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Date August 11, 1976

STUDENT EXPERIENCES IN EARLY PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE MANHATTAN, MONTANA AREA

by

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted in an attempt to learn if specific experiential data gathered from students of early public schools in the Manhattan area of Montana, could identify various characteristics that typify these early schools; which, in turn, would possibly provide educators with information pertinent to assisting in the development of valid direction for the future of public education.

In attempting to provide validity to indicators of future direction in public education, certain specific and appropriate areas of concern were developed. These areas were designed as categorized questions directed at determining the characteristics of the early public schools.

Primarily through the procedure of study and analysis of subject testimony, an inspection was made into early activities surrounding public education as they related to learning environment, school policies, community, curriculum, and parent-student attitudes toward school.

Subject biographies, community and school background information, and subject testimonies are included in the results.

Conclusions related to learning environment, school policies and parent-student attitudes toward school appear to be the most important. In connection with the study, some implications for education follow the conclusions.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Public education in this country has undergone considerable change since its beginnings. Catchwords of contemporary education include: open schools, mainstreaming, career education, behavior modification, and an almost limitless list of other familiar concepts, philosophies, approaches and trends indicative of the sometimes fruitful, somewhat myopic maze that pervades the Twentieth Century domain of public education.

Many of America's educators, political leaders and general citizenry presently seem not so much concerned with developing new concepts for public education, but rather, trying to determine which programs, approaches, methodologies and curricula are best suited for the needs of the student and society. In this search, many have backtracked to the earlier days of public education, when the "3 R's," and "Fundamentals," the "Basics," were all that seemed necessary for a good education. It seems highly unlikely that in the dawn of this vastly technological world, that reading, writing and arithmetic will suffice as the only essential goals for public education. Assuredly, man's only avenue for evaluating his present state and determining his future

is through the study of the past. If any particulars from the phase of public education which unequivocally prescribed the "Basics," or any other phase for that matter, when scrutinized, can yield one bit of perspective on direction in public education, then educators should take notice.

The history of Montana's public education is somewhat unique in that it remains chronologically quite near to educators in 1976. Schools did exist, of course, in sparse and temporary numbers throughout Montana Territory, but free public education was not available to the majority of Montanans until the early 1900's; and some of the students who attended these first public schools, the sons and daughters of Montana's early settlers, are still living.

It is through the experiences of some of these pioneer pupils of public education that perhaps a portion of valid input for determining future directions in public education can be acquired. The purpose, then, of this study is to chronicle the school experiences of former students who attended early public schools in the Manhattan area.

Chapter 2

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In attempting to provide validity to indicators of the future direction in public education, certain specific and appropriate areas of concern were developed. These areas of concern were designed as categorized questions directed at determining the nature of the early public schools in the Manhattan area. Therefore, the focus of interest of this project is on the school related experiences of former pupils.

More precisely, this study sought specific experiential data of early public school students pertinent to the following questions related to learning environment, school policies, community, curriculum, and parent-student attitudes toward school.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

1. What was the nature of discipline?
2. What physical characteristics defined the learning environment?
3. How did class makeup affect the learning environment?

SCHOOL POLICIES

1. What situations brought about the establishment of school policies?

2. What role did teachers have in terms of school policies?

COMMUNITY

1. What was the relationship between school and community activities?

2. What was the degree of community interest in school activities?

CURRICULUM

1. What subjects were taught?

2. What subjects were emphasized?

PARENT-STUDENT ATTITUDES TOWARD SCHOOL

1. Were parental attitudes positive towards public education for their children?

2. Did students seem to enjoy school?

3. Did former students perceive their education to be beneficial?

4. Did former students perceive their education as being adequate?

5. Did former students perceive public education today differently than they perceived their education?

Chapter 3

PROCEDURES

PRELIMINARY PROCEDURES

All material was gathered by interviews with Montana residents who began attending public schools in the Manhattan area during the period from 1899 to 1910. This period was selected because it was the earliest period of public education in the Manhattan area for which survivors could be found.

Initially it was very difficult to find members of this group. that is, to find survivors. School records at Manhattan High School do date back to 1912, but girls' maiden names virtually eliminated females; whereas, male students of that period were found to be deceased, or their location could not be determined. In addition, the records only indicated when a student was enrolled in the first high school, which was built about 1913, and gave no clues as to whether a student attended Manhattan's grade school.

