

## CHAPTER XII

### THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF WELD COUNTY. THE FIRST; THE LAST, AND IN BETWEEN.

It is certain that schools existed among the early settlers long before the machinery of county government was so organized that official records could be kept, but just how long before, what those schools were or where is not certain. In the office of the county clerk and recorder is a file of all county superintendents who have served from Peter Winne in 1863 to William S. Hunt in 1938, but that file marks 1861 and '62 with a question mark, from which it is logically inferred that schools did exist in those years although no county superintendent had supervision over them. In fact, from other good evidence it is safe to assume that some manner of instruction for children antedated even that time, for the one fact that stands out most clearly with regard to the early settlers is that they were above the average in education. This evidence is found in the story as given in Chapter I which tells of the persistent efforts of the settlers of this region to bring governmental order out of the chaos left by the Gold Rush of 1859. From all that is known of the early pioneers it can safely be assumed that many parents were themselves teachers, and that they not only taught their own children but gathered up the children of other settlers within reach and established informal classes in their own homes.

As to when or where the first school house was built an answer seems unobtainable at this late date; or, paradoxical as it may seem, too many answers are found. A number of the Pioneer Stories in this History give accounts of "First" school houses. None of these stories can be successfully disputed, for, as none give definite dates, one cannot be compared with another and the actual "first" established. All were simply "in the early '60's."

For instance: Henry Smith tells of one on the Platte River where he attended his first school, and he describes the primitive furniture and how it all impressed his small boy mind. The Fort

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Lupton Press of October 31, 1926, giving early reminiscences, tells of a school on the Tracy farm about a mile south of the Old Fort which may have been the one described by Henry Smith. Charles A. Duncan tells of a "first" school house near Windsor. Robert Hauck of a "first" near the Boulder county line. And out on the Wiley farm east of Greeley stands an old adobe building that Miss Wiley, to whom the tradition has been handed down from pioneer ancestors, declares to be the first in the county. Any one of these, or, even one not on this list, may have been the actual first, but a best guess might seem to be based on one somewhere along the St. Vrain within the region first organized into a school district; and District No. 1, as will be seen farther on in this Chapter, is described as "running along the western line of Weld county on St. Vrain Creek."

It is not hard to account for so many claimants to the honor of being the "first". Weld county at that time was the size of seven counties today; it occupied the entire northeast corner of the state; travel and communication were slow and difficult, and each group of builders could easily have been unaware of the activities of others. Undoubtedly the whole school system was in the formative period up to 1863 when the different groups must have come together and established a county organization. How the first boundaries of school districts were described is found in an old Record book in the office of the County Superintendent, covering the period between 1863 and 1874. Following is the first description:

"District No. 1 embraces the following limits, to-wit: Commencing at the western line of Weld county on St. Vrain Creek, thence running east four miles, thence south six miles, thence west four miles, thence north six miles, following county line."

"District No. 2 embraces the following limits, to-wit: Commencing at the eastern boundary of School District No. 1 and including all of the settlements for two miles in width on both sides of the stream down to the eastern boundary of Sam Foreman's claim."



Neither of these descriptions have dates; but the following is under date of March 3, 1864, at Latham, with Peter Winne as County Superintendent:

“District No. 6. Commencing at the western boundary of Peter Winne’s claim and including all the settlements on both sides of the Cache la Poudre down to its mouth; also including all the settlements on the north side of the South Platte River to the southern boundary of Leonard Bashaw’s claim.”

From this informal beginning the schools moved forward through the decade of the 1860’s and at the beginning of the 1870’s received a great impetus from the coming of the colonists.

In 1871 the larger schools divided into three departments; primary, intermediate and high school; and the school year into three terms, the first from September running fourteen weeks, the second from January twelve weeks and the third from April twelve weeks, making a school year of thirty-eight weeks.

