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THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN CANADIAN COUNTY, OKLAHOMA, 1889 TO 1958.

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THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN CANADIAN COUNTY, OKLAHOMA, 1889 TO 1958

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THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

IN CANADIAN COUNTY, OKLAHOMA, 1889 TO 1958

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THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN CANADIAN COUNTY, OKLAHOMA, 1889 TO 1958

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background and Need for the Study

In recent years there has been a revival of interest in all aspects of Oklahoma history. An obvious and excellent example of the way in which this revival of interest is shown is through an increase in the number of pioneer celebrations throughout the State. Also, many communities and cities are establishing pioneer celebrations as annual events as well as producing pioneer publications which give historical accounts of their locale. Even though editors of local newspapers are publishing pioneer editions with emphasis placed on pioneer customs and local history, very little thought is given and less written about the history of local school districts.

General histories of Oklahoma have been written about the origin and development of counties which interpret historically various aspects or related fields in education, but they do not give an account of the history of education

from the perspective of today. Perhaps this neglect is due to the upsurge of interest in areas of the past other than education, which were perceived as being more important.

On the other hand, much of the concern of educators and teachers today regarding such topics as school reorganization, rapid increase in enrollment, curriculum development, socio-economic conditions, and the habits and mores that pertain to the culture, do not allow educators and teachers time to spend inquiring into the origin and development of their school systems. Consequently, there is no available account of the history of schools for all counties in Oklahoma, one of which is Canadian County.

To capture the sweep and continuity of the history of education in the State would best begin with the history of education and school systems by county, which is an integral part of the history of education. The question as to what the events were and why they transpired as they did are important in understanding the growth and progress of education. A record of these events would facilitate interested persons in examining the situations and ideas influential in shaping the present educational status and school systems.

Statement of the Problem

This study was an attempt tc collect, examine, and present an account of the events and situations which influenced the origin and development of public schools in Canadian County, Oklahoma. More precisely, an effort was

made to determine as objectively as possible what historical evidence existed concerning education and educational practices, which had a bearing on the present educational status of Canadian County.

In a framework of the cultural and environmental background of the settlers of Canadian County, it was assumed that many pioneers were concerned about the education of their children; that the desirable tradition of educating children according to the American way of life was maintained and enhanced; and that economic forces contributed to the growth of the schools. In view of these assumptions this study was undertaken to test the hypothesis that events and situations did occur which indicated that pioneers of Canadian County were interested in educating their children and that they strived for more and better formal education.

This study was limited to a history of the larger schools of Canadian County, Oklahoma, mostly because there was little or no available information on the history of the smaller schools and a lack of reliable information about them. Canadian County was chosen since it was one of the first six counties to be organized and it was perhaps typical of "Old Oklahoma" counties. The question arose concerning the most appropriate date at which to begin the history. Since the first white settlers officially came to Oklahoma territory in Canadian County in 1889, it seemed appropriate to begin with that era.

Purpose of the Study

General histories of Oklahoma's schools have neglected the important factor of the rise of the schools at the district level which left a gap in the literature. Two research papers were written which had some bearing on this problem. A master's thesis by Dale[1] was limited to the history of the city schools of El Reno, Oklahoma, during the years of 1889 to 1914. A doctoral dissertation by Nunn[2] dealt with the schools of Oklahoma Territory to 1907 which covered such broad area that much detail was necessarily omitted. No studies of more recent date were found.

The purpose of this study was to trace the development of the larger schools in Canadian County from 1889, when the first settlers came, through the period of subscription schools to the establishment of the public schools, then to follow the development of these schools through 1957. This was intended to fill the gap in the literature.

Design of the Study

The date for this historical study were secured from both primary and secondary sources. The primary

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[1]Etta Dorothea Dale, "The First Quarter Century in El Reno Schools." Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1940.

[2]E. Sherman Nunn, "A History of Education in Oklahoma Territory." Unpublished Ed.D. dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1941.

sources were: Canadian County School Records, Newspapers, Oklahoma Governors' Reports, Oklahoma Statutes, State Superintendents' Reports, United States Statutes, and Interviews with Canadian County Pioneers. The secondary sources included: Doctoral Dissertations, Masters' Theses, Indian-Pioneer Papers, and Oklahoma Historical Works (general). The data were organized in chronological order by topic from the date of the first settlement.

The history may be roughly divided into four broad areas: (1) the Indian Era, before 1889, (2) the period of subscription schools and struggle for support of the early public schools, (3) the growth of the public schools, and (4) the further development of these schools. Since schools usually reflect the culture of an area, the settlement of Canadian county was included as background material in order to show the cultural aspects of the people who settled in that county.

Canadian county has passed through three economic periods; in each of which one type of economy has been dominant. Although these periods overlap, approximate dates can be given for the ending of one and the beginning of another. The first of the three periods, the Indian era, lasted until 1889, white settlement in the area being prohibited by law. In this period the range cattle industry was the main work. Next the period of agriculture was the dominant factor in the economy which lasted until about

1930. Since about the time of World War I, Canadian county has become more and more industrialized. At present many Canadian county people earn a major portion of their living in industry of some kind. The changing economy of the county is reflected by the changes in its schools.

Definition of Terms

Boomer: Homesteaders who announced their intention to forcibly settle the Oklahoma Lands without waiting for Congressional permission. Therefore, they were said to be booming the opening of the lands, and thus, became known as boomers.

Common Schools: "Common Schools" shall be construed to mean all of the schools of Oklahoma receiving aid from the State out of the common school fund.

Common School District: This is a legal description which ordinarily, though not necessarily, refers to a rural school offering instruction only in the elementary grades one through eight.

Consolidated School District: According to the law, those districts, which by reason of an election held for that purpose were organized from all or parts of two or more similar districts.

Course of Study: That which is taught as a course or subject or is included as the major part of a course or subject.

Curriculum: All the experiences of the child for which the school accepts responsibility.

Dependent District: All districts not independent are designated in this study as dependent regardless of any other description. The term "dependent," however, is only for the purpose of discrimination and is not a legal description of any type of district.

Independent District: An incorporated city of the first class, and each unincorporated town having a population of 1200 or more which maintained a four-year high school accredited for not less than sixteen units of work.

Joint District: This term may apply to any legal type of school district. Its only claim to this designation is that it lies in two or more adjacent counties.

Junior College: An institution of higher education with a curriculum covering two years of collegiate work (at least sixty semester hours, or the equivalent in year, term, or quarter credits) which is based upon and continues or supplements the work of secondary instruction as given in any accredited four-year high school.

Mandatory Laws: Those laws which state specifically that a school must obey these laws.

Oklahoma Lands: A region in the central part of Oklahoma which was not assigned to any tribe of Indians. Canadian county is part of this region.

"Old Oklahoma:" The land opened to white settlement

in 1889 at the first opening. Sometimes referred to as "Unassigned Lands" and "Oklahoma Lands."

Permissive Laws: Those laws which permit a school, at its own option, to obey these rules.

Principal: Any person other than a district superintendent of schools having supervisory or administrative authority over any school or school building having two or more teachers.

Public Schools: All free schools supported by public taxation consisting of elementary, secondary, and two years of junior college work.

Reorganization of Schools: The mandatory consolidation of small districts which were unable to maintain the required daily attendance.

Restrictive Laws: Laws which state specifically that a school shall not do a certain thing or follow a specified course of action.

Rural School: A school pertaining to the country or country life. Such districts had no city or town in their limits.

"Run": The first opening of the Oklahoma Lands, 1889, was by the race method. The first person to reach the claim was the legal owner, thereof.

Separate School: That school in any district of the race having the fewest number of children.

School District: Any area or territory comprising

a legal entity, whose sole purpose is that of providing free school education, whose boundary lines are a matter of public record, and the area of which constitutes a complete tax unit.

"Sooner": Some homeseekers were too impatient to wait for the legal time to enter the Oklahoma Lands. Settlers who entered the territory sooner than 12:00 o'clock noon on April 22, 1889, became known as "Sooners."

Subscription Schools: Schools supported wholly, or in part, by money given directly by the people of the community for the support of schools in their district. These schools received no tax money. Many, but not all, of these schools were private schools so they charged tuition.

Superintendent: The executive officer of the board of education and the administrative head of the school system of a district maintaining an accredited high school who held an administrative certificate recognized by the Territorial or State Board of Education.

Teacher: A person who held a proper certificate and devoted the time school was in session to classroom teaching.

Union Graded District: A type of school unit similar to that of a consolidated district and organized approximately in the same manner. The chief difference was in its administration. Instead of having all instruction in one central location, the buildings of the original districts could

be retained and instruction offered in each of them for grades one to six, inclusive. When this was the case, the central building was used only for the higher grades seven to twelve. Transportation was furnished in a consolidated district and could be furnished in a union graded district.

Since July 1, 1949, there has been no statutory authority for organization or existence of a consolidated school district or a union graded school district. All districts were known as either dependent or independent school districts. Interpretation of the law by the Attorney General (March 7, 1951) was needed, for in the designations mentioned above there was necessarily considerable overlapping. In other words, a district was designated by two or more terms. For example, a district could be at the same time consolidated, independent, and joint-consolidated depending upon the manner in which it was organized--independent for its attained educational level and its administration; and joint for its geographical location.

Schools, particularly in the beginning, reflect the life of the area in which they are located. The first part of this study, therefore, deals with the history of the settlement of the region as a whole.

CHAPTER II

SETTLEMENT OF CANADIAN COUNTY AREA

Canadian county is located slightly west of the center of the state of Oklahoma, its eastern boundary being some eight miles west of Oklahoma City. It has an area of 891 square miles, which lies in the region known as the Great Plains. The land is gently rolling from northwest to southeast with an average elevation of over 1300 feet above sea level. The Canadian and North Canadian rivers are its most important streams.[1] El Reno, which is the county seat, and Yukon are its largest towns.

The eastern one-half of Canadian county was opened to homestead settlement April 22, 1889. Its area at that time was about 470 square miles. That part of the western one-half which lies north of the Canadian River, containing about 320 square miles, was added when the Cheyenne and Arapaho land was opened April 19, 1892. On August 6, 1901, when the Wichita-Caddo country was opened for settlement, about 100 square miles lying south of the Canadian River

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[1]E. H. Smies, "Soil Survey of Canadian County, Oklahoma," U.S. Department of Agriculture Field Operations of the Bureau of Soils, 19th Report, 1917, 1399-1453.

was added to Canadian county. At the first two openings, which were by "Run," the land was secured by those who were swiftest; at the Wichita-Caddo opening the race was replaced by a plan of registration and drawing where the land went to those who drew the lucky numbers.

Just who were the first white people in the Canadian county area does not seem to be recorded. Three countries: Spain, France, and England were all claiming the same large expanse of land lying south and west of the Great Lakes as early as 1700. Spain and France based their claims on discovery and exploration and England on colonization. At that time this land, of which Canadian county is a small part, was known as Louisiana. In 1763, France, who had been defeated in her war with England, rather than lose Louisiana to her enemy let Spain have it.[2] In 1800, Spain returned the land to France. The French ruler, Napoleon, knowing that he could not hold Louisiana because of the great sea power of England, sold the entire Louisiana Territory to the United States for $15,000,000.[3]

The United States sent out exploring expeditions into Louisiana during the next several years. One of these expeditions, in 1820, traveled across Oklahoma on the divide between the Canadian and the North Canadian Rivers.

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[2]Victor E. Harlow, Oklahoma, Its Origins and Development (Oklahoma City: Harlow Publishing Co., 1955), 49.

[3]Joseph B. Thoburn and Isaac M. Holcomb, A History of Oklahoma (San Francisco: Doubleday & Co., 1908), 24.

This divide runs across Canadian county.[4]

Thomas Jefferson, in 1802, suggested setting aside a territory on the frontier and moving the Indians there. Intermittently over the years, other men, including President Andrew Jackson, approved Jefferson's suggestion which became the permanent policy of the Government by the Act of Congress of June 30, 1834. This Act made the Louisiana Territory into an Indian Territory.[5] Between 1820 and 1840 the Choctaws, Creeks, Cherokees, Chickasaws, and the Seminoles, which are known as the Five Civilized Tribes, were moved to Oklahoma.[6] In 1866, as a result of their activities in the Civil War, the Five Civilized Tribes were forced to sign treaties ceding a part of their lands to the United States, with the understanding that other Indians were to be located upon this ceded land.[7] Canadian county was a part of the lands purchased from the Creeks and the Seminoles. The Creeks were paid thirty cents an acre, while the Seminoles received fifteen cents an acre for the lands ceded to the United States.[8] From 1839 to 1889 Oklahoma was for the Indians alone: white settlement was forbidden by law.[9]

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[4]Ibid., 31.

[5]U.S., Statutes at Large, IV, 729.

[6]Edward Everett Dale and Morris L. Wardell, History of Oklahoma (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1948), 87.

[7]Ibid., 185.

[8]U.S., Statutes at Large, IV, 729.

[9]Dale and Wardell, Op. Cit., 75.

A United States treaty, in 1867, made with the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians, provided that these tribes were to settle on an agricultural reservation in the western part of Oklahoma and accept the civilization of the white Man. Education in the white man's school was one of the tools thought necessary in conferring civilization upon the Indian.

> Article VII. In order to insure the civilization of the tribes entering into this treaty, the necessity of education is admitted, especially by such of them as are or may be settled on said agricultural reservation, and they therefore, pledge themselves to compel their children male and female, between the ages of six and sixteen years, to attend school; and it is hereby made the duty of the agent for said Indians to see that this stipulation is strictly complied with; and the United States agrees that for every thirty children between said ages, who can be induced or compelled to attend school, a house shall be provided, and a teacher competent to teach the elementary branches of an English education shall be furnished, who will reside among said Indians, and faithfully discharge his or her duties as teacher. The provisions of this article to continue not less than twenty years.[10]

The Agency and School, both named Darlington in honor of Brinton Darlington, the first agent at the reservation, were located near the site of the present El Reno, in Canadian county, Oklahoma. Darlington school, which opened in 1871, was the first formal school in Canadian county, and the first teachers were Mr. and Mrs. Townsend.[11] In 1872, Darlington school had an enrollment of thirty-five pupils, most of whom were Arapahoes, as the Cheyennes were

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[10] U.S., Statutes at Large, XV, 595.

[11] John H. Seger, Early Days Among the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1924), 7.

opposed to the schools and the culture of the white man.[12] Both the Cheyenne and the Arapaho Indians were almost savages and any improvement in their mode of living and general behavior was welcomed by the agents. Since only a few of the adult Indians could read, the Indian agents found it difficult to communicate by written notice and to encourage them to send their children to school.[13] However, by 1890, there were 3,363 Indians at the Darlington Agency, which indicated that an interest was shown in education.[14] Although the agents were encouraged by the progress the Indians were making, seemingly some of the white people not connected with the school were critical of Indian education. One report, in 1890, argued that the civilization the Indian child learned in the school was a temporary thing, lasting only as long as the Indian was in school. This report included:

> To a stranger . . . it looked like a lot of time and money wasted, as the Indian, after some eleven years in a boarding school, at a cost of $1925, on returning to his tribe cast off his civilization, resumed the blanket and then Out-Indianed the worst Indian.[15]

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[12]Louise W. Cook, "The Printing Press in Oklahoma," The Oklahoma Almanac (Norman: Oklahoma Almanac, Inc., 1957), 45.

