

Schools in South Dakota

South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office

SCHOOLS IN SOUTH DAKOTA: AN EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Schools in South Dakota: An Educational Development

Introduction

The public school buildings of the Plains represent an important cultural resource to historians and preservationists. As a frontier institution, the rural school represented the only semblance of a community center in the late nineteenth century across rural South Dakota. As immigrants and emigrants alike settled the Great Plains through the enabling legislation of the Homestead Act of 1862, there existed no institution around which to forge a common identity. Outside of the Missouri River floodplain and associated topography, the Plains existed as largely undifferentiated land. For settlers arriving in advance of the railroad, the northern Plains presented a landscape which bestowed scant natural opportunity that might favor formation of a town. Thus, in an environment absent the features of a familiar landscape which settlers from the east would have found comforting, the community school functioned as perhaps the only institution with which the newly-settled community could identify.

Americans and Europeans alike recognized the value of education; those who had previously settled in the East were familiar with the publicly funded "common school," while European settlers arriving from Europe likewise brought to America a recognition of the importance of education in society. The rural school, whether public or conscription, inaugurated in a claim shack or a cooperatively-erected schoolhouse, often stood as the first communal effort on the Plains. The rural school often represented an important cultural bridge between emigrants and immigrants arriving on unbroken land for the first time.

As a significant public building within the rural community, the school was used for church services, elections, and local governmental meetings. It existed as a symbol of communal identity, and as an object of material sacrifice in its formation. Sometimes it took a form that expressed a singular pride of community, as distinguished from the non-ornamented, ascetic form of the little white schoolhouse. A schoolhouse that was well-appointed and carefully constructed, adapting architectural styles familiar to settlers from the East, symbolized the *ideal* of the community school. Simplicity in design and use of modest materials in construction of the school, however, always reflected the material limitations inherent in Plains settlement.

As an enduring institution, the community-supported school symbolized, the faith placed in cooperative government to educate our children. The evolving public school would, in its increasing complexity and versatility, come to reflect innovations in curricula that characterized the early twentieth century progressive notions about society and sociability. The public school was assigned the task of educating pupils to be leaders and workers, as evidenced by a cast concrete plaque placed at the entrance to the Hurley Public School which reads, "Enter to Learn, Leave to Serve."

Importantly, the schools were also viewed as the ideal forum for acculturating the arriving immigrants and, in the process, encouraging within them identification with American society. Accordingly, the evolution of the school building from its earliest incarnations, in improvised quarters, to the monumental structures which celebrated the triumph of public education as a community value, reflected the increasingly important role of education within American society.

As a consequence of politics and prejudice, the allocation of resources for construction and maintenance of schools across the state would also reflect deep social divisions within society. Through the early decades, the Dakota Territory was populated by a variety of groups: farmers and miners seeking fortune on the Plains, European immigrants, religious pilgrims such as the Hutterites, and of course the American Indians that constituted the indigenous population. Thus, the Dakota Territory was comprised of disparate social elements accommodating themselves to the Northern



The typical Plains schoolhouse.

Plains topography while establishing societies important for their cultural identity. The political and economic struggle over state assistance to education, school funding at the local district level, and administrative policy reforms throughout the last century exposed these divergent interests within society. The universal right to education prescribed by nineteenth century reformers was claimed by both rural and urban communities, the white and the American Indian, and the secular and the sectarian alike. Between the competing needs of these communities developed the history of education policy in South Dakota.

It is important to examine the historical disparities in funding for education, and the movements that sought to redress these inequities. A large, economically and topographically diverse state, the geography of South Dakota varies from the flatlands of the eastern third of the state, rich in alluvial soil that supports this abundant and productive farming region, to the majestic topography of the Black Hills and Badlands to the west. The variations in climate, particularly rainfall, and the abundance or scarcity of natural minerals and materials determined settlement patterns as well as the very means of inhabitation. Taken together, these elements greatly influenced educational development statewide. Accordingly, the public school buildings of South Dakota, as a cultural resource, reflect the variety of the state. The public school buildings which anchor the towns, villages, and cities constitute an important element in the history of community in South Dakota. From the fabled one-teacher schoolhouses of the agricultural prairie to the immense and elegant schools of the wealthy mining towns, these structures illustrate the local commitment to education while also reflecting the aspirations of the local community.

Developing an historic context for the evolution of education within South Dakota will enable a better understanding of the educational development of this relatively young state. Through understanding the history of these important resources, we may gain an historical perspective on the communities and the people that inhabited them.

The Origin of Public Schooling in America

The origins of public schooling in America date back to colonial settlements along the Atlantic coast. English colonists brought with them methods of administration and schooling derived directly from England, at first establishing privately funded schools known as subscription schools, which were "subscribed" to on a per-family basis: Subscription schools in South Dakota, such as those established in 1879 at Big Stone City (then known as Inkpa), predated the

local school district and its tax-levy financing (as stipulated in the Territorial Act), depending instead on tuition paid directly to the school on a per-pupil basis.¹

Although the foundations of educational administration descended from England, the system of privately funded elite academies favored there found little acceptance beyond the Northeast college preparatory schools or the parish-district white-only schools of the American Southeast. Schooling for all in the Republic underlay the Jeffersonian sentiment that "only an educated people can be free." Tax-supported "common schooling" brought education beyond the privileged elite to "all of us in our non-specialized, personal character, the citizen as distinguished from the professional man, the craftsman, the businessman, the learned man . . . we are all in the first place, and most importantly, Common Man."² Thus, common schools formed the foundation of an informed Republic capable of effectively participating in the democratic process that Jefferson envisioned.

As a universal right to education for all children came to be acknowledged in the nineteenth century, a democratic movement to provide an education, supported at public expense for the benefit of society, to children outside of the subscription school was organized. Subsequently, a system of local taxation was established to support the common schools, administered on a town by town basis. This local levy system continues to be the foundation for school funding in America today, although the town basis of administration remains unique to New England.³

Publicly-supported schools, mandated to educate the inheritors of the democratic ideal, found their acceptance in most state capitols and served to instill the values of morality, responsibility, and citizenship borne of patriotism as settlement expanded across the Northwest Territories, what is today known as the midwest.⁴ For immigrants living on the frontier, the common school provided an ethnically neutral, secular public institution amidst the various languages and religions that characterized the frontier of an expanding nation. In 1900 fully 61% of settlers in South Dakota were foreign born; for this reason, education policy in the context of immigration became an important element in the public school movement.⁵ Towards that end, the public school advanced a program of "Americanization" which sought to bridge the various cultural and religious differences within the community, and in so doing impart a common culture to the children of the community, regardless of origin.

As a model for the country, New England pioneered many of the educational innovations that continue throughout America today, dating back to the

organization by the State of Massachusetts of the first State Board of Education in 1837.⁶ The state boards of education served to administer education policy through a state education code. Reform in education has historically originated from the New England region and has influenced education provision nationwide in important ways. Progressive changes to curricula, education administration, and the school building itself have determined, to a great extent, the development of education and the form of the schoolhouse in South Dakota.

Although the Great Plains were settled a full two centuries later than New England, the means of providing education for the Plains settlers' children remained largely the same despite the very different political organization at the township and county level. The small taxing district, inherited from the town-based system of government in New England, remained the mechanism of school funding in South Dakota. Indeed, communal school building on the Plains signified the enduring importance of local control over education.

School Lands

The defining difference that characterized the settlement of the west as fundamentally different from the established New England and mid-Atlantic states was the land survey. Commissioned by Thomas Jefferson and authorized by Congress as the Northwest Ordinance of 1785, the land survey materially affected the pattern of settlement of the United States and "provide[d] by every possible means that as few as possible shall be without a little portion of land." The Northwest Ordinance reserved public lands for the "common good" and facilitated the later apportionment of public lands for private lease for the support of schools.⁷ Specifically, the ordinance stipulated that within the township organization, composed of thirty six sections, that section 16 be set aside for use as "school lands."

On the state level, land set-asides have a long history; as early as 1733, Connecticut had set aside vast lands to provide for "the perpetual use of the schools." In 1786, New York followed, and reserved two lots within each township of unoccupied lands for the use of the schools. However, it was in 1801 that New York established a *permanent* school fund through the sale of 500,000 acres of vacant land, thereby establishing a mechanism for the public funding of schools through the sale of public lands.⁸ Subsequently, on the national level, it was the decision of the United States Congress in the 1820s to approve the sale of public school lands for school funding that had a major impact on the public funding of education throughout the country.⁹

This legislation enabled the local sale of state lands reserved for education as the primary funding mechanism on the state level for public support of the schools.

In the Dakota Territory, the issue of the sale of school lands spurred the accelerating drive for statehood. William Henry Harrison Beadle, appointed as the first Surveyor General for the Dakota Territories, recognized the need for dedicated school funding. Fearing school lands would be turned over to land speculators for a fraction of their value, thus depriving the schools of their financial support, Beadle recognized the hazards in opening school lands for public sale within the territory. As Surveyor General, he utilized the statehood drive to better control the sale of school lands. At Beadle's insistence, in the Omnibus Bill enabling legislation for statehood, the *minimum* sale priced for school lands was fixed at \$10 per acre, insuring the schools a healthy financial return.¹⁰ Additionally, Beadle insisted on adding an additional section within each township (of 36 sections) to augment section 16, which was previously set aside for education. This resulted in a mandated two-section educational land set-aside.¹¹

In the sparsely populated yet expansive western region of the state, policy allowed placing a school within a couple of miles from every homesteaded claim. This came to be a hindrance, representing both an administrative and financial burden for the under-attended, and under-funded, rural school. Despite the low enrollment in the typical rural school, 4102 schoolhouses populated the territory by 1887.¹²

Prior to statehood, formal school administration was organized in the Dakota Territory in 1862 with the enactment of the Dakota Territory's first school law. The legislation mandated that the local district function both as a means of administration and as a geographic unit of funding. The district was to be administered by three board officials and organized under county supervision, an intermediary point of administration between that of the district and the Territory. Thus, the foundation of local school administration, the local district, was replicated in South Dakota despite its different pattern of settlement.¹³

In South Dakota the district system was administered by James S. Foster, appointed Superintendent of Territorial Instruction in 1864. Relocated from the New York Colony, Foster brought his familiarity with district administration with him from the eastern United States.¹⁴ Under his tenure, the number of small districts quickly began to grow; in 1867, 29 school districts attended by 421 pupils had been organized. By 1878, the number of districts had increased to 401, and enrolled 7,150 pupils.¹⁵ To reformers, the administra-

tion and supervision of so many small districts was seen as an obstacle to efficient rural education in the Territory. The district system functioned efficiently in localities with a higher population density, such as eastern South Dakota, yet the difficulties encountered in maintaining enrollment and financial support in the western reaches of the state attested to the unsuitability of applying the local district of administration to a state as diverse as South Dakota.

Rural School Establishment in South Dakota

The earliest schools in South Dakota were supported individually through donation, or "subscription," and formed the basis for local districts that remain the foundation of school administration and funding throughout the state. Settlement occurred late in many areas of South Dakota, particularly the regions west of the Missouri River. Such settlements were located far from established towns of the eastern regions of the state, which formed earlier with the arrival of Americans and Europeans migrating from settlements further east. As development was often contingent upon the arrival of the railroad across the northern Plains, sparsely settled regions remained frontier lands well into the 1890s. Few permanent school buildings were constructed as communities opted for claim shacks, sod dwellings, or borrowed space above retail establishments.¹⁶ However, with the arrival of the railroad, townsites were established around which a community could form. More often, in the central and western regions, settlement preceded the railroad. For these homesteaded settlements, the frontier community often formed around the rural schoolhouse.

With the formation of schools came the need for a funding mechanism to support school construction and employ teachers. The establishment of schools arose on the frontier before any formal provision for financial support of education was implemented on



An example of the nineteenth century sod house on the frontier.

the district level. Often these schools were rotated among settlers' sod homes or remained with the claim shack, which was sometimes moved with little difficulty to follow the progress of the frontier.¹⁷ Schools were often the first public buildings erected, using volunteer labor and donated materials. Where communities were more established or successful, volunteer efforts were supplanted by financial contribution or bonding, which would shift the burden of payment onto future settlers.¹⁸ Settlers with teams of horses were contracted to haul timber from eastern markets, the nearby rail head, or the river bottom, thus, in effect, reaping the bounty from the bonded funds in the short term. This was an arrangement, some suggested, that was less cooperative than profiteering.¹⁹

Even the earliest efforts at community school building were characterized by disagreements over the apportionment of school funds. Occasionally a school was moved several times on the demand of the family providing the greatest financial support to the school, so that it might reside closest to their claim.²⁰ The Boyd School, located in Winfred District #4, was reported to have been moved three times in one year.²¹ From these struggles, the community-funded schoolhouse of the northern Plains emerged.

The earliest structures built as schoolhouses on the Plains, such as dugouts and those made of sod, were not to be permanent, thus few remained into the 1880s and 1890s, the era of the frame schoolhouse of the western Plains. The often south-facing dugout school was fashioned in the manner of homesteading dwellings and reflected the scarcity of building materials available on the Plains. Burrowed into a hillside, faced with a wall of sod and roofed with pole and brush construction, the dugout offered the advantages of quick establishment and superior natural protection against winds from the north.

Some early schooling structures on the western frontier were constructed entirely from prairie sod, cut by the settler's plow and laid in strips one on top of another; roofs were constructed using pole reinforcement, lined with brush and topped with sod. Often the floor remained untreated earth. Despite moisture problems during rains, the sod schoolhouse was fairly well-insulated against the frigid Plains winters. These structures, characterized by local materials and building techniques adapted to the Plains, defined the advancing edge of the frontier. They were often abandoned when a framed, second generation schoolhouse could be erected.

In the early-settled southeastern region of South Dakota the first school in the Territory, the Territorial School, was established. It was located at Bon Homme

and operated for three months in 1860.²² Settlement in Bon Homme was facilitated by the establishment of the Dakota Southern Railroad in 1873, originating in Sioux City and stretching to Yankton, then the Territorial Capitol. The first permanent schoolhouse, however, was erected in 1864 in Vermillion, a community located along the Yankton rail line. Vermillion had been selected by the First Territorial Legislature in 1862 as the location of the future territorial university; perhaps this influenced the establishment of the first permanent schoolhouse there. It was a log cabin, erected using timber from the nearby Missouri River floodplain, in a style that very much characterized early Plains structures. Prior to relocation of townsite atop the Vermillion bluffs, following a major flood in the late nineteenth century, the schoolhouse stood at their base. Today the site is marked by a monument in the form of the log school—a symbol of the form of early settlement in the Territory.

The Form of the Early Plains Schoolhouse

Schoolhouse building on the Great Plains occurred in several incarnations as settlers established themselves and communities were formed. In time, the dugout, sod, or log schoolhouse that represented the earliest phase of habitation on the Plains in the 1860s and 1870s yielded to a construction method which employed balloon framing. In an environment which suffered from a dearth of building resources, this development in construction depended on commercially manufactured materials shipped by rail, such as dimension lumber, shingles, tongue-in-groove flooring, and siding. Prefabricated architectural elements, such as panel doors and barn windows, were also employed. Construction of the small wood-framed schoolhouse using manufactured materials displaced the rural schoolhouse cobbled of improvised materials in all communities but those on the frontier.²³ Thus, balloon-frame construction techniques and the use of manufactured materials defined the form of the rural schoolhouse and quickly displaced the earlier schoolhouses across South Dakota in the latter decades of the nineteenth century.

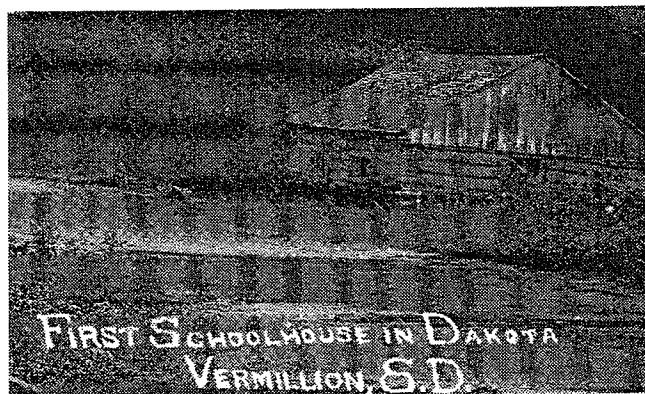
As a result of the availability of manufactured materials, schoolhouses of earlier design, common in the eastern United States, were exceedingly rare in South Dakota. The relatively late settlement bypassed the post and beam, mortise and tenon construction method common in New England, which relied on a supply of large timber and the availability of skilled labor. Such schoolhouses were all but nonexistent in South Dakota. Also uncommon was the school constructed of cut stone, which was used infrequently in the construction of early schoolhouses due to the labor

involved. Although much more durable and decorative, it was the rare community which invested in exotic materials for the first or second generation schoolhouse. Where it was employed, such materials are seen in the federal relief-era schoolhouses of the 1930s. Concrete block cast by hand at the site, as employed in the construction of the Aurora schoolhouse (Brookings County) in 1910, was sometimes used to emulate cut stone for purely decorative effect. Molds impressed in concrete the appearance and texture of cut stone. Where utilized instead of wood framing and clapboard, concrete block signaled a particular community's pride in their schoolhouses.²⁴

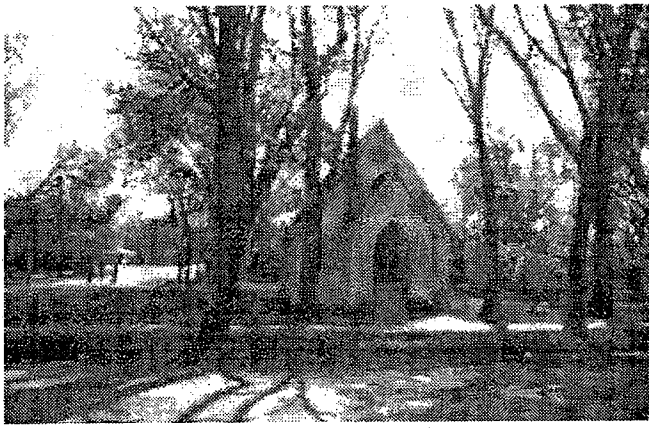
Stylistically, many early "folk vernacular" prairie schoolhouses reflected architectural styles transmitted westward through "cultural diffusion," as emigrants brought with them the familiar forms of home and church. The gabled roof common to the early folk vernacular school, for example, no doubt owes its debt to the church form.²⁵ Occasionally, high architectural styles such as Queen Anne, Romanesque, or Italianate were adapted to the local availability of materials and craftsmanship, producing a "provincialization" of high style in form if not in detail. The first public high school in Miller, a handsome, elaborate two-story clapboard structure, exhibited such exotic architectural influences.²⁶ Such school buildings reflected the "trends and reforms in American education, but with economies that simplified attempts to copy architectural designs."²⁷

Occasionally, unusual designs were employed for the schoolhouse, a product of the progressive theorists' advocacy of non-traditional building forms, such as the octagonal and round barns erected in the nineteenth century in rural communities. For example, the school built in Castlewood in 1884 featured four rooms, with 12-foot ceilings, each projecting in a different direction. Two rooms were used as classrooms while two were used for administration.²⁸

School building design pioneer Henry Bernard, in



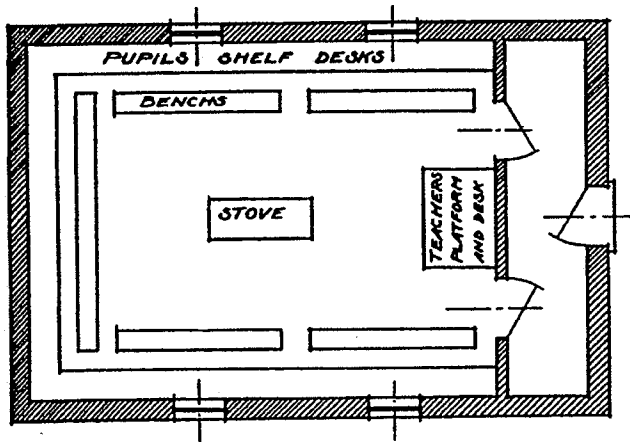
The Territorial School in Vermillion.



