1880

Dist. #10

Country School Legacy: Humanities on the Frontier

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Present building showing Oregon Trail Marker. Photo by Lester Jones, used through his courtesy and Estaline Carpenter who ordered the original.

HISTORY OF DISTRICT 10

By Ella Mae Hurburt
PREFACE

Old school books have long intrigued me, but it was not until I saw the two oldest registers for District 10 that the possibility of combining texts and school records into a school history aroused my interest in attempting such an endeavor. What started as a little spare-time paper became a full-sized research project, for one scrap of information led to the next, and an occasional elusive item meant much searching. Courthouse, statehouse, library, and State Historical Society have been invaded in the quest.

To certain people I am particularly indebted. Without their help, this would indeed be the little paper first envisioned. Special thank yous go to Leonard Skov of the State Department of Education and to former county superintendent R. C. Harriss for information and help in locating early recorded material, to the Deins, Theo, Cora, Lois and George, and to Mrs. George Busing, Mrs. Lydia Busing, Gust and Anna Olson, Ruby Nelson Terp, Luetta Gaston Cecerle, and Joshua Wittenberger for their patience and willingness to answer questions about the school, to my former superintendent, D. G. Hayek, and his staff in the teacher certification department for assistance in the area of certification history, to Miss Jean Messler of the Fairbury Public Library and her staff who keep a few volumes of old Fairbury newspapers upstairs constantly for my use, to county superintendent Alma Iwohn for taking a hot afternoon to go to the vault and get down boxes of records from a high top shelf, and for arranging for me to have access to them, to Mr. and Mrs. Walter Heimsoth and their son and to deputy sheriff Kellie for assistance in getting the records upstairs, to the staff at the State Historical Society for assistance in locating materials, to county attorney Bob Lammers for help in locating old school laws and for making his law library available, and to Clara Swett who has searched through term summaries, annual reports, and census sheets for information and who finally located the record book which contained the date of organization and the original boundaries.

Certain records can no longer be located. Without them there are gaps in information. The box containing the original petitions for districts 25-103 contained none for the first districts so that it is impossible to ascertain who initiated the original organization of the district or who signed for it. Secretary and treasurer's books have been discarded, and without them some dates are controversial. The students cannot agree as to when an event happened.

If there are errors in information, they should be corrected. A note to me at my home in Fairbury will assure that the annotated copy to be placed in the school at a later date is correct. For ease in printing, location of sources is not given. In a few instances, data are conflicting; it is difficult to ascertain which date is correct; and a trip to the Capitol after press time will be necessary in order to check dates and the errata list of one set of records.

ELLA MAE HURLBURT
June 17, 1967
With the coming of settlers into Nebraska, there was a need for schools, and although these were crude by our standards, they did serve a purpose. At least the children learned to read and write, and some pioneer woman was a little richer for her efforts. Unfortunately, few records of early schools are available today, but the Meridian school, or District 10, may be the outgrowth of a territorial organization.

According to John C. Jefferson, writing of early education in Jones County in the sixties, Fairbury Daily News, March 18, 1953, Joel Helvey backed a subscription school at Big Sandy in 1860 and Valentine Kyle was the first teacher. The term was only three months, and each family desiring instruction gave or promised a specified amount toward the teacher's salary.

In 1863 a territorial district was organized at Big Sandy. George Weisel, D. C. Jenkins, and Mr. Fannell were elected to the board and authorized to fix boundaries and hire a teacher in addition to collecting the subscription fee. They hired Miss Emily Marks, who also taught on Rose Creek that year. Later Anna Alexander taught Big Sandy.

These early schools were furnished with boxes and benches, and a blackboard, which also served as a common textbook for arithmetic, grammar, and spelling. Mr. Jefferson stated that the Bible was the most commonly used reader, and well it might be, for that would be the one piece of literature that homes might have in common. The teacher or a pupil read the history lesson from a United States History, and although there was a copy of a geography, the teacher lectured instead of reading from it. Skeptical students were permitted to use the book to check statements.

The patrons examined prospective candidates to see if they were qualified to teach. Such examinations were oral and consisted of reading a few Bible verses, solving a few problems in mental arithmetic, answering such questions as, "How many directions at the North Pole?" and spelling a few difficult words. Each candidate was sure to be asked to spell one of these: charivari, sarsaparilla, or asafoetida. For three years the scarcity of teachers kept salaries at a high seventy-five dollars per month, but as more qualified, wage offers were less.

Whether the boundaries of the Meridian district were synonymous with the territorial one in the Big Sandy area is a matter of conjecture, for all records have not been located.
If they were identical, some of the organizational problems would be simplified. There would be a knowledge of the number of children and of how nearly that figure met the new state’s required minimum for the formation of a school district.