At this point, the only remaining local source of information appeared to be the older residents of the community. Because Manhattan is a small town, local people, particularly from the Senior Citizens' Center, were helpful

in verifying a local woman as one of Manhattan's early students. The interview with this person, and the subsequent interviews with other former students provided a rather complete list of former early students and their whereabouts.

PROCEDURAL PROBLEMS

Several problems occurred during this project that restricted and/or prevented the information gathering process. First of all, many potential interviews were unsuccessful due to the poor health of former students. In some cases, interview situations were difficult because they were upsetting, or the subject had a hearing loss or other physical impairment that made the interview difficult to conduct. Sometimes interviews were postponed until the subject was feeling better. In one instance a good prospect died before he could be interviewed; another was recuperating from a stroke.

A second problem was that some people who were interviewed, and thought they had appropriate information to offer, had little information relevant to the study, or later were discovered to be unreliable sources. Unfortunately, these people believed they were retelling their experiences, when, in fact, they were relating someone

else's experiences that had been shared with them at some time in the past. Related to this problem is the fact that some persons could clearly recall only the "high points" of their school days. However, in some instances, these recollections were very revealing, and although transcripts for these people were not constructed, certain isolated incidents from their past were also included in the fifth chapter.

A major obstacle that had to be dealt with in gathering information for this study concerned the self image of the subjects, which is perhaps indicative of the self concept of many older people in our society, and should be noted by any researcher utilizing that population. The subjects, who ranged in age from seventy-three to eighty-three, had apparently viewed themselves as non-essential and non-productive, and felt that their histories had little to offer of value. Typical initial reactions ranged from, "I really don't have anything to say that anybody would want to hear," to, "This can't be very interesting to you," It seems that in any study dealing with encounters with older people who are to provide personal material, considerable patience, encouragement and empathy are essential on the part of the interviewer.

PROCEDURES

The procedure for all interviews was similar. Initial contact was made with the subjects at which time they agreed to the interview and the use of it, and a preliminary meeting was arranged. During the preliminary meeting, much of the person's general history was discussed to determine if he or she was a likely subject. In addition, certain school experiences were discussed which later helped to develop supplementary questions for the interview.

All interviews were taped on cassette cartridges. A condenser microphone was used. While an external microphone will result in better clarity of reproduction, the condenser microphone made the interview seem more informal, and made the subjects' conversations appear more spontaneous and natural in flow of language and expression. Total time for interviews averaged approximately two hours.

The interviews were conducted by use of a series of questions, both general and specific. A list of these questions, which generally defines the nature of the problem stated in chapter two, follows. The tapes were edited by the use of the recorder meter, excluding historical material not related to the questions.

GUIDELINE QUESTIONS FOR TAPED INTERVIEWS

1. Did you enjoy your school years? Why?

2. Do you remember your classmates? Classes? Teachers? School events?

3. What are your earliest memories of school?

4. What were the subjects you took in school? Did they change each year?

5. Were you in a one room school?

6. What were your parents' attitudes toward your going to school?

7. Which subjects did you like the most? The least? Why?

8. Did your brothers and sisters attend school?

9. What were your teachers like? Were they good?

10. How was discipline handled in the school?

11. How long was the school day? Did it vary grade-wise?

12. How long was the school term? Did it vary grade-wise?

13. Did school seem to change at all while you were a student?

14. Did you work hard at your studies? Did you have homework?

15. Was your attendance good? How about other students?

16. Did the school have sufficient books and other materials, or did you provide them?

17. Did you make friends at school?

18. Was school a benefit socially?

19. Were your parents and other community members active in school affairs?

20. What were your feelings about going to school?

21. Were there any extracurricular activities?

22. Did social activities take place in the school building? Community activities?

23. Do you think public education is more important today, or when you were in school?

24. How did farm and ranch kids get to school?

25. What did students do at lunch time? At recess?

26. Could you describe the school building(s)?

27. Did you advance as far in your schooling as you wanted?

28. Do you think your schooling, outside of learning how to read and write, was a definite benefit to you?

29. What are your opinions of public education today?

30. Which subjects were stressed when you were in school?

Some of the above questions are interrelated, and, in some instances, repetitive, but the design was intentional in order to specify responses. Responses to the questions were rearranged in transcription to provide for better organization and development of thought. Also, questions were occasionally rephrased or developed more substantially, depending on the nature of responses.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

