1924

Beaver Valley School - Dist. #13

Country School Legacy: Humanities on the Frontier

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GOUNTRYSCHOOL LEGACY:
'Humanities on the Frontier'

Project Director—Andrew Gulliford

Media Director—Randall Teeuwen
Exhibits Director—Berkeley Lobanov

HISTORIC SITE FORM

State: Nebraska               County: Boone

Location (in miles & direction from nearest town): One mile Northwest of Albion in Clay County

Is this the original location? Yes

Name of building & origin of name: Beaver Valley School

Name & number of the district: Dist. 13

Date built: 1912-1913                Date school opened: 1913

Years in use: 88

Who built it? A contractor or the community: Community

Does it look like it came from a plan book or was it designed by the community? Plan book

Names of former teachers:

Nora Nathaniel Robinson

Jane Bentley

MaryJane McVay

Carmel Noddle

Bettie Englehart Lownson

Bernice Andewells

Names of former students (family names only):

Atwood, Atkinson, Gearhart, Price, Engelbart, Gray, Zander, Basinger, Melo, Thompson, Ineley, Martin, Salter, Swain, Reid, Meyer, Turner, Penner, Bailey

Name & address of person in charge of building: District 13

Who is the owner? District 13

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COUNTRY SCHOOL LEGACY HISTORIC SITE FORM

Architectural Features: Full basement, furnace, refreg. Kitchen stone
Size of building: Two frame schoolhouses approx. 60' x 36'
Number of Windows (four pane, six pane, etc.): 2 pane, 15 windows

Number of doors (entrances): 3 entrance
Number of classrooms: 2, two schools were put together in 1965
Bell tower or cupola: Bell tower
Materials used (wood, brick, stone, etc.): Wood

Type of roof: Wood, shingles
Outhouses: No
Playground Equipment: Swing, merry go round, tether ball, tether tennis
Color of building & trim: White & black
Coal shed or stable: No
Teacherage: 1
Flagpole: Yes

Other architectural features:

Anything left inside?

Narrative Information: Did any special events happen at the school? What stories do people remember?
Four generations of Bengelmanns have attended this school. Ernest Bengelmann, now retired, still lives in the dist. His son Virgil (mid-fifties) farms in the dist. His son John lives near the school & farms there.
Current condition & use: His daughter Jacqueline started kindergarten last year a newspaper story on them appeared in the Albion News

District records available: Yes [ ] No [x] Where stored [ ]
Black & white photo taken: Yes [x] No [ ]
Old photos available: Yes [x] No [ ]

Does the building have any state or national historic designation?

Name & address of surveyor: [ ] Date: [ ]
Mrs. James Vandewalle
1030 S. 3rd
Albion, Nebr. 68620

Dear Mrs. Vandewalle:

You may recall that I spoke to you in the Rexall Drug Store in Grand Island today about filling in a form for me in a study I am doing on rural schools in Nebraska.

This is an eight-state project. I am the humanist, so-called, for the State of Nebraska. Dr. Ed Nelson, President of Chadron State, is doing the western counties, Jim Dertien, Bellevue Public Librarian, the eastern ones.

Please do not go to any trouble finding the information for this form, but I would be pleased if you would do what you can handily.

Also, if you have a black and white photo of the school building, and could send it to me, I would get a copy taken off and send the original back to you. If not, and you would tell me exactly how to reach your school, I will drive by some time on my way to Sioux City and take my own picture.

I will appreciate your help.

Sincerely Yours,

Ernest Grundy
Professor of English
Generation picture they took last year if you would be interested in it.

Mrs. Bernice Vandewalle
plans L. J. Gross, executive director of student services for the Dade County, Fla., school district. “Our teachers have a great talent to deal with the shortcomings of youth.”

Miami’s formula? Heavy emphasis on vocational training, intensive psychological counseling and a strong dose of academics—especially reading.

Although opportunity schools have succeeded in helping students toward graduation, only about 15 percent ever return to their previous schools.

