Snowball - Dist. #9

Country School Legacy: Humanities on the Frontier

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HISTORIC SITE FORM

State: Nebraska
County: Jasper

Location (in miles & direction from nearest town): 

Is this the original location? 

Name of building & origin of name: 

Name & number of the district: 

Date built: 1887 Years in use: 65 approx

Who built it? A contractor or the community? 

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

Names of former teachers: 

Names of former students (family names only): 

Name & address of person in charge of building: 

Who is the owner? 

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COUNTRY SCHOOL LEGACY HISTORIC SITE FORM

Architectural Features:

Size of building ________________________________

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

Number of doors (entrances) ______

Number of classrooms __________

Bell tower or cupola ______

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

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?

In write-up

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____
The Snowball Schoolhouse in the south part of Gosper County is one of the oldest one-room school buildings in Nebraska which is still standing in its original location. It is still used occasionally for community gatherings and is known now as the Snowball Community Center since the school district was dissolved in the 50's and the children of the district now attend school in Arapahoe.

The first school for the early settlers of this district was a dug-out near where the Briegel farm house now stands. Then in 1881, a sod house was built near the present cemetery. Families living in the district then were Dunlap, Smith, "ose, Seeman, Hand, Snyder, VanWinkle, Lewis and several others. The sod schoolhouse was unplastered until the second year. The first desks were planks that lay on pegs that had been driven into the wall. After the first year, the pupils had homemade desks. Sometimes there were snakes on the ridge-logs. Frank Montgomery was one of the early teachers and he later became County Superintendent.

The new schoolhouse, (the one still standing) was built nearer the center of the district, and was built in 1887. Bessie Dunlap who passed away in 1970 and attended school in the sodhouse before coming to the new school enjoyed telling the history of the school at the Snowball reunions which are still held every summer for former pupils, teachers and residents. She had stated that the Dunlaps had someone in school continuously for 60 years. In the late 30's there was a prairie fire originating on the farm where the Jimmy Toomeys now live and the teacher sent the pupils out to the plowed ground, south of the schoolhouse and ordered them to lie face down. They still breathed lots of the smoke since the grass was tall and the smoke was dense.

Before 1904, the school had the name "New Lisbon". The name "Snowball" came after the pupils threw snowballs at every passing team of horses from behind a huge snowfort. At one time, a huge snowman had to be torn down when William Breck's team refused to go by. About this time, there were 41 pupils (earlier, there had been more) and the school ground was divided with the girls playing on one side and
the boys on the other. There was trouble for anyone who dared go over the line.

In the early days, the schoolhouse was used for dances, Sunday School and funerals. Mrs. Ruth Randolph remembers that her father's funeral had been held in the school building.

During the summer of 1968, some of the older pupils enjoyed a picnic at their old school with picture taking and reminiscing. The atmosphere was that of former last-day-of-school dinners only that the pupils attending had been graduated from the eighth grade many years earlier.

From a souvenir folder of 1929 (more than 50 years ago) when Ethel Carpenter was the teacher, we learn that the pupils at that time were Lucy Dunlap, Margaret Toomey, Josephine DeVries, Harry Moore, Dorothy Tull, Opal Dunlap, Lucille Toomey, Eva Toomey, Marie DeVries, Francis DeVries, Gladys Dunlap, Robert Tull, Tofy Toomey, Jennie Noltensmeier, Alvin Vantine, Kenneth Packwood, Glen Dunlap, Leo Tull, Carl Vantine and Jimmy Toomey. School Board members were O. E. Tull, Director; J. C. Vantine, Moderator and M. D. Packwood, Treasurer.

Among former teachers that are still living are Anna Faw, Ruth Evans, Tillie Carter, Leonaor Nott, Lois Petersen, Madge Hill, Dorothy Detterding, Betty Ficken, Carolyn Haffey and Nora Toomey.

Three generations of the Packwood family attended school at Snowball and all of the Henry Ross family, He and his wife and daughter. Names of other families who attended school here were Hawthorne, Hambidge, Toomey, Dunlap, Tull, Noltensmeier, Smith, Esslinger, Vantine, Stewart, Hilker, Briegel, Dodson, Brecks, DeVries, Moore, Searl, Highland, Esslinger and Menze.