

# In the Hallowed Halls of Learning

## The History and Architecture of Poudre School District R-1

---

Historical Context

LAUREL STREET  
SCHOOL

1906

August 2004



**HISTORITECTURE**  
Historic Preservation Specialists

A Limited Liability Company



# In the Hallowed Halls of Learning

## The History and Architecture of Poudre School District R-1

---

### Historical Context

Submitted to:

Advance Planning Department,  
City of Fort Collins, Larimer County, Colorado

Facility Services,  
Poudre School District R-1,  
Fort Collins, Larimer County, Colorado

Submitted by:

Adam Thomas,  
Principal Historian

HISTORITECTURE, L.L.C.  
Post Office Box 419  
Estes Park, Colorado 80517-0419  
[www.historitecture.com](http://www.historitecture.com)

August 2004



The activity that is the subject of this material has been financed in part with Federal funds from the National Historic Preservation Act, administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior and for the Colorado Historical Society. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of the Interior or the Society, nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute an endorsement or recommendation by the Department of the Interior or the Society.

This program receives Federal funds from the National Park Service; Regulations of the U.S. Department of the Interior strictly prohibit unlawful discrimination in departmental Federally-assisted programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, age or handicap. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against in any program, activity or facility operated by a recipient of Federal assistance should write to: Director, Equal Opportunity Program, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1849 C Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20240

# Contents

Introduction | *Cathedrals of Culture* **1**

## Section I: The American Public School and Its Architecture

Chapter 1 | *The Roots of Public Education in America* **5**  
The Common School Movement **7** • Notes **11**

Chapter 2 | *Public Schools in the Progressive Era* **13**  
Notes **21**

Chapter 3 | *The Modern Development of Public Schools* **23**  
Schools of the Great Depression and World War II **23** • The Cold War School **25** • Notes **34**

## Section II: The Development of Poudre School District R-1

Chapter 4 | *Education in Early Colorado and Larimer County* **37**  
Education in Early Larimer County **39** • Notes **41**

Chapter 5 | *History and Architecture of District 5 (Fort Collins)* **42**  
Notes **55**

Chapter 6 | *Country Schoolhouse: The Rural Roots of PSD* **58**  
District 4 (Laporte) **60** • District 6 (Sherwood/Riverside) **61** • District 7 (Pleasant Valley) **61** • District 9 (Livermore) **62** • District 10 (Mountain View) **64** • District 11 (Michaud) **66** • District 12 (Virginia Dale) **66** • District 14 (Stratton Park/Rist Canton/Poudre Park) **67** • District 15 (Lower Boxelder) **69** • District 16 (Pleasant View) **69** • District 17 (Harmony) **70** • District 18 (Stove Prairie) **71** • District 21 (Fairview/Timnath) **72** • District 25 (Sloan/St. Cloud/Cherokee Park) **73** • District 26 (Plummer) **74** • District 27 (Highland/Stout) **75** • District 28 (Adams/Log Cabin) **76** • District 31 (Fossil Creek) **77** • District 33 (Upper Boxelder) **78** • District 34 (Wellington) **78** • District 35 **79** • District 36 (Sunset) **80** • District 39 (Trilby) **80** • District 40 (Soldier Canyon/Lamb) **80** • District 41 (Rocky Ridge) **80** • District 42 (Gleneyre) **81** • District 49 (Waverly) **81** • District 50 (Bellvue) **82** • District 52 (Westerdoll) **82** • District 53 (Eggers/Elkhorn) **83** • District 55 (Buckeye) **83** • District 56 (Westlake/Red Feather Lakes) **86** • District 59 (Moessner) **88** • District 60 (Cache la Poudre) **89** • District 62 (Timnath Consolidated) **91** • District 64 (Laporte Consolidated) **92** • District 65 (Pingree Park) **92** • Notes **93**

Chapter 7 | *PSD: From Reorganization to Today* **97**  
The Saga of Consolidation **97** • Poudre School District to the Present **100** • Notes **102**

Chapter 8 | *The Road to Equal Opportunities in PSD* **104**  
Germans from Russia **104** • Hispanics **105** • Notes **108**

Conclusion | *A Tale of Towers* **109**

Bibliography **110**

## Figures, Maps, and Tables

Fig. 1	Cupola, Second Fort Collins High School <b>1</b>
Fig. 2	Ideal Country School <b>10</b>
Fig. 3	Denver's East High School <b>17</b>
Fig. 4	Classroom, Franklin School <b>24</b>
Fig. 5	Classroom, Dunn School <b>24</b>
Fig. 6	First Schoolhouse in Fort Collins <b>42</b>
Fig. 7	Remington Street School <b>43</b>
Fig. 8	Benjamin Franklin School <b>45</b>
Fig. 9	Laurel Street School Floor Plan <b>49</b>
Fig. 10	Laurel Street School <b>50</b>
Fig. 11	Washington Elementary School <b>51</b>
Fig. 12	Lincoln (Harris) Elementary School Plan <b>51</b>
Fig. 13	Second Fort Collins High School <b>53</b>
Fig. 14	Dunn Elementary School Floor Plan <b>54</b>
Fig. 15	Dunn Elementary School <b>54</b>
Fig. 16	Rural Schools of Colorado <b>59</b>
Fig. 17	Sod Schoolhouse <b>62</b>
Fig. 18	Old Mountain View School <b>64</b>
Fig. 19	New Mountain View School <b>64</b>
Fig. 20	Michaud School <b>66</b>
Fig. 21	Virginia Dale School <b>66</b>
Fig. 22	Stratton Park School <b>67</b>
Fig. 23	Lower Boxelder School <b>69</b>
Fig. 24	Pleasant View School <b>69</b>
Fig. 25	Harmony School <b>70</b>
Fig. 26	Stove Prairie School <b>71</b>
Fig. 27	Timnath School <b>73</b>
Fig. 28	Cherokee Park School <b>74</b>
Fig. 29	Plummer School <b>75</b>
Fig. 30	Fossil Creek School <b>77</b>
Fig. 31	Upper Boxelder School <b>78</b>
Fig. 32	Old District 35 School <b>79</b>
Fig. 33	Rocky Ridge School <b>80</b>
Fig. 34	Gleneyre School <b>81</b>
Fig. 35	Waverly School <b>81</b>
Fig. 36	Eggers School <b>83</b>
Fig. 37	Buckeye School <b>86</b>
Fig. 38	Westlake School <b>87</b>
Fig. 39	Abandoned Schools, District 60 <b>89</b>
Fig. 40	Cache la Poudre School <b>90</b>
Fig. 41	Timnath Consolidated School <b>91</b>
Fig. 42	School District Reorganization Brochure <b>99</b>
Fig. 43	Leshner Junior High School <b>101</b>
Fig. 44	Third Fort Collins High School <b>102</b>
Fig. 45	Juan Fullana School <b>107</b>

Map 1 PSD and Its Predecessors **57**



# Introduction

---

## Cathedrals of Culture

Perhaps no building in America is as fondly remembered or as hotly contested as the public schoolhouse. Most Americans have spent 12 or more years in the classrooms and hallways of the public school. It is an integral part of our collective childhoods and a crucial epoch in our maturation into citizens. But public schools have been and continue to be a battleground. They have been viewed as the icons of everything that is right and wrong in America. As the gateway to young, impressionable minds, the schoolhouse is a machine of acculturation. Since the dawn of public education, leaders have understood that he who controls the schoolhouse can control the destiny of a nation. It is no wonder, then, that historian William W. Cutler, III, describes the schoolhouse as a “cathedral of culture.” “Americans expect their young to be instructed in separate spaces, and since the inception of public education in the early nineteenth century, they have become increasingly conscience of the appearance, layout, and location of those spaces,” Cutler writes. “They have invested enormous sums of money in the design and construction of schools; in turn, schools have become among the most numerous and easily identifiable public buildings in the United States.”<sup>1</sup>

Schoolhouses themselves were the product of a remarkable diversity in the types and levels of school district control. In general, governance of American schools ascended in the last two centuries from local to state to fed-

eral dominance. The local school board was, at one time, a sanctuary of community power and identity – the best and worst of homegrown democracy. But control shifted upward as school administration and curricula became more complex while, at the same time, the state and federal governments realized the role of education in domestic and foreign policy. States began to mandate curricula. The federal government maintained influence through funding. With this consolidation in control, schoolhouses themselves became increasingly similar in architecture and design.

American schoolhouses are also unique for their place in the built environment. While architecture in the United States tends to be extremely conservative, public schools have been remarkably innovative in their style and design. This is particularly true following World War II, when new schools were often the only Modern- and Postmodern-styled buildings in a community. While Americans have generally stuck to tried-and-true designs and styles for their homes, businesses, and other public buildings, they have been unusually willing to experiment with schoolhouse architecture. Schools were supposed to appear contemporary and were intended to reflect authority. As a result, schoolhouses often became the architectural pinnacle of community, a nexus of its *genus loci* – its sense of place. Moreover, the American schoolhouse was much more than just a building. Its playgrounds and athletic fields con-



**Figure 1.** The tower crowning the second Fort Collins High School was both a symbol of authority and a source of academic inspiration. (Photo by the author)



## Courtesy Titles and Images

This document uses the courtesy title “Miss” when it is appropriate and known before an unmarried woman’s name. As shall be explored later in the document, the marital status of a woman was an important factor in her employment as a teacher. This document also makes use of numerous images of schoolhouses. They are intended to illuminate the text and provide some perspective on the vast array of building forms and styles that contributed to the architectural lineage of Poudre School District.

tributed to a neighborhood’s overall cultural landscape.

The reason schoolhouse architecture so closely followed trends in the history of education and the reason Americans were so willing to experiment with their designs has to do with the close relationship between the building itself and its function. Cutler’s comparison of the schoolhouse to a cathedral is useful here. The design of a place of worship is intimately connected to the dogma of the people who constructed it. Each church, temple, or mosque is a representation of a particular faith and is uniquely oriented to facilitate a specific set of rituals. Thus, a Jewish temple differs architecturally from an Islamic mosque just as a Presbyterian church differs from a Roman Catholic church. The same is true for schoolhouses. School architecture is intimately tied to the specific pedagogy – the science or profession of teaching – intended to be used within its walls. As educational theory changed, so, too, did the design of the school itself. As members of school boards, and later administrators and teachers, favored one curriculum over another, they constructed new schools or modified existing ones. And because pedagogy is itself the product of an era’s social, political, and cultural climate, school architecture also reflects the larger historical contexts of a city, state, region, and nation.

This is the story of just one of America’s school districts. Its history and the architecture of its schoolhouses are both commonplace and unique. Poudre School District R-1 (PSD), headquartered in Fort Collins, is but a very recent phenomenon in the lengthy and complex history of public education in Colorado. While PSD itself is quite young, organized in 1960, it represents the consolidation of 38 districts, some of which have histories extending back

well before Colorado became a state.

Funded through a Certified Local Government Grant, administered through the National Park Service, this document and its related survey are the products of a cooperative agreement between Poudre School District and the City of Fort Collins to document and determine the significance of the district’s historic properties. This historical context endeavors to describe the significant broad patterns in our history that Poudre School District’s properties may represent. It is not intended to serve as a definitive history of the district and its predecessors, but, rather, it is a tool for preservation planning, allowing facility managers to quickly determine the nature and level of a property’s historical and architectural significance. Therefore, this document addresses in particular extant historic properties. Older buildings that have been razed or are now owned by an entity other than PSD are considered here only as part of the larger history and architectural heritage of the district.

This context is divided into two major sections. The first section, “The Public School and its Architecture in America,” provides the national and regional (Western) historical and architectural contexts for PSD’s historic properties. The second section, “The Development of Poudre School District R-1,” includes the state and local contexts. Each section, however, is not exclusive in its content. Local history appears in the national/regional context while references to United States history appear in the local section. It is important to remember that, although this document separates the levels of history, the events described within them were occurring simultaneously and were interdependent.



## Notes

1. William W. Cutler, III, "Cathedral of Culture: The Schoolhouse in American Educational Thought and Practice since 1820," *History of Education Quarterly* 29, No. 1 (spring 1989): 1.

# Section I

---

The American Public School and Its Architecture



# Chapter 1

---

## The Roots of Public Education in America

The development of public education in the United States was intimately tied to the ideologies of the American Revolution. In colonial America, education was largely a private and personal matter, varying greatly with socioeconomic status as well as political and religious ideologies. Among the working class, schooling was informal and limited. Because of the agricultural economy of early America, parents felt little training was necessary for their children beyond the practical lessons of the field and hearth. However, many children in the lower classes received some formal education through the church, where they were taught, via the scriptures, basic morality and respect of authority. Reading was far more important among the Calvinist sects of New England, which considered the self-revelation of the Bible critical to the development of the soul. Thus, many towns in the northern colonies supported sectarian elementary schools, which generally conducted classes 12 weeks a year. The Catholic Church often provided a limited education through its missionaries in the Spanish and French colonies of North America.<sup>1</sup>

Among the elite, education was a status symbol. Wealthy planters and merchants, particularly in the southern colonies, educated their children at home with tutors. In general, upper-class young men were expected to attend college in the colonies or abroad. Indeed, higher education was so important to early colonists that colleges were

among the first major institutions they had established, with Harvard in 1636 and William and Mary in 1693.<sup>2</sup> Elite education often emphasized classical studies. “For many, the learning of Greek and Latin in grammar schools or with tutors and attendance at a college were a means of maintaining or gaining elite status,” writes Joel Spring in his history of the American school. In addition to constructing a larger home and participating in conspicuous consumption, middle-class merchants in the colonies expressed their rising status by sending their sons to college.<sup>3</sup>

The rhetoric of the revolution and the founding documents of the new American republic, however, forced its leaders to consider a more formal and widespread system of public education. Citizens – at this time landed gentlemen – would be forced to make decisions beyond their own farmsteads, towns, and even states. Many of the founding fathers believed that the success of the republic ultimately rested upon the character and wisdom of its individual citizens. Moreover, many wanted to create a system that would instill loyalty to the young nation. Thus, through the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a bifurcated vision of public education developed. Led by Thomas Jefferson, the first vision considered a limited role for public schools. Children would be taught to read and write only. With this basic foundation, the rest of their education would be a lifelong journey of self-discovery, as

Jefferson himself had done. Political ideas and opinions would be omitted from the curriculum. To this end, Jefferson submitted to the Virginia legislature “A Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge” in 1799. While ultimately unsuccessful, the legislation would have created three-year, tuition-free schools for boys *and* girls.<sup>4</sup>

The second vision saw public schools as a means to teach the basic principles of republican government and engineer a new American culture. Foremost among this viewpoint’s champions was Noah Webster, best known as the father of the American English dictionary. He began his career as a schoolmaster and served in the Massachusetts legislature, where he pushed for the creation of a permanent state school fund. Between 1783 and 1785, Webster developed a three-volume set of primary-school texts entitled *A Grammatical Institute of the English Language*. The speller, grammar, and reader not only taught reading and writing, but provided examples of the virtuous citizen. Through his texts, Webster wished to produce patriotic Americans and develop an American language. Webster’s vision of the young republic was not multicultural; instead, he wished to create a unified and distinctive national spirit. Strangely, long after Webster and his contemporaries had vanished, the use of schools as instruments for forging an American identity persisted. Even today, this concept lies at the root of many public school controversies.<sup>5</sup>

Many Americans in the early nineteenth century built upon Webster’s ideas, believing that the school could perfect the good person and, ultimately, create a better society. This led to the expansion of charity schools – institutions aimed primarily at the urban poor and supported by churches, fraternal organizations, and particularly in the

case of Pennsylvania, states. The primary goal of the charity school curriculum was to develop more character through memorization and recitation of didactic readings. Moreover, the pedagogy of choice for charity schools was a highly organized and disciplined system developed by Englishman Joseph Lancaster. “Under the Lancasterian system, pupils were seated in rows and received their instruction from monitors, who received their instruction from the master, who sat at the end of the room,” describes Spring. Often, Lancasterian classrooms accommodated more than 250 pupils. But strict discipline and orderly management made instruction on this scale possible. Indeed, Lancaster is often credited with coining the phrase, “a place for everything and everything in its place.”<sup>6</sup>

The influences of republican ideology and Lancasterian pedagogy combined to create geometrically rigid and classically inspired school buildings. High-style schools often displayed Federal architectural elements. The Federal style was a refined and more graceful interpretation of classical architecture, a form thought appropriate for the young republic. The style was extremely rigid in its symmetry, with bays flanking a central corridor. Decorative elements often represented patriotic themes, with eagles, shields, and replication of the number 13, for the original colonies, in decorative features. These buildings expressed the power of the educational institution and the new federal government through towering cupolas, porticos, and pediments. Classically inspired architectural styles would continue to be popular for schools well into the twentieth century.<sup>7</sup>

## The Common School Movement

As the industrial revolution transformed the American economy in the first half of the nineteenth century, it prompted education leaders to campaign for even more inclusive and lengthy childhood education – the common school. There were two major reasons for reinventing the American public education system. First, industrialization created a much wider variety of occupations than had existed in the agricultural economy. New managerial positions required specific training that could not be gleaned from work in the farm or home. Second, the industrialized economy provided opportunities for thousands of immigrants fleeing Europe. At the same time, racial tensions flared between free Africans and whites in northern cities, and the population of slaves in the south continued to increase. Native-born Anglos worried that these “foreign” influences would destroy their culture. Once again, the idea of the school as moral instructor and cultural engineer gained even more momentum. “Many New Englanders hoped common schools would eradicate these ‘savage’ cultures,” writes Spring.<sup>8</sup>

The common school movement quickly found favor across the country, particularly in the urban east. Between 1825 and 1850, educators and reformers established over 60 periodicals to spread the common school ideology. But while common schools were generally compulsory, they were never truly common to all children. Among the gravest worries of Protestant Anglo Americans was the large number of Irish-Catholic immigrants arriving in the United States. In the years before the potato blight and famine of 1845, over one million Irish had come to

America. In 1845 alone, 1.5 million people fled Ireland bound for eastern port cities, particularly New York. American Protestants saw common schools as a means of subduing the Irish and converting Catholics. In response, Catholics lobbied for changes to curricula or permission to establish their own schools. In many eastern cities, these efforts inflamed social unrest, the worst incident of which was the Philadelphia Bible Riots of 1843, when 13 people were killed and a Catholic church burned to the ground. Public education was proving to be a contentious political issue – a trend that would continue to the present day.<sup>9</sup>

For the leaders of the common school movement, however, the riots were more proof of the need for an institution to acculturate the foreign born. Among those most concerned about social unrest was Horace Mann, the father of the American common school. He was born in 1796 and grew up in a harshly Calvinistic home in Franklin, Massachusetts. But Mann’s studies in law eventually altered his worldview; he saw the law as a means to salvation here and now – not in the afterlife. “My nature revolts at the idea of belonging to a universe in which there is to be never-ending anguish,” writes Mann. “...[W]hile we are on earth, the burden of our duties is toward men.”<sup>10</sup> In 1812, New York became the first state to create the position of state superintendent of schools. By the 1830s, state supervision of schools became common. Already editor of the *Massachusetts Common School Journal*, Mann was appointed the first secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education in 1837. Through his meticulous annual reports, Mann developed a belief that compulsory public education could create a unified American culture while ending poverty, crime, and other social problems.<sup>11</sup>

As the common school movement matured, it developed three key characteristics. First, all children had to be educated in a common schoolhouse. This forced students from a variety of economic, religious, and ethnic backgrounds to work together as they followed a unified curriculum fraught with patriotic themes and exercises. Second, schools served as an instrument of government policy. For one of the first times in the nation's history, Americans generally accepted that government policies could solve and control social, economic, and political problems. Third, common schools allowed state supervision of education to become a widespread and accepted practice. While control remained in the hands of a locally elected school board, state-mandated standards helped the common school movement maintain a unified curriculum.<sup>12</sup>

For the common school movement to be successful, however, all children across the country – even in the backwoods – had to have access to a classroom and an instructor committed to the ideals of the movement. These teachers would have to be inexpensive but still uphold the high moral standards expected in the classroom. For the solution, common school leaders turned to America's women. “The real heroines of the common school movement were the schoolmams,” writes Spring. Women were chosen as common school teachers because of the iteration of then-held notions of gender roles and femininity. The economic exploitation of women – accelerated by the industrial revolution – meant that this army of teachers could be paid considerably less than men in the same profession. As well, gender roles reinforced the dominance of men in the school hierarchy. Males continued to

supervise the schools as members of boards of education, superintendents, and principals. Also, men generally considered teaching a steppingstone to another career. But perhaps the most prominent reason for employing women was their perceived moral virtue and the related concept of republican motherhood. As stated above, the founding fathers worried that the success of the republic depended upon the virtue and wisdom of its individual citizens. As mothers, women traditionally held the responsibility of religious and moral instruction in the home. In the new republic, women had to cultivate their male children into virtuous, public-minded citizens. Thus, in a sense, the future of the nation rested upon its women.<sup>13</sup>

The notion of republican motherhood actually opened new educational opportunities for women. After all, the better educated they were, the more virtuous sons they could raise. In 1821 Emma Willard opened the Troy Female Seminary in New York. Two years later, Rev. Samuel Hall established a private college for women in Concord, Vermont. These institutions often taught common school pedagogy and served as foundations for state-funded normal schools, the first of which opened in Lexington, Massachusetts, in July 1839. The term “normal school” comes to United States from France, where the world's first modern, formal teacher-training institution, *Ecole Normale Supérieure*, opened in Paris in 1794. The word “normal” derives from the Latin word *norma*, which means *rule*.<sup>14</sup> Women enrolling in normal schools usually came there directly after graduating from elementary or common schools. Normal schools prepared their students to teach what would become the elementary grades and introduced the idea that methods of instruction could be taught and

learned. Thus, normal schools formalized the study of educational theory and analysis of methods of instruction. Meanwhile, men continued to attend colleges and universities to become instructors at secondary schools. As a result, an economic and distinct gender difference emerged between elementary and secondary school educators; female primary school teachers were paid considerably less than their male counterparts at secondary schools.<sup>15</sup>

The perceived moral virtue of female teachers, however, opened them up to public scrutiny. They had to be examples of purity in the classroom and at home. “The teacher’s private life has always been open to public scrutiny like a goldfish in a glass bowl,” observes Willard Elsbree.<sup>16</sup> To maintain a sense of moral purity in the classroom, boards of education explicitly ordered schoolmarms to avoid discussions of political, economic, and social issues. Most female teachers were single because married women were expected to remain at home with their own families. As well, women’s salaries required them to board with other families. The living situation provided *de facto* chaperones for the teacher but forced the schoolmarm to move often, something more conducive to a single, unattached woman.<sup>17</sup>

The popularity of Pestalozzian pedagogy further buffeted the role of women in the classroom. Where Joseph Lancaster had devised a system of classroom management, Johann Pestalozzi created a method of instruction. Introduced to the United States through the Oswego (New York) State Normal and Training School in 1861, the Pestalozzian model of instruction had as its cornerstone the idea that the mother and household were ultimately responsible for the well being of society. The Oswego

Movement, as Pestalozzian pedagogy was called in America, emphasized relating classroom lessons to the real world, of learning by doing, of freeing children from their desks. In later years, Pestalozzian concepts would serve as the basis for Progressive reforms in education.<sup>18</sup>

The dominance of women in primary education and the growing acceptance of Pestalozzian pedagogy altered school architecture as it became more feminine and intimate. This mirrored trends in domestic architecture in the first half of the nineteenth century. Influenced by the plan books of Andrew Jackson Downing, Americans adopted architectural styles reminiscent of Europe’s agricultural past as they built new homes, generally in suburbs. Building on Downing’s work was Catherine E. Beecher who, in 1841, published her *Treatise on Domestic Economy, for the Use of Young Ladies at Home and at School*. She then collaborated with her sister Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, on the manual *The American Woman’s Home*. This book reiterated the role of women as the moral instructors in the home and suggested architectural styles and floor plans necessary to make the home a sanctuary. In particular, Beecher and Stowe advocated the Gothic Revival style because it incorporated elements of the church into the home. Not surprisingly, many primary schools of this era, as well as secondary schools and colleges, also constructed their buildings in the Gothic Revival, reinforcing the moral lessons taught inside its classrooms. Many one-room schoolhouses, even those in the recently settled Midwest, featured Gothic elements such as lacy vergeboards and pointed-arch windows. Lacking these elements, most rural, one-room schools well into the twentieth century were constructed with an entrance on the gable end and rows of



windows flanking the sides, replicating the common spatial organization and fenestration of churches. Indeed, the Colorado superintendent of public instruction, Horace M. Hale, included in his 1873 annual report a woodcut illustration reproduced from the *American Journal of Education* – his vision of an appropriate rural schoolhouse. It depicts a building that, except for a weathervane in place of a cross, is indistinguishable from a church (see figure 2).<sup>19</sup>

It was also during the common school period that theories of education and the design of the schoolhouse itself became more profoundly connected. As education transformed in the nineteenth century from a decentralized, unregulated activity into a systematic, orderly endeavor, school design became more scientific. Particularly influential to American educators were Prussian schoolhouses. While urban schools in New York and Philadelphia still relied on the Lancasterian system, with over 250 students in a classroom, Prussian schools were subdivided into many separate classrooms with considerably smaller numbers of students. Among the visitors to Prussian schools was none other than Horace Mann, who brought their ideas back to the United States. Between 1838 and 1840, Mann's counterpart in Connecticut, Henry Barnard, published a series of articles entitled *School Architecture*. These documents formally connected education and school design. In particular, Barnard suggested that age-graded instruction, based on the Prussian model, was only really possible in a specially designed building.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, in the fall of 1847, school authorities in Boston opened a new grammar school that represented a pivotal change in school architecture. The Quincy School was divided into 12 self-contained classrooms, each capable of

seating 56 students. To take advantage of clear-span space, the top floor of the three-story building contained a large assembly hall. But the most significant innovation was that each teacher had her own room and each student had his own desk. The Quincy plan proved so successful that, by 1855, every grammar school in Boston was subdivided into self-contained, age-graded classrooms. Other urban school districts quickly followed. Moreover, Spring argues that the physical arrangement of the Quincy School and its successors reinforced the gender-role and authority differences in age-graded schools. While the female teachers had desks in classrooms with their students, the male principal had his own private office at the center of school but distinctly separated from students and teachers.<sup>21</sup>

The physical arrangement of the Quincy School was only one example of the increasing professionalization and bureaucratization of education in America that occurred during the second half of the nineteenth century. By the late 1800s, the chain of command governing schools today developed; day-to-day decisions flowed from the superintendent at the top, through principals and assistant principals, to the teachers. Students advanced to the next grade with the beginning of each school year, and all graded courses of study were uniform across the entire school system. During the 1800s, districts became the most widespread method of organizing state educational systems. Not surprisingly, this method of management was adapted from the factories and corporate offices of industrial America. Moreover, the employment of women correlated with an increase in bureaucracy – something common to factories and corporate offices as well as schools. Education historian David Tyack refers to the system as



**Figure 2.** Horace M. Hale, Colorado superintendent of schools, promoted this image in his 1873 annual report as the ideal country schoolhouse. Note its nearly identical resemblance to a church. (*American Journal of Education, 1873, in Gulliford*)

the “pedagogical harem.” In general, women were considered too emotional for supervisory positions. At the same time, traditional understandings of gender roles assumed that, because women were more nurturing and emotional, they were better teachers of young children; men lacked emotional depth and relied too heavily on reason.<sup>22</sup>

However, on America’s western frontier, teaching positions offered women a way to escape the social mores of the east and create a new life. By 1840, the number of female teachers in the northeast exceeded the number of positions available for them. Many began traveling west. In 1846, Catherine Beecher established the Board of Popular Education “combining a vision of bringing civilization to whites living on the wild frontier and providing jobs for unemployed female teachers.”<sup>23</sup> In addition to job opportunities, women traveled west with romantic visions of life on the frontier, religious convictions, and, because of the disproportionate amount of men to women in the west, a desire to meet a man, get married, and start a family. However, when faced with the reality of life on the frontier, many women quickly returned east. For others, the isolation of the wilderness sparked madness. A missionary teacher in Oklahoma “was found wandering over the prairies with [a] mind so disordered as to make her return

home imperative.”<sup>24</sup>

For those who survived, teaching offered one of the only respectable professions available to a single woman in the west. And western towns were desperate for teachers. Schools were always among the first buildings constructed in a frontier outpost. The schoolhouse, no matter how modest, was a symbol that the wilderness had been tamed and that a place once considered nowhere was somewhere. While saloons and churches quickly lined the streets of prairie oases or fleeting mountain mining boomtowns, schools were there as well. “Among our privations and actual dangers of the pioneer period, the American settler has always planned for the public school as one of the first institutions to be established,” writes Superintendent Albert H. Dunn in a sketch of Fort Collins public schools. “Beginnings were often crude, but they showed the spirit and purpose of this remarkable class of men and women, who were, first of all, home builders.”<sup>25</sup> But town fathers often did not construct schools out of a heartfelt appreciation for the education and the well-being of children. In nineteenth-century America, schools were also about capitalism. “Towns competed with each other to develop their institutions,” writes Carl F. Kaestle, “hoping to become county seats and rail centers.”<sup>26</sup>

## Notes

1. Carl F. Kaestle, introduction to “Part One, 1770-1900: The Common School,” in *School: The Story of American Public Education*, ed. Sarah Mondale and Sarah B. Patton (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 11-12; Joel Spring, *The American School: 1642-2000*, 5th ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2001), 9.
2. *Ibid.*; Stephan Thernstrom, *A History of the American People*, 2d ed. (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989), 54.
3. Spring, 9.
4. *Ibid.*, 59, 63-65.
5. *Ibid.*, 61.

6. *Ibid*, 66, 71, 103.
7. Cyril M. Harris, *American Architecture: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1998), 123-4.
8. Spring, 86.
9. *Ibid*, 87, 90, 106.
10. Mary Peabody Mann, ed., *Life of Horace Mann* (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1907), 49-50 [Horace Mann's edited letters and journals are reprinted in this book]; quoted in Spring, 108, n. 6.
11. Spring, 104-105, 109, 114.
12. *Ibid.*, 104-105.
13. *Ibid.*, 133-6, 139.
14. Timothy Smith, historical context in *Suburban Development: Greeley's Arlington Neighborhood*, Adam Thomas (Broomfield: SWCA Environmental Consultants, 2004), 12-13.
15. Spring, 135, 141, 143.
16. Willard Elsbree, *The American Teacher: Evolution of a Profession in a Democracy* (New York: American Book Company, 1939), 296; quoted in Spring, 137, n. 7.
17. Spring, 141-3.
18. *Ibid.*, 144-5.
19. Clifford Edward Clark, Jr., *The American Family Home, 1800-1960* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 33; Andrew Gulliford, *America's Country Schools* (Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press, 1984), 168-69.
20. Cutler, 2, 4-5.
21. *Ibid.*, 5-6; Spring 152.
22. Spring, 149-50, 153-54; David Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974); quoted in Spring, 152.
23. *Ibid.*, 161.
24. Ethel McMillan, "Women Teachers in Oklahoma, 1820-1860," *Chronicle of Oklahoma* (spring 1949): 4; quoted in Spring, 163; n. 65 [reference number in Spring's notes is in error].
25. Albert H. Dunn, "A Sketch of the Public Schools of Fort Collins," *Fort Collins Express-Courier*, 20 May 1923.
26. Kaestle, 15.

# Chapter 2

---

## Public Schools in the Progressive Era

In 1900, the United States, for the first time, “showed the outlines of an educational system,” writes historian Robert Wiebe. This included age-leveled elementary grades flowing seamlessly into a high school that provided preparation for college. In 1871, only six states had compulsory education laws. In 1900, nearly every state mandated childhood education. Schools also took on new roles as neighborhood social centers, as health clinics, as adult educational facilities. These reforms were the result of an increasingly influential group of social, economic, and political reformers – the Progressives.<sup>1</sup>

At the turn of the twentieth century, the large numbers of immigrants crowded in tenements, deadly disasters in factories, labor upheaval, corporate greed, and political scandal convinced many Americans that their society had to be reformed. For solutions, they turned to science. Many believed that social problems could be managed and eliminated scientifically. Soon, a generation of professionals in social reform emerged, applying science to everything from factory production to prison reform to child rearing. The *art* of education became the *science* of education, with “experts” applying new concepts of psychology and childhood development to classroom instruction. In general, Progressive educators advocated stimulation of the individual pupil over rote learning in a single-teacher classroom. Their ideas would influence education in the United States into the 1950s.

Foremost among the Progressive educators was John Dewey. He was born on October 20, 1859, to Archibald Sprague and Lucina Artemesia (Rich) Dewey of Burlington, Vermont. The University of Vermont exposed the young Dewey to evolutionary theory through the teachings of G.H. Perkins and *Lessons in Elementary Physiology* by T.H. Huxley. The theory of natural selection would influence Dewey’s philosophical outlook, particularly his epistemology (theory of knowledge). He taught high school for two years, during which time he became increasingly interested in philosophy. After successfully publishing an article in the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, Dewey enrolled in the graduate program at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. Dewey obtained his doctorate in 1884 and accepted a teaching post at the University of Michigan. He remained here for a decade, minus one year spent at the University of Minnesota in 1888. At Michigan, Dewey met one his most important philosophical collaborators, James Hayden Tufts. It was Tufts who, in 1894, led Dewey to the recently founded University of Chicago.<sup>2</sup>

Dewey, like many intellectuals of his age, worried about the social instability and isolation of the industrial age. He increasingly believed that the schoolhouse provided a means to morally uplift urban culture. The school should serve as a social center for children and adults – a place for learning and recreation. Most importantly, the school should be a clearinghouse of ideas, allowing the



John Dewey

modern worker to understand others around him and his own place in the industrialized world. For Dewey, the school was a community with a real social life. “[We] must interpret to [the worker] the intellectual and social meaning of the work in which he is engaged,” Dewey told a gathering school educators in 1902. “That is, [we] must reveal its relations to the life and work of the world.”<sup>3</sup>

In 1896, Dewey founded the Laboratory School at the University of Chicago. His goal was to reveal to students the social value of knowledge and the interdependency of society. Before this time, however, students were generally isolated, ranked in grades and seated at their own desks. Now Dewey wanted them to work cooperatively in an informal environment that could adapt to the moment’s particular lesson. Indeed, Dewey initially struggled to find tables suitable for his students. Manufacturers only produced individual child-size desks designed to be bolted to the floor. Dewey envisioned a schoolhouse with learning spaces that were more fluid and flexible than the age-graded, rigidly geometric plans based on the Quincy School.<sup>4</sup>

Dewey’s epistemology was entirely secular, a conviction of some controversy at the turn of the twentieth century. For example, Dewey rejected the idea that ethics are based on a divine origin or reflect some kind of perfect ideal. He felt that reliance on a religious foundation for morality and knowledge trapped civilization in ideas and institutions no longer practical in the modern, industrialized world. Dewey was a pragmatist; he believed that individuals should adopt those ideas, values, and institutions best suited for a particular social situation. Schooling was critical, in Dewey’s view, because a man or woman had to rely on his or her own experiences in assessing a social sit-

uation rather than blindly obeying God’s commandments. Architecturally, this pragmatism was incongruous with the concept of the schoolhouse as a place of divine inspiration. The building’s style could and should be divorced from the mythological past of Greece and Rome and the Christian past embodied in Gothic architecture. Instead, schools should appear modern and should be flexible spaces. While most American school districts were slow to implement Dewey’s ideas, they were embraced quicker in the American West as many of Dewey’s disciples took positions in universities and in public school administration in, particularly, California and Colorado. The large number of Craftsman-style and, later, early Modern-style (i.e. Art Deco and Art Moderne) schoolhouses in these areas, particularly in rural districts, was a testament to the adoption of Progressive educational theory in these areas.<sup>5</sup>

With Progressive reformers analyzing the science of learning, it is not surprising that, by 1900, a new group of specialists in school design emerged. Leading the way for professionally designed schools was architect C.B.J. Snyder, who, in 1891, was appointed New York City superintendent of school buildings. Like other Progressive reformers, Snyder scientifically evaluated the impact of building design on the educational environment. Moreover, he wanted to reform the politics of school construction. At this time, politicians handed out school building contracts as rewards for political favors. Snyder believed not just any building could serve as a schoolhouse; sunlight and fresh air were imperative in instruction. Thus, he pioneered the H-shaped schoolhouse, which allowed natural light and breezes into every classroom, even if the building was situated on lots located mid block. He introduced electric

lights and telephones to schools and invented large kindergarten classrooms with movable furniture. Snyder's designs were so successful that, in 1897, the city gave his office complete control over school construction and maintenance. "Snyder and his staff did not eliminate favoritism from the school building process," writes Cutler, "but they did establish the idea that only professionals could make the schoolhouse as effective an educational device as many thought it could be."<sup>6</sup> From this time forward, urban schoolhouse design was left almost solely to architects.

At the turn of the century, Progressive reformers even tackled problems in rural districts. Through a system of surveys compiled into impressive statistics, these reformers argued that rural schools and the system of locally controlled districts that administered them were antiquated and inferior to urban schools. By 1910, a wave of school district consolidations allowed professional administrators and experts on education to control even rural schoolhouses. In some cases, a professionally designed building that resembled, on a smaller scale, an urban school, replaced the iconic one-room schoolhouse.

Unfortunately, standard plans began to influence the architectural styles as well. In many school districts at this time, imagination gave way to economic realities. One reason the schoolhouse is so recognizable in almost every American city and town, Cutler argues, is that so many were built with nearly the same plan and style. But more and more experts continued to refine schoolhouse designs. Pioneering in the training of school administrators was the Teachers College at Columbia University in New York City. By 1917, the faculty also included two experts on school building architecture, George D. Strayer and Nickolaus L.

Engelhardt. They developed a set of school building standards used across the country.<sup>7</sup>

Progressive-era education and social reforms also demanded that schoolhouses become more complex, multi-use buildings. Reformers in urban areas were particularly horrified by crowded ghettos, inadequate municipal services, and unsanitary living conditions. Many viewed the public school as the solution to these problems. Progressive educators invented for schools a new public welfare function; the children of the urban, largely foreign-born poor would bring lessons of hygiene, fitness, and patriotism back to their homes, thereby influencing their parents. Schoolhouses and their grounds had to adapt to a plethora of new uses, including kindergartens; health and hygiene facilities; gymnasiums, playgrounds, and athletic fields; and adult education centers.<sup>8</sup>

Developed in the nineteenth century in Germany, educators designed kindergartens to provide a transition for children from the self-centered world of early childhood into a community of youths. As the name implies, kindergartens were envisioned as gardens in which teachers nurtured and cultivated children like plants. Carl Schurz and Elizabeth Peabody introduced the concept to the United States in the 1870s, and the nation's first kindergarten opened in St. Louis in 1873. The explicit target of the St. Louis kindergarten and of similar programs across the country were the children of the urban ghetto. St. Louis Superintendent of Schools William Torrey Harris argued that kindergarten was necessary because traditional socializing institutions, such as the family, church, and community, had failed in the industrialized world. "A major goal of the early kindergarten movement was to teach chil-



dren habits that would reform the home,” observes Spring.<sup>9</sup>

Architecturally, kindergartens required facilities dramatically different from those in the rest of the school building. Furniture had to be moveable and comfortable; facilities such as restrooms and water fountains had to be adapted for small bodies; and generally these rooms required their own egresses. Kindergartens in the first half of the twentieth century often included hearths, stained glass, and colorful murals meant to provide a comfortable yet stimulating environment.