The material presented in this chapter contains the transcriptions of taped testimonials of three subjects who were students in various schools in the Manhattan area. Background information on pertinent communities is given first. This is followed by some historical data that relates to the history of the schools attended by the former students. Each subject's transcription is preceeded by a brief biography. This information was collected from preliminary interviews with the seven subjects who were interviewed.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON COMMUNITIES

Manhattan

Manhattan was preceeded by Hamilton, a small community center which was located south of present day Manhattan, and was settled about 1865. The Northern Pacific Railroad laid their tracks about one mile north of Hamilton, and the town soon entirely moved to its present site. The name changed to Moreland, the name of a man who operated the Moreland Ditch Company and dug the nearby Moreland Irrigation Canal. In 1891, a group of New York businessmen

organized the Manhattan Malting Company in Moreland, and the town soon changed its name to Manhattan. Manhattan presently has k-12 schools, with a student population of about 450.

Central Park

All that exists of Central Park today are a few residences, a defunct cheese company, and a dilapidated building that once housed one of the area's first post offices. Central Park is located four miles east of Manhattan, and at one time was a busy little community serving ranchers, farmers and a large crew of lumberjacks from a nearby sawmill. Public school is no longer existent in Central Park.

HISTORY OF SCHOOLS

Manhattan Schools

The dates pertaining to Manhattan's schools are quite accurate, except in the case of a school that existed in Hamilton. Manhattan's (Moreland's) first school was built in 1883. It was a one room school, and when no longer adequate, was split in two pieces, both of which are portions of existing homes in Manhattan. The second school,

a two story affair with two rooms on each floor, was constructed in 1896. This building at first was utilized as a one room school, as Manhattan only had one teacher.

In 1913, Manhattan built its first major structure, a two story brick building that housed grades one through twelve. This building was severely damaged when it experienced the epicenter of an earthquake in 1925, and had to be virtually rebuilt. This school later served as an elementary school after the construction of a new high school in 1922, which is still serving as the high school. A new elementary building was erected in 1959, and at that time the first high school was torn down.

Central Park Schools

Very little precise data is available on the Central Park schools. The first one was a one room wooden structure, painted red. A two story, four room school made of blocks was built prior to 1920, and is still standing, although not in use.

LEETA TOWNSEND BIOGRAPHY

Leeta Mae Scow was born August 10, 1893, on a Baker Creek homestead east of Manhattan. Her father, Oliver Scow,

who crossed the ocean from Denmark in a sailboat, was one of the very early settlers in the Manhattan area. Leeta's mother, Carrie Perks, was the first white girl born in Butte, Montana. Leeta attended grades one through eight in Manhattan's two earliest schools, which was as far as she could progress at that time. At the age of 21, she again enrolled in school at Manhattan's first high school, which had opened around 1913. She repeated the first half of the ninth grade, but in 1915, she quit school to get married to Charles Townsend. Leeta Townsend, who has lived on the Dry Creek Road east of Manhattan for 83 years, has been active in school, church, and community affairs for more than half a century.

LEETA TOWNSEND TRANSCRIPT

I enjoyed going to school very much. I remember all my classmates, although they are pretty near all dead now. Of course, my parents wanted us to go to school. My brother didn't like school very much, but he had to go anyway. My mother and dad had very little schooling; however, I don't think there was much school available to them. Even while I was in school, kids who went to high school had to go to Bozeman.

The first school I went to was a two story building, built in 1896. When I first started, there were probably thirty kids, first grade through eighth, all in one room. They had a big, old coal furnace in the middle of the room, and on cold days everybody kept their coats on and sat around the furnace. And the coal fumes came up and made you sick. Several times I got sick and walked across the field home.

At first, half of the school was used as school, and half of it was church. Anything that was public was held upstairs in the school. They had traveling shows, dances, and other social events. Of course, the Holland people didn't believe in dances, so then we would have to have programs, which were held on Friday afternoons. Some students gave literary readings, some spoke pieces, and some played musical instruments. The parents came to these. The two story school was torn down in 1913, the same year that they built the first high school.

In the first grade I had a little old reading book, a spelling book and a copy book for penmanship. The little kids had to go to school all day too. My husband said that when he started school he used to sit there and turn the pages of his primer 'til he wore the pages off. There wasn't much for them to do, and the teacher had too many kids.

