



~ Part 3 ~

**Reflections on a Common Theme
Establishing Early Schools
& Academies**

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This is the third in the series featuring information about the six counties in the SV24 Alliance. Correspondents addressed the topic of establishing early schools and academies in the Solomon Valley. Carldon Broadbent, 766 K-14 Hwy, Beloit KS 67420, coordinates this series. Readers may submit information about their counties to him. The theme for the winter edition will be brief biographies of historically significant persons. These responses on the history of educational facilities are presented chronologically, revealing varying challenges in the process of establishing schools in Kansas.

Establishing Early Schools & Academies

CLOUD COUNTY

This information is taken from the 1893 Columbian History of Education in Kansas, compiled for the Columbian Exposition, "History and Growth of Schools, Cloud County," by Mrs. A. L. Bates, county superintendent. She quotes Mr. D. M. Stackhouse, a pioneer teacher, for descriptions of early schools.

"In 1868, a school known then as the Solomon school, was established, where the city of Glasco now stands, and Miss Jennie Paxton was employed to teach a three-months subscription school, and 'board round.'

"The close of this school was celebrated August 14, 1868, by the Cheyenne, Sioux and Arapahoe Indians, making the day one to be remembered by the settlers of Cloud county, and one that, but for the heroism and judgment of the brave little commander, would have proven a day of mourning to all whose little ones were entrusted to her care.

"The last two days of school were full of excitement, by reason of reported depredations of Indians, coupled with the fact that most of the men of the settlement had either gone away to seek work or had gone to the assistance of settlers further up the river. On the morning of the last day of school, one of the men who had been up the river came dashing down the valley, giving the warning of immediate danger. The teacher collected her little flock around her, hurriedly distributed to them some tokens of remembrance, and telling them of the danger, led them to the house of the nearest neighbor, just in time to escape the band of Indians, which was, even at that time, coming toward the schoolhouse, and which, a few minutes later, almost at the schoolhouse door, shot and left for dead Lewis Snyder, one of the little boys, who had gone back for his coat. . . . The little fellow feigned death. . . . In about three hours he was rescued by a body of settlers. After days of suffering, and anxious care . . . he recovered."

The annual report of Mr. B. H. EcEckron, second superintendent of schools, dated October 1, 1869, noted there were nine organized school districts, and three log schoolhouses, valued at \$160. The whole number of school children between the ages of 5 and 21 years was 264; the number of pupils enrolled, 110; average daily attendance, 10½; average length of term, 4¾ months; number of teachers employed: male-1, female-7; salary paid teachers—male \$35, female \$22.

MITCHELL COUNTY

Grellet Quaker Academy, submitted by Carldon Broadbent

The Grellet Academy furnished higher education for the early settlers of Mitchell County. The Quakers supported other private schools across the United States. Leaving the East, they had left behind educational opportunities which they now wanted in this new area of settlement. T. P. Trueblood organized the Grellet Academy in 1878 and it was chartered by the state in 1883. There were seven such academies in Kansas owned by the Quakers, or the Friends, at this time. The school stood three miles southwest of Glen Elder, or 14 miles west of Beloit in the rich Solomon Valley. The academy was built just west of the Pleasant Valley School. Its location is now covered by Waconda Lake.

The academy was named after the Quakers' noted missionary and philanthropist, Stephen Grellet, whose original name was Aden de Grellet du Mobilizer. He was born in Limoges, France, in 1773, and died in 1855. (The name Grellet is pronounced to rhyme with Chevrolet.) He had traveled Europe and in America in 1795, to report on the conditions of the prisons and poorhouses, being responsible for many reform measures. Rev. Trueblood selected a worthy notable Quaker for a name of his school.

Grellet Academy paid most of the expenses to attend, except for a small tuition. The catalog states that the fall term of 14 weeks would cost \$7.50. The winter term of 12 weeks cost \$7.00, with the spring term of ten weeks at \$6.50. The rooms were furnished complete, holding two students each, and cost 25 cents per student. The room had bedstead, mattress, stove, and chairs. The unfurnished rooms cost only 12½ cents. Board each week cost two dollars. The yearly expense amounted to \$105.

Although there were high schools in some towns, Beloit for instance, students on farms had no way to travel there and they would have had to board in any case. There was a settlement of Friends in this area already, and a high school education was important for any who wanted to enter college. Courses listed were algebra, Latin, physics, psychology, botany, German, literature, and rhetoric. Special courses were given in business, music, religion, and normal training for preparation of teachers. Many of the early teachers in Mitchell County took this course. By 1894 over 60 were enrolled from local towns and as far away as Esbon, Dispatch, Ionia, and Scottsville.