The schoolhouse descended from this form of church, featuring the characteristic gable roof.

his 1938 manual of standardization titled "School Architecture," offered two school designs that embraced the Greek Revival style, reflecting his belief that "every schoolhouse should be a temple, consecrated in prayer to the physical, intellectual, and moral culture of every child in the community."²⁹ Indeed, the pediment detail not uncommon in South Dakota recalls the formality of the classical Greek Revival style imported from the East and Southeast.³⁰ This vernacular inspiration afforded the rural schoolhouse a touch of formality in design yet accommodated the simplicity of form dictated by material and financial limitations.

Although school planbooks were circulated in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, school construction in South Dakota was not characterized by high style or progressive design. Small rural districts more commonly erected the "typical" prairie schoolhouse, relying on established architectural styles familiar to the settlers from experience in New England and the middle west, to give the early prairie schoolhouse

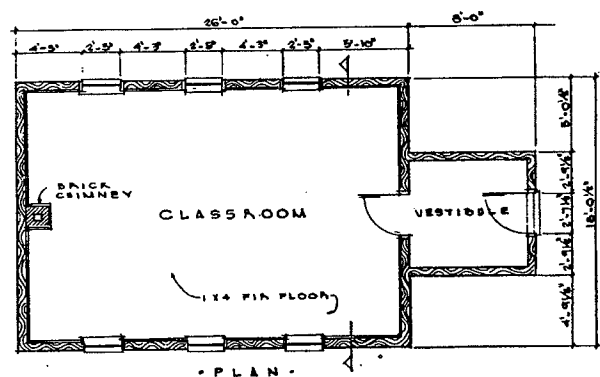


The plan of the typical one-room rural schoolhouse.

its form. That the familiar form of the church influenced schoolhouse construction in eastern regions of the earlier-settled midwest is key to understanding the role of the school in the community as a center.

The school was viewed as a cultural symbol of community in a time of great change and mobility, when there existed few cultural symbols in the rapid settlement of the American West. In *One Room Schools of the Middle West*, Wayne Fuller draws a strong connection between the church and the school in early America, noting that in small communities religious services were held in the school building. The bell tower so familiar in the image of the rural schoolhouse was often a later addition in the northern Plains region. Few school built belfries in South Dakota. Perhaps a function of the practical concerns of frontier communities endeavoring to provide for teacher salaries and student desks.³¹ For the community prosperous enough to afford one, the addition of a bell served as a point of pride for the community. The ringing of the bell served as a call to the community to warn of fire or perceived danger.³² Often the addition of a school bell waited until a collection could be taken up.

Often remembered fondly in the public imagination as "the little red schoolhouse," complete with bell tower, the rural school went without a bell and was painted white, when painted at all.³³ Though romanticized, the early rural school was an ascetic structure. Rectangular in plan, often situated on a temporary foundation, the nineteenth century rural school might have been as small as 16 x 24 feet, allowing only a single room for instruction and heated by a pot-bellied stove at the center or rear. Occasionally it was smaller, as was the first schoolhouse in Lincoln County, erected in Canton in 1870, which measured only 8 x 20 feet and was "furnished with benches and desks made by Werter Smith from black walnut cut along the Sioux River."³⁴ The door was invariably located in the gable



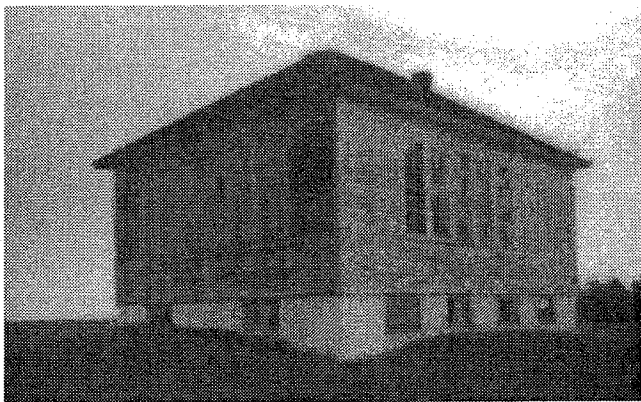
The plan of the Mayer one-room schoolhouse, Meade County, South Dakota, as published in *Prairie Schoolhouse*. Notice the exterior vestibule.

end, facing the teacher. Seating was provided through chairs or benches—desks being a luxury unaffordable to remote communities.

The construction was of balloon frame, uninsulated and sided by clapboards or weatherboard on the exterior and wood siding, or wainscoting, on the interior. Many rural schools lacked electricity until the rural electrification program of the New Deal; indeed, the Hamlin District No. I school, erected in 1919, was without electricity or phone until the 1950s.³⁵ Long before electricity was brought to rural schools, natural light was first afforded through the placement of three windows along each long wall.³⁶

Variations in climate throughout the Plains prompted departures from the traditional schoolhouse form including steeply pitched roofs to shed snow, the addition of a vestibule to the exterior to conserve heat in the winter, and hipped roofs. In some instances, just an overhanging shed eave shielded against rain or snow. Given the size and frugality of the smallest one room school, interior vestibules were not generally present, and appear as school building size increased. In the improved designs at the turn of the century, his and her cloakrooms and the interior vestibule become common elements.³⁷

The early one-room schoolhouse has almost disappeared from the Plains, either remodeled or replaced by newer one-room or consolidated schools. Over time, they have been lost to fire (as they were illuminated by kerosene lamp, this was always a concern) or sold at auction only to be pressed into service as farm buildings or storage sheds, often altered beyond recognition. Several examples of one-room schools remain throughout South Dakota for example, in Milbank and Kranzburg, preserved as museums.³⁸ Others have been used as a residence or as apartments, including the concrete block schoolhouse at Aurora,



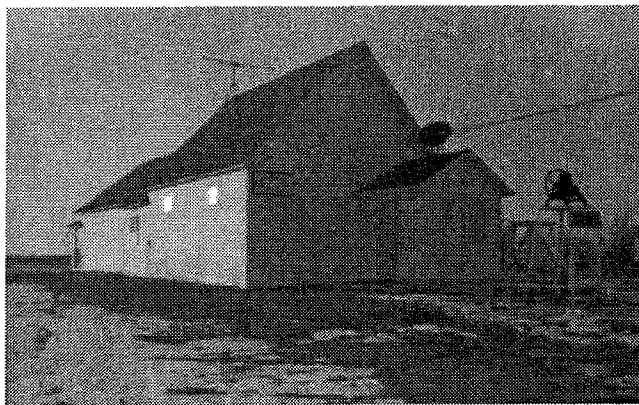
An abandoned one-room schoolhouse in South Dakota. The window arrangement and the square footprint indicate this is a 1920s design.

now known as the Aurora Apartments, and a 1921 brick schoolhouse in Fountain, known as the Fountain Apartments.³⁹

The one-room schools that remain scattered throughout the state, stand along section lines far off of the main road or aside the road, humbled by years of abandonment, either erected or modified during the 1920s or 1930s. Characteristics such as full basements, which raised the height of the schoolhouse by four feet, windows arranged on a single wall, raised toward the roofline, interior vestibules and cloakrooms, and simple hipped roofs characterize the one-room schoolhouse of this period. A result of standardized plan-books and their adoption by state superintendents of education, few continue to operate. Those that do operate serve communities that remain too remote for transportation to consolidated schools, such as Hutterite colony or reservation schools. In *America's Country Schools*, Andrew Guilliford lists almost one hundred such country schools operating as late as 1994 in South Dakota.⁴⁰ With names such as *Willow Row*, *Pleasant Valley*, *Fairview*, *Sunnyside*, and *Happy Hill*, these schools are symbols of the venerable history of rural education in South Dakota.

Educational Funding and the "Rural Problems"

Whether of sod, timber, plank or stone, the early schoolhouse reflected the experiences, history, and cultural background of the Plains settler. Indeed, for many the one-room school of the Plains symbolized the struggle of man over nature, the achievement of community-building in a forbidding environment. For others, however, the rural school epitomized the source of the problems that plagues rural life: that of a lower standard of living and a reduced interest in edu-



The Milboro Rural School in the Winner school district. The early, gabled form has been adapted for Educational Funding and the "Rural Problem" this simple structure. Original fenestration has been removed.

cation.⁴¹ These factors constituted a social condition unique to rural communities, one that should be addressed through education. "The great function of the school, therefore, is to supply the means by which the requisite *knowledge, attitude, and skill* can be developed." This, educational reformers thought, would "enable the individual to meet the real problems of actual experience as they are confronted in the day's life."⁴² Rural education suffered from a disparity in opportunity between rural and urban regions. Inequitable funding, inadequate teacher qualifications, and limited opportunities for socialization comprised a condition which critics referred to as the "general problem of the rural school."

The central problem in rural education was economic. The disparity in the relative value of production between agricultural and manufacturing lands had a major impact on funding education. Relative inefficiencies in agricultural production necessitated large tracts of land for sustainable returns to the family farmer, and, consequently, there existed pressure to lower the levy mill rate in rural areas. In Hand County, the school board voted in 1891 to lower the mill rate from thirty to twenty mills, and again voted, in 1919, to lower the rate to fifteen mills.⁴³ Manufacturing in the cities, in contrast, relied on vertical facilities to most efficiently deliver steam-powered, belt-delivered production energy to operate machinery. This resulted in higher density and more efficient land use, and encouraged a concentrated pattern of development. Real estate costs in the city, particularly proximate to the transportation arteries necessary for the distribution of manufactured products, further encouraged density of development. The effect was to generate more taxable revenue in the urban district. In

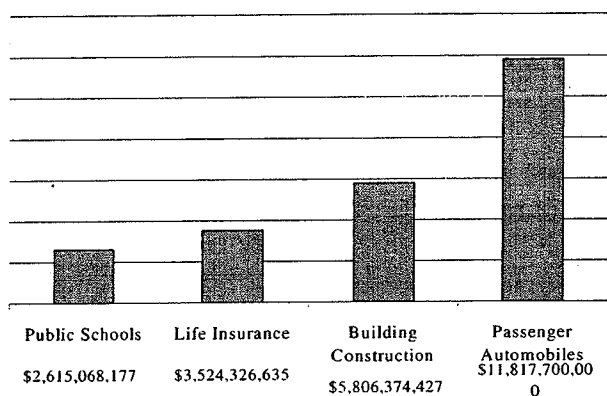
sum, regarding local-district funding, the urban school district derived more financial support than did the rural district.

An early effort was undertaken to remedy this inequity. Upon statehood, provision was made for the distribution of aid gained from school lands directly to schools from the state general fund. This measure was too little to make an appreciable difference, as the majority of funding for education was derived locally. As late as 1921, the general fund revenues only constituted twenty percent of total school revenues.⁴⁴ Further, this general aid was apportioned on the basis of enumeration, by census count. Such apportionment deprived the less-populated districts of school funding. Given that higher per pupil costs were incurred in rural districts, the distribution of general fund revenue was also inequitable on a per-pupil basis.⁴⁵

Compounding this disparity, industrialization encouraged families in search of jobs to migrate to the cities, resulting in a steady decline in rural population relative to urban population. The rural population, as a percentage of national population, dropped from 60.3% in 1900 to 43.5% in 1940, leaving behind not only diminished enrollment but also resulting in a displacement of earning power to the cities.⁴⁶ From the perspective of taxable income available for school support, farm income accounted for only 7% of total national income in 1932, down from 18% in 1919—hardly an adequate foundation for local aid to rural schools.⁴⁷ The depression starting with the stock market crash of 1929, further depressed agricultural earnings: in South Dakota, commodity prices plunged by more than 60% between 1929 and 1932.⁴⁸ Given failing commodity prices, farmers received only 9% of the national income but supported 31% of the nation's children aged between 5-17—resulting in a smaller base of taxable support for schools.⁴⁹

Thus, the local levy as a system of school funding was hardly equitable for rural regions: in the 1935-1936 school year, rural schools enrolled 50% of the nation's children yet received only 37% of available funds for education.⁵⁰ This disparity was most profoundly reflected in the relative quality of the school environment. Urban schools were often grand, elaborate exercises in the implementation of progressive educational ideals, while rural schools remained modest, absent the specialized facilities of their urban counterparts. In the same 1935-1936 school year, rural school buildings accounted for 88% of total school buildings, yet accounted for only 30% of total building value nationally.⁵¹ South Dakota rural schools operating during the same school year constituted 88.5% of total operating schools, and presumably represented comparable valuations.⁵² If, as a nation, we looked to

SCHOOL COSTS AND CERTAIN OTHER, EXPENDITURES IN 1930



From the *Small High School at Work*. Contrasts expenditures for education versus other needs.

the family farm as a foundation element in mythic American identity, we were less than charitable in funding the system of education that would shape this American character.

The Rural School Teacher

The scarcity of teacher availability throughout rural communities has historically, resulted in depressed qualification requirements for instructors in rural schools. The challenge of homesteading on the Plains required intense labor. The inability of men to devote their time to teaching opened an opportunity for women to teach in the schools. While men were viewed as more capable teachers and better able to discipline the troublesome pupil, women were perceived as well-suited to administering instruction in comportment and moral rectitude, in addition to teaching reading, writing and arithmetic. Women teachers were viewed as having a civilizing influence on frontier men and thus were thought to be better keepers of the moral standard.⁵³

In an effort to staff the rural school, the local supervisor would often award certification to a local resident based only on a meeting or cursory oral examination. Whether a frontier homesteader or a second generation community resident, the rural school teacher, relative to the urban teacher, often was minimally qualified to teach, having "neither the education nor the knowledge and training necessary for success."⁵⁴ In *New Ideals for Rural Schools*, George Herbert Betts identifies the historic deficiencies in rural teaching standards, and observes that the inadequacy of the curriculum,

leaves the child who has to depend on the rural school greatly handicapped in education. He has but a doubtful proficiency in the mechanics of reading, and has read but little. He knows the elements of spelling, writing and number, but has small skill in any of them. He knows little of history or literature, less of music, nothing of art, and has but a superficial smattering of science. Of matters relating to his life and activities on the farm he has heard almost nothing. The rural child is not illiterate, but he is too close to the border of illiteracy for the demands of twentieth-century civilization⁵⁵

Additionally, rural schoolteachers could expect to be paid less than half of their urban counterparts. As the harsh, solitary life of a rural schoolteacher might have been spent largely in isolation, or boarding on a rotating basis with a pupil's family, the paltry salaries encouraged great turnover amongst such teachers. The rural teacher, no matter what school size, was paid less than either the village or consolidated school teacher, and received smaller salary increases.⁵⁶ As a

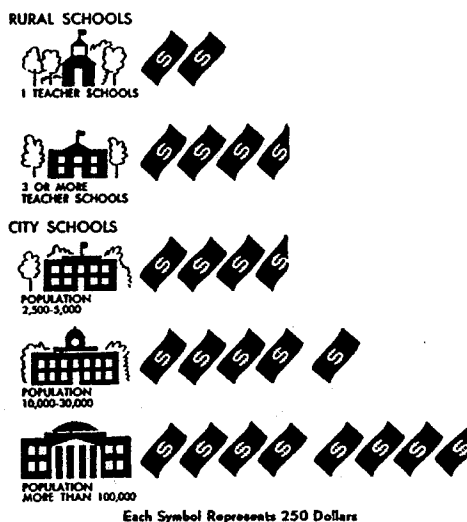
consequence, the rural school employed a higher proportion of beginning teachers.⁵⁷

Prior to the establishment of normal schools and colleges, the rural teacher might merely be a product of the common grade school. The need was perceived to dedicate institutions to teaching the states teachers, beginning with the first "normal school" in the state established at the University of Dakota, at Vermillion, in 1883.⁵⁸ The movement to establish colleges throughout South Dakota was coincident with the establishment of institutions such as the state university in Vermillion and the penitentiary at Bon Homme.⁵⁹ Fourteen sectarian and state supported colleges were established prior to the 1900s, many in smaller towns; most were active in training teachers for rural schools around the state.⁶⁰

Social Opportunity in the Rural School

Though teaching standards have improved with state certification requirements over time, perhaps the most widely cited problem perceived by educational reformers in rural schooling was the "socialization" problem. It was thought that the geographic isolation of the rural schools precluded the pupil from developing socially. Diminished opportunities for forming friendships within the limited rural schooling community were thought to be integral to the "rural problem," as "there are no rural slums for the breeding of poverty and crime; but on the other hand, there is an isolation and monotony that tend to become deafen-

TEACHERS' SALARIES IN RURAL AND CITY SCHOOLS, 1935



A comparison between rural and urban teachers as it appeared in *Still Sits the School by the Road*, published in 1943.

ing in their effects on the individual."⁶¹

As a consequence, rural families escaping to the cities would "continue to do so until the natural desire for social and intellectual opportunities and for recreation and amusement is adequately met in rural life."⁶² Indeed,

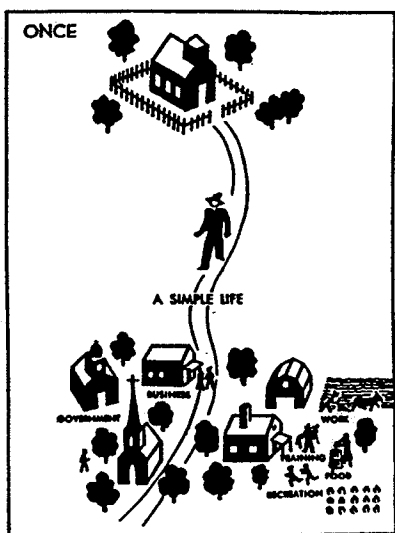
in the cities in the last fifty years that we have seen most of the decided inventions and improvements in living. The best brains and brawn of the country have flown thither several hundred thousand strong each year. Arriving there, these persons, naturally individualistic by farm training and isolation, have at first worked for themselves or at most for the city at the expense of the country. . . . The schools of the city have been the marvel of the rural regions, and one of the chief reasons of many people for 'leaving the farm.'⁶³

In *The Rural School From Within*, Marion G. Kirkpatrick recognized the shift in population to the cities, and looked to the schools themselves as both part of the problem, for the lack of opportunity offered within, and as a potential solution:

We are witnessing as never before the drift of rural people to the cities; indeed, this movement has become so great as to occasion national alarm, and everywhere the question is being asked, "How can the tide be turned?" "How can the boy and girl who are discontented with rural life be made contented and glad of an opportunity to remain on the farm instead of going to the City?"⁶⁴

Progressivism in Education as a Road to Reform

"Progressives" were nineteenth century reformers who advocated healing societal maladies through science and reason. The application of scientific princi-

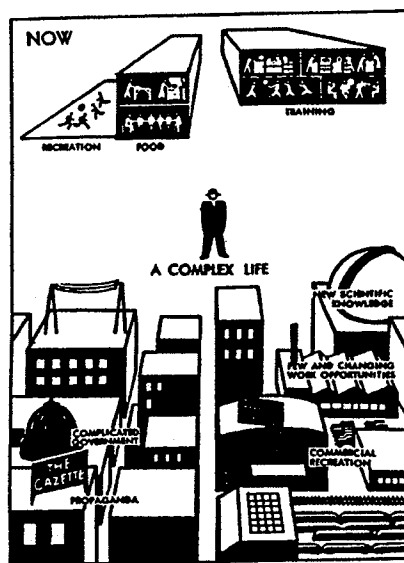


The old image of the country school, peacefully isolated in the country. Taken from *Still Sits the School by the Road*.

ples to educational reform originates in the Philadelphia Exposition of 1876. The European philosophy of education, first widely popularized at the exposition, was characterized by a professionalized approach to instruction grounded in "educational theory." By infusing professionalism into education, the theories of educational reformers such as Horace Mann were first applied to public education in the schools of the Northeast. A uniform educational method, formulated and championed by progressive reformers nationwide, was eventually implemented throughout schools in the United States.