New concepts of hygiene required schools to provide facilities for nurses, health education, and even shower facilities. A Boston school installed the first known school shower bath in 1889. These types of facilities profoundly illustrated the new role of the school as an agency of social change.<sup>10</sup>

Closely paralleling hygiene reforms was the Play Movement. This faction of Progressive reformers believed that a leading cause of juvenile delinquency was a lack of play and athletic facilities in cities. They wanted to provide sanctuaries of childhood innocence in an urban reality. The movement began in the 1880s with the development of sandlots in New York City, Philadelphia, Boston, and Chicago, and reached its pinnacle in the founding of the Chicago Park System in 1904. Members of the Play Movement saw the school as a natural ally in the battle against juvenile crime. Older schools were retrofitted with playgrounds and athletic fields, while those facilities were included in the site plans of new schools. The design of schools began to require an army of specialized professionals, including landscape architects, who transformed

schoolhouse design from an emphasis on an individual building to an entire campus.

But playgrounds and athletic fields were not the only school facilities used after dismissal. By opening its classrooms to adults, Progressive reformers also turned the neighborhood schoolhouse into the area’s social center. This, they believed, would fill a need in the community. Often, the adult programs offered at the schools were intended to Americanize the participants. In a sense, the school as adult social center reflected the continuing struggle of native-born Anglo Americans against a huge influx of eastern European immigrants. Advocates of these programs hoped to replicate in schools some sense of the village institutions these immigrants had experienced in their homelands. “The use of the school as a social center was viewed as one means of re-establishing within an urban context a sense of community that had been lost with the passing of rural and small-town life,” writes Spring.<sup>11</sup>

Schools as adult social centers had a profound impact on classroom design and schoolhouse architecture. In 1897, a superintendent complained that his schools were not conducive to adult uses because the assembly hall was on the top floor. Influenced by the design of the Quincy School, most multi-story school buildings were constructed with classrooms on the lower floor and the assembly hall on the topmost floor. However, this meant navigating many flights of steps and bringing the public through portions of the building that were closed. In response, architects began designing schools with the auditorium and gymnasium on the first floor, often accessed through their own doorways at street level. Because these rooms required clear-span space, they were often housed in their own



wings, replacing tall, box-like schools of the past with low, sprawling facilities. By 1910, districts were designing school buildings to function specifically as social centers.<sup>12</sup>

And public use of classrooms dictated an alteration that began to indicate the progressiveness of a school – moveable desks. The Lancasterian model of classroom management demanded military precision in the arrangement of desks. Through the nineteenth century, almost all school desks, even in rural, one-room schoolhouses, were bolted to the floor. This arrangement reinforced the ideas of discipline, order, and hierarchy in the classroom. C.B.J. Snyder later developed an arrangement of classrooms that would become the standard model for all schools in the early twentieth century. The rows of desks were bolted to the floor, facing the blackboard. Grades one through four had 48 desks, fifth and sixth contained 45, and seventh and eighth had 40. Between 1920 and 1940, 79 percent of desks in American secondary schools were bolted to the floor. But in districts considered progressive, the percentage was much lower. Indeed, only 19 percent of desks in the Denver school district, regarded as one of the nation’s most progressive, were bolted down. Moreover, the prevalence of stationary desks was directly related to class size. Larger classes required stricter control and confinement of student motion. Smaller classes could be more mobile yet remain manageable. This also infers that pedagogy differed according to class size.<sup>13</sup>

One particular Progressive-era reform led to the creation of some of public education’s most complex school buildings – the rise of the high school as a mass institution. The earliest high schools actually predated the Progressives by decades. A Boston town meeting in 1821

approved the construction of the nation’s first high school. But these institutions were not widely built and remained largely the privilege of the upper class and portions of the middle class. The expansion of higher education after the Civil War eventually forced reforms in lower-level schools. As colleges diversified their undergraduate curricula and expanded the elective system, education reformers realized the need for “a broader base of preparatory schools committed to a more exact training,” writes historian Robert Wiebe. “Renovating their curriculum to suit a modern industrial society, the high schools acquired a rationale and life of their own in the next twenty years (1900-1920).”<sup>14</sup>

High schools were generally not considered a component of state-funded compulsory education, however, until the 1920s. But even before that time, high schools were “architectural masterpieces,” writes Spring, “and could be described...as cathedrals of learning.”<sup>15</sup> In many small towns and city neighborhoods, the local high school represented that area’s pinnacle of architectural sophistication. Beautiful high schools were objects of civic pride and landmarks providing a sense of place. And generally they featured the most fashionable architectural styles of the day, a trend that continues to the present. Interestingly, among the most vaunted of the era’s high schools was Denver’s second East High School, opened in 1925. The massive school building dripped in elements of the Jacobean style, reaching its climax in the building’s 162-foot-high central tower, meant to resemble Independence Hall in Philadelphia. The building surrounded pupils in opulence, both on the inside and on the outside. True to the Progressive movement’s City Beautiful component, the school was carefully situated to become a component of



**Figure 3.** Denver’s East High School is a landmark of Progressive reforms in schoolhouse architecture. (Photo by the author)

adjacent City Park. East High School was intended to inspire the inborn aesthetic sensibilities of its students while invigorating their thirst for knowledge.<sup>16</sup>

Regardless of their architecture, modern high schools were largely the product of cooperation among strange political, social, and economic bedfellows: Progressive reformers, industrial capitalists, organized labor, and parents. All envisioned the high school as a solution to a pressing economic and social problem: the lack of skilled labor and management. On the factory floor, American industrial machinery had become too advanced for workers with an eighth-grade education. Corporate offices demanded professionals with advanced knowledge of finance, engineering, and a plethora of other special skills. Reformers, particularly socialists, desired to level the educational playing field. And parents wanted their children to receive an education that would provide for success in the modern job market. The solution to these issues was the high school. Here, students could pursue a course of study that would prepare them for college or provided them technical training to enter the job market upon graduation.<sup>17</sup>

As high schools became more vocationally oriented and the curriculum became increasingly diverse, school districts required more complex buildings. Machine shops, physical education facilities, laboratories, art studios, music rehearsal rooms, home economics classrooms, and a variety of other rooms had to be housed under one roof. With the addition of athletic fields and, in some cases, gardens, high schools became sprawling facilities consuming vast swaths of land.<sup>18</sup>

As early as 1880, many larger school districts began constructing separate manual training high schools. But the

trend boomed after the passage of the Smith-Hughes Act in 1917. This legislation provided special funding for vocational education. More importantly, however, the Smith-Hughes Act represented the increasing intervention of the federal government in education, a trend that would skyrocket during the Cold War.<sup>19</sup>

The Progressive era also witnessed the creation of the final component of the public school triumvirate: the junior high school. Education reformers realized that the transition from the rigid, uniform curriculum of elementary school to the liberal, student-specific programs of high school proved difficult for students. Moreover, educators found that high school was often too late for the vocational guidance students required. As a result, school districts began to introduce an intermediate step between elementary and high school, with New York City separating its seventh and eighth grades in 1905. The first nationally recognized middle school opened in Berkeley, California, in 1910. Educators designed junior high schools to allow students to meet with guidance counselors in order to choose a vocation-specific curriculum in high school. As well, junior high schools emphasized programs for socialization, preparing students for the numerous extracurricular activities available in high school.<sup>20</sup>

During this same period, schoolhouses transformed from being buildings largely *independent* of the curriculum to buildings overtly *reflecting* the curriculum. Much of the trend was due to the popularity of the Gary Plan. Just across the Indiana-Illinois state line from Chicago, on the shores of Lake Michigan, U.S. Steel built the world's largest steel mill in 1906. The mill town of Gary developed almost instantly, and most of its new inhabitants were immigrants

### The Growing Importance of High Schools

#### Public High School Enrollment in the United States

1890	202,963 (in 2,526 public high schools)
1900	519,251 (in 6,005 public high schools)
1912	1,105,360
1920	2,200,389 (20% of high-school age Americans)
1930	4,399,422 (47% of high-school age Americans)
1940	6,545,991 (75% of high-school age Americans)

Source: *Spring*, 255.

seeking job opportunities. For Progressives, Gary provided an opportunity to establish their programs in an entirely engineered setting. Town fathers wanted to assimilate the new arrivals and realized that schools were the best institutions for doing so. Thus, they hired a visionary disciple of John Dewey to oversee the construction and management of schools – William A. Wirt.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to his work with Dewey, Wirt was a follower of “scientific management,” a buzzword of Progressive reformers. Frederick Wilson Taylor, who, with stopwatch in hand, carefully observed industrial workers, pioneered the study of scientific management. Taylor believed that there was a single, most efficient way to perform a particular job. By increasing the efficiency of each worker at his appointed task, even if it only accounted for a few seconds, greatly increased the speed of the entire assembly line. Wirt applied the principles of Taylorism to school management. He constructed lavish, modern schools. But his most notable innovation was his self-proclaimed “Work-Study-Play” system or “platoon school.” Wirt’s curriculum kept students in motion the entire school day. He desired to maximize the “use of the educational plant” and provide the broadest curriculum for the lowest cost. Every space in the school, from the classrooms, to the auditorium, to the gym, to the playground, to the machine shop, were in constant use, and with every period, students switched to a different room. Wirt also wanted every student to experience every aspect of the school. College preparatory students learned to use a band saw in the wood shop while those in the home economics course conducted a chemistry experiment.<sup>22</sup> “Progressive education at its best...had been designed to tap all the talents of the stu-

dent as opposed to just a narrow band,” observes historian David Tyack.<sup>23</sup> One Progressive educator said of the Gary Plan that it would “make every working man a scholar and every scholar a working man.”<sup>24</sup>

However, for the Gary Plan curriculum to be successful, it required specially designed schools. Observers in Gary noted this almost immediately. “The building facilities provided at Gary [were] determined to an unusual degree by the requirements of the school program,” wrote George Strayer and Frank Bachman, who visited the city’s schools in 1918.<sup>25</sup> Despite the need for specially designed buildings and a political backlash when it was introduced in New York City, the Gary Plan became standard procedure in school districts across the United States and contributed to a school building boom in the 1920s. Schools began to implement Progressive-era concepts of rational organization and flow of labor. Schools began to reflect the layout and, in some cases, the architecture of factories.<sup>26</sup>

And it was Progressive-era reforms first instituted in factory design that led to even more dramatic changes in school construction. A central issue to many of the period’s reformers was workplace safety and efficiency. Before the 1880s, America’s large factory buildings were usually multi-story buildings with wood or brick walls and plenty of timber posts, beams, and flooring. In a fire, these factories proved to be death traps. By the mid 1800s, factory fires had claimed huge numbers of workers, many of whom could have survived if only they had had a way to escape the flames and smoke. By the 1880s, horrific accounts of factory fires in the popular press prompted a union of reformers and insurance companies to advocate a new concept of factory design – slow-burning con-

struction. Enticing factory owners with reduced premiums if they built plants according to slow-burning specifications, insurance companies began to issue plans they believed would allow workers to contain a fire before it spread and provide an easy escape. These designs would increasingly influence all large public buildings, particularly schools, emphasizing engineering over architectural detail. Architectural historian John Stilgoe provides this description of the changes:

[Factory designers] eschewed almost all ornament as an unnecessary fire hazard. . . . Insurance company engineers prohibited all interior wall coverings, forbade any ceiling whatsoever, and often limited the application of paint. They insisted that stairways be placed in the corners of the building, not in some grandiose clock-tower at the center of the building façade. They specified large, standardized windows of wired glass, almost perfectly flat roofs, and one-story heights.<sup>27</sup>

By 1900, school districts were beginning to construct two-story schoolhouses with stairwells at the end rather than at the center. Fire safety procedures became more standardized. Fire drills were routine, and many districts had installed additional fire escapes on their larger schoolhouses. But multi-story, Quincy-plan schools remained popular until a 1908 school tragedy sounded their death knell. A suburb northeast of downtown Cleveland, Ohio, Collinwood was, at the turn of twentieth century, a prosperous, quickly growing community. A source of particular pride for residents was their Lakeview Elementary School. Opened in the fall of 1901, the building was a typical

Quincy-plan school, with three stories above a full basement and an auditorium on the top floor. It consisted of a masonry shell with an interior structural system of heavy timbers. By 1907, a surging student population forced the district to add another four classrooms to the existing four. In 1908, 350 students crammed the eight classrooms and forced teachers to house the fifth grade in the auditorium. At 9:40 a.m., on Ash Wednesday, March 4, 1908, a student noticed a wisp of smoke as she left the washroom in the basement. She informed the janitor who, after investigating the source of the smoke, quickly rang the fire bell. The evacuation had begun well; Lake View students were regularly drilled for such an event. But as flames began to lick at the risers of the front stairwell ascending from the basement, panic ensued.<sup>28</sup>

The nexus of the tragedy was a design flaw with the vestibules at the bottom of the front and rear stairwells, which separated the steps from the outside. Either end of the five-foot-deep vestibules contained paired, swinging doors. In the event of a fire, the janitor anchored the doors to open outward. Despite rumors to the contrary, evidence strongly suggests that the doors were ajar as required. But the doors themselves were anchored to 2.5-foot-wide bulkheads on either side, constricting the passage space to a little over five feet wide. Worst of all, the space between the bottom step and the doorway was less than two feet. In this small space, students had to turn slightly to avoid the bulkhead and pass through the doorway. Fraught with panic, students stumbled at the slight jog in their pathway to safety. Within minutes of the fire, the bodies of dead and dying students had clogged the small area between the bottom of both the front and rear steps and their vestibules. Only

those would could jump from windows or reach the fire escape survived. Shortly after 10:30 a.m., the first floor collapsed into the basement, and the other floors followed. Those trapped in the stairwell who had not already succumbed to burns or smoke inhalation were crushed beneath the weight of the falling building. The fire killed 172 students, almost half of the school's enrollment, making it the worst school fire in American history.<sup>29</sup>

While investigators never determined the source of the fire, they agreed that overheated steam pipes contributed to the inferno. They also theorized that many, if not all, of the students could have escaped if they had had an unobstructed passage from the bottom of the steps to the outside. The sheer horror of the tragedy forced school

administrators and architects across the United States to reevaluate existing and planned schools for their fire safety and ease of evacuation. The Lake View School fire graphically proved that stairwells were particularly dangerous features in schools. After the fire, schoolhouses over two stories above the basement increasingly lost favor in the United States, largely because of stairwell safety issues. Architects began to advocate schools constructed with sprawling, one- or two-story wings. As well, after this time most schools were constructed with solid masonry, steel, or reinforced concrete structural systems and flat roofs, significantly reducing the amount of flammable wood construction.<sup>30</sup>

## Notes

1. Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 119.
2. Richard Field "John Dewey," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*; available from <http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/d/dewey.htm>; Internet; accessed 12 January 2004.
3. Spring, 230, 243.
4. *Ibid.*, 242-243.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Cutler, 8.
7. *Ibid.*, 8-10.
8. Spring, 229.
9. *Ibid.*, 232-33.
10. *Ibid.*, 235.
11. *Ibid.*, 236.
12. *Ibid.*, 237.
13. *Ibid.*, 241.
14. Wiebe, 118-9.
15. Spring, 122.
16. Cutler, 19; Denver Public Schools, "Denver Schools: Historic Buildings and Learning Landscapes," [tour brochure prepared for the 2003 National Trust for Historic Preservation Conference in Denver] (Denver: Denver Public Schools, October 2003); Thomas J. Noel, *Buildings of Colorado* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 91-2.
17. Spring, 253-5.
18. Cutler, 10.
19. Cutler, 10; Spring, 267.
20. Spring, 271-2.

21. Mondale and Patton, 78, 86.
22. Nelson Lichtenstein, Susan Strasser, and Roy Rosenzweig, *Who Built America? Working People and the Nation's Economy, Politics, Culture, and Society* (New York: Worth Publishers, 2000), 170; Roscoe D. Chase, *The Platoon School in America* (Stanford, Ca., 1931) 27; quoted in Cutler, 11, n. 26.
23. Tyack; quoted in Mondale and Patton, 88.
24. Quoted in Mondale and Patton, 88-9.
25. George D. Strayer and Frank Bachman, *The Gary Public Schools: Organization and Administration* (New York, 1918), 23-40, 59-61; quoted in Cutler, 11, n. 27.
26. Cuter, 11.
27. John R. Stilgoe, *Metropolitan Corridor: Railroads and the American Scene* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1983), 82-85.
28. John Stark Bellamy II, *The Maniac in the Bushes and More Tales of Cleveland Woe* (Cleveland: Gray & Co., 1997), 49-53.
29. *Ibid.*, 50, 60-61.
30. *Ibid.*, 63, 65.



# Chapter 3

---

## The Modern Development of Public Schools

### Schools of the Great Depression and World War II

By the time the stock market crashed on October 24, 1929, high school education was considered a right rather than a privilege. Throughout the 1920s, schools districts erected thousands of new buildings for high schools. Those districts that could not afford new buildings tried their best to adapt older buildings to the more diverse curricula high schools required. Demand for new schools, particularly high schools, did not diminish with the Great Depression. And while most private- and public-sector construction ebbed to a trickle during the 1930s, school construction continued, buoyed by a federal make-work program meant to offset the devastation of the Depression.

Among the most immediate impacts of the Depression was vast unemployment. By 1933, nearly a quarter of all wage earners, or 15 million people, was out of work. For those fortunate enough to retain their jobs, average real wages had fallen 16 percent. Franklin Delano Roosevelt bounded into the presidency over Herbert Hoover with his promise of “a new deal for the American people.” That New Deal included an array of programs to assist the unemployed. The Federal Emergency Relief Administration doled out about \$1 billion a year for three years. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) provided

work for 3 million young men, who lived a semi-military life as they constructed conservation projects and recreational facilities. In 1933, Congress authorized the Public Works Administration (PWA), which employed thousands of skilled laborers to construct dams, airports, courthouses, and bridges. It financed the construction of 70 percent of new schools built between 1933 and 1939. School construction continued under the Works Progress (later Projects) Administration (WPA), which was established in 1935 and employed more unskilled laborers. Unlike the PWA, the WPA directly hired its workers rather than funding projects through independent contractors. Because WPA workers provided their labor for real wages, they did not consider themselves the objects of emergency relief as workers in earlier programs had done. WPA laborers, who ranged in occupation from masons to artists, applied their specific talents to civic-oriented projects. The results were facilities carefully and skillfully constructed and steeped in pride. From 1935 to the end of the program in 1943, WPA built or improved more than 5,900 schools across the United States, more than any other type of building the program’s laborers had constructed. Moreover, WPA projects improved school infrastructure in other ways. Artists painted murals for school lobbies, libraries, and auditoriums. Workers also constructed nearly 13,000 playgrounds.<sup>1</sup>

WPA schools tended to be constructed on the same general plan: a central core – containing the lobby, gym-





**Figures 4 and 5.** An 1893 classroom in Fort Collins's Franklin School compared to a 1949-50 classroom in the Dunn School reveals the impact of Progressive pedagogy and minimalist architecture in public education. Note the strictly arranged, anchored desks above and the more fluid arrangement below. (Courtesy, Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library)



nasium, auditorium, and offices – flanked by two-story wings containing classrooms. As well, WPA architects favored traditional school architectural styles, particularly Gothic Revival (known as Collegiate Gothic when applied to schools) and Colonial Revival. WPA art was bold and colorful, generally portraying Americans in heroic and hopeful poses and often reflecting the local history of a particular area. These images were usually captured in a painted mural inside the schoolhouse and terra cotta reliefs on the exterior of the building. WPA chose to construct schools not just because of the demand for them, but because of their role as objects of civic pride. The schoolhouse was “a factor in the education of the community, entirely aside from school work done by teachers inside the building,” wrote J.W. Studebaker and A.W. Merrill in 1934. “Year after year it stands as a silent but eloquent witness for the ideals which found expression in its plan and construction.”<sup>2</sup>

The late 1920s and 1930s also witnessed the beginning of a phenomenon that would dominate school architecture through the rest of the twentieth century into the twenty-first century. For the first time in American history, architects began to abandon historic architectural styles – Gothic Revival, Colonial Revival, and the Romanesque Revival – in favor of truly modern, industrial designs. In cities as in the countryside, districts began to construct schools in the Art Deco and Art Moderne (Streamlined Moderne) styles. These buildings captured the spirit and limitless possibility of the industrial age. Art Deco emerged in the United States after the 1925 *Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes* in Paris. It was characterized by angular, zigzag, and other geomet-

ric ornamentation in low relief on building facades. It was the style of choice for the era's movie palaces and, most notably, skyscrapers, such as the Chrysler and Empire State buildings in Manhattan. Art Moderne was meant to capture on a building's façade the speed and efficiency of the era's streamlined trains, automobiles, and steamships. These buildings usually had smooth wall surfaces with flat roofs. Architectural details were meant to emphasize the horizontal, including ribbon windows and glass blocks wrapping around corners. Other corners were often rounded to provide a sense of streamlining.<sup>3</sup>

These Modern-style schoolhouses were a logical outcome of decades of Progressive reforms, which sought to place a more modern and efficient face on education. Architectural styles based on historical precedents suggested institutions that were antiquated and stuffy. Modern styles, on the other hand, indicated that a facility was cutting edge and better served students in preparing to live in a world dominated by technology. This concept was particularly well received in rural districts, which were often struggling for their own existence against consolidation. A rural district could, through the construction of a new, modern-style building, bolster the argument that their students were receiving the same quality of education as those in the more affluent urban areas. Thus, many newer schools in rural areas tended to stand out against the existing, more traditional architecture. Moreover, Cutler suggests another, more subversive reason for the acceptance of modern architecture for schools: the more schools de-emphasized moral education the more banal school buildings became.<sup>4</sup>

While banality is in the eye of the beholder, schools

constructed after World War II did become increasingly minimalist as more and more districts adopted the International style for new construction. Cyril M. Harris, in his encyclopedia of architecture, writes that the International style is “minimalist in concept, is devoid of regional characteristics, stresses functionalism, and rejects all nonessential decorative elements.” Exterior wall treatments feature “...simple geometric forms, often rectilinear, making use of reinforced-concrete and steel construction with a nonstructural skin; occasionally, cylindrical surfaces; unadorned, smooth wall surfaces, typically of glass, steel, or stucco painted white.”<sup>5</sup> By 1945, districts almost exclusively used Modern architecture styles for their new schoolhouses. Indeed, after World War II, schools became a canvas upon which to paint cutting-edge styles divorced from their surroundings. Each new school expressed the most prominent Modern style at the time of its construction, a trend that continues today.

## The Cold War School

Following the end of World War II, three forces fueled the redesign of old schools and construction of new ones in the United States: the baby boom, mass suburbanization, and the Cold War. Between the beginning of the war in 1941 until 1969, family income in the United States nearly doubled. After a decade and a half of economic depression followed by material shortages, Americans had disposable income and were ready to buy. Economic prosperity provided a sense of security, and Americans went ahead with the marriages and pregnancies they had postponed during the Depression and war. The result was a

spike in birth rates – the Baby Boom. During the 1940s, the American population grew by a rate double that of the mid-1930s, increasing by 19 million people. In the 1950s, the population grew by almost 30 million, a rate approaching that of India.<sup>6</sup> A British observer to the United States noted, “It seems to me that every other young housewife I see is pregnant.”<sup>7</sup> All of these infants would, within 5 years, require schools. Districts across the country scrambled to construct new school buildings – first elementary schools, and as the population matured, middle schools and high schools.

But these schools were not being as widely constructed in city centers as they had been in past. Now they were being built in the suburbs. More than 1.2 million Americans left the cities for suburbs during each year of the 1950s. Between 1950 and 1960, over 13 million new homes were constructed in the United States, and 11 million of them were in the suburbs. After nearly two decades of limited new construction, homebuilders finally had the materials, money, and, most importantly, the market to construct houses on an unprecedented scale. Low interest rates, generous loans to veterans, massive savings, swelling families, and a general sense of euphoria pushed acres of nearly identical tract houses onto farm fields and vacant land farther and farther from city centers. All of these new residential developments required schools.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, after World War II, the policy needs of the federal government, particularly national security, increasingly influenced American schools. The Cold War between the United States and Soviet Union manifested itself in a race to develop ever more destructive weapons and technologically advanced delivery systems. It was a battle of

science and mathematics. In 1950, Congress passed an act creating the National Science Foundation (NSF), one trickle in what would become a deluge of national education legislation. A key component of the program was funding and research to advance science education in public schools. Yet Americans still remained wary of federal aid in education.<sup>9</sup>

Meanwhile, a battle erupted over the course of public education in America – a battle that reflected the larger rift between the political left and right during the 1950s and '60s. Immediately after the war, conservatives began an assault against the nation's public schools. They claimed that Progressive reforms had gone too far, turning schoolhouses into nurseries, teachers into nannies. Conservative academics, such as historian Arthur Bestor, labeled school administrators as “anti-intellectual,” charging them with leading to ruin public schools and, consequently, the nation. They lambasted what they viewed as wishy-washy programs such as the life-directed education movement. Conservatives also played up a near hysterical fear in 1950s American culture: juvenile delinquency. While no statistical growth in teenage criminality or adolescent rebellion occurred at the time, juvenile delinquency became a hot issue for congressional debate, media coverage, and popular culture. Movies such as *The Wild One*, *Rebel Without a Cause*, and *The Blackboard Jungle*, along with the soaring popularity of rock-and-roll, suggested that the sugarcoated façade of consensus culture was crumbling, and conservatives blamed public schools.<sup>10</sup>

Liberals, on the other hand, charged conservatives with trying to maintain and expand a repressive agenda. They accused conservatives of trying to make education a

tool of the expanding corporate state – using schools as a means to cultivate human resources for the benefit of industrial and corporate leaders. This was done, they argued, at the expense of minorities and the poor, who were generally excluded from the vision of public schools conservatives promoted.<sup>11</sup>

Conservatives, however, had a particularly volatile tactic to remove liberal administrators and implement their own policies in public schools – accusing educators of being communists. For example, Willard Goslin, Superintendent of Schools in Pasadena, California, and a powerful leader of the American Association of School Administrators, proposed a tax increase in 1949. Opponents instantly labeled him a communist, and by 1950, he was forced to resign, leaving his career in ruins.<sup>12</sup>

But the lingering debate between liberals and conservatives would never have as profound an effect on education as a single, small sphere of metal and circuitry. On October 4, 1957, the Soviet Union launched the world's first earth-orbiting satellite, *Sputnik I*. The event jolted Americans from their post-war euphoria and sense of security, suggesting that the United States could indeed lose the Cold War. Instantly, many Americans blamed the public school system for this defeat – American children simply were not as well educated as those in the Soviet Union. Yet with the battleground in space, the weapons would become math and science. The launch of *Sputnik* opened the doors for unprecedented federal governance and funding of public education. Even conservatives in the Dwight Eisenhower administration were willing to invade this sanctuary of local control for the sake of national security.<sup>13</sup>

In response to the launch of *Sputnik*, Congress passed the National Defense Education Act, which President Eisenhower signed into law in 1958. The legislation developed a system of nationwide tests of high school students and provided incentives to persuade youths with high ability to pursue scientific or professional studies. Meanwhile, money flowed from the National Science Foundation for the development of curricular materials and to train teachers. Federal intervention in public schools quickly reached every school district across the country. Unfortunately, the government's emphasis on science and mathematics often came at the expense of the arts and humanities, and standardized testing promoted memorization and analysis over creativity. Nonetheless, federal intervention in education did provide much needed funding to poorer districts and had an even more profound effect on American culture. Perhaps most notable was the training of girls in the sciences and mathematics. Policymakers in Washington realized that much of the success in Soviet education was due to its universality. Soviets taught girls and boys the same way, and many of the intellectuals in their space program were women. In the United States, the traditional resistance to training girls in math and science was eliminating half of the population from the potential intellectual power necessary to defeat the Soviets. The education of girls became a matter of national security. As a result, large numbers of women, for the first time, entered the highest ranks of academia and agencies concerned with national defense and intelligence.<sup>14</sup>

Initiated in the John F. Kennedy administration, America's War on Poverty, carried out through President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society policies, used federal

influence in public education to carry out many of its programs. "The federal government's War on Poverty during the 1960s," Spring writes, "was reminiscent of the beliefs of nineteenth-century common school reformers that education could reduce social-class divisions and eliminate poverty."<sup>15</sup> Title II of the 1964 Equal Opportunity Act (the same legislation that created Job Corps) initiated the Head Start Program, the first and most popular of the national community action programs. Head Start was a preschool program intended to supplement the early childhood education of minorities and the impoverished, placing these children on equal footing with more affluent students when they entered school. During the program's first summer, in 1965, 560,000 children attended Head Start.<sup>16</sup>

On April 11, 1965, President Johnson, who had been a public school teacher himself, signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Title I of this legislation was the War on Poverty's major educational component. While the assertiveness of the bill's language would have been unheard of a generation earlier, Cold War federal involvement in public education was, by now, unstoppable: "The Congress hereby declares it to be the policy of the United States to provide financial assistance...to expand and improve...educational programs by various means...which contribute particularly to meeting the special educational needs of educationally deprived children."<sup>17</sup> As conceived by the Johnson Administration, the legislation was meant to use education as a means to end poverty. Proponents pointed out statistical evidence linking higher education to attaining a higher economic status. Commissioner of Education Francis Keppel testified at the opening congressional hearing on the legislation that it

was intended to be a lever to break the cycle of childhood poverty. As Spring notes, “The lever, of course, was education, and the fulcrum was federal financial assistance.”<sup>18</sup>

Federal financial assistance was the thread that ran throughout the legislation. Title II provided money for school libraries, textbooks, and other instructional material. This portion of the legislation was unusual because it extended funds to private schools. Title III financed the establishment of supplementary educational centers to promote local educational innovations. This was meant to stimulate creativity in local districts. Title IV funded education research and development centers. The final component, Title V, provided money to support and improve state departments of education.<sup>19</sup>

Beyond increased federal intervention, the mid 1950s through the 1970s was, in general, a time of expanding educational opportunities. Perhaps the most important development during the period was the end of school segregation. Following the Civil War, a pattern of separate schools for African American children had developed and extended well beyond the South. The Supreme Court approved this practice in 1896 through its decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. While the case related to railroad facilities, the court extended it to all public facilities and services. “Separate” facilities and services for African Americans and for white people in transportation, public welfare, and education were ruled constitutional, provided these public facilities and services were “equal,” notes S. Alexander Rippe. “The ‘separate but equal’ doctrine served as the basis for a race-based, dual school system in the south and *de facto* segregation in the north.”<sup>20</sup>

But cracks began to appear in the “separate but equal”

façade following both World Wars. African American soldiers experienced the rights and privileges people of African descent received in other western countries. When they returned, African American veterans expected the same treatment in their homeland. At the same time, black voters, particularly in the north, steadily increased their presence at polling places, forging a formidable political force. As African Americans sensed their increased political power, coupled with upward economic mobility, they began to demand equality in education.<sup>21</sup>

Leading the fight was a much more liberal United States Supreme Court, which, in a series of cases in the early 1950s, began to erode “separate but equal” policies. The legal end of school segregation came in the court’s landmark decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*. In a rare unanimous decision, the court solidly struck down *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Chief Justice Earl Warren delivered the opinion of the Court:

We conclude that in the field of public education, the doctrine of “separate but equal” has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore, we hold that the plaintiffs and others similarly situated for whom the actions have been brought are, by reasons of the segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment. This disposition makes unnecessary any discussion whether such segregation also violated the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.<sup>22</sup>

Not surprisingly, however, the Court’s decision took decades to implement, particularly in the South. In perhaps

the most famous example of resistance to the *Brown* decision, Governor Orville Faubus of Arkansas called out the National Guard rather than allow nine black teenagers to integrate Central High School in Little Rock. “I will not force my people to integrate against their will,” he fumed. “I believe in the democratic processes and principles of government wherein the people determine the problems on a local level, which is their right.”<sup>23</sup> The governor’s argument, centered on the issues of local governance, harkened back to the Civil War and was at the heart of American school politics. But the doors to federal control of local schools had already been thrown open, and the President had a Supreme Court decision to uphold. Thus, Eisenhower sent the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division to Little Rock, forcing Central High to keep its doors open and allow the nine black students their chance to complete a full day of school. The schoolhouse had once again proven to be the battleground for American social policy. Unfortunately, it was the children themselves caught in the crosshairs. “Their sense was, we are going into an environment where we are not wanted,” said historian James Anderson.

The teachers are going to be hostile. The students think of us as a despised race. We cannot make friends. We will be isolated and discriminated against. And the question for African Americans is, do you want your children to pioneer this process? Do you want your children to pay this price?<sup>24</sup>

In the American West, school segregation issues did not surround African Americans as much as Hispanics. Spring argues that discrimination against Hispanics, partic-

ularly Mexicans, was the result of attitudes about Anglo conquest in the American Southwest and, later, the economic value of Hispanic labor. The United States gained much of its Southwest through war. Spain peacefully ceded a portion of its North American territory to the United States in the Florida Treaty (also known as the Transcontinental or Adams-Onís Treaty) in 1819. But the United States took the remainder of the Southwest from Mexico in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which concluded the Mexican War (1845-48).<sup>25</sup> As a consequence of these treaties and other land purchases in the Southwest, Mexicans quickly became a significant ethnic group in the United States. However, while the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo granted these Mexican settlers American citizenship, it did not protect their property rights. Many found themselves displaced and impoverished by the wave of Anglo settlement in the Southwest.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, beginning in the late nineteenth century, Hispanics became a crucial source of cheap labor for American farmers in the West. As a result, a debate erupted between the farmers and school officers. An educated Hispanic population did not serve the economic interests of farmers, who wanted to maintain a cheap labor force. But educators wanted Hispanic children in public school so they could be Americanized. More often than not, however, farmers won. As one Texas farmer stated, “Educating the Mexicans is educating them away from the job, away from the dirt.”<sup>27</sup> Moreover, the farmer’s creditors often asked school officials to overlook state compulsory education laws when it came to Hispanic children. A school principal in Colorado observed, “never try to enforce compulsory attendance laws on Mexicans. ...The banks and the company will



swear that the labor is needed and that the families need the money.”<sup>28</sup>

Western school districts actively segregated Hispanic students, particularly to control their language and culture in the classroom. Indeed, instruction in Spanish became such a contentious issue that, in 1918, Texas became the first of many states to mandate English-only instruction. In general, however, many Hispanic children were not subjected to these Americanization efforts simply because they were allowed to slip through compulsory education laws.<sup>29</sup>

By the 1920s, however, a significant portion of Hispanics, particularly Mexicans, had managed to rise from field labor to an affluent, middle-class life. They were not about to allow public school officials to perpetuate discrimination against Hispanic children. In 1929, these middle-class Hispanics formed the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC). LULAC required its members to be United States citizens, advocating a policy that respected citizenship while it protected Hispanic culture. LULAC’s vision for America was multilingual and multicultural. The organization’s major goal was ending discrimination, particularly in schools. While LULAC had some early victories, particularly in Puerto Rico, the full breadth of its efforts was not realized until the emergence of the more radical Chicano movement of the 1960s and ’70s. Indeed, bilingual education remains a volatile political issue, particularly in the West, where referendums and propositions involving the subject are regular election-day considerations.<sup>30</sup>

School architecture of the 1960s and ’70s reflected these dramatic social and cultural reforms, liberal experimentation in education, as well as the collapse of 1950s

consensus culture and growing distrust of established institutions. The emerging radicalism of the period suggested a failure of more traditional pedagogy. In the early 1960s, educators attempted to define more clearly the *structure* of knowledge itself. In June 1961, the National Education Association convened a “Seminar on the Disciplines,” which addressed “those fundamental ideas and methods of inquiry from selected fields of study which should be in the mainstream of the instructional program of public schools.”<sup>31</sup> This seminar, coupled with Jerome Bruner’s influential *The Process of Education* (1960), allowed leaders in education to advocate structuring the classroom to stimulate cognitive behavior – intuitive thinking and learning by discovery. They desired to shift the basic educational model from the study of one subject at a time to an interdisciplinary approach. Students should form basic concepts and principles with little or no assistance from the teacher. “The pedagogy, then, seemed clear: instead of studying *about* a field of knowledge, learn instead its structure and its inherent methodology,” writes S. Alexander Rippe. “It was this fundamental approach that intrigued the innovators.”<sup>32</sup>

But leaders in education could not implement this educational philosophy without rather radical changes to the organization of the school itself. For the first time in more than 125 years, public schools began to challenge the idea of age-graded classrooms, returning instead to a much older model. Education reformers wanted “to reorganize American schools vertically into ‘multigraded’ or ‘nongraded’ classes and horizontally into ‘team teaching’ or cooperative instructional arrangements. Educators and psychologists advanced the concept of the “open” or “informal

classroom.” The idea of the nongraded school was to allow individual students to progress at their own pace. Slower students did not feel the pressure to keep up with the rest of their peers while a more academically talented student could advance to more challenging material. Team teaching involved redeploying staff into closer relationships to allow two or more instructors to teach the same group of students. Thus, these reforms were, at the same time, individual and group oriented.<sup>33</sup>

The multi-room school building of the past, with individual classrooms arranged along a central hallway, simply could not accommodate this new pedagogy. As a result, architects and education reformers worked together to design new schools without walls or central hallways. The most popular floor plan was the pod system. It usually consisted of four to five classroom spaces undivided by walls. Each pod contained its own facilities, including restrooms, break areas, and audio-visual equipment. Students generally shared tables rather than sitting at individual desks. These reformers and educators generally sold conservative school boards on the pod system with two arguments. First, many of these schools were designed with channels in the floors and ceilings, along with considerations for electrical, plumbing, and ventilation systems, allowing walls to be installed easily if they were needed. Second, pod-system schools were cheaper to construct, a particularly effective argument at a time when student enrollment and construction costs soared.