Just when petitions for the creation of the Meridian District began to circulate is unknown. The original filings for Districts 1-24 have not been found. Some sources claim that the district started in 1868, and well it might have. Every voter in the area had to be notified by mail or in person of the proposed district and of an election to organize. With the slowness of both mail and transportation, several weeks might have elapsed between the beginning of organization and completion. Even after the election, a district could not be said to exist until at least two of the officers had agreed to accept their election. As soon as two accepted, a district was declared formed and could transact business.

On March 20, 1869 the Meridian School was declared organized. That same year the Legislature ordered all districts numbered, and this one received the numeral 10. In the County Superintendent’s Record Book is the boundary description as filed on the petition.

Commences Northwest corner of Section 6, Township 3, Range 1. Runs east 1 mile, south 2 miles, east 1 ½ miles, south about 1 mile to Little Blue following in a southeasterly direction said stream about ½ mile to the section line between Sections 21, 22-3-1, south to southeast corner of Section 21, Township 3, Range 1, west 3 miles and north 4 miles to place of beginning. Contains sections 6, 7, W ¼ of 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, and part of 21 of Township 3, Range 1.

On April 12, 1869, it purchased Lots 20 and 21 in Block 20 in the town of Meridian from Fordyce and Julia Roper for one dollar. It was in less of a hurry to file the deed or to commence construction. It was not until July that the deed was filed; the contract for the building was not let until December 10, 1869. H. M. Cornell, William Nightengale and Barzillai Price comprised the first school board.

The board lost no time in selecting a site for the school. On April 12, 1869, it purchased Lots 20 and 21 in Block 20 in the town of Meridian from Fordyce and Julia Roper for one dollar. It was in less of a hurry to file the deed or to commence construction. It was not until July that the deed was filed; the contract for the building was not let until December 10, 1869. H. M. Cornell, William Nightengale and Barzillai Price comprised the first school board.

The patrons no longer determined the qualifications of the teacher. By law the county superintendent was required to examine prospective teachers and to certify them. A Third Grade County Certificate, good for six months in the county of issuance, was granted if the candidate could pass the examination in orthography, reading, writing, grammar, geography and arithmetic. A grade of fifty was passing, but an average of seventy-seven was required. Examinations were held on the fourth Saturday of the month, at least four times a year.

Even though the schoolhouse was not to be ready until June, a teacher was hired to begin instruction in May. The handwritten contract, now fading and penned in a modified Spenserian hand, followed the form prescribed by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Its terms specified:

Contract between Lucy L. Correll, teacher and Hiram Cornell, Director, whereby said Lucy L. Correll agrees to teach the public school in the town of Meridian, County of Jefferson and State of Nebraska for the term of 12 weeks beginning on the third (3) day of May, 1870 and that she will faithfully and impartially govern and instruct the children and youth entrusted to her care, whereby the said Hiram Cornell, Director, as aforesaid, hereby agrees to keep the schoolhouse in the said district in good repair and see that it is furnished with the necessary fuel and appendages for the comfort and convenience of the pupils, and to pay the said Lucy Correll, teacher, for her services as teacher the sum of one dollar ($1.00) per day and board also, paid by the week. Dated at Meridian this day of May 1870.

Lucy L. Correll, Teacher
M. Cornell, Director
Barzillai Price, Treasurer

To the teacher’s copy was to be fixed a five cent revenue stamp. Although her copy may have been dated, there is no evidence that the board copy was. A blank seems always to have been in that copy, now in the possession of Lois Dein. Just where Miss Lucy taught is unknown. On June 6 the school board notified George Weisel, who had signed the performance bond for the contractor, that the school promised for completion June 1, 1870 was not done, nor was there any evidence that it ever would be. At least the annual report of the county superintendent shows no building for that year.

State law permitted school districts to levy a one-and-one half mill tax for school purposes. Judging from delinquent property taxes of thirty-five, fifty, or seventy-five cents, this levy could not have brought in much. Additional funds came from the apportionment of funds derived from the sale of the state school lands. This money was to be divided among the schools by the following formula: $8.11 to each district in the state and $1.66 and one-tenth cent per each child on the census. However, the $57.12 received the first year apparently was computed by another formula. A small sum from fines was also included when state monies were apportioned which might account for the discrepancy.
State records show that there were fifty-two children of school age that first year, but only twenty-one attended. One of those was either under or over school age.

Textbooks were approved by the State Superintendent who felt that uniformity of texts was needed. In order to encourage the adoption of these books, he persuaded the publishers to offer the official texts at half price until September 13, 1870. The Meridian parents found themselves expected to furnish Hillards Readers, French's arithmetics, and Harvey's Grammar. To date, efforts to locate any of these have been fruitless.