[13]Carolyn Thomas Foreman, Oklahoma Imprints (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1936), 267.

[14]U.S. Bureau of the Census, Eleventh Census of the United States: 1890, Report on Indians Taxed and not Taxed in the U.S., 542.

[15]Ibid., 543.

In spite of public opinion, Congress still considered education a necessity in the Indians' civilization as the Fiftieth Congress appropriated money to pay a physician, two teachers, two carpenters, one miller, two farmers, a blacksmith and an engineer. This appropriation was in addition to the amount of money necessary for food and clothing.[16]

Supplies for Darlington and nearby Fort Reno were hauled over the Chisholm Trail, which crossed the North Canadian River near the present town of Yukon.[17] This famous trail was also used by the Texas cattlemen who drove their cattle into Oklahoma and, when fat, on to market at the Kansas railroad town of Caldwell, which became the greatest open cattle market in the world.[18]

Since the cattlemen were grazing their herds in the Indian country and building fences there, the would-be homesteaders announced their intention of forcibly settling these lands, whereupon they became known as "Boomers," since they were said to be booming the settlement of the Oklahoma Lands.[19] In 1879, E. C. Boudinot, a well-known Cherokee,

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[16]U.S., Statutes at Large, XXV, Part 2, 987.

[17]Joseph B. Thoburn and Muriel H. Wright, Oklahoma, A History of the State and Its People (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., Inc., 1939), I, 411.

[18]Charles Evans, Lights on Oklahoma History (Oklahoma City: Harlow Publishing Co., 1926), 152.

[19]Edward Everett Dale, and Morris L. Wardell, History of Oklahoma (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1948), 222.

wrote an article for the Chicago Times in which he stated that he had discovered that several million acres of land in the Indian Territory were public domain and therefore subject to homestead entry. The leader of the boomers, Captain David L. Payne, organized colonies and made several attempts to settle the Oklahoma Lands, but his camps were broken up by the United States troops stationed at Fort Reno,[20] for the law prohibited the settlement of white people on these lands.[21] Morrison showed the existing need of the use of troops for the purpose . . . of patrolling Indian territory. . . . "The garrison's main job during the years from 1880 to 1885 was connected with keeping the boomers out of Oklahoma."[22]

In 1885, disagreements between the agency Indians and the cattlemen over the grazing of the latter's herds on the Indian lands caused the Indians to become restless. The agent asked President Cleveland for more troops to control these tribes. The President ordered all cattle removed from the reservation, discharged the agent, and placed an army officer in charge of the agency.[23] By this time, 1885,

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[20]Harlow, op. cit., 251.

[21]Edward Everett Dale and Jesse Lee Rader, Readings in Oklahoma History (Evanston: Row, Peterson and Co., 1930), 452.

[22]William Brown Morrison, Military Posts and Camps (Oklahoma City: Harlow Publishing Co., 1926), 150.

[23]Dale and Wardell, op. cit., 217.

except for the cattlemen, there was little opposition to the opening of the Oklahoma Lands.[24] But the Creek and the Seminole claimed that the land was for the use of other Indians rather than for settlement by white people.

In 1889, the Creeks and the Seminoles agreed to sell their remaining claims for the land to the United States, thus making the land public domain.[25] Before Congress adjourned on March 3, 1889, congressmen favoring the opening of Oklahoma made a concerted effort to get an Oklahoma bill passed. They accomplished this by attaching a rider to the Indian appropriation bill. The Indian appropriation bill with this rider passed on March 2, 1889, and it received the signature of President Cleveland only a few hours before his term expired.[26] President Harrison, shortly after his inauguration on March 4, 1889, issued a proclamation (March 23, 1889) declaring the exact time and manner in which the Oklahoma Lands would be opened to settlement.[27]

In summary, it seems that the history of Canadian county to 1889, is one of conflicting claims for the land. By the year 1700, three nations: France, Spain, and England were all claiming Louisiana. France and Spain based their

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[24] Ibid., 241.

[25] Dale and Rader, op. cit., 441.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

claims on discovery and exploration and England based hers on colonization. These nations gave little consideration to any Indian claims. After the Louisiana Purchase, in 1803, the claimants were the United States and the Indians. The Indian country was created and the Five Civilized Tribes were moved to Oklahoma. Darlington, a school and agency for the purpose of civilizing the wild Cheyenne-Arapaho Indians, was established in what is now Canadian county. Darlington school was the first formal school in Canadian county. Criticism of the Indian school indicates that criticism of the schools existed long ago, therefore, educators of today, while constantly trying to improve the schools, should be cognizant of the fact that criticism and evaluation will continue to remain throughout history.

The westward movement of the settlers caused partly by the search for new homes, the building of the railroads, and the desire of the ranchmen to get pasture for their herds complicated the problem of keeping Oklahoma for the Indians. Both the boomers and the cattlemen appeared to have entered the area illegally. In 1889, the United States purchased title to the Oklahoma Lands from the Creeks and the Seminoles thus making the land public domain and open to settlement by the white people. A rider to the Indian appropriation bill calling for the opening of Oklahoma passed Congress and received President Cleveland's signature just a few hours before his term expired. Subsequently,

President Harrison issued a proclamation stating that the lands would be opened for settlement at noon on April 22, 1889.

CHAPTER III

FORERUNNERS OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

When headlines had spread the news of the opening of Oklahoma Lands, hordes of land-hungry individuals camped on the borders of the area for a chance to obtain claims. Not only were there sooners, but boomers, some of whom felt that they should have been given preference in the selections of claims instead of having to take their chances with those who "entered the vineyard at the eleventh hour." "Farmers, miners, mechanics, gamblers--a motley array, desirable and undesirable--are ready to start," wrote one editor.[1] The one thing that these individuals had in common was the great desire for land. There was no pretense that any one was present for any reason than that of his own self-interest. When the signal was given, it was everyone for himself.[2]

There were so many colorful accounts of the "Run" that sometimes it was difficult to determine which ones were

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[1]Harper's Weekly, XXXIII, No. 1687 (April 20, 1889), 306-307.

[2]Ibid., No. 1691 (May 18, 1889), W. W. Howard, "The Rush to Oklahoma," 391-394.

true and which were merely Oklahoma tall tales. For example, one well-known story told of a slender young lad who, dressed as a girl, dashed across the line and got a good claim. The dozen men who were already there gallantly lifted their hats and rode away. Another tale declared that one man, in his haste to get a good homestead, fell into a shallow well which had been dug by some soldiers. He stayed there for several hours until a man who was hauling supplies and not making the run answered his yells and rescued him.[3] Consequently, it was by accident that he obtained a claim, if he did.

Troops patrolled the borders to keep the over-eager settlers from entering too soon, but many "sooners" evaded the soldiers. When the fastest race horses reached some of the best bottom lands, the "sooners" were already there.[4] One author gave the following account of the "Run."

> At 12:00 o'clock, noon, on the 22nd. day of April, 1889, the signal gun was fired that gave the people permission to hike over the line and get a home if they could beat the other fellow to it, and seeing a chance for future misery and privation, many people were on hand early to avoid the rush. A few days before the opening some of the more energetic fellows eluded the officers and had already made their selection. Later some were removed by the soldiers, some by the undertakers, and a few remain to this day.[5]

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[3]James S. Buchanan and Edward E. Dale, A History of Oklahoma, (New York: Row Peterson and Co., 1924), 206.

[4]Victor E. Harlow, Oklahoma, Its Origins and Development, (Oklahoma City: Harlow Publishing Co., 1955), 206.

[5]C. D. Foster, Foster's Comic History of Oklahoma (Oklahoma City: The Publishers Press, 1916), 57.

Imperfections in the laws caused trouble in Oklahoma. For example, the Act of March 2, 1889, which authorized the opening of Oklahoma, provided that applications for town lots were to be made through certain county officers. But since there were no counties--there were no county officers, therefore, nothing could be settled without further legislation. In the meantime, however, El Reno and Frisco, in what is now Canadian county, were flourishing. The land offices were directed to accept all applications for city lots, but they were to take no action on them.[6] Later, many suits were filed and the courts had to decide the cases. The decision of the courts in some of these suits may have given rise to stories, an example which follows:

This court action was between Ben Clark of El Reno and an Irishman. Both of these men claimed the same irregular strip of land lying next to the western boundary line, which later became part of El Reno, the county seat of Canadian county. The story goes that Clark won because he stepped over the line while the Irishman jumped; thus Clark had actually arrived on the claim while the Irishman was still in the air.[7]

Fortunately for El Reno, the period of turmoil over lot titles did not come until 1890 when El Reno was about

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[6]The Secretary of the Interior Report, 1889, I, vii.

[7]The Daily Oklahoman, April 22, 1909.

three years old, consequently, the city was able to continue her growth.[8] In looking back to 1889, El Reno's citizens reported that they could see the progress which was made.

As soon as the settlers got their claims filed, they began making their homes in the new country. They built houses of sod, logs, rough lumber, or any material which was available. Dugouts were common. Some people lived in tents or in their wagons for the first few months. As soon as the settlers finished building a shelter, they plowed a few acres of sod and planted a crop of some kind. Because the season was late, many pioneers planted turnips since the crop would mature before winter came. This limited the diet of many of the early settlers to turnips, cow peas, and wild game.[9]

While the homesteaders were working in their fields and on their buildings during the summer they undoubtedly did not realize the lack of schools. However, in the fall the homesteaders recalled that this was the season for school to convene in their former home territory, so they began to plan for the education of their children. Groups met and organized schools. These schools, called subscription schools, were aided by donations of the people of the community.[10] Rapid progress was indicated for all of the towns

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[8]Berlin B. Chapman, "The Founding of El Reno," Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. 34, (Spring, 1956), 79.

[9]C. B. Glasscock, Then Came Oil (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1938), 102.

[10]The Evening Gazette, November 11, 1889.

and many of the rural communities had subscription schools the first winter.[11]

It seemed possible that the building of schools was urged. The advantages of schools had been discussed and it was assumed that they would boost the growth of the towns as well as provide for the education of the children. The following item appeared in the Evening Gazette, an Oklahoma City newspaper, on August 30, 1889.

> Yesterday Guthrie advertised for bids for building a brick school house. Yesterday Oklahoma (city) voted against schools and school houses. Which will best further the interests of the rival cities?[12]

On September 5, 1889, the same newspaper published an item stating that the Oklahoma City graded schools would be opened on September 16, 1889. The tuition was to be $1.50 per month for the primary grades, $1.75 for the intermediate, $2.00 for the grammar, and $3.00 for the high-school grades.[13] Most of the early schools seem to have been subscription schools in which tuition was charged.

There is reason to believe that El Reno was trying to win over her rival cities with the extra inducement of a free school system, because of the following notice that appeared in the Evening Gazette for November 11, 1889:

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[11]Marion Tuttle Rock, Illustrated History of Oklahoma (Topeka: C. B. Hamilton & Son, 1880), 153.

[12]The Evening Gazette, August 30, 1889.

[13]Ibid., September 5, 1889.

El Reno

> The El Reno school board has employed Miss Ella Farnham, late of Lawrence, Kansas, to teach our public school which will be opened on next Monday morning week at 9:00 o'clock, in the Variety store building which will be finished and furnished for this purpose. All children between the ages of 7 and 16 years of age are invited to receive free tuition.[14]

Evidently the invitation was well received since the Evening Gazette, November 26, 1889, reported that:

El Reno

> The El Reno public school opened Monday morning of this week with Miss Ella Farnham, teacher. As it is the first term our people are exchanging mutual congratulations over the auspicious beginning. About 30 scholars are enrolled and others to be entered...Miss Farnham is not only capable of giving instruction, but possesses the tact to discipline her scholars.[15]

However, it appeared that the first El Reno school was a subscription school. Miss Iona DeBaum, a Canadian county pioneer teacher, reported that the funds for the support of this school were so limited that the plan was adopted for taxing every bachelor $5.00 in order to assist with the financing. There were thirty bachelors who were taxed.[16]

Meanwhile, Frisco also had a school, but perhaps it was having more difficulty in raising money. The Evening Gazette of December 2, 1889, reported that:

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[14] Ibid., November 11, 1889.

[15] The Evening Gazette, November 26, 1889.

[16] El Reno American, April 30, 1931.

Frisco

> Mr. Hadley desires us to state that all pupils who expect to attend his school next month must be prepared to pay cash in advance.[17]

The September 3, 1890, issue of the same newspaper contained the following:

Frisco

> This school district can show up over 125 children of school age. And to conduct a good and successful term of school two teachers will be needed.[18]

Again in the Evening Gazette of November 7, 1890, it was reported that:

Frisco

> The Frisco school began on Wednesday morning with about 60 pupils and the number has been increased to about 80. When the school is full there will be upwards of 100 pupils in attendance. Frisco will have a good school and Mr. and Mrs. Davisson prove teachers of the highest and most excellent standards.[19]

Some of the pioneer citizens of Canadian county recalled that most of the subscription schools, like the homes of the people, were very crude. Along the streams where there was timber, the schoolhouses were log cabins or frame shacks of rough cottonwood lumber. On the high prairies where no trees grew, the schoolhouses were made of large pieces of sod which were laid up like brick for walls and covered with poles and more sod for a roof. Sometimes

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[17] The Evening Gazette, December 2, 1889.

[18] Ibid., November 7, 1890.

[19] The Evening Gazette, November 7, 1890.

dugouts, a form of cave with poles covered with sod for a roof, were used as schoolbuildings.

Some of the instruction was given in the teachers' homes. At West Point, a rural school in Canadian county, the first classes were held in the one-room cottonwood shack of the teacher, Miss Tulle McCormick.[20] Miss Iona DeBaum taught school in her dugout home some three miles southeast of El Reno. The floor was of dirt and the school furniture was her table and chairs. She had five pupils.[21] The first school building in Yukon was one room of Miss Donna Taylor's two-room house, on a homestead of 160 acres which she was "holding down" for her mother, who was a teacher in the Darlington school.[22] This 160 acre homestead later formed one-half of the original townsite of Yukon.

Perhaps the first school at Frisco, as remembered by Birdie Stafford, will give a general idea of the subscription school in Canadian county. The first school at Frisco was a subscription school built of cottonwood logs. Slabs of wood (from the nearby sawmill) with pegs put in for legs were arranged around the wall and used as seats for

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[20]Miss Mabel Fry, Personal Interview, February 7, 1958. Miss Fry was a student in this school. She has taught many years in Canadian county and is at present the librarian at Yukon.