**Basic courses successful.** By far the most publicized and successful alternative programs are the fundamental schools emphasizing a back-to-basics curriculum, enforced dress codes, strict discipline and regular homework assignments. Such schools are in contrast with open-classroom programs that developed in the last 20 years, offering a more child-centered, unstructured philosophy.

At Philadelphia’s Fitler Elementary School, the atmosphere is no-nonsense. When pupils hear the first bell in the morning, they walk to designated spots in the schoolyard and march in silence to their classrooms. Only when teachers give permission do children enter the classroom.

The academic rules are just as strict. “If the child does not receive at least a C in the required subjects of mathematics and reading, we will not pass that child on,” says Principal William R. Crumley, Jr. Children who disobey rules are reprimanded harshly and occasionally suspended. Achievement levels in the 3-year-old program are among the highest in the city.

Critics have misgivings about certain aspects of the back-to-basics movement—their excessive regimentation, for example, and their occasional accent on religion and patriotism.

Marva Collins, a black teacher who

**Small Schoolhouses That Won’t Fade Away**

Hundreds of communities across the nation are employing an education program that permits children to get extensive individual attention in the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic. It’s called the one-room school.

Long considered backward, one-room schools are generating new respect and stirring local pride in such places as Boone County, Neb. The sparsely populated farm county has lost 45 one-room elementary schools since 1960 but is determined to keep alive its remaining six.

William Davenport, the county schools superintendent, recalls that he once favored bringing all children together into a few large buildings and closing one-room schools. “My eyes were opened,” he says, “after the first visits to these schools.”

What Davenport found in each school was a teacher taking time to see that every student was progressing in the basics. “Over the past 20 years,” he says, “one of the most innovative ideas the experts and university professors have talked about is the individualized program. That’s one thing these kids for darn sure have.”

For decades, one-room schools were closed as counties consolidated and reorganized their classrooms. In 1930, the U.S. had 149,282 one-teacher schools. Now, there are barely 1,000.

At special high school for the arts in Houston, students produce television programs in fully equipped studio.

Despite new respect for the jobs they do, more one-room schools likely will vanish this autumn. Reason: Small farms are fading, and families are getting smaller. Nebraska this year may lose as many as 20 of its 435 one-teacher schools for lack of children to attend them.

Support for one-room schools, though, is growing. Texas has come up with a state law protecting isolated schools and has abolished its minimum-enrollment requirements. In South Dakota, State Education Superintendent Thomas Todd describes one-teacher schools as an essential part of the education system.

“Twenty or 30 years ago the idea was to close as many schools as possible and consolidate,” Todd says. “Now we’ve learned that bigger is not always better.”

One old-time quality much admired in one-room schools is the dedication of teachers. Bernice Vandewalle, who teaches 13 students from kindergarten through the eighth grade, figures she would be wasting time if she took a half-hour break from her duties at Boone County’s Beaver Creek School. “I can drink coffee when I retire,” she says.

On the other hand, Vandewalle is not plagued with the kind of worries that grip big-city teachers: “We never have a discipline problem, and I have a lot of independence.”

**Spartan conditions.** Limited resources are a challenge. The most modern equipment most one-room teachers use is a blackboard. Many one-room schools don’t even have running water. In nearly all of them, teachers double as janitors.

It is not surprising, then, that few persons are prepared to be one-room teachers. Barely 10 of the nation’s 3,000 teaching institutions offer rural-education programs, although one fourth of the U.S. population still is classified as rural.

But Ivan Muse, director of rural education at Brigham Young University, says prospective teachers are starting to show an interest in small rural schools. “It’s more like real teaching than in any other place,” he explains.

Dixie Rector, who teaches first through third grades near Welch, Okla., agrees. “It’s like stepping back into the past,” she says. “The parents maintain high behavior standards at home which the children follow. It certainly makes the job of teaching more pleasant.”

**This story was reported by Sarah A. Peterson of the Houston bureau.**

U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT, Sept. 10, 1979
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