While Progressives had addressed the perceived ills of cities through implementation of social programs, they viewed the rural community as needing improvement. Opportunities for rural dwellers were curtailed compared to those of the city. For Progressives, the rural community was "in constant danger of intellectual and social stagnation [thus having] far more need that its school be a stimulating, organizing, socializing force than has the town or City."⁶⁵ It was believed that the limitations of rural life affected children most severely, and that appropriate reforms should be addressed through education.

Schools were perceived as integral elements for introducing the concepts of modernity and "progress" into the rural community. It was thought that in exposing the rural pupil to modern ideas, the rural school would encourage "cleanliness, better house-keeping, [and] better standards of living."⁶⁶ Pupils would presumably then bring these lessons of modernity into the home. Thus, reformers placed the pupil at the center of efforts to address the "rural problem,"



The new image of the school, located uncomfortably in the city. An omen for the consolidation movement (same source).

and the school served as the avenue of introduction of new ideas into the community. An evolution in the role of education in shaping children took place under the influence of progressive reformers. According to one reformer, within schools, "provision should be made for experiences in the manipulation of materials and for the development of those discovered special abilities, talents, and interests of the individual which may be a means of increasing his happiness and social value."⁶⁷ Socializing the rural pupil was thus encouraged through public education.

Progressive curricula reforms were implemented at the state level, through state curricula standards. With these reforms came renewed attention to the school building and its perceived impact on learning. The rural school, bereft of teaching aids and comforts, was thought to be a major limitation on the educational achievement of the rural pupil. In "Educational Legacy: Rural One-room Schoolhouses," Historian Fred Schroeder reflected on his experience teaching in a rural school.

Outwardly the Sunny Crest school was typically charming. Built of white clapboard with a plain, pretty bell tower and surrounded by elms and evergreens ... [the school] was the 1894 replacement of an 1879 red frame structure that had replaced the original log cabin; during the New Deal 1930s the schoolhouse had been provided with electricity but not with plumbing.

Inside, the Sunny Crest school was typical, too. Ill-lighted by three widely separated windows on each side, the crowded room reeked of kerosene, oil-mopped floors, chalk dust, perspiration, damp wool and chlorine bleach that was poured into the attached privy at the rate of a gallon a day. Clearly the romance of the 'little red schoolhouse' was founded partly on legend.⁶⁸

The vernacular schoolhouses which reflected the earliest efforts in school establishment on the Plains were identified as a root cause of the "rural problem" in education. Indeed, educational reformers complained about crowded conditions and inadequate lighting, as well as poor heating, poor ventilation and thus the opportunity for infection.⁶⁹ These conditions reflected the fundamental inequity underlying the funding of education. As Progressives addressed the curricular problem in education, close attention was paid to the rural school building.

School Building Standardization in Educational Reform

The principles advanced by Progressive reformers had a fundamental impact upon education in the rural schools. In order to bring much-needed improvements to the schools, reformers sought to improve the school

building by applying educational reforms already implemented in the East to schools across the country. By first formulating recommended improvements to the curriculum and to the school, then widely applying those improvements through policy at the state level, it was thought that the general standards for rural education could be elevated. This movement, known as "school standardization," was widely embraced by educational reformers in the latter decades of the nineteenth century.

The origins of school standardization in construction can be traced to two influential publications, William A. Alcott's *Essay on Construction of Schoolhouses* (1831) and Henry Bernard's *School Architecture* (1838). These publications featured model schoolhouse designs and suggested reforms to curricula. Such recommendations were widely published in education journals and federal bulletins at the time. Educational reformers responded by issuing manuals of rural schoolhouse reform titled *The Rural Schoolhouse Plant*, *The Rural Community and its Schools*, *The American Rural School*, and *The Rural School from Within*, to name but a few. Federal and state reform efforts would follow in the form of official manuals of school building standardization and recommended reforms to the public education favored by educational reformers in the curriculum.

After the United States Bureau of Education published an influential school planbook in 1880, individual states followed suit by formulating state plans for educational reform according to the federal model.⁷⁰ State policy for the implementation of reforms languished, however, until Theodore Roosevelt's 1908 National Commission on Country Life focused attention on the inadequacies of the rural school. The attention spurred a coordinated effort between the state and federal governments to address the problems by encouraging implementation of standardized formulas and recommendations on the state level in the 1910s.

Analysis of educational programs from the per-

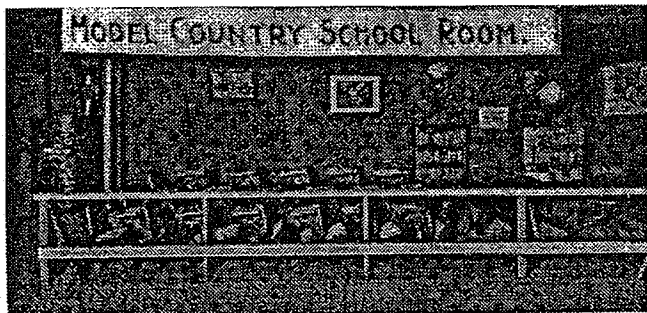


A stylized look at the Greek Revival style nineteenth century. ("Modern American School After the United States Bureau of Education," published an *Buildings*).

spective of scientific thinking encouraged changes in the curriculum which were reflected in school building design between the 1880s and 1930s. The rural school pupil that had grown accustomed to the uncomfortable benches, handbuilt desks, or winter drafts common to the rural school would find in the new school more hospitable. New schools included gender separated cloakrooms, cleaner air through ventilation, playground equipment, potable water, flagpoles, and full basements designed for community use.⁷¹ Rural school privies were a particular concern of the nineteenth century reform movement; they were unsanitary and home to contagion. Some critics even viewed the primitive rural school privy, which invariably accommodated both boys and girls, as a threat to morality and asked, "How many ruined characters can trace their downfall to scenes of their early school days, where, through force of circumstances, they lost that delicate sense of modesty, so essential to guard the virtue of the young."⁷² State standardization guides recommended improvements be made to the school privy and included suggested floorplans for their implementation.

According to educational reformers, the modern village or town school building would be characterized by "natural ventilation of the rooms, expansiveness, flexibility, light corridors, effective supervision, reduction of vertical travel, aesthetic fitness, and economy."⁷³ The reformers believed that the modern school, equipped with amenities such as industrial shops, kitchen laboratories, library, auditorium, gymnasium, and nature study rooms, would facilitate flexibility in learning.⁷⁴

Not only were specific recommendations for lighting, heating, ventilation, furnishings and privies adopted for school building construction by state superintendents, but recommendations for suitable architectural styles were advanced as well. Suggestions for school buildings were advocated in the early Barnard and Alcott planbooks in the 1830s; planbooks of the 1880s advocated specific plans from which a



A photographic illustration of the "model" rural classroom. (From *The American Rural Analysis* of educational programs from the perspective of *School*.)

schoolhouse could be built. Indeed, the standardization movement through planbooks made possible a uniform school design available in all regions of the country. State Superintendents of Instruction issued guidelines which included illustrated floorplans and elevations of architect-designed model rural schoolhouses. Such model schoolhouses were erected by state teaching academies, such as the Kirksville Model School erected by the Kirksville Normal School in Kirksville, Missouri.⁷⁵

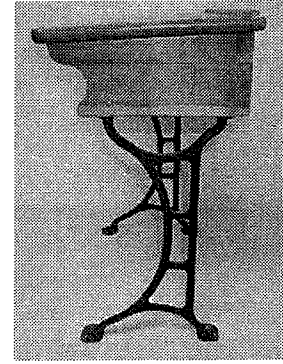
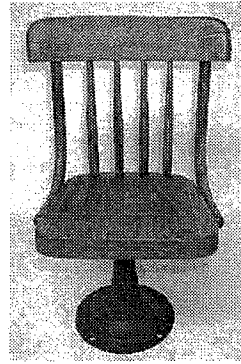
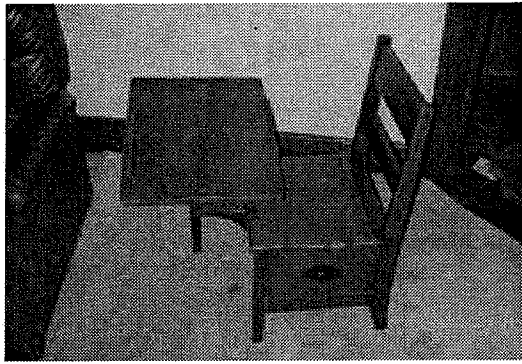
Standardization Policy in South Dakota

In South Dakota, the earliest recorded county-wide effort at school building standardization was advanced by Amos E. Barker, Day County Superintendent, in 1885. Barker made recommendations concerning size and layout, specifically, that schools should measure 16 by 26 feet, with three windows on each side and a door in the middle. This form was common to early community schoolhouse building efforts in South Dakota.⁷⁶

The standardization movement was implemented in policy through guidelines on the state level, as the State Superintendent of Instruction adopted recommendations. South Dakota's statewide standardization efforts received official sponsorship through legislation which accorded the State Superintendent of Public Instruction power of approval over new school construction plans. The legislature, in 1907, adopted these specific standards for schoolhouse construction, as detailed in the *Eleventh Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction*:

Schoolhouses shall have in each classroom at least fifteen square feet of floor space, and not less than two hundred cubic feet of air space per pupil, and shall provide for an approved system of heating and ventilation by means of which each classroom shall be supplied with fresh air at the rate of not less than thirty cubic feet per minute for each pupil, and have system of heating capable of maintaining an average temperature of seventy degrees Fahrenheit during the coldest weather.⁷⁷

Such legislation represented the first statewide effort to address the rural school problem through improvements in school building design and construction.⁷⁸ Particularly, illumination was thought to be inadequate in the vernacular schoolhouse, and that "... many such disturbances such as headaches, backaches, and nervous disorders, can be traced directly to poor seeing."⁷⁹ It was believed that window light originating from two different directions caused eye strain in pupils. Thus, it was suggested that windows be located only along one wall to provide uniform illu-



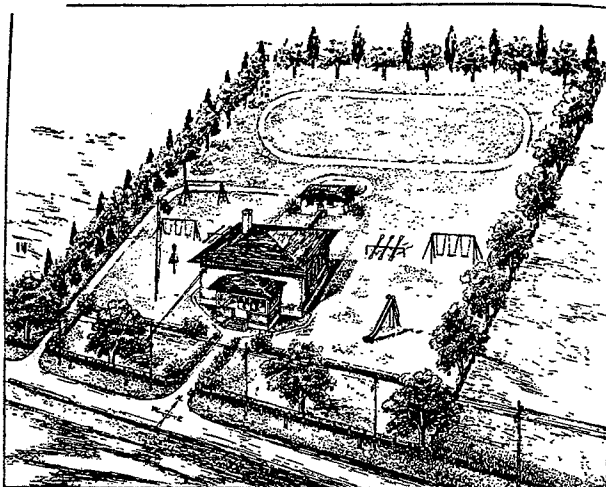
Illustrations of desks prescribed by educational reformers for the modern classroom.

minations from the left of the pupil only, so that a shadow would not be cast across the pupil's paper should he or she be writing with the right hand.⁸⁰ As a result, state superintendents of education, acting on the advice of reformers, adopted specific window arrangements and formulas that addressed illumination in schoolhouses. Regarding illumination formula, the Biennial Report stipulated a formula of one square foot of glass per every five square feet of floor space.⁸¹

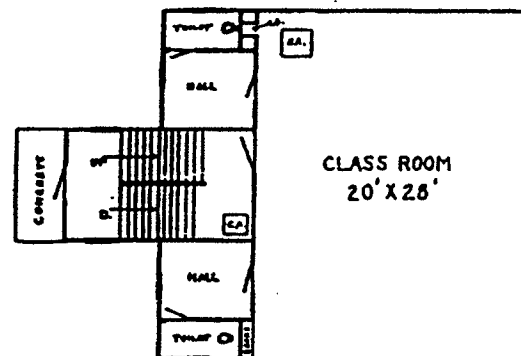
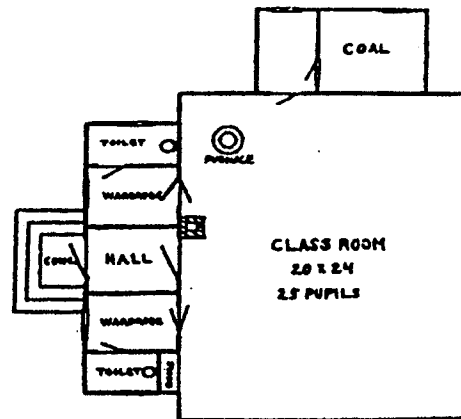
Indeed, South Dakota closely regulated the specifics of school construction prior to stipulating designs or suggested forms. By 1915, such regulations extended to classroom doors, egresses, window-to-floor area formulae, artificial lighting, windows, chimneys, fire drills and escapes, ventilation and water fountains.⁸² Subsequently, a South Dakota financial incentive program, passed in 1919 under Subsequently, Governor Norbeck, offered \$150 to each rural school that complied with state standards. As a result, older rural schoolhouses were renovated to come into compliance with "modern school building" standards outlined in

the state guidelines. The number of schools in compliance increased from 95 schools in 1920 to 427 in 1923, thus literally transforming the vernacular rural school into one that complied with new statewide standardization guidelines.⁸³ For one-room schools, this often involved removing the windows from one wall entirely while expanding those on the other.

These schoolhouses represented a transitional effort in school standardization, that of adapting the vernacular form through modern improvements. In mandat-



A depiction of the ideal rural school set in the landscape. (From *The Rural School Plant*).



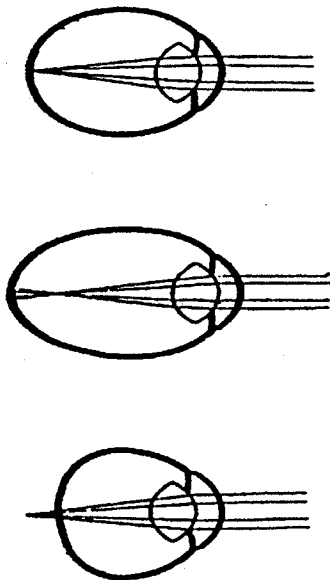
Two plans from the State of South Dakota Department of Public Instruction's standardized guidelines. (From *Country School Buildings of Northeastern South Dakota*)

ing a consistent school building design, standardized plans served to supplant the uniqueness and individual community experience that was characterized by the vernacular rural school.⁸⁴ This outcome is best exemplified in the Lincoln and Garfield grade schools in Madison, South Dakota. Identical when originally constructed in 1902, each benefited from identical additions to the older structures in 1922. Again, in 1953, each received identical new additions which replaced the 1902 structures. Today, After two additions to each, the schools appear virtually identical.

The Form of the Standardized School in South Dakota

The 1919 standardization legislation greatly affected the design of the public school through financial incentives for new construction. In the 1920s, standardized plans recommended a building with a square footprint and a hipped roof, one based on the state superintendent's suggested four plans for standard school buildings.⁸⁵ This became the style of the one-room school throughout the state. Variations on the four plans included accessory rooms to serve the community; an auditorium, for example, was incorporated into all but the smallest rural school. Day District school #16A, located southeast of Clark, dedicated a sizable proportion of its floor space to an auditorium "one third as large as the classroom to its side behind a large opening that served as a proscenium arch."⁸⁶ Other amenities adopted according to reformers' rec-

The Hygiene of the Eye.



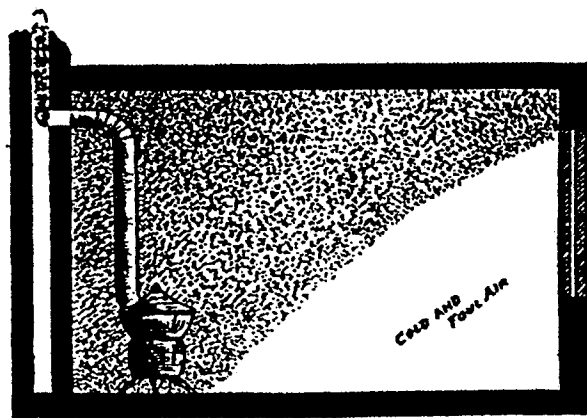
Nineteenth century reformers relied on scientific theory to formulate school building recommendations, such as lighting formulae based on studies of human vision.

ommendations included indoor toilets, separate cloak-rooms, and indoor vestibules—yet little else.⁸⁷

The influence of standardization on the evolution of the school building can be seen in the larger schools of the early 1900s. Prior to standardization, the four-or eight-room rural schools of the 1900-1910s were often equally spare with regard to amenities and lacked the gymnasiums or auditoriums prescribed in later standardization recommendations. This larger rural school was commonly designed to place classrooms in an irregular, asymmetrical arrangement around a central hall. The interior of the Hitchcock School, constructed in 1907, reflects the early layout of the larger rural school. Usually windows lined two walls of the classroom, as opposed to the unidirectional recommendations that later dictated the standard form of the classroom.

The exterior of schools of this era belied the simplicity of their interior arrangements. The exterior exhibited architectural formality through symmetrical design and ornamentation, often influenced by a movement or style such Richardson Romanesque. The exterior of the Hitchcock School reflects this style; the central projecting bell tower is a prominent element which distinguishes the school from the later hipped-roof box dictated by standardized designs. An entry arch of decorative brickwork, cut-stone stair columns, and brick quoins lends a definite formality to the facade, infusing the older school with authority and importance in the context of the small rural town.

The Wilmot school, erected eight years later in 1915, shares some exterior elements with the Hitchcock school. Both schools assumed a square footprint. As with the Hitchcock school, the Wilmot school was entered through a central projecting



Proper ventilation for the schoolhouse determined the reformers schoolhouse plans. This diagram indicates the unhealthful aspects of the schoolhouse stove.

entrance (later obscured by an insensitive addition), however, it differs in interior arrangement. Through comparison of the respective floor plans, an evolution in school layout can be inferred. While the Hitchcock school was asymmetrical in plan, the Wilmot school employs a symmetrical arrangement of the four classrooms on the first floor on either side of the centrally-placed staircase. More importantly, half of the second floor space is devoted to an auditorium, complete with stage.