In the grades I liked geography and arithmetic the best. In high school it was Latin and geography. I didn't like civics, but I finally had to take it. And as I said before, the teacher had too many pupils. They didn't have any time to give anybody special help. And our class periods were only fifteen or twenty minutes long. I missed out on some history. They put some of us ahead a grade to balance the grades out. I think it was fifth grade.

My husband said that when he started school, it was held for only three months during the summer. When I started school it was a nine month term, even though all the big boys stayed out during the spring and fall to help their dads on the farm. Girls, of course, didn't help much in the field. It wasn't a woman's work. It wasn't a woman's world in those days either. Attendance was pretty good. Most parents saw to it that their youngsters went to school regularly.

We had music first thing in the morning when I was in grade school. We'd sing songs like "America" and "Swanee River." Of course, everybody had to sing. I think courses like music are good for kids that are musically inclined. I don't know if it helps the other ones.

We went to school from nine 'til four. We had recesses, of course, and would play pom-pom pole-away, dare-base, and baseball, or most any game that as many as could, could play together. The older kids kind of supervised.

We always had track meets every spring in the grades, and everybody went to them. They held the meets at Belgrade, out on the flats on the rocks. This was before the western part of Belgrade was built up. Everybody took their lunches and stayed all day to watch the kids go through their running and jumping, or whatever else they had to do. I got there by horse and buggy; the rest had to walk or get there by horseback or buggy. They didn't have all these buses that pick kids up at the door.

We also had declamation contests close to the end of the school year. Several kids that were good would go to Belgrade or Bozeman to compete.

I remember my fifth grade teacher, Mr. Clothier. He didn't have any discipline. We could do anything. We tormented him. We hid his clothes. We had ink-wells in the desks, and ink got all over the place. The boys in the back of the girls with the long hair, would dip their hair in the inkwells. That helped alot, of course. So one by one, the parents took their children out of school because the teacher wasn't doing any good. When the school year ended there were just a few of us left.

Then we had a disciplinarian. Cyrus Paxton was his name, and he meant discipline. He had a switch on his desk, and when his temper got away from him, he'd march down the aisles trying to get his temper under control. Boy, when he came down our aisle everybody was sure busy doing something!

I tell you, when he said something, he meant it. But he had all those kids to tune down because they had just done as they pleased; and he had this terrible temper. One of the boys laughed one time when Mr. Paxton was trying to talk to him, and he gave that boy the most awful floggin' there ever was! The boy went home to his dad, of course, and the dad came back to see what he could do to his teacher. Well, the teacher just promptly throwed him out the door on his head. Then this old Dutchman came down to my dad, who was one of the first trustees, and

wanted him to put the teacher out. Well, of course, he didn't do anything. He felt the teacher did what he should have done, and didn't figure he should interfere with the teacher's business anyway. But this teacher sure taught the youngsters that they better do what he said.

I don't remember how the teachers were paid when I started school. Probably from taxes mostly. Of course, most of them boarded out around the town. I do remember that if money was ever needed for anything at school, Mrs. Smith would organize an entertainment program for the community, and all the youngsters would be in the program. I remember one time they raised money to buy the school bell.

Everybody had to get out of the school at noon if the weather was nice, but they didn't want you to leave the school grounds. I remember one of my cousins left her books at home, and she lived out of town. She wanted to get her books at noon, but the teacher said no. Well, when he went home for dinner she hitched up her horse, and I went with her. By the time we got back, we got a good scorin'! We had to get up in front of the school and apologize for disobeying the rules.

In high school the farm kids still came on horseback. There was a barn behind the school to keep their horses in, and the kids had to bring their own hay or oats to feed them with at noon.

The last teacher I had I told I hated English, and she said, "You don't either;" and I said "I sure do." But by the time I had gone that half year with her, I realized what English could do for you, if you had any sense.

I think school is more important today. You have to have a high school education to get any kind of a job. When I went to school most kids had an eighth grade education, but only a few got a high school diploma.

I think my education helped me to help my children learn. And you can understand what they are going through and what they're supposed to be learning.

I think school today puts too much emphasis on games. The kids are just keyed up for basketball and football. They don't spend enough time learning;

they spend too much time on pleasure. Whether it's a good thing for the school and the country, I don't know.