In many schools, however, the pod system proved to be an utter failure. The *Washington Post* provides this description of a pod-system school in the Washington, D.C., area:

While [Fran] Laterra is trying to lecture her fourth graders about electromagnetic forces in the corner of an 80-foot-square room called “Pod C” that she shares with four other classes, another teacher leads her 28 students to the computer lab. The problem is that the door to the hallway is near Laterra’s chalkboard. So they march right through Laterra’s room, and the harried-looking teacher desperately tries to bring her students’ eyes back to the board. At the same time, a teacher across the room is struggling to get her students to settle down. Yet another teacher in this open space is lecturing on how to read distances on a map. And right in the middle, a videotape on the life of Martin Luther King Jr. is booming – loud enough that students in other classes are swaying to the soundtrack.<sup>34</sup>

The pod system often forced educators to alter their teaching styles. They avoided hands-on projects, role-playing games, and debate because they feared these activities would escalate the volume in their classes, only contributing further to the cacophony of the pod. From the 1980s to the present, school districts across the country spent millions of dollars on walls and doors to create separate classrooms within the pods. A statement from the history of Wenonah Elementary School, in the Waynesboro, Virginia, School District, provides a glimpse of the dislike for the pod system. “Wenonah was built with the open concept popular at the time, without walls or doors separating the classrooms from the central hallway. Glass walls with doors were installed in 1997, creating the more traditional classrooms that we enjoy today.”<sup>35</sup> Moreover, many educators saw the pod-system as nothing more than 1960s



and '70s radical education reforms adopted too hastily. "It's viewed basically as a mistake," remarked Mike Eckhoff, Assistant Director of Design and Construction Services for Fairfax County, Virginia, Schools. "We should look at all [new ideas] closely and not just jump on the bandwagon because it's the 'in' thing. That's something we learned from this."<sup>36</sup>

The failure of the pod system, however, was not entirely a circumstance of inherently poor design. While many districts were happy to construct these schools based on their reduced price tags, few were willing to implement the often controversial organizational and curricular changes necessary to make the new educational spaces work effectively. In other words, school districts were trying to make a more traditional educational philosophy work in a space designed for an entirely different system of education. Indeed, in the small minority of schools that introduced the organizational and curricular changes envisioned by these architects and education reformers, the pod system worked remarkably well. Thus, pedagogy and school architecture had become profoundly connected.<sup>37</sup>

The architectural style of schools built during the 1960s and '70s became increasingly banal as architects placed more importance on the function of the interior rather than the decoration of the exterior. Schools of the period tended to be simplified interpretations of Modern styles, particularly Brutalism. Primarily constructed of reinforced concrete, buildings constructed in this style consist of heavy, monumental, geometrical forms, which, when taken together, suggested a massive sculpture. The concrete was either chiseled into a rough surface, or, more often, left with the heavy imprint of wooden forms, a

process called *béton brut*. When artistically executed, Brutalist buildings were impressive in their sheer mass and ever-changing profiles. But the style was often applied to school buildings with little consideration of its sculptural qualities. Moreover, the energy crisis of the 1970s led many architects and school districts to install smaller and smaller windows until school facades contained only small, glazed slits or no windows at all. The results were school buildings that resembled shopping plazas rather than schools, or worse: some of the schoolhouses appeared to many to be fortresses of repression rather than cathedrals of learning. School architectural critic John Goodlad, in 1969, noted that modern schools gave the impression of a society indifferent to education; they were places "less suited to human habitation than its prisons."<sup>38</sup>

As school architecture became more simplistic on the outside and less traditional on the inside, federal involvement in public education continued to increase, particularly through the Jimmy Carter administration. These efforts culminated in the United States Department of Education, which Congress statutorily created in October 1979 and officially authorized on May 4, 1980. The first component of the department's mission statement revealed its liberal roots: "Strengthen the Federal commitment to assuring access to equal educational opportunity for every individual." But much of the rest of department's mission would assist the conservative administrations that would dominate the 1980s:

- Supplement and complement the efforts of states, the local school systems and other instrumentalities of the states, the private sec-

tor, public and private nonprofit educational research institutions, community-based organizations, parents, and students to improve the quality of education;

- Encourage the increased involvement of the public, parents, and students in Federal education programs;
- Promote improvements in the quality and usefulness of education through Federally supported research, evaluation, and sharing of information;
- Improve the coordination of Federal education programs;
- Improve the management of Federal education activities; and
- Increase the accountability of Federal education programs to the President, the Congress, and the public.”<sup>39</sup>

With the election of Ronald Reagan to the presidency in November 1980, a popular backlash ensued against liberal components of education, against federal intervention, and, indirectly, against banal schoolhouse architecture. Reagan designed his public education platform to appeal to conservative voters. Yet it raised many of the issues still controversial in American public education policy: prayer in schools, educational choice, and restoration of morals education in the classroom. In 1983, the Reagan administration issued *A Nation at Risk*, a report blaming public schools for America’s difficulties in competing in world markets with Japan and West Germany. But unlike early reports with similar, grim findings, *A Nation at Risk* was not intended as a prelude to further federal funding and regulation. Indeed, Reagan wanted to abolish the Department of Education. Instead, *A Nation at Risk* urged

states and local communities to increase academic standards, reform curricula, hire more qualified teachers, and institute testing to hold administrators, teachers, and students accountable for their performances in the classroom.<sup>40</sup>

In general, *A Nation at Risk* and the corresponding educational policies of the Reagan, George H.W. Bush, and (to a more limited extent) Clinton administrations opened the floodgates to a deluge of public school criticism and a resulting backlash against the pedagogy of the 1960s and ’70s. At the same time, however, a similar backlash was occurring in architecture. A new generation of architects began to criticize the lack of inspiration in Modern-style buildings, particularly International-style structures. The older, Modern architects emphasized function over form and praised austere, minimalist designs. Postmodern architects, however, embraced a new freedom of design, mixing contemporary forms with historical allusions. They not only flagrantly used decorative features, but also overemphasized them, such as the gigantic broken pediment capping Philip Johnson’s AT&T Building (Manhattan, 1984). Post-modern architects adopted bright colors and admonished the rectilinear, installing whimsical, curvilinear features. In the case of the new Denver Public Library (1995), architect Michael Graves combined historical and structural features with multi-colored geometrical shapes into a single, massive building.<sup>41</sup>

With the expansion of the Postmodern-styled schoolhouse, the story of American school architecture came full circle. Postmodern architects revived the old idea that the architecture of the school contributed to the dispersal of knowledge within its walls – that schools were indeed

cathedrals of culture. Moreover, the Postmodern school allowed educators and policy makers to visually distance themselves from the beleaguered schoolhouses and educational philosophy of the 1960s and '70s. Indeed, a frequent modification to older, Modern-style schoolhouses is the addition of a Postmodern element, often an entryway, meant to evoke the sense of awe and intellectual awakening once so fundamental to American school architecture.

## Notes

1. Lichtenstein, *et al.*, 368, 393, 397, 402, 426.
2. J.W. Studebaker and A.W. Merrill; quoted in Cutler, 20, n. 40.
3. Harris, 14.
4. Cutler, 15-16.
5. Harris, 182.
6. William H. Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 123.
7. Quoted in Lichtenstein *et al.*, 572.
8. Chafe, 117.
9. Spring, 362.
10. *Ibid.*, 358-59, 366-67; Lichtenstein, *et al.*, 599-601.
11. Spring, 359.
12. *Ibid.*, 358, 365.
13. Lichtenstein, *et al.*, 569; Spring, 369
14. Spring, 369, 371.
15. *Ibid.*, 371.
16. *Ibid.*, 374.
17. "Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965, Public Law 89-10," reprinted in Stephen Bailey and Edith Mosher, *ESEA: The Office of Education Administers a Law* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1968), 235-266; quoted in Spring, 274, n. 24.
18. Spring, 374-5.
19. *Ibid.*, 375.
20. S. Alexander Rippa, *Education in a Free Society: An American History*, 8th ed. (New York: Longman, 1997), 227.
21. *Ibid.*, 227-28.
22. Earl Warren, opinion of the Supreme Court of the United States, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, 1954; in *The School in the United States: A Documentary History*, ed. James W. Fraser (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2001), 268.
23. Orville Faubus; quoted in Severita Lara, "'Why Don't You Go to School with Us,'" in Mondale and Patton, 142.
24. James Anderson; quoted in Lara, in Mondale and Patton, 143-44.
25. Arthur L. Campa, "Early Spanish Contacts with Colorado," in *The Hispanic Contribution to the State of Colorado*, ed. José de Onís (Boulder: Westview Press, 1976), 10-11.
26. Thernstrom, 495-6.
27. Spring, 201.
28. Gilbert Gonzalez, *Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation* (Philadelphia: Balch Institute Press, 1990), 108; quoted in Spring, 202, n. 34.
29. Spring, 203.
30. *Ibid.*, 205, 211.
31. *The Schools Look at the Schools: A Report of the Disciplines Seminar* (Working Paper prepared for the Project on the Instructional Program of the Public Schools; Washington, D.C.: National Education Association,

- February 1962), 1-2; in Rippa, 267, n. 32.
32. Rippa, 267-8.
  33. *Ibid*, 268-9; Spring 427.
  34. Eric L. Wee, "Washington, D.C.'s, Open Classrooms are Noisy Failures," *The Washington Post*, 25 January 1998, p. B1; quoted in "Noise News for Week of January 25, 1998"; available from <http://www.nonoise.org/news/1998/jan25.htm>; Internet; accessed 16 December 2003.
  35. "Wenonah History"; available from <http://www.waynesboro.k12.va.us/wboro/Wen/Docs/history.html>; Internet; Accessed 16 December 2003.
  36. Wee.
  37. Spring, 428.
  38. Harris, 40; John I. Goodlad, "The Schools vs. Education," *Saturday Review*, 19 April 1969, p. 60; quoted in Cutler, 38.
  39. United States Department of Education, "Mission"; available from <http://www.ed.gov/about/overview/mission/mission.html?src=sm> ; Internet; accessed 11 December 2003.
  40. Spring, 430-31.
  41. Harris, 257.

## **Section II**

---

The Development of Poudre School District R-1



# Chapter 4

---

## Education in Early Colorado and Larimer County

In Colorado, as in most of the West, schools were believed to be the best evidence that the untamed wilderness had become civilized society – that the frontier had indeed been settled. At the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, the Colorado exhibit boasted photographs of 20 new school buildings in the newly admitted state. Article IX of the recently adopted state constitution spelled out, in 16 sections, very specific rules for the governance and proliferation of education across Colorado. Schools were a hallmark that a fledgling community on the frontier was succeeding. Indeed, in the months following the initial Colorado gold rush in 1859, when families began joining men in the mining camps, schools had already started to open. The first of these was the Union Day School, established in Denver by “Professor” Owen J. Goldrick in October 1859. An Irish immigrant, Goldrick was reputed to have studied at both the University of Dublin and Columbia College in New York City. He worked for a publisher in Cincinnati before coming west driving a team of oxen. Contemporaries remembered his flamboyant entrance into town: a well-dressed bullwhacker scolding his oxen in Latin. Goldrick charged \$3 a month per pupil, and, on his first day, had 13 students in his classroom, “2 Indians, 2 Mexicans, and the rest white and from Missouri.”<sup>1</sup>

Many of the schools that immediately followed Goldrick’s lead were either privately owned or operated

through the Catholic or Episcopal churches. But by 1860, public-financed schools were becoming more common, with classrooms at Mount Vernon and Golden. Boulder constructed a new building for its first school, making the building Colorado’s first schoolhouse. Town boosters across the Colorado Territory quickly realized the marketing potential of a schoolhouse in their particular area. “Since the mere mention of schools was likely to dispel doubts about life in the wilderness West in the minds of potential immigrants,” write Carl Ubbelohde, Maxine Benson, and Duane A. Smith in *A Colorado History*, “town promoters saw the excellent advertising potential of such institutions.”<sup>2</sup>

The statutory organization of public schools in Colorado actually extended back to the 1850s. From 1850 to 1854, the area that would become Colorado was actually divided into three parts: the Utah Territory in the west, the New Mexico territory to the south, and an unorganized portion of the original Louisiana Purchase east of the mountains and north of the Arkansas River, including present-day Larimer County. After 1854, four territorial governments controlled what would become Colorado: Utah, New Mexico, Kansas, and Nebraska. Even with this hodgepodge of governance, residents in Colorado managed to cobble together a rudimentary system of public education, which, by 1858, included a territorial superintendent of public instruction and a system of county-

administered districts. Colorado became its own territory with the Enabling Act of February 28, 1861. This legislation, which also served as the territorial constitution, made little mention of schools. Indeed, schools are only addressed in Section 14, which merely reiterates the federal government's practice of reserving sections 16 and 36 of each township for the benefit of constructing and maintaining future public schools. Yet by this time, the county-centered system of public school supervision, with control of each district vested in a popularly elected school board, was firmly entrenched. The 1876 Colorado Constitution merely codified the existing system.<sup>3</sup>

The Colorado Constitution also organized the supervision of another point of pride in the state's educational system – institutions of higher learning. In May 1863, Denver Seminary (later the Colorado Seminary and, in 1880, the University of Denver) was established. The territorial government opened the Colorado School of Mines in Golden in 1874. In 1877, the University of Colorado in Boulder offered its first classes. The Colorado Agricultural and Mechanical Arts College (now Colorado State University) started classes in Fort Collins in 1879. In 1890, the Colorado State Normal School (now the University of Northern Colorado) opened in Greeley. Thus, in less than 25 years after becoming a state, Colorado already boasted five major institutions of higher education.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps the most important of these institutions, as far as a supply of qualified public school teachers is concerned, was the Colorado State Normal School. Before 1890, Colorado had no training school for teachers. Thus, most instructors came from surrounding states such as Nebraska and Kansas. In 1888, the superintendent of

Greeley schools, A.B. Copeland, proposed to Albert E. Gipson, president of the school board, establishing a state training school for teachers. Copeland and Gipson worked with Senator James W. McCreery and other political leaders in drafting a bill creating a normal school in Greeley. After intense political wrangling, the bill finally reached Governor Alva Adams, who signed it on April 1, 1889. Classes commenced in October 1890 with 76 students.<sup>5</sup>

Because students attending an American normal school before 1900 came directly from elementary school, usually upon completing the eighth grade, the curriculum at the State Normal School provided a review of basic subjects like English, history, math, and geography that graduates needed to know in order to teach at the elementary level. Tuition was free to students who agreed to pursue careers in Colorado's public schools after receiving their teaching certificates or degrees.

Under the leadership of the school's second president, Zachariah Xenophon Snyder, the school's curriculum diversified well beyond the subjects taught at a typical normal school. In 1897, Snyder's reforms allowed the school to rise to the status of a two-year junior college. The president also enacted tougher admission requirements, making the school the first of its kind to require a high school diploma for admittance. While the institution's primary purpose was to train teachers for Colorado's innumerable rural schools, the curriculum continued to diversify and broaden. As the school awarded its first Bachelor of Arts degree in 1911, the name changed to the State Teachers College of Colorado. The college added a graduate program in 1913 and a Conservatory of Music in 1917. In 1935, the institution's name was again changed to the



Colorado State College of Education. By the 1970s, the college was a fully accredited university, at which time it became the University of Northern Colorado.<sup>6</sup>

## Education in Early Larimer County

The early history of education in Larimer County and the roots of Poudre School District begin with the settlement and founding of the county and of Fort Collins. The first Anglo settlers in the Fort Collins area arrived here around 1858. Most farmed and raised livestock to trade with passing prospecting expeditions. Others in the area served as guides for gold seekers. These early settlers organized the Colona town site on the Cache la Poudre River, near the location where that stream gouged a canyon through the foothills. They later reorganized the settlement as Laporte, which would become the seat of a new county. On November 1, 1861, the Colorado Territorial Legislature created Larimer County. It was named in honor of General William Larimer, a founder of Denver and an early political leader in the territory. In 1864, the federal government established an army post near Laporte to protect settlers on the northern plains, passing prospectors, and travelers on Overland stagecoaches. Named Camp Collins, the post was manned by the 11<sup>th</sup> Volunteer Ohio Cavalry, under the command of Colonel W.L. Williams. After a devastating flood on the Poudre, military officials moved the camp downstream and reorganized it as Fort Collins. The post quickly became the hub of a small agricultural settlement. The land remained under military control even after the army abandoned the fort in 1866. In 1867, Jack Dow and Normal Meldrum surveyed and platted a small town site at

the location of the fort. The triangle of streets was laid out parallel to the river at an angle to the military compound. In 1868, voters in Larimer County approved Fort Collins as the Larimer County seat. More settlers arrived here in 1870, when the military officially opened the land to homesteading. At the same time, R.A. Cameron developed plans for an agricultural colony at Fort Collins. Cameron was a founder of the Union Colony, which became Greeley. Cameron's Larimer County Land Improvement Company claimed property adjacent to the Dow-Meldrum town site. Cameron hired Franklin C. Avery to survey and plat the new community. Avery established a north-south grid of streets and blocks on the southern edge of the original settlement. Almost immediately, the town of Fort Collins and Larimer County prospered.<sup>7</sup>

The first school in Larimer County, as in Denver, was a private endeavor. According to Ansel Watrous in his 1911 *History of Larimer County, Colorado*, Albina L. Washburn, wife of Judge John E. Washburn, opened a school in a log cabin at St. Louis, what is now Loveland, in 1864. She received \$10 a month to instruct 10 students. The school opened around January 1 and lasted three months. Another private school opened in Laporte in 1865. While records are unclear, the St. Louis School appears to have become the first public school in the county, with Miss Sarah Milner (later Sarah Milner Smith) as the first teacher. Watrous asserts that the first official public school district formed in Larimer County was located at Namaqua, just east of present-day Loveland, in the Big Thompson Valley. Its first schoolhouse was a "rude cabin," opened in 1868. It was officially organized as District 1 on October 1, 1868. However, District 2 (St. Louis) and District 3

### Larimer County Superintendents of Schools

H.P. Chubbuck	1864-1868
James Smith	1868-1870
James Galloway	1871-1873
Clark Boughton	1873-1874
R.W. Bosworth	1874-1875
E.N. Garbutt	1875-1879
W.B. Sutherland	1880-?
George Thompson	?-ca. 1883
W.H. McCreery	1883-1888
S.T. Hamilton	1888-1896
Henrietta Wison	1896-1900
Mary Gill	1900-1906
Pearl Moore	1906-1912
Emma T. Wilkins	1913-1923
Alice Cook Fuller	1921-1931
Una S. Williams	1931-1935
Florence Irwin	1935-1945
Anna Belle Fagan	1945-1949
Frank L. Irwin	1949-1959
Margaret B. Miller	1959-1962
B.F. (Ford) Kitchen	1962-1967

(Hillsborough, now Kelim) were organized on the same date. According to B.F. (Ford) Kitchen, the county's last superintendent of schools, the number of a district does not necessarily connote an order by date of founding but, rather, indicates the sequence in which the county superintendent officially entered a district boundary description in his or her records. Moreover, it appears that some districts were organized informally before the county recognized them.<sup>8</sup>

In 1868, the total student population in the three districts numbered 95. However, some of these early districts were enormous, containing hundreds of square miles. The western boundary of District 1 originally extended to the continental divide, at some places 100 miles away from the schoolhouse. Despite these distances, the student population grew quickly during the first three years of public education in Larimer County. The population increased from 159 in 1869 to 203 in 1870. The expenses of all county schools rose from \$1,200 in 1868 to \$2,147 in 1870. Also in 1869-70, the county added three districts: District 4 (Laporte), District 5 (Fort Collins), and District 6 (Sherwood, now Timnath).<sup>9</sup>

Administering the county's school districts was the Larimer County Superintendent of Schools, a position created through the various territorial governments and codified in the 1876 Colorado Constitution. Larimer County's first superintendent of schools, apparently elected as early as 1864 and certainly by 1866, was H.P. Chubbuck, who also served as sheriff.\* The duties of the county superintendent were amazingly numerous and varied. In the century preceding district reorganization in Larimer County, locally elected school boards governed each district. But

the administration was left to the county superintendent. While some of the more populated districts, particularly District 5 (Fort Collins), employed their own superintendents as an intermediate step between the county superintendent and the schools, in most cases the county superintendent managed the districts. This included setting curricula for primary schools, creating budgets, and acting as a purchasing agent. The county superintendent, at least in the early decades, also had to certify teachers. To teach in a Larimer County school, prospective instructors were not required to have any formal training. Instead, they had to take an examination that longtime rural schoolteacher Olive Widman called "not a very hard one."<sup>10</sup> County law also required the superintendent to visit every school each quarter. Before Jackson County was carved from Larimer County in 1909, some school districts stretched to the Park Range, at points 125 miles away from courthouse in Fort Collins. By the roads of this era, the mileage was easily double that. Moreover, the county eventually formed 65 districts. While not all of these existed at the same time, the sheer number of districts, combined with the massive amount of territory they contained, suggests that much of the superintendent's time was spent traveling.<sup>11</sup>

Interestingly, while men largely controlled the local school districts, women played an integral role in the administration of schools at the county level. Indeed, almost half of the individuals who served as the Larimer County Superintendent of Schools were women. The first woman to hold the position was Henrietta Wison, who served from 1896 until 1900. Mary Gill followed her in 1900 and served until 1906. One of the most influential women to hold the position was Pearl Moore. Born on a

\* The Watrous history names Chubbuck as the county's first superintendent of schools in 1864, but no other secondary sources corroborate this assertion. However, while newer histories, including Kitchen, doubt the Watrous claim, an H.B. Chubbuck did indeed sign an oath of office for county superintendent of schools on August 19, 1866. This oath is in the collection of the Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library. It accompanies an identical oath, also signed by Chubbuck, for the office of sheriff. Thus, Chubbuck was mostly likely the county's first superintendent of schools.

farm near Fort Collins in 1879, Moore originally attended the Plummer School (District 26). At the age of 12, her family moved into town, allowing Moore to attend District 5 schools, including Fort Collins High School. She then enrolled at the University of Denver and the Colorado State Normal School. Moore served three, two-year terms as county superintendent, administering 55 schools, all of which she was required to visit at least once a quarter.

After her terms as county superintendent, Moore continued to teach in District 5 schools. In 1936, she was described as “one of the best in her profession. She is conscientious, painstaking and thorough...always interested in the betterment of the people and the world in general.” Moore’s sister, Jessie Moore, was also a longtime District 5 teacher; Moore Elementary School is named in her honor.<sup>12</sup>

## Notes

1. Carl Abbott, Stephen J. Leonard, and David McComb, *Colorado: A History of the Centennial State*, 3d ed. (Niwot, Colo.: University Press of Colorado, 1994), 130; Carl Ubbelohde, Maxine Benson, and Duane A. Smith, *A Colorado History*, 8th ed. (Boulder, Colo.: Pruett Publishing Co., 2001), 82.
2. *Ibid.*, 82-3.
3. *An Act to provide a temporary Government for the Territory of Colorado* 59, 36th Cong., 2nd sess., (28 February 1861); Ubbelohde, *et al.*, 50-51; Colorado State Department of Education, “Brief History of the State Department of Education in Colorado,” available from <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeedserv/historycde.htm>; Internet; accessed 9 January 2004.
4. Ubbelohde, *et al.*, 83; Abbott, *et al.*, 130.
5. Timothy Smith, historical context in *Suburban Development: Greeley’s Arlington Neighborhood*, Adam Thomas (Broomfield: SWCA Environmental Consultants, 2004), 12-13.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Barbara Allbrandt Fleming, *Fort Collins: A Pictorial History* (Fort Collins: Fort Collins Jaycees, 1985), 21-23, 31; Fort Collins Chamber of Commerce, *Fort Collins, Colorado* (Fort Collins, by the author, circa 1915); Andrew J. Morris, ed., *The History of Larimer County, Colorado* (Dallas: Curtis Media Corp., 1985), 36, 38; Guy Peterson, *Fort Collins: The Post, the Town* (Old Army Press, 1972), 13, 41, 55.
8. Ansel Watrous, *History of Larimer County, Colorado* (Fort Collins: Courier Printing and Publishing, Co., 1911), 128-29; Kitchen, 2-3; Wayne Sundberg, “Early History of Fort Collins Schools: The First Twenty-Five Years,” 5 December 1970, TMs (photocopy), p. 2.
9. Watrous, 128-31; Josephine Payson Clements, “Old School Districts,” in *The History of Larimer County, Colorado*, vol. II, ed. Andrew Morris (Dallas: Curtis Media Corp., 1987), 442; B. Ford Kitchen, “The Superintendency in Larimer County Schools,” 1967 TMs (original), Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library.
10. Barbara Allbrandt, “Olive Widman remembers teaching for \$40 a month,” *Fort Collins Coloradoan*, 17 March 1974, p. 11.
11. Kitchen, 3-6; Charlene Tresner, “Early superintendent ‘best in her profession,’” *Fort Collins Review*, 1 April 1981, p. 4.
12. Tresner, “Early superintendent,” pp. 4-5.

# Chapter 5

## History and Architecture of District 5 (Fort Collins)



**Figure 6.** This simple building, located at 115 Riverside Drive in Fort Collins, was the first schoolhouse constructed for District 5. It was known as the “yellow schoolhouse.” (Photo by the author)

In June 1866, Elizabeth Keays arrived in Fort Collins to stay with her aunt and uncle, Lewis and Elizabeth Stone, pioneers who provided lodging and a mess hall in a log house adjacent to the military compound at Fort Collins. Homesick soldiers at the fort referred to Mrs. Stone as “Auntie.” A widowed mother, Keays began teaching her son, Wilbur P. (also recorded as William) and another boy, Harry Cooper, in an upstairs bedroom. She had no formal training as a teacher. Nonetheless, soon neighbors asked Keays to teach their children as well. Enrollment in the fledgling school continued to increase. In June, Keays moved her school to an abandoned commissary at the fort. Thus, through the summer of 1866, Keays operated the first school in Fort Collins.<sup>1</sup>

Mrs. Keays’s school must have set a good example because, by fall, the area around the fort had organized its own informal public school district, with N.P. Cooper as president, W.D. Hayes as secretary, and Captain Asaph Allen as treasurer. Not surprisingly, they hired Keays as the district’s first and, at that time, only teacher, paying her \$50 a month. She taught only one semester. As was the era’s protocol, Keays resigned when she married Harris Stratton. Miss Geneve Cooper succeeded her. Larimer County formally organized District 5 on December 28, 1870.<sup>2</sup>

Through a campaign led by Judge Alfred F. Howes in 1870-71, citizens of Fort Collins donated a total of \$1,100

for the construction of a new schoolhouse. Donations were necessary because there was so little taxable property in the district; the school tax in District 5 grossed \$165.25 in 1870. The new schoolhouse, constructed by Henry C. Peterson, was a simple, front-gabled, wood-framed building located at what is now 115 Riverside Drive. The schoolhouse opened for classes in September 1871, and Miss Maggie Meldrum was the first teacher. Referred to as the “yellow schoolhouse,” it was District 5’s principal facility until the completion of the front half of the Remington Street School in 1879. Apparently during the 1870s and even after the opening of the Remington Street School, the district also rented a storefront at 201 Pine Street, at the corner of Jefferson and Pine, for an additional classroom. The school district sold the old yellow schoolhouse in 1879 to Frank Michaud. It was converted into a church and used by Fort Collins’s Catholic congregation until the completion of St. Joseph’s Church in 1900-01. It later became a private residence and continues to stand today.<sup>3</sup>

Despite humble beginnings, District 5 would become one of the most progressive school districts in Colorado and the United States. Big ideas came early. In 1874, when school operating funds amounted to \$102.64 and the population of Fort Collins was about 400 people, townsfolk were already considering a larger, more ornate schoolhouse. In March, Larimer County Superintendent of Schools Clark Boughton, who also happened to be the



publisher of the *Fort Collins Standard*, remarked in his newspaper, “Shall we have a \$20,000 school house? [sic] has been the principal subject of discussion the past few days.” While such a building would saddle the district with debt for two decades, Boughton indicated that the plan still had its proponents. Boughton’s vision may have succeeded if he had not died that year, at the age of 23.<sup>4</sup>

The need to replace the original yellow schoolhouse indicated the rate at which the student population was increasing in District 5. With cramped classrooms spread in two different buildings, the school board decided to ask voters in the district to approve the sale of bonds for the construction of a new schoolhouse. On July 2, 1878, voters approved 31 to 14 issuing \$7,500 in bonds to purchase land for the new building. Three architects submitted plans to the board: R.W. Jordan of Cheyenne, Richard Burke of Fort Collins, and a firm from Boulder. The board selected Jordan because it was impressed with the proposed building’s “...strength, durability, light, ventilation, and manner of heating rooms.”<sup>5</sup> Heating and ventilation, in particular, appear to have been ongoing concerns for educators and administrators. An 1890 book of regulations for Fort Collins public schools provides this directive to teachers:

VENTILATION.

SECTION. 16. Teachers are required, for the preservation of their own and pupil’s health, to give particular attention to the ventilation and warming of their room, and on no account to suffer children to sit in draughts of cold air; and, as a rule, to cause all of the windows to be opened at recess for the emission of foul and free admission of pure air; and at no time to raise the

temperature of the room higher than 70 degrees, nor allow it to sink lower than 65 degrees, Fahrenheit.<sup>6</sup>

By July 20, 1878, the board had selected a site on the southeast corner of Remington and Olive streets. Bids from contractors trickled in through the rest of the summer, but by September, the board had completed the sale of an additional \$12,000 in bonds for the construction and furnishing of the school. On September 15, the board selected contractors Joseph Coyte, Jr., and J.F. Colpitt for their low bid of \$6,954. They broke ground on the project two days later. The building was completed and accepted by the board at the end of February 1879. The grounds around the school included boys’ and girls’ playgrounds, separated by a “tight board fence,” and, of course, privies, constructed for \$119 a piece. And District 5 completed the schoolhouse not a moment too soon: by 1879, the population in Fort Collins had climbed to over 1,000 people. Three years later, it would double.<sup>7</sup>

Compared to the yellow schoolhouse, the 1879 Remington Street School, located at 318 Remington Street, marked a bold step forward in District 5’s schoolhouse architecture. The building was constructed of brick trimmed in “Collins” granite and “Boulder” sandstone. It was essentially a two-story building with a wide central hallway (with 12-foot ceilings) and two classrooms on each side per floor, for a total of four classrooms. In essence, the Remington Street School was a miniature of Boston’s Quincy School plan. Moreover, Fort Collins’s new school was technologically advanced, with gaslights and a Boyington furnace for central heating. Stylistically, the

**Figure 7.** The Remington Street School marked a huge step in the architectural and curricular maturation of District 5 (Fort Collins). (Courtesy, Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library)



building was Italianate, with a low-pitched, hipped roof; quoins; hooded windows; and a broad cornice with paired brackets. Most notable was the hipped-roof central tower, which housed the obligatory school bell. As an Italianate-style building, the Remington Street School corresponded directly to the plans and styles promoted by Catherine Beecher and other education reformers in the mid to late nineteenth century. Moreover, the size and style of the school reflected other major public buildings in Colorado, including Larimer County Courthouse. Thus, the Remington Street School would have suggested the prominence and permanence of public education in Fort Collins, ultimately reflecting upon the sophistication of the town itself. The schoolhouse was overtly intended to be a place of enlightenment; the Latin motto *Fiat Lux*, curved into the arch above the main doorway, essentially meant “becoming light.” This building was razed in 1967-68 for an urban renewal program resulting in the construction of the DMS Senior Housing Apartments.<sup>8</sup>

District 5, with Fort Collins itself, matured considerably through the late 1870s and 1880s. The district began with a single teacher in 1866 and continued to employ only one teacher, Maggie Meldrum, when it opened the yellow schoolhouse in 1871. She was the sister of Colorado Lieutenant Governor Norman H. Meldrum. In 1872, Alice M. Watrous replaced Miss Meldrum. Succeeding her were two teachers, “Professor” J. W. Barnes and his wife. They continued to teach at the yellow schoolhouse until the end of the 1877-78 school year. Replacing them as the new Remington Street School opened were three teachers, who each taught a different “department;” first through third grades were the primary department, fourth and fifth were

the intermediate department, and sixth through eighth were the grammar department. By 1886, the number of teachers at the Remington School and the district’s rented facility increased to 11: W.W. Remington (principal/superintendent), L. Eva Spencer, William Eisenmann, Lizzie Mellinger, Florence Whitely, Lillian Kingsbury, Nellie DeLaney, M.E. Birse, Mary Gill, Alice Mitchell, and G. Thomas.<sup>9</sup>

And like many school districts in the West, District 5 initially struggled to retain qualified teachers. Thus, the board established a pay scale that rewarded instructors for remaining in the district’s schools. In the early 1880s, the district paid a teacher \$60 a month for the first term, rising to \$65 if the instructor decided to remain at her post. Experienced teachers could receive \$70 to \$75 a month.<sup>10</sup>

As mentioned in the first section of this context, another practice for retaining teachers was to hire only single women. They could be paid less, were not expected to advance to higher positions as men were, and did not have the married woman’s conflicts of husband and home. District 5, as most of the districts in Larimer County, was no exception in its hiring practices. Indeed, by 1889 this hiring policy was codified in District 5 with the passage of a resolution that dictated, “no married women be employed as teachers.” Moreover, the district maintained the gender roles that had defined the professionalization of education. Men dominated the school board and closely dictated and administered policy. The female teachers had little say in the decisions that directly affected their classrooms. When one District 5 teacher, L. Eva Spencer, did try to speak out, the board condemned her actions as inappropriate, reprimanding her by considering her future

employment conditional. The board directed that “she would be expected to confine her work to matters connected with her grade and not to assume to interfere with the business of the board.”<sup>11</sup>

Despite the appearance of a male-dominated, pedagogical harem, women must have been wielding some power over the school board itself. The contentious election of May 5, 1879, replaced every person on the three-member board. Judge Jay H. Boughton, brother of Clark Boughton, became president, Franklin C. Avery became secretary, and F.N.B. Scott became treasurer. While women in Colorado did not receive the right to vote until 1893, they appear to have played a part in this election. The *Fort Collins Courier* noted, “a large number of ladies graced...the occasion by their presence and participated in the election of officers.”<sup>12</sup>

As with allowing women to participate in board elections, District 5 also continued to be extremely progressive in its curricula and programs. In 1880, Jay Boughton introduced the idea of a kindergarten, which the district formally opened that year. It was the first of its kind west of St. Louis, which was home to the nation’s first kindergarten, opened in 1873. The program was so successful in Fort Collins that, in 1893, the Colorado legislature made kindergarten a regular component of the public school system in the state.<sup>13</sup>

But even the best efforts of men and women in the school district could not keep pace with swelling enrollment. District 5 was booming; from 1880 to 1890, the assessed tax valuation of the district nearly doubled, from \$566,189 to \$1,045,440. Less than eight years after the completion of the Remington Street School, the burgeon-

ing student population of District 5 forced the school board to consider constructing another schoolhouse. In October 1878, when the Remington Street School was under construction, the student population of District 5 was 134. By May of the next year it was 234. Classrooms quickly became cramped and unmanageable. Assuming



**Figure 8.** The Benjamin Franklin School, circa 1890, continued District 5’s trend toward larger and more sophisticated schoolhouses. (Courtesy, Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library)

that this population was evenly divided among the four classrooms in the Remington Street School, the class size would have averaged 58.5 students per room as early as 1879. By 1886, the district rented rooms above the Jefferson Block. Situated on the southwest corner of Howes Street and Mountain Avenue, the new Benjamin Franklin School was expected to solve the overcrowding problem. It was constructed by Joseph Coyte, Jr., a



Cheyenne contractor who was also involved in the building of the Remington Street School. In the summer of 1886, the school board requested, on two different occasions, bids for the new building. Both times the board rejected all of the bids submitted because it considered them too high. The board formed a special committee, consisting of Franklin C. Avery, Ansel Watrous, and D.M. Harris, to study the plans and consider alternatives. Of particular interest to the board was reducing the thickness of the first story walls. Ultimately, and fortunately, the committee rejected any changes to the wall width. On August 18, the board accepted a bid of \$19,500 from the E.M. Halleck Lumber and Manufacturing Company of Denver. Franklin School was completed in time for the 1887-88 school year and housed the third through eighth grades; first and second remained at the Remington Street School.<sup>14</sup>

Architecturally, the Franklin School continued the trend of even larger and more sophisticated facilities that began with the Remington Street School. The new schoolhouse was a large, square-plan, two-story building, again based on the Quincy School in Boston. The Franklin School lacked the frilly ornamentation of the Remington Street School but communicated much more a sense of massiveness. Instead of carved and contrasting stonework, the Franklin School's exterior walls exhibited elaborate brick corbelling and belt courses. Most notable were the huge hearths and chimneys that protruded from the building. Stylistically, the new school was an impressive interpretation of the Italianate with suggestions of the much heavier Romanesque Revival. It featured symmetrical façades, elaborate pediments, heavy dentil molding, and a broad frieze, complete with bas-relief swags. The school

boasted electric lighting and other modern conveniences. Even though Fort Collins was maturing quickly into one of Colorado's major cities, the Franklin School would still have been an extremely impressive building and an object of civic pride, much as the Remington Street School had been a decade earlier. The school remained active until the completion of the A.H. Dunn Elementary School in 1949-50. The Franklin School was demolished in 1959 to clear the parcel for a Steele's Supermarket.