At that time, the sixth reader was as high as reading series arrangements, the second term might have been delayed until the building was completed. At any rate, in a year that other districts were holding forth in dugouts, log cabins with dirt floors, and homesteaders' kitchens, District 10 had a building erected for educational purposes, but it was also used for church services and for lodge meetings.

A month after the county superintendent had visited the school at Meridian, the February 17, 1872, Fairbury Gazette printed the report.

COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT'S NOTES
January 16th, 1872
Visited School District No. 10. Rev. George Schultz, Teacher; S. J. Alexander, Director; T. J. Holt, Treasurer; Mr. Nightengale, Moderator. They have quite a good school house in this district. Mr. Schultz is laboring under many disadvantages, the house not being properly seated, nor supplied with any kind of school apparatus excepting a blackboard. There were 28 pupils enrolled with 24 present. I remained during the day and witnessed his methods of teaching which I think are quite commendable. I noticed that there was a little more confusion and noise during school hours than I generally find in our schools, which I attributed partly to the ill condition of the temporary seats. This district should try and procure the necessary apparatus and seat the room before commencing another term.

P. L. Chapman, Co. Supt.

In other reports, Mr. Chapman was very critical of those districts that were not using the required texts. Since no mention was made of such a deficiency here, it is assumed that this district did demand the purchase of the necessary texts. Compared to today's book prices, textbooks were cheap, but then money was scarce. To encourage the use of uniform texts, Mr. Chapman published a price list, giving the established price for a new book and also an exchange one, should the student have one that he could not use. Primary children having an obsolete book could turn it in, along with fifteen or twenty cents, and get what they needed. The more expensive the book, the higher the rate of exchange.

The State Superintendent's records show two terms for 1872, each taught by a different teacher. At a salary of forty dollars per month, A. H. Bush taught the four month term. Maud Baird was paid only thirty dollars for each of the three months that she taught. This may reflect a difference in qualifications, for those in attendance at the November, 1871 institute passed a resolution asking school boards to consider the different grades of certificates in determining pay. The holder of a second grade county certificate had been examined in a few more subjects than had the recipient of a third grade one whose examination covered only basic subjects.

Another resolution of that institute specified that each school day be opened by the singing of a hymn and by reading a chapter from the Bible. To inform the public of these decisions, the Institute ordered them published.

Information for the next two decades is fragmentary at press time. In telling the history of the town of Meridian to Bill...
Cram in 1936, H. M. Stanclift, a former merchant of the area, stated that the town was destroyed by a tornado in 1875. But although the town was not rebuilt, the school was. There are other reports that hail at various times severely damaged the building, also.

The scrapbook kept by former county superintendent Ed Cowles yielded the next few items of information. On November 25, 1882 his column in the Gazette announced that "A. C. Routzahn has entered upon a five months' term of school." A month later the column carried complaints of absenteeism with this report from Meridian: "A. C. Routzahn presides in the Meridian District. His school, as well as Connor's is poorly attended at present as nearly all of the larger pupils are husking corn." Connor taught District 50 to the south. The December distribution of state money and fines show District 10 as receiving $36.40 on the basis of an enrollment of 31.

The officers for 1883 were reported as being George Neisel, Tobias Broder, and Jacob Dein. On the basis of 31 children the district received $39.22 from the June apportionment of state funds.

The attendance problem was still bothering in 1885, and Superintendent Cowles was offering a prize for the school with the highest average attendance. Florence Nightengale, teacher that year, reported that 16 were enrolled at District 10, but that the average attendance was only 9. There were 10 tardies and seven visitors. This report carries the earliest mention of students enrolled: James, Mollie, and Jessie Hawkes having perfect attendance.

Maggie Ireland taught the five-month winter term in 1886, having first taught a fall term in another district. She was followed in 1887 by Jos. Wittenberger, who taught three terms there. With the help of his son Joshua, and the earliest signed register, the dates for which the next four teachers instructed were determined. George Smith taught the term beginning in 1890. He was followed by the Powell cousins, Millie in 1891 and Lilly in 1892. Della Thompson instructed the 1893 term.

Joshua Wittenberger and John Backer recall having gone to school while it was still in Meridian. The latter speaks of the tall sunflowers which surrounded the building each fall. Mr. Wittenberger described the building as being "at the edge of the old Meridian townsite just east of the old church about 20 rods just over the hill in the valley ... the original building had two front entrance doors. There was no entrance room, you walked right into the main room. We had rather comfortable seats accommodating two students. Each side of the desk was equipped with an iron grill."

Mr. Wittenberger revealed that one might have the same seatmate for several years, and such an arrangement could result in the wrong one being blamed if mischief were afoot. He and Fred Dein were seatmates for many years. They did not "squeal" on each other, but when Joshua was blamed, and things were "getting hot" for the former one year, the latter confessed to his school-board-member father, and the seatmate was saved. Most of the time, however, Joshua, admits that he, himself, was the culprit.