LONA MEECE BIOGRAPHY

Lona Meece Anderson was born November 11, 1898, near Somerset, Kentucky, the third of five surviving children of Charles and Deliliah Meece. The Meeces were "hill people," living on a small farm twelve miles from Somerset.

In 1904, the family traveled to Belgrade, Montana, as Charles Meece had intended to homestead in the nearby Horseshoe Hills. However, Mr. Meece instead landed a job as a planer in a sawmill south of Central Park. Lona attended Central Park schools for approximately seven years, at which time the family moved to Manhattan.

Lona attended both of Manhattan's earliest schools, and was one of three graduates from Manhattan's first high school graduating class in 1916.

After high school, Lona continued her education at Western Normal School in Dillon, Montana, and became a school teacher. Her career lasted ten years, including jobs at Heeb School (southwest of Manhattan), Hardin and Lodge Grass.

Lona Meece Anderson is the widow of McKinley T. Anderson, and presently resides in Belgrade.

LONA MEECE TRANSCRIPT

My father brought us to Montana to homestead. However, my mother wanted to be where her children could get an education. My mother only went through about the fifth grade, and my father through the eighth grade. My mother knew that if they continued living in the South that her children didn't have much chance to go on to school. In that country my father couldn't eke out a living to send his children beyond the eighth grade. Therefore, my mother saw to it that we lived where we could go to school.

We came to Belgrade on the Burlington, and my uncle met us. We went out to his homestead, and we were there until my father found a position at the lumber mill at Central Park.

I started school at Central Park. I can't remember the first day, but I do remember this: We had long desks, two could sit at them, and I sat with my sister. We had to share the same desk. I can remember my mind wandering because there was something going on all the time. Instead of doing my own work, I was listening to others.

The first school was just a little red school house like any other. At the front of the room was a little platform with the teacher's desk and the blackboard. The coats and overshoes were at the back. We just had hooks along the walls.

We had another school at Central Park. They built a school out of sandstone blocks. It was a two room school house with a classroom on each floor. It was a two room school because the town had grown. I went to the upper grades at that school, and my teacher was Miss Quam. She was red-headed. I don't remember if she was a good teacher, but I don't think she liked me very well. When we had art I'd always have to add a little bit more, and she would criticize that.

When we first went to school in Central Park the

children made fun of us because we talked like Southerners. We would say "you-all" and "sit a spell," all those Southern expressions. My next oldest sister, Idelia, had a very quick temper; my oldest sister and I were quite shy and more sensitive. We didn't live very far from the school house, and they kept teasing us about our talking. Well, Idelia just came home and got the broom, and took the broom down to the school where they were all gathered and were making fun of us, and she just beat up on every one of them! We never had any trouble after that.

I do remember we had a teacher by the name of Mr. Crawford at the two room school in Central Park. He could flip a pencil from his nose, and it would either hit you or the desk. That was the way we were disciplined. I also remember two older boys went out all night. I think they went to Logan. Here we were, all at school, and the team came up to the hitching post, and the boys were both asleep in the wagon! I don't know what was done with them.

School was from nine 'til four, with a morning and afternoon recess, and an hour for noon. We went to school for nine months. At recess the boys played marbles; we jumped rope and played "steal-sticks." And sometimes the girls would get together and play house. You know, this is the kitchen, this is the dining room, this is the living room. We never went down to the river to play, or left the school grounds during recess, although the teacher never told us we couldn't. It was just understood.

When we went from the red school to the two room school, school seemed different. It seemed like we had more freedom, and there was more room. We weren't so crowded. Mr. Crawford and his wife taught there.

When Bernard McLees and I were in the seventh grade we had to take geography and physiology. Then we had to take a final test. He came by in his horse and buggy. And here I was, just a little ignorant girl, and he was a nice little boy. That was a big day in my life. Imagine, a girl of my age going out with a boy! We rode up to Crawford's, and they coached us all evening. Then they took us into Belgrade where we took our geography and physiology tests. I think they were some sort of equivalency tests that country school kids had to take to get into high school.

When I was going into the ninth grade we moved to Manhattan where my father became a blacksmith. I went to school for one year at the old school, and attended high school at Manhattan's first high school, which has since been torn down. The teachers tutored me in several classes, which allowed me to finish high school in three years. I think they did this in order to have more students graduate in the first graduation. I graduated in Manhattan's first class, The Class of 1916, along with two other students, Madge Gibson and Ruth Green.

