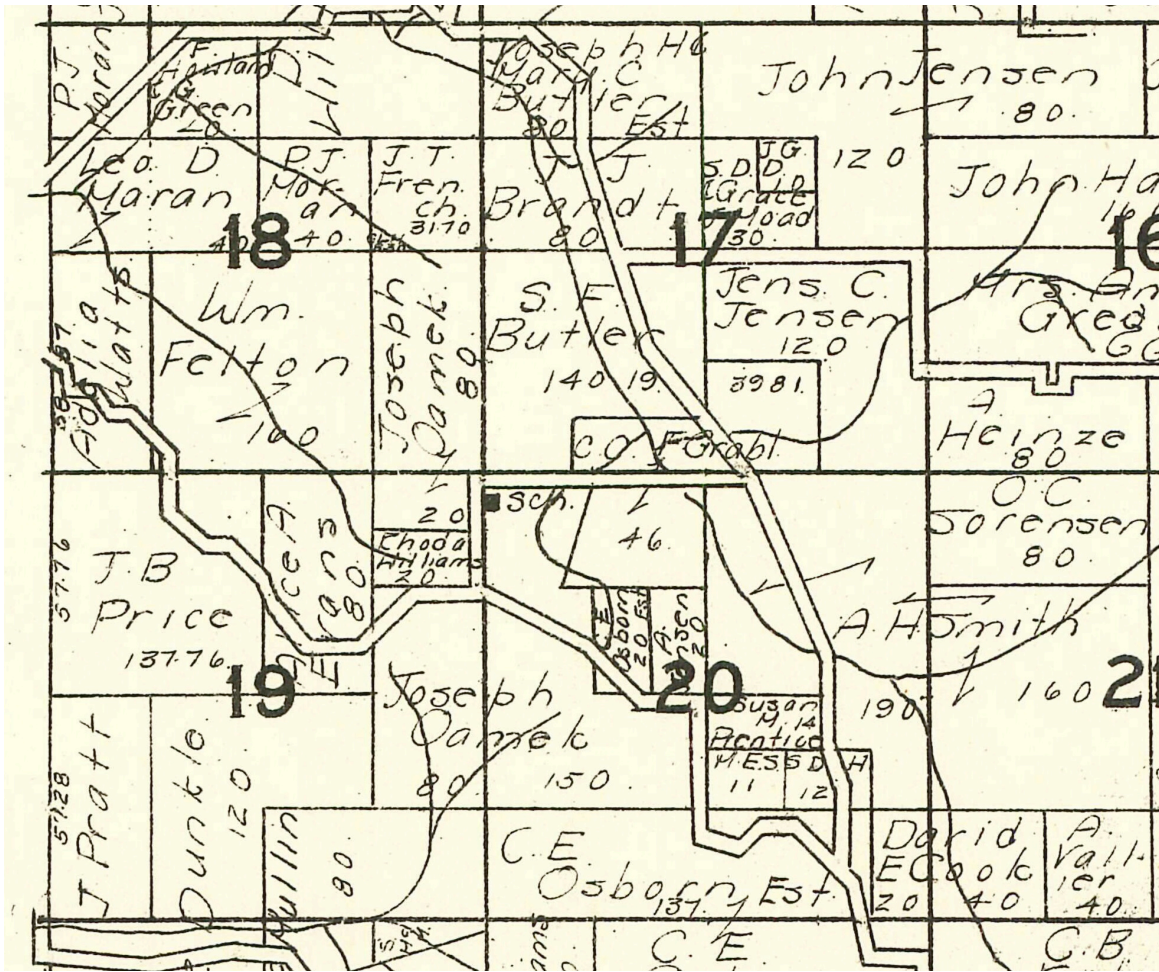
In 1986 Maynard, a widower, married my aunt, Thelma (Schroder) Larson.
Maynard and Gladys Jensen are buried in Cedar Lawn Cemetery in Council Bluffs.



The Hazel Dell #4 Subdistrict (Sections 17, 18, 19 & 20) in 1885
 (ancestry.com U.S., Indexed County Land Ownership Maps, 1860-1918)



The Hazel Dell #4 Subdistrict (Sections 17, 18, 19 & 20) in 1902
 (ancestry.com U.S., Indexed County Land Ownership Maps, 1860-1918)



The Hazel Dell #4 Subdistrict (Sections 17, 18, 19 & 20) in 1919
 (Courtesy of the University of Iowa, taken from 1930 (sic) Hixson atlas)