Camp Creek - Dist. #54

Country School Legacy: Humanities on the Frontier

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GROWTH OF THE SCHOOLS: A Legacy of the Frontier

Humanities on the Frontier

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HISTORIC SITE FORM

State: Nebraska

County: Otoe

Location (in miles & direction from nearest town):

8 miles S + 4 miles E

Is this the original location? No, formerly Dist. #1, Otoe Township

Name of building & origin of name: Camp Creek

Name & number of the district: Camp Creek, Dist. #54

Date built: 1874-1875

Years in use: Still in use

Who built it? A contractor or the community?

Contractor

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

Plan book

Names of former teachers:

Illinois Tate

Jessie Bain

Mrs. W.E. Jim

T.T. Cummings

Bertha Bain

Miss I.B. Harmon

Miss C. Bain

A.H. Roberts

Miss H. Lewis

A.E. Traill

Henry Roberts

C.T. Traill

F.A. Patterson

Names of former students (family names only):

Mrs. D. Allen

Charles Baker

Joseph W. Anderson

O.S. Beckwith

Alexander Bain

Arthur Brown

H. Baker

Reuben Church

Anna Baltensperger

John H. Campbell

Name & address of person in charge of building:

Martha Brief

Who is the owner? District #54

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COUNTRY SCHOOL LEGACY HISTORIC SITE FORM

Architectural Features:

Size of building ___________ 18-25 ___________
Number of Windows (four pane, six pane, etc.) ___________ 6-8-pane ___________
Number of doors (entrances) ________ 1 ___________
Number of classrooms ___________ 1 ___________
Bell tower or cupola __________________ bell tower ___________
Materials used (wood, brick, stone, etc.) ___________________________________________________________
Type of roof __________________ asphalt shingle ___________
Outhouses ___________________________________________________________
Playground Equipment ____________________ bars, teeter-totter, slide, basketball hoop ___________
Color of building & trim __________________ gray stucco with white ___________
Coal shed or stable ___________________________________________________________
Teacherage ___________________________________________________________
Flagpole ___________________________________________________________
Other architectural features: __________________ small, narrow raised stage ___________
______________________________________________________________
Anything left inside? __________________ used as school ___________

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

1914 - old heating stove replaced with pipeless furnace.
Between 1917 & 1924 - coating of gray stucco added to original soft brick.
1975 - Rural Water District #1 brought piped water to building & toilets installed.
See also A HISTORY OF CAMP CREEK, ITS CHURCH, CEMETERY AND SCHOOL 1854-1900

Current condition & use: __________________ Good - still in use as school ___________

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 ____________________________ James L. Dertien ___________
Date ___________ 1/3/81 ___________
Dear Mr. Grundy,

I hope that you will find the History of Camp Creek, Its Church, Cemetery, and School of interest in your study of the rural schools in Nebraska. Although the focus of the book is more on the historical and genealogical interests than on the school as an educational institution, it does trace the development of one of the essential institutions of the state.

The photograph which I enclose shows the building last June, which was, of course, while the schoolhouse was not in use during the summer vacation. You will note that the original red brick has been covered with gray stucco, and that the belfry has been remodeled. In spite of its age, however, the building is still structurally sound. The photograph has a flaw on the right side; it was taken at the request of the Syracuse paper.

I attended school at Camp Creek very briefly, from September 7, 1914 to March, 1917, but I have many happy memories of those years. My mother had taught me to read, strictly by phonics, before I entered. That caused problems, of course, both for me and for the teacher. She put me in the second grade, where I floundered trying to catch up with arithmetic and spelling while learning to write my name, etc.

However, since the teacher was the only one stranger in the community, I did not have any problems with my fellow students, many of whom were cousins. Just last spring I learned that Ellen Alber, my teacher in the third and fourth grades, had just completed the tenth grade and was only 15 years old when she came to Camp Creek. It didn't occur to me at the time that she was any younger than my mother! I do not recall that she ever scolded or was cross at all, except on the morning when one of the boys arrived late after skinning a skunk on his way to school. He went back home promptly, to the relief of everyone else.

Although I had problems with art, music, and school regulations when I entered grade school in Lincoln in March, 1917, I was at least a year ahead of my class in both reading and arithmetic; it was a surprise to find that my classmates could not diagram a sentence, although they knew all about fire drills and calisthenics, which were foreign to me.

It was a real satisfaction to succeed in placing Camp Creek School in the National Register of Historic Places, for the prospects were that after it closes in a few years for lack of students, the building would be converted to a machine shop, an inglorious end for what had cost so much labor and sacrifice years ago. My grandfather oversaw its construction and served as director; my uncles and aunts all attended, as well as my father, who said that the same seats which were broken when he entered had not been repaired yet when I started there. One uncle and two of my aunts taught there for pay which seems woefully inadequate today. Of course, I don't deny that my attachment to the old school is emotional.