[21]Iona DeBaum, "Indian-Pioneer Papers," XXIV, 70. Unpublished. In Phillips Collection at University of Oklahoma. Also in Library of Oklahoma Historical Society at Oklahoma City.

[22]Mrs. Donna Taylor Westenberg, Personal letter to Miss Mabel Fry, February 14, 1956.

the older students. Backless benches in the center of the room served the younger children. The floor was of clay and it was sprinkled with water to keep down the dust. A rude table and chair for the teachers, and a wood-burning stove completed the "furnishings." There were no teaching aids such as maps, globes, or library books. The pupils used slates and either slate rags or their sleeves for cleaning the slates. Water for the school was carried from a neighbor's well and it was passed around to the children with everyone drinking from the same cup.[23] Since the school at Frisco was a city school, it was perhaps one of the better schools of the time. Undoubtedly, other city schools were no better.

According to the Norman Transcript of November 16, 1889, "Reno City has a permanently established public school,"[24] but some thirty days later, doubt was cast on the above statement. "Good school buildings are being erected in many portions of Oklahoma but at the best the school facilities here are poor as yet."[25] On March 15, 1890, "Report says the Rock Island railroad company intends to give Reno City the cold shoulder and build up a town at El Reno."[26] Since the Rock Island railroad company chose

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[23]Mrs. Birdie Shacklett Stafford, "Indian-Pioneer Papers," LXXXVI, 369-371.

[24]The Norman Transcript, November 16, 1889.

[25]The Norman Transcript, December 21, 1889.

[26]Ibid., March 15, 1890.

El Reno over Reno City for a station, Reno City became a ghost town and Reno City's "permanently" established school system as well as the town itself disappeared.

Since there was not a commonly adopted textbook for the schools, each child brought to school whatever books the family happened to own, and each child studied from his own books. These books were of many kinds with perhaps no two books alike, but even worse, the books were from different regions of the United States and probably carried different ideas.[27]

The differences in textbooks as well as the lack of teaching aids did not make for a well organized school. Records of the subjects taught in the small subscription schools are unavailable, but perhaps the curriculum consisted of whatever the teacher considered most important. In some communities such subjects as reading, writing, arithmetic, and spelling may have been about all that was offered, but in others, according to the memory of some pioneers, nature study was given an important place.[28]

One portion of a chronicle which was of paramount interest because it indicated the concern of homesteaders about schools, seemed important.

> The first settlers believed in education. Their school houses were rather humble structures...but

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[27]Mrs. Birdie Shacklett Stafford, "Indian-Pioneer Papers," LXXXVI, 369-371.

[28]Miss Mabel Fry, Personal Interview, February 7, 1958.

> they became the civic centers of the community. It was in these school houses, the settlers met for church, Sunday School, pie socials, literaries, and at these gatherings you can be sure there was always a full attendance.[29]

In summary, the events and situations reported indicate that Oklahoma Country was settled so quickly and so completely that the people had to adjust to each other rapidly. There were, of course, some disagreements over the ownership of land, with lawsuits which the courts settled, but many of the citizens were able to find a common interest in the education of their children. During the first winter all of the towns and many of the rural areas had subscription schools, most of which charged tuition. The schoolhouses, which were the only public buildings in many communities, became the community centers and were used for public meetings of all kinds.

The school buildings were inadequate and teaching aids were non-existent. The curriculum perhaps consisted of whatever the teacher considered most important. The teachers were homesteaders who taught for very small wages and in some communities they even furnished the building for the school.

The one fact which seems to stand out above all others is that the people wanted schools. Parents wanted education for their children and town boosters wanted schools

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[29]O. H. Richards, "Early Days in Day County," Chronicles of Oklahoma, XXVI, (Autumn, 1948). Mr. Richards was a homesteader of 1889.

as an added inducement with which to attract new settlers to their respective towns. This strong school sentiment could make itself felt in the laws which would be passed as soon as the country could be made into an organized territory.

CHAPTER IV

LEGISLATION ESTABLISHING PUBLIC SCHOOLS

At the time of the Run only two towns in Canadian county, Reno City and Frisco, had been platted, but the county grew rapidly and by the summer of 1889, another town, El Reno, had appeared and there were many small country stores and hamlets which hoped to become cities.[1] The occupants of the would-be cities were angry rivals for such things as the railroads, the county seat, and the big prize --the territorial capital. The three largest of these towns, El Reno, Reno City, and Frisco, had about the same population; and according to their respective fans, each would soon become the most important city in Oklahoma.

Meanwhile, the people realized the need for a government. Since Oklahoma Country was not yet an organized territory, there were no laws for carrying on business, protecting property, making wills, building roads, and establishing schools. Such problems increased the desire of the people for organized government and intensified the rivalry among the cities.

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[1]The El Reno American, April 25, 1935.

In May, 1889, the citizens of Guthrie, in what is now Logan county, had called a convention in an attempt to set up a temporary government immediately as they felt that the territory should not wait for Congress to meet. The towns of Canadian and other counties had opposed this plan as they feared that this provisional government would be approved by Congress when it met in the fall and consequently would give the capital to Guthrie. The towns opposing Guthrie's plan contended that such action (1) would delay the coming of territorial government, (2) would be expensive, and (3) was not necessary, since Congress would meet in regular session within a few months.[2]

On July 15, 1889, a non-partisan political convention met at Frisco to defeat Guthrie's plan. This assembly, which was supported by Oklahoma City and most of the territory except that part immediately surrounding Guthrie, adopted a resolution opposing the organization of a temporary territorial government. The Frisco Convention was an important event in the history of the entire territory, for it was at Frisco that the delegates from the different cities met and formed friendships which were far reaching in the future political history of the territory. One result of this convention was a memorial to Congress asking that Oklahoma be made into a territory as soon as possible.[3]

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[2]The Oklahoma Gazette, June 17, 1889.

[3]Dan W. Peery, "The First Two Years," Chronicles of Oklahoma, VII, 306ff.

When Congress met in the fall of 1889, Oklahoma delegates were in Washington armed with petitions and, after some five months, on May 2, 1890, the Organic Act was passed.

This Organic Act, which made Oklahoma into a territory, contained many important provisions. One major provision was that Oklahoma was divided into seven counties. Each county was designated by a number until its people could select a name for their respective counties as well as select the county seats. Canadian was County Number Four with its temporary county seat at El Reno. Another provision of the Organic Act contained the following:

> Sec. 15. That the legislative assembly of the Territory of Oklahoma shall hold its first session at Guthrie, in said Territory, at such time as the governor thereof shall appoint and direct; and at said first session, or as soon thereafter as they shall deem expedient, the governor and legislative assembly shall proceed to locate and establish the seat of the government for said Territory at such place as they may deem eligible, which place, however, shall thereafter be subject to be changed by the said governor and legislative assembly.[4]

President Harrison appointed George W. Steele, of Indiana, as Governor of Oklahoma Territory.

This appointment of an "outsider" as governor was a big disappointment to the politicians of Oklahoma. Both the Republicans and the Democrats had held meetings in which they had agreed that all offices, both executive and jucicial, should be filled by the appointment of actual residents

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[4]U. S. Statutes at Large, XXVI, 89.

of the Oklahoma Territory.[5]

There were other important provisions of the Organic Act:

> Sec. 18. That sections numbered sixteen and thirty-six in each township in said Territory shall be, and the same are hereby, reserved for the purpose of being applied to public schools in the State or States hereafter to be erected out of same.[6]

and

> Sec. 26....To be expended by the governor in temporary support and aid of common school education in said Territory, as soon as a system of public schools shall have been established by the legislative assembly, the sum of fifty thousand dollars.[7]

When the First Legislature met at Guthrie, August 27, 1890,[8] the first question considered was that of the location of the capital of the Territory, which question took so much time that school legislation and other important matters had to wait. Oklahoma City succeeded in getting a bill passed by both houses giving that City the capital, however, Governor Steele vetoed the bill.[9] Another bill, giving the capital to Kingfisher, met the same fate.[10] These vetoes increased the discord and prolonged the time spent on the capital question thus delaying the considera-

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[5]Dan W. Peery, "The First Two Years," Chronicles of Oklahoma, VII, 320-321.

[6]U. S. Statutes at Large, XXVI, 89.

[7]Ibid., 93.

[8]The Evening Gazette, September 1, 1890.

[9]Ibid., October 13, 1890.

[10]Ibid., November 24, 1890.

tion of educational and other important questions. Finally, the location of the capital was turned over to Congress and remained an unsettled issue in Oklahoma politics for some twenty years.

The First Territorial Legislature made provision for the establishment of the University of Oklahoma at Norman, the Agricultural and Mechanical College at Stillwater, and the Normal School at Edmond. (The nearness of these colleges to Canadian county would be an advantage to the citizens of that county.) A system of public education was instituted and was placed under the direction of a Territorial Board of Education composed of a Territorial superintendent of schools appointed by the governor, and seven county superintendents of schools elected by the people for a term of two years.

The duties of the territorial board of education as well as those of the county superintendents were defined by law. Some of the duties of the territorial board of education were: to have charge of the territorial common school system; to grant territorial certificates and diplomas; to prepare questions for use in the county teachers' examinations; and to supervise county normal institutes. The county superintendents were: to have general supervision of the schools at the county level, to visit each school at least once each term of six months, arrange and supervise the summer normal institute, hold quarterly teachers' examinations,

and grant certificates to the successful applicants of their respective counties.[11] City superintendents of schools for towns of more than 2500 population,[12] and township boards of education composed of five members (one from each of the four districts and a chairman selected at large) completed the supervisory system of the public schools.[13] The same Legislature also made provision for the financial support of the public schools of Oklahoma, as is shown by the following mandatory law;

> Article II. Sec. 2. The county commissioners shall at the time the annual taxes for the Territorial and county purposes are levied, levy on the taxable property of the county, a tax not to exceed one (1) per cent, which shall be collected as other taxes; and the money so realized, together with the proceeds of all moneys collected from fines, forfeitures, penalties, proceeds from the sale of estrays and from all moneys paid by persons as equivalent for exemption from military duty, and all moneys collected from marriage licenses, shall constitute a county school fund, and be appropriated exclusively for the purpose of establishing and supporting public schools for not less than three months nor more than nine months in each year, and defraying current expenses of the same, of every description; and said county school fund, shall be apportioned to each school township in said county in proportion to the number of children over the age of six and under the age of twenty-one years, resident therein as shown by the last annual enumeration of the same.[14]

and by the following permissive legislation:

> Article II. Sec. 3. At the regular annual school

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[11] Statutes of Oklahoma, 1890, LXXIX, art. 6 (5), (6399) 1126.

[12] Ibid., art. 7 (1), (6403) 1128.

[13] Ibid., art. 8 (1), (6405) 1129.

[14] Ibid., art II (2), (6435) 1135.

district election, electors of the district may vote school tax not to exceed one per cent for that year.[15]

But perhaps one of the more surprising laws passed by the First Legislature is the following:

> Art. I. Sec. 3. One high school in each township and one in each city of over 500 inhabitants may be established by a majority vote of the voters of said township or city: Provided, that no township or city funds shall be appropriated to the support of any high school until there be reserved therefrom funds sufficient to support the common and graded schools for a term of not less than nine months.[16]

This law in effect prohibited high schools for, since the land was not yet deeded to the settlers, no taxes could be levied on the homesteads, thus there was little money for any kind of schools.

One pioneer, E. E. Blake, related an incident which occurred in El Reno in which fines in Canadian county were used for the support of the schools. At the first term of the El Reno Court, twenty-seven of the saloon keepers, gamblers, and other law breakers were indicted. Someone had given them the idea that if they pleaded guilty they would be given a fine of $5.00 and their cases would be dismissed. They all entered a plea of "guilty." The District Judge, A. J. Seay, later governor, fined a wealthy gambling house proprietor $500.00 saying, "These fines will all go into the school fund. There is no other present resource, the Territory must have schools." The other culprits received smaller

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[15] Ibid., art. II (3), (6436) 1135.

[16] Ibid., art. I (3), (6355) 1118.

fines according to their ability to pay and the schools got the money.[17]

Another major concern at the latter part of the nineteenth century with respect to education was teacher certification. Standards, although not lacking, were undeveloped, and a relatively high premium was placed on summer school and teacher examinations. The Oklahoma Democrat, published in El Reno, gave the following account of the first Canadian county summer normal:

> Next Monday the first normal ever held in Canadian county will commence at El Reno. County Superintendent E. E. Wilson, assisted by Professor Hopkins has made great preparations for it. Judging from the numerous inquiries about board and lodging, it will be well attended, which assures its success beyond a doubt.[18]

The enrollment at this first term was 34 but, since 80 teaching certificates were granted, some applicants who were not enrolled in the summer normal took the examinations which were held on the last two days of the session. Certificates given were: three first-grade, sixteen second-grade, twenty-four third-grade, and thirty-seven temporary certificates.[19]

The requirements for certification were the following:

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[17]E. E. Blake, "The Ghost Dance," Oklahoma The Beautiful Land, 99.

[18]Oklahoma Democrat, August 1, 1891.

[19]First Biennial Report of the Territorial Superintendent, 1893, 16-17.

Article 4. Sec. 2. Certificates issued by the county superintendents shall be of three grades; first, second, and third, and shall continue in force respectively, three years, two years, and one year.[20]

Sec. 3. Certificates of the first grade shall certify that the person to whom issued is proficient in and fully qualified to teach orthography, reading, writing, English grammar, composition, geography, arithmetic, United States history, Constitution of the United States, book keeping, physiology and hygiene, the theory and practice of teaching, and the elements of natural philosophy, and shall not be issued to persons under twenty years of age, nor to such as have not taught successfully twelve school months: Provided, that persons who receive first grade certificates shall make a general average of not less than ninety per cent and in no case shall a person receive a certificate of the first grade who shall fall below seventy per cent in any one branch.

Sec. 4. Certificates of the second grade may be issued to persons of not less than eighteen years of age, who shall have taught successfully not less than three school months, and who shall fully satisfy the county superintendent as to their ability to teach all the branches prescribed for the first grade certificate except book keeping and the elements of natural philosophy: Provided, that persons who receive a second grade certificate shall make a general average of not less than eighty per cent, and in no case shall a person receive a second grade certificate who shall fall below sixty per cent in any one branch.

Sec. 5. Certificates of the third grade may be issued to persons not less than sixteen years of age, who shall have passed the same examination as required for a second grade certificate, except physiology and hygiene, constitution, and theory and practice of teaching, and make an average of not less than seventy per cent, and in no case shall a person receive a certificate of the third grade who shall fall below fifty per cent in any one branch and no third grade certificate shall be issued more than twice to the same person.[21]

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[20] Statutes of Oklahoma, 1890, LXXXIX. art. 4. sec. 2 (3). (6373) 1121.

