

September 27, 1981

Reunion today at Summit

BOURBON — Summit Chapel Church and District No. 3 School sit atop a hill, facing one another across Ind. 10, silent now but looking much as they did when they were filled with the sounds of worship and the laughing chatter of children.

The silence will be broken today when classmates and church members meet for their annual reunion in the old school. Mrs. Ruth Mellott Fretz estimates 25 or 30 will attend.

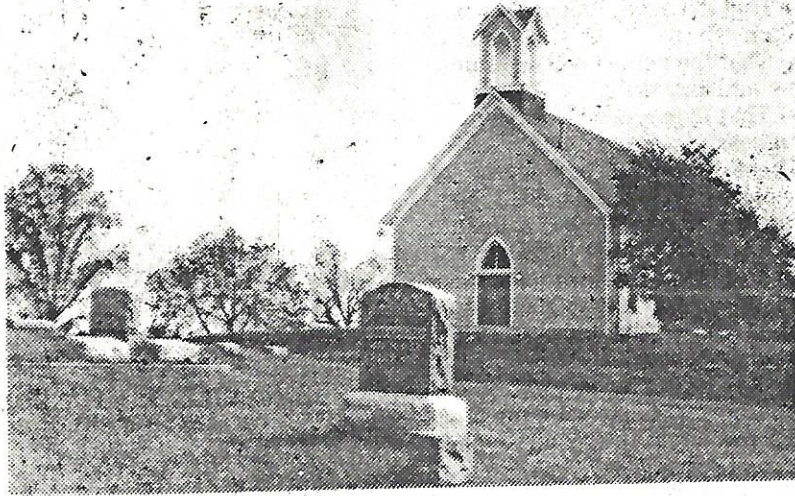
The little one-room school was built by Jacob France in 1845 and had four long windows on both east and west sides and was heated with a woodburning stove. The west windows were boarded over in the early 1900s but the stove still stands along the wall, ready to warm the building. There was no pump in the building and there still isn't; water was carried in a pail from the neighboring houses and all used the community dipper to slake their thirst.

Each grade, one through eight, sat in a row and all were taught by one teacher.

It was the custom to celebrate the last day of the school year with a dinner and entertainment. The last day of school in 1928 was special because the last eighth grade class, consisting of Shirley Coar Apple and Ruby Ford Schaffer, was graduating. After that, students were bused to Tippecanoe, about five miles away.

Church services were held in the school until 1891, when a small frame building was built across the road and became known as Summit Chapel. It was part of the Methodist Conference and was served for a number of years as part of a circuit by a minister who lived in Bourbon and who also served the Albright Church four miles north of Bourbon, and the Talma Church ten miles to the southwest taught by one teacher.

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OLD CEMETERY — Summit Chapel District Number Three School stands silent guard over the small neighborhood cemetery across Ind. 10 from Summit Chapel Church.

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When money became scarce, the little church was pastored by seminary students. Finally, it wasn't the lack of funds but lack of members that closed the church in 1969. Mrs. Fretz remembers, "It just killed us when it closed."

The neatly kept cemetery behind and to the west of the school was laid out in 1892, with the lots selling for \$25 each.

It is still used and many of the names on the gravemarkers are

the family names of the present surrounding neighbors.

The Summit Chapel Ladies Aid still meets each month in the members' homes and, although it has turned into a more or less social affair, the women still do some of the same work they did when they were connected with the Methodist Conference. "It is kind of a community affair and we just have awful good times," Mrs. Fretz says.

Chalked on the blackboard in the school is the notation that the building is 885 feet above sea level, which is the highest point for many miles around. The beautiful view in any direction is one of wide expanses of fields, forest and farm steads. For Mrs. Fretz, "it's the greatest place on earth — that schoolhouse and church," and the sincerity in her voice and the sparkle in her eyes left no doubt that she meant just that.

An independent church group bought the building a few years ago and held services, but financial problems forced them to put the little white church up for sale. It was purchased this past winter by William Neal of Elkhart who has plans to convert it to a summer home.