Surveys of school construction in 1928-1929 indicate an increasing incorporation of facilities such as auditoriums, gymnasiums, and special rooms in elementary school buildings.⁸⁸ These changes reflected a growing awareness of the rural school as an institution serving the community through a multiplicity of uses. Town meetings were held in school assembly rooms and Election Day voting was often conducted in the local school. The Community Club met in the Thomas High School, in Hamlin County, for years, and a soldier's funeral service was held there in 1918.⁸⁹

The gymnasium became a central element of the school that served the community. Athletic competitions were held there, and during recess it served as an important forum for socializing for the rural pupil. Humbolt elementary school, constructed in 1920, was one such school that prominently featured a gymnasium in its plan. Unlike other elementary schools, in which the gymnasium was situated on the basement level, in the Humbolt school the gym was placed centrally on the main floor, surrounded by classrooms. The gym extended through the second floor, completely open to the walkway around which the second floor classrooms were placed. Perhaps a reflection of the perceived importance of an activity program in education, in this plan the gymnasium was central to the school experience, and functioned as a social center for the community during athletic competitions as well. The gym has since been sensitively remodeled to serve as a library and computer space, an example of adapting the school to new educational needs.

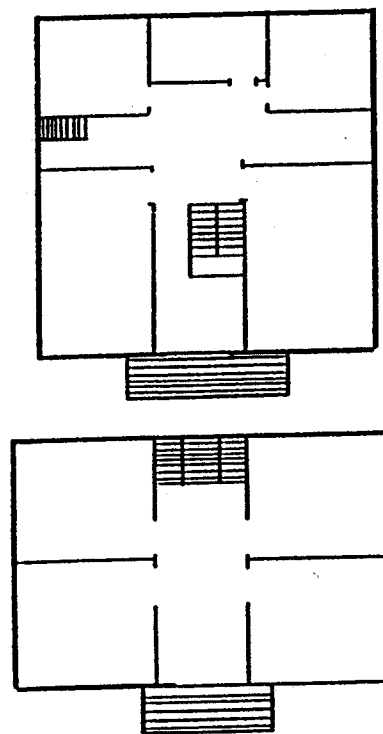
Clearly the rural school, with its small enrollment and limited financial resources, had to be creative in adopting amenities such as auditoriums, gymnasiums, and manual training classrooms that were available in city schools, such as Spafford Elementary, in Flandreau. For smaller schools, plans were devised that arrived at a compromise between space and function through creative solutions. For example, flexible partitions were recommended to subdivide the assembly room into classroom space.⁹⁰ For the larger rural schools, guidelines recommended the combination auditorium and gymnasium, frequently evidenced in

smaller community schools erected throughout the state. A stage was placed at one end of the gymnasium, or along the long wall, and bleachers provided seating. Science classrooms were recommended that combined both laboratory and lecture hall into one room.⁹¹ Such amenities were implemented throughout South Dakota during the 1920s, and changed the school experience, particularly for the rural pupil.

Inequity in Educational Funding in South Dakota

Despite the efforts of educational reformers, the system of local-levy district funding originating in New England proved to be an impediment to reform of rural schools in South Dakota. The sparse settlement among the Plains states, spread out over greater distances than in New England, mandated numerous small under-enrolled school districts. These districts were administered through the control of a local school board sometimes unwilling to cede control over education, and so opposed consolidation. In effect, this preserved a rural system of education dominated by small, one teacher schools under ineffective county supervision. More importantly, given the small community and its limited resources upon which financial support for the local school depended, these districts were effectively undercapitalized as well.

Unique to South Dakota are the extensive Federal,



A comparison of plans for the Hitchcock and Wilmot schools.

State, and American Indian lands within its boundaries. These lands, of which 92.23% reside west of the Missouri River, are non-taxable for the purposes of school funding. On the local level, this resulted in reduced levies for the purposes of school funding, which had left western local school districts effectively undercapitalized. Thus, an intra-state funding disparity existed which undermined the effectiveness of the local levy as an equitable source of school support in South Dakota.⁹²

In addition, diminished rainfall levels west of the Missouri River depressed land values relative to the more profitable small farms located in eastern South Dakota. Reduced rainfall levels in the west also necessitated larger homestead claims, which were assembled through land speculation and often fraudulent claims.⁹³ These larger claims, which supported ranching rather than (more profitable) agriculture, resulted in reduced income per acre and an overall lower population density. This, in turn, mandated political subdivisions which covered a much larger geographic area.⁹⁴ Thus, the larger, less profitable claims west of the Missouri River served to undercapitalize local districts. At the same time, the low population density of the region necessitated higher per-pupil costs. To make matters worse, the five year residence requirement prior to the award of a land patent—as stipulated by the Homestead Act—meant these large tracts

remained nontaxable for school purposes during the claim cycle, and thus deprived early frontier schools of much-needed funding.⁹⁵

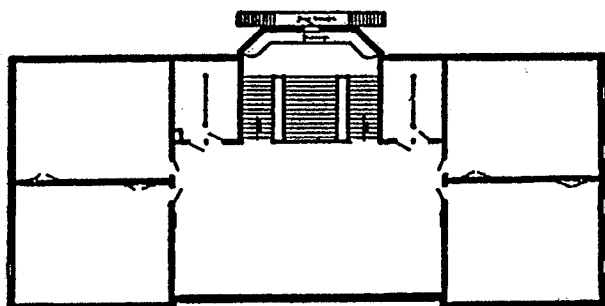
On the other hand, in eastern South Dakota, some of the land reserved through statehood legislation for dedicated school funding was already privately settled at the inception of statehood. More valuable school lands east of the Missouri River were then exchanged on an acre by acre basis for less valuable “indemnity” lands west of the Missouri River *without regard for value*.⁹⁶ The general fund, from which funding was distributed to schools statewide, received revenue calculated on the basis of valuation of the much less valuable indemnity lands west of the Missouri River, depriving the fund of revenue that would have further supported rural schools. In sum, the local levy school funding structure disproportionately favored the more densely settled, high land value regions in the eastern portion of the state.

In an effort to improve the inequitable apportionment of funding for schools across the state, in 1935 the state legislature approved both sales and net-income taxes, of which 30% was earmarked for the schools.⁹⁷ The apportionment statewide of the sales and income taxes across the state was intended to alleviate the historic discrepancy in intra-state funding for education. The majority of the state school funds, as apportioned by census, went to the school districts in the east, leaving the less-populated western rural school districts under-funded.

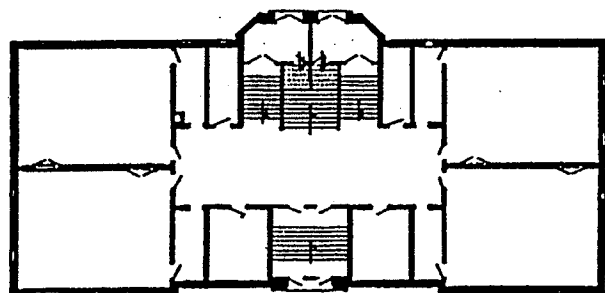
Indeed, considering its limited resources, the rural school district *itself* was thought to limit educational opportunity. In seeking to redress inefficiencies in administering education in disparate regions of the state, the efforts at school administration and funding reform over the past century have mainly revolved around the inefficiency of local district funding and the extent to which such districts should be consolidated. Such reforms have entailed conflicts between local control over education versus centralized administration, and the apportioning of funding equitably between villages and rural regions.

A Remedy for the Under-funded Rural School

As the telephone, radio and advances in transportation facilitated communication, the disparities between urban and rural school became apparent. As changing modes of production both on the farm and in the factories encouraged economic migration and redistributed rural populations to the cities, a crisis in rural education became apparent. Progressives argued for reforms in rural education; to that end, rural school consolidation



SECOND FLOOR PLAN.



The evolving 8-room school and the auditorium that is central to the design.

was viewed as the most effective means of achieving some parity between the rural and urban schools.

In conception, efficient consolidation represented a compromise between the larger school district (its potential in education favored by the Progressives) and the increased cost of transportation for pupils to and from the consolidated school, which was often far from the local community. In *Planning Rural Community School Buildings*, Frank Cyr and Henry Linn assessed the needs of a hypothetical rural community named "Ruralville" in the age of school consolidation.⁹⁸

The authors observed that farm consolidations, expanded communications, and availability of transportation resulted in changes in the rural community which necessitated an enlargement of the rural educational service area. In advocating the "community unit" as a basis of school districting, rather than the local district, the authors described the community as growing to encompass several traditional rural localities. Ruralville's expanded service area had enlarged into a new form of "rural village." The concept of the rural village as a service area, a perception divorced from traditional political subdivision boundaries, provided a rationale for school consolidation, which augured the closure of the small rural school.

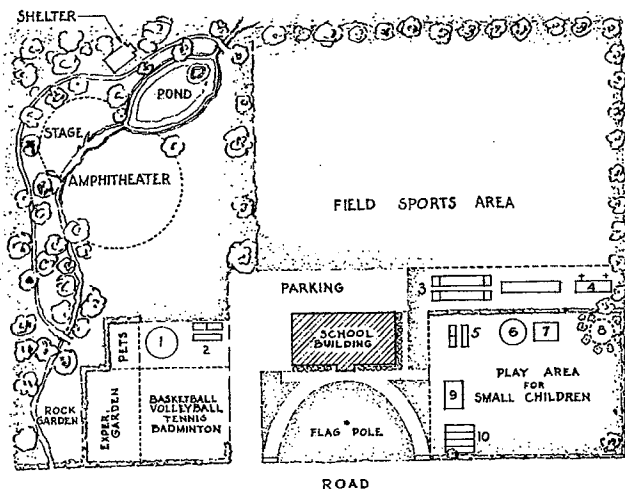
Aside from the question of equitable funding of schools, the numerous small districts and the isolated geography of the rural schools proved very effective at resisting improvements in rural education. As a consequence, the progressive reforms, including the modern school building, were substantially unavailable to the rural school pupil until suitable trans-

portation was available and affordable. As the Midwest began to grapple with the issue of consolidation at the turn of the century, the transportation problem proved vexing; both Ohio and Indiana encountered poor roads as an obstacle to consolidations.⁹⁹ The road betterment movements in the first decades of the twentieth century improved the prospects of consolidation by establishing statewide networks of improved roads that facilitated pupil transportation over longer distances.

Consolidation in South Dakota

William Henry Harrison Beadle, former Surveyor General for the Dakota Territories, in 1879 was appointed State Superintendent for Instruction. Always an advocate of consolidation in education, he implemented the first such efforts in the Dakota Territory in 1883, legislation which allowed for voluntary county initiatives to move from a local-district to a township-based administration and thus eliminated local districts in favor of township control.¹⁰⁰ The township unit of administration was to be supervised by three officials at the township level, a county superintendent and a statewide superintendent of public instruction. However, by 1886, only 68 of 83 counties adopted consolidation as a means toward township administration; the remaining 15 counties accounted for 1150 districts—representing 57% of the local school districts statewide.¹⁰¹

The disparity between the sparsely populated regions of the west and the earlier settled, more densely populated regions east of the Missouri River presented challenges to administrative control and funding. While the multitude of small districts in the west was viewed as a problem, necessitating low enrollment, the swelling population of the eastern region of the state presented an opposite situation; by 1899, 49 teachers administered classes in nine schools in Sioux Falls.¹⁰² Addressing the needs of populated districts in the east, legislation in 1891 enabled more densely populated counties to vote to subdivide into smaller districts. A retreat from the earlier efforts at consolidation, this statewide legislation encouraged further district division across the state. Opting for local control, the smaller district movement spread *beyond* the densely settled regions in the east during the early twentieth century and resulted in a multiplication of small school districts throughout the sparsely-settled region.¹⁰³ For example, Brown County had voted to divide from 27 into 71 local districts.¹⁰⁴ The obstacle presented by these small districts to the efficient administration and funding of education later encouraged renewed district consolidation efforts on a statewide scale.

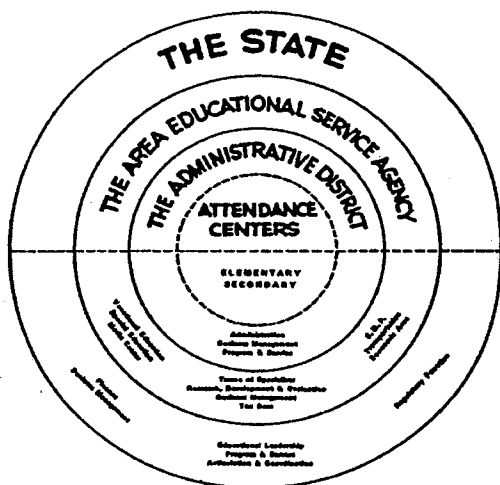


The reformers idealized village setting for the newly consolidated school. (From *Planning Community School Buildings*).

The consolidation movement gained momentum in South Dakota through legislation, in 1913, which encouraged school district consolidation through financial incentives. Only one year later, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Charles H. Lugg, had approved 23 consolidated districts, the first effective consolidation of local districts since the passage of William H.H. Beadle's 1883 legislation which was intended to discourage small districts.¹⁰⁵ Consolidation was slow to become widely established in rural South Dakota. A United States Bureau of Education survey found that as of 1916, only 32 consolidated districts had formed.

On the national level, in 1917, the Smith-Hughes Act enabled federal grants to states for vocational education establishment. Defined as "education and training of less than college grade for . . . preparing persons of employable age for advantageous entrance into skilled trades and occupations," vocational education would constitute "a wellrounded course of instruction for useful citizenship."¹⁰⁶ Apportioned on the basis of population, the intent of this aid was to encourage construction of consolidated school facilities suitable for offering vocational training. Receipt of aid, however, depended on local matching contributions—funds that were in short supply in rural regions of South Dakota in the aftermath of World War I.¹⁰⁷ Thus the larger towns and cities, with more funds at their disposal, benefited disproportionately from the flow of federal dollars prior to the 1920s.¹⁰⁸

The United States Bureau of Education called for increased efforts nationwide to encourage consolida-

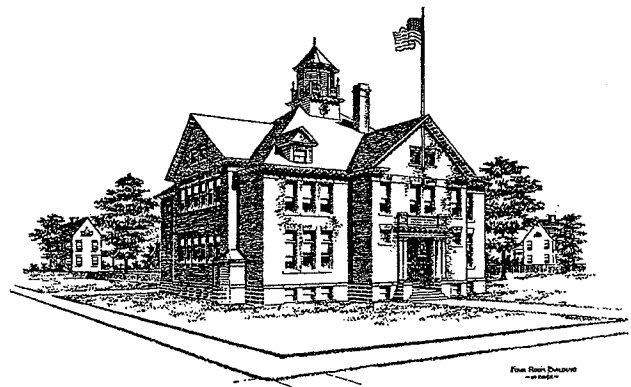


The philosophy behind the hierarchy of school district reorganization, showing the consolidated district at the center within the state administration of education. (From *Guidelines for School District Organization*)

tion, including direct state aid as an incentive to consolidate.¹⁰⁹ Following the United States Bureau of Education recommendations, in 1919 the South Dakota legislature authorized consolidation aid, stipulating three classes of consolidated schools eligible for assistance: the two-room, two-teacher school (\$250 in aid provided); the four-teacher school (\$400 in aid); and the consolidated high school of at least four grade teachers, three high school teachers, four rooms, offering "special training in agriculture, home economics, and manual training" (\$600 in aid provided).¹¹⁰ Specifically, the legislation stipulated that aid should support only "approved" rural schools.¹¹¹

One of the first such rural districts to form through consolidation under the 1919 legislation was the Orland consolidated district, in Lake County. Beginning in 1919, a literal consolidation brought three frame school buildings together around a central room to form a "T." In 1921 a brick consolidated school was built, complete with auditorium, stage, balcony, and motion picture booth. Its dedication was celebrated "in typical Orland fashion [with] a supper of roast beef, mashed potatoes and gravy, beans, rolls, bread, pickles, cake and ice cream."¹¹² By 1920, 31 schools across South Dakota received consolidation assistance for *already* being in compliance with one of the three classes of approved plans.¹¹³

As transportation was recognized as key to the consolidation effort, state legislation in 1923 addressed the need for transportation funding to encourage consolidation. The legislation stipulated the provision of transportation for all pupils more than two and a half miles from the consolidated district school.¹¹⁴ With state aid for transportation considered a legitimate educational expense, motorized buses were employed by one-half of the districts,



An early village consolidated school dating to 1915, according to the description—very early in the consolidation movement. (From *Modern American School Buildings*)

offering subsidized transportation to pupils.¹¹⁵ Legislation had, in 1921, authorized districts to pay tuition to village schools for educating pupils from rural districts, including authorized reimbursement to parents for the cost of travel.¹¹⁶ Pupils could then attend village schools, across district lines, on a tuition basis, thus eliminating a major complicating factor in inter-district schooling.¹¹⁷

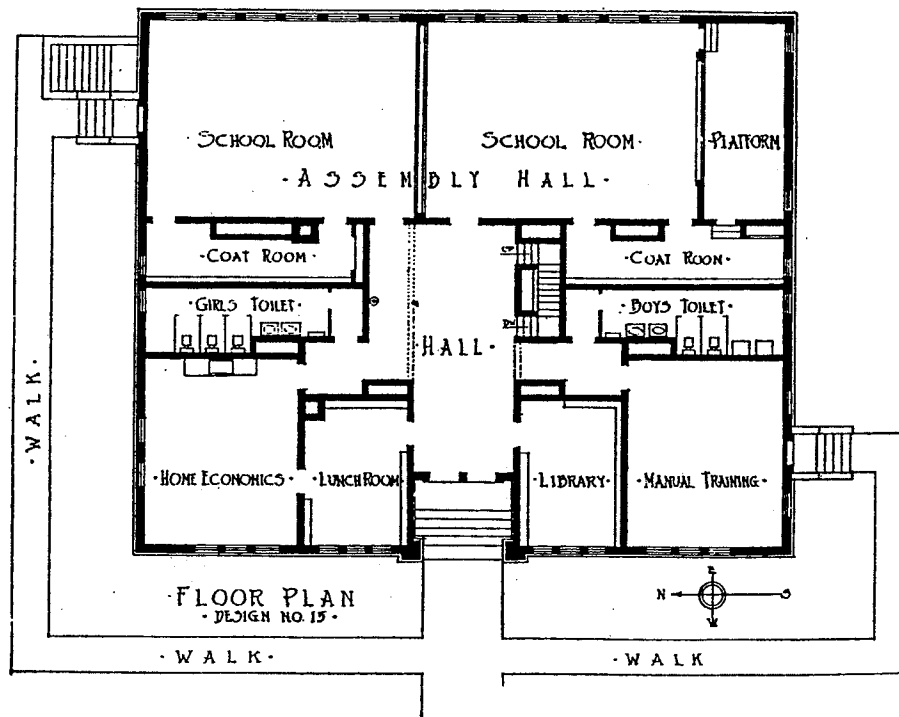
A "Better School Campaign" was waged across the state to praise the benefits of consolidation, publicizing the availability of state financial aid for the effort. The financial incentive from the state encouraged smaller communities to vote to consolidate their districts. The campaign was successful, as by 1923 state assistance flowed to 71 approved consolidated schools, mostly located in villages. In 1929 that number had risen to 99 schools, the result of rural district consolidation and subsequent closure of one-room schools. The larger urban districts, which had undertaken consolidation efforts earlier in response to the 1913 legislation, benefited less from the 1919 legislation.¹¹⁸

The Standardized Consolidated School

The transition to the standardized, "modern" village consolidated school from the traditional box form of the earlier school came about as a result of the clo-

sure of rural one-room schools in order to consolidate the administration of education in a single, centrally located school. Standardization brought a rational design to the larger school, arranging classrooms in a symmetrical plan around a central hall and staircase as in the earlier schools. The Hill City Consolidated Public School, erected in 1921, is an excellent example of the transitional evolution from the unique plan of the smaller, earlier school to the efficient plan of the larger school. In the Hill City Consolidated Public School, four classrooms per floor were symmetrically arranged around a gym at the basement level, while two classrooms shared the second floor with the auditorium, accessed through the central staircase. This school retained the box form of the school of the 1900s, characterized by the central hall and staircase, yet arranged the interior symmetrically around an abbreviated corridor.