[21] Ibid., Sec. 3, 4, and 5. (6374) (6375) (6376) 112.

> Sec. 6. The county superintendent upon request made in writing by the secretary of the township or city board and after satisfying himself by examination of the ability and proficiency of an applicant, may grant a temporary certificate in case of necessity, valid only in the designated township or city, and valid only until the next regular examination, nor shall such certificate be granted twice to the same applicant.[22]

The salary schedule for teachers was based on the grade of the certificate held: First-grade, $40 per month; second-grade $30; and $25 for the third-grade certificate and the temporary certificate.[23] Undoubtedly, the First Legislature recognized that these salaries were too low, but in spite of low salaries, the legislature passed a law in an attempt to enforce, at least, the payment of these low salaries:

> Art. 9. Sec. 10. Teachers' wages are hereby declared due and payable monthly. . . . That in case the warrants issued . . . (and) not paid for want of funds . . . shall bear interest at the rate of six per cent annum.[24]

Since teachers were not paid by check or cash, but rather issued warrants, many of them were unable to cash their warrants at face value. Consequently, they sacrificed their actual wages by accepting less money for their warrants in order that they could obtain some cash.[25]

Meanwhile, in 1891, the Territorial Board of Education carried out one of their relegated duties which was

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[22] Ibid., Sec. 6.

[23] Report of the Governor of Oklahoma, 1891, 10-14.

[24] Oklahoma Statutes, 1890, LXXXIX, Art. 9 (10) (6425) 1132.

[25] Oklahoma School Herald, October, 1893.

significant to the development of a sound educational system in Canadian county. They adopted the publications of the American Book Company for exclusive and uniform use in the public schools of Oklahoma for the following five years. The books were:

McGuffey's Revised Speller
McGuffey's Revised First Reader
McGuffey's Revised Second Reader
McGuffey's Revised Fourth Reader
McGuffey's Revised Fifth Reader
McGuffey's Revised Sixth Reader

Barnes' Elementary Geography
Barnes' Complete Geography
Barnes' General History
Barnes' U. S. History
Electric Physical Geography

Steele's Popular Physics
Steele's New Astronomy
Steele's Popular Chemistry
Steele's Physiology
White's School Registers
Harkness' Latin Composition
Harper and Burgess' Latin Method
Harper and Waters' Greek Method
Hadley's Elementary Greek Grammar
Johnson's Homer's Illiad (3 books)
Dana's New Text Book of Geology
Page's Theory and Practice
Ray's Plane and Solid Geometry
Ray's New Practical Arithmetic
Ray's New Intellectual Arithmetic
Ray's New Higher Arithmetic

Long's New Language Exercise, Part Two
Long's New Lessons in English
Harvey's Revised English Grammar
Pathfinder Physiologies, Nos. 1 and 2
Townsend's Civil Government
Kidd's New Elocution
Bain's Mental Science
Bryant and Stratton's H. S. Bookkeeping
Quackenbos' Composition and Rhetoric
Schuyler's Logic
Gray's Lessons in Botany
Holder's Elements of Zoology
Gregory's Political Economy

Jepson's Music Readers
Gow's Morals and Manners[26]

This textbook adoption, along with a graded course of study, had an enduring influence. The Governor of Oklahoma very early took cognizance of this:

> It has been the special effort of the Territorial Board of Education to improve the condition of the district school. To this end a graded course of study was prepared about four years ago, that the opportunity of the children to receive full benefit of the common school courses might be improved...For the institutes of 1898 a graded course of study was prepared and used in all the counties of the Territory.[27]

In summary, the people realized the need for laws and sent delegates to Washington to urge the organization of the Territory of Oklahoma. The Organic Act which was passed on May 2, 1890, contained provisions to help support the public schools. George W. Steele, of Indiana, was appointed as the first governor of Oklahoma Territory. The First Legislature which met at Guthrie on August 27, 1890, after wrangling for some time over the location of the capital finally made some provision for education. The University of Oklahoma, the Agricultural and Mechanical College, and the Normal School were all located advantageously for the residents of Canadian county. A system of public schools, with many detailed mandatory and permissive laws, was created. These early laws contributed much to the history of education in Canadian county.

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[26]Third Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1896, 3.

[27]Report of the Governor of Oklahoma, 1898, 8.

It appeared that the people were in favor of common schools (grades 1-8), but they were less concerned about a high school education for all children. The laws passed during this period seemed to suggest that at least some of the teachers were inexperienced, untrained, and possibly lacking in ambition for the law required that no third-grade certificate be issued more than twice to the same person. The poverty of the people may perhaps be inferred from the permissiveness of the law for voting an annual tax for district school support.

The first normal school held in Canadian county was at El Reno with an enrollment of 34 members. Teaching certificates were issued by the county superintendents and they were valid only in the one county where issued.

The Territorial Board of Education in 1891 adopted a uniform series of textbooks for exclusive use in the public schools of Oklahoma for the following five years, with the contract awarded to the American Book Company.

All of the problems of the schools were by no means solved as yet, for there was so little money to support education that high schools were in effect prohibited. A relatively basic clue to the financial condition of the school districts was the issuance of school warrants to teachers and many teachers found that they were unable to redeem these warrants at face value.

CHAPTER V

THE FIRST PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Since the First Legislature had made no provision for the voting of bonds for the erection of school buildings, the early public schools were conducted under conditions almost as unfavorable as those of the subscription schools. Governor Steele held that the $50,000 appropriation for school aid carried by the Organic Act should not be used for buildings, or for any other purpose except for that of teachers' salaries and the forms which the Secretary of the Territory needed in connection with the schools. At the end of the fiscal year, in 1891, there was a balance of $12,237 left over from the appropriation which was being held to pay teachers in those districts where no schools, or schools continuing less than full terms, had been held.[1]

Certain other factors might also be mentioned. The First Territorial Superintendent gave a rather contradictory account of the first teachers of the Territory:

> Teachers are moral and intellectual...many young and inexperienced professionally but determined to learn the best methods of teaching. Low wages and short

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[1] Report of the Governor of Oklahoma, 1891, 6.

> terms don't attract teachers from other states...rather remarkable that so many good teachers have located in the Territory.[2]

But not all of the teachers were of this class as the report continued:

> We have barnacles which have attached themselves to the professional force with whom it ought not to be weighted. We have so-called teachers who are too stingy to take a school journal and too indolent to read one, who will not attend teachers' associations or institutes, whose self-conceit is the biggest object in a contracted brain, whose pay in going through the mechanics of keeping school is what they draw from the county treasury, and not the consciousness of being an aider in the development of the child's mind and the former of a noble child character. The sooner we rid our schools of this class the better.[3]

The Territory was, "Not to be congratulated upon the school-houses" either, although, "Some districts were to be congratulated." These more provident districts had by private subscription built "comfortable and commodious" school buildings.[4] It is doubtful that many Canadian county school houses of these early years could be called either comfortable or commodious.

The first public schools in Canadian county under the Oklahoma Territorial Laws were established beginning in January, 1891. By June 30, 1891, Canadian county had established and maintained public schools in fifty-eight districts. The average salary for women teachers was $25.92

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[2]First Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Territory of Oklahoma, 1893, 7.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid.

and the average for men teachers was $29.17. Canadian county had 60 teachers working under this salary schedule in 1891.[5]

Something of the spirit, activity, and conditions in some of the rural schools of Canadian county during the first few years may be captured by an examination of the reports of pioneers. In 1891, the people of Banner community cut cottonwood logs, hauled the logs to a sawmill, had them made into rough boards and built a small rural school house. Everyone donated his labor.[6] Etta Dale, the first teacher of this school related that the building was a "little frame shack" which had cost a total of fifty dollars, not counting the donated labor.[7] Since there were no blackboards or furniture of any kind, the teacher and pupils brought chairs and boxes from home from which they made their own desks. Dale used a piece of black cloth for a blackboard. She related that "Teachers had to get a temporary certificate for teaching, and one of the requirements was to attend a normal school which lasted two weeks. Normal school work was just a review of eighth grade studies."[8] Dale had fifty-two pupils, "And they ranged from beginners to sophomores in high

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[5]Ibid., 16-17.

[6]Karl Borneman, "Indian-Pioneer Papers," IX, 413.

[7]Etta Dale, "Indian-Pioneer Papers," XXIII, 28.

[8]Etta Dale, Letter written to Mrs. John P. Hickman, Oklahoma The Beautiful Land, 284-285.

school." The financial condition of the school district was abominable, "My salary was $35.00 per month, and I was paid in warrants which had to be discounted 15%..."[9]

Sunnyside, another rural school, located six miles north and three miles east of El Reno was organized in 1891. The first term in the Sunnyside school was taught in a one-room sod house which was owned by Forrest Barrett. Both colored and white children attended this school; of the 26 children, 22 were white and four were colored. As remembered by one of the students, "The colored boys and girls went right to class with the others and no concern was shown."[10] Perhaps, this might have been the first account of racial (Negro) integration in the public schools of Oklahoma.

Iona DeBaum described the rural school at Rich Valley in Canadian county in which she taught in 1891. This school building was made of cottonwood logs and had six windows; but four of the windows were boarded up since the community could afford glass for only two of the windows.[11]

Another pioneer of this time was Anna Ratcliff Rowland. She attended a rural school in a sod building in the northeastern part of Canadian county, near the present town of Piedmont. After graduating from this "soddie" she taught her first term of school near Northville, west of El Reno,

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[9] Ibid.

[10] El Reno American, April 19, 1956.

[11] Iona DeBaum, "Indian-Pioneer Papers," XXIV, 72.

in a dugout. Rowland related, "My first school was taught in a dugout, built up with logs and a fireplace for heat. I killed several centipedes."[12] Rowland taught the next term in the sod building which she had attended as a child. She described the sod building and her experiences rather vividly in the poem, School Days which she wrote:

School Days

In pioneer days when Oklahoma was new
A home on every quarter (section) and children not a few
And school-teachers were scarce, who spared the rod
The men got together and built a house of sod,
Just twenty-eight feet long and fourteen wide
A shingle roof and three windows on a side.
In an old box stove, we burned cottonwood green
With the sap boiling out. 'Twas cold I ween.
We sat on benches, but desks we had none
With our books in our laps, we did our sums.
We had no floor, only solid ground.
'Twas a meeting place for the country round.
And a school for the children for many a day.
The years spent there were happy and gay.
A little later we had a few seats
And a floor of boards beneath our feet.
Our teachers were Taylor and Pickard and Sproat
And Goe and Bickford, naming in rote.
Mr. Goe was our favorite for lessons or fun
When we put on a program 'twas a jolly one.
We turned the blackboard down for a stage
Our plays and readings were quite a rage.
In this humble place came my first inspiration
To go to El Reno for a teacher's examination.
Mr. Goe said with a smile only his,
"Let's go together and take the quiz."
But lo! when the day to go came round
'Twas a bitter cold wind, snow covered the ground.
We were not disposed to sit and moan
We girls took the cart and went alone,
So we drove through the storm in an open cart
But knowing our mission, kept warm our heart.

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[12]Anna Ratcliff Rowland, Personal Letter to the writer, February 13, 1958. Mrs. Rowland is an aunt of Thelma Ratcliff, English teacher in Yukon High School at the present time.

We drove eighteen miles without any harm
But to please my father, stopped once to warm.
Two days we struggled with facts, verbs, and sums
And then the time of waiting comes.
In all due time the certificate came
And I was an authorized teacher in name.[13]

In the fall of 1891, the small community of West Point, near the present Yukon, built a sod school house and plastered the inside of the building with red clay. The west wall of the one-room building was painted black; this was used for the blackboard. Belle Talbot taught the first two terms in this sod school building.[14]

As shown by the above reports of pioneer teachers and students, Canadian county schools were inadequately housed, staffed, and supported. Apparently, because of these conditions the private schools had an opportunity to prosper for several years.

Conditions in the public schools improved after Congress, in 1894, transferred the school lands to the Territory and assigned the leasing of these lands to a school land board. This board was composed of the governor, the Secretary of the Territory, and the superintendent of public instruction, who were authorized to lease the lands under certain rules prescribed by the Secretary of the Interior.[15] The income from the leasing of these lands increased from

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[13] Ibid.

[14] Mabel Fry, Personal Interview, February 7, 1958.

[15] Report of the Governor of Oklahoma, 1900, 23.

year to year, and this money became a significant source of revenue for the public schools. The Second Legislature passed laws allowing the districts to vote bonds for the construction of buildings for school purposes.[16]

The impetus and evolution of education in Canadian county can be shown best, perhaps, by giving a more detailed account of the two major schools, El Reno and Yukon. The records for these schools were more complete and more information about them was available. An account of each will be presented in turn.

El Reno

The first public school in El Reno, under the Territorial law began on January 19, 1891. The first teachers in this school were the Principal, S. N. Hopkins, at a salary of $50 per month, and Rosalie Minnis at a salary of $30 per month. The records did not show the length of the school term, but a list of warrants issued from September to June, 1891, suggested that the school term continued until June.[17]

In August, 1891, Hopkins was re-elected as principal with an increase in salary of $65 per month, and Sarah C. Davisson and Anna Riley were employed as teachers at a salary

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[16] Ibid., 10.

[17] Etta Dorothea Dale, "The First Quarter Century in the El Reno Schools," Unpublished master's thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1940, 14.

of $40 per month.[18] The monthly report for El Reno schools published in December of 1891 showed an enrollment of 166 pupils.[19]

The opening of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Country, in April, 1892, caused an increase in the school enrollment at El Reno. Since the eastern boundary of the land to be opened was near El Reno, families gathered in the town to await the opening date. The children of these families were enrolled in the schools and swelled the school population to such an extent that one teacher made this announcement in an El Reno newspaper:

> To the Patrons of the El Reno Schools, Primary Department: I now have on roll 108 pupils, and often have a daily attendance of 78 or 80. This is more than I can do justice to, and respectfully ask that you urge the Board of Education to employ another teacher. You are not only losing valuable time, but doing an injustice to pupils as well. It creates in the pupils a dislike for school, and is also injurious to health. I ask you to come and inspect the work of the school and you will be convinced.
>
> Anna Riley, Teacher[20]

This notice could have been the major source of influence for the Board of Education to rent another building and to hire another teacher in February, 1892.[21]

New settlers moving into El Reno rented all of the

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[18]Ibid., 15.

[19]Ibid., 18.

[20]Oklahoma Democrat, January 19, 1892.