The completion of the Franklin School in 1887 also marked a new epoch in the professionalization of District 5's administration. Initially, the district's principal was the teacher-in-charge. But as District 5 grew, the principal became more of an administrator. As the number of students and facilities increased, the principal had to also handle the tasks of a superintendent. During the mid 1880s, W.W. Remington was principal. But his duties were simply overwhelming. He resigned in 1887, prompting the board to realize that the district had become too large and complex for a single principal. As a result, on May 26, 1887, the school board created the position of Superintendent of Schools. It hired Edward G. Lyle to the position, at an annual salary of \$1,400. The board also established a position of principal of the grammar grades, leaving the existing principal's position solely in charge of the elementary grades. Thus, the duties Remington handled himself the board had now divided among three people.<sup>15</sup>

Beyond being a symbol of increasing professionalization, the Franklin School was best known for housing, in two rooms on the upper floor, the district's first high school. Prior to 1889, students who wished to receive a high school diploma could only do so through the nearby

Agricultural College. That year, however, Superintendent Lyle proposed to the board of education a four-year course of study following the completion of the eighth grade. On June 1, 1889, the board resolved to carry out Lyle's plans. The board publicly announced its intentions 10 days later. They noted that the high school would provide "...an opportunity to acquire knowledge of those branches which are not necessarily proved in the common school course, and to furnish advanced instruction to those who desire to prepare themselves to become teachers as well as to make of it a preparatory school for those who wish to secure a collegiate training."<sup>16</sup> Like kindergarten, the high school came to Fort Collins long before it had arrived in many settlements of a similar size. Also like the kindergarten, the board initially viewed its high school as a test. When it announced the opening of the new program, the board noted that the high school "must necessarily be regarded as an experiment for the first year or two, and it is earnestly desired by the board that it shall receive such patronage as will warrant them in continuing it."<sup>17</sup> The high school was a success, and District 5 conducted its first high school commencement in the spring of 1891 at the opera house in Fort Collins. The first graduating class consisted of five students: Myrtle Emry (Cornell) Woods, Alice Lenore (McAnelly) Sturson, Rose Margaret (Lee) Havener, Grace Greenwood (Schull) Eichman, and Howard Joseph Livingston.<sup>18</sup>

As was typical of this era, board members themselves created the high school curriculum. Members were Jay H. Boughton, T.M. Robinson, and Franklin C. Avery. They developed a course of study as follows:

- FIRST YEAR (Ninth Grade): English analysis and composition; arithmetic; bookkeeping; U.S. history; and drawing.
- SECOND YEAR (Tenth Grade): Rhetoric and American literature; algebra; physical geography (one semester); government (one semester); and drawing.
- THIRD YEAR (Eleventh Grade): general history (one semester); physics; moral philosophy; physiology (one semester); botany (one semester); geometry or Latin; and drawing.
- FOURTH YEAR (Twelfth Grade): English literature; chemistry (one semester); elements of political economy; astronomy; and trigonometry.<sup>19</sup>

The course of the study as well as the sex ratio of the first several classes reflects the reality of Fort Collins's high school: it was meant to prepare students for careers as teachers. But it also represented the implicit and, in many cases, explicit homogenization programs of America's schools through the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries – particularly kindergartens and high schools. As in the urban east, the settlements of the American West drew a diverse population from around the country and around the world. The racial and socioeconomic background of early members of District 5's school board suggests that it was dominated by wealthy, Anglo males. These were the very people concerned about foreign influences and lack of traditional and family socializing structures in this new place. Indeed, since the 1820s, the arguments supporting the creation of high schools were the same. In his history of schools in the United States, Joel Spring suggests that early high schools typical-

ly were designed to meet the following socialization goals:

- Well-educated people would be taught to believe that equal opportunity through schooling justified the existence of social differences based on income and wealth.
- High schools would promote the idea that achievement depends on individual responsibility.
- A high school education would lead to obedience to the law.
- A high school education would undercut the potential for political revolution by instilling basic republican values.
- High schools would contribute to the reduction of crime by instilling basic moral values.<sup>20</sup>

An 1890-91 booklet, a “directory, rules, regulations, and course of study” for Fort Collins Public Schools, provides a glimpse of a fully matured school district. The listing of school officers and “corps of teachers” indicates that the pedagogical harem was in place: members of the school board and the superintendent were all male while the teachers were all female. According to the regulations, teachers in District 5 were expected to have considerably more qualifications than those in rural districts. Marriage, however, remained taboo:

SECTION 1: No Teacher above the First Primary Grade shall hereafter be employed who has not had at least one year’s successful experience, and who does not hold a State certificate, or a First Grade certificate for Larimer County. No married woman shall be elected by the Board.<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, the course of study in District 5 extended from kindergarten to high school. The booklet also suggests that students had access to a full complement of resources, including a “Library of several hundred volumes; also, a special reference Library, connected with the schools.”

Fort Collins’s high school ultimately proved successful. Enrollment had tripled to 122 students by 1902, and District 5 found itself once again asking voters to approve a bond issue for school construction. That year, voters did indeed approve the \$35,000 needed for a new high school building. Known simply as Fort Collins High School, the building was located at 417 South Meldrum (between Mulberry and Magnolia streets, now the site of the Lincoln Center) and was completed in 1903. The school was designed by Fort Collins’s most renowned architect, Montezuma W. Fuller, and constructed by Knutsen and Isdell of Greeley. Fuller planned some of the city’s most beautiful homes and churches, many of which stand today. The District’s choice in the architect for its new high school reflected civic pride in education facilities and perpetuated the idea that the beauty of the schoolhouse inspired the students within it. The high school building exhibited the same classical-inspired architecture as the Franklin School, but even heavier and more ornate in its application. The building featured liberal use of red, rusticated sandstone on the foundation and trim, and the walls consisted of pink, pressed-brick produced by Cooke and Cummer of Fort Collins. In form, the new high school was rigidly symmetrical, with classical details such as pediments and round-arch windows. The heavy exterior cornice, replete with equally massive dentil molding, was constructed of galvanized iron with zinc applications, which would

quickly tarnish to a stately green patina.<sup>22</sup> The *Weekly Courier* provides this glimpse of the interior space:

The boys have the south entrance and the girls to the north. Downstairs the boys have on the south a lunchroom with lockers for athletic equipment, etc., and a toilet room. The girls have on the north the same conveniences. Here also on the west side are janitor quarters and the heating plant.

On the top floor the high school room occupies the whole front of the building. It is a magnificent vaulted hall; is splendidly lighted, has blackboards, shelving for works of reference, and will seat 150 very comfortably. South of it is a small library room with shelving that may be used as a recitation room. Back of that is Principal Dunn's room with handsome oak desk, etc.

On the west side, across the large hall that cuts this floor in two from north to south, are three recitation rooms whose arrangement and appointment are beyond criticism. Two are furnished with opera chairs having wide arms to serve as desks. The third, which will be used as a chemical laboratory, has movable seats and a large case for apparatus. The largest room will seat 42.

In the northwest corner are Superintendent Dunn's private office, the Board of Director's room and a retiring room for the lady teachers. All [of] these are equipped with handsome oak furniture.

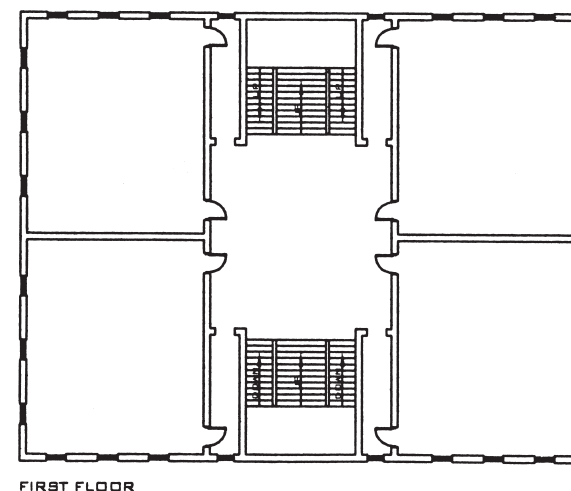
The square on which the building stands will very properly be devoted almost entirely to the purposes of a playground. In fact, a lawn will be started at the side and back, the boys and girls will have full swing.<sup>23</sup>

This description suggests that the school board con-

tinued its trend to adopt programs and standards well ahead of most of the rest of the nation. Particularly notable is the installation of bath facilities for boys and girls, a provision that would become more common with Progressive-era concerns about hygiene. Related to this was the installation of athletic fields, a nod to the Play Movement. Like the Franklin School, the original Fort Collins High School was basically a reiteration of the rectangular-box Quincy plan. But the building was soon expanded with nearly identical wings, one to the south in 1916 and one to the north in 1921. This building reflected the reality of a high school curriculum, which required more and more specialized classrooms than traditional schools; high schools would only become more complex buildings as districts adopted the Gary plan. The original Fort Collins High School became the middle school, Lincoln Junior High School, after the construction of a new high school building in 1925. In 1975, Poudre School District constructed a new Lincoln Junior High School at 1600 West Lancer Drive. Most of the old school was demolished in preparation for the construction of the Lincoln Center events complex. The city retained the newer additions to the school, however, and integrated them into the complex, which opened in 1977.<sup>24</sup>

District 5's curriculum became more innovative and progressive between 1903 and 1912, during the District superintendency of M.F. Miller. In 1905, the District instituted a summer school, which was housed at the Remington School. A decade before the passage of the Smith-Hughes Act, Miller introduced manual training courses to the District. These classes provided hands-on training with construction and manufacturing equipment.

**Figure 9.** The floor plan of the Laurel Street School was yet another reiteration of the Quincy School. Laurel's identical twin, the Laporte Avenue School, has been demolished. (*Daggett, et al.*)







**Figure 10.** Designed by Montezuma Fuller, the Laurel Street School is the oldest District 5 schoolhouse yet remaining in Fort Collins. It is now Centennial High School. (Photo by the author)

They were conducted at the YMCA in Fort Collins and later in a rented room on Olive Street. Miller also introduced the first semblance of a home economics program, beginning with sewing classes, and started courses in accounting and commercial management. A 1923 *Express-Courier* article noted, however, that the sewing class was “conducted under many difficulties in the regular classrooms of the high school” and that the commercial class was located in a storeroom and hallway. This indicates that a well-designed building was imperative to house the ever-diversifying curricula of high schools.<sup>25</sup>

However the high school program was not the only point of expansion in District 5. In 1906, the District con-

structed the first of many sets of identical-plan elementary schools – a building trend that continued into the late 1960s. While architectural critics derided the practice as lacking imagination and innovation, constructing schools from identical plans provided quickly growing school districts with efficiencies of time and money. And the District’s first twin school buildings were hardly lacking in imagination. The Laurel Street School and the Laporte Avenue School, completed between 1906 and 1907, were designed by Montezuma Fuller. The Laurel and Laporte schools continued the classical-inspired style of previous schools. However, they were even more heavy and ornamented, with elements bordering on the massive style of Henry Hobson Richardson, namesake of Richardson Romanesque style. The symmetrical front façade of the buildings featured large blocks of rusticated sandstone, elaborately corbelled brickwork, and a central pediment with a heavy, bracketed cornice. The most notable feature was the central entrance, which opened beneath a massive, rusticated sandstone arch. The plan of the building was the same rectangular box as the preceding Franklin and Remington schools. Long after high schools had abandoned it, the Quincy plan continued to dominate elementary school design until devastating fires rendered it an unsafe design. While the Laporte Avenue School has since been razed, the Laurel Street School still stands, serving Poudre School District as Centennial High School. It is the oldest of the District 5 schools PSD still owns and operates.<sup>26</sup>

Another set of twin elementary schools, constructed in 1919, revealed the impact of Progressive-era education reforms in the District. The George Washington School,

located at 233 South Shields Street, and the Abraham Lincoln School, at 501 East Elizabeth Street, were designed by Frank Frewen and Earl Morris. Both buildings marked a departure from the earlier, box-shaped, Quincy plan schools constructed in the District. They indicated a transformation from the school building as a morally inspiring environment into a rational, efficient machine for learning. On the exterior, both of the schools were extremely modest in decoration, especially compared to the older schools in District 5. They were mutedly Craftsman in architecture, a style that correlated closely to the Progressive movement. Originally, they sported brackets, exposed rafter ends, and multi-light double-hung sash and casement windows. But the true genius of these schools was their floor plans. Both were designed with corridors in a reversed C-shaped plan. Inside the “C” was a service core containing offices and a gymnasium/auditorium. The original plan hosted 11 to 12 classrooms divided on a main floor and lower level. All were within easy access of a doorway, but two of the classrooms had their own, separate doorways, suggesting their use as kindergartens. Moreover, these schools were far more intimate and scaled-down in their interiors, indicating an adoption of Progressive ideas of childhood – the school needed to be a nurturing, comfortable place for its youngest pupils.<sup>27</sup>

Poudre School District continues to use both the Washington and Lincoln schools, hosting special curricula elementary schools. In 1939, District 5 changed the name of Lincoln to Harris Elementary School in memory of Mame Harris. She was the daughter of a Fort Collins mayor and was the first principal of the Lincoln School. Ms. Harris was also a founder of the Teachers Club. The

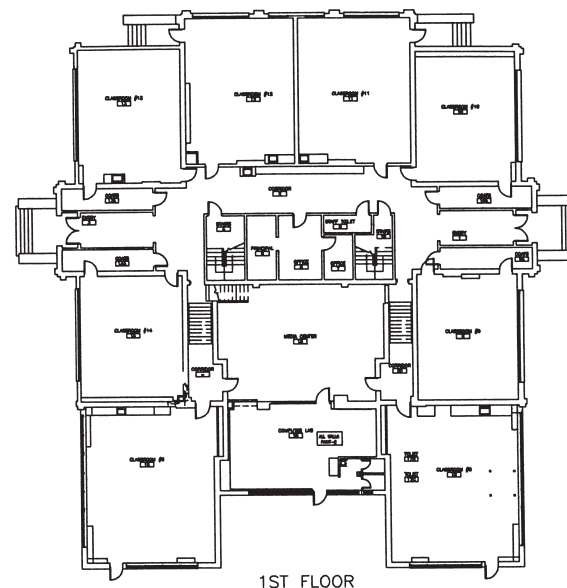
District transferred the name Lincoln to the middle school building, the first Fort Collins High School. Washington is now PSD’s laboratory school while Harris is the Bilingual Immersion School.<sup>28</sup>

District 5 reached a pinnacle in architectural sophistication with the completion of the second Fort Collins High School in 1925. But unlike previous school building projects in District 5, voters did not initially support the construction of a new high school. At a board of education meeting on December 29, 1919, member Fred W. Stow offered a resolution to construct a new high school. He recommended issuing \$300,000 in bonds for construction and \$20,000 to purchase a site. Unfortunately, voters at the February 11, 1920, bond election overwhelmingly defeated the measure. The north addition to the old high school was constructed as a compromise. But the seed had been planted. Already a committee was investigating potential sites for the new school. Meanwhile, the board began a public relations campaign to bring the District’s dire overcrowding situation to the public.<sup>29</sup>

Leading the campaign was one of the county’s most Progressive administrators, District 5 Superintendent Albert Howard Dunn. Born in 1867 in East Portland, Maine, Dunn received most of his early education at home, from his father. At age 19, he graduated from Bates College in Lewiston, Maine. He came to Colorado in 1888 and taught at Fairplay and Golden before arriving in Fort Collins in 1893. He was the high school principal for 19 years and superintendent for 18. Dunn established a high school orchestra. But two programs, in particular, reflected his Progressive reforms in the District. Dunn instituted courses in health instruction and started an adult education



**Figures 11 and 12.** The architecture and spatial arrangement of the identical Washington School (above) and Lincoln (Harris) School (below) indicated District 5’s adoption of Progressive pedagogy. (Photo by the author; drawing from Daggett, et al.)



program, held in the evenings at the District's schools. Dunn Elementary School is named in his honor.<sup>30</sup>

In an article he wrote for the *Fort Collins Courier* in September 1921, Dunn reported that the capacity of the grade school was 1,750 seats but 2,399 students were enrolled. The high school added an additional 413 students to the District. Continuing the public relations push, the board created a general committee in October 1922 to determine the need for a new high school building and assess the level of public support for a \$400,000 bond issue. Reporting to the board at its February 1923 meeting, the general committee recommended constructing a new high school and found public support for a \$330,000 bond issue. Indeed, voters passed the measure on April 10, 1923 and, with \$68,000 in bonds approved in a previous election, had the financial resources needed to construct a new school.<sup>31</sup>

Even with the financing in place, however, difficulties did not end. Indeed, finding and selecting a building site proved daunting. The issue was so contentious that the board did not even consider sites until after the bond election. Factions supported a variety of locations; among them were sites on the eastern edge of Fort Collins, on Mulberry Street, and on Laurel Street. Another site was in the 1400 block of Remington Street, on land owned by Louis Clark Moore, a prominent Fort Collins financier and treasurer of the school board after March 1920. The site selection issue lingered through the spring of 1923. At its June 19, 1923, meeting, the board of education once again put off the issue. Frustrated, Moore, on June 28, presented to the board an offer it could not refuse: he would *donate* his land to District 5. The board unanimously accepted his

offer. With an additional parcel that the District purchased from Moore, the new high school included four large city blocks adjacent to a city park to the west, separating Remington from College Avenue. Much like the landmark East High School in Denver, the new Fort Collins High School would include extensive athletic and recreational areas in its site plan. Some residents, however, harshly criticized the school board for selecting a site they considered too far from the town. After all, Fort Collins's previous schoolhouses had all been a few blocks from the county courthouse. But suburbanization was altering the center of population in the city. The location of the new Fort Collins High School represented an acknowledgement that the trend of Fort Collins's urban development was spreading quickly southward along College Avenue.<sup>32</sup>

Designed by Denver architect William N. Bowman and constructed by the Alex Simpson Jr. Company of Boulder, the school was completed by the beginning of 1925, seven months after laying the cornerstone. The new building entirely embodied Progressive education reforms and the full adoption of the Gary plan in Fort Collins. The building featured a cafeteria and modern kitchen, a full library, and a large auditorium. Classrooms were constructed and equipped for specific curricular functions: manual training, business and accounting, chemistry and physics, and more.<sup>33</sup>

The architecture of Fort Collins High School (FCHS) embodied one of the two most popular styles for high schools constructed during this period, the Colonial Revival. (The other popular style was Collegiate Gothic). Most notable were the symmetrical wings protruding from a central core with a full-high portico crowned by a white-



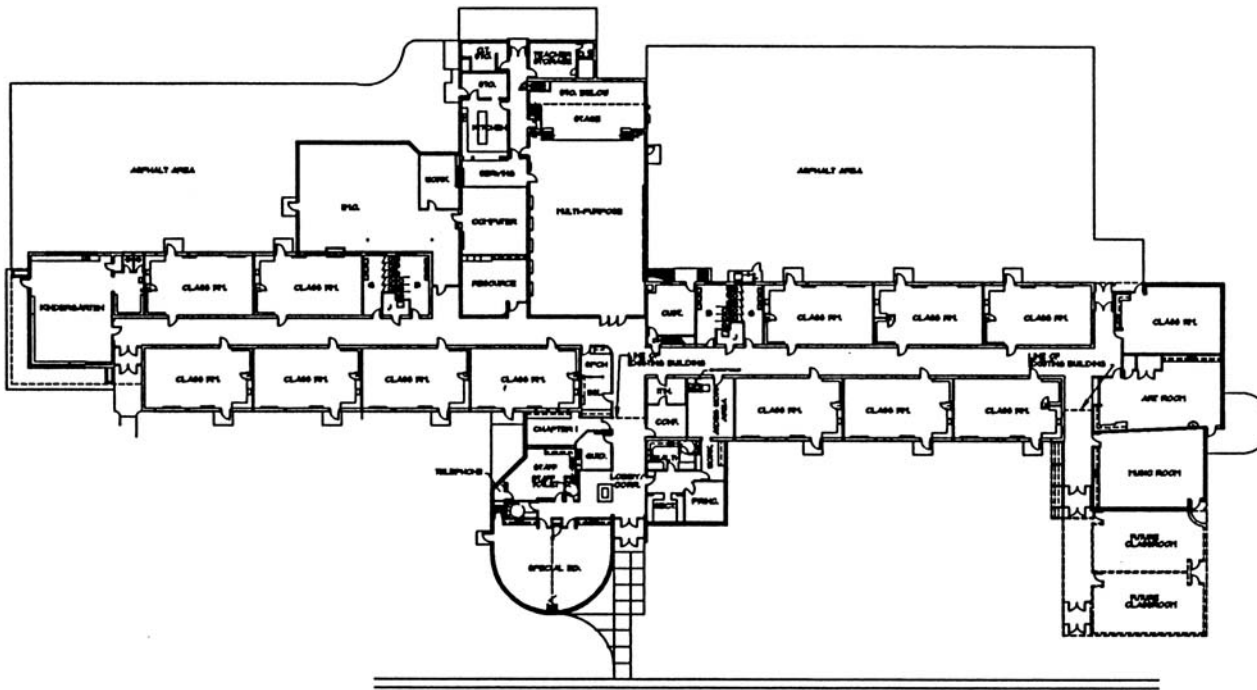


painted cupola. The portico consisted of slender but extremely tall Doric columns supporting the heavy pediment. Windows beneath the portico opened under round and flat arches with prominent keystones. An oval window pierced the center of the pediment. The original gymnasium even featured a Palladian window. The use of Colonial Revival architecture for high schools reinforced an old idea in American education; schools created virtuous citizens and, thus, perpetuated the republic. These buildings were more minimal replicas of Independence Hall in Philadelphia and other edifices prominent in the American Revolution and the early years of the republic. Students entering the building were subliminally reminded of the

founding fathers. Boys and girls were supposed to become enlightened within the school – sensing their civic duties and obtaining secular inspiration. Interestingly, however, Fort Collins High School was the last school building in District 5 constructed in a historically inspired style. All schools built after FCHS exhibited Modern and Postmodern styles. Poudre School District sold the second Fort Collins High School to Colorado State University in 1996, after completing a new high school. After the completion of a large addition to the north end of the school, the building now houses CSU’s performing arts program.<sup>34</sup>

By the late 1920s and through the 1930s, state and national educators lauded District 5 as one of the most

**Figure 13.** The second Fort Collins High School was indeed a cathedral of culture. Its sprawling floor plan was intended to accommodate the diverse curricula of a Progressive-era high school. *(Photo by the author)*



**Figures 14 and 15.** The Dunn School represented a vast departure from District 5's previous elementary schools, both in style and plan. The curvilinear features are later, Postmodern elements added to this International-style building. (Drawing from Daggett, et al.; Photo by the author)



progressive in the nation. Certainly its history supports this praise; in innovation after innovation, District 5 was often ahead of the rest of the nation. By 1929, the School District employed a nurse and teachers for music, art, and physical education. The vocational training program provided a diverse array courses, ranging from bookkeeping and stenography to metalwork and agriculture. But in some respects, District policies remained regressive. While Fort Collins public schools paid female teachers an average of \$184.18 a month for high school and \$166.67 for junior high school, male teachers received \$229.32 per month for high school and \$181.08 for junior high. Male teachers were not even considered for elementary school teaching positions.<sup>35</sup>

But as far as school architecture was concerned, District 5 remained cutting-edge. The first Modern-style school constructed in the District was Dunn Elementary. It was completed in 1949 and located at 501 South Washington Street, just south of Mulberry Street. Designed by the architectural firm of Atchison and Kloverstrom and constructed by the Johns Engineering Company, the school was revolutionary on the inside and the outside. While older schools were box shaped, with two or more floors of classrooms, Dunn featured a sprawling, one-story floor plan that would influence schools for decades. The plan eliminated one of the most dangerous and inefficient elements in older schools – stairways. In addition, the new floor plan allowed every classroom to have a doorway directly to the outside. These sprawling floor plans, however, changed the site selection process for new schools in District 5. No longer could they be constructed on the same block with already extant commercial

and residential buildings. Rather, they required a vast amount of open land, often forcing construction to the edges of developed areas and, subsequently, encouraging further development around them after construction.

The Dunn School was revolutionary on the exterior for its use of International-style architecture, indicating the final departure from the school building as an inspiration to a functional, efficient machine for learning. The architecture promoted function over ornamentation and the horizontal over the vertical. Not only were International-style schools less costly to construct than their more ornamented ancestors, they suggested a forward-looking peda-

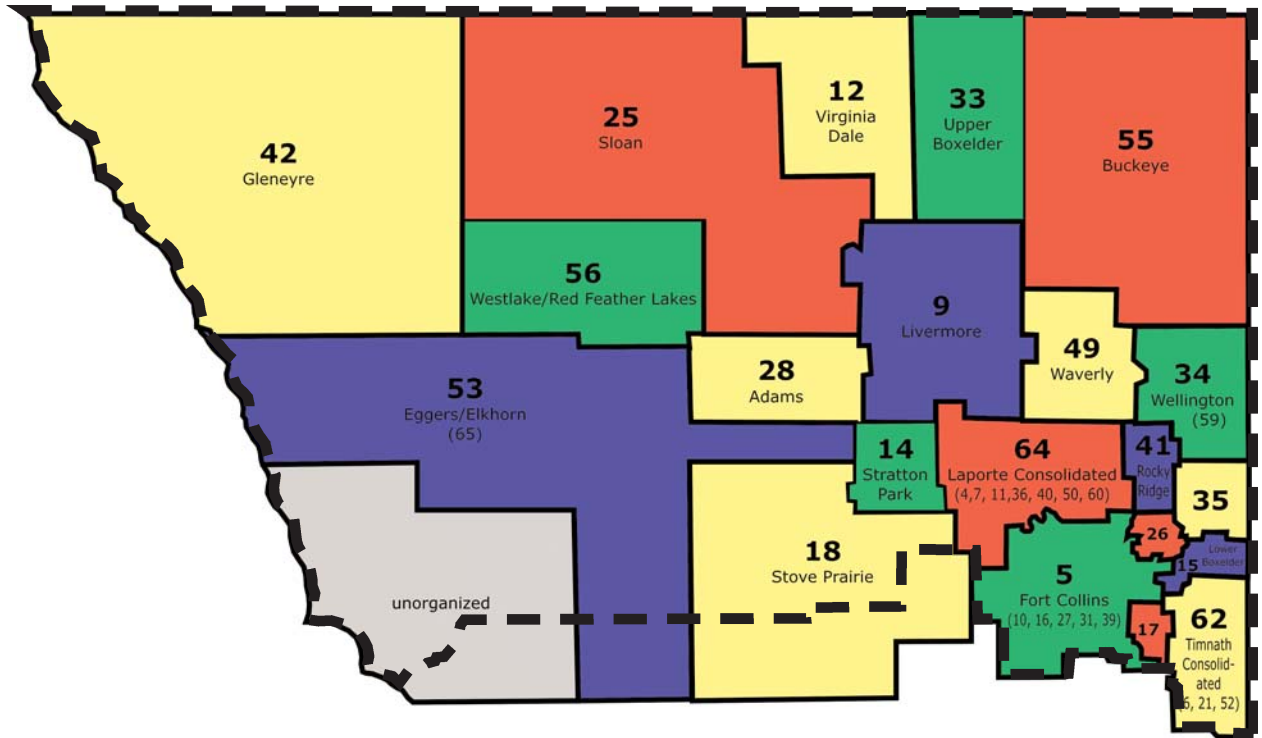
gogy rather than a curriculum rooted in the past. In 1955-56, District 5 constructed three more identical-plan, International-style elementary schools: Putnam, Barton, and Moore. Designed by Fort Collins architectural firm Robb, Brenner & Brelig, the schools included many of the same elements as the Dunn School, such as a one-story plan and exterior doors in each classroom. While these schools were the last constructed for District 5, Robb, Brenner & Brelig would become the architects of choice for Poudre School District, designing over a dozen schools in the next 30 years.

## Notes

1. Kitchen, 7; Watrous, 129, 227; Wayne Sundberg, "Early Education in Auntie's cabin," *Review*, 2 September 1981; Sundberg, "The Early History," 1.
2. Watrous, 129-30; Sundberg "Early Education"; Sundberg, "Early History," 1-2.
3. Watrous 92, 230; Sundberg, "Early Education;" Alice P. Stanton, undated newspaper article in file, in "LC-SCHOOLS-General," Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library.
4. Sundberg, "Early History," 4-6.
5. *Fort Collins Courier*, 6 July 1878, p. 4; quoted in Sundberg, "Early Education," 6, n. 14.
6. Board of Directors, School District No. 5, *Directory, Rules, Regulations, and Course of Study of the Public Schools, School District No. 5, Fort Collins, Colorado* (Fort Collins: Courier Printing & Publishing Co., 1890), 13-14.
7. Sundberg, "Early Education"; Sundberg, "Early History," 9, 11.
8. Sundberg, "Early Education"; Arlene Ahlbrandt, *Legacy of County and Mountain Schools of Larimer County, Colorado* (Fort Collins: by the author, undated), "Remington School District #5, Fort Collins"; Sundberg, "Early History," 7-8.
9. Watrous, 130; Albert H. Dunn, "A Sketch of the Public Schools of Fort Collins," *Fort Collins Express-Courier*, 20 May 1923, p. 2.
10. Sundberg, "Opening of school brought many problems," *Fort Collins Review*, undated article in the folder "LC-SCHOOLS-General," Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library.
11. Sundberg, "Opening of school."
12. Sundberg, "Early History," 9.
13. Watrous, 129; Dunn, 1-2.
14. Board of Directors, 39; "Franklin School's Early Pupils to Attend Final Social Affair in Building," *Fort Collins Coloradoan*, 30 November 1949; Sundberg, "Early Education;" Sundberg, "Opening of School."
15. Sundberg, "Early History, 14."
16. Pike, 2.
17. Quoted in "Franklin School's Early Pupils."
18. "Franklin School's Early Pupils;" Sundberg, "Opening of school."

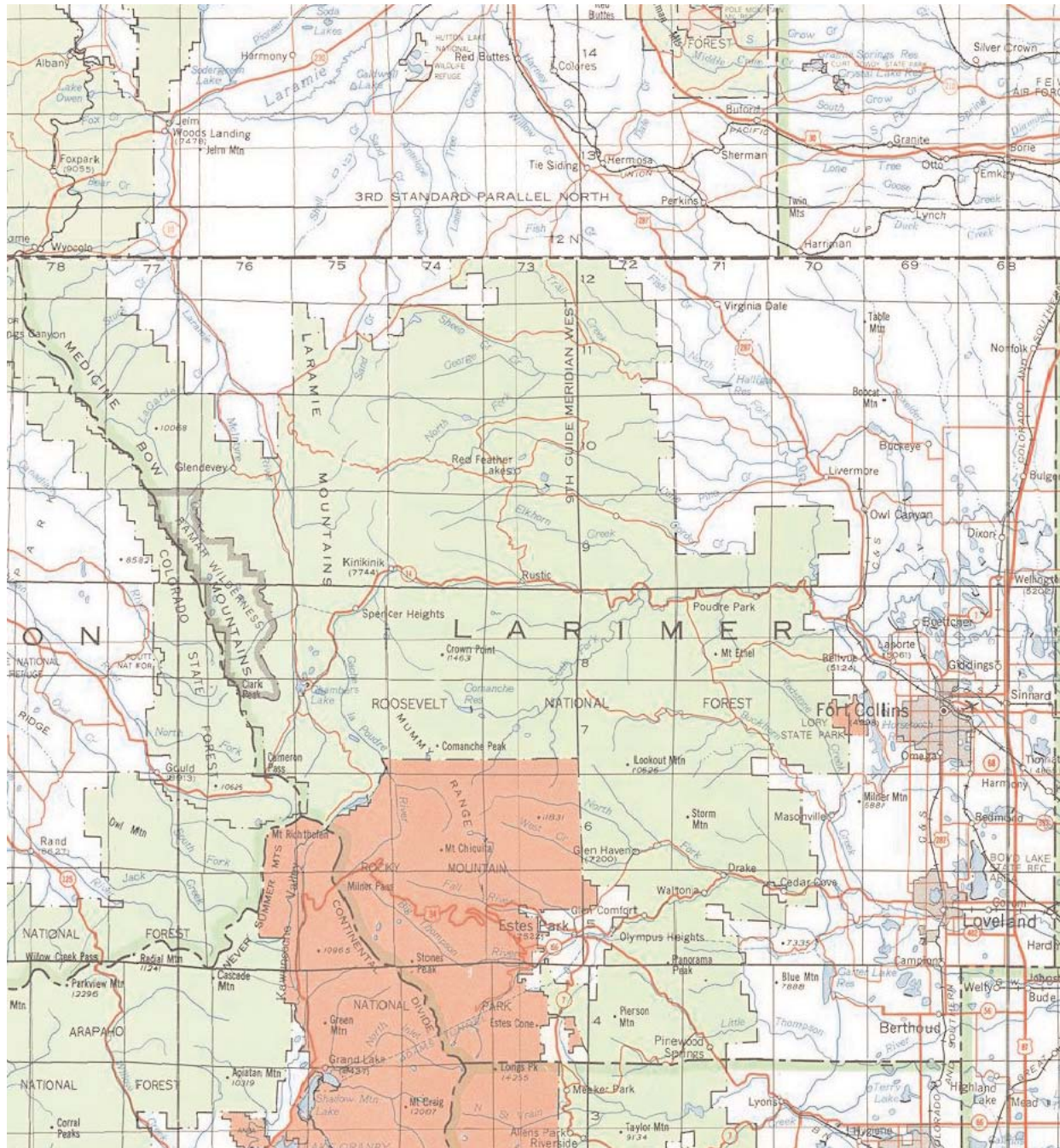
19. "Franklin School's Early Pupils."
20. Spring, 122.
21. Board of Directors, 12.
22. Robert H. Pike, *Home of the champions: The history of Fort Collins High School, 1889-1989* (Fort Collins: Lambkin Enterprises, 1994), 5.
23. *Fort Collins Express*, 21 October 1903.
24. Gail A. Thomason, "Schools were named mostly for local educators," *Fort Collins Triangle Review*, 31 July 1995, p. 22; "High School Building," undated newspaper article, in the folder "LC-SCHOOLS-General," Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library; Pike 9-11.
25. "Fort Collins Summer School, 1909," document, in the folder "LC-SCHOOLS, General," Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library; Dunn, 1-2.
26. Thomason.
27. Ron Daggett, Alice N. Williamson, and Ken A. Forrest, *Poudre School District Building Statistics, 2000-2001* update (Fort Collins: *Poudre School District*, 2001), "Harris Elementary School (Bilingual Immersion School)" and "Washington Elementary School (Lab School)."
28. Thomason.
29. Pike, 11-12.
30. Elizabeth Case, "Fort Collins Public Schools," undated , TMs (photocopy), Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library.
31. Pike, 11-12.
32. *Ibid.*, 12-14.
33. *Ibid.*, 21.
34. William W. Cutler, III, "Cathedral of Culture: The Schoolhouse in American Educational Thought and Practice since 1820," *History of Education Quarterly* 29, No. 1 (spring 1989): 19.
35. "Schools are Progressive and Efficient," *Fort Collins Express-Courier*, 25 September 1929, p. 8.





--- Present PSD boundary

Transparent Overlay



**Map 1.** Boundaries of Poudre School District R-1 and its predecessors. Pre-consolidation district boundaries appears as they did on June 30, 1960. Numbers in parentheses indicate annexed and consolidated districts prior to that date. Boundaries are approximate only and are not meant for legal use. (Based on Kitchen)



### PSD's Ancestors

Dist.	Name	Est.
4	Laporte	1868
5	Fort Collins	1870
6	Sherwood/Riverside	1870
7	Pleasant Valley	1870
9	Livermore/Owl Canyon	1872
10	Mountain View	1873
11	Michaud	1873
12	Virginia Dale	1874
14	Stratton Park/Rist Canyon	1875
15	Lower Boxelder	1875
16	Pleasant View	1875
17	Harmony	1878
18	Stove Prairie	1878
21	Fairview/Timnath	1880
25	Sloan/St. Cloud/Cherokee Park	1882
26	Plummer	1882
27	Highland/Stout	1882
28	Adams/Log Cabin	1883
31	Fossil Creek	1884
33	Upper Boxelder	1884
34	Wellington	1885
35	no name	1885
36	Sunset	1885
39	Trilby	1885
40	Soldier Canyon/Lamb	1885
41	Rocky Ridge	1885
42	Gleneyre	ca. 1885
49	Waverly	1886
50	Bellvue	1886
52	Westerdoll	1887
53	Eggers-Elkhorn	1887
55	Buckeye	1888
56	Westlake/Red Feather Lakes	1888
59	Moessner	1908
60	Cache la Poudre	1913
62	Timnath Consolidated	1918
64	Laporte Consolidated	1924
65	Pingree Park	1925

# Chapter 6

## Country Schoolhouse: The Rural Roots of PSD

The sheer number and variety of rural schoolhouses in what is now Poudre School District is mind-boggling. While the county superintendent established standards for students and teachers, there were no such rules regulating the construction of schools. Governed by a locally elected school board and often restricted by a tiny tax base, rural districts often simply cobbled together their schools. Some conducted classes in nothing more than shanties with long planks serving as desks. Others built small but elegant brick and stone schoolhouses furnished with equipment and supplies rivaling those found in District 5. But most of Larimer County's country schoolhouses revealed at least two elements of architectural standardization – the doorway was almost always located on the gable end and rows of windows lined the sides. The few schoolhouses in Larimer County that did not have the principal entrance on the gable end or lacked windows on the sides were always located in the most isolated, short-lived or impoverished districts. This was generally because the school was a hastily constructed building or had previously served as a dwelling or even an outbuilding. The only legal requirement governing the construction of rural schools concerned their location: public schoolhouses had to be situated within easy access of a county road. In general, a school was built for every nine square miles of populated land.<sup>1</sup>

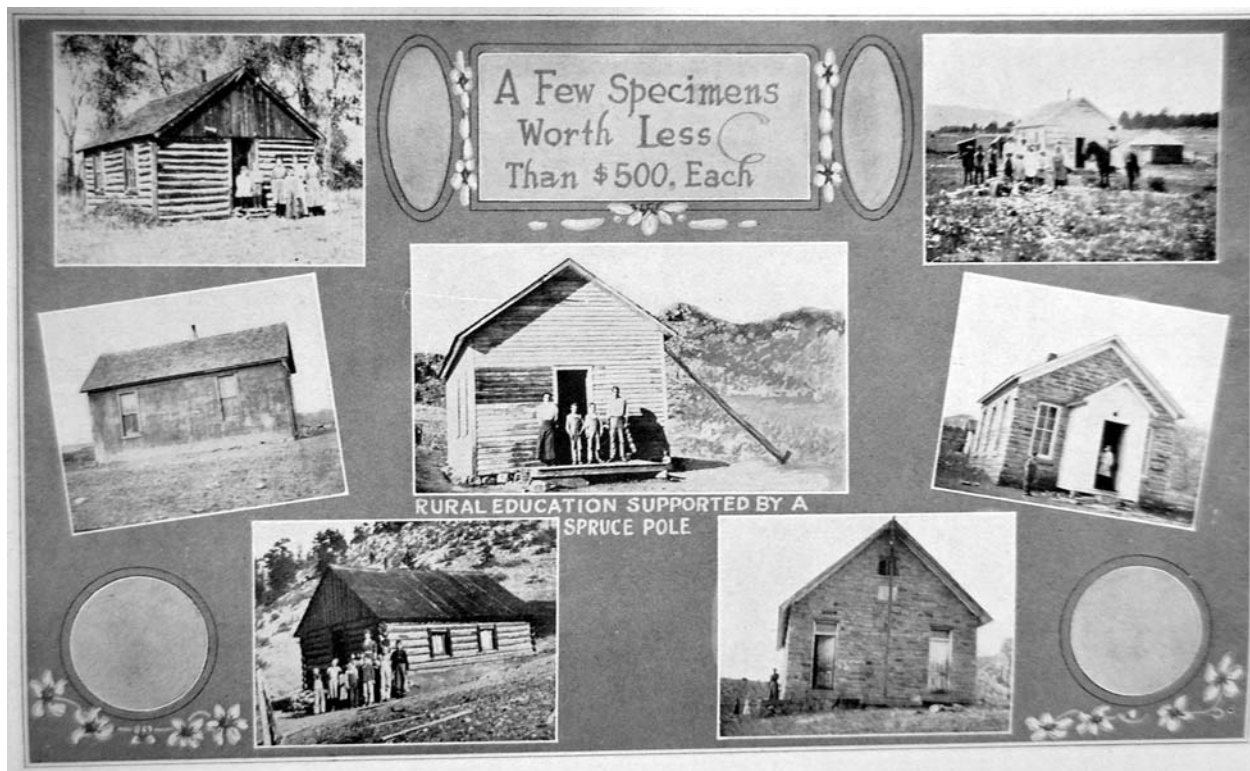
While some education reformers argued that rural

schools were deficient compared to urban schools, others argued the opposite. Despite the small size of the one-room schoolhouse, country districts were a huge target for reform-minded educators. After all, a significant portion of the American population attended these schools. As late as 1920 there were still 200,000 one-room schoolhouses in the United States. But rural schools, at least in Larimer County, used standardized textbooks, often the same as those employed in Fort Collins. Where many rural schools across the United States only provided education through the eighth grade, nearly half of Larimer County's districts held classes through the tenth grade. Moreover, rural students enjoyed a much lower student-to-teacher ratio and the resulting individual instruction. Even the schoolhouses themselves were improved through time, particularly in the 1930s, when county, state, and federal make-work programs modernized many of the county's rural schools. In addition, federal programs, particularly the CCC, improved country roads, greatly contributing to future consolidation. But the problem for students in rural districts was probably the lack of diverse educational opportunities. The larger urban districts could afford to construct high schools with a variety of courses unheard of in the one-room schoolhouse. Moreover, students in urban areas had access to libraries, museums, and, in the case of Fort Collins, a major university.<sup>2</sup>

Also unlike urban schools, rural schoolhouses were

intimately connected to the ebb and flow of the local community and its economy. They were social centers – a point of cohesion for an otherwise diffused and disparate population. “The simple architectural unity of these structures disguised the remarkable complexity of the activities they contained,” notes Andrew Gulliford in his study of county schools in the United States.<sup>3</sup> Rural schools, particularly in the mountains, initially held classes in the summer only, taking advantage of the weather. However, many families, especially those operating ranches, needed the labor of their children during the summer. Thus, economic forces compelled schools to operate through almost unbearable winters. On the plains, classes were often suspended during certain periods in the cycle of sugar beet cultivation, such as the thinnings, hoeings, and harvest. Moreover, if a student actually graduated from the eighth grade, families faced a difficult decision. They could simply end education there or pay tuition and travel costs to send a child to an urban high school. Many chose to move to the city. Thus, the oldest child’s graduation from elementary school often ended an entire family’s school enrollment at a rural school and accelerated the school’s ultimate closure.