The earliest register bears an 1893 date. Mr. Wittenberger provided information on earlier scholars. Two of them, Mary Padgett and Fred Bensing, were not residents of the district.

Mr. Wittenberger recalls that reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, physiology, grammar, and spelling were the subjects taught. Spelling and mathematics were stressed. "We used to have spelling and ciphering contests after school on Friday and had spelling and ciphering matches between adjoining districts. Fred Busing in the district to the north of us was a genius in mathematics and could add several columns at a time. The rest of us took one column at a time, and so Fred took us all for a ride."

By 1890 the majority of the students were living north of Meridian; therefore, the decision was made to move the building to a more central location. A corner of the Dein farm being deeded by Jacob and Wilhelmina Dein to District 10 for as long as there is a school building on it became the new site. Across the road were the ruts of the Oregon Trail. Directly across the road was the Ratz home, and when the old building arrived at the new site, people began to call it the Ratz school.

To some, it is still that although the Ratzes have long been gone.

The building underwent some remodeling, but those who went to school in it recall that it was very cold on a wintry day. The wind came in everywhere.

According to the register of 1893, twenty-six were enrolled. The school went only to the fifth grade. The ten first graders had writing in addition, but joined with the third grade for work in Ray's Primary Arithmetic. The fourth grade had language extra, but worked only on the third grade level in Ray's Elementary Arithmetic. For the fifth grade, language was divided into grammar and composition as presented in Harvey's Elementary Language. History of the United States was also a new subject. The six fifth graders ranged in age from ten to nineteen. All received identical grades in orthography, reading, grammar and composition. The fourth graders were ten, twelve and fifteen, but their grades varied.

The daily schedule shows the pupils spending half the morning on arithmetic and a like portion in the afternoon on geography. History required an hour of study and was taught...
as reading in the fifth grade. The first grade spent much time
with slates.

A. R. Spurling, also known as Reuben, taught the 1894 term
and was the first one for whom we have a signed register.
He, too, had no students above the fifth grade and a few of his
first graders had not completed the first reader the previous
year. By the time Mr. Spurling arrived to teach, Barnes had
replaced the Hillard texts of the first two decades as the
readers. At the close of the term, he classified his pupils
as they should be for the next year and provided for a sixth
grade. He noted that this group had done fifth grade work in
arithmetic until February and that the fourth grade would
need to review division and factoring. In the report to the
successor, Mr. Spurling wrote: "By using the course of
study adopted by the Jefferson County Teachers, the teacher
may find just the work that each pupil has done."

That the district was providing texts is evidenced by his
statement:

"The Sixth grade should have had History and Physiology
this year but as we did not have the kind of book that the
course of study called for, we took Geography. It would be
well to drop Geography for one year and get that grade started
in History and Physiology."

Many districts were not yet providing books, but according
to Theo Dein, whose father, Jacob, was a long-time board
member, the coming of the railroad through the district
brought in additional tax revenue which real estate need not
bear. Therefore, there was money for things that other districts
might not provide. In fact, at times, the district had a surplus
of funds and lent money. It had a very low mill levy at such
times and usually enjoyed a lower levy than its less fortunate
railroadless neighbors.

Early registers are not marked off for monthly attendance,
but from the total days of attendance recorded for each pupil,
it appears that eight months of school were held. Bertha,
Katie, Caroline Dein, and Caroline and Talea Backer have
150 or more days attendance recorded. Thirty children were
enrolled but the four little Wittenbergers moved before
school closed. A school picture owned by Mrs. George Busing
shows thirty-three pupils, but a few little visitors swelled
the ranks that day. Mothers had dressed them up and sent
them to school so that their pictures could be taken. The
treelessness of the background makes the building seem very
isolated.

Malcom Akin taught the next two years. The 1895 term
began October 7 and closed April 3, 1896. It was sub-
divided into a fall and winter term, and he reclassified a
few of the pupils. The school was grouped into A, B, C, and D
divisions for arithmetic, and into two classes for spelling,
and language. Decimals, factoring and fractions gave the students trouble. The Fourth Grade had gone through the third reader once, and the Third Grade had read half of the second reader and needed to review writing numbers. Only twenty-seven were enrolled that year.

An extra month was added in 1896, school again starting in September. There was also a three member class of seventh graders, which was reading, however, in the fifth reader. Classes were not a full term in length. The seventh grade studied physiology one month; the fifth grade had done the work in geography to Mexico, and it had been joined by the fourth grade when the work on the North Central States commenced. Of the sixth grade, Mr. Akin wrote:

"The Sixth Grade have finished the first two parts of the Language but should review before advancing further... have studied to the War of the Revolution, would be well to review before advancing."

Swinton's Readers had joined those of Barnes as reading texts. There were also geography and history texts credited to Barnes.