Before the end of the decade of th ’70s, so high had standards climbed that it began to be difficult to secure teachers with qualifications equal to requirements. In the decade of the 1880s, so acute became this difficulty that it developed into a positive demand for higher grade professional teachers; and this demand took shape in a definite movement to secure a State Normal School for the purpose of training teachers in the art of teaching. Chapter 13 on The Birth of the State Normal will give this movement in detail and show the colossal effort made by the people of Weld county to secure that institution, and its consequent result in placing the public schools of Weld on the high educational footing they occupy in 1938. But before giving the present status it may be interesting to glance back over the pathway between the first pioneer schools and these last and note some of the landmarks along the way.

Carl Carlson who was assistant superintendent under Jerre Moreland and who became superintendent in his own right on resignation of his principal in 1936, through appointment by the county commissioners, made a careful survey of the history

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and development of the school system and permits the use of his findings in this History.

In 1880 there were 32 districts, with 44 teachers, and an average attendance of 744. The Superintendent's salary was \$569. In 1885 there were 54 districts, 74 teachers and an enrollment of 1,418. Superintendent's salary was \$1,265. In 1890 there were 65 districts and 98 teachers. About the middle of that decade Superintendent Snook made the following encouraging report:

"Nearly all the districts of the county are in satisfactory financial condition and able to support good schools for eight or nine months in the year. \* \* \* \* A large majority of the teachers hold Normal diplomas or first grade county certificates, only 4 per cent falling below that grade."

The Report also spoke of the growing need of libraries accessible to the schools, and pointed out the improvement made in teaching staffs since the coming of the State Normal.

In 1909 County Superintendent Harrison said in his annual Report:

"The year has gone on with many signs of improvement. Perhaps the most marked upward tendency has been the very general movement in many districts to house their schools more comfortably. A larger number of better class buildings have been erected than in any previous year. The salary standard is rising and a disposition on the part of the school boards to require still better equipment in their teachers is manifest. On the whole I should characterize the year as one of substantial progress.

In 1911 Superintendent Thomas reported:

"General conditions in the county were quite satisfactory during last year. The need of rapid extension of school facilities, especially in the dry land districts, is pressing. The people of those sections are displaying a fine spirit in doing much of the building work them-

selves. Better housing of schools and more attention to the needs of the playground are noted with growing satisfaction." And, as a last word he added: "The county superintendent could do better work if his office were provided with more ample help."

In 1913 Superintendent Copeland took up the same note, emphasizing that better work could be done with more ample help. He regretted in particular the inadequate provision for transportation in connection with school supervision, pointing out the impossibility of one person doing the work as it should be done while trying to cover an area of 4,000 miles. He laid the blame on state school laws that did not authorize expenditures for travel.

And so the survey goes on, showing steady improvement year by year, but at that only keeping abreast of growing needs.

### THE PRESENT STATUS.

From the office of County Superintendent W. S. Hunt and his able assistant, C. L. Cree, comes the general statement of "a progressive educational system in action; of a spirit of co-operation between instructors, pupils, school boards and parents, working smoothly and achieving results."

Figures for the year ending in June, 1938, are only partly available as this History goes to press, hence those of 1937 are used where necessary. For the last named year there were 566 pupils enrolled in one-room schools, 1,248 in two-room schools and 11,216 in schools of three or more rooms; a total of 13,040. The teaching staff for all schools including principals, supervisors and superintendents was given for that year as 190 men and 495 women.

In 1936 there were 136 districts with schools in operation; at the close of the school year of 1937-8 there were fewer, the exact number not obtainable because some operated irregularly, that is, with indefinite periods between sessions. Several closed altogether. This was due principally to two causes: consolidation and soil conservation. It is easy to understand how the



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first cause could be a factor, several sparsely settled districts consolidating into one; but the second at first glance seems foreign to school matters, yet its connection is entirely logical.

Under the broad title of "soil conservation" the government has, for the past two years, been doing things in Northern Weld never done before. Where farmers in the dry lands had reached their limit and were ready to quit the struggle against drouth, high winds and insects, they were transported to more favorable lands and their own dry acres bought by the government and turned back to grazing lands. Naturally this reduced the number of school children in the localities affected; those remaining were provided with other school facilities and the districts closed. What will be the situation after the Grand Lake Diversion system gets into action cannot be foretold at this time. Dry lands may become productive irrigated fields and schools be re-established, but later Histories must tell the story.