[21]Etta Dorothea Dale, "The First Quarter Century in El Reno Schools," 20.

available buildings for living quarters, consequently the El Reno Board of Education in September, 1892, was unable to acquire extra rooms for the school classes. School buildings had to be built, and the fall school term was delayed until the buildings could be completed. Thus, El Reno had no public school classes during the fall of 1892. When the buildings were completed other teachers, including a Negro teacher, F. S. Oliver, were employed and this increased the number of faculty members to seven. Each of the teachers was paid $40 per month and Hopkins, now superintendent, was paid $75 per month.[22]

Superintendent S. N. Hopkins made a report in January, 1894, which showed a pupil enrollment of 500 and a faculty of ten in the El Reno schools.[23] El Reno voted $14,000 in bonds and the Board of Education let a contract for another schoolhouse in 1894.[24] The Oklahoma School Herald reported that the new Irving school at El Reno was "One of the most substantial, neat, and convenient school buildings we have seen in the Territory. . . . There is no waste space."[25] Not only was there no waste space; there was not enough space. One editor commented, "Six grades will be consigned to the old rookeries. Another and larger building than the

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[22] Ibid., 28.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Oklahoma School Herald, February, 1894, 7.

[25] Ibid., July, 1898, 14.

one just completed will be built next year."[26] By 1901, there was an enrollment of 829 and a faculty of 18 teachers in the El Reno Schools.[27]

The El Reno Public Schools Course of Study for 1903 is perhaps an example of the academic rules and regulations of the schools of Canadian county for the same period. The teachers were told to "By means of objects, lead the pupils to discover the number of pints in a quart, quarts in a gallon, and feet in a yard." Some of the materials thought necessary for a first grade arithmetic class were: inch sticks, square inch blocks, and cubic inch blocks. These objects were to be in varied colors in order to secure the interest of the child.[28]

In the first grade reading classes the teachers were to use the word, sentence, and "phonic" method with Baldwin's Primer as the text. The children were to memorize several poems. All writing was to be in the vertical style, and the children were to use both slates and the blackboard.[29]

Also, the course of study gave detailed requirements which a teacher in the El Reno Schools in 1903 must meet: (1) The teacher must be at least twenty years old, (2) must

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[26]Canadian Republican, March 6, 1896.

[27]Etta Dorothea Dale, "The First Quarter Century in El Reno Schools," 77.

[28]El Reno Public Schools Course of Study, 1903, 3. In Archives, University of Oklahoma.

[29]Ibid., 5.

have completed studies equivalent to the first three years of the El Reno high school, (3) must have had at least twenty months successful teaching experience, and (4) all regular teachers employed thereafter in the high school must have the equivalent of a college education.[30]

Teachers were required to be in their respective rooms thirty minutes before the time of the opening of the forenoon session; and any teacher who failed to comply with this rule was required to file with the superintendent a written statement setting forth the number of minutes tardy and the reason. The superintendent was permitted to excuse the teacher's tardiness if the reasons given were satisfactory.[31]

The teacher was required to attend all teachers' meetings and there was a penalty if she failed to do this. For each unexcused absence one-half day of pay was deducted. No excuse for non-attendance was accepted other than that which would justify absence from the school day. All excuses were to be presented in writing and signed by the president of the board of education and the superintendent of schools.[32]

No mention was made of any compulsory attendance law. Children were <u>permitted</u> to attend school if they were

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[30] <u>Ibid</u>., 53.

[31] <u>Ibid</u>., 54.

[32] <u>Ibid</u>., 56.

within three months of six years of age at the beginning of the term. In case of doubt concerning the age of the child the parent was required to make a written affidavit. Non-residents were required to pay $1.50 per month tuition, in advance. Pupils, if absent three half-days without written excuse could be dismissed from school. Pupils were not allowed to "Collect around the school buildings before the first bell rings," nor were they allowed to remain on the school grounds during the noon hour without the permission of the teacher. Any pupil might be expelled if his presence became a detriment to the school.[33]

Other rules for the El Reno schools were: School would begin on the second Monday in September and continue for thirty-six weeks; the school hours for the elementary grades would be from 9:00 A.M. to 12:00 noon and from 1:15 P.M. to 4:15 P.M., except for the first grade which would be dismissed at 4:00 P.M. The school hours for the high school would be from 8:40 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. with the same noon hour as that of the elementary school.[34]

Yukon

But not all of the educational progress in Canadian county was confined to El Reno. Another town, Yukon, was growing. In 1891, A. N. Spencer, a contractor for the Choctaw, Oklahoma, and the Gulf Railway Company had made

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[33] Ibid., 57-58. [34] Ibid., 59.

an agreement with Minnie Taylor and Luther Morrison, owners of the original townsite to bring the railroad through their homesteads and to survey the land for a townsite in exchange for one-half of the town lots.[35] This was done and the town of Yukon was born.

Yukon's first public school classes under the Territorial laws, were taught in the South Methodist Church and a small frame building located on the corner of Fifth and Elm Streets, the present site of the post office.[36] By January, 1893, Yukon was, according to one editor, "One of the rapidly growing towns on the Choctaw Road and is ambitious for a good school system including a college."[37] Meanwhile, school meetings were being held to plan and work for a brick or stone building for a college; and the editor of the Yukon Weekly stated that "Nothing contributes so much to the prosperity . . . of a town as good schools."[38]

In the school year of 1894-1895, Yukon had two teachers, Dora Hall and Nellie Pickard, and an enrollment of 122 in the Yukon public schools. The names and also the grades of the students were published in the local newspaper, in a monthly school report. The grades, seemingly in per

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[35] El Reno American, April 25, 1935.

[36] Emma Ellison, Personal Interview, May 13, 1954. Ellison was one of the first graduates of Yukon high school.

[37] Oklahoma School Herald, I, January, 1893, 7.

[38] Yukon Weekly, July 26, 1894.

cent, ranged from 71% to 100% in school work and from 40% to 100% in deportment.[39]

Despite the interest in education a shortage of school funds caused the Yukon public schools to close in March, 1895. (Little of the land in Canadian county was deeded to the settlers as yet and therefore it was not subject to taxation.) Grace Spencer announced in the weekly newspaper that she would teach a private school in South Methodist Church beginning on April 1, 1895.[40]

The condition of the school buildings which Yukon was using at this time may be inferred from the open letter from the president of the Board of Education published in the Yukon Weekly. "Schoolhouse, or no schoolhouse . . . or shall we continue the same as in the past and keep our school in the same old building, not fit for any child to sit in . . ."[41] The rent for two buildings had cost $171.20 for a six months term, and the above letter continued, "Why not use this rent for other purposes?"[42]

Undoubtedly, the open letter stimulated action for in the following week's issue of the Yukon Weekly, it was stated that Yukon would have a new school building. At the election only two votes had been cast against bonding the

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[39] Ibid., March 8, 1895.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid., July 4, 1895.

[42] Ibid.

district for $4,900 for the schools; work was to begin at once.[43] When the fall term of the Yukon schools began on September 16, 1895, there were three teachers employed and over 100 children were enrolled.[44]

In January, 1896, issue of the Oklahoma School Herald an article stated that the new brick school building at Yukon was "one that the citizens can well feel proud of." The building was furnished with "modern automatic folding seats" and with Olmstead's Artificial Slate Blackboards and venetian blinds. In charge of the schools were Rust and three other teachers, along with a new teacher recently hired.[45]

In September of 1897, the public schools of Yukon began with John Davis as principal and teacher of the high school; and Myrtle Irwin, Ruth Perry, and Mettie Phillips, as teachers in the grade school. Besides the regular eight grades of school work, it was announced, there would be a high school course of three years preparing for the "Territorial institutions of learning," and "Special arrangements will be made for pupils who have been irregular in previous work."[46] (The offering of high school work had been made possible by the passage of a Territorial law in 1895 per-

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[43] Ibid., July 11, 1895.

[44] Ibid., September 19, 1895.

[45] Oklahoma School Herald, February, 1896, 12.

[46] The Yukon Weekly, August 26, 1897.

mitting the union of several districts to establish a high school. The Yukon schools had been organized under this law.)[47]

Perhaps aided by the new building and the high school courses, Yukon's enrollment continued to grow. By 1899, there was an eight-month's school term set up in the budget. The expenses of the previous school year which amounted to $1163.79 had been met, and the Yukon District, "Will soon be in good condition financially," reported the Oklahoma School Herald.[48]

In contrast to the report which appeared in the Oklahoma School Herald, Emma Ellison, a student at Yukon at that time, in 1901, reported that Yukon had, "No room, money, teachers, or time for high school work." There were in that year three girls: Lela Russell, Manone Glotfelter, and Emma Ellison needing high school courses. The girls, "Prevailed upon the superintendent of the Yukon schools, F. M. Sanger, and his wife, Winnie Sanger, to teach them high school work after regular school hours."[49] They attended classes from 4:00 P.M. to 6:00 P.M. each paying $3.33 per month. These three girls, in 1904, became Yukon's first graduating class. Emma Ellison recalled that the graduation exercises were

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[47] Ibid., July 25, 1895.

[48] Oklahoma School Herald, July 1899, 13.

[49] Yukon Sun, May 13, 1954. F. M. Sanger and his wife Winnie Sanger were studying medicine during this time; both later became Doctors of Medicine. Sanger House at the University of Oklahoma was named in honor of Dr. Winnie Sanger.

held in the Spencer Opera House (which now houses the Yukon Sun newspaper) with the girls wearing long white organdy dresses with full skirts. All three of these first graduates later taught in the Yukon schools, where Emma Ellison taught for 39 years, until her retirement.[50]

In summary, the First Legislature failed to pass laws allowing school districts to vote bonds and because of lack of money to support the schools they were in a deplorable condition for the first few years of Oklahoma Territory's existence. However, private schools continued to prosper for several years. The Second Legislature enacted laws allowing the districts to vote building bonds, subsequently the towns and some of the rural districts were able to build school buildings.

The influx of people waiting for the lands of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians to be opened caused El Reno's schools to become overcrowded. This opening, in April, 1892, created such a demand for housing in El Reno that there were no buildings available for housing the schools in the fall of 1892, consequently, El Reno had no public schools that fall.

In 1894, school bonds were voted for the first brick school building in El Reno. Enrollment in El Reno's schools continued to grow rapidly and by 1901 the enrollment had reached 829 pupils and 18 teachers.

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[50] Ibid.

Yukon, founded in 1891, used a small frame building and a rented church building for the first public schools. As late as 1895, Yukon was using makeshift buildings for school classes and was unable to provide for a school term of longer than six months. Many homesteads were not yet deeded to the settlers and were therefore not subject to taxation. In 1895, Yukon took advantage of a new law allowing the union of several school districts for the purpose of offering high school work. Yukon, in 1895, voted $4,900 bonds for the first brick school building and by 1897 Yukon was offering three years of high school work. The financial condition of the district was still inadequate, however, according to one of the first Yukon high school graduates, the high school courses were not being offered in 1901. (The lack of sufficient money in turn caused lack of buildings and teachers.) The first graduating class of the Yukon high school (1904) consisted of three girls, all of whom later taught in the Yukon schools.

The El Reno Public Schools Course of Study of 1903 gave a general idea of the requirements and rules of the schools of Canadian county at that time. Although schools were making progress, they were still very inadequate.

CHAPTER VI

EARLY DEVELOPMENT IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

By the early 1900's Canadian county was becoming prosperous. El Reno, now the county seat, claimed a population of 10,000 along with "Schools, churches, a library, public buildings, electric lights, and all of the comforts and refinements of civilization."[1] The county had three railroads: the Rock Island Road, running north and south; the Choctaw Branch of the Rock Island system, running east and west; and the St. Louis, El Reno, and Western, in operation between Guthrie and El Reno.[2] The increased prosperity of the area had its effect on the schools, which was shown not only in more adequate buildings and equipment, but also in the number and variety of courses being offered in the schools.

In looking back to 1890, it was fairly obvious that the people were very interested in what was to be taught in their public schools. The First Legislature passed a mandatory law setting forth the curriculum offerings at that time:

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[1] The El Reno American News, May 5, 1904.

[2] Ibid., June 23, 1904.

> Art. I, Sec. 5. The common school course shall include orthography, penmanship, reading, arithmetic, geography, English language, United States history and constitution, Physiology and hygiene, and such other branches as the township and city boards may direct: Provided, that the school course enumerated in this section shall be taught in the English language only.[3]

A restrictive law passed by the same Legislature read:

> Art. I, Sec. 6. No sectarian doctrine, or religious doctrine shall be taught or inculcated in any of the public schools of the Territory; but nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit the reading of the Holy Scriptures.[4]

The legislatures continued to pass laws regarding the curriculum. An Act of March 10, 1899, required the district school boards to provide a library fund for the purpose of purchasing books and periodicals; and an Act of March 16, 1903, authorized city schools to levy a tax of two mills for a library fund.[5]

Curriculum construction up to about 1900 had consisted mostly of course of study building. The aims to be achieved were skills and a trained disciplined mind. The inclusion of certain subjects was justified on the grounds that these subjects "developed" the mind. Since psychological research on the transfer of training had brought forth new concepts about the learning process, more stress was being placed on social usage as a basis for selection of sub-

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[3]Statutes of Oklahoma, 1890, LXXIX, Art. 1, Sec. 5. (6357) 1118.

[4]Ibid., Sec. 6. (6358) 1119.

[5]E. E. Dale and M. L. Wardell, History of Oklahoma (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1948), 469.

ject matter. The children's activities, needs, and interests were becoming the dominating influence in the courses being offered. Even physical education was becoming popular:

> On Christmas afternoon there will be a matched game of football between the El Reno Athletic Association eleven and a team from Fort Reno composed of soldiers. A stake of $300.00 is the prize, $150.00 to a side. Uncle Sam's men put up their coin and an El Reno business man put up the coin for the home team.[6]

The interest in athletics became so great by 1906, that another athletic team was formulated. "A State high school basketball team is being organized composed of two players from Shawnee, and one each from Kingfisher, Oklahoma City, and El Reno."[7]

English was being stressed in the El Reno schools and regular weekly compositions were being required of all the pupils from the second through the twelfth grade. The teachers furnished the outlines for the compositions.[8] The rural schools were also emphasizing the language arts.

Many rural schools were engaging in debate through the Literary Societies which met in the school houses. The questions used in these debates were those mostly concerned with government problems:

> Literary and debate last Friday night was well attended, the question debated was, "Resolved that the United States should not have built the Panama Canal."

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[6]El Reno American News, December 22, 1904.

[7]El Reno American, November 22, 1906.

[8]Sixth Biennial Report of the Territorial Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1904, 90.

> It was decided in favor of the negative. The question next Friday night is, "Resolved that the Government should buy, own, and control the Railroads of the United States."[9]

El Reno schools were offering commercial courses in the high school and planned to include "manual training and domestic science . . . next year."[10] Although much improvement was made in the curriculum over the years, much remained to be accomplished in other academic and administrative areas, one of which was the obtaining and keeping of qualified teachers.