After 1900, Colorado’s third-class school districts (legally defined as those with less than 350 students) became the focus of the state’s education reformers. Concern about these districts prompted the state to fund C.G. Sargent, at the Colorado Agricultural College, to conduct a survey of all rural schools in the state from 1906 to 1913. Using Progressive-era techniques such as surveys and statistics, Sargent found that students in the rural districts received a poorer quality education than the same students in urban areas. Borrowing the language of the era,



the report’s author noted “even the educators themselves were slow to believe that schools were so inefficient.”<sup>4</sup> Moreover, third-class schools accounted for a large portion of the state student population. Of the 82,174 school-age children in Colorado, 31,254 were enrolled in third-class districts.<sup>5</sup> And in most cases, Sargent found that these districts lacked standards beyond the minimum required by the county and varied greatly in their compositions:

The district boundaries are arbitrarily made by the people who make the new district, and are arbitrarily changed when the district is divided by a dissatisfied faction that wants a “school of its

**Figure 16.** This page from the Sargent report is designed to call attention to the dismal condition of Colorado’s rural schools. The Westlake School (District 56) is at the top right; the Round Butte School (District 55) is in the middle row, left; and The Log Cabin School (District 28) is at the bottom, left corner. (*Sargent*)

own.” There is no uniformity as to size and area and they vary in this respect from one and a quarter sections to thirty townships.<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, as Larimer County Superintendent of Schools Margaret Bigelow Miller points out in her history of county school district reorganization, previous county superintendents tended to measure their success by the number of districts they established during their administrations. Interestingly, Sargent’s solution to the problems of rural school districts was consolidation. While small reorganizations occurred in the county, Sargent’s idea took nearly a half century to become widely accepted and result in the creation of Poudre School District in 1960.<sup>7</sup>

Below are brief histories of the rural districts comprising Poudre School District. This is not intended as a thorough report of every schoolhouse constructed in what is now PSD. The author includes architectural descriptions of the schoolhouses in each district when the buildings either currently exist or when he was able to locate photographs of them. Similarly, he notes the current condition and location of schools when this information is readily available. However, when rural schools fell into disuse, many were moved, adapted for other uses, or simply wasted away. Because the existing records of rural districts are sparse, particularly when it comes to the specifics of individual schoolhouses, the location and description of some buildings may never be known. While a fuller investigation of Larimer County’s rural school districts and their schoolhouses is possible, it is outside of the scope of this document and project. Those district numbers not included below are either solely ancestors of the Thompson or Park school districts or are now part of Jackson County.

## District 4 (Laporte)

The first settler in the Laporte area was reputedly Antoine Janis, who squatted on land along the Cache la Poudre River, just west of the present town site. Janis and a collection of French Canadian trappers began building permanent, log houses in 1858. They called their town Colona. Later, the Overland Stage Company moved its line south of the Oregon Trail to avoid Native American hostilities. The company established a stage station near the Colona outpost and called it Laporte, meaning the door. In 1862, the Laporte Townsite Company claimed 1,280 acres in this portion of the Cache la Poudre Valley. So many settlers had arrived by November 1861, that the newly formed Colorado Territorial Legislature named Laporte the seat of Larimer County. In an 1881 election, Laporte lost by only one vote to Denver for being named the state capital.<sup>8</sup>

The oldest ancestor of Poudre School District, District 4 was established on May 7, 1869. In a 1909 *Fort Collins Courier* article, May Hugent, a member of a Laporte pioneer family, remembered that the first schoolhouse “was up a hill near Mr. Gillett’s.” She reported that it was later moved to a parcel near Preston Taft’s residence. This location is south of Poudre River and east of Overland Trail. A later schoolhouse was a rather substantial, one-room, wood-frame building, resting on a cut-sandstone foundation. White-painted wood siding, with cornerboards, covered the exterior walls. Tall, four-over-four-light sash windows pierced the sides and flanked the door on the gable end. District 4, with Districts 7 (Pleasant Valley), 40 (Soldier Canyon/Lamb), and 50 (Bellvue), consolidated in January 1913 to create District 60.<sup>9</sup>

## District 5 (Fort Collins)

See chapter 5.

## District 6 (Sherwood/Riverside)

In 1860, Judge Jesse M. Sherwood and F.W. Sherwood settled on land along the Poudre River, 4.5 miles southeast of Fort Collins. In October 1863, Ben Holladay purchased a parcel from the Sherwoods to construct an Overland stage station. Eventually a small settlement sprang up around Sherwood Station. When the federal government established a post office here in 1884, its postmaster, Rev. Charles A. Taylor, named the place Timnath from *Judges 14*: “Samson went down to Timnath and saw there a young Philistine woman. When he returned, he said to his father and mother, ‘I have seen a Philistine woman in Timnath; now get her for me as my wife.’” [NIV]. The town was not officially incorporated until July 16, 1920.<sup>10</sup>

District 6 shares a lineage with what is most likely the oldest public schoolhouse in the Poudre Valley. Children from this area originally attended a school built a half mile east of the county line, in Weld County. This schoolhouse was constructed in 1866. In 1869, residents in the Sherwood area organized their own district. In 1870, the District completed its first schoolhouse – a log building costing about \$900. The schoolhouse was a rather large, one-room building, with square-hewn logs and dovetail corner notching. The first teacher was Miss Mary Moulton, who taught a six-month term and had 18 students.<sup>11</sup>

The population in the area, however, only increased and, by 1879, the schoolhouse, built to accommodate 25 students, now held double that number. Officers and voters in District 6 finally addressed the overcrowding issue at

the May 1879 school board meeting, where they elected to divide the District in half. The dividing line was the section line a half mile south of Sherwood (Timnath), what is now County Road 38 (Harmony Road). The northern portion became District 21 (Fairview) and contained the settlement of Sherwood (Timnath.) The southern portion, which now had no population center, remained District 6. Around 1880, District 6 constructed a new schoolhouse, the Riverside School, 1.5 miles southeast of the old log school. (That building was later moved to the Clovis Nelson farm, where the family used it as a barn as recently as 1987.) After District 21 opened the new Timnath School in 1909, parents in District 6 often paid tuition for their children to attend classes in this new building, located on the northern edge of the settlement. District 6 was consolidated in 1918 with Districts 21 (Fairview) and 52 (Westerdoll) to create District 62 (Timnath Consolidated).<sup>12</sup>

## District 7 (Pleasant Valley)

Pleasant Valley is a basin between the first set of hogbacks and the higher foothills, 6 miles northeast of Fort Collins. Settlers first arrived here in 1858-59. Among those early homesteaders were Abner Loomis and Benjamin T. Whedbee, both of whom became prominent in the development of Fort Collins. It was Abner Loomis who wanted a school for the children in the valley. In 1867, he provided land for the schoolhouse, which was constructed of hand-hewn, 14-inch-square, beige-colored sandstone. It measured 24-by-40-feet. In front of the building was a concrete stoop, and a belfry crowned the front-gabled roof. Inside, the walls of the single room were plastered and a



stove stood in the middle. Residents in the area established the district itself in 1870.<sup>13</sup> At the time, children from Bellvue, which is located in Pleasant Valley, traveled along the Pleasant Valley Ditch to reach the schoolhouse. However, Bellvue formed its own district, Number 50, in 1886. In 1913, District 7 consolidated with Districts 4 (Laporte), 40 (Soldier Canyon/Lamb), and 50 (Bellvue) to create District 60 (Cache la Poudre). The schoolhouse still stands on the Graves Ranch, which purchased the Loomis property in 1897.<sup>14</sup> It is located on County Road 54 E, about a mile west of U.S. Highway 287. The Graves used the building to house workers for their dairy. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2003.

### District 9 (Livermore)

According to tradition, trappers Adolphus Livernash and Stephen Moore built a small dwelling here in 1863 and became the area's first permanent residents. From their residence at the base of what is now known as Livermore Mountain, Livernash and Moore claimed hundreds of acres in the area that settlers soon referred to as Livermore Park. The area stretched west to the Continental Divide and north to the Wyoming border. Its lush meadows attracted ranchers. Some of those early settlers who were in the ranching business were English remittance men (wealthy young men supported by funds sent from abroad). In 1880, a ranching school to train the young remittance men was opened in Livermore. Students of the school later made their homes in the area. Robert O. Roberts built the most notable landmark in the Livermore area, the Forks Hotel, in the spring of 1875.

In 1871, all 25 qualified electors in the Livermore area voted to form a school district; District 9 was officially established on September 14, 1872. Classes were first held in 1874 in the dugout that Livernash and Moore had reputedly constructed, on what became the Russell Fisk Ranch. Mrs. Russell Fisk was the first teacher. The building had earthen walls and a sod roof. The front elevation consisted of logs, with a small window and door. This type of structure certainly was not uncommon for early schools in Colorado. Of course, a sod school also had its share of unusual problems. "One day some steers were being driven near the dugout and a steer broke through the sod roof with one foot," writes Adra Storey Rietveld in a history of the Livermore School. "Fortunately, school was not in session at the time." Even with these problems, classes continued. On January 22, 1875, County Superintendent of Schools R.W. Bosworth approved the first school board for District 9: Russell Fisk, president; Lewis Wetzler, treasurer; and Robert O. Roberts, secretary. The budget for that year was \$172.15, with \$12.15 remaining at the end of the term. In June 1876, the District constructed a second schoolhouse eight miles west of Livermore. Known as the Gordon School, it later became part of District 28 (Adams). Also in 1876, after the dugout in Livermore had proven inadequate as a schoolhouse, classes moved to the home of Lewis Wetzler. After two years in the Wetzler house, classes transferred again to a log building along County Road 74 E (now Red Feather Lakes Road). Classes were held here for only a year before Wetzler and William Calloway financed the construction of a 14-square-foot building. When this building opened in 1879, it hosted 13 pupils: Azulah and Almira Batterson; Sarah and Thomas

**Figure 17.** Sod schoolhouses, like this one in Logan County, Colorado, were common on the treeless plains of the state. (*Library of Congress*)



Gordon; Sylvia Sabin; Ewell Stewart; George and Ernest Roberts; and Frederick, Ida, and Nellie Wetzler.<sup>15</sup>

On November 21, 1883, voters in District 9 convened to consider funding a new schoolhouse and decide on its location. While the electors approved a new building, the site selection, as usual, was a controversy. It took a second election, on January 15, 1884, to determine the site – a parcel north of Red Feather Lakes Road and east of the North Fork of the Cache la Poudre River. Interestingly, the site chosen was outside of the settlement of Livermore. District 9 let the contract for construction of the new schoolhouse to William Brellsford. He agreed to build a 20-by-25-foot, wood-frame building for \$505. Classes were first held here in September 1884. The building was a typical, one-room schoolhouse: white-painted clapboard siding; front-gabled roof; four, double-hung sash windows on the side elevations; and a small brick chimney. The only notable decorative element was a broad surround, with protruding cornice, around the door and transom.<sup>16</sup>

The first teacher at the new Livermore schoolhouse was a Miss Newcomb. While she was reported to be an excellent instructor, she was best known for her fear of rattlesnakes. Indeed, she became so fearful of the legless reptiles that she insisted on keeping the era's popular snake-bite antidote, whiskey, on hand in the schoolhouse. This provided Miss Newcomb and the Livermore School with a moment of national notoriety. Local historian Kenneth Jessen provides this description of the incident:

Somehow, a national magazine, the *Police Gazette*, got hold of this story and published a highly exaggerated version, stating the rattlers were so

plentiful, the teacher absolutely had to keep whiskey on hand to preserve the very lives of pupils. This wasn't bad, but an illustration showed the teacher holding a boy across the desk, pouring whiskey down his throat.<sup>17</sup>

In 1886, voters in the District agreed to a small mill levy to buy books for a school library. Once again, however, District 9 found itself requiring more space as student enrollment swelled. In 1889, the District contracted with D.M. Harned to build a 20-by-25 foot addition to the schoolhouse. The project cost \$402. The improved, 20-by-50 foot building could seat 54 pupils in two rooms. The expanded building resembled the original schoolhouse except that the number of windows was greatly expanded; the side elevations featured long bands of sash and casement windows.<sup>18</sup>

School days at the Livermore School were almost identical to those elsewhere in Larimer County and across the country. Rietveld, who lived in the old schoolhouse after she and her husband purchased it in 1953, provides this description of a typical day at the Livermore School:

...[S]chool began with the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag and with the Lord's Prayer recited in unison, by all the pupils. Children brought their lunches, mostly in metal syrup pails, which were then available. There were coal- or wood-burning pot-bellied stoves, and in cold weather those seated near the stove were too hot, and those farthest away were too cold. Kerosene lamps furnished light when needed. The teacher kept the floor swept, and parents and school board members did the general maintenance work. The school



day began at 9:00 A.M. and let out at 4:00 P.M., with an hour for lunch and exercise. There was no homework since most of the children had farm chores to do after school, and often before school as well. Report cards came out once a month and parents were very much involved in their children's progress in school. Punishment for any infraction of school rules was often repeated at home.<sup>19</sup>



**Figures 18 and 19.** The old District 10 schoolhouse, located on the northeast corner of Overland Trail and Vine Drive, is now a private residence. Poudre School District uses the newer schoolhouse, later called the Mountain View School, as its Administrative Annex. It is located at 2540 Laporte Avenue. (Photos by the author)



Livermore's two-room schoolhouse served District 9 for almost seven decades. But in 1952, voters in the District approved a bond issue for a new school building. Designed by architect Stanley Morse, the new, two-story, brick school building opened in time for the beginning of the 1953-54 school term. It was located just west of the Forks Hotel, along Red Feather Lakes Road, only a short distance from the site of the dugout that housed Livermore's first school. This would be the last schoolhouse constructed by a rural district prior to consolidation into Poudre School District. Like most schools constructed in 1950s, the Livermore School was an International-style building, with rectilinear forms and bands of windows. After 1960, the school at Livermore continued to serve PSD as an elementary school. In 1980, the District added new classrooms and a multipurpose room. Nine years later, two more classrooms further expanded the building. Both additions were designed by Robb, Brenner & Breling. The Livermore Elementary School continues to serve Poudre School District.<sup>20</sup>

District 9 had at least one other schoolhouse. The Ingleside School was constructed for the children of workers at the Ingleside Quarry near Owl Canyon. The school-

house was an extremely rugged building, nothing more than a shanty, with rough-planed, vertical planks for the walls and roof. It was entered through the side rather than the end, and no chimney or stovepipe is apparent on historic photographs in the Local History Archives, Fort Collins Public Library.<sup>21</sup>

### District 10 (Mountain View)

District 10 was organized on February 7, 1873, and served the agricultural area west of Fort Collins and east of the first ridge of hogbacks. The District's first schoolhouse, located on the northeast corner of Overland Trail and Vine Drive, still stands today as a private residence. Constructed around 1873, this schoolhouse was a remarkably ornate and substantial building given its age and location. Constructed of red brick on a rusticated sandstone foundation, the school's plan was T-shaped, supporting the complex, intersecting gable-on-hip roof. The exterior walls featured elaborate corbelling and windows opened beneath projecting, segmental arches. Variegated wood shingles filled the gable ends and a belfry, with a tall, pyramidal cap, crowned the building. The original District 10 school was one of the few examples in the Fort Collins area of school architecture mimicking domestic architecture. The schoolhouse resembled many of the late Victorian homes in the area. Stanley Ricketts, who attended the original District 10 school in 1899 or 1900, remembered that the building consisted of one large room divided by a heavy cloth curtain, suspended down the center, into two classrooms.<sup>22</sup>

Between 1899 and 1906, the enrollment in District 10 nearly doubled, from 70 to 135 students. Thus, in 1906,

District 10 built a new schoolhouse. It was located at 2540 Laporte Avenue, between North Taft Hill Road and Overland Trail. As originally constructed, the second District 10 school was a simple building. It was a red brick school with a large, round-arch entryway in the center of its façade. The entryway led to a central hall dividing the two classrooms. On either side of the entryway was a set of three, four-over-four, double-hung windows, opening beneath segmental arches. Above the entryway, protruding up from the hipped roof, was a squat, hipped-roof tower with arched openings mirroring the entryway beneath it. Unlike the first District 10 school, the second schoolhouse, with its large, central, round arch, did not resemble the homes around it but, rather, was a miniature of the larger schools in Fort Collins. A year after its construction, the school hosted 85 pupils.<sup>23</sup>

Helen Yoder Slonecker remembers attending the second District 10 school in 1906. She recalled the two classrooms. Each held four grades. A Mr. Alexander, principal, taught the older students, and Minnie Young instructed the younger pupils. Slonecker also recalled that a privy – a white-painted, wood-frame building – was located along the west fence. The east elevation of the privy had a door on either end; girls entered on the south and boys on the north. She also said that a white-painted, wood-framed stable was located on the northeast corner of the schoolyard. Because so few students rode horses to school, the structure was soon turned into the first- and second-grade classroom. Around 1910, the District added a third classroom to the school itself, allowing it to raze the stable. A fourth classroom, with a downstairs activity room, was added around 1930. The school board constructed a separate

building on school grounds in 1938-39. It was used as both the seventh- and eighth-grade classroom and as an activities center.<sup>24</sup>

Another former student, Edith Lambert Sheppard, recalled a story that reflected District 10's agricultural roots. Sheppard started the first grade here in 1913 and remained for all eight years. She recalled that a student brought to school a bucket of beet pulp, a byproduct of sugar manufacturing with a very pungent odor. He slipped it into a seat behind one of the students who then had to suffer the permeating smell all day.<sup>25</sup>

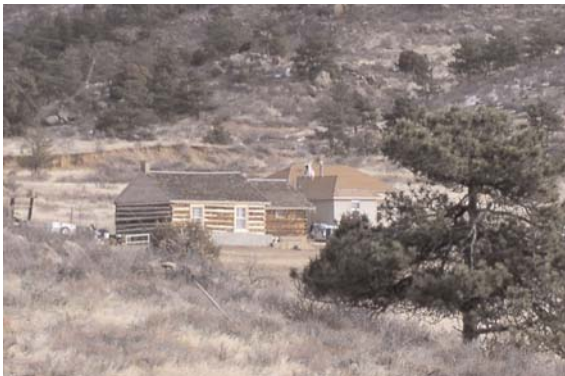
By 1948 enrollment in District 10 had skyrocketed while tax revenues remained stagnant. The board of education considered either increasing the physical size of the district or dissolving it and consolidating with District 5 (Fort Collins). After 1913, students from District 10 could attend District 60's Cache la Poudre High School in Laporte. However, many chose to attend Fort Collins High School, which, in 1948, increased tuition for non-district students from \$110 to \$130 a year. Thus, the board proposed to dissolve and consolidate the District. At an election on June 6, 1948, electors in District 10 approved the proposal. District 5 annexed District 10, and its schoolhouse was renamed Mountain View School. Students in the area attended Mountain View from grades one through six. Older children were bused to Lincoln Middle School and Fort Collins High School.<sup>26</sup>

In 1958-59, District 5 completed a third building on the Mountain View School campus, north of the second. Mountain View served as the area's elementary school even after the creation of Poudre School District in 1960. Irish Elementary School, completed in 1968, replaced Mountain



**Figure 20.** The Michaud School still stands on the east side of Shields Street, just south of the intersection with U.S. Highway 287. (Photo by the author)

**Figure 21.** The Virginia Dale School carries the distinction of being one of the nation’s last, functioning, one-room public schoolhouses. The teacherage, at right, is the former Adams School (District 28). (Photo by the author)



View School, which then became a facility for speech and hearing classes, as well as various social outreach programs. The Mountain View School complex remains intact, serving as PSD’s Administration Annex.<sup>27</sup>

### District 11 (Michaud)

Formed on February 24, 1873, this district was located north of the Poudre River from Fort Collins. The first schoolhouse was a one-room, wood-frame building, constructed in 1874. The original board was comprised of R.Q. Tenney, president; John Riddle, treasurer; and C.C. Hawley, secretary. Early families associated with the school were the Michauds, Hawleys, Mandevilles, Gregorys, and Riddles. Later pupils came from the Bogard, Willox, and Cushing families. The first teacher mentioned in District records was Miss Ethel Case. In three years the number of students in her classroom climbed from 34 to 47 students, but her salary decreased from \$55 to \$50 a month. In 1888, the District built a larger, brick schoolhouse on land belonging to Frank Michaud, District 11 board secretary for 20 years. Resting on a rusticated sandstone foundation, the schoolhouse was a front-gabled building with four-over-four windows opening beneath segmental arches. A wood-frame vestibule was later added to the front. In 1924, District 11 consolidated with Districts 36 (Sunset) and 60 (Cache la Poudre) to create District 64 (Laporte Consolidated). After that time, the old schoolhouse hosted a variety of uses, including migrant worker housing, grain storage, and a farm machinery shop. Albert Bogard purchased the schoolhouse in 1986 and rehabilitated it. The building still stands on North Shields Street. After the cre-

ation of District 60 (Cache la Poudre) in 1913, high school students in District 11 attended Cache la Poudre High School in Laporte.<sup>28</sup>

### District 12 (Virginia Dale)

This storied, desolate outpost on a high plateau near the Colorado-Wyoming state line began as a stage station. In 1862, Joseph “Jack” Slade, division manager for the Overland Stage, named this station in honor of his wife, Virginia Dale Slade. Farmers and ranchers here began to clamor for a school for their children and, on December 5, 1874, the county established District 12. The school and its locale, however, remained wild and rugged. When a teacher accepted a position here, she was given a key to the building and a shotgun for the rattlesnakes.

The Virginia Dale School was a square-hewn log building with very tight, dovetail notching. Windows were six-over-six-light sash, flanked by shutters. Attached to one gable end was a rough, vertical board-and-batten foyer, large enough to accommodate coats, hats, and overshoes.<sup>29</sup>

Amazingly, the Virginia Dale School remained open after district consolidation, and PSD even invested in modernizing the schoolhouse. As well, Poudre School District moved District 28’s Adams School to this location to be used as a teacherage. Because of these improvements, the Virginia Dale School became one of the last one-room, one-teacher public schools in the United States. Before it closed, the school only had two students, a brother and sister. The Virginia Dale schoolhouse still stands today. It is located on the east side of Highway 287 at Virginia Dale.<sup>30</sup>



## District 14 (Stratton Park/Rist Canyon/Poudre Park)

This area between Rist and Poudre Canyons, northwest of Fort Collins and east of Stove Prairie, was named for Harris Stratton, who settled in Fort Collins in 1865 and was instrumental in establishing the agricultural college there. He represented Larimer County in the Colorado Territorial Legislature in 1867-68 and also served in the State Senate. In 1877, he was appointed to the Colorado State Board of Agriculture. Harris Stratton was the same man who married Auntie Stone's niece, Elizabeth Keays, Fort Collins's first schoolteacher. The original schoolhouse here was a log building constructed along Rist Canyon Road near or on the C.R. Salisbury Ranch. Some sources indicate that the District moved this schoolhouse further west along the road. However, it appears that this moved building was more likely a second schoolhouse that had replaced the original log building. Moreover, it is not impossible that both buildings had been moved at one time or another. But all were situated within Rist Canyon. The original schoolhouse consisted of square-hewn logs with hog-trough corners. Photographs indicate that while it appears to have had a dry-laid stone foundation, the corner boards, which extended to ground, carried most of the load. On either of the side elevations was a single, four-over-four, double-hung window. Rough-planed, vertical planks covered the gables. Students entered the school through a door on the left side of the gable end. Inside, the log walls were whitewashed and lacked a ceiling.<sup>31</sup>

A secretary's report from 1907 and photographs from 1920 suggest the books and furnishings used in the school.

The 1907 report reveals that the District used the following texts:

- Reading – Baldwin [most likely James Baldwin's *School Reading by Grades* (American Book Company, 1897)]
- Spelling – Reed [most likely Alonzo Reed's *Word Lessons: A Complete Speller Adapted for is the Higher Primary, Intermediate and Grammar Grades* (New York: Clark & Maynard, 1889; Effingham Maynard, 1890; Maynard, Merrill, & Co., 1893)]
- English Grammar – Harvey [most likely Thomas W. Harvey's *A Practical Grammar of the English Language* (New York: American Book Company, 1878) or *Elementary Lessons in Language and Grammar* (New York: American Book Company, 1900)]
- Geography – Frye [any number of geography texts by Alexis Everett Frye]
- U.S. History – Barnes [probably James Baldwin's *Barne's School History of the United States* (New York: A.S. Barnes and, later, American Book Company ca. 1875 to ca. 1920)]
- Physiology – Steele [probably Joel Doman Steele's *Hygienic Physiology*. (New York: American Book Company, 1888)]
- Civic Government – Peterman [probably Alex L. Peterman's *Elements of Civil Government* (New York: American Book Company, 1891)]

The same report indicated that the District furnished the schoolhouse with a daily register, unabridged dictionary, and a globe. A 1925 photograph shows manufactured combination desks and seats as well as slate blackboards. The building remained intact until a storm during the win-



**Figure 22.** A young schoolmarm stands with pupil George Guilford Payson in the doorway of the Stratton Park School, 1898. (*Mildred Payson Beatty Collection, in Morris, vol. II*)

ter of 1983 collapsed the roof. It was razed by 1985.<sup>32</sup>

The second schoolhouse “had set on a knoll a little east of what was later the Walter Salisbury place, Lewstone Creek [in Rist Canyon].”<sup>33</sup> The building was originally a home for C.R. Salisbury’s mother-in-law. It was a small, rectangular, one-room building, clad in unpainted, rough-planed, vertical board-and-batten siding. The same planks covered the gabled roof. Its original use as a home rather than a schoolhouse was evident in the doorway, which opened on the gable side rather than the end. Beside the door was a single, four-light casement, hopper, or awning window. When the District deemed that it needed to move the Stratton Park School lower in the canyon, residents loaded it onto skids that, when the building reached its new site, became the foundation. The District abandoned the schoolhouse in 1926. It was eventually demolished and the lumber used elsewhere.<sup>34</sup>

Opened in time for the 1926-27 school year was a new Stratton Park School constructed by Tom Farrell, George Vannorsdel (whose father had constructed the Stove Prairie School), and Charlie Hollemon. All were fathers of students at the school. The new schoolhouse was, again, located along Rist Canyon Road, on land belonging to Tim LeMoynes. It was a more substantial and traditional schoolhouse than its predecessors. The new Stratton Park School was a rectangular-plan building clad in white-painted, wood lap siding. Photographs suggest that the building rested on a cut-sandstone or concrete-block foundation. The doorway was located on the south-facing gable end. The building was windowless except for the east elevation, which had six, small, six-light windows. This schoolhouse’s first teacher was Mrs. Maude Parks, who boarded in a house on

the George Vannorsdel place.<sup>35</sup>

A pamphlet from the end of the 1928-29 school year, given as a memento to students, provides a glimpse of the schoolhouse and District at this time. The teacher was Miss Pearl Opal Sorden, and her pupils were Clyde Hollemon, Fred Hollemon, Roy Farrell, Emmett Farrell, Lloyd Farrell, Mildred Mapes, Alama Mapes, John Mapes, Roy Robinson, Dana Vannorsdel, Ray Vannorsdel, Helen Gabriel, Myrtle Gabriel, and Octouana Pacheco. The school board at this time consisted of Andrew Benson, president; George Vannorsdel, treasurer; and Mrs. Walter Salisbury, secretary.<sup>36</sup>

After the creation of Poudre School District in 1960, this schoolhouse was closed. In the tradition of Stratton Park schools, it, too, was moved to another location. The foundation and a concrete stoop remain along Rist Canyon Road.<sup>37</sup>

District 14 located its second schoolhouse at Poudre Park, located 14 miles northwest of Fort Collins, in Poudre Canyon. The schoolhouse came about when a number of families residing in the canyon with school-age children increased enough to warrant a school. Residents of the area did not want to transport their young children to Laporte, but District 14 lacked the funds to construct a school. In 1933, residents in the area reached a compromise: District 14 would purchase the building materials if residents supplied the labor to construct a schoolhouse. Lumber came from the nearby Spaulding saw mill. When the school opened at the beginning of the 1933-34 school year, it had 11 students: Albert Earl Spaulding, Jay McGrew, Mona Marie McGrew, Elwyn Spaulding, Dick Vaplon, Virginia Louise DeBolt, Betty Emery, Bobbie

Spaulding, Edward Vaplon, Jack Fowler, and Betty May Rickard. The first teacher was Olive E. Rickard. Like many rural schoolhouses, the Poudre Park School was also a community center, hosting social events and church services. It is unclear whether this building still exists.<sup>38</sup>

### District 15 (Lower Boxelder)

The lush bottoms of Boxelder Creek were one of the earliest pre-irrigation farming districts in Colorado. On September 24, 1875, settlers in the area established District 15, in an area located east of Fort Collins and north of Timnath. Around 1900, the Lower Boxelder school was a two-story, Edwardian-style, brick building. It featured a tower with belfry and a porch large enough to protect all of the students beneath its roof. Around 1920, the District constructed a handsome, two-story schoolhouse, with a matching teacherage. It was lauded as “among the most modern and really up-to-date schools in the county. ...[It] has all of the conveniences of a town school building...” Among those conveniences were slate blackboards and steam heat. After district consolidation in 1960, Poudre School District retained the building as a warehouse. It sold the building in November 1988. It still stands on Highway 14 (Mulberry Street) just east of Interstate 25.<sup>39</sup>

District 15 briefly operated a second facility, the Cactus Hill School. This was a wood-frame building with whitewashed clapboard siding. Decoration was minimal. However, the paneled door, opening in the center of a gable end, featured a rather elaborate surround with “NO. 15” painted in its pedimented cornice. It is unclear whether this building still exists.<sup>40</sup>

### District 16 (Pleasant View)

On May 9, 1881, settlers in the agricultural area southwest of Fort Collins met at the home of Henry Akin to organize their own school district, which the county officially recognized as District 16. John Hice donated a lot at the corner of South Shields Street and Drake Road for the construction of a schoolhouse, aided by a tax levy. On July 7, 1881, the board awarded D.M. Harnard the contract to construct the wood-frame schoolhouse. But Harnard and the board realized that the proposed building would cost between \$750 and \$1,000, more than the District had raised through the levy. Thus, they reduced the size of the building to 20 by 30 feet and construction commenced. The District hired Miss Emma F. Barrows to teach a six-month term beginning September 1, 1881, for \$40 a month.<sup>41</sup>

Enrollment continued to climb, and on May 8, 1897, residents participated in a special election to consider building a new schoolhouse. Of the 18 eligible voters, only two rejected the issue. At the same time, voters approved a \$1,500 bond issue to fund construction. In a bold move for a small, rural district, the board hired Montezuma Fuller to design the new schoolhouse. Opened in 1897, it was an elegant, red-brick and sandstone building located on the northwest corner of South Shields Street and Drake Road. While the building resembled Fuller’s other Edwardian and Classical Revival schools, it included an interesting array of Asian-inspired, Craftsman elements, including shaped, exposed rafter ends, half-timbering, and flared eaves. The District added another classroom to the building in 1905, placing grades one through four in the older portion and



**Figure 23.** Located on the north side of Highway 14 (Mulberry Street) just east of Interstate 25, the Lower Boxelder School (above) and its matching teacherage are now private residences. (Photo by the author.)

**Figure 24.** Montezuma Fuller’s Pleasant View School was one of the most picturesque rural schools in Larimer County. (Courtesy, Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library)





five through eight in the newer. In 1914, the board installed a movable partition between the rooms, allowing the building to be used for large, neighborhood gatherings. In 1926, a furnace was installed in the partially excavated basement. Cliff Wetzler received a contract to modernize the school in 1946. His project added a lunchroom and restrooms with indoor plumbing. At \$2,500, this addition cost nearly twice as much as the original building.<sup>42</sup>

By the late 1950s, residents in District 16 began to favor annexation to adjacent District 5 (Fort Collins), which, in 1956, had completed Moore Elementary School, a modern facility less than 2 miles from the Pleasant View School. Voters in District 16 approved annexation by District 5 in 1959. The Fort Collins District immediately abandoned the Pleasant View School and its 16 students were transported elsewhere. The building briefly housed the DeSilio School, a private elementary school. Despite an outcry from Fort Collins's preservation community, the building was razed in the 1970s, but the Delehoj family managed to salvage the bell tower, which they used as a decoration for their home and antiques store on North Shields Street, just south of Highway 287 and north of the Michaud School. It remains there today.<sup>43</sup>

### District 17 (Harmony)

This district was organized in 1878. The first schoolhouse, known as the Muddy School, was located just west of the Harmony Cemetery along Harmony Road. It was a handsome, wood-frame building, featuring a large tower capped by a pyramidal roof with flared eaves. Beneath the eaves were large, arched windows. Some of the first stu-

dents were Henry Webster, Sam Webster, and Mildred McAnelly. At age 16, McAnelly became a teacher herself, instructing students first at the Fossil Creek School and later at schools in Fort Collins. In 1886, farmers in the Fort Collins area, in protest of prices paid for their wheat by the Fort Collins Mill, formed the Farmers' Protective Association and constructed the Harmony Mill south of town. The small settlement that sprang up around the mill became known as Harmony.<sup>44</sup>

In 1931, the District constructed a new school on the northeast corner of Harmony and Timberline Roads. The building featured four classrooms with a full basement, containing the gymnasium. The Harmony School was particularly unusual because it was an example of the Art Deco style applied to a rural school building. Details included elaborate corbelling and other brickwork, concrete pilaster capitals with a zigzag pattern, and the name of school and district in stylized metal letters. Later, a Craftsman-style teacherage was constructed on school grounds. Despite the modern architecture, the school schedule remained traditionally pastoral; the school board timed a fall "vacation" each year to correspond to the sugar beet harvest.<sup>45</sup>

After county school consolidation in 1960, Harmony area students were bused to Timnath. The Harmony School housed Poudre School District's alternative education program before it moved to the Laurel Street School. It has been used by private school and preschool endeavors since that time.<sup>46</sup>



**Figure 25.** The Art-Deco Harmony School stands on the northeast corner of Timberline and Harmony roads. It is now the Harmony School Christian Early Childhood Center. (Photo by the author)

## District 18 (Stove Prairie)

This mountain park was apparently named for an old camp stove found here. Settlers in the area organized their own school district on April 5, 1878. Families probably held the first classes in their homes and other outbuildings. In 1896-97, Emanuel Vannorsdel (also spelled Vannorsdell), father of ten children, and Harlan Bosworth, father of two, constructed a formal schoolhouse, occasionally assisted by neighbors. Vannorsdel milled the lumber at his own sawmill. They located the building on what would have been an important crossroads: Stove Prairie Road (County Road 27) traveled north-south; Rist Canyon Road (County Road 52 E) approached from the east; and traveling west from the intersection was the old Flowers Toll Road, which connected to the North Park Stage Road, the boomtown at Lulu City, and points in Larimer County west of the Continental Divide (now in Jackson County).<sup>47</sup>

When it was completed, Stove Prairie School was among the most picturesque and iconic rural schoolhouses in Larimer County. It was a rectangular building clad in unpainted, rough-planed, vertical board-and-batten siding. On each side were two, four-over-four windows. A vertical plank door opened on the gable end. Crowning the roof was a belfry, which the District removed a year later because, with the strong winds that typically blew here, it allowed snow to sift into the classroom. Another belfry must have been installed, however, because it appears on a photograph from 1912. Opposite the belfry on the roof ridge was a brick chimney. The setting was much as it is today – meadows and widely spaced pines. The first

teacher was Belle Thompson.<sup>48</sup>

By 1904, Stove Prairie School hosted 37 pupils, well more than it was designed to accommodate. As a result, the District 18 board decided to open three other schools. The Welch Park School was located near Buckhorn Mountain, on County Road 41 (south of Rist Canyon.) A previously abandoned log building housed the school. The other two schools were located south of Stove Prairie. Buckhorn School

was a one-room, log building situated on Buckhorn Creek, near the junction of Stove Prairie Road (County Road 27) and Pennock Pass/Buckhorn Canyon Road (County Road 44 H). A one-room, wood-frame building, the Redstone School was located along Redstone Creek, west of Horsetooth Mountain, along County Road 25 E. By 1920 or 1921, these new schools left only two students at Stove Prairie School. Thus, the District closed the schoolhouse, and Stove Prairie students attended the Kimball Hill School, three miles away. In 1928, the school reopened with the arrival of three children in the area. The following year, the school had fifteen students.<sup>49</sup>

Heating and water remained elusive luxuries at Stove Prairie School for decades. Originally, parents sent water



**Figure 26.** The Stove Prairie School in 1897. This building remains at the southeast corner of the current school building, which PSD still operates. (Morris, vol. II)

with their children. Later, a quarter-mile-long pipe provided the school access to a spring. According to Helen Gabriel Lowery, a former student at the school, the district took a sample of the water to the Colorado Agricultural and Mechanical College (now Colorado State University) in Fort Collins, where it tested 98 percent pure. However, she also notes that students found hair in the water, apparently from a rabbit that also enjoyed the spring. As for heat, students were expected to bring some wood each day for the stove. The district finally purchased a gas heater for Stove Prairie School in 1955.<sup>50</sup>

