

# Duette school reunion slated

by Gini Berry

Duette has planned a reunion for all graduates and their families, not only from the present day Duette School, but from those schools which preceded it.

The early schools were known as Albritton, Bunker Hill, and the 'old' Duette School, established around 1916, and located one-half mile east and south of the present school.

The reunion is scheduled for April 20, on the school grounds. Registration will be held at 9 a.m. Dinner is set for 12:30 p.m.

The PTA will provide Bar-B-Que chicken and pork, tea and coffee. Those planning to attend are advised to bring a dish to compliment the above and enough place settings.

A free baby sitting service will be provided by the Duette 4-H Club. Entertainment will be furnished by Leon Poindexter's Bluegrass Band.

A concerted effort has been made to reach everyone who attended the earlier schools. Those who have not been contacted are encouraged to attend the reunion, or contact Silas Keen at 776-1138.

Although attendance records only extend to 1913, the existence of the Albritton and Bunker Hill schools go back much further.

John Quincy Keen turned 90 years old April 1st of this year. It is believed he is the oldest living school graduate from Duette.

Quincy is the son of Moses and Lucy C. (Hand) Keen, who were married in Manatee County February 9, 1882, and are buried in the Keen Cemetery in Bunker Hill.

According to John Rutledge (88), Moses Keen was born in this area of Manatee County in 1859,

one year after the conclusion of the last Seminole War. His father's name was Jacob, and the family, says Rutledge, emigrated to Manatee County from Alabama some time in the mid 1850's.

Although Moses could neither read nor write, the 1895 census of Manatee County indicates four of his children were attending public school. It is thought, therefore, they must have gone to the Albritton School, as Quincy, the 8th of 12 children, was enrolled there in 1901.

The original site of the school (named after a Doc Albritton) was just north of the Keen homestead located about two miles up the old Carlton Road off Rt. 62.

Around 1923, the school was moved to its final resting place across the road from the present school. It is no longer standing.

The Bunker Hill School, on the other hand, has weathered the course of time and still stands.

The school was located originally on the site of the present day Bunker Hill Missionary Baptist Church, one-half mile north of Rt. 62 on the Bunker Hill Road. According to an old Manatee County section map, the school was there in 1913.

Several years ago, the schoolhouse was converted for use as a church. When the present church was constructed around five years ago, the old structure was moved to a site on the Keen Cemetery Road and is currently being refurbished for use as a private residence.

When the present Duette School was built in 1930, the three schools were, for a brief period, consolidated.

Mules and wagons eventually gave way to the 1928 Ford school buses which carried 6 or 8 children, 10 if necessary. Today's modern school bus system is a vast network linking all corners of the county.

But throughout the years, there are subtle variations to change, as Duette continues to retain its rural atmosphere and charm. The Carlton Road is still dirt, probably not much different than it was in 1895.

Thus, there should be many ex-students from the area who can trace their early school days back to the Albritton, Bunker Hill, and 'old' Duette schools. Renewing old acquaintances, and relishing old times should make this reunion in Duette a very special occasion.

## Asolo theater

The Asolo State Theater has added three extra matinees to its forthcoming run of the musical 'Dames At Sea' at the Ringling Museums' Asolo Theater to meet demand.

In addition to the Wednesday and Saturday (and one Tuesday on April 30) afternoon performances previously scheduled for this all-singing, all-dancing spoof of the Busby Berkeley musicals of the 1930s, the new matinees

are now set for Sunday, April 14, and Thursdays on April 18 and 25.

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JOHN QUINCY KEEN, (90) and wife Dennie. He is the oldest former student from Duette area who attended school there.

## Historical Society meeting announced

The April meeting of the Manatee County Historical Society will be held at the Gulf Coast Research and Education Center Wednesday, April 17. The public is invited.

Reservations for the noon picnic of box lunches must be made by Monday, April 15. Please call Mrs. G. Warren Johnson at 747-2398, Mrs. C. Fred Snyder at 748-8410, or Mrs. Willis W. Hampton at 746-6521. The cost of the meal is \$4.50.

Drive east on S.R. 64, turn right onto Morgan Johnson Road. Continue south to the Research Center. For transportation to the meeting, please call an above number or meet at the Central Library at 11 a.m.

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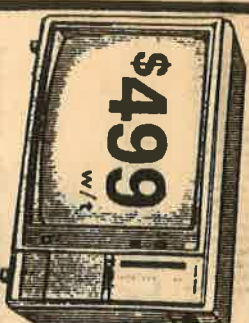
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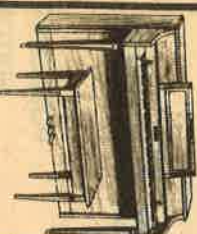
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