Names of some students attending were Emory Davis, Mary Green, Eva Hadley German, Minnie Harrison, Julia Meall Blankenship, Carrie Pickett Woodard, Jessie Slaven Davis, Lena Thieroff McKimson, Edith Waltman Davis, Clemina Jordan Park, John Park, Mae Price, and Charles Wieranga. Some marriages resulted as result of getting acquainted at the school such as Clemina Jordan and John Park, both of whom taught school. John Park was a long time pioneer teacher of the rural schools. A famous surgeon, Dr. Outland, received his schooling here, graduated from medical school, and often returned to the Beloit area by plane to perform difficult surgeries requested by the local physician.

There were some stricter rules for entering school at Grellet. One had to have good moral character, and to shun intoxicating liquor, tobacco, or profanity, 'pernicious literature,' dancing, card playing, and all other habits detrimental to good scholarship.

Religious services were held on Sunday and in the middle of the week with all students expected to attend. They were required to take active parts in Sunday School and bring Bibles to Sunday School class.

Unfortunately the academy building burned in 1895, and the trustees did not see fit to rebuild the school. Glen Elder had by this time a beautiful school to attend, as did Beloit and other towns around, so academy students attended these schools. Most of these high schools offered the normal training classes for the many district country schools which needed teachers constantly, year after year. There were then probably as many as 160 rural country schools in Mitchell County. The rural school built near where the academy stood was also called Grellet and later named Pleasant Valley.

The Grellet Academy served these pioneer families for a period of 15 years, with an influence which spread all over North Central Kansas. The Friends Church continues today, for when the Waconda Lake was flooding the valley, the Friends had built a new brick building in Glen Elder with money received from the government for the land and removal.

The high ideals for which the Academy taught and the Quaker church and community stood, are embedded in the hearts and minds of their many descendants to this day.

SHERIDAN COUNTY

This article is taken from the 100th anniversary book written by Marilyn Carder about the Sheridan County High School.

It was apparent from the beginning that the earliest settlers were concerned with providing their children an education. Schools were an important factor in building a civilized community, so as soon as the pioneers could arrange for a place and teacher, the schools were started.

In the spring of 1879 one of the first settlements of Sheridan County was founded. It was named Kenneth and was located two and one-half miles north of Hoxie. As the small town grew, a school was formed for the pioneer children. The Court House was used as a school house for that district until 1885 when bonds were voted for a building which would be large enough to accommodate community gatherings as well as school purposes in Kenneth.

When the county was organized in 1881, there were two school districts in the county with an enrollment of 37 students. By 1882 there were nine organized districts with a total of 172 students. Each school district had a three-member school board, elected at the annual school meeting. The board members hired the teachers, supervised the school district property, and represented their district in legal matters. After Kenneth was moved to the Hoxie site in the spring of 1886, an annual school meeting of District 19 was held at E. H. McCracken's office on Main Street on August 12, 1886. Block 11 in the city of Hoxie was donated by the Hoxie Town Company which they called 'school house square.' A school tax of one and three-fourths percent for contingent expenses was approved at that time. It was ordered that there should not be less than six months of school during the year. A vote of the citizens approved the use of \$3,000.00 worth of bonds to be used on building a two-story, four room schoolhouse. In the 1930s there were 67 coexisting school districts in Sheridan County. This was the height of the country schools.

A Normal school was established in Hoxie on January 1, 1889. This allowed 8th grade graduates to receive a two-year teaching certificate. Many students would receive their teaching certificate and then return to their home area to teach and then help on their family farm during the summer months.

The first term High School began Monday, September 14, 1903, with an enrollment of 21 students. R. G. Mueller was hired as the principal and only instructor. This enrollment continued to increase throughout the year until it reached a total of 43. Eleven of the thirteen townships of Sheridan County were represented. Country students would "move" to town for the school year to further their education.

On November 16, 1921, around 9:00 p.m., the city fire alarm was sounded. The county high school building was on fire. Owing to the somewhat isolated location of the building and the lack of a waterworks system, the fire had made too great of a headway for the citizens to save it. The Sheridan County High School building was a complete loss. All the school records, including grades and graduate listings, were destroyed. The fire had apparently started in the engine room.