The country schools, especially, were being taught by young inexperienced people probably because of lower salaries and less desirable working conditions in the rural areas. But the city schools had no over supply of well-trained teachers either, for even by 1914 all of Canadian county had only 15 teachers with first grade certificates. In 1914 there were 72 teachers in Canadian county with second-grade certificates and 33 teachers with third-grade certificates.[11]

Another problem encountered was that of school attendance. Up to this time the compulsory education law had not been successfully enforced. In 1913, there were 6,737 children between the ages of six and twenty-one in Canadian

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[9] El Reno American, December 13, 1906.

[10] Oklahoma School Herald, March, 1908.

[11] Fifth Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1914, 2.

county. Of this number only 5,493 were enrolled in school and the average daily attendance was only 2,824 or 51.4 per cent of those enrolled.[12] The State Superintendent wrote:

> The attention of teachers, school officers and patrons should be directed to the . . . law providing for the compulsory attendance of pupils. This law makes it the duty . . . any person living in the district to make complaint against any person failing or refusing to comply with its provisions . . . teachers must advise the county superintendent of any violation of provisions of the law.[13]

In 1914, Canadian county had 100 school districts, with an enrollment of 5,537 children in the public schools. The average daily attendance was 3,951 which was only 71.3 per cent of the enrollment. Of the 115 teachers in the schools of Canadian county, 50 had first-grade certificates, 48 second-grade certificates, and 17 had third-grade certificates. There were 18 men and 97 women teachers. The average salary paid these teachers was commensurate with the type of certificate held. Men teachers with first-grade certificates received $81.74 and the women $66.65; those who held second-grade certificates earned $62.45 and $51.25 for men and women, respectively. Men who held third-grade certificates received $51.25 and women received $47.60. Five schools with an enrollment of 411 offered high-school work. Of these 411 high-school students, 218 were in the ninth grade, 103 in the tenth, 57 in the eleventh, and 33 in the twelfth grade.[14]

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Oklahoma School Herald, January, 1914, 10.

[14] El Reno American, January 14, 1915.

The county superintendent, Mina Jackson, gave the following report on the enrollment and physical condition of the rural schools in Canadian county in 1915. Rich Valley had a two-room school with an enrollment of 42 pupils where two teachers were employed. Riverside school had an enrollment of 18 pupils with the school in "good condition" and Pleasant Hill school needed some window shades; it had an enrollment of 29. Matthewson had "new furniture, papered walls, and good pictures" with an enrollment of 35, where Bell School had a building which needed plastering and a new door. Spring Creek was "in good shape; new concrete building furnished with 40 new seats"; and 35 pupils enrolled. Oak had "one of the best buildings, with a porch and two cloak-rooms." Independence was the smallest school in Canadian county. This building was only 15 feet long and 13 feet wide, but contained 8 desks, arranged four on each side of the room with an aisle down the center. Evidently, these were double desks since there were ten pupils enrolled. A teacher's desk and chair was at one end of the room and a stove was at the other. Notwithstanding its size, Independence had some "good blackboards, some maps, and a suspension globe," all of which had been added during the last year.[15] This report suggested that some of the rural schools were showing progress in terms of physical plants, while others, in contrast, were deteriorating.

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[15] Ibid., February 11, 1915.

Continuing progress in educational matters is shown by an article in the Oklahoma Teacher favoring the "model school" plan. Under this plan each rural school in the State would be scored by the teacher during the school year. The schools were to be graded or classified in four principal divisions: Grounds and Outbuildings, 315 points; School Building, 370 points; Equipment, 480 points; and Organization, 160 points. No school was expected to make a perfect score of 1,325 points, but all were urged to try for 1,000 points and thereby become "model schools." No attempt was made to rate the teacher under this state plan.[16]

To attain the model school rating a school was required to meet various requirements. The grounds of a model school were judged on walks, trees, shrubs, flowers, tornado shelters, playground equipment, the well or cistern, and the sanitary condition of the premises. Judging of buildings was based on construction, condition, equipment for work and recreation, library, fuel shed, and teacher's home and garage. The equipment of the model school must include comfortable desks, a jacketed stove, good blackboards, lighting equipment, a national and a state flag, curtains, reference books, reading matter, a school truck, equipment for cooking and sewing, and floors treated to keep down dust.[17] Model

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[16]Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1919, 18.

[17]El Reno American, "Agricultural Edition," March 22, 1928, 16.

schools were organized around community needs, or interests, rather than merely around the interests of the child. There were parents' clubs, clubs for boys and girls, entertainments, fire drills, and recreation programs. Attention was given to the physical needs of the students in such matters as hot lunches and comfortable surroundings.[18]

Also, concern was given to teacher preparation with emphasis placed on health and reading. The Oklahoma Teacher carried a report in September of 1919 that statewide attention had been attracted by the success of the classes in home hygiene and care of the sick which had been taught during the summer terms of the six state normal schools.[19] The normal schools were also giving attention to the improvement of the Reading Circle work being done by the teachers in their respective districts.[20]

The Teachers' Reading Circle, which had been organized in 1894, under the management of the Territorial Board of Education, began as an individual study plan whereby any teacher could improve her education. In 1898, there were 35 Canadian county teachers enrolled in this work. The books approved for use that year for the Reading Circle were:[21]

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[18]Ibid., 22.

[19]Oklahoma Teacher, September, 1919, 16.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Fourth Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Instruction, 1898, 64-66.

Halleck's Psychology $1.25
Koopman's Mastery of Books 90
Wood's How to Study Plants 1.00

The Territorial Board of Education adopted the books for the Reading Circle in the spring of each year and enrollments in the work were taken at the summer institutes or later. Thus the books were available for the fall, winter, and the spring of the next year. This plan was suggested by the United States Commissioner of Education in a report of 1896-97. The only expense to the teacher was the cost of the books.[22]

Any teacher who read two of the books adopted for any one year and passed an examination given by the Reading Circle Board was granted a Reading Circle certificate, and when she had followed this plan for a period of four years, the teacher was given a Reading Circle diploma. In 1901, the first Reading Circle diplomas were issued. Of the twenty successful recipients of these diplomas, one was from Canadian county.[23]

Although the Reading Circle work had been originally planned as individual study, in a few years it became a group study plan. By 1919, the normal schools of Oklahoma were giving college credit for the Reading Circle work. Three groups of teachers were eligible to receive the college

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[22]Sixth Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1902, 41.

[23]Ibid.

credit: rural teachers, grade teachers in towns or villages, and high-school teachers. Each group was asked to organize and elect someone to lead their discussions and to act as the director of the Reading Circle in that community.[24] The work was adapted to the needs of the respective groups. The normal schools assisted the groups by sending out examinations and by grading the returned papers. Faculty members of the normal schools visited the groups from time to time and offered suggestions concerning the work.[25]

In summary, by the early 1900's, Canadian county was becoming rather prosperous and this prosperity was being reflected in some improvements in the schools. The curriculum was expanding as new courses were being added by the legislatures in response to the wishes of the people. Also research on transfer of training and consideration of the activities, needs, and interests of the children influenced greater emphasis with respect to social usage and basis for selection of subject matter. In addition to other athletic activities, basketball became so popular in the high schools that an all state high-school basketball team for boys was organized. One of the five players on this team was from the El Reno high school.

The trend in education was toward the practical. Commercial courses, manual training, and domestic science

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[24]Oklahoma Teacher, November, 1919, 16.

[25]Ibid.

courses were added to the curriculum of the high schools. The model school movement with the school program organized around the community needs and interests, was being urged by the State Department of Education. Literary societies met in the rural school houses and offered programs which were well attended. Nevertheless, with all the effort expended, schools were not reaching the masses as evidenced by the low average daily attendance. The worst conditions were found in the rural districts.

CHAPTER VII

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCHOOLS

Each year more and more emphasis was being given to the problems of the rural schools.[1] By 1919, vocational agriculture was being stressed in the schools and the Oklahoma Teacher stated that "Vitalized agriculture . . . develops the highest type of citizenship because it teaches the grave importance of common, every-day things."[2] One county superintendent considered two things of first importance in the schools. One of these was consolidation of schools, and the other was the teaching of homemaking to the girls. She believed that these things would go far in meeting the needs of the young people and thus keep them from leaving the home community.[3]

But something was needed to keep the teachers in the rural schools. The following notice was published in the Oklahoma School Herald:

> WHEREAS, on account of the scarcity of teachers . . . many teachers have given up their schools and accepted

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[1] Oklahoma Teacher, November, 1919, 16.

[2] Ibid., September, 1919, 15.

[3] Ibid., October, 1919, 23.

> positions in other schools without the consent of the board first employing them. . . . NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the State Board of Education that all persons . . . who are guilty of violating their contracts without the consent of the board first employing them . . . upon proof . . . State Board of Education will cancel their certificates.[4]

There was a shortage of teachers in every county in Oklahoma by December, 1919, according to the State Superintendent, R. H. Wilson and there was no material increase in the number preparing for teaching. The increased enrollments, reported by some colleges, were not in the education departments. One of the causes for this shortage of teachers was low salaries. In Oklahoma the rural teachers received an average salary of $684.49 each per year in 1919. Some of the teachers were still getting only $45.00 per month and the highest paid rural teacher was getting only $175.00 per month. Superintendent R. H. Wilson suggested that every community organize itself for the purpose of aiding the schools.[5]

The United States Bureau of Education estimated that 22 per cent of the teachers dropped out during 1918 because of the better wages offered by industry. The only solution for this condition was thought to be higher salaries for teachers.[6]

The Oklahoma Legislature of 1919 passed an act which

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[4]Oklahoma School Herald, December, 1918, 331.

[5]Oklahoma Teacher, December, 1919, 9-10.

[6]Ibid., 26.

appropriated $100,000.00 per year for the next two years to be used to supplement the funds of some rural schools. There were three prerequisites to securing state aid under this act: the school must be a rural school; the purpose for which the aid was furnished must be the maintaining of the rural public school; and the district asking for the aid must have made full levy and collection of the 15 mills on the dollar valuation as provided by the state constitution. The word "rural" was held to mean the country, as separated from the city of town, and as used in this statute referred to and included only such school districts as had no city or town in their limits. The independent school districts were excluded from the benefits of this act.[7]

Consolidated and Union Graded school districts were eligible for the state aid as they included no town in their districts. The county superintendents were to make applications for the rural aid, sending these applications to the state superintendent. The money was given to the schools that applied first.[8] Over the years the legislatures and many of the voters seem to have favored increases in teachers salaries, but there were people who opposed the spending of so much money for the schools. Since large numbers of pupils were enrolled in the schools, the cost of maintaining these schools had greatly increased.

Some of the people who favored more money for the

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[7] Ibid. [8] Ibid.

schools and higher pay for the teachers were rather pessimistic. Professor Thomas H. Briggs, Teachers' College, Columbia University, was quoted as saying:

> Teachers are underpaid, that is true, but this generation of teachers must resign themselves to these conditions and seek comfort in the joy of the work . . . the professional task before the teachers of today is to bring up the boys and girls into national citizenship, and as men sacrifice themselves in war, so the teachers must sacrifice themselves now in fulfilling their duty to society.[9]

But the teachers were not willing to become human sacrifices. The editor of the Oklahoma Teacher wrote:

> Our preconceived notions that school teachers are a lot of quiet little ma'ams who allow themselves to be undervalued, underpaid, and generally bullied by "The Board" are getting a rude jolt.[10]

In another issue of the Oklahoma Teacher the editor commented: "The teachers of America are not striking. They are merely leaving the profession because they can not exist in it."[11]

The gradual decrease in the number of new students enrolling in the teacher-training schools, war wages in industry, and the drafting of all able-bodied male teachers into the military services had resulted in a serious teacher shortage. Many schools were closed. The National Education Association, through its leaders, gathered data from all of the states and began a huge campaign of publicity and

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[9] Oklahoma Teacher, December, 1919, 29.

[10] Ibid., 31.

[11] Ibid., February, 1920, 26.

education. Newspapers and magazines became convinced of the seriousness of the education crisis.[12] The Oklahoma Teacher gave wide publicity to the results of a Federal survey of Public Education in Oklahoma (1922).[13]

This Federal Survey indicated that Oklahoma was not making enough effort to support education when compared with other states of like ability and resources. Oklahoma ranked number 33 among the other states in school population enrolled and number 48, or the very lowest, in the per cent of enrollment which was in average daily attendance. The Report stated that the cause of this deplorable situation was:

1. A defective system of taxation
2. A system of school finance which made it absolutely impossible to provide adequate school funds
3. The district system
4. An unscientific method of apportioning the state funds, which ignored both the ability and the effort of the local units.[14]

The Oklahoma Education Association had supported the idea of the professional survey by the Government and urged teachers of Oklahoma to work and to influence legislation to change the poor conditions in the schools of Oklahoma.[15]

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[12] Ibid., January, 1922, 29.

[13] Ibid., February, 1923, 11.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

Perhaps the facts revealed by the survey Public Education in Oklahoma in 1922 increased the effort made by the people for in 1928 the following progress in education was reported at Yukon:

Yukon

> Yukon has grown from a small trading post established in the early territorial days to a modern little city with a population of 1313 . . . There are two school houses. A modern high school was built in 1925 and the old building which had been used for the entire school system was changed to a grade school.
>
> Yukon high school has placed itself on the map since Ralph A. Myers became superintendent in 1922. Ten students who graduated from the Yukon public school in 1909 wanted a high school education so in 1910 the ninth grade was offered.
>
> In 1925, high school students were attending school in the same building with the lower grades. It was that year they moved to the new building. A department of home economics was added to the school. Manual training was added for the first time. Enthusiasm was aroused for athletics, debating, pep clubs, and music. . . . Two hundred and ten students are enrolled in the high school, a hundred of whom were transferred from rural schools. Only 85 of them are girls.
>
> Last year a department of vocational agriculture was established in the Yukon high school. Thirty-three students enrolled in the department, 30 of whom were farm boys. . . . The vocational agriculture boys put up the Educational Display for the township at the county fair and won first place.[16]

The reported progress of the El Reno schools at this time was:

El Reno

> For the first time this year the El Reno school system has a library in the high school with "traveling"

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[16] El Reno American, "Agricultural Edition," March 22, 1928, 16.

> facilities for the ward schools' convenience. Fifteen volumes of books make the rounds weekly to the various schools for the use of the students. Three-hundred dollars has just been spent for new books this month.
>
> Degree requirements in El Reno schools include M.A. degrees for the heads of departments in the senior high school; B.A. degrees for high school teachers and life certificates for grade teachers. . . . El Reno high school students edit a splendid newspaper, The Boomer, which is maintained by ad solicitation.
>
> The largest senior class ever graduated from the El Reno High School will receive diplomas this spring. The class consists of 103 students. . . . This is an increase of 19 students over last year and 22 over year before last.
>
> Booker T. Washington school for Negro children in El Reno is making excellent progress . . . stresses business and vocational training. Negro boys are taught to cook, do shop work, learn fundamentals of agricultural farming, and concrete laying.
>
> Chapel is held twice a week on Tuesdays and Fridays and the public is welcome to attend at all times. . . . There are glee clubs for both boys and girls, two quartets and an octet. Besides these there is a 15-piece orchestra. The music department pays for itself from funds made by concerts in El Reno.
>
> Five men teachers and one woman supervise the athletic department, caring for playground supervision of the grade schools.[17]

Despite the progress made, the schools were very inadequate as pointed out by one educator:

> In 1929, despite the use of standardized achievement tests, individual and group intelligence tests, adjustment inventories, and aptitude tests, the curriculum was, in the main, still regarded as a number of subjects to be mastered.[18]

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[17] Ibid., 44.