Consolidated schools are located as follows: In Ault, Erie, Ft. Lupton, Gilcrest, Kersey, Pierce, Johnstown, Platteville and Windsor. Children are taken by bus from their homes to the schools.

Total enrollment in all schools for the year ending in 1938 was 14,244; boys 7,181, girls 7,063. Of this number, 2,990 were graduated from rural High and Ninth grade schools, Greeley not included. The schools and the number graduated by each follows. Ninth grade graduation is marked \*.

### RURAL HIGH SCHOOLS AND THEIR GRADUATES, 1938.

\*Auburn, 7. Ault, 135. \*Big Bend, 13. \*Block, 1. \*Beebe Draw, 10. Buckingham, 15. Briggsdale, 45. Carr, 29. Dearfield, 1. Eaton, 169. Erie, 154. \*Evans, 9. Fort Lupton, 218. Frederick, 96. Gill, 82. Grover, 65. Gilcrest, 69. Galeton, 62. \*Gerry Valley, 1. \*Highland, 1. Hudson, 31. Johnstown, 147. Keenesburg, 57. Kiowa, 14. Kesta, 14. Kersey, 90. \*LaSalle, 26. Morning Star, 1. Milliken, 56. \*Midway, 1. Mead, 40. Nunn, 25. New Raymer, 34. \*Owl Creek, 1. \*Pawnee Center, 2. Pierce, 76. Prospect Valley, 43. Purcell, 13. Platteville, 107.

Roggen, 11. \*Sunnyside, 1. Stoneham, 30. Wyatt, 5. Windsor, 179. Total 2,186. To which Greeley adds an enrollment of 804. from which graduated a class of 215 in 1938; a grand total for the county of 2,990.

Greeley is not listed above because it has a different classification. The words "rural" and "urban" in school parlance do not have their usual meaning. "Rural" means all schools that fall below a certain enrollment. Greeley is the only one classed as "urban".

The cost of education per pupil is effected in a marked degree by local conditions; the higher the number of pupils in a district the lower the proportionate cost. Greeley with the largest enrollment has a cost of \$70.23 per pupil per year, while some of the sparsely settled districts run as high as \$150. The average for the county is \$105.96. This is charged in the bulletin to current expenses.

#### DISTRICT NO. 6—GREELEY.

This being the largest district of the county of course has the most complete equipment, but all others have like equipment, in degree suited to requirements. Overcrowding and need of better facilities and equipment in the Greeley schools has been relieved this year, 1938, by the construction of one new building and the alteration and extension of two others.

Before the close of the school year the new Greeley Junior High, fronting on Fifteenth street was completed and taken over by the school much to the relief of the Meeker Junior High, fronting on Ninth avenue in the same block. The Meeker building underwent alterations and extensions, as did also the Cameron grade building on Thirteenth avenue. On the whole these additions, including furnishings and equipment, raised the amount expended in the district since its beginning to near the million and a half mark.

The report is made by Secretary of the Board of Education, Howell Culbertson, that, since 1871 District No. 6 has actually expended the sum of \$1,413,176 for grounds, buildings, furnish-

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ings and equipment. But he also states that owing to recent depreciation in real estate the valuation stands now, 1938, at about \$950,000.

The new construction, alterations and additions completed this year represent an expenditure of \$194,030. Of this sum, \$86,400 was a grant from the Public Works Administration; the balance, \$107,630, was borne by the district. In anticipation of this need a bond issue of \$105,000 was voted by the people of the district in February. This proved to be insufficient to meet the actual expenditure, but the deficit, \$2,630 was paid from the current funds of the district.