Twenty-seven children were on Sarah Traum's 1897 roll. The term was again a seven month one and there was no third grade. The second grade of the previous year had not completed its work, and one of the third graders was put back with it. The first grade had arithmetic combinations to ten, the second grade learned then through twenty-seven. One sixth grader studied geography with the fifth grade, but one boy in that class studied geography of Nebraska and of Jefferson County alone.

Around nineteen-hundred a new school was erected. Each student has a different way of determining the date. According to some this could have been the first term taught in the new school. However, a later annual report shows that the plans were not paid for until 1899. To delay bills that long is unusual which makes one think that the building may not have been erected until later. Whenever it was, the old building was sold at auction for thirty dollars to Jacob Dein, who tore it down and erected some farm buildings from it. The teacher for the 1898 term is unknown; the register shows no fourth nor sixth grade and only twenty-two enrolled. The seventh grade was still the highest grade.

Kate Baker received $280 for teaching eight months in 1899. She had twenty-three pupils. B. S. Harrold taught the 1900 term. According to the register, Frank Deffer taught the 1901 term. His register shows daily attendance, but the work covered, texts used, and notes to successor features of previous registers are not provided for in this one. Thirty-three children were enrolled at some time during the fall, but the register shows that there was much absenteeism, and much dropping and re-entering. A whole family would be absent for a week or more. Mr. Deffer copied bits of poetry in the margins of his register pages.

"I love the dear children
I like to see them play
The music of their voices
Is with me all the day."

The next register page is neither dated nor signed. The annual report for the district shows W. H. Flamm as teaching the 1902-03 term of eight months for $280. The term started with only fourteen pupils. Four more enrolled in January, three of them boys old enough to help with cornhusking and potato digging, and therefore often encouraged to stay home and work until weather put an end to field activities. As during M. Deffer's term, there was much absenteeism, less than half being present some days.

Harold Rupert taught the next term. A class of nine started September 10, but again the older boys waited until colder weather to enroll, some the same latecomers of the previous year. Both tardy and half-day-absence marks dot the page. There are many days that show less than a fourth to be neither absent nor tardy.

It was in 1904, three years before the law required one, that District 10 established a school library. Proceeds from a box social were used to purchase the first books. At that time rivals for the affection of the teacher or some pretty girl in the district could run boxes up enough that the affair might net as much as thirty-five dollars. A set of Louisa Alcott's books was purchased from this fund, "Under the Lilacs, " "Eight Cousins, " "Jo's Boys," and "An Old Fashioned Girl" are still to be found on the shelves. "The English Orphans" by Holmes, also a part of that purchase, is there, too, but its title page is missing.

A. L. Fullerton was next to sign the register as teacher. He started with eight, but five more enrolled before the close of the sixth week. At the close of the second month the attendance was transferred to a new register. The old register was designed to comply with the state law that required the teacher to submit the attendance record each month for examination, but no director ever signed it.

This register also shows a variety of visitors, including candidates for political office as well as the official visits of the county superintendent. Opposite one name, that of a Mr. Hollinbroke, is the notation: "Book agent. Worse than Bedbugs."

The new register again provided for listing texts. The
primary children were using Baldwin's readers, but many of the other texts were the same as those in use a decade earlier. To encourage attendance, an honor roll page on which to list those neither absent nor tardy was included. Teacher's term summaries indicate that it initiated a series of seven month school terms.

Flora Weisel taught the 1905-06 term, starting with only seven pupils. She divided her year into fall and winter terms with a two-week break between them at Christmas. The winter portion found many absent. The primary children were absent more than they were present.

September 3, 1906, Howard O. Wiswell opened school for nine pupils. Unlike other rural teachers in the county, Mr. Wiswell held one of the new state certificates issued by the State Superintendent. Just which one it was--there were three--the county superintendent did not state. She merely clarified, by the state certificate wording, why he had no grades for county teacher's examinations. Mr. Wiswell taught only two months. He married then and left for the west coast with his bride.

On November 5, Mrs. Sadie Noble took over. Her two little girls enrolled, and in December, three of the teen-agers who had been working returned to school, which brought the enrollment to twelve. Illness forced the school to close for a few days and because of making up time, school closed late.

Mrs. Noble returned the next fall, again having a small school. Distance forced one small child to quit after fourteen days, and one of the older ones also quit that month. All grades were reading from Baldwin, but there were no fifth, sixth, nor eighth graders. The four Backer children moved in February, leaving just six to complete the year.

Bertha Dein taught the 1908-09 term. She started with only six, but before the year closed enrollment had doubled. Absenteeism was heavy during the winter months. Five of them attended less than a week after Christmas. "For those of us who lived far, it was often too snowy for the younger ones to make it," one student recalls. The heavy snows that winter led some of the daring older boys to make huge snowballs which they brought in and rolled around on the floor, sometimes striking the teacher with one. Improvements both inside and out of the building were reported to the county superintendent, but there is no written record of what these were.