In larger consolidated schools, this transitional plan yielded to the full-corridor plan of the "modern" standardized school of the 1920s. The Rutland School, erected in 1921, was representative of the linear double-loaded corridor layout common to consolidated schools. In schools of this plan, the gym was typically housed at the basement level, with the main corridor functioning as an overlook for spectators during athletic events. Common to schools during this

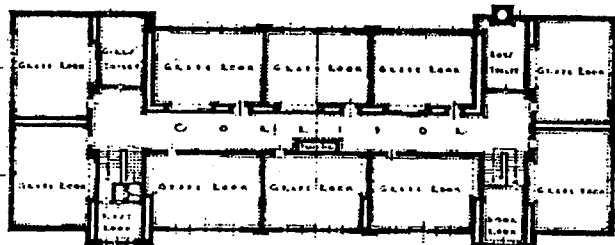


A relatively early 4-room consolidated design; note the irregular arrangement of the plan and the nearly square footprint. (From *The Rural School Plant*)

period, as in the Rutland School, the classrooms were arranged along the corridor which terminates, at either end, with another classroom. This arrangement allowed the placement of windows along only one wall in each classroom, a recommendation from state guidelines for the construction of school buildings. This arrangement yielded the familiar appearance of the consolidated school's brick facade flanking either side of the central grouping of classrooms.

The exterior of the Cresbard Junior-Senior High School, erected in 1921, exhibits this design, and the school retains a very high degree of interior and exterior historic integrity. Historic elements common to the 1920s that distinguished this school included cast concrete pilasters and the scrolled brackets which supported an ornate, cast concrete cap above. Separate "boys" and "girls" entrances are relatively uncommon on schools of this date, yet were incorporated in this excellent example of the 1920s consolidated school. Although schools of this period are characterized by classical motifs, such as scrolled brackets, decorative door and window caps, rarely did the 1920s era school incorporate exotic architectural styles in design.

Two schools in South Dakota, the Emerson Elementary School and the Lincoln Elementary School, both in Sioux Falls, were designed in the Mission style, unusual for the region. The Emerson School, in particular, is an excellent example. Constructed of red brick with cast-concrete decorative brackets and window sills, the design clearly alludes to Mission influence in its stepped roofline with tile accents, arched windows, stylized buttresses and dual towers. Underlying this facade, however, is the familiar layout of dual entrances flanking centrally placed classrooms accessed from a double-loaded corridor. Additionally, classroom wings line either side and project beyond the facade. Therefore, the Emerson Elementary School exhibits the unusual Mission style as applied to the standard layout of the 1920s school.

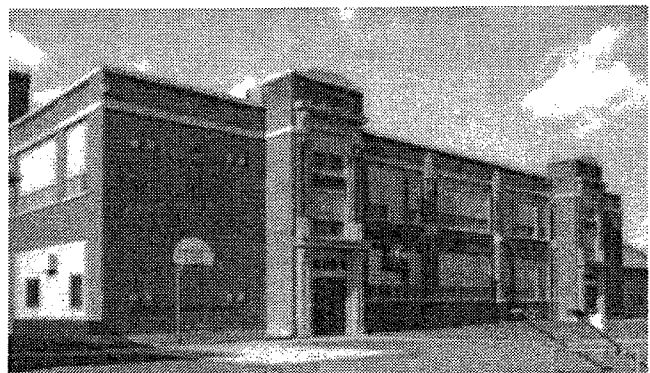


The evolving consolidated school, illustrating the double-loaded corridor and double entries. Note the absent auditorium or gymnasium. (From *Grade School Buildings*)

The Spafford Elementary School, erected in 1923, represents the apex of the stylized, large city consolidated school design. A very large school serving Flaudreau, the Spafford Elementary School's classrooms were arranged in a "U" pattern around a large central auditorium, a design that generally characterized the larger schools. The necessity for adequate natural lighting for classrooms pushed classrooms to the periphery of the building; in this school they fully line three sides. The exterior of Spafford Elementary is exemplary in style, as well. A central main entrance is flanked by four massive concrete columns, while pilasters adorn all sides of the building, executed in ornamental brickwork and topped by cast concrete caps. Spafford Elementary, in its size, arrangement and ornamentation, exists as a homage to the place of the large city elementary school in the city—an affirmation of the importance of public education in the 1920s.

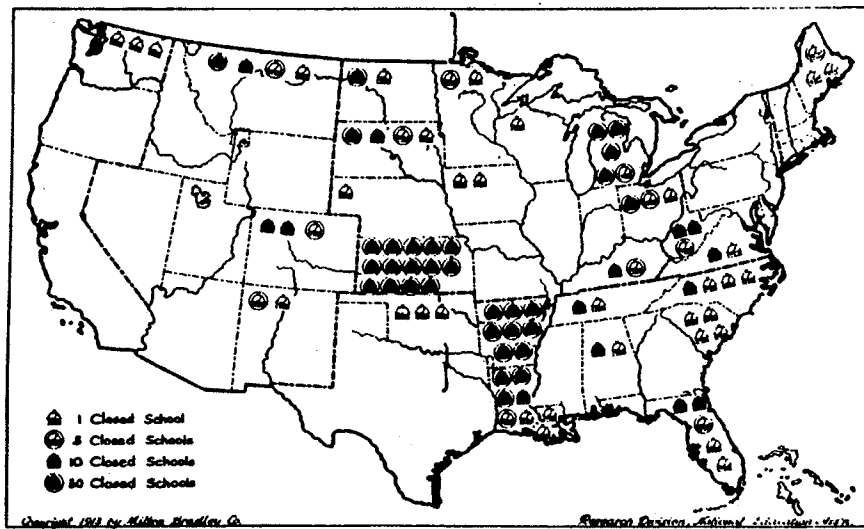
In Brookings, the evolution of the school building in the first five decades of settlement in South Dakota, from the vernacular one-room school of the nineteenth century to the federal relief-sponsored city school of the 1930s, is evidenced. Upon the arrival of the railroad in 1879, plans were formulated to erect a school in the center of town. Erected at Fourth Street and Fifth Avenue in 1880, the school was a two story, box-like frame structure with a hipped roof.

The population of the town soon swelled and necessitated another school, for which the corner stone was laid in 1888. An elaborate, three story brick structure in the Queen Anne style, it was known locally as the Red Castle. Further increases in enrollment prompted Brookings to erect another school, a grade school, in 1907; a large two-story school, it was designed in the Greek Revival style. A consolidated high school was erected in 1921, much in the style as



The school at Cresbard, South Dakota. Note the ornamentation and massing that characterized the evolved consolidated school of the 1920s.

RURAL SCHOOLS NOT OPENED BECAUSE OF LACK OF FUNDS
1933-34



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Map indicating the rural one-room schools that didn't open in 1933 and 1934, during the depression. (From *One Room Schools of the Middle West*)

advocated in current school building manuals. It houses both a gymnasium and an auditorium, and as considered "one of the finest of its time."

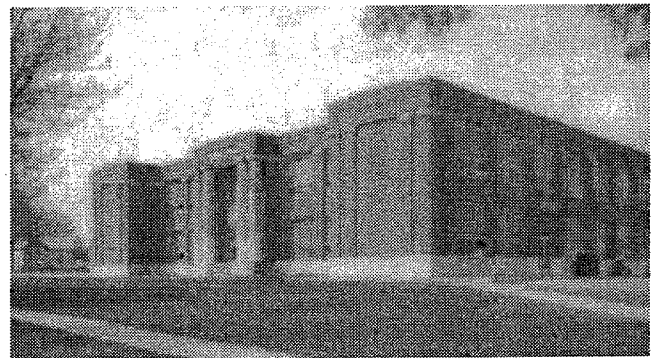
Further growth in Brookings necessitated a supplementary school, and in 1935, on the site of the Red Castle, the Works Progress Administration erected the large Central Elementary School at a cost of \$90,000.¹¹⁹ A large building which includes a gymnasium, often included in schools erected through federal relief, the Central Elementary School is representative of a large city school of the 1930s. These five schools illustrate the transformation from the one-room school to the large town modern elementary school of the 1930s.

Rural Crisis During the Depression Era

Consolidation accelerated in the years after the depression as school endowment funds were lost to bank failures. The Rutland district's sinking fund was lost when the Rutland Bank closed in 1927.¹²⁰ Optimistic rural population projections after World War I encouraged school building in the 1920s. The farm consolidations of the 1930s served to thin the rural population. At the same time, the average value of farm land decreased steadily through the depression, from \$71.39 per acre in 1925 to a low of \$18.65 per acre before 1935.¹²¹ This amounted to a transfer of wealth from the point of production, the rural community, to the urban centers where wealth was already concen-

trating due to manufacturing and a concentration of financial institutions.¹²²

As urbanized regions increasingly displaced wealth from farm communities, the local base of school support was severely compromised.¹²³ A decline in enrollment in rural schools, which were more sensitive to population fluctuations given their smaller enrollments, undermined their necessity. Farm productivity disproportionately eroded financial support for the schools in the regions where adequate funding was most vulnerable.¹²⁴ In combination these factors undermined school funding in rural areas. Between 1929 and 1950, for example, Belle Fourche erected no schools at all.¹²⁵



The Spafford Elementary School, in Flandreau, South Dakota.

After the depression the family farm experienced radical changes; farm tenancy and farm mortgage debt increased.¹²⁶ Farmers that had, in the past, personally guaranteed school funding with farm assets were hesitant to put their assets at risk following the depression. Political subdivisions consolidated because of financial obligations. Small schools in the rural regions suffered the consequences. Many were closed as districts became larger, anchored by a village consolidated school. The Oldham-Ramona district today covers 192 square miles over three counties; preschool through sixth grades attend in Oldham and grades seven through twelve attend in Ramona. In an indication of the transportation issues to be resolved in large scale consolidation, buses from each community school meet at a midway point in order to exchange pupils accordingly.¹²⁷

The Social Impact of Consolidation

Consolidation was advocated in professional educational journals as the path to educational reform.¹²⁸ The limited sociability afforded by the small rural school, thought to be an integral aspect of the "rural problem," was addressed through the consolidated school and its larger community of "companionable associates." Consolidation of small rural districts into a more efficiently administered, larger district would constitute a larger social community for the rural pupil in which he may overcome the "social bans and

barriers of the small neighborhood."¹²⁹ In contrast to the one-room school, the better-appointed village consolidated school could offer the pupil a

comfortable, sanitary, attractive school home where country children may enjoy all the conveniences ordinarily ascribed to city life; a building which, at least, can be what few country schools are now—clean, well-lighted, well-heated and properly ventilated. A school of this kind, moreover, owing to its size, dignity, and attractiveness, can exert a social influence impossible to the little one-room school set off by itself in comparative isolation.¹³⁰

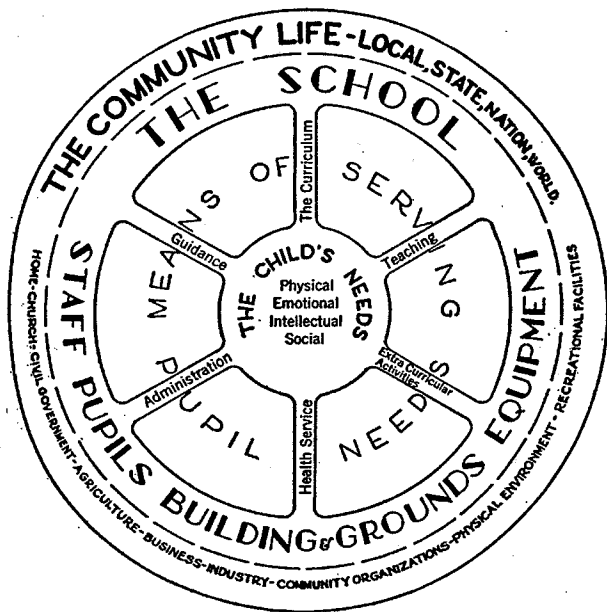
The consolidated rural school, advocates thought, could offer the rural community amenities such as gymnasiums and auditoriums, important elements in an "activity program" that encouraged activity as opposed to passivity. It was thought that such a program was necessary to the individuality and "moral adjustment" of the child.¹³¹

Community events, such as athletic competitions and school performances, were central to the function of the consolidated school as a social center.¹³² Further, the consolidated school was heralded as a laboratory for social improvement community-wide, an "object lesson" for rural households. Improved lighting, indoor plumbing and fresh water innovations constituted "modern features that should be installed on our farms [which] frequently go out from the consolidated school to the homesteads by the contagion of example."¹³³

Thus, the responsibility of the school extended beyond equipping the rural pupil for life outside the community; advocates for consolidation heralded the benefits it would bring to the community. Experienced instructors would offer specialized instruction in subjects as such as science and business, and would bring improved teaching methods into the classroom. An improved school building dedicated to the specifics of an improved curriculum—science laboratories, the industrial arts facilities, and business training classrooms—would bring to the rural pupil educational opportunity formerly available only to the pupils of the larger, better funded, urban schools.

The High School Movement

Advances in educational reform as implemented in consolidated school design and construction were nowhere more apparent than in the high school. If the public school was seen as a means of preparing society for democracy, then the high school movement would fulfill Thomas Jefferson's vision of "'Aristocracy of virtue and talent' spread through all conditions across the nation with an equal hand."¹³⁴

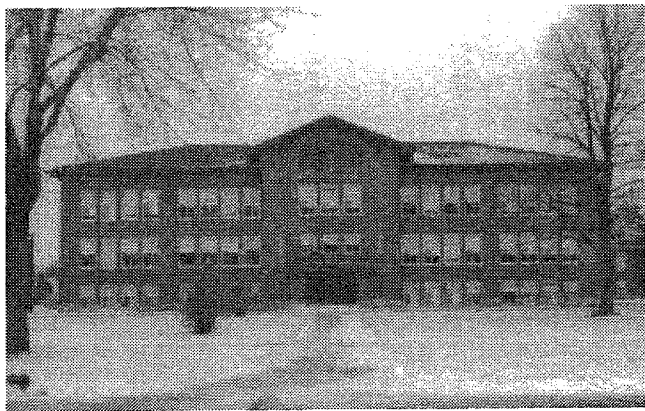


On a depiction of "the child's needs," as diagrammed by educational reformers. The concentric rings depict the various levels of society within which the school operates. (From *The Small High School at Work*)

Originating in the private academy education of the nineteenth century, the public high school was envisioned as a terminal for non-college bound pupils, providing them with a basic secondary education beyond the Latin grammar school.¹³⁵ The skilled apprenticeship society of the eighteenth century was yielding to mass manufacturing in the nineteenth century. Increased automation, facilitated by technological advancement and industrial specialization, necessitated a renewed approach in education. In order to adapt to changing modes of production and their impact in the industrializing cities, education adapted to an industrializing economy.¹³⁶ The three-year high school curriculum of English, science, mathematics, history and logic was instituted "with the design of furnishing the young men of the city . . . with the means of completing a good English education to fit them for active life or qualify them for eminence in private or public station."¹³⁷ The educational mission of the high school, was to prepare pupils for participation in productive society.

The first high school in the Dakota Territory was opened at the Territorial Capital of Yankton in 1875, enrolling nineteen pupils in its three-year curriculum. Housed successively in two buildings (demolished), the school moved into its present building, a two-and-one-half story Arts and Crafts structure, in 1916. The size of the Yankton High School (now the Yankton Middle School) reflects on Yankton's past dedication to education and provision of education to the community, whether future farmer or potential industrial employee.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, school enrollments increased due to the introduction of labor machinery on the farms, which relieved children of fieldwork. As late as 1890, high schools nationally accounted for only 2% of total school enrollment—almost nothing in rural regions—but doubled every



The Yankton Middle School, formerly the Yankton High School.

decade between 1890 and 1940.¹³⁸ In South Dakota, high school construction kept pace with this increase in enrollment, showing rapid growth in rural areas during the period after World War I.¹³⁹ Larger districts took advantage of increased state financial incentives to consolidate to erect the familiar "consolidated high school" of the 1920s.

Mass manufacturing and its hierarchical managerial model of the factory had a profound effect on public education. Having moved beyond the core secondary education curriculum, the curricula of the high school reflected the prominence of business influence throughout society. Commenting on the poor qualifications of the rural school teacher, educational reformer Herbert Betts compared the school to industry, noting that "*in no great industrial project should we think of placing our youngest and most inexperienced workers in the hardest and most important positions, and this without supervision of their work*" [italics added].¹⁴⁰ Schools organized to facilitate pupils' adjustment to the "business logic" of an industrializing society.¹⁴¹ Educational reformer John Philbrick advocated segregating school pupils by grade and employing lockstep promotion from grade to grade in emulation of the factory assembly line, the mode of production for which pupils were being prepared.¹⁴²

Originating in the hipped-roof, box form of the 1900s-1910s, the early high school differed little from the grade school. With little room for the kind of curricula specialization that characterized the high school movement, this layout predated the rapid change in the role of the high school after World War I. The high school found its mission in the alarming rural illiteracy rates discovered through the draft during the World War I buildup. The federal government feared that in the event of another war buildup, the potential



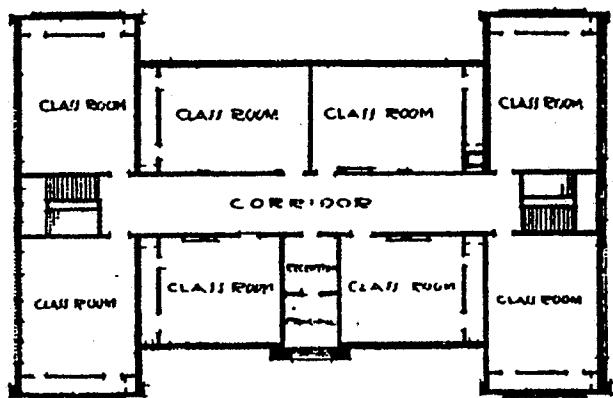
The Bridgewater High School, in Bridgewater, South Dakota. An early example of the high school prior to its evolution into consolidated form of the late 1910s and 1920s.

draftee would be ill-prepared for service in the armed forces. This emphasized the need for effective rural education reform, including classes that would prepare the potential inductee for service.

