1910

Center School - Dist. #185

Country School Legacy: Humanities on the Frontier

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**HISTORIC SITE FORM**

**State:** NEBRASKA  
**County:** CUSTER

**Location (in miles & direction from nearest town):** in Callaway

**Is this the original location?** no  
**Original location:** 17-15-22 Custer Twp

**Name of building & origin of name:** Center School, Dist. #185  
**The original school was sod, later of wood.**

**Name & number of the district:** Center School, Dist. #185

**Date built:** 1910  
**Years in use:** 1910-1911

**Who built it? A contractor or the community?** Most of the country schools were built by the patrons of the district.

**Does it look like it came from a plan book or was it designed by the community?** Designed to serve bare necessities.

**Names of former teachers:** Anna Weaver, Harriet Cox, Hazel Vanderslice, Edith Haefele, Della Cox, Mrs. L. M. Huff, Della Cox, Mrs. Roy Jones, Helen Davies, Verna Skelton, Irvin Longmore, Nellie Tucker, Pearl Boyer, Clara Skelton, Ileen Hammans, Ruth Cox, Ruth Krenz, Ruth Headley, Evelyn Larson and Nellie Tucker.

**Names of former students (family names only):**

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<th>Estergard</th>
<th>Ogg</th>
<th>Wilbourn</th>
<th>Wind</th>
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<tr>
<td>Scott</td>
<td>Malcom</td>
<td>Liles</td>
<td>Yingling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cooper</td>
<td>Dickson</td>
<td>Henry</td>
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<td>Deal</td>
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<td>Koch</td>
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**Name & address of person in charge of building:**

The building was purchased by the American Legion and used as a meeting house for awhile and then donated to the Boy Scouts and is used as their meeting place.

**Who is the owner?** Scout Troup
COUNTRY SCHOOL LEGACY HISTORIC SITE FORM

Architectural Features:

Size of building__________________________________________

Number of Windows (four pane, six pane, etc.)_____________________

Number of doors (entrances) one________________________________

Number of classrooms one_____________________________________

Bell tower or cupola no_______________________________________

Materials used (wood, brick, stone, etc.) wood_____________________

Type of roof_________________________________________________

Outhouses___________________________________________________

Playground Equipment________________________________________

Color of building & trim_______________________________________

Coal shed or stable___________________________________________

Teacherage____________________________________________________

Flagpole_____________________________________________________

Other architectural features:

Anything left inside?

Narrative Information: Did any special events happen at the school? What stories do people remember?

Current condition & use:

District records available: yes ___ no ___ where stored ________

Black & white photo taken: yes ___ no ___

Old photos available: yes ___ no ___

Does the building have any state or national historic designation?

Name & address of surveyor__________________________ date___
FOLLOWING IS A DESCRIPTION OF THE BUILDING BY ONE OF THE FORMER STUDENTS:

Small concrete step on the south, entering into an entry where coats were hung, lunch pails left and balls, bats, hoops and the equipment to run the hoops kept. At the south end of the school room itself was a stage where the teacher's desk set. Also a wall blackboard from the entrance door to the west wall. Blackboards also filled spaces between the windows on the east and also west walls. Sometimes they were used for assignments or speed mathematical races in addition, subtraction, division, multiplication or fractions. Sometimes, the blackboards were used as bulletin boards.

The ceiling was molded tin painted that gave it a sculptured appearance. (Several buildings in Callaway built about the same time have the same type of tin; the old Catholic Church; the Community building, a hardware store that has been torn down etc.)

The desks were graded in size from small for beginners to the large for older students. They were double desks that could accommodate two students if necessary. They were lined in rows. Then there was the recitation bench where the particular class sat for reciting the day's lesson, while the other students were supposed to be studying their lessons. I dare say it was listening time for those who couldn't keep their minds on their own work. There was an old book case with reference books etc.

The stove was in the far northwest corner. It was a big heavy coal burner with a heavy metal jacket that kept students away from the direct heat and also forced the heat up.

The water was carried from a farm home and put into a stone cooler. Everyone had their own cup. Water had to be emptied each night when the weather was cold or the jar would freeze and break.

Neighbor schools would come on special occasions to play ball or other games. Special programs and box socials were big events.
The rural school will soon be a memory. Have you told your children and grandchildren about those early memories? In the early days the schoolhouse often served as a voting place, a church and for "literary" and other community gatherings.

The teacher's lot was not easy. She walked one to three miles to school in the early morning to get the fire built and did all the janitor work. Her wages were low. Few schools had wells. The teacher and pupils brought water or got it at the nearest neighbor. Teacher and pupils rustled their own fuel, usually "cow chips" unless the school was near a river or creek where wood was available.

Children sat on home-made benches with boards in front to write on. The first "boughten" desks were double, fastened to the floor or on boards so they could be moved. They wrote lessons on slates. There were no grades. Children were promoted from "First Reader" to "Second Reader". Friday was a joy-day with art work, a spelling-down, or a ciphering match.

In 1910 there were 22 rural schools in this area. Sunny Side was organized in 1914 when Lower Spring Creek district was divided. Only one--Redfern--has classes today.

The first schoolhouses were made of sod, with the exception of the Maier district where the first one was of frame construction. Redfern has the only brick schoolhouse.