Stove Prairie School remained open after the creation of Poudre School District in 1960. Indeed, PSD invested heavily in the school, constructing a new classroom in 1964 and, after almost seven decades since the school's construction, an indoor restroom with running water. In 1972, the District completed an addition containing another classroom, a multipurpose room, and an office. And even in these more recent times, Stove Prairie School continues to serve as a social center, hosting church services, the Mother's Club, and the Winter Carnival arts and crafts show. Though greatly altered and expanded, the Stove Prairie Elementary School is Poudre School District's oldest building and the last of the original mountain schoolhouses still operating as a public school.<sup>51</sup>

In many ways, District 18's Welch Park School was even more remote than the schoolhouse at Stove Prairie. It was a rectangular-plan building, measuring approximately 16 feet by 20 feet. It was constructed of square-hewn logs and had a shallowly arched, round roof. Six-over-six windows opened on the south and east elevations. The door also had a small light. Emma T. Wilkins, Larimer County

Superintendent of Schools from 1913 to 1923, remembered vividly her first visit to the Welch Park School. Pearl Yager provides this description of the event:

...[Wilkins] hired a taxi to take her to the top of Stove Prairie Hill. As there had never been an auto over that road, the taxi driver waited. She started to the school afoot, not knowing how far it was or exactly where. After walking what seemed a long way and not seeing anybody or buildings, she got to thinking about bears, lions, and other wild animals, became frightened, and started to running, finally reaching the school safe and sound after a two-mile journey. The taxi driver started to worry about her being gone, so he started to look for her. When he saw she was taking such long steps, [he] knew she was running, so [he] thought for sure there must be something after her. So he started running also, but it turned out okay except for a nice long four-mile trip for both of them.<sup>52</sup>

## **District 21 (Fairview/Timnath)**

In 1879, residents of District 6 (Sherwood) voted to divide their District to alleviate overcrowding in their only schoolhouse. District 21 was officially organized on January 27, 1880, and consisted of those portions of District 6 north of County Road 38 (Harmony Road), including the settlement of Timnath. The District constructed a new schoolhouse a half mile north of town, naming it the Fairview School. It was a typical, one-room schoolhouse, with wood framing; white-painted, horizontal wood weatherboard siding; and an entrance on the gable end. It rested on a random-laid sandstone foundation. A

set of three, two-over-two windows opened along the side elevations. A brick chimney protruded from the center of the roof ridge. The building remained intact until its demolition in 1974.<sup>53</sup>

In 1900, residents in the District approved a bond issue to construct a new schoolhouse. Located on the north edge of town, the Timnath School was a vast departure from the area's previous schoolhouses. It was a rectangular-plan, red, pressed-brick building, resting on a rusticated sandstone foundation. Stylistically it was a classically inspired school with elements of Colonial Revival architecture. Students entered through the center of its symmetrical façade. This entryway featured a column-supported portico beneath a graceful pediment. Above the pediment was an open, hipped-roof belfry. Inside, the building consisted of a central hall with a classroom on either side. The school proved to be so modern, in fact, that parents in District 6 (Riverside) often paid tuition to send their older children to the school. On March 20, 1918, District 21 consolidated with Districts 6 (Riverside) and 52 (Westerdoll) to create District 62 (Timnath Consolidated). That District constructed a new school building adjacent to and south of the original Timnath School, using the older schoolhouse as a kitchen and lunchroom. It continues to serve in this capacity today.<sup>54</sup>

### **District 25 (Sloan/St. Cloud/Cherokee Park)**

This enormous district contained a swath of land bounded by Virginia Dale to the east, Red Feather Lakes to the south, District 42 (Gleneyre) to the west, and the

Wyoming border to the north. Included within it were the St. Cloud and Cherokee Park areas. The district was officially organized on June 7, 1882, and appears to have had seven different schoolhouses throughout its history: Sloan, Holcomb, Diamond Peak, St. Cloud, Lowery, Elliott, and Tepfer. The history of these schools

is difficult to trace, however, because classes were often held at various ranches and homes, moving from year to year to adjust to changing centers of population. District 56 (Westlake, later Red Feather Lakes) was carved out of District 25 in 1894. At the time of the county school reorganization in 1960, Sloan was the largest district in the county geographically and the smallest by population.<sup>55</sup>

District 25 was generally known as "Sloan," the name of one of its smallest schools. The schoolhouse was located on the J. Arthur Sloan Ranch, and Art Sloan himself happened to be secretary of the District's board of education, a position he held until the creation of Poudre School District in 1960. Before the construction of a schoolhouse in 1923, classes at the Sloan Ranch were held during the summer months only; the ranch house porch was the classroom. The schoolhouse itself was a tiny, 12-foot-square building with unpainted, rough-planed, vertical board-and-batten siding. It rested on a dry-laid stone foundation. The



**Figure 27.** District 21's 1909 Timnath School is a study in classical symmetry. It currently serves as an art building for the adjacent Timnath Elementary School (former Timnath Consolidated School). (Photo by the author)





**Figure 28.** The Cherokee Park School, located on the banks of the North Fork of Poudre River in Cherokee Park, was built around 1885. It burned down in the 1960s. (*Robert J. Swan Collection, in Morris, vol. II*)

principal elevation was located on one of the gable ends and featured a small door opening beside a four-beside-four-light, sliding sash window. Anchored to the center of the front elevation and extending above the roof was a rough plank used as a flag pole. Sloan's daughters, Juliana (Jo) (later Mrs. Lafi Miller) and Sylvia (later Mrs. Donald Clark), were the only students except for Eli Cooley, who attended classes here for three months. Their teachers were Sadie Morrison and Ora Sivers. The teacher and her two students traveled to the Livermore School on a regular schedule to attend music classes. The school closed in 1929 after the Sloan girls had left the eighth grade and attended high school in Fort Collins. But it reopened in 1950 when Sylvia's own son, George Gibbs, was old enough to enter the first grade. The old schoolhouse, however, was in disrepair, so classes were held on the sun porch of the former Samuel and Laura Sloan house at Sloan Ranch. The District hired Catherine Roberts to teach at the Sloan School, and she remained there all eight years until it closed at the end of Gibbs's eighth-grade year. Occasionally other students would join Gibbs, including Jud Wagner, Keith Fullerton, Gail Fullerton, and Marina Brown.<sup>56</sup>

The Holcomb School was located on Running Creek at the Colorado-Wyoming state line. The Diamond Peak School was near its namesake topographic feature, located along Cherokee Park Road (County Road 59) about a mile south of the Wyoming border. The Lowery School was situated on Lowery Flats. The locations of the Elliott and Tepfer schools are unclear.<sup>57</sup>

In 1884, C.T. Woods, a Mr. Ankney, and George Martin constructed a schoolhouse between the North Fork of the Cache la Poudre River and Cherokee Park Road,

near what is now Trails End. The schoolhouse was a one-room, log building with hog trough corners. It was fairly long and hosted a single door on the gable end. It had six-over-six windows, two to a side.<sup>58</sup> According to a historic photograph, even the privy appears to have been a log building. The first teacher was a Miss Foote. Unlike most of the other schools in District 25, the schoolhouse never moved. But apparently the name did change, from the St. Cloud School to Cherokee Park, when the post office was moved to the Cherokee Park Resort in 1903-04. While the schoolhouse was located adjacent to the road, Cherokee Park School remained isolated and somewhat wild. Florence Woods Baxter Munz remembers that a "pet bobcat from Trails End used to sleep on the schoolhouse roof near the chimney to keep warm."<sup>59</sup>

### District 26 (Plummer)

Located north of the Poudre River and east of Fort Collins, District 26 was established on June 9, 1882. The history of its early schoolhouses is unclear, but at least one was a small, wood-frame building located near or at the current location of the existing schoolhouse. Another was a one-story, brick building, with a steeply pitched roof. In 1906 the District constructed a two-story, brick schoolhouse on the northwest corner of Vine Drive (then known as Sugar Factory Road) and Timberline Road (County Road 9 E). The building was named Plummer School in honor of the man who had donated the property, James Plummer. He had come to Colorado during the 1860's gold rush, packing mining equipment into Black Hawk. Plummer returned to Colorado in 1882, after a stint in

Iowa, and purchased a farm northeast of downtown Fort Collins. He remained here until his death in 1887.<sup>60</sup>

The new schoolhouse was rather substantial for a rural school. Some sources attribute the building to Fort Collins architect Montezuma Fuller. Its elements of Italianate and Italian Renaissance Revival architecture, including a symmetrical façade, pilaster-flanked central archway, and high, rusticated sandstone foundation, were indeed indicative of Fuller's school designs, although the schoolhouse lacked the ornamentation and delicate details of some of his other buildings. The building was nonetheless impressive, hosting a central, rectangular tower with an arcaded belfry, sprawling hipped roof, elaborate brick corbelling and quoins, and sandstone window sills. Perhaps most interesting and puzzling was the application of the building date on the façade. Across a large, bronze plaque mounted just below the belfry are the characters "A.D. MDCCCXVI." Why the architect decided to represent the year 1906 with these Roman numerals rather than the more conventional MCMVI is unclear, but the longer notation did provide a dramatic effect and contributed to the building's sense of massiveness. Inside, the building consisted of two classrooms, one on each floor. The upper floor had a feature that was generally found in more affluent urban schools. A divider in the center the classroom could be folded out, turning the space into two smaller classrooms.<sup>61</sup>

The Plummer School is perhaps best known for one of its teachers, Hope Williams Sykes. In her classroom and in her home (she lived behind her husband's filling station on the northeast corner of Vine and Timberline), Sykes was immersed in a foreign culture. In settlements flanking the sugar factory, little more than a mile to the west, and in

fields around her school and home, resided families of Germans from Russia who tended fields of sugar beets. The teacher carefully noted the lives of her neighbors and students. Sykes chronicled her observations in the novel *Second Hoeing*. Published in 1935, the book followed the life of a fictional German-Russian family between 1924 and 1929. Set in Valley City, a pseudonym for Fort Collins, the story follows a common trend among the beet-laboring families: the rise from contract field laborers to tenant farmers to farm owners. The family's move out of the "Jungles," an ethnic ghetto, to a rented farm represented one step in the pursuit of success. While hailed by critics, *Second Hoeing* disturbed the German-Russian community because it described brutality in an oppressively patriarchal family. "Second Hoeing was too realistic a commentary on German-Russian family relationships and child labor practices to be taken calmly in the 1930s," writes Kenneth Rock, a history professor at Colorado State University. "Now...it is possible to consider Sykes's novel a historical document."<sup>62</sup>

After school district consolidation in 1960, the Plummer School was abandoned, left to vagrants and vandals. In 1977, Steve and Kay Roy purchased and renovated the building for their Country School Antiques store. It later served as offices and as a home and studio. Currently the school building is undergoing another renovation into a small events center.<sup>63</sup>

### District 27 (Highland/Stout)

In the 1870s, settlers in Fort Collins first came to Spring Canyon, a valley between the hogbacks west of



**Figure 29.** The Plummer School remains a notable landmark as it graces the northwest corner of Vine Drive and Timberline Road. (Photo by the author)



town, to quarry sandstone for businesses, houses, and even sidewalks. In the 1880s, the architect of the State Capitol in Denver, E.E. Meyers, proclaimed the sandstone in this valley “the best he ever saw.” Soon it was in demand in Denver and the burgeoning towns along the northern Front Range. By the end of 1881, the Greeley, Salt Lake & Pacific Railway, a subsidiary of the Union Pacific, had completed a line to the quarries. Not surprisingly, a host of quarry companies purchased land in the valley and began cutting sandstone for shipment east. In 1882, William N. Bachelder, the most prominent of the quarry speculators, established the first post office in the settlement he called Petra, Greek for “stone.” Many of the quarry owners and operators moved their families to the valley and, in the early 1880s, began clamoring for a school. In the summer of 1882, Charles C. Smith, owner of the Highland Stone Quarry, built a small, wood-frame schoolhouse on his property. This was first Highland School. He hired a teacher and purchased books and enough supplies for three months of classes. With the other families in the valley, Smith lobbied the county to establish a school district here; it was legally recognized as District 27 on November 30, 1882. A month earlier, the post office here was moved to William H.B. Stout’s boarding house, and the name of the community was subsequently changed to “Stout.” (Incidentally, the location of the actual town of Stout is difficult to determine. Old maps show it in three different locations in the valley. Thus, Stout is better described as an area than a town site.) In 1883, M. Thomas constructed a stone schoolhouse to replace the original Highland School.

The second Highland School at Stout proved to be a sophisticated, community-centered institution. In January

1884, students formed the Lyceum of Highland School, electing 46-year-old Bachelder as its first president. The club hosted debates, readings, and sing-songs. By summer, Stout had a literary society and, later, a reading club, which discussed each month’s selection. The Highland School also served as the local courtroom and as a church for both Protestant services and Catholic mass. The small building served Stout for six decades. Even after the railroad had completely abandoned the valley in 1918, classes continued at the Highland School, except for two years during World War II. The school officially closed in 1946 when it was sold to the United States Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) in preparation for the construction of Horsetooth Reservoir. Even after the school’s sale, the BOR continued to use the building as its construction headquarters. District 5 (Fort Collins) annexed District 27 in June 1948. The remains of the schoolhouse and the knoll on which it stood are now beneath the waters of Horsetooth Reservoir.<sup>64</sup>

### **District 28 (Adams/Log Cabin)**

Located between Livermore to the east and Red Feather Lakes to the west, District 28 was organized in January 4, 1883, and carved from District 9 (Livermore). It contained two schoolhouses.<sup>65</sup>

The Adams School was most likely named for a prominent family in the area who settled here before 1894. The first schoolhouse was a log cabin William Breslford constructed on part of a miner’s claim in Section 16. This is about a mile from the Log Cabin post office and a half mile off what is now Red Feather Lakes Road. The first students were Frank, Alice, and Mina Sheets. Their family

lived on the south side of Livermore Mountain, and they walked four miles one way to reach the schoolhouse. The District eventually constructed a more adequate schoolhouse a half mile west of McNey Hill, near Glacier Meadows. It was a frame building with wood lap siding that, according to photographs, appears to have been unpainted for most of its existence. Locals referred to the schoolhouse as the “traveling school” because it was moved from place to place to accommodate students. (Many schoolhouses in Larimer County earned this nickname.) In 1912, the District moved the building three miles east to a location between the McNey and Tibbits Ranches. The schoolhouse returned to near its original location in 1917. In 1945, Georgia Harris Vogele wanted to take the teaching position at the Adams School. She traveled to Denver to take the test necessary to obtain a wartime teaching permit. But she was only 17 at the time, and she had to be at least 18 to take the test. Officials in Denver told her to return after her birthday but still allowed her to teach. Perhaps it was because, by that time, the Adams School had but one student – eighth grader Alice Buckendorf. Later that year three brothers in three different grades arrived at the school. Vogele’s memories of the Adams School were steeped in pastoral reflections:

I loved walking up the draw [to the schoolhouse] rather than the road as it was so pretty with birds and deer that I would quite often see. I nearly walked upon a fawn one day. The mother was very nervous about me being so close. She stomped her front feet to let me know not to move any closer.<sup>66</sup>

Vogele lost her position at the Adams School during the 1946-47 school year when all of the students moved away. The last student to attend the school was Richard Swan, who, in 1957, while in the seventh grade, was the only pupil. In 1961, after district consolidation, Poudre School District moved the Adams schoolhouse to Virginia Dale where it served as the teacherage. It remains intact at this location.<sup>67</sup>

Located in the village of Log Cabin, along Red Feather Lakes Road (County Road 74 E) between Livermore and Red Feather Lakes, Log Cabin School was, appropriately enough, a log building. It was constructed of round logs with simple, saddle corner notching. Windows were four-light awning, hopper, or casement and appear two to a side. Students entered through the center of the gable end. Corrugated sheets of metal covered the roof. One of the teachers was Stewart C. Case, who operated the Log Cabin store and hotel from 1911 to 1919. He also was an occasional instructor at the Adams School. The Log Cabin School stands today and is used as a dwelling. It is located on the north side of Red Feather Lakes Road just east of its intersection with County Road 68 C.<sup>68</sup>

### District 31 (Fossil Creek)

Located south of Fort Collins, on the southwest corner of U.S. Highway 287 (College Avenue) and Harmony Road, the Fossil Creek School was constructed in 1884. In 1910, the teacher was Attie D. Moore. She had 49 students. Officers of District 31 that year were Henri McClelland, president; Hugh Strachan, secretary; and Olin Reed, treasurer. In 1933, the teacher was Ruth I. Pitts, who had 17

**Figure 30.** The Fossil Creek School before its demolition in 1986. (Photo by Marilyn Norlin Eckles, in *Morris*, vol. II)



pupils, five of whom had the same surname, “Cordova.” In 1949-50, Katherine Lydon was the instructor. School board members that term were John Strachan, Herbert Norlin, and Mrs. John Pendergast. The Fossil Creek School was a tidy, one-room, brick schoolhouse with segmental arched windows. An enclosed vestibule was later added to the building and stucco applied over the bricks. The schoolhouse stood long after District 5 annexed District 31 on June 7, 1955. It was demolished in 1986 for the construction of out-parcel commercial buildings associated with the adjacent Wal-Mart store.<sup>69</sup>



**Figure 31.** The Upper Boxelder School is now situated in the courtyard of the Fort Collins Museum. (Photo by the author)

### District 33 (Upper Boxelder)

Wedged between District 55 (Buckeye) to the east and District 12 (Virginia Dale) to the north, District 33 was organized on December 9, 1884. A decade earlier, Isaac Adair became the first Anglo to settle on this arid plateau, located where plains meet mountains and Colorado meets Wyoming. Early settlers like Adair were almost always ranchers. According to local legend, a school became necessary after 1882 when a colony of Mormons squatted on land near Red Mountain (just east of County Road 37, near U.S. Highway 287, north of Livermore and south of Virginia Dale.) But the man who constructed the schoolhouse had also contributed significantly to an increase in the school-age population – Alexander Webster, father of 14 children. Completed in 1883, the one-room schoolhouse was a log building with hog-trough corners. Located along County Road 37 (Granite Canyon Road) in Section 19, at the foot of Red Mountain, the school rested on a tightly mortared sandstone foundation. Students entered

through a doorway, complete with transom, in the center of the gable end. Lining each side were a set of four-over-four windows. Fishscale wood shingles covered the gables, and wood shakes protected the roof. A pink brick chimney emerged from the rear of the roof ridge.<sup>70</sup>

The school’s first teacher was Miss Daisy Runyan. Some of her successors were Ora Cornelison Mason (ca. 1918), Mrs. G. Nauta (1940s), Goldie Hutchinson (1946-47), and Barbara Swett (ca. 1950) The Upper Boxelder School was extremely well built. It remained in use long after the Mormon families had departed, some traveling east to Missouri and other west to Utah. As late as 1947, the school had six children, all members of the combined Swanson-Juvinall family. But in 1951, the Swanson family moved away from the area. When they removed their children from the tiny school, it closed. The schoolhouse was located on land belonging to the Maxwell Ranch. The owners of the ranch, upon their deaths, donated the property to the Colorado State University Research Foundation. In 1977, CSU donated the schoolhouse to the City of Fort Collins. The Fort Collins Victorian Questers financed the school’s move to a site adjacent to the Fort Collins Museum, where it remains today. It is an important component of the interpretation of the area’s agrarian past and is a poignant reminder of the rural roots of public education in Larimer County.<sup>71</sup>

### District 34 (Wellington)

Located in the Boxelder Valley north of Fort Collins, Wellington was named in honor of C.L. Wellington, traffic manager for the Colorado & Southern Railroad. The town

site was surveyed in 1902 and incorporated in 1905. The C&S tracks extending north from Fort Collins reached Wellington in 1903.<sup>72</sup>

The first school in Wellington was a typical, one-room schoolhouse. But with the completion of the railroad, the town boomed and, in 1905, it constructed a larger, wood-frame schoolhouse. A second floor crowned the building in 1907. The modified school, located adjacent to the Community Church of Wellington, was an imposing building. With a gable on hip roof, the wood-siding-clad school featured impressive classical architectural details such as heavy cornices, pediments, and fanlights. Some of the one-over-one-light sash windows contained diamond-shaped glazing in the upper lights. Capping the building was a large belfry. The school housed a full compliment of grades, with the elementary school on the first floor and high school on the second.<sup>73</sup>

In 1916, the burgeoning community constructed a three-story, brick schoolhouse on North Third Street, at a cost \$21,689. The building featured formal, Romanesque arches on either end of the central portion. Windows were in long bands and were six-over-one. The schoolhouse remained in use after district consolidation in 1960, housing elementary and middle school grades. In 1976, Poudre School District completed Eyestone Elementary School in Wellington. The older building became solely the junior high school, and PSD added a gymnasium in 1978 and locker rooms in 1980. In 1993, the District demolished the 1916 portion of the school and rebuilt it. PSD preserved an archway from the original building and located it in front of the rebuilt junior high school.<sup>74</sup>

### District 35 (no name)

Located on the prairie northeast of Fort Collins, District 35 was organized on March 21, 1885. The original schoolhouse, constructed between 1885 and 1890, was located at what is now the southwest corner of Interstate 25 and County Road 54. It was a small, wood-frame, one-room schoolhouse, with whitewashed clapboard siding and a small vestibule. The building featured three, two-over-two-light sash windows on each side elevation. A corbelled brick chimney emerged at the center of the rear elevation. The student population in the area increased so much that, in 1906, the District erected a tent beside the schoolhouse to house more students. Unfortunately, the tent proved uninhabitable during the winter, forcing the District to construct a new schoolhouse.<sup>75</sup>

Located one mile south of the old building, the new, two-room school was completed in 1907 and, in 1919, the District constructed a four-room teacherage. An additional two classrooms were added to the school in 1921. The finished building was a rather sophisticated and refined example of Classical Revival architecture for its prairie locale. The floor plan consisted of a central hall with two classrooms on each side. Covering the central entryway was a heavy pediment supported by slender, round columns. The pediment and cornice beneath it were decorated with fine dentil molding. Above the pediment, crowning the roof was a belfry. The pressed-brick building, with sandstone foundation, was painted white sometime between 1925 and 1928. This building was razed in 1965 when U.S. Highway 87 was improved to become Interstate 25.<sup>76</sup>



**Figure 32.** The first District 35 schoolhouse, circa 1890, was an iconic American one-room school. (Helen Akin Day Collection, Morris, vol. II)



### District 36 (Sunset)

Located north of Laporte, this district was organized on March 18, 1885. The schoolhouse was located about a mile east of what is now the cement factory, just northeast of Highway 287, on the Jackson Ditch. It was originally a tiny, wood-frame schoolhouse with tall, four-over-four windows. It eventually featured a classroom, two hallways, and a library. On May 18, 1934, District 36 consolidated with Districts 11 and 60 to create District 64 (Laporte Consolidated). At that time, the little, white, wood-frame schoolhouse was moved to the Cache la Poudre School grounds in Laporte to become a second-grade classroom. The District attached the schoolhouse to the first-grade classroom, which was also housed in a white, wood-frame building moved from elsewhere. The first-grade building had once been a home, a country school, and the superintendent's house. The old District 36 school housed the second grade until 1972. The combined buildings still remain in Laporte, located on the cul-de-sac at the end of Vernon Court. It is a duplex rental unit.<sup>77</sup>

**Figure 33.** Many schoolhouses took on new lives after PSD sold them. The former Rocky Ridge School is now a church. (Photo by the author)



### District 39 (Trilby)

The name for this agricultural area most likely comes from George DuMaurier's 1894 novel *Trilby*. Established on June 21, 1885, this district was located directly between Fort Collins and Loveland. On June 25, 1953, District 5 (Fort Collins) annexed the northern 54 percent of the district while District 2 (Loveland) assumed the remaining 46 percent. The Trilby School was a typical, clapboard-sided, one-room schoolhouse, with the entrance at the gable end

and windows along to sides. It still exists as a private residence at the southwest corner of U.S. Highway 287 (College Avenue) and Trilby Road.<sup>78</sup>

### District 40 (Soldier Canyon/Lamb)

Established on April 25, 1885, District 40 was situated around Soldier Canyon, west of Fort Collins and south of Bellvue. The schoolhouse was located on the 40-acre homestead of local stonemason Eugene Lamb and his wife, Effie. They had six children, all of whom attended the tiny schoolhouse. Thus, the building was known both as the Soldier Canyon School and Lamb School. It was a wood-frame building resting on a foundation of random-laid sandstone rubble. The students and the teacher entered through the center of the gable end, and a pair of sash windows opened on each side. Wood weatherboard clad the walls, and an uncovered wood porch provided access to the building. In 1913, District 40 consolidated with Districts 4 (Laporte), 7 (Pleasant Valley), and 50 (Bellvue) to form District 60 (Cache la Poudre).<sup>79</sup>

### District 41 (Rocky Ridge)

Established on April 27, 1885, this district was located northeast of Fort Collins, directly northeast of Terry Lake. The history of the District's first schoolhouse is unclear. However, after 1900, District 41 constructed a new, multi-room schoolhouse, located along Colorado Highway 1, at 290 County Road 56 E. A red-brick veneer clad the exterior walls, which a hipped roof protected. The floor plan consisted of a central hallway with a classroom on each



side, both on the main floor and the basement. Thus, each classroom held two grades. The central hallway protruded forward on the principal elevation, forming an entryway. A set of wide, concrete steps approached the double-door entryway, which featured a shaped parapet. Windows appeared in bands along the side elevations. Rocky Ridge students attended junior and senior high school at Waverly. In 1985, Poudre School District sold the building to the Pope Pius X Society, which uses the building for its Annunciation Chapel.<sup>80</sup>

### District 42 (Gleneyre)

Located near the junction of McIntyre Creek with the Laramie River, in the remote northwest corner of Larimer County, north of Glendevey, Gleneyre was originally called Dawson's Headquarters. A man named Dawson contracted with the Union Pacific Railroad to supply ties for the eastern portion of the first transcontinental railroad, then under construction in Wyoming. The name remained Dawson's Headquarters until around 1880. Ranchers began to come to this glen outpost as a meeting place, stocking up on supplies here and using the post office. They renamed the place Gleneyre.<sup>81</sup>

A school district was formed here around 1885-86. The schoolhouse was a rather sophisticated log building, with square-hewn logs and hog-trough corners. Flanked by shutters, a set of three, four-over-four-light windows lined both of the side elevations. The students and teacher entered on the north end through a small, front-gabled foyer. In a place where any substantial buildings were few, this schoolhouse provided a sense of permanence and

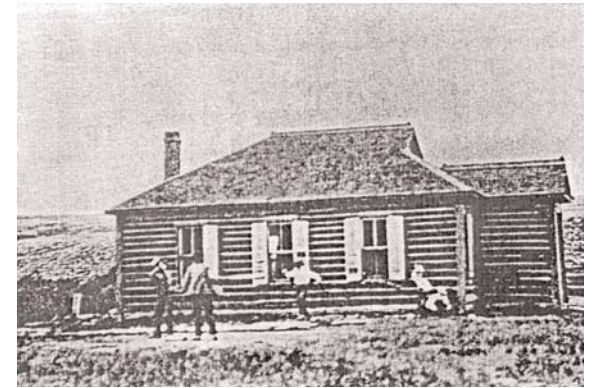
refinement. The school remained opened after district consolidation in 1960. It closed by the late 1960s, when it had too few students to justify its existence.<sup>82</sup>

### District 49 (Waverly)

Located north of Fort Collins and 5 miles northwest of Wellington, the school district here was organized on March 19, 1886, before the town of Waverly was settled. F.C. Grable surveyed a town site within the District in 1903, and Sherman Grable promoted the community. A clerk in the new post office here apparently suggested the town's name, in honor of Sir Walter Scott's "Waverly" novels. The Colorado & Southern Railroad constructed a branch from Wellington to this settlement in 1903. The town boasted stores and a gas station. It had a mayor, town council, and even a fire department.<sup>83</sup>

District 49 constructed the first schoolhouse in the community of Waverly in 1918 on land purchased from Mr. T. Harned. The student population continued to expand and, sometime between 1918 and 1928, the District constructed a new schoolhouse. (Some sources suggest that the District merely expanded the 1918 building, but structural evidence combined with the student census does not entirely support this assertion.) A teacherage was also constructed here, most likely in the 1920s, but Poudre School District demolished it in 1998.<sup>84</sup>

Located at the northwest corner of County Roads 66 and 51, the 1918 Waverly School was perhaps the best example of a rather large and sophisticated school building in an undeveloped, rural area. It was a long, single-story brick building with a full basement. Most notable was its



**Figure 34.** The Gleneyre School was perhaps the most isolated schoolhouse in Larimer County. Its location may have contributed to its continued use well after the creation of PSD in 1960. (Ahlbrandt, Legacy)

**Figure 35.** The Waverly School was a rather sophisticated and large building for its rural location. (Photo by the author)



elaborate brickwork. It suggested a very minimal interpretation of Collegiate Gothic, with buttresses and tall, narrow archways around the doors. Inside, the building featured a combination gymnasium/auditorium with a balcony, as well as a lunchroom and kitchen. The Waverly School served all grades, elementary through high school.

But the Waverly School remained small. Indeed, the janitor served double-duty as the sole bus driver. When the county considered school district reorganization in the late 1950s, Waverly often served as a key example in supporting consolidation. Its tiny high school was not even accredited and could not offer the array and depth of classes available in Fort Collins. After consolidation in 1960, Waverly students were bused to Wellington, and the schoolhouse served as a community center. But Poudre School District retained ownership of the facility. Today it is the Waverly School Teen Learning Center. Except for the schoolhouse itself, little else remains of the town of Waverly.<sup>85</sup>

District 49 also hosted at least two other schoolhouses. The South School was a one-room building just north of Waverly. It was a rather long school, with four, four-over-four windows lining each side. It was clad in white-washed wood siding and was entered through the gable end via an uncovered porch. In 1912, 20 students attended the school, varying in age from 6 to 18. The District could not have a South School without a North School. This building was almost identical to the South School, except that it was shorter, with only three windows per side. Its exact location is unclear. It is unclear whether either of these schoolhouses still exists.<sup>86</sup>

## District 50 (Bellvue)

Set in Pleasant Valley, the town of Bellvue was established in 1872 by Jacob Flowers. It became a small railroad center, shipping stone from quarries at nearby Redstone and Soldier Canyon. By 1880, the town boasted several businesses, hotels, boarding houses, and a number of residences. Prior to the establishment of District 50, students in Bellvue attended the Pleasant Valley School (District 7), which was, in some cases, two miles away from their homes. On April 28, 1886, Bellvue formed its own school district and approved \$1,500 to purchase property and construct a new schoolhouse. Its was located on Conard's corner, a block south of the B.F. Flowers General Merchandise store, now the Bellvue Grange building. A Mr. Basty (or Bastie) constructed the one-room schoolhouse from native sandstone – the same used for the Flowers store – quarried nearby. According to local legend, the District paid Mr. Basty a pair of mules for his time and expenses. Also according to anecdotal descriptions, one notable feature of the schoolhouse was its high-set windows. Apparently this was done to promote student concentration inside by reducing distractions outside. In 1913, District 50 consolidated with Districts 4 (Laporte), 7 (Pleasant Valley), and 40 (Soldier Canyon/Lamb) to create District 60 (Cache la Poudre). The schoolhouse then became a dwelling until it was demolished in 1955.<sup>87</sup>

## District 52 (Westerdoll)

Located south of Timnath, District 52 was formed on August 8, 1887. The schoolhouse for this district was

referred to as both the Westerdoll School and the Swede School. It was a typical one-room building, clad in white-washed weatherboard, with cornerboards painted a contrasting color. Windows were four-over-four, opening beneath protruding cornices. A belfry crowned the roof. District 52 consolidated on March 20, 1918, with Districts 6 (Sherwood/Riverside) and 21 (Fairview/Timnath) to form District 62 (Timnath Consolidated).<sup>88</sup>

### **District 53 (Eggers/Elkhorn)**

This district, located in Poudre Canyon between Stove Prairie Landing to the east and Rustic to the west, was organized on September 3, 1887. It contained two schoolhouses, Eggers and Elkhorn. Eggers was a summer post office and resort named for the area's original settlers, the Fred Eggers family. While the original location of this log, one-room schoolhouse is unclear, it spent most of its days near the Pingree Park Bridge on Colorado Highway 14 in Poudre Canyon. After the consolidation of Poudre School District, the building remained vacant and was threatened with demolition until members of the Poudre Canyon Chapel moved the schoolhouse beside their building. It housed the Poudre Canyon Library and is now the Poudre Canyon Museum. The log building is entered through the gable end and features bands of windows on either side.<sup>89</sup>

Elkhorn refers to the creek that flows into the Cache la Poudre River between Stove Prairie Landing and Rustic. The area drained by the creek runs between Poudre Canyon and Red Feather Lakes. The first schoolhouse in the area was apparently located at Manhattan, a short-lived mining boomtown north of Rustic. Here, classes were held

in homes and at the Manhattan town hall. At a special meeting in 1903, families in the area decided to build a new schoolhouse, a one-room, 20-by-40-foot building. In 1905, the building was moved to a location near the intersection of County Road 69 and the Pingree Hill Road. Later it was moved to another place along the Elkhorn and, in the summer of 1947, it wound up in its final location, the Ralph Mason Ranch, in the Elkhorn Valley. The schoolhouse remained opened after district consolidation in 1960. A decade later it was closed, and, in 1974, Poudre School District cancelled its lease with the property owners. It is unclear whether this building still exists.<sup>90</sup>

### **District 55 (Buckeye)**

The first settlers, mostly stout-hearted cattle ranchers, arrived in the Buckeye area in the early 1860s. In 1860, Elias W. "Pap" Whitcomb and Oliver Goodwin began feeding cattle on the dry grasses in northeastern Larimer County. Noah Bristol bought the Whitcomb Ranch in 1875. He became a county commissioner and was instrumental in establishing a school district in the Buckeye area, which was officially organized on June 1, 1888. Classes were first conducted in the old Whitcomb ranch house, just east of the Eldon Ackerman house. Buckeye became more prosperous in the early 1900s when disillusioned coal miners from Walsenburg, Trinidad, Erie, and Lafayette took up homesteads here. The settlement of Buckeye was not officially founded until 1925, when the Union Pacific completed an 11.64-mile branch line from Portner (Boettcher) Station to this settlement. The railroad constructed the line to tap into the rich agricultural market and even richer oil



**Figure 36.** The Eggers School, located along Colorado Highway 14, now serves as the Poudre Canyon Museum. (Photo by the author)

fields. District 55 maintained, at one time or another, at least six different schoolhouses: Spring/Greenacre, Round Butte, East, Fairmont, Bulger, and Buckeye.<sup>91</sup>

*Spring/Greenacre School.* The first school in this area actually predated the district. It was a one-room building constructed in the 1870s on the Calloway homestead. The schoolhouse consisted of square-hewn logs with dovetail corner notching. Wood shakes covered the roof, and the windows were four-over-four. The Greenacre brothers, Allen, Harold, and Ed, later purchased the Calloway homestead. Sometime around 1905, they built a new, wood-frame schoolhouse near a spring on their property in the Boxelder Valley, about 2 or 3 miles west of County Road 21. The first teacher was Mae Vandewark and the first, and, for a while, only student was Louise Greenacre (Whistleman, Hosack).<sup>92</sup>

In 1907, Olive Cooper became Louise Greenacre's teacher at the school. The District paid her \$40 a month for the three-month school term. Cooper's reason for coming to this desolate outpost on the high prairie was the same motive that brought many single women to the West. "There was nothing else a woman could do then but teach school or do housework," Cooper said in a 1974 oral history interview. "I might have chosen another profession if I'd had an opportunity – but I've always liked working with children." And like so many western schoolmarms, Cooper boarded with a local family, in this case the Greenacres. In 1906, she met her future husband, Frank Widman, the postmaster at Waverly. (He also ran the Waverly Store with his sister, Elizabeth Widman Schmidt.) Despite her connection to Widman, Cooper did not remain at Buckeye. She taught in rural districts in Larimer County (including

Waverly, Harmony, Buckeye, and District 11) as well as in Wyoming and Oregon. Cooper returned to Buckeye, however, and in 1917 she married Widman. As was expected, she retired from teaching since a country schoolhouse was not a respectable place for a married woman.<sup>93</sup>

Doris Greenacre describes the beginning of the school day at the Spring School:

A fire was built in the early morning in the pot-bellied stove in the northwest corner of the schoolroom. Drinking water was carried from the spring. Children galloped in on wiry ponies or rode horse-drawn buggies. A shed near the school protected the horses. The school-marm appeared, bell in hand, to call everyone into the school building to commence another day of teaching and learning at Greenacre-Spring School.<sup>94</sup>

Around 1917, the District moved the Spring School to adjust to shifting centers of population. At that time, Ada Greenacre, wife of Ed Greenacre, provided the school with a two-burner kerosene stove, as well as a couple of large kettles and other cooking and eating utensils. She had read about the benefits of hot lunch programs in schools elsewhere and, in a truly Progressive-era move, she started a hot lunch program for the school children. Each of the families took a turn providing food.<sup>95</sup> Laura Isabel Makepeace, who was the Spring School teacher at this time, provides a description of the meals:

We had a variety from various combinations of vegetable soups, eggs, big beef joints – one of them provided three meals, i.e., soup, dumplings,



and hash. That was for 22 people. Pinto beans' day changed from a near tragedy to a favorite day. One family (four children) brought a large can of pinto beans and all of the others announced they didn't like them. I added much imagination to them. The last hour they cooked, better and better they did smell, so at noon every child was willing to try a tablespoonful; then all but one came back to have his bowl filled. After that it was a favorite noon meal.<sup>96</sup>

The Greenacre-Spring school had been abandoned by the early 1930s and its is unclear what it looked like.

*Bulger School.* In 1910, on the arid prairie ten miles north of Wellington, on what is now Interstate 25, Jim Bulger established his namesake town site. The town soon claimed ten families, and District 55 constructed a schoolhouse for their children. It was a whitewashed, clapboard-sided building resting on a dry-laid foundation. Students entered through the center of a gable end, and a pair of two-over-two windows pierced each side wall. According to local legend, Bulger became increasingly agitated that his town site was not prospering as he had planned. In 1914, in a drunken rampage, he unloaded his shotgun into the town. He fled but was later arrested in Denver. The incident drove away the town's few residents; the settlement and its school were abandoned.<sup>97</sup>

*Round Butte School.* The Round Butte School was located near its namesake topographic feature, approximately 20 miles north and slightly west of Wellington. The one-room, wood-frame schoolhouse was constructed in 1888 and was originally located a half mile west of the butte. It was later moved to a location one mile south of it. In 1916,

there were 16 children attending the one-room schoolhouse. It appears to have been a masonry building, covered in an earth-tone stucco. A door opened in the center of the gable end. A pair of four-over-four windows opened on each side. A small stovepipe emerged from the roof ridge. After district consolidation in 1960, the schoolhouse was moved to Waverly. It is located north of the Waverly School and has been converted into a residence.<sup>98</sup>

Laura Makepeace also taught at the Round Butte School. She observed that "people on the plains were pitifully poor, most of them." She remembered one particular incident that occurred around Christmas, 1916:

We were getting ready to put on a Christmas program and planning to follow the program with a box supper, but the teacher felt there must be a tree. On the foothills several miles to the west we could see dark spots which we knew must be trees, so I sent two boys in their buggy with the school axe to cut us a tree. When they returned they said all of the trees had branches on only one side. The wind blew up there so hard from the northwest no branches had had a chance to grow. So they had brought two trees and we wired them together to make one tree....