Federal vocational programs subsidized the establishment of high schools with industrial shops, then employed these facilities to train non-collegiate men for war industries.¹⁴³ These early industrial arts and specialized vocational training programs dovetailed conveniently with business interests and were instrumental in furnishing industry with workers. The communist threat during the Russian Revolution heightened the "American competitive instinct" and encouraged widespread participation in the vocational curriculum offered by the high school.¹⁴⁴

Thus, the mission of the public high school was to prepare the factory worker for participation in an industrializing society. The high school would insure for all citizens a place in the economy, prepared for corporate organization by the lockstep-promotion-factory model of the school and trained in the arts of industrial production. Hardly overlooked was the potential contribution of women to industrial society. High schools instituted a "business" curriculum, which offered instruction in typing and stenography that would educate women in the skills for business employment. In classes titled "home economics" and "food sciences," women were instructed through a *scientific* approach to the domestic arts, reflecting a regard by progressive educational theorists for the classroom in the high schools as a "laboratory for learning."¹⁴⁵

As the high school evolved into an institution offering the pupil more opportunity through a specialized academic and vocational curricula, the form of the school building followed. Given incentives offered in consolidation legislation on the state level in 1919, the

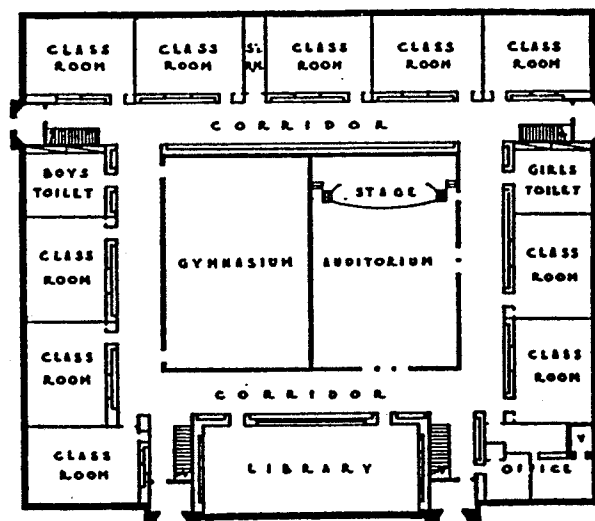


The plan of a typical high school as it has evolved into the "H" plan, prior to its evolution into the "U" layout.

high school building evolved according to state standardized plans for the consolidated school. Sometimes a consolidated school would house both the graded classes and the high school, as did the Redfield School, which featured a banner that read "High School and Grade School." The linear-corridor plan of the village consolidated school expanded into the "U" layout characteristic of the high school. Classrooms surrounded the auditorium as in the consolidated school, but science laboratories, home economics kitchen facilities, industrial education shops, and lecture halls would comprise the high school.

Perhaps the apex of high school construction in South Dakota was reached in 1940 with the construction of Lead High School. A prosperous town with its wealth originating in mineral extraction, Lead erected a magnificent school building employing an Art Deco motif. A symbol of modernism, the Art Deco style carries through to the smallest details in the school, from the stainless steel handrails to the decorative ceiling relief. The simplicity of the linear double-loaded corridor is belied by the amenities furnished to this high school. A 975-seat auditorium, complete with semi-circular stage and orchestra pit, anchors one end of the school; below, on the first floor, is the large gymnasium, accessed by the community through a separate entrance past a ticket window. A 1964 gymnasium addition anchors the other end.

Sitting high on a hill, the Lead High School is a symbol of the importance of education to the community and its investment in secondary education. Of course, Lead High School is hardly typical of the



The plan of the typical city high school as it has evolved into the "U" plan of the 1920s, with the gymnasium and auditorium central to the building.

South Dakota school. Its facilities are unavailable to other pupils in the state.

Americanization Programs in South Dakota

Socialization of children into society (through athletics and playground recess) was an important part of the school experience. Not only were the schools charged with community improvement, they were instrumental in familiarizing the immigrant with the values and beliefs of American society. This occurred through administering "Americanizing" programs for adults as well as children.

The need for acculturating immigrants originated in the heightened public sensitivity toward immigrants who populated the farms and manned the machinery of industrial production during World War I. Concerns about immigrants sympathizing with "the enemy" in a time of war spurred efforts to introduce American culture and values to them through the public schools. The high school mission was broadened to include Americanization and acculturation programs for immigrant adults and children. In 1915, legislation on the state level mandated English language instruction in the community high school as a condition for receiving financial assistance.¹⁴⁶ The rural high school, in particular, was charged with delivering lessons in Americanization to the rural, often immigrant, community of the Plains:

In country schools, music served as the great social event, bringing together diverse members of the community, including non-English-speaking immigrants. The German-Russians, Swedes, Norwegians and Italians may not have spoken English well, but for their children's programs they learned to sing patriotic songs in English.¹⁴⁷

Indeed, South Dakota's Americanization Act of 1919 required that children between the age of sixteen and twenty-one who couldn't read and write English (at a minimum 5th grade level) attend compulsory night or day classes.¹⁴⁸ The foremost Americanization program administered through the public schools in South Dakota was the Young Citizens League (YCL), founded in Brown County in 1912 by the County Superintendent of Schools, Michael M. Guhin. The YCL, through its publication titled *Young Citizen*, emphasized the values of democracy and citizenship.¹⁴⁹ Lessons in parliamentary procedure structured meetings, exposing children to the democratic process. Citizenship values stressed school betterment programs, such as landscaping and fundraising to establish rural school libraries. In 1926 alone, fundraising was very successful—YCL chapters statewide raised \$83,408 for school improvement programs.¹⁵⁰ Indeed, the YCL pledge stated, "I shall strive to do

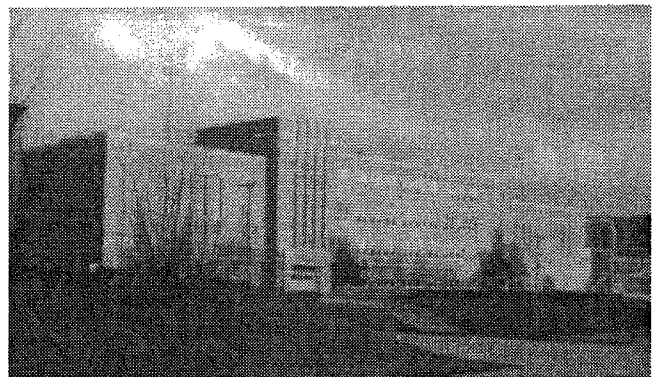
something each day to improve the standing of my school and community, and thereby endeavor to promote better citizenship."

Appointed State Director of Americanization in 1919, founder Guhin was responsible for coordinating statewide YCL Americanization efforts aimed at the children and grandchildren of immigrants.¹⁵¹ In the aftermath of World War I, the Young Citizen's League emphasized patriotism and loyalty, as sung in their march song:

O, up from every valley.
And down from every crest.
We come, thy loyal children,
By all thy favors blessed,
To pledge our firm allegiance,
America to thee.
Thy guardians of tomorrow,
By mountain, plane or sea.

Concentrated principally in the rural districts, the YCL eventually declined as rural schools closed. Consolidation of rural schools effectively ended the Young Citizens League.¹⁵²

The Americanization legislation and the Young Citizen's League changed public education not only with educating children in reading, writing, and arithmetic, but also in shaping the moral character of the child with Christian values delivered in a secular environmental.¹⁵³ The role of education in developing the character of the individual was especially important considering the relationship between American society and two insular cultures residing in South Dakota, the American Indian and the Hutterites. The "civilizing influence" of the schools on the "uncivilized" American Indian became an important issue in the administration of education in the state. Likewise,



Lead High School, in Lead, South Dakota. The asymmetrical plan allows for the auditorium and gymnasium, both at right, to anchor the building. At right is the 1964 gymnasium addition.

state legislation which compelled Hutterites' attendance in public schools determined the political interaction between the Hutterites and the state. Whether European immigrant seeking to assimilate, resident American Indian resistant to surrendering one's culture, or Hutterite struggling to preserve religious insularity, public education endeavored to extend, into disparate cultures, the values and institutions of American culture through public school education.

Education of American Indians: State or Federal Responsibility?

In the nineteenth century, Progressive reformers believed that acculturation through education was the most efficient method of assimilating American Indian children into mainstream society. After exposure to the white's way of life, it was thought that American Indian pupils would bring "civilizing" ideals back to the reservation home.

Eastern humanitarians generally agreed . . . that to be completely assimilated, Indian children should be enrolled for a period of three or four years in special institutions in centers of white civilization. The advocates of education in the East argued that returning pupils would accomplish more among their tribesmen than white teachers working in the tribal environment.¹⁵⁴

The federal government, however, was slow in acknowledging the responsibility for educating American Indians. It was not until 1870 that the federal government, through legislative act, appropriated financial aid specifically for American Indian education. When provided, such aid was intended to impart domestic skills to American Indian women and to prepare them for life among whites rather than life among American Indians.¹⁵⁵ Ultimately, the federal government was content to let Christian missionaries assume the burden of schooling American Indians on the reservations. In South Dakota in 1877, federal aid first supported a missionary school on the Standing Rock Reservation. Subsequently, Jesuit priests formed missions on the Rosebud and Pine Ridge Reservations in 1886, establishing the Saint Francis and Holy Rosary Missions, respectively.¹⁵⁶

Missionary schools on the reservations were an integral aspect of federal American Indian education policy. They relieved the federal government of the obligation of administering education directly by deferring to religious organizations the processes of acculturation, moral education, and industrial training that comprised the missionary educational.¹⁵⁷ The system of federally-funded, Christian education continued through the end of the century until it was decided, on the federal level, that American Indian

education was better controlled directly through a federally administered school system.¹⁵⁸

In order to more thoroughly acculturate American Indian children to the ways of white society, "it was thought that four or five years of boarding school experience . . . would erase the young Indian's disorderly habits."¹⁵⁹ First established in South Dakota at Pierre in 1891, the non-reservation boarding school expanded to Flandreau, Chamberlain, and Rapid City by 1898.¹⁶⁰ In one case, the former Columbus College in Chamberlain, having been bought from the state in 1907, was operated by Priests of the Sacred Heart as a school for American Indians.¹⁶¹

Viewed warily by American Indians, such schools never enjoyed widespread success in attracting American Indian children, for they were obliged to surrender their culture.

In these large, multi-roomed schools they were forced to discard their native dress, speech and customs. The traditional long hair of the boys was cropped close, and Indian girls, accustomed to loose-fitting blouses and skirts were required to wear tightly-buttoned dresses that covered them from their ankles to their necks.¹⁶²

Federal support for these schools was subsequently channeled to less expensive, federally supported reservation day schools established for elementary age pupils. It was believed that boarding schools were best suited for older pupils, those in grades six through twelve, while day schools would more efficiently acquaint younger children with improved living practices.¹⁶³ First established by Protestant missionaries in the 1880s, these schools were administered by state school superintendents through the public-district system and attracted a greater enrollment than the missionary schools. Government day schools largely supplanted the missionary reservation schools, and at one point numbered thirty-two on the Pine Ridge reservation alone.¹⁶⁴ Whether day schools constituted an improvement in Indian education is a matter of opinion. Cultural differences between white teachers and the Dakota, who almost exclusively spoke their native Lakota language, presented a serious obstacle to learning.

The children learned well. However, all the textbooks described scenes and situations utterly foreign to their culture. . . . Lakota values are different from those of white society, and the children could not understand the reason for competition in the classroom. Native American parents felt no obligation to keep him or her in school.¹⁶⁵

Indeed, Laura Woodworth-Ney, in "The Diaries of a Day School Teacher: Daily Realities on the Pine Ridge

Indian Reservation, 1932-1942," describes an environment in a day school in which the teacher

is presiding over a class of twenty-seven at the Grass Creek Day School. Behind her, the Ten Commandments are clearly delineated on the chalkboard. Her pupils also celebrated all of the major American holidays. Halloween, for example, found the children carving pumpkins and fashioning masks out of brown paper.¹⁶⁶

Day schools represented a concerted federal effort to acculturate the American Indian, particularly regarding the traditional gender roles of white society. Unlike the missionary or boarding schools, a teacher and housekeeper, typically a husband and wife team staffed the reservation day school. In *"Holy Women and Housekeepers: Women Teachers on South Dakota Reservations, 1885-1910*, Susan Peterson observes that, "the teacher concerned himself with academic subjects and industrial training for the boys, and the housekeeper-aside from taking care of her husband-supervised domestic training for the girls."¹⁶⁷

Day schools were an important transition from the sectarian missionary school to the federally financed reservation public school. In pursuing the policy of American Indian containment, there has been an effort to use education as a tool to segregate the American Indian population into manageable numbers. This policy was more effectively pursued through government schools rather than the missionary schools, which tended to stress moral education and acculturation almost exclusively.

Closely related to education was the work of changing or breaking up the nomadic form of Indian life Breaking up the main body into smaller family groups and settling them in separate localities was an important step toward self-support. Without this social organization the day school could not have functioned.¹⁶⁸

The larger mission of federally-supported schools was to aid in both controlling the reservation population and introducing European concepts of society.

On the state level, compulsory American Indian attendance at white schools had been mandated as early as 1913 by South Dakota session law, which opened state public schools to American Indians. Seeking to discourage Indian attendance in the schools, the compulsory attendance legislation was repealed two years later in 1915, thereby "excusing" American Indian attendance in the public school.¹⁶⁹ The repeal encouraged school administrators to actively discourage attendance—in effect constituting a disavowal of responsibility on the state level for American Indian education. In 1916, South Dakota

State Superintendent Charles H. Lugg stated, "The non-white population of our state is almost wholly Indian, and the illiterates among the Indians are still wards of the federal government for whom our schools are not responsible."¹⁷⁰

By the 1920s and 1930s, however, responsibility for Indian education was assumed by the state though the public schools. The Bureau of Indian Affairs at Pine Ridge posted letters encouraging families to send their children to public schools.¹⁷¹ By 1920, more American Indians were enrolled in public schools than were enrolled in government sponsored schools.¹⁷²

Until the 1930s, neither the state nor the government assumed full responsibility in the American Indian education. There had been no comprehensive approach to educating reservation-based American Indians. Instead, a parallel system of missionary, day, and state-administered public schools educated American Indians, all of which coexisted on the reservations until well into the twentieth century.¹⁷³

The Hutterite Colony: Partial Independence

In the history of education, the case of the Hutterites in South Dakota provides an interesting contrast to that of the American Indians. Of European origin and agriculturally self-sufficient, the Hutterites were perceived not as a people in need of civilizing, but as productive immigrants well-suited to settling the expansive Northwest Territory. Like the plight of the American Indian, the insular life and educational system of the Hutterites was not ultimately beyond the reach of public education and its objective of integrating children into American society.

The Hutterites originated in Germany and successively migrated eastward due to persecution for their religious beliefs. The Hutterites also established colonies in the Ukraine prior to emigration to America.¹⁷⁴ The sect enjoyed agricultural success raising Red wheat, a crop ideally adaptable to the climate and soil of the Plains. Given their self-sufficiency, the Hutterian Brethren were invited to relocate to the United States by President U. S. Grant, who recognized the potential contribution of the sect in settling the Northwest Territory. As an incentive to emigrate, and in recognition of the central role of education to their communal culture, Grant promised the Hutterites the freedom to operate their schools free from interference.¹⁷⁵

The Hutterites settled in South Dakota in 1874, establishing a religious-based colony in Bon Homme County.¹⁷⁶ The Hutterite philosophy was expressed through their insular, self-sufficient, agriculturally-based society. Hutterites believed that control over

education was necessary to the cultural cohesion and continuation of the community. Hence, they placed a great deal of importance upon independent schools located within the colony. The organization of colony schools fundamentally differed from the state system of education. Education was conducted in German, and constituted "indoctrination and habituation directed toward developing self-discipline which [would] insure identification by the individual of his will with the common will to abide by the traditional beliefs."¹⁷⁷ The Hutterites sought to eliminate extraneous knowledge from their children's upbringing, thinking it to be useless, even dangerous.¹⁷⁸

Their closed community, with its separate educational system, attracted state regulatory attention. In a manner fundamentally different from the schooling of American Indians, who were ignored by state education officials, the Hutterites' independent system provoked state efforts to regulate the colony schools according to state requirements. In the atmosphere of progressive school reforms in the late nineteenth century, political pressure was applied to colonies to conform to state educational requirements, including teacher certification and state superintendent approval of school buildings. Early efforts at state control proved unsuccessful, as the Hutterites resisted all forms of state interference. By 1909, only one non-Hutterite certified teacher instructed in the colony schools statewide.¹⁷⁹

During the war years of the 1940s, anti-German sentiment was manifest against the Hutterites through organizations called the Local Defense Councils. To force a share of the war cost onto the prosperous, pacifist Hutterite communities, Yankton residents seized cattle for auction from the community, deducted war costs, and then returned the remainder of the proceeds to the Hutterite colony.¹⁸⁰ Religiously opposed to the war effort, and mindful of earlier state efforts to effect control over the colony schools, the sect became alarmed and retreated into Canada for two decades after World War 1. In the late 1930s, given assurance of autonomy for the colonies and their schools, the Hutterites returned to South Dakota. They remain entirely autonomous under the Communal Corporations Act of 1935, which conferred non-profit religious corporation status upon the colonies.

Though the colony school system was integral to maintaining a cohesive cultural and religious identity, it was fundamentally incompatible with the secular state system. In *All Things Common: The Hutterian Way of Life*, Victor Peters observed, "the atmosphere in a 'worldly' public school is deliberately exploratory," and thus in contrast to the Hutterites' belief in excluding extraneous knowledge from daily life.

Intellectual curiosity and an examination of the existing order and values are accepted by the world as positive attributes of a good school. All this is in sharp contrast to Hutterian doctrine and to the aim of Hutterian education. The schools, according to the Hutterians, should be oriented away from worldliness and the existing material objectives that come only too naturally to man. They should exist to acquaint the child with the eternal truths, God's imperatives, and a speculative approach to them is morally wrong.¹⁸¹

Interestingly, the Hutterites advanced a view of the world not dissimilar from that of American Indian culture. Where the approach taken by state and federal authorities to American Indian education was "civilizing" and paternal, the efforts of the state in regulating education on the colony were much more cautious. Half a century would pass between the appointment of the first non-Hutterite teacher to a colony school and state supervision and administration. While the American Indians experienced coordinated state and federal acculturation efforts through schooling, the Hutterites fared much better. In fact, the colony schools operated independently, remaining outside state control until the 1950s.