The new Greeley Junior High cost, in construction, \$123,351; in furnishings and equipment, \$9,292; Total, 132,643. Alterations in the Meeker High figured within four cents of \$6,486; furnishings and equipment \$899. Total, \$7,385. Construction at Cameron was \$43,067, and furnishings and equipment came within ten cents of \$899, making a total of \$43,966. Other expenses connected with the three projects, such as architects fees, legal and administrative costs, brought the grand total to \$194,030.

In the judgment of Superintendent Eldridge this cost is balanced by values, not only meeting present needs but anticipating those of the future for a good many years ahead.

The schools of Greeley with their locations and enrollment are as follows:

Greeley High School, 14th ave., between 15th and 16th streets .....	804
Meeker Junior High, 9th ave., between 14th and 15th streets .....	500
Greeley Junior High, 15th street and 9th avenue .....	300
Eighth Avenue Gymnasium, 8th avenue, 14th and 15th streets,	
Cameron, 13th avenue, 14th and 15th streets .....	380
Horace Mann, 12th street, 11th avenue .....	213
Central Platoon, 11th avenue, 7th and 8th streets .....	463
Washington, 6th street, 13th avenue .....	190
Lincoln Platoon, 11th street, 5th avenue (three buildings)	500



## A HISTORY OF WELD COUNTY, COLORADO

Franklin, one mile west on Loveland road .....	45
Gipson, 3 miles west, (across from Spanish Colony) .....	127
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Total enrollment .....	3,522

Total number of instructors in Greeley schools, including superintendents and principals, 121.

Superintendents who have served Greeley schools: A. B. Copeland, 1884 to 1904, a period of 20 years. Charles E. Carter, 1904 to 1916, a period of 12 years; G. E. Brown, 1916 to 1929, a period of 13 years; I. E. Stutsman, 1929 to 1934, a period of 5 years; W. D. Eldridge came next and will probably continue a number of years to come.

### ACTIVITIES AND INTERESTS OUTSIDE OF TEXT BOOKS.

Fortunate indeed is the child of today as compared with the child of yesterday—and the day before. Well do the parents and grandparents of today remember their “first day at school,” and the terror that sometimes went with it; and it is with personal gratification that they draw the contrast with today, feeling that they have had a part in the transformation. May this writer be indulged in one small reminiscence?

At the age of four, (yes, that was too early, but rules were elastic, and father was a director,) perched upon the shoulders of a sturdy fifteen year old brother, the triumphal march began. To the small girl that was the day for which all other days were made. The journey lay over deep muddy roads against which the brother's high-topped boots were ample protection, and ended at the little red school house half a mile distant. There the new pupil descended and walked proudly beside the big brother to his seat. It was a place where pupils of all ages, (“scholars” they were called) assembled together. The teacher, from his platform, called to order. (Yes, “his” is right; they were nearly all men teachers then. And they were called “School Masters”, not teachers.)

The new pupil was somewhat awed by the bigness of the occasion, but felt safely anchored so long as she could hold on to the assuring hand of the big brother. But finally there came a moment when she was called up to the platform where sat the Master, to "say" a lesson. Sternly he pointed to a big "A" on the book and demanded the name of it. The new pupil knew it very well at home; had learned it and the whole alphabet "by heart" and been assured of her smartness by her parents; but now, alas, every name of every letter flew away, leaving the small mind a total blank. Then the Master said, in a voice that to the bewildered child sounded like the approach of doom. "Well, what is it? Don't you know?" In that moment there were no words to speak; only a flood of tears to keep the heart from breaking. The next moment the trembling child, with her world all in fragments about her, was gently folded in the sheltering arms of the big brother who was commanded by the Master to "Take her home." There the mother gave comfort, but the father looked stern and returned to school with the big brother. Looking backward now to that day this writer knows that should she live to see her hundredth birthday there will never be another such heart-breaking and humiliating day as that "first day" in school.