The morning I returned, ...I threw the tree out into the yard, planning to take it to the woodshed later to chop it for kindling. When I looked out at recess, a little boy had set it up in the fence corner and was trying to climb it. I thought "you poor little fellow. You've never had a tree to climb on. I'll just leave it there for a few days."<sup>99</sup>

*Buckeye School.* The Buckeye School, a two-room,





**Figure 37.** The Buckeye School's prairie locale remains pretty much as it was when District 55 constructed this building. (Photo by the author)

wood-frame schoolhouse, was constructed in 1925 by O.A. Decker of Fort Collins. The building measured 26 by 60 feet and had 10-foot ceilings. Decker bid \$3,630.60 for the project, noting that oak flooring would cost an additional \$149.76. The schoolhouse was situated on three acres of land donated by C.V. Owens. He also provided gravel for the playground and planted trees. The completed building was symmetrical in its floor plan, with front-gable entryways on either end of a side elevation, providing access to each of the classrooms. The school rested on a rather high concrete foundation, and whitewashed wood siding clad the exterior walls. Most windows were two-over-two, double-hung, usually placed in bands across the side.<sup>100</sup>

Paid \$75 a month, Jess Trower was the first teacher at the Buckeye School. This instructor had 29 students. Teachers following Trower were Elise Goodman (1931-32); Elizabeth Lane (1933-35); Ruby Sieglinger (1934-35); Marie Trower (1935-37); and Joseph McNey (1937-40). The last instructor at the school was most likely Olive Ragsdale. After completing the eighth grade, students at Buckeye School attended Leshar Junior High School and, then, Fort Collins High School. With the reorganization of the county's districts in 1960, the Buckeye School was closed. Elementary students in the area initially attended the Waverly School and, later, Wellington schools. The old Buckeye School is now used as a community center.<sup>101</sup>

### **District 56 (Westlake/Red Feather Lakes)**

The first schoolhouse in this area of the Lone Creek Valley, northwest of Fort Collins and west of Livermore,

predated the establishment of the District. John Hardin and his family settled on a ranch on South Lone Pine Creek in 1871, near what is now Log Cabin. Hardin constructed a schoolhouse on his ranch for his large family and kept the school census himself.<sup>102</sup> In 1888, settlers in the area applied to the county superintendent of schools for permission to establish their own district. Local historian Evadene Burriss Swanson noted a phenomenon in the development of the District that influenced the geographic limits of countless rural school districts. "The school district boundaries...encompassed a natural unit in which settlers were drawn together for education and social life."<sup>103</sup> District 56 was officially organized on June 6, 1888. Children originally attended the schoolhouse John Hardin had constructed. The District decided to construct a new schoolhouse in 1895. However, a minor controversy erupted over the location of the new school. But in the tradition of school districts as tiny democracies, six of the eleven families in the District ultimately voted to locate the building near a spring on the northwest corner of the Hardin Ranch, a location that is today near the entrance to Red Feather Lakes.<sup>104</sup>

The original Westlake School, completed in 1895, was a typical one-room, mountain schoolhouse. It was a log building with hog-trough corners. Students entered the schoolhouse in the center of the gable end, and two, double-hung windows pierced each of the side elevations. A small, hipped-roof barn adjacent to the school provided protection for the pupils' ponies. And like many rural schoolhouses, the Westlake School was also a community center, hosting parties and dances.<sup>105</sup>

As in most rural districts, the unmarried female

teacher boarded with local families. In 1911 the teacher at Westlake was Carrie Williams. In 1913 it was Laura Makepeace. Because the students and the teacher alike had to travel great distances by foot or horse to arrive at the schoolhouse, the District originally only conducted classes in the summer. This, by no means, meant that travel was easy. Children wore overshoes all summer in order to cross the flooded hay meadows of the Hardin Ranch. A fire had to be made each morning to ward off the chill; classes were often held outside in the afternoon when the tiny building became stifling.<sup>106</sup>

In 1922, a land deal would alter the course of this isolated mountain outpost. Dr. D.O. Norton, Myron Akin (a prominent Fort Collins businessman and mayor), and Jesse Harris began consolidating their parcels in this area in the hopes of creating a summer resort community. They named the place Red Feather Lakes, in honor of a then-popular mezzo-soprano Tsianina (also spelled as Chinena) Red Feather, a Native American woman of Cherokee and Creek descent. Known popularly by her stage name, Princess Red Feather, the singer was touted in New York City and across the country. Appearing on stage in a romanticized image of traditional Native American garb, she popularized songs such as the “Land of the Sky-Blue Waters,” and “Indian Love Call.” As part of a promotional stunt, Akin and others claimed, while the singer was performing in Denver, to have discovered the grave of Chief Red Feather, Tsianina’s grandfather, at their resort. They announced plans to preserve it for posterity. The town site named in her honor was officially incorporated in 1923, but the area remained very remote, first receiving electric service in 1953.<sup>107</sup>

By 1925, the number of year-round residents at Red Feather Lakes had increased substantially. At the same time, roads and automobiles improved. These events compelled the District to consider winter classes. The schoolhouse, however, was simply inadequate for cold-weather use. Thus, in 1925 or ’26, District 56 added insulation and clad the building in whitewashed, horizontal lap siding, allowing classes to be held in the winter.

Through the 1925-26 school year, Josephine Payson Clements’s mother, Mildred Payson Lambe, taught at the Westlake School. Clements recalled the remarkable trek her mother repeated each week as she traveled to and from the isolated schoolhouse:

During the winter she boarded with Martin and Verda Peterson, who lived about halfway between the Hardin ranch and Log Cabin. During these months she rode horseback to school weekdays and on weekends rode horseback from Petersons’ to Log Cabin, where she left the horse at the Millers’ barn, then drove her Chevy touring car, with canvas top and button-down isinglass curtains, to Fort Collins.

On Sunday afternoon, she drove back to Log Cabin, left the car at Millers’ again, and rode the horse back to the Petersons’.<sup>108</sup>

But even schools as isolated as Westlake were not immune to the Progressive-era reforms sweeping the nation’s schools. In 1927, Westlake schoolmarm Lambe was awarded a national pennant for instituting the recommendations of rural school nurses into her own schoolhouse. The centerpiece of her changes was a hot lunch



**Figure 38.** The Westlake School, photographed in 1912. The small building at right is a horse shelter. (Swanson, Red Feather Lakes)

program, which many rural schools adopted in the 1920s. Apparently, every child at the school gained weight from the meals. Lambe also conducted a box social to raise funds for building improvements, including new paint for the interior, shades and curtains for the windows, and the addition of a woodshed along the west wall to help provide an additional buffer against the prevailing winds. In the early 1940s, Bee More McCarthy became the teacher at the former Westlake, now Red Feather Lakes School. As the winter population of the resort community increased during and immediately after the war years, so, too, did student enrollment. In the fall of 1945, McCarthy had five students. By February of the next year she had 12 students representing four families, including her own. The little schoolhouse continued to serve the community well after the creation of Poudre School District in 1960. In 1985, a new elementary school was completed here. Designed by Robb, Brenner & Breilig, the building replicated the Rustic log appearance of the resort's homes and businesses. The 7,904-square-foot building was expanded to 8,881 square feet with an addition in 1997. The original Westlake schoolhouse appears to have been razed.<sup>109</sup>

The District operated at least two other schools. The Yockey School was located near Black Mountain, northwest of Red Feather Lakes. The Campbell Grove School was a one-room, log building. While saddle notches held the corners, the ends of the logs were shaped into points. The roof consisted of uncovered boards.<sup>110</sup>

### **District 59 (Moessner)**

Located north of Wellington, this district was organ-

ized on March 20, 1908. The District completed its first schoolhouse in time for the 1908-09 school term. It was situated on land belonging to Frank Moessner. The schoolhouse was a small, one-room, wood-frame building. It was a square plan, with the door and transom opening in the center of the gable end. Lining each side was a pair of two-over-two windows. The District replaced this schoolhouse with a similar building in 1917.<sup>111</sup>

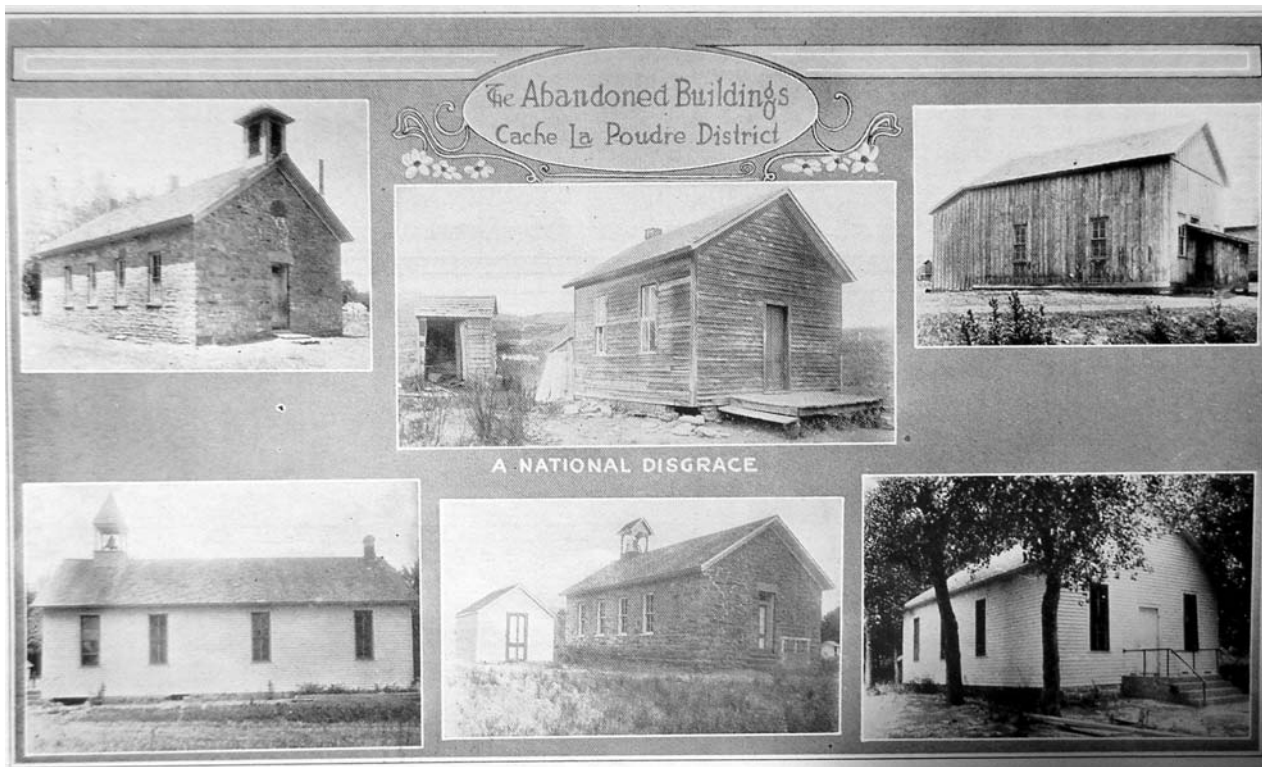
Families in the Moessner District were notoriously poor. In the 1920s, however, an oil boom in northern Weld and Larimer counties brought an influx of people and money to the high prairie. As a result, the District 59 school board decided to construct a new school building and teacherage. In June 1926, the board accepted the bid of Fort Collins contractor R.S. White, who proposed to construct the buildings for \$8,879.25. The new schoolhouse was a rectangular-plan, light-brown brick building, resting on a high, concrete foundation and protected beneath a broad, hipped roof. Inside were two classrooms on the main floor and an auditorium in the basement. The building also boasted gas heat and lights at a time when many rural schools with similar populations still had potbellied stoves and kerosene lamps, a testament to the prosperity of the oil boom. On the exterior, the school exhibited elements of the Craftsman style, including exposed rafter ends and windows with the upper sashes divided vertically. District 34 (Wellington) annexed District 59 in 1956. This action was meant to take advantage of efficiencies in consolidating the school physical plant while increasing enrollment. The school and teacherage sat vacant for many years. James Elder, an adjacent landowner and frequent member of the District 59 school board, eventually purchased the

teacherage. North Poudre Irrigation Company bought the school and converted it into housing for its employees. They later sold it, and the building became rental units. The building still stands.<sup>112</sup>

## District 60 (Cache la Poudre)

In 1912, residents in the Laporte area embarked upon an important Progressive-era experiment in Colorado public education that would ultimately pave the way for the creation of Poudre School District. They elected to consolidate four districts into one: District 4 (Laporte), District 7 (Pleasant Valley), District 40 (Soldier Canyon/Lamb), and District 50 (Bellvue). The reorganization merged five, one-teacher schools and another schoolhouse with three teachers. Officially established on May 5, 1913, District 60 (Cache la Poudre) was only the second consolidated school district in Colorado. Progressive-era education reformers in the state hailed Cache la Poudre as an example all districts should follow to improve their rural schools.<sup>113</sup> In his report on the condition of the state's country schools, C.G. Sargent remarked that parents, teachers, and administrators in District 60 "are in a class by themselves, for they now have the largest, the strongest, and best equipped rural school in Colorado."<sup>114</sup>

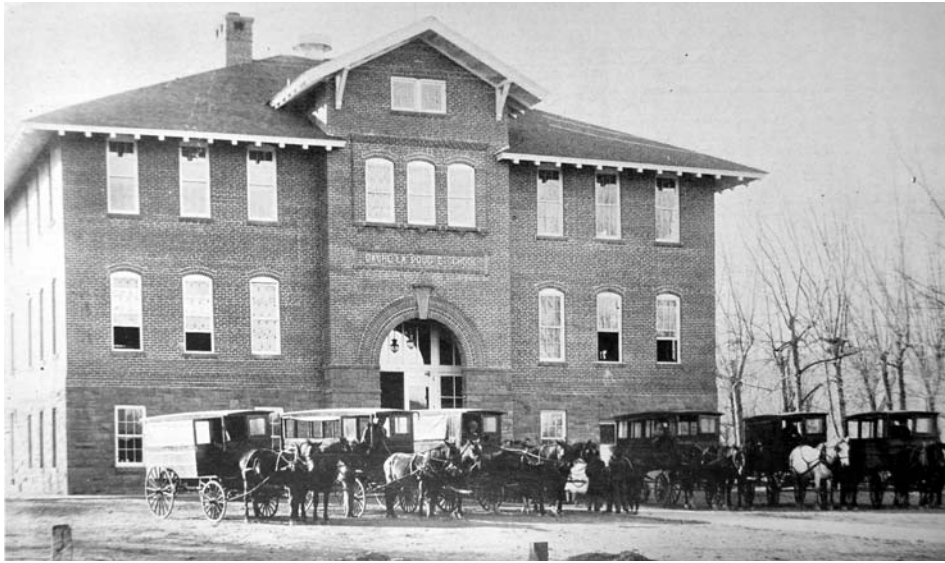
District 60 replaced six "dilapidated" rural schools with one, large schoolhouse, located in Laporte. The school was large enough to accommodate a four-year high school, "with the curriculum emphasizing agriculture and farm life."<sup>115</sup> In his report, Sargent provides this glowing description of the new Cache la Poudre School:



The school building is constructed of red sandstone and pressed brick. It is three stories high, the first floor being eight inches above the level of the ground. The first floor contains the steam heating plant, coal-bins, five rooms in which the janitor and his family live, the toilet rooms, a laboratory, and two large rooms now used as play-rooms for the small children in stormy weather, and lunch rooms for those who ride to school. The second floor has a large hallway and four large class-rooms, while on the third floor are three more classrooms, a rest-room for the women teachers, a principal's office, and a large assembly room which will accommodate from 350 to 400 people. The school is supplied with

**Figure 39.** The Sargent report boasts that the Cache la Poudre School replaced several inadequate schoolhouses in the Laporte area. They are (clockwise from top left) Bellvue School (District 50); Soldier Canyon-Lamb (District 40); unknown; Laporte School (District 4); Pleasant Valley School (District 7); and unknown. (*Sargent*)





**Figure 40.** The Cache la Poudre School, circa 1913, with the horse-drawn vans that made consolidation possible. (*Sargent*)

mountain water and has sanitary drinking fountains on each floor. It is wired for electricity, but at present is lighted with gas. The completed plant cost \$25,000.

[The new school sits on 4.5 acres] of good farming land with water right. It has a small orchard of six-year-old apple trees. It has ground that will be used for gardens. It has

large baseball and football grounds, playgrounds for the small children, and room for tennis courts.<sup>116</sup>

Architecturally the Cache la Poudre School was significant because it represented the transition from an older, classically inspired style to a more modern American style. In many ways, the building resembled many older schoolhouses in the Fort Collins area and across the United States. The building featured a pink sandstone foundation below red, pressed-brick walls. A central tower protruded between symmetrical wings. Opening in the center of the tower was a massive, arched entryway, complete with elaborate corbelling and a scrolled keystone. These features suggested a classical style popular for schools constructed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But the roofline revealed another style. With exposed rafter ends and knee brackets beneath the eaves, the school also dis-

played elements of Craftsman architecture, a style associated with the emerging Progressive movement.

The same contradiction between old and new existed inside the Cache la Poudre School. Its auditorium was on the top floor – the traditional floor plan based on the Quincy School. However, the building included classrooms specifically constructed for a high school curriculum and even boasted manual training rooms. These spaces represented a manifestation of newer, Progressive models of education.

Much of the success of the District 60 consolidation was due to the Cache la Poudre School. The quality of education and number of opportunities at the new school far exceeded the older, rural schools. Indeed, education at the Cache la Poudre School was such an improvement that residents of extremely remote portions of Poudre Canyon rented houses in Laporte during the winter so that their children could attend school there. But a more important reason for Districts 60's success was improvements in transportation. In 1912, residents organized the Poudre Valley Good Roads Association. It hired convict laborers to improve the road through Poudre Canyon during the winter of 1912-13. The convicts were then transferred to projects in the Big Thompson Canyon and Estes Park, including the construction of Fall River Road through Rocky Mountain National Park. In 1916, this crew returned to the Canyon to blast through a granite outcropping at a place called Little Narrows. The Baldwin Tunnel, better known as Poudre Canyon Tunnel, is still used by motorists today. These improvements quickly led to better roads throughout the Laporte area.<sup>117</sup>

In addition to better roads were better organized and,



later, mechanized conveyances. District 60 had created the first District-wide busing program in what would become Poudre School District. In 1913 the District purchased seven horse-drawn vans to convey 166 children to and from school each day. Later, the District replaced these vans with motorbuses. At least one of these buses was nothing more than a metal and wood box attached to a truck chassis. Local blacksmith Chris Lund constructed the contraption in his shop. It served the District until it could afford to buy a more substantial bus.<sup>118</sup>

In 1934, District 60 itself became part of a larger consolidation when Districts 11 (Michaud) and 36 (Sunset) merged with it to form District 64 (Laporte Consolidated). Poudre School District demolished the Cache la Poudre School in 1962 in preparation for the new Cache la Poudre Elementary School.<sup>119</sup>

### **District 62 (Timnath Consolidated)**

The next district consolidation to occur in Larimer County centered on the Timnath area. On March 20, 1918, Districts 6 (Sherwood/Riverside), 21 (Fairview/Timnath), and 52 (Westerdoll) consolidated to form District 62 (Timnath Consolidated). In 1919, the District completed a new school building, which housed an elementary school, high school, and kindergarten. The old Timnath School, directly north of the new school, became a kitchen and cafeteria. When it opened, the new Timnath Consolidated School was one of the most modern schools in Colorado and by far the most advanced educational building outside of Fort Collins, a remarkable achievement for a rural district. As originally constructed, the building featured class-

rooms divided among two floors and the basement. On March 21, 1935, however, faulty lighting in the school's stage area ignited a fire that gutted the building. Because of financial and legal restrictions, the District rebuilt the school almost exactly as it had been before the fire. Constructed with Works Progress Administration (WPA) labor, the 1936 building expressed the program's Modernistic style. It was a symmetrical, two-story building with a protruding central core and shallow, flanking wings. The walls consisted of tan bricks accented with brown brick. A shaped parapet, rising to form a pseudo pediment, crowned the central core, but was later removed. Most notable were the huge windows dominating the core's principal elevation. Unusually, however, the building lacked an ornate entrance. Instead, students entered through two small, unassuming doors on either side of the central core. During the 1953-54 school year, District 62 added a gymnasium and additional rooms to the south side of the building.<sup>120</sup>

With the formation of Poudre School District in 1960, the Timnath School housed grades kindergarten through 9; high school students attended Fort Collins High School. In 1972, PSD completed Boltz Junior High School in southeastern Fort Collins. At that time, the Timnath School became an elementary school, in which capacity it continues to function. In 1988-89, an addition to the south end of the building provided another 17,000 square feet of classroom and media center space. Another addition to the building was completed after 2000.<sup>121</sup>



**Figure 41.** The Timnath Consolidated School is now Timnath Elementary School. *(Photo by the author)*

### **District 64 (Laporte Consolidated)**

On May 29, 1924, Districts 11 (Michaud), 36 (Sunset), and 60 (Cache la Poudre) consolidated to form District 64 (Laporte Consolidated). In essence, the new district was nothing more than an expansion of the county's first district consolidation in District 60, but was evidence that roads and automobiles were improving, allowing children even farther from Laporte to attend its schools. The new district initially handled the influx of new students to the school by converting the old District 60 superintendent's house into a classroom and moving the Sunset School to the Cache la Poudre school grounds. This arrangement continued until 1949, when the District constructed a new high school. Designed by the architectural firm Magerfleisch & Burnham and built by Alford Matthiesen, the new Cache la Poudre High School was a sprawling, one-story, International-style building. The floor plan was V-shaped, with wings coming off a central core, which contained a combination auditorium and gymnasium. As plans for countywide school district consolidation gelled in the 1950s, residents in the Laporte area used this new building as a reason for resisting reorganization. They argued that the high school was as well equipped and modern as any in Larimer County. Their efforts ultimately failed. Today, Poudre School District continues to operate this 1949 building as Cache la Poudre Junior High School.<sup>122</sup>

### **District 65 (Pingree Park)**

Pingree Park was probably named for George W. Pingree, an early trapper and soldier. He apparently came to this area in 1868 to cut and mill lumber for ties destined for the Union Pacific Railroad, then building westward out of Cheyenne to its ultimate connection with the Central Pacific Railroad, thus completing the first transcontinental railroad. With a team of thirty to forty workers, Pingree cut ties and laid them along the banks of the Little South Fork of the Cache la Poudre River. During the spring runoff flood in 1869, Pingree's men floated the ties to Laporte, where they were hauled northward by teams of oxen to the aptly named Tie Siding on the Union Pacific mainline.

Organized on August 15, 1925, District 65 was the last school district established in Larimer County. Its sole purpose was to provide a public school for children of the Koenig family, which operated a ranch in Pingree Park. The schoolhouse was a cabin at the Ramsey-Koenig Ranch, which is now Colorado State University's Pingree Park Campus. The schoolhouse was a simple, wood-frame building clad in unpainted, vertical board-and-batten siding. The doorway was on the side of the building and the windows were one-over-one-light sash. The building remains intact today. District 53 (Eggers/Elkhorn) annexed the District in June 1946, probably after the last of the Koenig children left the eighth grade, rendering the entire District unnecessary.<sup>123</sup>

**Notes**

1. Jo and Lafi Miller, "Sloan School" in Morris, vol. II, 487.
2. Cutler, 6; Susan Harness, "Area's settlers valued education," *Fort Collins Coloradoan*, 17 September 1995, p. B5; Una S. Williams, "Rural School News," *Fort Collins Coloradoan*, 19 February 1934, p. 3.
3. Andrew Gulliford, *America's County Schools* (Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press, 1984), 7.
4. C.G. Sargent, *The Rural and Village Schools of Colorado: An Eight Year Survey of Each District, 1906-1913 Inclusive* (Fort Collins: Colorado Agricultural College, 1914), 6.
5. *Ibid.*, 10-11.
6. *Ibid.*, 6.
7. Margaret Bigelow Miller, "Larimer County School District Reorganization," in Morris, 118.
8. "Laporte," in Morris, 53-4; Marty Hagen, ed., *Larimer County Place Names: A History of Names on County Maps* (Fort Collins: Fort Collins Corral of Westerners, 1984), 46.
9. Clements, "Old School Districts," in Morris, vol. II, 442; Kitchen, 4, 15; Photograph of the District 4 (Laporte) schoolhouse, Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library.
10. Hagen, 69, 75.
11. Beverly Schuelke, "Timnath Schools," in Morris, vol. II, 495-6.
12. Hagen, 75; Schuelke, "Timnath Schools," in Morris, vol. II, 495-6.
13. Hagen, 62; Kitchen; Clements, "Old School Districts," in Morris, vol. II, 442; Wilma Camden, "Pleasant Valley School," in Morris, vol. II, 481-2; Wilma Camden, "District No. 7 – Pleasant Valley," in Larimer County Home Extension Clubs, *Histories of Larimer County Schools* (Fort Collins: by the authors, 1986), 9-10.
14. Camden, "District No. 7 – Pleasant Valley," in *Histories of Larimer County Schools*, 10.
15. Adra Storey Rietveld, "Livermore School" in Morris, vol. II, 468; Adra Storey Rietveld, "A History of Livermore School," in *Histories of Larimer County Schools*, 17; Kenneth Jensen, "Livermore school plagued by rattlesnakes," *Fort Collins Review*; in *History of Larimer County Schools*, 21.
16. Rietveld, "History of Livermore School," 17-18; Photograph "Dist. 9 Livermore School, Industrial Ed. 1894" (neg. 50), Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library.
17. Jessen, "Livermore school plagued by rattlesnakes."
18. Rietveld, "History of Livermore School," 17-18.
19. Rietveld, "Livermore School."
20. Rietveld, "Livermore," in Morris, 55; Doris Greenacre, "Livermore Yesterday, Today," in Morris, 56; Hagen, 49; Clements, "Old School Districts," in Morris, vol. II, 442; Rietveld, "Livermore School," in Morris, vol. II, 469-70; Daggett, *et al.*, "Livermore Elementary," 2; Kitchen.
21. Ahlbrandt, "Ingleside School District #9," in *Legacy*; Photo, "Dist. 9 Ingleside, From Pearl Moore Bartels" (neg. 3200), Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library.
22. Erma L. Devers, "School District No. 10," in *History of Larimer County Schools*, 28; Devers, "School District No. Ten," in Morris, vol. II, 475; Kitchen, 3.
23. "Apportionments for Dist. No. 10," in *History of Larimer County Schools*, 32; Devers, in Morris, vol. II, 476.
24. Devers, in Morris, vol. II, 476.
25. Carol Rowley, "Mountain View District 10," in Morris, vol. II, 477.
26. Rowley, 477; Airport Extension Homemakers Club, "A Brief History of District 10 School, Larimer County, Colorado," in *History of Larimer County Schools*; Devers, in Morris, vol. II, 476.
27. *Ibid.*
28. Clements, "Old School Districts," in Morris, vol. II, 443; Clements, "Cache la Poudre School," in Morris, vol. II, 449; Devers, "District #11 – Michaud School," in Morris, vol. II, 474; Kitchen, 3, 15.
29. Photograph, "Virginia Dale School, 1912" (neg. 10011), Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library.
30. Dick Burdette, "Virginia Dale," in Morris, 79-80; Ahlbrandt, "Virginia Dale District #12," in *Legacy*; Hagen, 78; Clements, "Old School Districts," in Morris, vol. II, 443.
31. Hagen, 72; Clements, "Old School Districts," in Morris, vol. II, 443
32. Clements, "Stratton Park School – Log Schoolhouse," in Morris, vol. II, 488-89.
33. Clements, "Stratton Park School – Latter Buildings," in Morris, vol. II, 493.
34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.*
36. *Ibid.*, 494.
37. *Ibid.*
38. Jack Fowler, "Poudre Park – Stratton Park School," in Morris, vol. II, 485.
39. Hagen, 17; Clements, "Old School Districts," in Morris, vol. II, 443; Ahlbrandt, "Boxelder School (Lower District #15)," in *Legacy*; Kitchen, 3, 15; "Improvements Are Made at Rural School," *Fort Collins Express-Courier*, 22 October 1929.
40. Photograph "School Dist. No. 15, Lower Boxelder 1907" (neg. 2972) and Photograph "Lower Boxelder School, Dist. 15, from 1906 Larimer County Democrat" (neg. 6027), Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library.
41. Helen Michie Reisdorff, "Pleasant View District #16 School," in *History of Larimer County Schools*, 67.
42. Reisdorff, 67-68.
43. Clements, "Old School Districts," in Morris, vol. II, 443; Helen Reisdorff, "Pleasant View District #16 School," in *History of Larimer County Schools*, 66; Ahlbrandt, "Pleasant View School District #16," in *Legacy*; "No. 16 School Will Close," *Fort Collins Coloradoan*, 4 August 1959.
44. Ahlbrandt, "Harmony School District #17," in *Legacy*; Hagen, 39; Beverly I. Schuelke, "Harmony School," in Morris, vol. II, 466-7.
45. Schuelke, 466-7; R. Laurie and Thomas H. Simmons, "Colorado Historical Society, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Historic Building Inventory Record for the Harmony School (5LR1513), January 1992; Jill Sato, "Preschool adds life to Harmony building," *Fort Collins Coloradoan*, 27 November 1997, p. A3.
46. Sato.
47. Helen Gabriel Lowery, "Stove Prairie School District," in Morris, vol. II, 491; Mary Ann Thompson, "Stove Prairie District #18," in Morris, vol. II, 492; Mary Ann Thompson, "District No. 18 – Stove Prairie," in *History of Larimer County Schools*, 73.
48. Lowery, "Stove Prairie School District," 491; Photograph "Dist. 18 Stove Prairie, Feb. 1912" (neg. 3208), Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library.
49. Lowery, "Stove Prairie School District," 491; Thompson, 492; Pearl Yager, "Welch Park School," in Morris, vol. II, 501; "Rural School Is Providing Improvements," *Fort Collins Express-Courier*, 8 October 1929, p. 7.
50. Thompson, "District No. 18 – Stove Prairie," in *History of Larimer County Schools*, 74.
51. Lowery, "Stove Prairie School District," 491; Daggett, "Stove Prairie Elementary," 2; Thompson, 492.
52. Yager, 502 [Grammar and punctuation standardized to improve syntax].
53. Schuelke, "Timnath Schools," 495-6; Ahlbrandt, "Timnath Country School Named Fairview, District #6," in *Legacy*; Kitchen.
54. Schuelke, "Timnath Schools," 495-6; Kitchen.
55. Clements, "Old School Districts," in Morris, vol. II, 443; Florence Woods Baxter Munz, "St. Cloud and Cherokee Park School District #25," in Morris, vol. II, 487.
56. Jo and Lafi Miller, "Sloan School," in Morris, vol. II, 487.
57. Munz, 488.
58. Photograph of the St. Cloud School, Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library.
59. Munz, 488.
60. Plummer School commemorative plaque; Photograph "C. 1904 Plummer School, Dist. #26" (neg. 163), Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library.
61. Clements, "Plummer School" in Morris, vol. II, 484; Cutler, 28.
62. Kenneth W. Rock, "Unsere Leute: The Germans from Russia in Colorado," *Colorado Magazine* 52, no. 2 (Spring 1977): 157.
63. Clements, "Plummer School," 484.
64. Edith Bucco, "Founded on Rock: Stout," *Colorado Magazine*, (Fall 1974); reprinted in Morris, 70-73; Clements, "Old School Districts," in Morris, vol. II, 443.
65. Kitchen, 3.
66. Georgia Harris Vogeles, "Adams School 1945-46 and 1946-47," in Morris, vol. II, 445-46
67. Hagen, 9; Lafi Miller, "Adams School," in Morris, vol. II, 444.
68. Clements, "Old School Districts," in Morris, vol. II, 443; Lafi Miller, "Log Cabin School," in Morris, vol. 11,

- 470-1; Photograph "Dist. 28 Log Cabin," Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library.
69. Devers, "Fossil Creek School," undated, TMs (photocopy), Local History Archives, Fort Collins Public Library; Clements, "Old School Districts," in Morris, vol. II, 443.
  70. Goldie Hutchison Harris and Josephine Payson Clements, "Upper Boxelder School, 1946-47," in Morris, vol. II, 497; Arlene Ahlbrandt, "Upper Boxelder School, Historic Log Schoolhouse," in Morris, vol. II, 497-8; Mary Dell Portner and Trulie Ackerman, "Buckeye" in Morris, 33.
  71. Harris and Clements, in Morris, vol. II, 497; Arlene Ahlbrandt, "Upper Boxelder School, Historic Log Schoolhouse," in Morris, vol. II, 497-8.
  72. Mrs. Harry Ahlbrandt, "Wellington, Then and Now," in Morris, 80-1.
  73. Ahlbrandt, "Wellington School District #34," in *Legacy*.
  74. *Ibid.*; Photograph "Wellington High School" (neg. 5884), Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library.
  75. Arleen Hinsey Davis, "District #35," in Morris, vol. II, 456.
  76. *Ibid.*
  77. Clements, "Old School Districts," in Morris, vol. II, 443; Clements "Cache la Poudre School," in Morris, vol. II, 449; Mildred Payson Beatty, "Old #36 School in Laporte," in Morris, vol. II, 479.
  78. Hagen, 76; Clements, "Old School Districts," in Morris, vol. II, 443.
  79. *Ibid.*; Ahlbrandt, "Soldier Canyon School District #40," in *Legacy*; Kitchen, 4, 15.
  80. Clements, "Old School Districts," in Morris, vol. II, 443; Ahlbrandt, "Rocky Ridge School District #41," in *Legacy*.
  81. Hagen, 37.
  82. Ahlbrandt, "Gleneyre School District #42," in *Legacy*.
  83. Clements, "Old School Districts," in Morris, vol. II, 443; Ahlbrandt, "Waverly," in Morris, 80; Hagen, 79.
  84. Ahlbrandt, "Waverly School District #49," in *Legacy*; Daggett, *et al.*, "Waverly School."
  85. *Ibid.*
  86. Ahlbrandt, "South School District #49," in *Legacy*; Photograph, District 49 North School, Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library.
  87. Helen Burgess, "Bellvue," in Morris, 26-7; Clements, "Cache la Poudre School," in Morris, vol. II, 449; Ruth Hereim, "Bellvue School House, Built About 1886, Being Razed," *Fort Collins Coloradoan*, 29 June 1955, p. 3; *Fort Collins Courier*, 6 May 1886; Kitchen, 4, 15.
  88. Ahlbrandt, "Westerdoll School District #52," in *Legacy*; Kitchen, 4, 15.
  89. Hagen, 30; Clements, "Old School Districts," in Morris, vol. II, 443; Devers, "Eggers School," in Morris, vol. II, 460; Kitchen, 4.
  90. Hagen, 30; Clements, "Old School Districts," in Morris, vol. II, 443; Devers, "Elkhorn School," in Morris, vol. II, 461.
  91. Portner and Ackerman, 33; Clements, "Old School Districts," in Morris, vol. II, 443.
  92. Doris Greenacre, "So Long Ago..." *Wellington Hi-Lites*, 1 January 1982, p. 1; Ahlbrandt, "Spring School/Greenacres District #55," in *Legacy*.
  93. Olive Cooper, interview by Jonathan Anderson, 1974; quoted in Charlene Tresner, "Teaching school best alternative," *Fort Collins Review*, 10 November 1902, p. 16.
  94. Doris Greenacre, "So Long Ago..." 1.
  95. *Ibid.*
  96. Laura Makepeace, in *A Span of Educational Service: More than a century with women in education in Larimer County* (Fort Collins: Nu Chapter, Delta Kappa Gamma Society, 1975), 23.
  97. Ahlbrandt, "Bulger School District #55," in *Legacy*.
  98. Devers, "Round Butte School," in Morris, vol. II, 486; Ahlbrandt, "Round Butte School District #55," in *Legacy*; Photograph "Round Butte School" (neg. 8311), Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library
  99. Makepeace, in "A Span of Educational Service," 24-25.
  100. The Waverly Home Extension Club, "Buckeye School," in *History of Larimer County Schools*, 208.
  101. "Buckeye School," undated, TMs (photocopy), Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library.
  102. Evadene Burreis Swanson, *Red Feather Lakes: The First Hundred Years* (Fort Collins: by the author, 1971), 2.
  103. *Ibid.*, 18.
  104. *Ibid.*, 18, 48; Clements, "Old School Districts," in Morris, vol. II, 443; Devers, "Yockey School," in Morris,



- vol. II, 502.
105. Swanson, *Red Feather Lakes*, 19-20.
  106. *Ibid.*, 18-20.
  107. Arlene Ahlbrandt, "Princess Red Feather," in Morris, 67; Swanson, *Red Feather Lakes*, 27.
  108. Josephine Payson Lambe Clements, "Westlake School, 1925-27," in Morris, vol. II, 500.
  109. Swanson, *Red Feather Lakes*, 41, 60; Daggett, *Red Feather Lakes*, p. 2
  110. Photograph "Dist. 56, Campbell Grove School House" (neg. 7569), Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library.
  111. Kitchen, 4; Alvina Desjardins, "Moessner School, District #59, in Morris, vol. II, 475; Photograph "Dist. 59 Moessner" (neg. 3195), Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library.
  112. Desjardins, 475; Kitchen, 15.
  113. Kitchen, 4, 15.
  114. Sargent, 82.
  115. *Ibid.*, 84.
  116. *Ibid.*, 82, 84
  117. Arlene Ahlbrandt, "Poudre Canyon or Baldwin Tunnel," in Morris, 66; Clements, "Cache la Poudre School," in Morris, vol. II, 450.
  118. Sargent, 85; Josephine Payson Clements, "Cache la Poudre School Bus," in Morris, vol. II.
  119. Kitchen, 15.
  120. Schuelke, "Timnath Schools," 195-6; Daggett, "Timnath Elementary School," 2-4.
  121. *Ibid.*
  122. Kitchen, 14; Daggett, *et al*, "Cache la Poudre Junior High School."
  123. Dr. William J. Bertschy, "Pingree Park," in Morris, 69; Kitchen 5, 15; Photograph, "Pingree Park, Dist. 65" (neg. 1201), Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library.