Only three children enrolled the first week of Ada Wilson's term which was to be eight months long. Joseph Landkamer was absent enrollment day, but walked the two and a half miles to school every day for the rest of the year. Late entries and new families finally brought the total enrollment to fifteen. Again the small children miss whole months of school.

The school board notified the county superintendent that it was considering the purchase of all new books. The text book titles show new books for spelling, arithmetic, history, physiology, geography and grammar. Hoenshel's Grammar with its emphasis on diagramming had arrived at District 10.

A picture of Ada Wilson in the classroom is in possession of Gust Olson and has been used as a guide in recreating the appearance of a turn of the century classroom. The desk of that era has been replaced by a more modern one.

This is the first year that the records at the school show that the county superintendent made more than one visit required by law. R. C. Harriss signed the examination record for the register in both September and March.

For teacher Pearl Hooper, the year 1910 was not routine. The old discarded register of 1904 was given her and she was without the background material on her pupils. It was not until January that she received a new record book. She had only seven pupils at first, and after the first month, one of those was rarely present. There were late enrollees. In December the stove smoked one morning and after an hour and a half of school, the students were sent home. On two days in January, the register shows all absent. Her report shows an average daily attendance of five.

Miss Cora Simmons, beginning her first year September 4, 1911, also found no register, and her pupils had forgotten over the summer just where they were when school closed. She spent her first two weeks just trying to classify them. But she finally got classes organized and taught the school until the spring of 1915. There is no record of any prior teachers having taught that long. She had the same nine children her first two years; her other registers have not been located.

During Miss Simmons' tenure new books were purchased, but instead of turning the old ones in as the County Superintendent was urging in order to encourage schools to keep up-to-date with their texts, she added them to the school library. Her own school had none and the one here seemed a treasure to be increased. To be sure, an expenditure of ten cents per pupil was to be spent on books for the library, but in a small school, that bought few books.

Her school held a basket dinner in order to purchase the pictures, "Christ and the Doctors" and "The Song of the Lark," both of which still hang in the front of the room. Nor did beautification stop there. The iris and the day lilies still on the grounds date back to those that she brought from her home to plant around the school, but the little peach tree planted near the front steps is gone.

Her county superintendent still speaks of the fine work that she did. He once slipped into class and found her so engrossed
in her work that she did not know that he was there.

The next registers are missing. The annual report for 1915-
16 gave Hazel Pitman as the teacher. For the next two terms
Mary Van Ness taught. The treasurer's books show that pre-
depression high wage for the district. Not until World War II
teacher shortages began would contracts equaling that figure
be tendered. That year the building was both shingled and
painted. Labor charges for the shingling came to eight dollars.

A new coat of plaster was applied.

Helen Beer taught the next term at a much lower salary.
Her contract called for seventy-five dollars a month. Other
than salary, thirty-two dollars and fifty cents for coal was
the only major expense. School supplies came to less than
twenty dollars.

Mabel L. Baruth began a two-year period of teaching in
the fall of 1923. Records show that she had thirteen pupils.
Several new books were purchased that year.

Alma Broeder was the new teacher the next fall. Not only
was there a new teacher, but there were new pupils, and
single desks replaced the familiar double desks used by all
previous students. There was an enrollment of nineteen, six
of them being first and second graders. The increased en-
rollment meant more books and additional school supplies. The
stove required new pipe and grate, and the organ had to be
repaired. The district had received $55.35 cents from the
Thayer County treasurer, but there is no notation as to why
that county was paying. A rewording of District 10 boundary
lines, as recorded in 1922 by the County Superintendent still
showed the district as lying within one county. Her description
read:

Beginning at the southwest corner of section 21,

T. 3. R. 1. running thence north a quarter mile,

thence west a half mile, thence north one and three
quarter miles, thence north a quarter mile, thence
west a quarter mile, thence south two and a quarter
miles, thence east three miles to place of beginning,

containing all of sections 17, 18, 19, 20, and W½ of

W½ and S½ of Sec. E. 4, Sec. 21 and W Sec. 16 and SW¼

of SW¼ of Section 7, all in township 3, North Range 1

east of 6th P.M. 3320 acres.

Alice Busing taught the 1926-27 term. During the year
eighteen pupils enrolled. On one November day, every pupil
was tardy. Three of the pupils were frequently absent for long
periods.

Ethel Fox taught the next two years. She organized a rhythm
band which had uniforms. Those uniforms served a dual-
purpose, for after little Loren Landkamer started to school,
the older boys would don them and climb up in the rafters of

the coalhouse. Some one would bring Loren to the building and
shut him in. The waving white arms of the uniform-clad boys
was enough to convince the small lad that real ghosts lived in
the coalhouse, and terrified, he would flee. A new stove had to
be purchased for her second year, and a stove board was
also secured.