The latter half of the twentieth century saw the threat of state interference returned in the context of education. Statewide teacher qualification standards, which applied to colony schools as well, were raised, in effect supplanting non-certified colony teachers with non-colony teachers with state certification. The first step in breaking the autonomy of the colony schools was thus taken, and would later be advanced by legislation in 1967 which mandated school district reorganization and did not exempt the colony schools.¹⁸² This legislation compelled colony schools to join with state districts operating secondary schools.¹⁸³ Although the Hutterites do not participate in the democratic system, namely school board elections, control over their schools constituted an essentially non-representative arrangement. This removed administrative control from the colony and transferred it to the state. In order to alleviate fears of cultural dilution of the Hutterite educational mission, agreements were made with the colony upon their entry into the local district. The prohibition of audio-visual materials, for example, was promised but not legally guaranteed.¹⁸⁴

Integrating state control into colony schools has resulted in an enduring hybrid system: children under five attend a kindergarten, known as *little school*, in which early colony socialization takes place. At age five the children attend *large school*, which consists of both public and sectarian instruction.¹⁸⁵ The sectarian, or German, school is the "chief agent" of training for the sect and conveys the culture and beliefs of the Hutterites.¹⁸⁶ This arrangement of parallel public and

sectarian schools has proven satisfactory to state administrators for most of the twentieth century. Opening the colony to public instruction, however, represented a major loss of community insularity and autonomy. "It has been suggested that the [introduction of] American and Canadian public school destroyed the Hutterian educational system and that all that has been salvaged of the Hutterian heritage is the kindergarten."¹⁸⁷

Although under statewide supervision, colony schools are far removed from the village schools erected through consolidation in the 1910s and 1920s. With their geographical service area limited to the colony, Hutterites' schools exemplify the spirit of the rural one-room school on the Plains. In the case of the Spring Valley Colony, the school complex consists of three one-room school buildings, each of square plan with a central entrance; two of the buildings are connected by a walkway, forming a two-room school out of two one-room designs. Considering their square plan with exterior vestibule and overhanging eaves, these buildings are very much in the tradition of the rural one-room school. Sometimes, as will the Gracevale Colony school in Lake County, the colony school exists as the last operating one-room school in an area.¹⁸⁸

Federal Relief Efforts in South Dakota

During the 1930s, the depression economy, in tandem with the drought, inflicted hardship on farms; productivity was down and farm tenancy was high. As children were needed to work the farms, school enrollment was low; in 1934 only 42.8% of school-age children in South Dakota attended school regularly.¹⁸⁹ Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal relief programs intervened in an effort to reverse the enrollment decline.

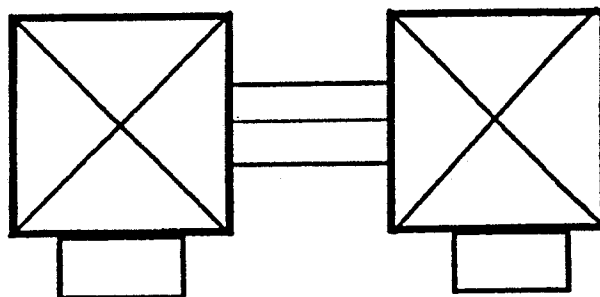
The Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) instituted a program of financial assistance to rural schools, subsidizing high school teachers' salaries in an attempt to keep the schools open despite diminished funding.¹⁹⁰ To alleviate difficulties in transporting pupils from the farms to the relatively distant consolidated village high school, FERA funded resident dormitories for high school pupils. Often located in private houses, it was the responsibility of the local community to provide the buildings, heat and fuel; the government subsidized the "deans" and paid twelve cents per person, per day, for boarding expenses. Such dormitories were established in approximately 125 South Dakota towns in order to keep high schools open and insure attendance.¹⁹¹

Just as FERA provided relief aid to support attendance throughout the rural area of South Dakota, the

Public Works Administration (PWA) issued loans and grants-in-aid toward the construction of new school buildings.¹⁹² Nearly all 25,000 school districts statewide benefited from federal relief, with the local cost-share averaging only about 35% of the cost.¹⁹³ Local communities approved bond issues in order to provide the local share necessary to qualify for the relief assistance. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) provided funding and labor for school buildings, athletic fields, playgrounds and swimming pools.¹⁹⁴ Near Hot Springs High School, for example, the WPA erected Woods athletic field for the use of the school. Using stone native to Hot Springs imparted a local feel to the relief project. WPA projects utilized local materials in construction when possible.¹⁹⁵

The stand-alone gymnasiums and auditoriums erected by the WPA underscored the importance of relief programs to local communities in the 1930s. Gymnasiums were added to older schools in substantial numbers. The high school in Thomas, for example, was in dire need of a gymnasium. The school team was known as "the dirt-floor cagers" because they practiced on a bare floor, and were only able to compete in facilities outside of town. In 1939, a WPA gymnasium addition provided the community with one of the better gyms in the county.¹⁹⁶ Virtually all of the federally-sponsored school improvement or construction projects described in a 1939 Federal Writers Project publication entitled *Schools and Their Builders*, include a gymnasium among other improvements such as plumbing and heating facilities.¹⁹⁷

Auditoriums, too, were a common addition to schools that would benefit the community. The WPA erected either stand-alone auditoriums as a school improvement, or would incorporate them as a central, even predominant, element when erecting a rural school. Harding County High School is one such example; in size, the auditorium appears to dominate the school. The entrance is centered between the school and auditorium, giving the community convenient access to the latter for events held there.



The plan of the colony "large" school—a combination of two one-room schools moved to the site.

WPA schoolbuilding projects nearly always included facilities deemed necessary for a well-rounded education in the public school, such as a gymnasium, auditorium, or both in combination. Given the sensitivity of the Roosevelt administration to charges that communist philosophy underlaid the federal relief effort, it is not surprising that the WPA emphasized the construction of gymnasiums and auditoriums—both community facilities important to the socialization of children.¹⁹⁸

The WPA sponsored 111 projects to effect school improvements in 69 towns. For rural schools, these federal relief efforts brought schoolhouses into conformity with approved state guidelines, including erecting privies conforming to a “model outhouse” plan.¹⁹⁹ This accelerated the improvement of the rural schools by providing communities with modern school buildings or additions.²⁰⁰ The Hudson Public School received a large WPA addition to the original 1894 building, greatly expanding classroom space and also providing an auditorium for the small town. Constructed of cast concrete and distinguished by subtle Art Deco details, the addition is a stylistic contrast to the original building, and illustrates two distinct eras of school design.

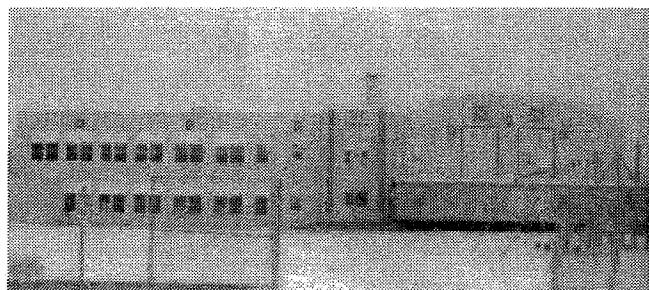
In the aftermath of the Great Depression of the 1930s, federal relief programs were instrumental in subsidizing new school construction across South Dakota. The former Rapid City High School, now the Dakota Middle School, is an excellent example. Standing four stories tall, the school was built using materials that spared no expense, such as Terrazzo and marble floors throughout. A two-story tall gym resides on the main floor, and a full auditorium, featuring a coffered ceiling, a full balcony, and a stage ornamented with terra cotta detailing, resides on the third floor. Occupying a full city block near the center of Rapid City, the school is a monument to the ambition

of the federal relief effort, particularly in city schools.

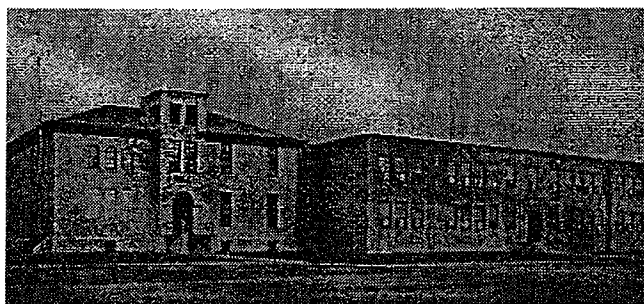
While thirty-two cities and towns received new schools, the WPA specifically targeted rural communities for school building. As rural areas were vulnerable to the unfortunate consequences of the depression, construction of these schools would not have been possible without the participation of federal aid programs. Relief programs provided assistance in erecting 43 rural schools, many designed according to the state’s standardization plans.²⁰¹ The Baltic Elementary School is an prime example; erected in 1940, it was designed according to the standardized plan and without ornamentation, a style that characterized the small-town WPA school. Its prosaic appearance was relieved only by the incorporation of Art Deco detailing around the entrance, and by the stylized “Baltic” banner. Incorporating Art Deco elements of the period was common in relief projects and emphasized modernity and progress as a counterpoint to the economic difficulties of the 1930s.

Occasionally, WPA designs employed architectural styles which departed significantly from the familiar appearance of the village school. The Kadoka Elementary School, otherwise unornamented, embraced minor elements of the “Mission style” in its facade, notably projecting through the roofline. Further, it featured an entry vestibule that emulated the adobe construction of the Southwestern United States. Harding County High School featured an American Indian motif throughout its otherwise spare exterior. Often, the designs of local architects were implemented, resulting in a familiar, if non-distinctive, building. The spare style prevalent in WPA projects was taken to an extreme with the Agar Consolidated School, which featured no decoration or styling whatever in its design.

Federal relief efforts extended to the Indian reservations as well, although modern motifs and exotic styles were rarely employed. One such school, at Inte-



Harding County High School, in Buffalo, South Dakota. The large auditorium is at right, the school at left. Notice the Native motifs employed in this WPA 1939 school.



The original Hudson Public School, at left, and the WPA addition at right. WPA auditorium is not visible.

rior, was condemned by school authorities and razed, replaced by one of the more ascetic structures observed throughout the state during a recent historic survey of schools.²⁰² Regarding interior efforts, however, an unusual example of WPA-sponsored interior artwork is found in the He Dog Consolidated School in Parmalee, on the Rosebud Reservation. Murals painted by James Black Horse were installed throughout the building in 1939, four years after the school was built. The murals illustrate various aspects of American Indian life, such as hunting and ceremonial rites, and distinguish the He Dog school among federal relief projects in South Dakota.

Several relief projects on the reservation are notable for their departure from conventional school design by employing unusual materials and construction methods for the 1930s. Indeed, in conjunction with the U.S. Indian department, three log schools were constructed for American Indians in Washabaugh county. In Wanblee, in Jackson County, one "rammed-earth" school was constructed using local clay, thereby employing local materials and vernacular construction techniques in the spirit of early school building on the Plains.²⁰³

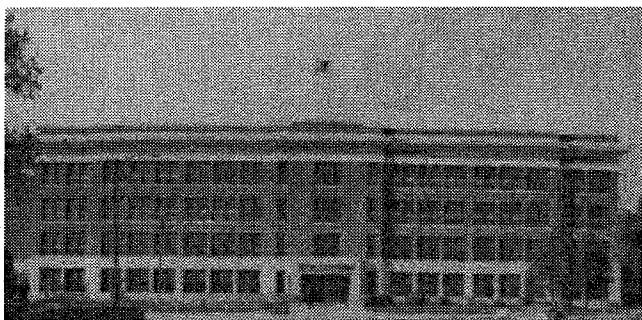
In bringing the modern school to small communities, New Deal era relief programs carried the state through the post-depression 1930s and the war years of the early 1940s. It was not until after World War II, during the administration of George T. Mickelson, that the state legislature committed substantial resources to the building of schools, authorizing \$8,500,000 for a long-range construction and maintenance program, as well as providing increases in salary for school personnel.²⁰⁴ By the time of the 1940s school building effort, however, the priority had shifted from improving the rural school to constructing only urban and village consolidated schools.²⁰⁵

Consolidation Strikes at the Notion of Community

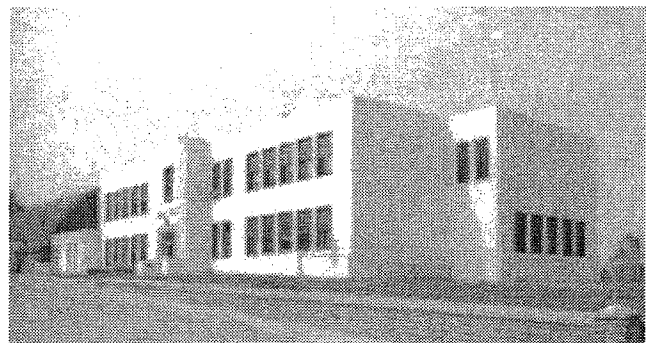
In the post-reform era the one-room schoolhouse, with its higher per-pupil costs, would collide with the apparent efficiency of the consolidated school. Inexpensive transportation of pupils to the village consolidated schools on a tuition basis served to undermine the practicality of the venerable rural school except in remote regions. The superior curriculum of the consolidated school offered greater opportunity while the maintenance needs of the many one-room schools in operation consumed operating funds. These factors dictated that consolidation would be the more practical policy for rural schools. Despite the costs involved in erecting new schools and providing transportation, the costs for educating rural pupils required a greater investment over time.²⁰⁶

Efficiencies realized through consolidation precipitated a steady decline in the number of operating small rural schools, which dropped in number from 4,731 in the 1931-1932 school year, to 2,775 during the 1953-1954 school year.²⁰⁷ Consolidation, then, resulted in the closure of a school which in earlier years, served as the focus of the rural community. School consolidation closely paralleled the farm consolidation movement as families moved to the village upon sale or lease of their farm. In this sense, both school and farm consolidation signaled a profound change in the rural social community. If, as has been observed, "the community with a school was a community with a future," then consolidation symbolized the potential demise of the school-centered rural community.

Certainly, school consolidation may have served to deepen the suspicion of rural residents regarding change in the social fabric of the Plains. This perception was especially prevalent in western regions of the state



The Dakota Middle School in Rapid City, South Dakota. Formerly the Rapid City High School. One of several large buildings on the site.



The WPA-erected Baltic Elementary School, in Baltic, South Dakota. Sparse ornamentation is contrasted with minor Art Deco detailing.

where the school was especially valued. Whether a grade school or high school, the school symbolized the social center of the community. All manner of social celebrations were hosted by the community school. "Parties, celebrations, debating societies, spelling bees, arithmetic contests, and dances 'called' by a local square dance caller kept the school house in use many nights of the week."²⁰⁸ These values were important to the rural community and were manifest in the resistance sometimes offered to the closure of the local school.

The chief barrier to the centralization of rural education has been local prejudice and pride. In many cases a true sentimental value has attached to "the little red school-house." Its praises have been, and orator and writer have expanded upon the glories of our common schools, until it is no wonder that their pitiful inadequacy has been overlooked by many of their patrons.²⁰⁹

Wary of relinquishing local control over the education to the remote consolidated school administration, the rural community experienced an additional uneasiness with an unfamiliar curriculum. Progressive curricula introduced into the consolidated school, which embraced areas of intellectual inquiry unfamiliar to the rural family, may have been perceived as threatening to community beliefs. This would account, in part, for the early reluctance of the northern Plains communities to abandon the one-teacher school for the consolidated school. In the 1931-32 school year in South Dakota, one-teacher schools accounted for 88.9% of all schools within the state, second only to North Dakota.²¹⁰ More importantly, South Dakota trailed far behind in terms of consolidated schools, with only 104 such schools operating, as compared to North Dakota's 462 in operation.²¹¹ This would seem to indicate, prior to the WPA relief construction program, a more grudging acceptance of consolidation in South Dakota.



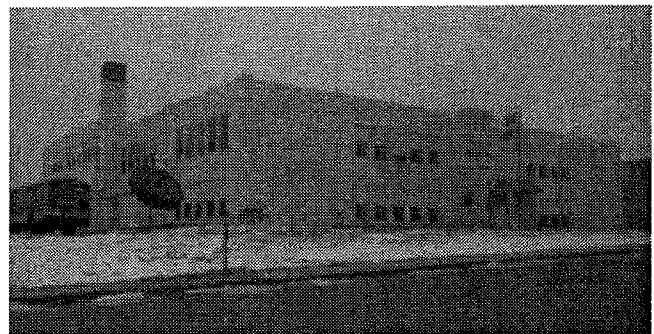
One of the many James Black Horse murals in the He Dog Consolidated School.

Although one-teacher schools continue to operate on the Plains, the consolidated school is today's rural school. Just as the one-room school provided a forum for the rural community of a century ago, so the gymnasium and auditorium of the consolidated school brought people together from the larger community for social events and athletic competitions. In size and centralization, these schools are memorials to efficiency and conservation of resources among rural communities suffering declining population. Schools that were operating at capacity a generation ago today may operate far under capacity. Such inefficiency greatly raises the per-pupil cost of education and encourages school closure.

The Preservation of Educational Resources

As aging school buildings are viewed in strictly functional terms, however, these historic structures will be purchased by a private buyer or razed, as schools have historically been, to accommodate notions of what the "modern" school should be. The loss of historic fabric through demolition is not the only challenge facing preservationists. The preservation of often large, dedicated structures depends on continued maintenance, particularly if the resource has fallen into disrepair. Often the department of education will reduce maintenance as the continued viability of the building is questioned in the context of budgetary priorities. At some point, the substantial financial investment necessary to reverse decline in a building the size of a school becomes considerable. For decades, upkeep was the responsibility of the district, drawing on tax revenue and contributions from the general fund. In most communities large-scale private investment is not available.

Adaptive reuse, however, may actually destroy the



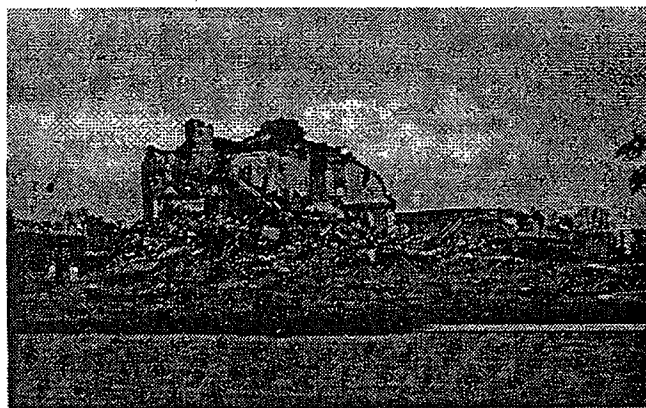
The Kadoka School, in Kadoka, South Dakota, exhibits a distinctly Southwestern influence, a style uncommon to the region but not in WPA-sponsored school buildings. The entry vestibule emulates adobe construction methods.

historic fabric and compromise historic integrity. For example, additions to the exterior such as siding will disqualify the resource from National Register eligibility. The greatest potential impact to historic school buildings as a group, however, is not posed by demolition or private reuse, but by the addition of additional structures.

As district needs change, the school will be expected to adapt. Usually this means constructing an addition, and in the process often compromising historic integrity. Some additions are sensitive to the historic context of the existing structure; indeed, some additions are all but unnoticeable. The Huron Middle and High School building, for example, consists of a high school erected in 1913, to which was added a junior high school building three years later—an addition all but impossible to discern. Other additions are distinctly noncontextual, but are attached in a way that does not compromise the integrity of the original, resulting in an interesting amalgam. Still other additions overwhelm the existing building by virtue of their size or placement. The 1938 Harrisburg school, for example, has been almost entirely surrounded by contiguous additions in 1973 and 1980.

Even worse, throughout the state, several examples exist in which the original, historic building is almost totally obscured by an addition. The Eureka High School, erected in 1927, is such an example; a WPA-sponsored addition was added in 1944 to the face of the building. Extensive interior remodeling was undertaken to accommodate an assembly room, a music room, and six classrooms.

As the needs within a given community change, of course, the schools will have to adapt. It is hoped that in the future, educational planners will consider the integrity of the existing buildings within an historic



A sight all-too-frequent in smaller towns as a result of consolidation.

preservation context when adapting existing buildings to new uses. The loss of historic schools at an increasing rate—often in villages where little significant historic fabric remains from an era of prosperity long ago—portends the eventual loss of important resources that illustrate the evolution of education in South Dakota.

The Moving Frontier of Education

On the state level, other political movements will impact education in the years to come. In a continuing effort to realize cost savings at the county level, county-consolidation is certain to accelerate. The larger, consolidated county would presumably have supervisory control over a larger educational area, thereby mandating further school consolidation. Toward this end, the South Dakota legislature has continued to employ incentives to encourage districts to consolidate.