I do wish, though, that someone who knows the history of Mudturtle College, Otoe County District 42, would dig out its story!

Sincerely yours,

Rosalie Trail Fuller
Prof. Ernest Grundy, Dept. of English
Kearney State College
Kearney, NE 68847

Dear Prof. Grundy,

When I was down at Camp Creek again recently, I was given this clipping from the Nebraska City News-Press, which shows the interior of the school as it is today. Needless to say, the arrangement is much different from what I remember.

This makes an appropriate epilogue, I think, to the account of the early history of the school and its community. It is only natural, of course, that few of the people who live there now know anything of the early conditions and traditions of their surroundings.

I shall be much interested to hear the results of your Humanities Study, when it is completed, and wish you the best of success in it.

Sincerely yours,

Rosalie Trail Fuller
Schoolhouse Keeps Flavor Of Pioneers

By Denise Andersen

Country schools across the country may be disappearing, but they're alive and well in Otoe County, Nebraska. Almost 300 students attend the county's 23 rural schools, taught by 33 teachers. A look at one rural school reveals the one-room building still exists and the atmosphere retains the flavor of pioneer days, although indoor plumbing is an added convenience.

The Camp Creek school, District 54, located eight miles south of Nebraska City, provides rural schoolchildren a place to learn and grow. Sitting on a hilltop and banked by wooded land, the school and its teacher, Martha Brief, educate six children.

At the beginning of this school year, nine students attended Camp Creek school, but three have moved into town this weekend.

Bobby Angus, 10, is one of the children making the change. He and his brother and sister, Chris and Becci, had all attended a city school.

Bobby said he doesn't know very many kids in town, which may make the change a bit more difficult.

"There are more people in the town schools," he said, "but it shouldn't be too hard to get to know some."

What's it like to go to a country school, Bobby said what he likes most about camp Creek before coming to Camp Creek.

"As long as I continue teaching, it will be at a country school," Miss Brief said.

A rural school has the same education requirements as a city school, according to Miss Brief. The school has its own library, reference books and teaches all of the basic skills.

Field trips are another type of problem. "Once you go somewhere, you next year, because everyone gets to go."

"You also have to find something that's suitable for all age groups," she added.

The Michigan native, who has been at Camp Creek for three years, graduated from Peru. She student taught at Nebraska City and was approached by several rural schools in the area who had teacher openings.

She taught for two years at District 17 before coming to Camp Creek.

"I see where the problem is and I can correct it," she said. "In a bigger class I wouldn't be able to do that and the students could slide by."

Although Miss Brief said she feels her students are academically prepared to enter any high school, it is difficult to prepare them for things like sports.

"Because of the age differences, we have to play games that everyone can participate in," she said, "which rules out football or softball."

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Miss Brief said she has no discipline problems, because the parents and school board back her.

"However," she said, "not all schools are this good. It really depends on the school board."

How do the students perform in a rural school? Miss Brief said that after one year of teaching at Camp Creek, all of the achievement scores for the students were very high.

She attributes this success to the small group. "It gives me a closeness to the students and I have more time to help them with their own specific needs," she said.

However, Miss Brief said that for the good of the students, she thinks they should go into town to school after the sixth grade.

"I think it is important for the kids to form friendships. If they wait until they're freshmen to enter city schools, then they're labeled as 'country kids,'" she said, "and all of the cliques have been formed."

The one-room schoolhouse is a busy place as Camp Creek students work on their class assignments. Near row includes, front to back, Rod Adams, Bobby Angus and Chris Baltensperger and Sherry Herzog.

The Camp Creek school hours are from 9 to 3.

He also likes having one teacher, Bobby said. In town, he had four.

Sherry Herzog, a 3rd grader, said it's easy to get along with the other kids, adding that she and sixth grader Paula Baltensperger are 'best of Palas.'

Bobby is a 5th grader. His brother Chris is a 3rd grader and Becci is a first grader. They attended the school along with Terza Vanek, another first grader; third graders Mark Baltensperger and Sherry Herzog; fifth graders Rod Adams and Kevin Herzog and sixth grader Paula Baltensperger.

What's it like to teach at a country school? Miss Brief said she likes the smaller classes, and although there is a variety of age groups, it isn't hard to teach them all once a system has been devised.

"It's like having special reading groups, one for slow readers, one for average readers and one for advanced readers, only in more subjects," she said.

She said she doesn't have many of the administrative problems a city school would have. The rural school is governed by the Otoe County superintendent and a three-member school board.

"This allows me to make my own decisions, and I'm able to discuss any problems I might have, because the board is much closer to me than a
Camp Creek School

See Rosalie Trail Follois

The Camp Creek School

KBC Library