The students had classes at the courthouse until the new brick school was used for the first time on Monday, November 22, 1922. On December 21, 1922, there was a dedication ceremony and citizens throughout the county and Hoxie filled the new auditorium. The Hoxie band was present for the evening's entertainment. The students began to find their way around and getting into a normal school pace. Many additions have been added to this 1924 school but it is still the center of the high school in use now.

ROOKS COUNTY

Stockton Congregational Academy, submitted by Carldon Broadbent

Before 1860 there was no well defined system of public education in the U. S. So the Congregational ministers and churches in the Northwestern Assoc. had the idea of starting an academy to prepare students in this part of Kansas for admission to Washburn College, which was a Congregational College founded in Topeka in 1865. Towns of Osborne, Stockton, and others contended for the school site. On the day of decision, Stockton was given the nod, 25 to 3 in the voting.

Stockton offered six sites, some of which were of large acreage. In April 1887 Stockton citizens came out with their teams to take the committee around to view these places. The Mickey brothers' site of 13 acres was chosen. Immediately town lots surrounding this site increased in value seventy-five percent!

Classes began in 1887, even before the building was finished. Two years later, Prof. I. F. Mather sent two students down to Medicine Creek for some cedar trees which were set around the grounds. The trees lasted longer than the academy.

The brainchild of the academy was the Rev. Sherman and he begged from all quarters.

He taught classes later when other educators deserted. He resigned his ten year pastorate to travel in the East trying to raise support and students. But the drought, the failure of the railroad to run through Stockton, and the fact of public high schools forming here and there, made the end inevitable in 1896.

This Stockton Academy happened to be the third Congregational Academy in Kansas. The city of Stockton had offered ten thousand dollars and water to the building. They raised this by selling subscriptions and scholarships. During the almost year and a half of building, the classes were held on the second floor of a store on Main Street. The building was dedicated on April 30, 1889. It housed both male and female students with room and board. The three-story edifice contained a chapel, kitchen, dining room, reading room, recitation rooms, and 14 rooms on the second floor for the women. The attic floor was one large dorm area for the men.

The curriculum was nonsectarian in nature, but students were to attend daily prayers and church of their choice on Sundays. There were three terms and the choices of curriculums included: classical, scientific, normal (teacher training), and commercial. In later years they added business courses and a music conservancy. A three-month term cost \$22 for tuition and \$72 for meals. A room cost \$12.50.

So for reasons stated above, the academy had its last class in 1896. The first class in 1887 contained 50 students, and the last class had only 30 students. At its closing perhaps more than 300 scholars had attended the Stockton Congregational Academy and had received a well rounded education. For many years they returned to celebrate their annual reunion and homecoming.

The public school in Stockton began in 1891. After the Academy stopped classes the local school district bought the beautiful three-story structure for the district's high school. It was the high school from 1898 to 1922. By 1923 Stockton's new public high school building was completed and the Academy building razed. So ended the era of the academies over most of this area of Kansas.

OSBORNE COUNTY

Hill Agricultural Academy, submitted by Carldon Broadbent

There was a Seventh-Day Adventist school located five miles northwest of Downs. This parochial school had been started as early as 1903 in the region between Portis and Downs. Unlike the other two academies along the Solomon Valley, the purpose of this school for all the grades was to support religious training for the children of the Adventist faith. The parents, not wanting a secular education thrust upon their children, were willing to send them to a boarding school, perhaps far from home. There they were educated from the first grade to the twelfth grade with the purpose of returning them to the field of agriculture.

Zerah Hill donated land in 1910 and on it was built a large three-story schoolhouse. The two storied square building sat on a full windowed basement, with an entrance into a three storied square tower, which probably contained the stairwell. The third story of this tower appears to have been to house the bell. The basement walls appeared to be of stone or brick. Since it set up so high on the high foundation, the steps were many and steep to the first floor. In this building were the classrooms and the dormitories.

Two years after the building was erected in 1910, a town named Academy was formally platted around the school and it was thought the new city would be a great success. By 1920 there were 96 students, fulfilling the early predictions. But four years later the funding for the academy stopped and it was forced to close, as all dreams of a Utopian paradise ended. The Seventh-Day Adventist schooling in this area of Kansas lasted from 1903 to 1924, with the last 14 years in the large structure described above.

GRAHAM COUNTY

Hill City Memorial High School, written by Lowell Beecher

By the end of the second decade of the Twentieth Century, opposition to the planned construction of a high school at Hill city had diminished, perhaps because the upper level of the 1905 stone school would not accommodate the curricular requirements of a rapidly-growing and demanding high school enrollment. At that time, domestic science classes were held at the First Presbyterian Church, manual training sessions were conducted at the Masonic hall, and various academic offerings were scheduled within the already-crowded confines of the courthouse.