Alice M. Knigge took over in 1930 with ten pupils enrolled.
There were no major expenses that year. In fact school
operated for two hundred dollars less than the previous year.

Only three children were on hand when Alma Baruth opened
school September 8, 1930. Unlike Ada Wilson whose three-
pupil school grew, Miss Baruth gained no new students. With
only grades five and seven, there was little difficulty in getting
in all of the required classes.

Next fall there were four Busing children to add to the small
enrollment of the previous term. Wauneta Collicott had five
grades to teach, and unlike her predecessor who was paid
eighty dollars to teach three, she received only fifty-five per
month. Wages in District 10 were beginning to reflect the trend
of the depression era. The textbook inventory indicated that
there were 233 on hand. Her seventh and eighth graders were
promoted providing they passed their county examinations.
Since this district still maintained only eight months of
school, the returns were not ready at the close of school.

On September 5, 1932, Marcella Backer commenced the
first of her three years in the school. She received even less
than Miss Collicott, forty-five dollars per month and that
dropped another five the second year when she had only five
pupils. The register in use through the twenties had carried
little other than attendance records, but Miss Collicott had
started a new one, and Miss Backer carefully filled hers out.
Searson & Martin, Winston, and Bolenius readers were in use.

Mention is made of the Vitalized Agriculture which was
supposed to be a part of the rural school program in Jefferson
County. This was a school visited in the spring of 1934 by the
Alexandria Normal Training class.

Miss Backer requested new reading books for her third
year and received Elson as her new basic one. Although she
had some grades of two pupils, her notes indicate that if
abilities varied, she adjusted her teaching to the child's needs
and did not try to keep them together in all subjects.

Evelyn Smith taught the 1935-36 and 36-37 terms. Hers was
a small school of five the first year, and six the second. She,
too, was receiving the rather standard forty-five dollars per
month depression salary, although some were getting less,
and a few very experienced or college trained ones more. The
treasurer's records show expenditures only for teacher's
salary, fuel, and supplies. Essentials rather than improve-
ments reflected the scarcity of tax money.
On September 6, 1947, Doris Snyder commenced the first of her four years in the district. Never were there more than seven enrolled during that time. School was closed for such county activities as the Fall Festival which replaced the County Fair during the depression and County Education Day. The 1938-39 term showed a small enrollment of lower grade pupils, and for the music period that year, the children learned to play the harmonica. In April of her last year, The Fairbury Normal Trainers visited the school. One of those returned later to teach. For the first time the records show a nine-month school.

Rural electrification brought electricity to the school at a monthly charge of $1.25. Thus, the district now had the same lighting advantages that town schools had.

The next register is missing. Lois Davidson taught the 1941-42 term for fifty dollars per month. A new stove had to be purchased. Marie Malik received seventy dollars monthly for 1942-43, but the following year, Betty Meyers signed a contract jumping, boards attempted to protect themselves in various ways. Miss Meyers was to receive a bonus of ninety dollars if she completed her term in a satisfactory manner. The treasurer’s record shows that she did receive the bonus. She returned the following year, receiving the first salary of over a hundred dollars, but there seems to have been no bonus provision that year.

Gayle Sydow taught the next term. She had only two pupils and there were days that only the teacher was there. Twice weather and roads forced the school to close. Mrs. Sydow felt that the lack of competition was a handicap. The first grader was only four when school opened and found it difficult to concentrate on his work. Her day closed in mid-afternoon.

For Luetta Gaston, the year 1946 meant teaching a family school, for the two pupils were her small cousins. She, too, closed early, for since only primary pupils were involved, the State Department of Public Instruction granted permission to teach a shorter day. She had days of no school and no pupils also, and she recalls that this was a snowy winter and that many days she waded high drifts to get to school. She contracted to teach less than a full term, and at the close of five and a half months, the school closed.

It did not reopen the following year either. Tuition was paid to Alexandria and Powell for two families to attend there, and the cost of transporting the children was also paid.

School did not reopen until the fall of 1949. Mary Ann Hudson taught both that year and the next. None of her pupils had been previously enrolled. She had only four grades and the scarcity of teachers is shown by her first year’s salary of $1,575 and the fifteen dollar per month increase of the next year. The coal burning stove of previous years was replaced by an oil heater, with the result that heating expenses rose. An unusual feature of the second year lies in the promotion record. Only two of the children completed the required work of their grade.

The same small group plus a small beginner started school September 3, 1951 with Jo Ann Baruth as teacher. A substitute taught one day and school closed a day for a track meet. The children were often tardy, and the record shows that stormy weather kept some at home.