# Chapter 7

---

## PSD: From Reorganization to Today

### The Saga of Consolidation

In 1947, a third of a century after C.G. Sargent recommended district consolidation as the remedy for ailing rural schools in Colorado, the state legislature passed a bill to encourage and facilitate the reorganization of many small districts into one or more large districts. With vastly improved roads and automobiles, many rural schoolhouses simply were not needed anymore. The legislature continued to press the issue through the 1950s, arguing that children in rural areas deserved the same access to quality education and opportunities as those in urban areas. Yet it was not until the end of the 1950s, with increasing pressure from the state, that Larimer County seriously pursued the consolidation of its districts. Despite evidence that children in reorganized districts performed better than those in disparate districts, many in the county were not going to accept reorganization without a fight. Their reasons for resisting had to do with old ideas of the schoolhouse and its governance. As previously mentioned in this context, a schoolhouse indicated that a settlement on the frontier had matured into a civilized place. In many rural districts, the schoolhouse and, occasionally, the post office were the only civic institutions and the most sophisticated buildings architecturally. The school, in particular, was a source of great pride for a community. As well, rural districts allowed a population removed from centers of governance to exer-

cise political power – power that would not be easily surrendered.

In the latter half of the 1950s, Larimer County Superintendent of Schools Frank L. Irwin asked the presidents of the county's 31 extant districts to appoint a member for a reorganization committee. Irwin and the committee ultimately developed a six-district plan that was fundamentally flawed. One district contained only rural schools and would not have been able to support a superintendent with its meager tax base. But this first attempt to reorganize the county's districts was far more political than practical. Indeed, the committee even refused on several occasions to conduct a survey of districts and their schools. Such a survey would have provided a list of assets and deficits to be addressed in a reorganization plan. The resulting six-district plan did not reflect needs, but represented a compromise between the rural districts' need for self rule and state's expectations for consolidation. Ultimately, however, the state rejected the plan. When Margaret Miller became the new county superintendent of schools in 1959, she reconvened the reorganization committee to create a new plan the state would accept. Unfortunately, the politics of the committee proved unworkable, and it merely resubmitted the same six-district plan. Again, the state rejected it.<sup>1</sup>

Left without options, Miller called together the presidents of the 31 districts for a meeting on July 16, 1959. All

attended. The superintendent reminded them of a 1959 amendment to the 1947 school reorganization bill. The amendment authorized the Colorado Commissioner of Education to recommend a reorganization plan to the legislature and governor on January 1, 1960, if the local committee was unable to create a mutually agreeable consolidation plan. The threat was clear: either consolidate schools at the county level or the state would do it for you. The presidents nominated members to a new reorganization committee. Interestingly, however, some of the school board presidents making these nominations represented districts without a single student.

The new reorganization committee consisted of Hunter Spence, chairman, of Loveland; E.H. Barker of Red Feather Lakes; John Carmack of Estes Park; Velma Elliott of Laporte; Ray W. Hein of the Summit District (near Berthoud); Elmer C. Hunter of Fort Collins; a Mr. Lawson; Roscoe E. Little of Waverly; Wilfred Meining of Berthoud; Virginia C. Norton, of Laporte; Eleanor Peterson, of Poudre Canyon and, later, Fort Collins; Everitt V. Richardson of the Rocky Ridge District; and Roland Wickersham of Livermore. Later, the committee added two more members from districts that were both in Larimer and Weld counties, District 38J (Twin Mounds) and District 57J (Lakeview). They were Walter Carlson and Helmut Kurtz. On August 27, the committee conducted fact-finding hearings among the superintendents of the Berthoud, Fort Collins, Waverly, and Laporte Districts. Two weeks later, it interviewed Estes Park, Timnath, Loveland, and Wellington superintendents.<sup>2</sup> County Superintendent Miller provides a glimpse into the preponderance and disparity of the information collected:

Statistics recorded by the committee members on “bedsheet-size” paper revealed the cleavage between “have” and “have not” districts with high schools in the county. Waverly with 28 high school students rested at the bottom of the scale, and Mr. [Ray] Froid suggested such small schools are one reason for reorganizing. High schools at Berthoud, Laporte, and Waverly were not accredited by the North Central Association.”<sup>3</sup>

The committee also interviewed professors of education from the Colorado State College of Education and Colorado State University.<sup>4</sup>

Despite these careful deliberations and concerns about state-level involvement in the reorganization plan, a minority of committee members continued to reject any proposal that Larimer County voters would approve. To tie up the proceedings, according to Superintendent Miller, this minority presented unworkable proposals for six-, two-, and one-district plans. Ultimately, however, the majority of committee members rejected these proposals and, on October 29, 1959, approved ten-to-five a three-district plan. While this compromise had its downfalls, it did provide an adequate tax base for the operation of all three districts. Centered on Fort Collins, Loveland, and Estes Park, the committee easily decided on names for the districts. The Poudre School District R-1 and Big Thompson School District R-2J were named for the river drainages representing most of their land areas. The “R” stood for “reorganized” and the “J” for “joint” because some of the district was within Weld and Boulder counties. Park School District R-3 was named for its location in Estes Park.

Much of the hardest work for the reorganization committee, however, lay ahead. Public hearings were required throughout the county. But the law stipulated that notices of the hearings and, later, elections had to be posted on every one of the 60 existing schoolhouses in the county. Given the remoteness of some of the schools, however, this was no easy task. Superintendent Miller, with Dr. Lynn Miller, spent her Sundays driving around the county posting hearing and election notices. But some of the schoolhouses were only accessible by four-wheel-drive vehicle. Thus, the sheriff ordered his deputies to deliver notices to these isolated schoolhouses, most of which were in the northern portion of the county. Amazingly, some of the schoolhouses were so remote that men hired to post notices were unable to find six of them. Because of this delay, hearings had to be rescheduled and notices reposted on all 60 schoolhouses.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, some residents in Berthoud bitterly opposed the three-district plan and retained the services of Greeley attorney William Albion Carlson, an outspoken opponent of school district consolidation. Berthoud residents felt that they had the most to lose in the three-district plan, which reoriented the district around Loveland, and left to question the future of Berthoud's full complement of schools. Rollin Fletcher, of the *Berthoud Bulletin*, worried that his community would lose all of its schools and become a ghost town. Carlson sought to invalidate the reorganization plan on legal grounds at the same time he regularly denounced the committee's work at its meetings. In response, consolidation supporters organized a public relations blitz for the county. They formed a speakers bureau and published a pamphlet entitled "Our Children

are our Most Valuable Resources: Learn the Facts and Vote on Larimer County's Plans to Reorganize 30 School Districts into 3."<sup>6</sup>

The county held three separate elections on the creation of each of the three districts, limiting electors to eligible property owners only. Voters approved the creation of Park School District on March 21, 1960; Poudre School District on March 28; and Big Thompson on April 26. The last election was perhaps the most bitter, with Berthoud residents voting 445 to 35 against the creation of the Big Thompson District. But support of the plan in Loveland offset the Berthoud votes. While the previously existing school districts continued to manage their affairs until the end of the fiscal year on June 30, 1960, the new, consolidated districts began to organize themselves. As stipulated in the law, a school board for each new district had to be elected within 60 days of the creation of the District. In Poudre School District, 19 people filed petitions with the county to serve on the school board. William H. Allen was elected president and John Stewart vice president. The other five members were Stanley R. Case, Ralph H. Coyt, Dana Peiterson, John R. Moore, and Harlan Seaworth. The new board agreed to offer the position of superintendent to Dr. David B. Leshner, who was superintendent of District 5 (Fort Collins). He accepted and became the first superintendent of Poudre School District.<sup>7</sup>

Challenges to the consolidation plan, however, did not end with the elections. On May 24, 1960, William Carlson and Jane Carlson filed in district court a motion questioning the validity of the election on behalf of four, small districts in the northern portion of the county: Virginia Dale, Gleneyre, Adams, and Upper Boxelder. The last two

**OUR CHILDREN  
ARE OUR  
MOST VALUABLE RESOURCES**

---

**LEARN  
THE  
FACTS  
AND  
VOTE**

**On Larimer County's Plans to  
Reorganize 30 School  
Districts Into 3**

---

**ELECTIONS:**

**MONDAY, MARCH 21**  
Park School District R-3

**MONDAY, MARCH 28**  
Poudre School District R-1

Polls open 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

**Figure 42.** Published by the publicity committee of the Larimer County School Planning Committee, this brochure listed the arguments in favor of district consolidation. (*County School Planning Committee*)

**Poudre School District  
Schools Constructed Since 1960**

School Name	City	Year	Architect
Leshner Junior High School	Fort Collins	1960	Alfred Watts & Grant
Poudre Senior High School	Fort Collins	1962	Alfred Watts Grant & Associates
Bennett Elementary School	Fort Collins	1963	Robb, Brenner & Brelig
Cache la Poudre Elementary School	Laporte	1963	Magerfleisch & Burnham
O'Dea Elementary School	Fort Collins	1964	Robb, Brenner & Brelig
Tavelli Elementary School	Fort Collins	1967	Robb, Brenner & Brelig
Bauder Elementary School	Fort Collins	1968	Robb, Brenner & Brelig
Irish Elementary School	Fort Collins	1968	Robb, Brenner & Brelig
Riffenburgh Elementary School	Fort Collins	1968	Robb, Brenner & Brelig
Blevins Junior High School	Fort Collins	1968	Wheeler & Lewis
Rocky Mountain Senior High School	Fort Collins	1971	Wheeler & Lewis
Beattie Elementary School	Fort Collins	1972	Robb, Brenner & Brelig
Boltz Junior High School	Fort Collins	1972	Wheeler & Lewis
Eyestone Elementary School	Wellington	1973	Robb, Brenner & Brelig
Lincoln Junior High School	Fort Collins	1974	Nakata & Associates
Juan Fullana Elementary School	Fort Collins	1975	Robb, Brenner & Brelig
Shepardson Elementary School	Fort Collins	1978	Robb, Brenner & Brelig
Red Feather Lakes Elementary School	Red Feather Lakes	1985	Robb, Brenner & Brelig
Lopez Elementary School	Fort Collins	1986	Robb, Brenner & Brelig
Werner Elementary School	Fort Collins	1987	McCaffrey/Dulaney Architecture
Johnson Elementary School	Fort Collins	1988	Dulaney Architecture
Linton Elementary School	Fort Collins	1988	Dulaney Architecture
Olander Elementary School	Fort Collins	1990	Dulaney Architecture
Webber Junior High School	Fort Collins	1990	AMD/TAS
Kruse Elementary School	Fort Collins	1992	Dulaney Architecture
McGraw Elementary School	Fort Collins	1992	Dulaney Architecture
Fort Collins Senior High School	Fort Collins	1993	Architectural Horizons
Wellington Junior High School	Wellington	1993	Robb, Brenner & Brelig
Traut Core Knowledge Elementary School	Fort Collins	1998	Dulaney Architecture
Zach Elementary School	Fort Collins	2002	Robb, Brenner & Brelig
Bacon Elementary School	Fort Collins	2003	Robb, Brenner & Brelig

Districts did not even operate schools. After the trial, held July 13 and 14, 1960, Judge Wilbert Schauer characterized the motion as a “shotgun attack” on the 1947 school district reorganization act. He ruled that the plaintiff failed to prove that the election was invalid. The Carlsons vowed to take their case to the Colorado Supreme Court. But after Superintendent Miller raised some questions about the source of money used to pay the Carlsons’s fees, the attorneys appear to have relinquished and ultimately dropped the suit. In 1962, B. F. (Ford) Kitchen became the county’s last superintendent of schools. The position was rendered unnecessary by the reorganization of the school districts, and voters, in 1966, elected to dissolve the office.<sup>8</sup>

**Poudre School District to the Present**

Officially incorporated on July 1, 1960, the new Poudre School District R-1 was by far the largest of the county’s school districts both in geography and enrollment. Indeed, PSD was far larger than the Park and Big Thompson Districts combined, a land area 1.5 times the size of Rhode Island. And the success of its schools was as equally enormous. A study in the 1960s found that more students from Poudre School District went on to receive their doctorates than any other school district in Colorado.<sup>9</sup>

Helping propel the new Districts forward was massive Cold War funding in education. In some of her final acts as county superintendent of schools, Margaret Miller used two National Defense Education Act grants to purchase the county’s first overhead projector and double the size of the film library. Teachers from around the county gathered



at the courthouse auditorium to preview and choose the films, which, tellingly, centered on math and science.<sup>10</sup>

With a soaring population and expanded access to federal funds, Poudre School District launched an unprecedented building spree. In the two decades following consolidation (1960-1980), PSD constructed 17 new schools, averaging nearly one new building each year. Of these new schools, 11, or 65 percent, were elementary schools, indicating that much of the expansion in population was due to families with young children. But the building boom also included the construction of four junior high schools (Leshner, Blevins, Boltz, and Lincoln) and two new senior high schools (Poudre and Rocky Mountain). Unlike preceding schools in the Fort Collins area, which were generally situated in the middle of population centers, these new schools were often constructed on the fringes of development, where adequate land was available for sprawling floor plans and acres of recreation and athletic fields. Moreover, the District remodeled and expanded every one of its existing schools during this period, even the tiny, isolated schoolhouses at Stove Prairie and Virginia Dale.<sup>11</sup>

The District's new school buildings were indicative of those built across the county at this time. Most were a nearly identical simplification of Brutalism, with monolithic exterior wall treatments, few windows, and sprawling, one-story floor plans. Most elementary schools featured open-floor plans hosting a pod system. Borrowing a page from earlier in the century, PSD used the same floor plan for four of its elementary schools – Bauder, Irish, Riffenburgh, and Tavelli – all constructed in 1967-68. Designed by architect William Robb, of the firm Robb, Brenner & Brelig, the schools appear to have included both

elements of traditional classrooms and the pod system. This description of the schools was included in a dedication pamphlet for the buildings:

Each building is designed for a two-track educational system (two classrooms per grade). The buildings have flexibility. Using folding partitions, three classrooms can be combined into a single space seating 90 children for use of visual aids or group teaching. The central space we have labeled “studyway.” Each studyway may be used as an extra classroom, library, study or project area closed to through traffic. The room can be left open or divided into smaller spaces by the use of light partitions or furniture. Teachers’ workrooms, usable for work, counseling or extra tutoring of students, are located for convenience and control of the three classrooms and the studyway.<sup>12</sup>

The plans for these schools received special recognition for their innovative spaces. Drawings of the Riffenburgh School were displayed at the 1968 national convention of the American Association of School Administrators in Atlanta. Moreover, Blevins Junior High School, also completed in 1968, used temporary wall systems. Yet the idea of using moveable partitions to divide classrooms or create larger assembly spaces dates to

**Figure 43.** Although started under District 5, Leshner Junior High School, an International-style building, became PSD's newest facility immediately after reorganization. (Photo by the author)



the nineteenth century in America and was promoted widely in John J. Custis's 1897 *The Public Schools of Philadelphia: Historical, Biographical, Statistical*.<sup>13</sup>

Beginning in the 1980s, school design in Poudre School District became more flamboyant and inspired, following national trends. Designed by Fort Collins-based Architectural Horizons and completed in 1995, the new Fort Collins High School is a masterpiece of Postmodern design. An arced hallway anchored between arts facilities on one end and athletic facilities on the other, connects three wings of classrooms. Poudre School District continues to construct Postmodern schoolhouses that are as inspirational as they are functional.

At the end of the twentieth century, Poudre School District's facilities also became more innovative. The

award-winning Zach Elementary School, opened in the fall of 2002, set a new standard in energy efficiency and environmental friendliness. Many of the building components were created from recycled materials, including a roof of former rubber gaskets and window frames insulated with old blue jeans. The school used as much natural light as possible, with sensors automatically adjusting the level of artificial light needed. Supplementing the cooling system are thermal ice storage units. The ice is made at night, taking advantage of a period of low electricity use. Moreover, the school itself was created as a gigantic learning tool. Throughout the building, materials are exposed to show how the school was constructed and to showcase those mechanisms that make it so efficient.<sup>14</sup>

**Figure 44.** The third Fort Collins High School is a massive, Postmodern building. Just as its predecessors, the sprawling floor plan is intended to host a wide variety of curricula. (Photo by the author)



## Notes

1. Miller, 118.
2. *Ibid.*, 118-9.
3. *Ibid.*, 119.

4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*, 119-20.
7. *Ibid.*, 120; "R2J School District Wins by 103 votes," *Fort Collins Coloradoan*, 27 April 1960, p. 1.
8. Miller, 120-1; Charlene Tresner, "Early superintendent," 4.
9. Robert Getz, "Poudre R-1 schools face time or transition," *Fort Collins Coloradoan*, 22 April 1984; Linda M. Jellins, "Poudre schools always ranked high," *Fort Collins Review*, 17 August 1977.
10. Miller, 121.
11. Daggett, *et al.*; Miller, 121.
12. Poudre School District R-1, "Dedication of New Schools," 1968, brochure, Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library.
13. Poudre School District R-1, "Dedication of New Schools;" Cutler, 28.
14. United States Department of Energy, "Rebuild America Energysmart Schools Success Story: Poudre School District, pamphlet, October 2003.

# Chapter 8

---

## The Road to Equal Opportunities in PSD

Article IX, Section 8, of the Colorado State Constitution provides an overt vision of equality in education: “No sectarian tenets or doctrines shall ever be taught in the public schools, nor shall any distinction or classification of pupils be made on account of race and color.”<sup>1</sup> But in reality, not all children in Colorado and Larimer County enjoyed the same access to education. Distinction or classification of pupils based on ethnicity and skin color was not only practiced, but also often enforced. This section investigates the history of two groups that, while providing major contributions to the economy, were frequently segregated in Larimer County schools.

### Germans from Russia

With the opening of the Loveland sugar beet processing factory in 1901 and in Fort Collins in 1903, families of Germans from Russia settled in Larimer County. In Fort Collins, many settled in the Buckingham and Andersonville neighborhoods northeast of downtown. Here they were physically segregated from the rest of the city by the Poudre River, but they were not exempt from Americanization programs. Schools were central to acculturation, as Randall C. Teeuwen concludes in his masters’ thesis “Public Rural Education and the Americanization of the Germans from Russia in Colorado: 1900-1930”:

For German-Russian children it was the sum of the various public school experiences that contributed to their Americanization. In school they learned a new language; recited Longfellow and the Pledge of Allegiance; played uniquely American sports; sang patriotic songs and saluted the flag when the band marched past. Undoubtedly they learned that, like Abraham Lincoln and other great Americans, in the United States of America ordinary people could achieve their dreams.<sup>2</sup>

The first German-Russian school in Fort Collins, excluding church-sponsored Saturday schools, was held in the original Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church building in Andersonville. The Fort Collins School Board hoped to open the elementary school there on November 28, 1904. That morning, when teacher Emma Wilkins arrived with her pupils, she found the doors bolted. Apparently, the night before, some members of the church objected to English-language instruction in their building. The conflict was resolved in January 1905. The first day the school opened, Miss Wilkins had forty-five students. She had twenty more the next day. Despite evidence that older Germans from Russia often resisted sending their children to school, both to assist in the beet fields and avoid assimilation, this first school only continued to grow. By the end of the school year on April 1, Miss Wilkins had over a hundred students and an assistant. In 1908, the School District

constructed near Andersonville the Rockwood School – a four-classroom building for German-Russian children. Enrollment continued to grow at the elementary school and, by 1921, the school board doubled the size of the building. A contemporary article includes this glowing description of the enlarged building:

The halls are wide and especially well lighted, making it one of the most pleasant grade buildings in Fort Collins. Its east windows look out over a beautiful farming country; while from its western ones a glorious view of the mountains is seen. Long's Peak is a familiar friend always in sight.<sup>3</sup>

Architecturally, the Rockwood School continued the trend of classical-styled school buildings in Fort Collins. However, the style was very simply expressed on this building, similar to other schools in the rural districts.

With the establishment of compulsory education in Colorado, many *Hausvaters* (male heads of German-Russian families) found themselves paying multiple fines to the School District for keeping their children from the classroom. At the same time, an American-born generation of Germans from Russia realized that English-language education was a springboard out of the grueling cycle of beet-field labor. But attendance did not improve. A 1923 report from the U.S. Department of Labor found that truancy and status in Larimer and Weld County schools were directly related. The children of beet farm owners attended 90 percent of school days each year, those who rented sent their children almost 89 percent of the time, but children of contract laborers missed a quarter of the school

year. Records from Larimer County school districts reveal that the children of beet workers were absent almost five times as often as children who did not help in beet cultivation. The problem was so rampant in Larimer County that many schools offered summer programs for the children of beet workers in addition to beet “vacations” during the regular school year.<sup>4</sup>

As with child labor, those American reformers who worried about German-Russian truancy often misunderstood economic realities. “I think lots of Russian-German children are working too hard; but as things are, I don't see any other way out of it,” a Windsor *Hausvater* told reporters from the National Child Labor Committee. “I want my children to have the education they need instead of working so hard.”<sup>5</sup> But as families increased in affluence, education became more important. In *Second Hoeing*, as the Schreissmiller family becomes more successful, children attend more and more years of school. The level of highest education – elementary, secondary, and college – corresponded to laborer, tenant, and owner. While German-Russian children were initially segregated, especially in the case of the Rockwood School, more and more of them simply integrated into the general student population as each generation adopted more and more American customs.

## Hispanics

As German-Russian families left the sugar beet fields and as immigration from Europe ended following World War I, Colorado's sugar companies increasingly turned to Hispanics in Mexico and the American Southwest for their



field labor. Soon, a large Hispanic population settled in Larimer County. For the Hispanic community in Fort Collins, quality education was one of the most prominent symbols of success and one of the toughest battles in the fight for civil rights. For the migrant worker, education was an escape from the cycle of poverty. But it was education that they could least afford. Like their German-Russian predecessors, Hispanic beet workers realized the economic advantages of removing their children from school during the harvest.<sup>6</sup>

Even when they could go to school, many Hispanic children simply had to walk too far to get there. Like the Germans from Russia before them, Hispanics were often isolated in their own settlements. But for a brief time, Hispanics in the sugar factory neighborhoods did have a local school – Rockwood. Throughout the 1920s, the student population of the elementary school shifted from a German-Russian to a Hispanic majority, mirroring a similar change in the Buckingham and Andersonville neighborhoods, not to mention the addition of students from the sugar company’s recently constructed Hispanic colony, Alta Vista. But for many older residents of the sugar factory neighborhoods, Rockwood was the only school they attended – the only school they *could* attend. Once they reached high school or when the Rockwood School closed, boys and girls in Andersonville, Buckingham, and Alta Vista were expected to attend schools in town – places like the Franklin School, located on the southwest corner of Mountain Avenue and Howes Street. The school was two miles from Andersonville. Trips to the Remington and Lincoln Schools were no easier. “I used to like to go to school at first,” Inez Romero said in an oral history inter-

view, “but the reason I felt it was hard to go to school after we moved in this area [Andersonville], in those days there were no buses, no taxis. You had to walk, so...my parents didn’t push me into going, because they didn’t like the idea for me to walk.”<sup>7</sup>

An unreasonable distance to school was one of the reasons truant officers cited in a 1951 study on migrant farm labor in Colorado. They also reported that enforcing compulsory education in marginal places like Alta Vista, Andersonville, and Buckingham was a luxury wasted in those areas. But most officers were simply unwilling to enforce the law when it came to Hispanic children. “...Many people in the district would not appreciate our making those kids attend school,” one truant officer reported:

There is some feeling against the migrants. The farmers feel that their own children are corrupted and degraded by contact with the migrant kids. Many of the people direct their resentment against the big companies and farmers who they charge are “ruining the community” by importing migrant workers.<sup>8</sup>

Hispanic parents echoed similar frustrations. Many told the study’s reporters that they were unwilling to send their children to school when fellow students made fun of them and teachers neglected them. Given this situation, the children were better off and more productive at home. “Juan is the biggest boy in his class,” one parent told a reporter. “Even the teacher thinks he is dumb. But believe me, he has never had a chance to go to school. So you see, we keep our children at home – not to make them work,

but because it is not so bad as seeing them come home crying.”<sup>9</sup>

Not surprisingly, it was Holy Family Catholic Church, organized to serve Fort Collins’s Latinos, that provided Hispanic families “a chance to go to school” free from discrimination. With Father Joseph Pierre Trudel’s blessing, Margaret Murray opened a parish school in 1928 in her home. With the completion of the new church building in 1929, classes moved into the small, wood-frame building that formerly housed the parish. Enrollment grew, and soon Margaret Linden and Jovita Vallecillo, the first Hispanic graduate of Colorado State University, assisted Murray. The 1934 academic school year began with 85 students, and the church recruited more instructors: four Sisters of St. Joseph from Stevens Point, Wisconsin. Soon the school had over 100 children in eight grades. Boys arrived early to start a fire in the potbellied stove that heated the old building. Parents seemed far more willing for their children to make the journey from the sugar factory neighborhoods to the school when they were certain that their children received the teacher’s attention while avoiding ridicule and alienation. In 1948, the city condemned the old school building, so classes moved into the new parish hall adjacent to the rectory. Four medium-sized classrooms on the east end of the building held between 90 and 120 students each year. The school opened a kindergarten, and the parish converted the gym’s balcony into classrooms for the fifth and sixth grades. But the school struggled financially, closing forever at the conclusion of the 1968-69 school year.<sup>10</sup>

The closing of Holy Family Parish School, combined with the cessation of classes at the Sue Barton (formerly

Rockwood) School some years earlier, forced a majority of Hispanic children to attend the Laporte Avenue School, by then a vastly inadequate and deteriorated building located on the edge of the Holy Family Neighborhood. It was over this school that the Hispanic community in Fort Collins waged and won one of its biggest battles. Poudre School District realized the closing of Holy Family would create a glut in elementary enrollment in northern Fort Collins. In 1968, a bond issue for a new school failed to pass in a general election. The District tried again the following year; this time Hispanic leaders went door to door to encourage community members to vote for the bond issue. It passed, but when the funds became available, the School District decided to build the new elementary school in one of the quickly growing neighborhoods spreading south along College Avenue. The Hispanic community was enraged. “We had quite a battle with the school board and administration,” recalled Ernie Miranda. “They just wanted to build another school away from this area. And that...had been the history.”<sup>11</sup> Members of the Hispanic community contacted the Mexican American Legal Defense Association to come to their aid. Leading the battle was the organization’s attorney, Frederico Peña, who went on to become Mayor of Denver and Secretary of Transportation in the Clinton Administration. Peña and students from the University of Colorado Law School researched the School District’s records, discovering a pattern of discrimination on the north side of Fort Collins. The school board reversed its decision, constructing a new elementary school on the site of the old Laporte School in 1975. In a conciliatory gesture, the school board left the name of the new facility up to the Hispanic community who had fought so



**Figure 45.** The Juan Fullana School, now PSD’s Fullana Learning Center. (Photo by the author)

hard for it. They decided to call it Juan Fullana Elementary School in honor of a pastor at Holy Family Church who was an advocate for Hispanic civil rights in Fort Collins.<sup>12</sup>

Despite efforts to make quality education accessible, the Hispanic community has had to contend with a rate of high school dropouts significantly higher than the national average. In 1980, one in every four Hispanic students in Poudre School District dropped out of school. That was

double the local average for Anglo students and six percent higher than Hispanics elsewhere in the state.<sup>13</sup> That average, however, has steadily improved as the Hispanic community and its culture has become more visible and integrated in Poudre School District, which today even boasts bilingual immersion programs – a celebration of the community’s dual Anglo and Hispanic heritages.

## Notes

1. Colorado Constitution, Art. IX, Sec. 8.
2. Randall C. Teeuween, “Public Rural Education and the Americanization of the Germans from Russia in Colorado: 1900-1930,” (M.A. thesis, Colorado State University, 1993), 106.
3. “This is Rockwood School,” located in Germans From Russia Folder, Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library, Fort Collins, Colo.; Don McMillen “Senior farmer typical of Germans from Russia,” *Fort Collins Coloradoan*, 21 January 1976, p. 1.
4. United States Department of Labor, *Child Labor and the Work of Mothers in the Beet Fields of Colorado and Michigan* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1923), 43, 47-9.
5. B.F. Cohen, Wilbur E. Skinner, and Dorothy Leach, *Children Working on Farms in Certain Sections of Northern Colorado* (Fort Collins: Colorado Agricultural College, 1926), 155.
6. Department of Labor, 43, 47-9.
7. Inez Romero, interview by Charlene Tresner, 1975, transcript p. 7, Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library.
8. Howard E. Thomas and Florence Taylor, *Migrant Farm Labor in Colorado: A Study of Migratory Families* (New York: National Child Labor Committee, 1951), 88.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Thomas J. Noel, *Colorado Catholicism and the Archdiocese of Denver, 1857-1989* (Niwot, Colo.: University Press of Colorado, 1989); Holy Family Catholic Church,” in Morris, 97.
11. Ernie Miranda and Carolina Miranda, interview by Ellen T. Ittelson, 20 October 1903, transcript p. 6, Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library.
12. *Ibid.*
13. Ramon Coronado, “Dropout rate high for Poudre Hispanos,” *Fort Collins Coloradoan*, 30 November 1980, p. A1.

# Conclusion

---

## A Tale of Towers

In the past, an almost universal architectural feature of schoolhouses was a tower. In some cases, this was an elaborately decorated spire reaching heavenward. Other schools merely had a belfry protruding from the roof ridge – nothing more than a simple shelter over the school’s bell. In the American built environment, towers were symbols of both authority and inspiration. They were a hallmark of almost all churches and a standard architectural element of countless courthouses and other government buildings. Towers set buildings apart from the rest of their surroundings. They indicated that a place was particularly important in the secular or sacred worlds, that those who entered were expected to display respect or reverence.

*Fiat lux!* proclaimed Fort Collins’s first multi-room schoolhouse, the Remington School, to students entering its hallways – become the light of knowledge! Not surprisingly, a tower crowned this building as well. A colonial-inspired cupola, rising above the second Fort Collins High School, indicated to passersby on College Avenue that this building was of particular importance – that the education of our youth was as crucial to our culture and our way of life as religion and civil government. Towers crowned larger rural schoolhouses, such as the Plummer School, and a belfry even found its way to the distant reaches of Stove Prairie. These towers were lightning rods, transferring the

ethereal realm of knowledge into the practical lessons of the classroom. Henry David Thoreau once mused, “Knowledge does not come to use by details, but in flashes from heaven.”

The history of public education, like the history of all great human institutions, is cyclical. Old teaching theories and old curricula become a new possibility with each succeeding generation of scholars and leaders. Thus, because schoolhouses are so intimately connected to pedagogy and curricula, their architecture is cyclical as well. Old ideas in schoolhouse design have recurred again and again, reinterpreted though the lens of new architectural styles. Schoolhouse towers fell out of favor in post-World War II America. They were cast aside as symbols of an old, decaying establishment.

But the tower was not gone forever from schoolhouse architecture. Gracing the south entrance of the new Fort Collins High School is a soaring spire – a Postmodern interpretation of this ancient architectural element. The tower is a connection to Poudre School District’s past, to opulent urban schools and simple, one-room schoolhouses. And it is a connection to the future as it serves the District’s students as a point of inspiration. Indeed, the tower appears as if it could pull down knowledge “in flashes from heaven.”



# Bibliography

---

## Primary Sources

### Interviews

Miranda, Ernie and Carolina Miranda. Interview by Ellen T. Ittelson, 20 October 1903. Transcript p. 6. Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library.

Romero, Inez. Interview by Charlene Tresner, 1975. Transcript p. 7. Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library.

### Newspapers

*Fort Collins Coloradoan*

*Fort Collins Courier*

*Fort Collins Express-Courier*

### Articles

“High School Building.” Undated newspaper article. In the folder “LC-SCHOOLS-General.” Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library

“This is Rockwood School.” Undated newspaper article. In the Germans From Russia folder. Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library.

### Legislation

*An Act to provide a temporary Government for the Territory of Colorado* 59, 36th Cong., 2nd sess., (28 February 1861).

Colorado Constitution.

### Reports and Brochures

Cohen, B.F., Wilbur E. Skinner, and Dorothy Leach. *Children Working on Farms in Certain Sections of Northern Colorado*. Fort Collins: Colorado Agricultural College, 1926.

Poudre School District R-1. “Dedication of New Schools.” 1968 brochure. Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library.

Sargent, C.G. *The Rural and Village Schools of Colorado: An Eight Year Survey of Each District, 1906-1913 Inclusive*. Fort Collins: Colorado Agricultural College, 1914.

School District No. 5, Board of Directors. *Directory, Rules, Regulations, and Course of Study of the Public Schools, School District No. 5, Fort Collins, Colorado*. Fort Collins: Courier Printing & Publishing Co., 1890.



Thomas, Howard E. and Florence Taylor. *Migrant Farm Labor in Colorado: A Study of Migratory Families*. New York: National Child Labor Committee, 1951.

United States Department of Education. "Mission." Available from <http://www.ed.gov/about/overview/mission/mission.html?src=sm>. Internet. Accessed on 11 December 2003.

United States Department of Energy, "Rebuild America Energysmart Schools Success Story: Poudre School District. Pamphlet. October 2003.

United States Department of Labor. *Child Labor and the Work of Mothers in the Beet Fields of Colorado and Michigan*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1923.

### Photographs

Photographs in the collection of the Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library.

## Secondary Sources

### Newspapers

*Fort Collins Review*.

*Fort Collins Triangle Review*.

### Local School References

Ahlbrandt, Arlene. *Legacy of County and Mountain Schools of Larimer County, Colorado*. Fort Collins: by the author, undated.

Case, Elizabeth. "Fort Collins Public Schools." Undated. TMs (photocopy). Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library.

Daggett, Ron, Alice N. Williamson, and Ken A. Forrest. *Poudre School District Building Statistics*. 2000-2001 update. Fort Collins: Poudre School District, 2001.

Delta Kappa Gamma Society, Nu Chapter. *A Span of Educational Service: More than Century with Women in Education in Larimer County*. Fort Collins: by the author, 1975.

Devers, Erma L. "Fossil Creek School." Undated. TMs (photocopy). Local History Archives, Fort Collins Public Library.

Kitchen, B. Ford. "The Superintendency in Larimer County Schools," 1967. TMs (original). Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library.

Larimer County Home Extension Clubs. *Histories of Larimer County Schools*. Fort Collins: by the authors, 1986.

Larimer County School Planning Committee, Publicity Committee. "Our Children are our Most Valuable Resources: Learn the Facts and Vote on Larimer County's Plans to Reorganize 30 School Districts into 3." Brochure, 7 August 1959. Local History Archives. Fort Collins Public Library.

- Pike, Robert H. *Home of the Champions: The History of Fort Collins High School, 1889-1989*. Fort Collins: Lambkin Enterprises, 1994.
- Simmons, R. Laurie and Thomas H. "Colorado Historical Society, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Historic Building Inventory Record for the Harmony School (5LR1513). January 1992.
- Stanton, Alice P. Undated newspaper article. In file "LC-SCHOOLS-General." Local History Archive, Fort Collins Public Library.
- Sundberg, Wayne. "Early History of Fort Collins Schools: The First Twenty-Five Years." 5 December 1970. TMs (photocopy).
- Teeuween, Randall C. "Public Rural Education and the Americanization of the Germans from Russia in Colorado: 1900-1930." M.A. thesis, Colorado State University, 1993.
- General State and Local References**
- Abbott, Carl, Stephen J. Leonard, and David McComb. *Colorado: A History of the Centennial State*, 3d ed. Niwot, Colo.: University Press of Colorado, 1994.
- Colorado State Department of Education. "Brief History of the State Department of Education in Colorado." Available from <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeedserv/historycde.htm>. Internet. Accessed 9 January 2004.
- de Onís, José, ed. *The Hispanic Contribution to the State of Colorado*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1976.
- Fleming, Barbara Allbrandt. *Fort Collins: A Pictorial History*. Fort Collins: Fort Collins Jaycees, 1985.
- Fort Collins Chamber of Commerce. *Fort Collins, Colorado*. Fort Collins, by the author, circa 1915.
- Morris, Andrew J., ed. *The History of Larimer County, Colorado*. Dallas: Curtis Media Corp., 1985.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The History of Larimer County, Colorado*, vol. II. Dallas: Curtis Media Corp., 1987.
- Noel, Thomas J. *Buildings of Colorado*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Colorado Catholicism and the Archdiocese of Denver, 1857-1989*. Niwot, Colo.: University Press of Colorado, 1989.
- Peterson, Guy. *Fort Collins: The Post, the Town*. Old Army Press, 1972.
- Rock, Kenneth W. "Unsere Leute: The Germans from Russia in Colorado." *Colorado Magazine* 52, no. 2 (Spring 1977).
- Swanson, Evadene Burris. *Red Feather Lakes: The First Hundred Years*. Fort Collins: by the author, 1971.
- Thomas, Adam. *Suburban Development: Greeley's Arlington Neighborhood*. With the historical context by Timothy Smith. Broomfield: SWCA Environmental Consultants, 2004.
- Ubbelohde, Carl, Maxine Benson, and Duane A. Smith. *A Colorado History*, 8th ed. Boulder, Colo.: Pruett Publishing Co., 2001.

Watrous, Ansel. *History of Larimer County, Colorado*. Fort Collins: Courier Printing and Publishing, Co., 1911.

#### General American Education References

Cutler, William W., III. "Cathedral of Culture: The Schoolhouse in American Educational Thought and Practice since 1820." *History of Education Quarterly* 29, No. 1 (spring 1989): 1-40.

Denver Public Schools. "Denver Schools: Historic Buildings and Learning Landscapes." (Tour brochure prepared for the 2003 National Trust for Historic Preservation Conference in Denver.) Denver: Denver Public Schools, October 2003.

Field, Richard. "John Dewey." Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Available from <http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/d/dewey.htm>. Internet. Accessed 12 January 2004.

Gulliford, Andrew. *America's Country Schools*. Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press, 1984.

Mondale, Sarah and Sarah B. Patton, eds. *School: The Story of American Public Education*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2001.

Rippa, S. Alexander. *Education in a Free Society: An American History*, 8th ed. New York: Longman, 1997.

Spring, Joel. *The American School: 1642-2000*, 5th ed. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2001.

Wee, Eric L. "Washington, D.C.'s, Open Classrooms are Noisy Failures." *The Washington Post*, 25 January 1998, p. B1. Quoted in "Noise News for Week of January 25, 1998." Available from <http://www.nonoise.org/news/1998/jan25.htm>. Internet. Accessed 16 December 2003.

"Wenonah History." Available from <http://www.waynesboro.k12.va.us/wboro/Wen/Docs/history.html>. Internet. Accessed 16 December 2003.

#### General Historical References

Bellamy, John Stark, II. *The Maniac in the Bushes and More Tales of Cleveland Woe*. Cleveland: Gray & Co., 1997.

Chafe, William H. *The Unfinished Journey: America since World War II*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Lichtenstein, Nelson, Susan Strasser, and Roy Rosenzweig. *Who Built America? Working People and the Nation's Economy, Politics, Culture, and Society*, vol. I, Since 1877. New York: Worth Publishers, 2000.

Thernstrom, Stephan. *A History of the American People*, 2d ed. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989

Wiebe, Robert H. *The Search for Order, 1877-1920*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1967.

#### General Architectural References

Harris, Cyril M. *American Architecture: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1998.

Clark, Clifford Edward, Jr. *The American Family Home, 1800-1960*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1986.

Stilgoe, John R. *Metropolitan Corridor: Railroads and the American Scene*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1983.