Continuing advances in telecommunications and computing technology are changing the way educators and politicians conceive of education. While the school building has long been central to the debate over educational quality and equitable school funding, new theories of distance learning are raising questions regarding the delivery of education to children. Distance learning advocates see technology as liberating the disadvantaged pupil from the tyranny of the underfunded school, offering true equity in education. As a result, the school building itself may be destined to become marginalized in the debate over the future of education. Ironically, the village consolidated school may fall victim to efficiencies realized through technology.

Yet the image of the one-teacher school remains in the collective consciousness as a symbol of rural education,



The Huron Middle and High School, in Huron, South Dakota, exhibits virtually identical entrance towers, despite their being constructed three years apart.

representing the values of individualism, hard work, and a heritage of self-reliance. The few remaining operating one-teacher schools, servicing sparsely populated locales such as rural, Indian and Hutterite communities, still retain a sentimental appeal for rural residents. Throughout the northern Great Plains, the difficulties of rural life remain a vivid memory for many people as they identify their own personal beginnings with the one-room school, remembering with affection

the resourceful and idealistic rural teacher, for whom no subject, course or age was separated from its neighbors, and

with whom the day became an invitation to circles of experience, widening outward from the common room so that child, community, nature, books, and imagination were unified in an adventure of growing and learning.²¹²

Though the schoolhouse may sit along the section road, empty and decaying, it remains a symbol of the collective effort to establish, on the newly settled Plains, an institution for the community. In the "global" community of today there remains a place reserved for legacy of the one-room schoolhouse in a disappearing local community.



Endnotes

1. *100 Years in Grant County, South Dakota, 1878-1978* (Grant County Historical Society, 1979), 120.
2. Henry C. Morrison. *American Schools: A Critical Study of Our School System* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943), 9.
3. In the Southeast United States the parish has proved to be an enduring model, while midwestern and western lands function on a local district, township or county basis.
4. George Z. F. Bereday and Luigi Volpicelli. *Public Education in America* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), 38.
5. Andrew Gulliford. *America's Country Schools* (Niwot, Colo.: University Press of Colorado, 1996), 91.
6. Edwin Grant Dexter. *A History of Education in the United States* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1906), 98.
7. Hildegard Binder Johnson. *Order Upon the Land* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 45.
8. Dexter, *A History of Education*, 203-4.
9. Gulliford. *Country Schools*, 38.
10. Douglas Chittuck and James C. Schooler. "The Story of School Lands." Permanent School Fund in South Dakota and the Beadle Club (Aberdeen: NorthPlains Press, 1976), 54.
11. By several acts of congress, for all states admitted prior to 1848 a second section of land was previously reserved for school support. Dexter, *A History of Education*, 204.
12. Ralph V. Hankins. *SDEA: The First Seventy Five Years* (Pierre: State Publishing Co., 1958), 3.
13. Otto Strobel. "The Regional Education Service Area Unit in South Dakota." *Position Papers: Prepared for the Project Office in South Dakota*. Purdy, Ralph D., ed. (Lincoln: The Project Office, 1968), 3.
14. Herbert S. Schell. *History of South Dakota* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), 102.
15. Dexter, *A History of Education*, 121.
16. Hamlin County, 1878-1979. Hamlin Historical Committee. (The Committee, 1979), 54. Castlewood's second school term, 1883-1884, was conducted on the second floor of the Marshall building, above R. E. McKinley's retail store; *Mellette County, South Dakota, 1911-1961* (White River, S.D.: Mellette County Centennial Committee, 1961), 581.
17. Philip L. Brown. "Country School Buildings of Northeastern South Dakota." (Booklet, Pierre: Mountain Plains Library Association, 1981), 14. Brown suggests that rural schools were constructed with a temporary foundation so that the building could move to keep pace with population changes. Everett Dick. *The Sod House Frontier, 1854-1890* (Lincoln: Johnsen Publishing Company, 1954), 316; Dexter, *A History of Education in the United States*, 103.
18. Dick, *Sod House Frontier*, 319.
19. Dick, *Sod House Frontier*, 319.
20. *Brookings County History Book* (Brookings, S.D.: Brookings County History).
21. *History of Lake County* (Madison: Lake County History Book Committee of the Lake County Historical Society, 1995), 350.
22. Schell, *History of South Dakota*, 102.
23. Gulliford, *Country Schools*, 182.
24. John Martin Campbell. *The Prairie Schoolhouse*. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), plate 23.
25. Gulliford, *Country School Architecture*, 15.
26. Heidepriem, Scott. *Bring on the Pioneers!: History of Hand County, S.D.* (State Publishing, 1978.), 66.
27. Schroeder, Fred E. H. "Educational Legacy: One-Room Schoolhouses." *Historic Preservation*, Vol. 29 #3, July-September 1977 (Washington D.C.: National Trust for Historic Preservation), 6.
28. Handin County, 1878-1979, 54.
29. Charles D. Lewis. *The Rural Community and its Schools* (New York: American Book Company, 1937), 167.
30. Campbell, *The Prairie Schoolhouse*, plate 18.
31. Brown, "Country School Buildings," 20.
32. Gulliford, *Country Schools*, 174.
33. Lewis, *The Rural Community*, 44; Wayne E. Fuller. *One Room Schools of the Middle West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994), 111. The red schoolhouse derives its image from iron oxide pigment that was popularized for its application on barns in the nineteenth century. In the plains it was not used frequently on schoolhouses. Subsequent to 1870, when manufactured pigments made paint more affordable, often the rural school remained unpainted when funds for school support were in short supply. Although white lead-based paint was recommended in model school guidelines, whitewash was early favored as the least expensive option.
34. *History of Lincoln County*, 182.
35. *Hamlin County, 1878-1979*, 64.
36. Day County Superintendent Amos Barkees recommendations issued in 1885 included this suggestion. It apparently influenced many rural school designs, as the three-window design was prevalent on the Plains. According to Herbert S. Schell, writing in *History of South Dakota*, the rural electrification program made slow progress prior to World War II, with the first "R.E.A.-financed" line in operation in 1937. Only after World War II did rural electrification accelerate—no doubt leaving selected rural schools around the state without electricity well into the 1950s.
37. Fuller, *One Room Schools*, 20.
38. Brown, "Country School Buildings," I 0- IL.
39. *Brookings County History*, 203.
40. Gulliford, *Country Schools*, 276.
41. Betts, George Herbert. *New Ideas in Rural Schools* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1913), 16.
42. *Ibid.*, 2-3.
43. Scott Heidepriem, *Bring On the Pioneers!*, 69.
44. Schell, *History of South Dakota*, 309.
45. Brown, "Country School Buildings," 38. See for an analysis of rural vs. consolidated per-pupil costs.
46. Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940. Reprinted in Fuller, *One Room Schools*, 102.
47. Schell, *History of South Dakota*, 283.
48. Schell, *History of South Dakota*, 283.

49. Works, George Alan and Simon Lesser. *Rural America Today, Its Schools and Community Life* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1943), 17.
50. *Ibid.*, 25.
51. *Ibid.*, 25.
52. Fuller, *One-Room Schools*, 105.
53. Susan Peterson. "Holy Women and Housekeepers: Women Teachers on South Dakota Reservations, 1885-1910." *South Dakota History*, Vol.13 #3 (Pierre: State Publishing Company, 1983), 246.
54. Louis W. Rapeer, ed. *The Consolidated Rural School* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1920), 8.
55. Betts, *New Ideals*, 18.
56. Lewis, *The Rural Community*, 281. Reproduced are median salaries of teachers in "Various Types of Rural Schools and Cities of Different Populations" reproduced from Status of Teachers and Principals Employed in the Rural Schools. Bulletin #3 (U.S. Department of Education, 1932).
57. *Ibid.*, 58.
58. *Ibid.*, 130.
59. Schell, *History of South Dakota*, 382.
60. Scott Heidepriem, *Bring On the Pioneers!*, 71.
61. Betts, 10.
62. *Ibid.*, 14.
63. Rapeer, *The Consolidated Rural School*, 4.
64. Marion G. Kirkpatrick. *The Rural School From Within* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1917), 234.
65. Betts, *New Ideals*, 26.
66. Laura Woodworth-Ney. "The Diaries of a Day-School Teacher: Daily Realities on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, 1932-1942." *South Dakota History*, Vol. 24 # 3-4 (Pierre: State Publishing Company), 195.
67. From "The Job of the Secondary School," *Connecticut State Department of Education Bulletin 1941*, quoted in Merle A. Stoneman. *Supplementary Standards for the Small Twelve-grade School Building* (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Teachers College, 1939), 19-2.
68. Schroeder, "Educational Legacy: Rural One-room Schoolhouses," 4.
69. Rapeer, *The Consolidated Rural School*, 171.
70. Brown, "Country School Buildings," 14.
71. Gulliford, *Country Schools*, 19.
72. *American School Buildings*, 175. Quoting the Nebraska state school superintendent, from 1872.
73. Quoted in Long, *Desirable Physical Facilities*, 32.
74. *American School Buildings*, 17.
75. S. A. Challman. *The Rural School Plant* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1917), 21.
76. Brown, "Country School Buildings," II.
77. Eleventh Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, July 1910-June 1912. State of South Dakota (Aberdeen: News Printing Company, 1912), 151.
78. Brown, "Country School Buildings," 18.
79. Randolph Williams Sexton. *Schools, One of a Series* (New York: Architectural Book Publishing Co., 1939), 7.
80. *Eleventh Biennial Report*, 155.
81. *Ibid.*, 155.
82. *Report of Committee on School House Planning* (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1925), 88.
83. Brown, "Country School Buildings," 28.
84. Gulliford, *Country Schools*, 195; Brown, "Country School Buildings," 14.
85. Brown, "Country School Buildings," 29.
86. *Ibid.*, 25-27. According to an estimate therein, approximately one half of the schoolhouses representative of this style that remain in northeastern South Dakota were "clearly built according to one of the state plans."
87. *Ibid.*, 28.
88. Quoted in Frank McKinley Long, *Desirable Physical Facilities for an Activity Program* (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1933), 30.
89. *Hamlin County, 1878-1979*, 54.
90. *Ibid.*, 101.
91. Chittuck, "The Story of School Lands," 66.
92. Schell, *History of South Dakota*, 173.
93. Chittuk, "The Story of School Lands," 57.
94. Brown, "Country School Buildings," 10. In *History of South Dakota*, p. 174, Herbert Schell argues that given the abuses of homesteading on the frontier in the latter nineteenth century, homestead patents accounted for only 15% of land deeded by the U.S. Government to private individuals—the remainder being through Preemption legislation and the "commuted homestead."
95. Chittuck, "The Story of School Lands," 63.
96. Schell, *History of South Dakota*, 285.
97. Frank W. Cyr and Henry H. Linn. *Planning Rural Community School Buildings* (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1949), 4.
98. *Ibid.*, 45.
99. Brown, "Country School Buildings," 32.
100. Hankins, *SDEA*, 8.
101. Smith, Charles A. *A Comprehensive History of Minnehaha County, South Dakota* (Mitchell: Educator Supply Co., 1949), 241.
102. Brown, "Country School Buildings," 7.
103. *Brown County History*. Brown County Museum. Aberdeen: North Plains Press, 1980, 406.
104. Brown, "Country School Buildings," 32.
105. C. E. Rakestraw. *Training High School Youth for Employment* (Chicago: American Technical Society, 1947), 2.
106. Works, *Rural America Today*, 120.
107. *Ibid.*, 117.
108. Brown, "Country School Buildings," 32.
109. Robert Dodge Baldwin. *Financing Rural Education* (Stevens Point: Rural Service Press, 1927), 8 1.
110. Brown, "Country School Buildings," 32.
111. *History of Lake County*, 357. The Orland Consolidated school was razed in 1991.
112. Brown, "Country School Buildings," 33.
113. Baldwin, *Financing Rural Education*, 81.
114. Brown, "Country School Buildings," 34.
115. Tuition for students outside of a school district dates to prior to the twentieth century; *Hamlin County History* cites a tuition charged of \$1.00 per month for students attending Bryant schools from "outside the city."
116. Brown, "Country School Buildings," 38.
117. *Ibid.*, 33.
118. Brookings County History, 207.
119. *History of Lake County*, 361.
120. Schell, *History of South Dakota*, 283.
121. Lewis, *The Rural Community*, 57.

123. Works, *Rural America Today*, 14.
124. *American School Buildings*, 55.
125. Pat Engebretson et al. *A History of Butte County, South Dakota* (Dallas: Curtis Media Corp., 1989), 66.
126. Schell, *History of South Dakota*, 283. Farm tenancy had risen from 34.9% in 1920 to 44.6% in 1930.
127. *History of Lake County*, 360.
128. Lewis, *The Rural Community*, 178. See also Kirkpatrick, *The Rural School*, 256; Betts, *New Ideals*, 35; Harold Waldstein Fought. *The American Rural School: It's Characteristics, Its Future and Its Problems*. (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1912), 23; Rapeer, *The Consolidated Rural School*, 8; Morrison, *American Schools*, 272.
129. Mabel Carney. *Country Life and the Country School* (Chicago: Row, Peterson and Company, 1912), 147.
130. *Ibid.*, 146.
131. Long, *Desirable Physical Facilities*, 40.
132. Rapeer, *The Consolidated Rural School*, 169.
133. *Ibid.*, 171.
134. Bereday, *Public Education*, 40.
135. Roy Emerson Langfitt, Frank W. Cyr and N. William Newsom. *The Small High School at Work*. (New York: American Book Company, 1936), 21.
136. Bereday, *Public Education*, 147.
137. Langfitt, *Small High School at Work*, 21. Quoted from the "Regulations of the School Committee," in 1833, of the Boston English High School.
138. Bereday, *Public Education*, 42. Morrison, *American Schools*, 7 1.
139. Nancy Tystad Koupal, ed. "National Youth Administration." *South Dakota History*, Vol. 9 #2 (Pierre: State Publishing Company, 1979), 22.
140. Betts, *New Ideals*, 23.
141. Morrison, *American Schools*, 101.
142. Fuller, *One Room Schools*, 74.
143. Schell, *History of South Dakota*, 300.
144. Bereday, *Public Education*, 146.
145. *American School Buildings*. (Washington, D.C.: American Association of School Administrators, 1949), 15.
146. Gulliford, *Country Schools*, 93.
147. *Ibid.*, 81.
148. *Ibid.*, I 10.
149. Engebretson, *A History of Butte County*, 60.
150. Gulliford, *Country Schools*, I I 1.
151. *Ibid.*, I 10.
152. *Ibid.*, I 1 1.
153. Peterson, "Holy Women," 38.
154. Schell, *History of South Dakota*, 326
155. *Ibid.*, 325.
156. Peterson, "Holy Women" 247.
157. *Ibid.*, Peterson writes that the federal government "allocated rations and fifty dollars a year per child to the missionaries in return for their providing a curriculum that combined academic instruction with industrial training. Saint Francis Mission was such an enterprise when it opened in 1886."
158. *Ibid.*, 326.
159. Evelyn C. Adams. *American Indian Education* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1946), 51.
160. Dexter, *A History of Education in the United States*, 464.
161. *Brule County History*. Brule County Historical Society (Pukwana, S.D. : Brule County Historical Society, 1977).
162. Gulliford, *Country Schools*, 98.
163. Woodworth-Ney, *Day School Teacher*, 195.
164. Peterson, "Holy Women," 253.
165. Gulliford, *Country Schools*, 100.
166. Woodworth-Ney, *Day School Teacher*, 198.
167. Peterson, "Holy Women," 253.
168. Schell, *History of South Dakota*, 327.
169. Nancy Tystad Koupal. "Cheyenne River Reservation." *South Dakota History*, Vol. 10 #1 (Pierre: State Publishing Company, 1979), 21.
170. Quoted in Gulliford, *Country Schools*, 98.
171. Peterson, "Holy Women," 257.
172. Adams, *American Indian Education*, 7 1.
173. Caroline Hatton. "Western South Dakota's Country Schools" (Booklet, Pierre: Mountain Plains Library Association, 1981), 32. According to Susan Peterson, writing in "Holy Women," reservation day schools were reinstated in the 1930s under the Bureau of Indian Affairs Commissioner John Collier.
174. Victor Peters. *All Things Common: The Hutterian Way of Life* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1965), 31.
175. Mark W. Huenemann. "Hutterite Education as a Threat to Survival." *South Dakota History*, Vol. 7 #1 (Pierre: State Publishing Company, 1976), 16. Huenemann indicates that the assurances received from Grant by the Hutterites was questioned by Secretary of State Hamilton Fish, "who viewed them as going beyond the president's legal powers."
176. Schell, *History of South Dakota*, 117.
177. Lee Emerson Deets, *The Hutterites; A Study in Social Cohesion* (Gettysburg: Times and News Publishing Co., 1939), 18.
178. Huenemann, "Hutterite Education," 18.
179. Lee Emerson Deets, *The Hutterites*, 18..
180. Schell, *History of South Dakota*, 27 1.
181. Peters, *All Things Common*, 138.
182. Earl G. Boxa. *A Design for Educational Organization in South Dakota* (State of South Dakota Department of Public Instruction, 1968), 22. Legislation SB 130 mandated that all lands within South Dakota be placed in a 12 year accredited district.
183. Huenemann, "Hutterite Education," 20-21.
184. *Ibid.*, 21.
185. *Ibid.*, 21.
186. John W. Bennett. *The Hutterite Brethren: The Agricultural Economy and Social Organization of a Communal People* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967), 247.
187. Peters, *All Things Common*, 134.
188. *History of Lake County*, 350.
189. Hatton, "Western South Dakota's Country Schools," 45.
190. Kupl, "National Youth Administration," 133.
191. *History of Faulk County, South Dakota 1910-1982* (Faulk County Historical Society. Faulkton & Clark, SD: Moritz Publishers 1982), 467.
192. Schell, *History of South Dakota*, 293.
193. Kennedy, 3-4. Kennedy cited average construction costs of A-1 standard rural one-room schools as having been \$4,610, with the local district contributing 43% of the total cost.

194. Schell, 293.
195. Stoneman, *Supplementary Standards*, 169.
196. Hamlin County, 1878-1979, 57-8.
197. Kennedy, *Schools and Their Builders*, 7-20.
198. Richard Lowitt. *The New Deal and the West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 25.
199. Kennedy, *Schools and Their Builders*, 4. Kennedy includes a list of community schools that have been 'reconditioned' through WPA aid, as well as eleven counties in which rural schools have been improved.
200. Ibid.
201. Brown, "Country School Buildings," 31; M. A. Kennedy, et al. *Schools and Their Builders* (Federal Writers Project Publication. Mitchell: Works Progress Administra-

- tion, 1939), 4.
202. Kennedy, *Schools and Their Builders*, 17.
203. Ibid., 4-7.
204. Schell, *History of South Dakota*, 310.
205. Brown, "Country School Buildings," 8.
206. Kennedy, *Schools and Their Builders*, 38. Cited are the annual costs in 1951 for educating rural, and town and city pupils: \$255.33 and \$152.32, respectively
207. Fuller, *One Room Schools*, 119.
208. *History of Lincoln County*, 182.
209. Betts, *New Ideals*, 37.
210. Lewis, *The Rural Community*, 181.
211. Ibid., 181.
212. Schroeder, *Educational Legacy*, 9.

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