Leona Dondlinger found one less pupil the next fall but she had similar attendance problems. Miss Dondlinger’s $190 per month was a new high in salaries.

Before Miss Hilde Schoenrock arrived in the fall of 1953, the schoolhouse was repaired and repainted. Fern Schroeder made new curtains for the windows. A new flag pole was installed. Only eight children enrolled, but there was a new first for “Old Dein”. Kindergarten had been added, and Neil Dein and Junior Fisbeck were the first to attend the half-day sessions.

“Old Dein”... No one knows exactly when or why, but through the years the district began to take on the Dein name. The building was on a corner of the Dein farm, and schools were often given the name of the original owner, but the name may have come from the many Deins who attended the school or who served on the board. Rarely was there a no-Dein board. Mrs. Jacob Dein often boarded the teachers during the earlier days of the school, for many homes were too small to accommodate an extra, and with her large family, there was someone to be company for the teacher. Over the years, people began to call this the Dein school as a more easily fixed location than the District 10 name. This kindergarten was to see the third generation Dein enroll, a double third really, for not only did his paternal grand father attend here, but mother and maternal grandmother had, also.

Hilde Schoenrock taught two years. School was closed one week the second year because she had surgery during Thanksgiving week, and a substitute taught the following week. Again, a new stove was a major item of expense.

August 29, 1955 school opened for five children with Roma Sukovaty as teacher. She was to stay three years, and her registers show the problems that come to the rural school. There was the day that Schroeder’s barn burned and the one that over half of the children were home with the flu, and there was the day that the teacher was home with it. Five days were lost during the 57-58 term due to snow. The Powell school visited twice one spring; a photographer came to take school pictures, and time out had to be taken for various
educational days. Some days though, it was possible to teach.

Theresa Landkamer began her two years there, September 1, 1958 with only five pupils. Attendance was good but there were storm days which closed the school. At the close of her second year, Miss Landkamer decided to retire.

Georgiana Baruth was hired to teach the 1960-61 term which was to prove anything but routine for the five pupils. Shortly after school started, a patron charged that the teacher was not qualified. Although others of like qualifications were teaching unchallenged, the patron's allegations were upheld by both the County Superintendent and the State Department of Education. Miss Landkamer agreed to teach until someone else could be found, but if she taught over sixty days, she would be removed from the retired teachers' roll. She urged that a replacement be found. Rose Junker came next, but she did not want to drive so far during the winter. With the prospect of having to find a fourth teacher where none seemed to exist, the board closed the school at the end of the first quarter and paid tuition to send the children to Alexandria.

At the annual school meeting in 1961, on a motion of Almon Schroeder, seconded by Connie Gaston, the district voted to contract for the coming year with Alexandria. The district continued to contract until it was dissolved August 9, 1965. The majority of the land was annexed to the Alexandria District, a small area wishing to be added to Gladstone and Powell districts. As of August 10 the almost century old District 10 ceased to exist as a public school. Meridian -- Ratz -- Dein had held its last term.

### STUDENT ROSTER

**DISTRICT 10**

Because of missing and incomplete records, there are omissions in this list. The date given is the first one for which the name was found rather than for the year that the pupil entered. It is hoped that at some future time the record may be complete. Teachers used many spellings for a name.

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ERRATA

The annual report for 1915-16 gave Hazel Pitman as the teacher. For the next two terms Mary Van Ness taught. The treasurer's books show that maps, a globe and a flag pole were purchased those years, and that insurance coverage was only a dollar. A pint of ink and six dozen pencils, total cost of $2.30 took care of the school's writing needs for a year.

In the June 4, 1919 treasurer's report, there is recorded a total expenditure of $478.32. There was a balance on hand of $127.28. Coal, lumber for out building repair and the teacher's salary were the major expenses. Two teachers divided responsibilities for the term. Laura Jacobs taught two and a half months; Rosa Wiebe finished the year.

The next year also saw two teachers. Alvis Polage taught until November 15, 1919 at which time she resigned to accept a better position. A long distance phone call to the county superintendent for the names of eligible applicants and another to a qualified teacher, brought Ruby Nelson to finish the term. For her there is the memorable experience of being snowbound by a spring blizzard and of not being able to get back to school after a week-end at home. When the train did attempt to make the run, it became stalled in a cut near the school, and she and farmer Lee Snyder got off there to walk the rest of the way. He broke the trail, but in places the snow was so deep that the teacher found it easier to roll down hill and across the ravines than to walk. When they reached his house, Mr. Snyder loaned her a horse to take her to her boarding place. When school re-opened, the little Summers boys who lived the greatest distance away were the first ones to arrive.

Anna Fellers taught the next two years. The first four months she received a salary of eighty dollars a month, but in January the board gave her a ten dollar a month raise. Her ninety-five dollars monthly salary for that year was a pre-depression high wage for the district.