Better stop here, for the subject is endless. But if one more comparison may be granted it will be this: In the days of the little red school house children went to school to *study*, and that by the hardest methods. Play was a thing apart from the business of school. But happily at noon and recess "prisoner's base," "tag," and "antne over" might be indulged. This last named game passed with the passing of the little school house, but was great while it lasted. It meant tossing the ball up over the top of the school house; and if one on the other side caught it and could run around and hit the thrower with it before the thrower could escape, the thrower lost the game.

When teachers began to mingle with children at play it was an innovation, and it was a long time before such could be considered *good* teachers. But today the happy Kindergarten youngsters and their teachers play together and the *best* teacher is the

one who can enter into the game most heartily.

From the office of Superintendent Eldridge has recently issued a beautifully illustrated booklet under the title of "Your Children At School." It pictures the many play-games through which children learn pleasantly and effectively the lessons that carry them through the grades from "the first day" to the cap and gown of the High School graduate. In the upper grades the actual work that awaits them in the world outside is taught. Boys have their perfectly equipped workshops and girls their kitchens, and what would otherwise through life be puzzling drudgery is turned into easily understood sciences. The boys learn to build every thing from furniture to airplanes, and girls to prepare banquets fit for the gods—if gods ever banquet. Boys are not denied access to kitchens nor girls to workshops. Both learn the art of nursing and first aid, and the discipline that later gives them command in time of accident or emergency.

So, without regret for the passing of "the good old days," the boys and girls of yesterday—and the day before, greet the youngsters of today—and tomorrow, and look forward to still greater achievements by those of next week.

#### COUNTY SUPERINTENDENTS OF SCHOOLS.

?	.....	Dec. 2, 1861
?	.....	Oct. 7, 1862
Winne, Peter	.....	Sept. 12, 1863
Winne, Peter	.....	Sept. 12, 1865
Johnson, Bruce F.	.....	April 2, 1867
Johnson, Bruce F.	.....	Oct. 7, 1867
Fulton, Daniel J.	.....	Sept. 8, 1868
Moyer, Frank E.	.....	April 6, 1870
Bassett, O. P.	.....	Sept. 12, 1871
Wilbur, Alvin	.....	Sept. 9, 1873
Howard, Oliver	.....	Sept. 14, 1875
Howard, Oliver	.....	Oct. 2, 1877
Boyd, David	.....	Oct. 7, 1879
Taylor, John L.	.....	Nov. 10, 1881
Packard, Abel K.	.....	July 7, 1882



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Packard, Abel K. ....	Nov. 7, 1882
Packard, Abel K. ....	Nov. 6, 1883
Cooke, John B. ....	Nov. 3, 1885
Packard, Abel K. ....	Nov. 8, 1887
Thomas, Wm. C. ....	Nov. 5, 1889
Thomas, Wm. C. ....	Nov. 3, 1891
Howard, Oliver ....	Nov. 7, 1893
Howard, Oliver ....	Nov. 5, 1895
Snook, J. E. ....	Nov. 7, 1897
Snook, J. E. ....	Nov. 7, 1899
Snook, J. E. ....	Nov. 5, 1901
Harrison, Lucian H. ....	Nov. 8, 1904
Harrison, Lucian H. ....	Nov. 6, 1906
Harrison, Lucian H. ....	Nov. 3, 1908
Thomas, W. C. ....	Nov. 8, 1910
Copeland, A. B. ....	Nov. 5, 1912
Copeland, A. B. ....	Nov. 3, 1914
Copeland, A. B. ....	Nov. 7, 1916
Martin, Chas. W. ....	Nov. 5, 1918
Martin, Chas. W. ....	Nov. 2, 1920
Fleming, Archie I. ....	Nov. 7, 1922
Ogle, F. A. ....	Nov. 4, 1924
Ogle, F. A. ....	Nov. 2, 1926
Ogle, F. A. ....	Nov. 6, 1928
Ogle, F. A. ....	Nov. 4, 1930
Moreland, Jerre T. ....	Nov. 8, 1932
Moreland, Jerre T. ....	Nov. 6, 1934
Carlson, Carl A. ....	Aug. 1, 1936
Hunt, William S. ....	Nov. 3, 1936