Lower Lodi, Triumph, and Redfern districts had two-room structures and at one time offered two years of high school.

All have consolidated with other districts except Redfern and Lower Lodi. Pine Canyon consolidated with Arnold. Pupils from Lower Lodi attend school at Oconto and Callaway. Earlier Milldale joined Triumph; Rye Valley joined Sand Valley and Sunny Hill, the Headley school and Happy Hollow joined Redfern. Then part of Redfern consolidated with Callaway. All of the other schools consolidated with Callaway in the late 1950's except Triumph which joined in 1961.

What happened to the rural schoolhouses is frequently asked. Here are the answers, researched by Mrs. Max VanCleave.

Delight No. 3, one mile west of Callaway, organized in 1880. Lloyd Schuker moved the building to his Stop Table farm to use for grain storage.

Lower Spring Creek, No. 26, six miles northeast of town. First frame building burned in the 1940's. Another one purchased. Building moved to Callaway school grounds to use as superintendent's office. Later sold to Paul Ridder for use as a shop.

Triumph, No. 42, built about 1892, six miles northwest of town. Building sold to Wiley Eastwood and moved to Callaway.

Lower Lodi, No. 73, ten miles southeast of town. Organized in 1885. Used today as community center.

Maier School, No. 88, four miles east of town. First frame building sold to a Mr. Cameron, who moved it to his farm for use as his house. Jess May, who later lived there, used it as a shop. Foster Smith bought the one built later for a shop.

Stop Table, No. 93, about eleven miles southwest of town. Organized in 1885. Bill Hagle bought the building. It remains on original site.

Sand Valley, No. 95, one mile south and four miles west of town. Frame schoolhouse built in 1887. Building bought by Joe Hagle and moved to his farm.
Fairview, No. 102, (Beshaler or Evans School), about seven miles north of town. John Beshaler bought the building for use as a shop on his farm.

Finn Canyon, No. 103, about 12 miles northwest of town. Organized about 1888. Building used as a shop on the Burt Johnson farm.


Redfern, No. 113, about 13 miles southwest of town. Wm. Johnson moved the frame structure to Hog Hollow and made it into a house, after a new brick structure was built.

Riggle School, No. 160, four miles north of town. Last term of school was 1936-37. Building bought by Lester Gibbons and moved to town for use as a garage.

Brown Valley, No. 165, about five miles southwest of town. Building remains on original site and used for grain storage by Glenn Longmore.

Center, No. 185, about five miles southeast of town near farmhouse of Duane Henry. Building moved to town across west of the park. Used by American Legion, and now by the Boy Scouts.

Milldale, No. 203, about 10 miles northwest of town. Building moved to Callaway and remodeled to become the Bible Baptist Church. Held as early as 1898. Building moved to town and being used by Progressive Fertilizer plant.

Hillside, No. 215, about five miles south of town. Dates from the eighties. Fred Miller bought the building and used the lumber in the construction of his house.

Happy Hollow, No. 223, 14 miles southwest of town. Organized in the late eighties. A teacher, the late Mary Gilmore, gave it its name. The school house was sold to Donald Oman for use as a farrowing house for hogs.

Cottonwood, No. 230, (Lange school) 10 miles south of town. George Rhodes bought the building and moved it to Callaway for use as a shop.

Cross Roads, No. 243, about four miles northwest of town. Dates back to 1890. Building used today as a club house on Callaway Golf Course.

Custer, No. 246, about 10 miles east of town. Frame school built about 1897. Building sold to a Mr. McCaslin and moved to his home near Broken Bow.

Upper Spring Creek, No. 250, about eight miles northwest near Lynn Griffith farm. Dates back to 1890. Glen Cool bought the building for use as a shop and machine shed.

West Cottonwood, No. 254 (Hog Hollow), about nine miles southwest of town. Building bought by Leslie Hickenbotton and moved a quarter-mile south and made into a house.

Sunny Side, No. 277, about seven miles northeast of town. A part of Lower Spring Creek district until 1914. Building on original location and used as meeting place for Sunny Side Sunday School.
Callaway, NE 68825
Feb. 16, 1981

Ernest Grundy
Professor of English
Kearney State College
Kearney, NE

Dear Mr. Grundy:

Sorry gathering up this material has taken so long. Time passes so fast, I just can't believe it. All of these country schools were researched in detail by different local citizens in 1967 when we were putting out programs for the 7 Valleys Historical Society and some people really researched in detail. However, when it came time for the publications, we had to cut it down some so I'm enclosing the pictures and brief histories of each school in this 7 valleys area. All of these schools are now part of Dist. #180 and come to the Callaway Public School.

The particular school that is being used in Callaway as a Scout Hall was researched by Mrs. Harlan VanCleave who was a student in the frame school house. There was a sod school house before this one in a slightly different location. However, any school records before 1910 are not available in Custer County because the county court house burned destroying them.

I do not know if there would be enough interest in rural school history to warrant a meeting but I would be willing to try in the summer or fall if you would like. There are some old school records of Crossroads and the Brown Valley school at the museum. And also more detailed records of some of the others that were researched.

There is a group presently working to do a 100 year book of this area and some of these school histories will be combined with area history and family histories.

Will mail this information and if I can be of further help, please let me know.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Ann Smith