With the passage of a bond issue which helped in making available \$135,000 in construction funding, opposition to the school further dissolved, and a number of individuals assumed active roles in initiating the developmental process: M. E. and M. J. Creighton, book store proprietors and owners of what had been, until 1914, the Creighton Ball Field at the current site of the Graham County Hospital, offered that tract as a site for school construction; banker Leander Messick offered the present location of The Graham Estates; and Lester Worchester indicated that he would provide a three-acre building site "south of the power house" at the edge of Hill City.

Nevertheless, to the surprise of many, the board of education—E. E. Mullaney, James O. McVey, and Martha Worchester—spurned these gratis offerings and chose instead to exercise court-sanctioned eminent domain rights and purchased, through condemnation, two city blocks of property (one full block and two one-half blocks) at the center of town. One of the one-half block tracts was later released. This decision was supported by a 181-10 vote of the district's patrons, many of whom had been involved in the initial 505-378 vote which sanctioned the issuance of bonds.

In reality, the board of education was following the precedent of John Welty, who had built on Pomeroy Avenue an ultra-modern "opera house" just a year earlier. Following, then, the construction of the Midway Theatre, the board further defused the still-festering north-versus-south animosity by placing the new building in close proximity to the gully which bisected—and still bisects—the town, thus offering occupants of the two factions equal access to the school and to its educational and extra-curricular opportunities.

L. P. Hogan offered free stone, well over 400 cords or 52,000 square feet of it, to be taken from his massive deposits of granite-like Ogallala quartzite just northeast of Hill City (31-7-22). Individuals seeking information requisite to submitting bids on stone shaping for the building's exterior walls were invited to view stock block "samples" on display at the Farmers and Merchants Bank. Eventually, expert stonemasons were paid a then-exorbitant wage of \$15.00 per day, \$5.00 above the standard wage, to prepare "hatchet faced" (edge-beveled) stone blocks for the massive building.

Hill City's new high school opened in the late summer of 1923; the grounds were soon cleared of construction debris and leveled by students with horse-drawn drags—and a single tractor—preparatory to the dedication of the building an Armistice Day of that year.

However, because the holiday fell on a Sunday, the dedication ceremony was rescheduled for Monday, November 12, 1923. Parents and spouses of the 23 Graham county soldiers who had died in uniform during The Great War were issued special invitations. The school auditorium, considered the most aesthetically-pleasing venue in western Kansas, was filled to capacity as speakers explained the benefits of education and lamented the loss of young life, even in sacrifice to freedom.

Unquestionably, the most poignant moment of the day came with the unveiling by Martha J. Worchester, board clerk, of the bronze tablet listing the names of those who had served during World War I. with special recognition of the 23 soldiers whose names were prefaced by stars. The memorialized soldiers were from across the county and from varied ethnic groups: Scroggins, Findley, Griffie, Kobler, Davis, Hess, Beecher, Irwin, Kline. . . . Listed were soldiers from Morland and Nicodemus and Hill City and from outlying farms and settlements. Several were not permanent county residents: one was a Franklin county native, a transient worker with a temporary Graham county address; another was a local farm boy who was teaching at Liberal High School and who had left Graham county for advanced education nearly 10 years earlier. Seward county, too, claimed him as one of its heroes. A half-dozen had fallen to enemy fire, but most had succumbed to Spanish influenza, the worldwide pandemic which claimed the strongest, those seemingly most capable of surviving the hemorrhagic disease. Still, all had in common that they were wearing American colors as they perished.

Then, almost 25 years later, on Memorial Day, May 30, 1948, the 30 graham county soldiers who had died in uniform during World War II were likewise memorialized during a second ceremony. A second bronze tablet was dedicated, this one presented by Joyce F. Blackman, and subsequently placed at a second stairwell landing, further consecrating an already-consecrated edifice. Another list

of names was read: Brown, Young, Desbien, Wallace, Parker, Niehaus, McKisson (twice), Gudgell, Riedel. . .

Forty two years later, in 1965, Hill City Memorial High School ceased to exist. The school was stripped of its memorial status, and renamed in honor of a Nineteenth Century narrative poet when it became Longfellow Middle School. In May 2009, after 44 years as a middle school, its closed one more time as the classes were moved into the Hill City Grade School and Hill City High School buildings.