[18] W. B. Ragan, Modern Elementary Curriculum, revised edition, (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1960), 13.

Then came the severe economic depression that began in 1929 and confusion in education was nationwide. The critics of the schools were numerous: the schools were costing more and were accomplishing little.[19]

There had been progress since World War I; in enrollment, average daily attendance, courses offered, length of term, and general community service. The enrollment in all Oklahoma schools had increased from 157,403 in 1907 to 678,377 in 1931. In order to maintain these schools it had been necessary to increase the total amount of money for schools. While the enrollment and services of the various schools had been increasing, the revenues had greatly decreased. During the depression schools had to be run with the minimum amount of money despite the larger enrollment.[20]

All through the depression years the enrollments continued to increase. Enrollment figures for Calumet (a small town near El Reno) schools indicated a record year for 1937-38. The most overcrowding was in the high school where 123 had enrolled.[21] Perhaps the high school students stayed in school because there were few jobs available to them. Teachers, in lieu of salary, received recognition for loyalty:

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[19]Edgar W. Knight, Fifty Years of American Education, (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1952), 338.

[20]Oklahoma Teacher, November, 1932, 12.

[21]The Calumet Chieftain, September 9, 1937.

> Impressive during these lean years was the loyalty of the teachers and other educational workers. . . . Thousands of them went unpaid.[22]

The Oklahoma Teacher carried this editorial:

> Considerable difficulty is being experienced in many places in the state by teachers who are unable to cash their salary warrants without accepting a discount. In a few instances it is impossible to secure ready cash on them even with a discount. . . . This matter must necessarily be settled on a local basis and so long as the economic situation is such as exists at the present time, there will be little probability of making satisfactory adjustment.[23]

The State Superintendent estimated that the teachers of Oklahoma contributed $180,000 in free services in 1931.

> Most of this was given to fill out the term which would have been cut without this sacrifice. There were 178 high schools in Oklahoma which were unable to pay the teachers for the full time contracted.[24]

In 1938, the Calumet Chieftain reported that for the first time in four years the schools of Calumet would have a nine months school term. All current expenses had been met and the new school term would be "started free from debt."[25] These schools in 1938 had the largest enrollment in their history.[26] Other districts in Canadian county were probably overcrowded for the Public Works Administration formed by the federal government to relieve unemployment,

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[22]Oklahoma Teacher, October, 1932, 10.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Ibid., 10.

[25]Calumet Chieftain, May 19, 1938.

[26]Ibid., September 15, 1938.

completed, among others, a new $50,000.00 school at Union City.[27]

The Yukon schools were making progress. In 1932, in cooperation with the vocational department of the federal government, Yukon had built a home economics cottage which was the third building of its kind in Oklahoma.[28] The Yukon Sun, in April, 1937, quoted the Yukon Superintendent of Schools, Ralph A. Myers as saying that the schools had qualified for affiliation with the North Central Association of Colleges since 1923 by maintaining a nine months school and having a faculty that met the scholastic requirements. The enrollment in the Yukon schools in that year (1937) was 545.[29]

The El Reno Junior College was established in 1938. No difficulty has ever been met in transferring credit from this college to other colleges and universities. Two types of programs are offered: (1) Vocational, and (2) College Preparatory. The low cost of the El Reno College makes two years of education possible at reduced expenses, for the student may live at home. The entering student for college standing must be a high school graduate. The El Reno College confers the Associate of Arts degree upon those students who complete sixty-two hours of prescribed work with sixty-two

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[27]The Yukon Sun, August 12, 1937.

[28]Ibid., March 25, 1937.

[29]Ibid., April 1, 1937.

grade points. The Associate in practical Arts degree may be earned by completing the prescribed sixty-two hours in one of the vocational curriculums. A full-year scholarship is given the valedictorians, and a semester scholarship is given the salutatorians of Canadian county high schools. The tuition fee is $165.00 per year or $85.00 per semester for 16 hours of work.[30]

In summary, the World War I years dealt the already weak schools a severe blow. Teachers left the profession for better paying jobs in industry, college students chose to prepare themselves for other fields than teaching, and all able-bodied male teachers were drafted into the armed services. Many schools were closed for lack of teachers. The serious shortage of teachers caused the National Education Association to begin a campaign of publicity and education to inform the people of the situation. State surveys of education began to be made. A survey by the federal government of public education in Oklahoma, made in 1922, showed that Oklahoma's schools were not adequate. Oklahoma was not making enough effort, according to her ability, to support the schools; in fact Oklahoma ranked at the bottom of the list of the 48 states in average daily attendance.

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[30]Bulletin of the El Reno College, El Reno, Oklahoma, Catalog Issue 1956-57, 2, 3, 4.

Perhaps the above survey alerted Canadian county educators and patrons to the needs of the schools, as the schools were showing more progress. But the curriculum was still thought of as subjects to be mastered. Then about this time (1929) the depression began and the condition of the schools became critical.

Educational budgets were sharply reduced, school terms were shortened, teachers went without their pay, more and more students enrolled, and the critics of the schools added to the confusion. The Public Works Administration aided in new school construction. Things were getting better for Canadian county by 1938. In that year Calumet schools reported that for the first time in four years they would have a nine-months school term, and the school budget had been met. Seemingly it was newsworthy if a school district was able to have a nine months term and meet its bills.

Perhaps partly to take care of the unemployed youth of the county, the El Reno College was established in 1938. Students could thus employ their time wisely and get at least some college education at reduced cost as they could live at home. Thus, in spite of the critics of the schools, some people still believed in education.

CHAPTER VIII

REORGANIZATION OF SCHOOLS IN CANADIAN COUNTY

The results of the federal survey of 1922, should have come as no surprise to the educators of Canadian county for awareness of the condition of the schools is shown in the reports over the years. One such report by County Superintendent Bickford, in 1904, concerning the condition of the schools in El Reno states:

> The rooms are crowded. At the end of the second month city schools have an attendance of over a thousand . . . some rooms which should have no more than 35 have 40 or 45. . . . One or two teachers are needed.[1]

In 1901, the establishment of county high schools had been authorized in counties with a population of at least 6,000 and perhaps this law may be said to be the beginning of reorganization or consolidation of schools. A special election was called in 1906 in Canadian county to vote on whether or not a county high school, to be located at El Reno, should be built. The issue carried in El Reno, the proposed site of the school, but lost in other parts of Canadian county.[2] One writer thought that the defeat of

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[1] El Reno American News, November 3, 1904.

[2] El Reno American, November 22, 1906.

the high school issue in many counties was:

> . . . largely because increased transportation facilities and the establishment of good city high schools . . . soon after the passage of the act checked interest in the county high schools.[3]

As early as 1902, the Territorial Superintendent stated that the:

> Union graded school and county high school laws have not been taken advantage of generally. . . . The present educational tendency is toward centralized schools through consolidation of school districts and the transportation of children.[4]

Local Support for Reorganization

In 1908, a law passed by the Legislature authorized consolidation of school districts, thus two or more adjoining districts could, by majority vote, combine to form a consolidated school. The Mustang Enterprise, a Canadian county newspaper, was urging a centralized school as early as 1911. The editor wrote:

> Professor Smith, teacher of the Green School, presented some valuable facts concerning the consolidation of rural schools at the meeting of the Mustang Teachers' Association.[5]

And:

> Should all of the five schools around us consolidate, the pupils would have quite an interesting library,

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[3]James S. Buchanan and Edward E. Dale, A History of Oklahoma (New York: Row, Peterson and Co., 1924), 470.

[4]Sixth Biennial Report of the Territorial Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1902, 9.

[5]Mustang Enterprise, April 7, 1911.

> as each district has a small one and some of them have a pretty good variety.[6]

In a later issue of the Mustang Enterprise, the editor complained that the teachers of rural or ungraded schools had to alternate the work of the seventh and eighth grades, teaching the seventh-grade work one year and the eighth-grade work the next year:

> The even grades are taught in the odd years, so the seventh and eighth grades studied the seventh grade this year, therefore, few passed the eighth grade county examination.[7]

The editor explained that the teachers were not to blame, they were merely following the directions of the state course of study.[8]

State Urges Reorganization

In 1914, the State Superintendent strongly urged the consolidation of rural schools.[9] Since 1903, when the first consolidated school district in Oklahoma was organized, there had been a slow but steady increase in the number of centralized districts,[10] and by 1918, there were 137 centralized schools in Oklahoma; Canadian county had one

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[6] Ibid., May 19, 1911.

[7] Ibid., May 26, 1911.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Fifth Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1914, 13.

[10] Seventh Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1918, 25.

such school.[11]

The State Superintendent of 1918, praised the former legislatures for showing:

> . . . A substantial appreciation of the superior quality of centralized schools . . . but allowing certain groups of rich districts to consolidate in a way which cut off the poorer districts should be discontinued.[12]

The State Department of Education (1918) was making a strong effort to effect the consolidation of small one-teacher schools. The rural supervisor was sent to counties in which the county superintendent desired aid in promoting consolidations. Several trips to any one district were made. During the fall and winter a community would be visited for the purpose of giving the people general information about consolidated and union graded schools. Then in the spring the same community would be visited again. This time to aid in organizing a centralized school, offer suggestions as to plans for buildings, give an estimate of the expenses, and discuss with the people the policy that should be adopted by the district in order to provide a school which would meet the community requirements. Two bulletins on the subject of centralized schools were published in local papers as well as in papers having a large circulation. Despite the strong program set up by the State Department of Education, progress in the reorganization of schools was very slow.

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[11] Ibid., 32. [12] Ibid., 38.

Local conditions stood in the way of progress. It required some time, often a year or more, for many communities to accept the idea of abandoning their one-room schools.[13] Since a consolidated district could not be organized until a majority of the people of the districts concerned signed a petition for an election and then a majority of those voting favored the proposal, it was a problem of education in getting the people to see the benefits of a centralized school. The results obtained varied in the individual counties, depending largely upon the support or absence of support of the various county superintendents.[14] The State Superintendent of Public Instruction of 1918 decided that, "The chief obstacle encountered is the innate conservatism of the rural people."[15]

World War I years, along with the shortages of many things necessary for transportation of pupils, slowed down the reorganization movement until after the end of the war. But the reorganization program promoted by the State Departments of Education resulted in the creation of more than 400 consolidated, union graded, and other types of centralized districts in Oklahoma by 1926.[16] During the

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[13] Ibid., 43.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid., 42.

[16] Eleventh Biennial Report of the State Department of Public Instruction, 1926, 5.

four years from 1920 to 1924, at least 14 Canadian county one-room school districts consolidated with or annexed to some other district to provide better schools for the children.[17] After 1924, the movement for reorganization of schools lost momentum. This may have been the result of general economic conditions following World War I; the limitation of bonds that could be voted; and the difficulties some centralized districts were having in supporting the program. One State Superintendent wrote:

> Poor districts were having trouble in paying the transportation and other expenses for an accredited high school on the same valuation with which they had been unable to provide a good grade school. . . . The reaction from such districts had discouraged many districts which could well afford consolidation.[18]

However, some of the districts already organized continued to make progress.

Piedmont, Canadian County Consolidated District number 22, which had begun reorganization in 1920, continued to add territory and by 1927 the district consisted of 57 square miles, with an assessed valuation of $997,068. There were six busses (each with a capacity of 30 students) which were used for the transportation of 170 pupils, at the average cost of $.98 per pupil per day.[19] Piedmont was

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[17] Canadian County School Records, in office of County Superintendent, Neal V. Golden, 1957.

[18] Eleventh Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1926, 37.

[19] Oklahoma Teacher, April 1927, 9.

offering four years of accredited high school work and had a total enrollment of 236, of which number 67 were high school students. The school building was "a good brick building with seven class rooms and a spacious auditorium-gymnasium." There were nine teachers at this time (1927).[20]

Union City school, another Canadian county reorganized school, in 1927 was the highest ranking superior model school in the county. The school library contained "Over 1,100 volumes and is being added to constantly by the Parent-Teacher Association." About 150 pupils were enrolled and there were eight teachers.[21]

Calumet was another consolidated school which had consolidated with Old Calumet city school district and was now known as Consolidated District 76. The enrollment (1928) was 175 grade students and 75 high school students.[22]

By 1930, reorganization of the school districts of Oklahoma was taking the form of annexation of smaller districts to adjacent larger districts, and the combining of two or more smaller districts to create one large district. A plan was needed to make the rural and smaller village schools less expensive and at the same time give to the rural children more and better education. During the school year of 1929-30, fifty-three small high schools in Oklahoma

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[20] El Reno American, "Agricultural Edition," March 22, 1928, 16.

[21] Ibid., 8.

[22] Ibid., 40.

enrolled less than 20 students. In many of these small schools the high school work had been supported by using money which should have gone into the grade school work. During this period (1929-30) some 83 one-year and two-year high schools employed on the average one high school teacher for each 15 students and one grade teacher for each 40 students. The State Department of Education had tried to reorganize these smaller high schools but had met with little success.[23]

"The cost of many small schools is too great. It is impossible to reduce the costs in these schools as they are now organized," said the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (1934). He thought it was time to begin a comprehensive program of reorganization which would bring large numbers of students together in centers for high school instruction.[24] The effects of the depression were being felt in the schools, but it took time to get legislation passed to aid reorganization.

In 1940, Senate Bill No. 81, commonly referred to as the annexation bill, aided in the process of the needed school district reorganization. This Act required high schools to have an average daily attendance of forty in order to qualify for State Aid. This requirement reduced

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[23]Thirteenth Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1930, 2-3.

[24]Fifteenth Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1934, 33.

the number of small non-economical districts. There was some criticism of the bill for during the World War II years of the early 1940's transportation was curtailed by the shortages of equipment and gasoline. At this time the minimum requirement for the grade school average daily attendance was thirteen.[25]

Canadian county, in 1940, had several one-room grade schools with less than thirteen pupils enrolled. Some of these schools were: Pleasant Hill, Green Valley, Riverview, Eureka, and Lone Star. Two other schools, Pleasant Valley with fourteen, and Mayview with sixteen, were barely within the requirements.[26] By May, 1941, other Canadian county schools were unable to maintain the required average daily attendance of thirteen. These included Frisco, Highland, Old Calumet, Midland, and Valley View; while Prairie Queen and Sunny Hill were on the doubtful list.[27] Perhaps these schools were allowed to continue in operation because of the shortage of transportation facilities due to the all out war effort. At any rate, the records in the office of the Canadian county superintendent show that no additional schools were reorganized until 1947.[28]

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[25]Nineteenth Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1942, 3.

[26]El Reno American, December 19, 1940 and December 26, 1940.

[27]Ibid., May 8, 1941.

[28]Records in the Office of the County Superintendent of Schools, El Reno, 1957.

In 1947, many small rural schools of Oklahoma were reorganized under the provisions of the school bill adopted by the Oklahoma Legislature during the previous session. This reorganization of schools abolished 42 of the 80 rural school districts in Canadian county, leaving 38 districts to have regular classwork during the 1947-48 school term.[29] In the five year period from 1947 to 1951 Canadian county lost 55 small schools to the reorganization program. Of the districts reorganized in Canadian county during this period 47 annexations were mandatory while only eight were elective.[30] But there were still 25 one-room schools in Canadian county which were unable to offer a good program of education for the children enrolled. By November, 1952, the number of small schools had been further reduced until there were only 18 elementary school districts and seven high school districts in all of Canadian county.[31]

Another Oklahoma law, passed in 1957, calling for still more reorganization of schools, had little immediate effect on Canadian county high school districts. This law was aimed at doing away with the small rural school and at the same time raising the salary somewhat in other teacher positions. House Bill No. 508 required a high school to have an average daily attendance of 40 students or more if

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[29]Daily Oklahoman, August 1, 1947.

[30]Oklahoma Teacher, January, 1952, 48.

[31]Ibid., November, 1952, 33.

it was located within 12 miles of another high school, in order to qualify for state aid. Canadian county had one school which was in the danger zone. Piedmont high school was registering just slightly over the 40 average daily attendance requirement and was within 12 miles road distance of another high school.[32] Piedmont fell below the 40 average daily attendance, but by good management and sacrifice was able to continue without state aid for the 1957-58 school year.

House Bill No. 508 had more effect on the rural elementary schools of Canadian county. Stipulations of this law were that such schools must have a minimum average daily attendance of 15 if they were within 12 miles of another elementary school. Schools on the border line of these requirements were: Richland, Sunnyside, Fairview, and Oak.[33] At the beginning of the school year 1957-58, there were only 14 school districts in Canadian county. Five of these 14 districts were Independent high-school districts, leaving nine Dependent districts. Of these nine, only one had a one-teacher school.[34]

There are ten joint districts in Canadian county,

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[32]El Reno American, April 4, 1957. One stipulation of the law was that a small school could continue to operate if it could do so without state aid.

[33]Ibid.

[34]Canadian County School Records, in office of County Superintendent, Neal V. Golden, 1957. El Reno, Oklahoma.

only three of which (Piedmont, Mustang, and East Walnut) are administered in Canadian county. The others are Okarche, Cashion, Deer Creek, Minco, Lookeba, Hinton, and Geary, which are administered in surrounding counties. For this reason the total census records in Canadian county do not include those children living in joint districts that are administered in other counties. County Superintendent Golden estimated that "About 20 per cent of this county's area is not counted here."[35]

There were two schools for colored children established in Canadian county, other than at El Reno. These schools were Excelsior No. 9, and Center Grove No. 51. Both of these schools are joined with J-105 which is operated in Kingfisher county. Canadian county had very little trouble with the separate school problem, for few Negroes settled in the county and those that did settle there were concentrated in the city of El Reno. No other Canadian county town had any Negroes.[36]

In summary, one of the greatest problems which perplexed the schools from the earliest years was that of insufficient finance. Over the years efforts had been made by various educators to promote consolidation or reorganization of the too small schools but these efforts had met

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[35]El Reno Daily Tribune, June 1, 1954.

[36]Canadian County School Records, in office of County Superintendent.

with little success. By the year of 1914, Canadian county had only one consolidated school in the entire county. Some success in the reorganization program was made during the years from 1920 to 1924, with 14 Canadian county schools choosing reorganization. The permissive reorganization idea was, on the whole, ineffective for the rural people were unwilling to give up their local schools. The real crisis of the schools during the depression years changed the policy of the state officials from that of persuasion to force.

In 1940, Senate Bill No. 81, required high schools to have an average of 40 in average daily attendance to qualify for state aid. This requirement reduced the number of small districts somewhat, and other laws followed strengthening the requirements. In 1947, a school bill abolished 42 of the 80 rural school districts in Canadian county, leaving 38 such districts. In the five year period from 1947 to 1951 Canadian county lost 55 small school districts to the reorganization program. Of the districts reorganized in Canadian county during this period 47 annexations were mandatory and only eight were elective. By 1952, the number of small schools had been further reduced until there were only 18 elementary districts and seven high school districts in all of Canadian county.

In 1957, another law, House Bill No. 508, still further reduced the number of school districts in Canadian

county until at the beginning of the school year of 1957-58 there were only 14 school districts in the county. Five of these 14 districts were Independent high-school districts, leaving nine Dependent districts where only one had a one-teacher school.

CHAPTER IX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study was undertaken to collect, examine, and present an account of the events and situations which influenced the origin and development of schools in Canadian County, Oklahoma, from 1889 to 1958. From these historical accounts an effort was made to determine as objectively as possible the existing evidence of education and educational practices which had a bearing on the present educational status of Canadian County.

The general hypothesis that events and situations did occur which indicated that pioneers of Canadian County were interested in educating their children and that they strived for more and better formal education was formulated. In order to test this hypothesis, a survey of the following primary sources and secondary sources was made: Canadian County School Records, Newspapers, Oklahoma Governors' Reports, Oklahoma Statutes, State Superintendents' Reports, United States Statutes, Interviews with Canadian County Pioneers, Doctoral Dissertations, Masters' Theses, Indian-Pioneer Papers, and Oklahoma Historical Works (general).

The general coverage of material fell into four

broad areas: (1) The Indian Era, before 1889, (2) the period of subscription schools and struggle for support of the early public schools, (3) the growth of the public schools, and (4) the further development of these schools. Many accounts emerged from a survey of the relevant materials.

The beginning of civilization in the Indian country of the present Canadian County was in early summer of 1867, when the first droves of cattle on their way from Texas to Abilene, Kansas made the beginning of the Chisholm Trail. Until that time the uncivilized Cheyenne and Arapaho plains Indians ruled the prairies.

The United States government undertook the task of civilizing these wild Indians. As a result of this undertaking an Indian Agency and School, both named Darlington, were established in 1869 in Canadian County near the present El Reno. Darlington was the first school in Canadian County.

In 1889, the United States government purchased title to the Oklahoma Lands from the Creeks and the Seminoles. The land became public domain and was opened to settlement by the white people on April 22, 1889. In spite of the relatively rapid and complete settlement of the land, many of the citizens were able to find a common interest in the education of their children. During the first winter, all of the towns and many of the rural areas

had subscription schools. The schoolhouses in many communities were the only public buildings; therefore, they became the community centers and were used for public meetings of all kinds.

The school buildings were inadequate and teaching aids were unknown. The curriculum, perhaps, consisted of whatever the teacher considered most important. The teachers were homesteaders, or relatives of homesteaders, who taught for very small wages. In some communities they even furnished the buildings in which they taught.

The one fact which seemed to stand out above all others in the early years of Oklahoma was that the people wanted schools. Parents wanted education for their children and town boosters wanted schools as an added inducement with which to attract new settlers to their respective towns. This strong school sentiment would make itself felt in the laws which would be passed as soon as the country could be made into an organized territory.

The Organic Act which was passed on May 2, 1890, contained provisions for the support of the public schools. The First Legislature, which met at Guthrie on August 27, 1890, made some provision for education setting up a system of public schools with many detailed mandatory and permissive laws. Some needed legislation such as that of permission to vote building bonds was overlooked.

The people of the Territory were in favor of common

schools (grades 1-8), but were less concerned about a high-school education for all of the children. The laws passed during this period seemed to indicate that at least some of the teachers were inexperienced, untrained, and possibly lacking in ambition since the law required that no third-grade certificate be issued more than twice to the same person. The poverty of the people may be inferred from the permissiveness of the law for voting an annual tax for district school support.

The first normal school in Canadian County was held at El Reno in 1891 with an enrollment of 34 students. During this time teaching certificates were issued by the county superintendent. Also in 1891, the Territorial Board of Education adopted a uniform series of textbooks for exclusive use in the public schools of Oklahoma for the following five-year period.

All of the problems of the schools were by no means solved since there was little money for their support. In effect, high schools were prohibited until the common schools were supported. The financial condition of the school districts was also indicated by the fact that teachers were unable to cash their warrants at face value. Since the First Legislature failed to pass laws allowing school districts to vote bonds, lack of money to support the schools kept the public schools in a deplorable condition for the first few years of Oklahoma Territory's exist-

ence. The Second Legislature enacted laws allowing the districts to vote building bonds, subsequently the towns and some of the rural districts were able to build school buildings.

The influx of people waiting for the opening of the lands of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians caused El Reno's schools to become overcrowded. This opening, in April 1892, created such a demand for housing in El Reno that there were no buildings available for housing the schools in the fall of 1892. El Reno had no public schools that fall. In 1894, school bonds were voted for the first brick school building in El Reno. El Reno's schools continued to grow until by 1901, the enrollment had reached 829 and there were 18 teachers employed.

Yukon, founded in 1891, had a small frame building and a rented church building for its first public schools. As late as 1895, Yukon was using makeshift buildings for the school classes and was unable to provide for a school term of longer than six months. In 1895, Yukon took advantage of a new law permitting the union of several school districts for the purpose of offering high-school work. In the same year, Yukon voted $4,900 bonds for the first brick school building and by 1897 three years of high-school work was offered. However, in 1901, high-school courses were not offered, which suggested another slump in the financial situation. A few years later Canadian County was becoming

rather prosperous and this prosperity was reflected in some improvement in the schools. The curriculum was expanded by adding new courses approved by the different legislatures in response to the wishes of the people.

The trend in education was toward the practical. The model school movement with the school program organized around community needs and interests was urged by the State Department of Education. Literary societies met in the rural school houses and offered programs which were well attended. In contrast, the average daily school attendance was very low. The worst conditions were found in the rural districts.

World War I years dealt the already weak schools a severe blow. Teachers left the profession for better paying jobs in industry and college students were not preparing themselves for teaching. Able-bodied male teachers were drafted into the armed services. Many schools were closed for lack of teachers.

A survey made by the federal government on the condition of education in Oklahoma (1922) revealed that Oklahoma was not making enough effort to support the schools. Also, Oklahoma ranked at the bottom of the list of the 48 states in average daily attendance.

The economic depression in 1929 was another critical time for educational advancement in Canadian County. Again the schools became a financial burden to the people.

Educational budgets were sharply reduced. School terms were shortened, teachers went without their pay, and the critics of schools became even more vocal. Young folks who were unable to find work went back to school thus overcrowding the facilities. The Public Works Administration aided in new school construction, perhaps, partly to take care of the unemployed of the county.

One of the big problems of the school districts from the beginning was that of finance. Efforts were made to reduce the costs of operating the schools through consolidation or reorganization. A law passed in 1908, which authorized consolidation of school districts, was not popular in Canadian County, as evidenced by only the presence of one consolidated school in the entire county by 1914. But during the four year period from 1920 to 1924 there were 14 Canadian County one-room schools consolidated with or annexed to some other district. After 1924 reorganization of schools in Canadian County lost momentum so the State Department of Education forced reorganization of schools.

In 1940, Senate Bill No. 81, commonly referred to as the annexation bill, required that high schools have an average daily attendance of 40 in order to qualify for state aid. This requirement reduced the number of small uneconomical districts somewhat. In 1947, a school bill adopted by the Oklahoma Legislature abolished 42 of the 80

rural school districts in Canadian county, leaving 38 districts to have regular classwork during the 1947-48 school term. In the five-year period from 1947 to 1951 Canadian County lost 55 small school districts to the reorganization program. Of the districts reorganized during this period 47 annexations were mandatory and only eight were elective. By 1952, the number of small schools had been further reduced until there were only 18 elementary districts and seven high-school districts in all of Canadian County.

In 1957 another Oklahoma law, House Bill No. 508, still further reduced the number of school districts in Canadian County. Five of these 14 districts were Independend high-school districts leaving nine Dependent districts where only one had a one-teacher school. With the reorganization and consolidation of school districts came an improvement in curriculum, teacher preparation, and educational facilities. New courses were added and the level of teaching was greatly improved.

Conclusions

Evidence obtained from the historical literature permits a relatively sound appraisal of the origin and development of public schools and education in Canadian County, Oklahoma. The information tends to support the hypothesis concerning the interest of pioneers in originating and maintaining a formal education for their children in spite of social and economic hardships. The results

of this study suggest that the following factors were influential to the development of schools or had a bearing on the present educational status of Canadian County: (1) An attempt at educating Indians by the federal government resulted in the establishment of the first school in the county. (2) The settlement of the land for purposes of establishing new homes, obtaining pastures for cattle, and building railroads resulted in a rapid increase in population. (3) Town boosters wanted schools as an added inducement to attract new settlers to their towns for prestige and economic reasons. (4) The reluctance of settlers to vote for taxes to support school districts suggested a lack of finances. (5) Because of lack of money, the development of the common grade school took precedence over the establishment of high schools. (6) The First Legislature failed to pass laws permitting settlers to vote bonds for school districts and consequently educational progress was thwarted. (7) A uniform series of textbooks adopted by the Territorial Board of Education indicated progress. (8) The Second Legislature enacted laws permitting districts to vote building bonds which enhanced rural districts to construct school buildings. (9) The requirement of teaching certificates tended to raise the standard of teaching because of the demand for better teacher preparation. (10) The prosperity of the early 1900's and shifts in industry bettered the economic situation and therefore

helped the schools. (11) The results of educational research made an impact on quality of teaching and created a need for better facilities for education. (12) School programs were organized around community needs and literary societies were formed. This activity indicated a growing interest of the settlers in advancing their knowledge. (13) Because of better wages in industry and greater stress on higher education, many teachers left the teaching profession. (14) School terms were shortened and budgets reduced because of the economic depression of 1929. (15) Consolidation and reorganization of school districts was an attempt to reduce costs. (16) The enactment of the annexation bill required a set average daily attendance in order to qualify for state aid. (17) Other legislation reduced the number of school districts because of inadequate standards.

Many events and situations have occurred during the period 1889 through 1957. Even though some of them were mentioned in this study, perhaps an equal number of other important accounts have been inadvertantly neglected. Nevertheless, a reasonable conclusion confined to some reflections on the major trends exhibited might be stated as follows: The pioneers of Canadian County, Oklahoma, recognized the need of formal education for their children and they attempted to meet this need, but the lack of finances and economic hardships minimized educational development.

Although this conclusion seems self-evident, the scope and progress in education had been extended with each succeeding decade to the point where the schools and quality of instruction meet the modern standards of today.

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