I liked the association of the children and teachers when I went to school. It seemed like the teachers of that time were very understanding if you had a problem, and it always made you feel better after you had talked to them and got their opinions on things.

There was never any discord in high school. There was never any bickering. And there weren't any cliques. Everybody was congenial and friendly, and we got along very nicely together.

Miss Hagen was my English teacher and my favorite. She was the one that had tutored me so that I could get four years of English in three terms. She was very understanding.

Coming to school I always had to go by the post office, and Miss Hagen always wanted me to pick up her mail. She had a boyfriend in Missoula, and, of course, she'd get letters. We had that much in common because she knew as soon as I entered the room and walked toward her desk that she had a letter. She was the teacher that stands out in my mind as being the closest to me. Just having a little secret about those letters gave me alot of confidence.

When I first started grade school I had reading, writing and spelling. Later I had arithmetic, civics, geography, history and physiology, as well. When I was in high school I had American history, modern and ancient history, science, algebra, bookeeping, geometry; two years of Latin, two years of German, and four years of English; and home economics, which was called domestic science. At that time, it seemed the State required that you have four years of English and two years of foreign language in order to enter college. At least, those subjects were stressed.

I didn't take work home while I was in grade school, but I had to work through high school. It was hard. And I can remember my mother not being able to help me, and I'd be sitting at the dining room table studying and crying, and having a fit; and pretty soon she'd look in from the kitchen door, and I'd be all smiles, and then she knew I had gotten it. It would have been easier for me if my parents could have helped me with my school work, but I retained what I studied because I had to do it on my own.

My education took me places. It gave me a knowledge of people and getting along with people. It broadened me in alot of ways, and I learned to understand that one person was just about as good as another person, regardless of his stature in life. I think I advanced as far in my education as I could. I could have gone further, but I got married, and money was a big factor, too. Even when I went to Normal at Dillon for three months, I had to pay all the money back to Dad. It was just necessary to do so then.

I would like to see our children taught a little more of being able to read, and being able to write more legibly; and improvement in spelling and math, also. To me those are the fundamentals. I think they should be instilled in children while they are young, so that they can then create.

VIOLET LILLY BIOGRAPHY

Violet Collins Lilly was born October 22, 1903, at her parent's homestead northwest of Belgrade, Montana. Violet's parents, Frank and Grace Cheney Collins, had five children, but only Violet and a younger sister survived infancy.

In 1900, the family moved to Helena where Frank learned the butchering trade. He moved to Central Park in

1908, to operate a butcher shop and meat wagon, and this is where Violet began school. From 1911 to 1914, Frank Collins worked a farm in the Nigger Hollow area west of Three Forks. Violet then attended a country school for approximately two terms. Mr. Collins moved again in 1914, this time to Manhattan where he operated an auction service. Violet completed both grade school and high school at Manhattan.

Violet married Walen Francis Lilly in 1924, and they resided in Manhattan until 1943. They then moved to Three Forks where Mrs. Lilly, now a widow, still owns and operates an apartment and rooming house.

VIOLET LILLY TRANSCRIPT

I started school at Central Park in the old, two-story block school. The first four grades were downstairs, and the next four were upstairs. Mr. Crawford was my first teacher. He made us stand up at the side of him when we had reading, and I remember I was scared stiff when it was my turn. He had good discipline, although I can't remember him ever thrashing a kid.

I went to the first grade with an Indian girl, Mary Sinclair. We used to box in the ring, and I knocked her out! We had boxing on Friday afternoons at school for entertainment. We all took turns at it.

I also remember a crippled girl, Betsy Stone, who taught upstairs. I remember one day she was ringing one of those hand bells, and she stopped to talk to one of the older boys; and I thought I would run under her when she was ringing the bell. Well, I ran under, and she bopped me across the head, and the blood just

flew. I ran all over, and they couldn't catch me because I was so scared!

I had writing, reading, spelling and a little arithmetic when I started school. Later we had geography, Montana history, and English, in addition to those other subjects. In the higher grades we added civics. After about the fourth grade we had art as a class, too. I liked history the most when I was going to school. I still like history.

The Central Park school at that time was the hub of the community. And the school and the church were the only places the people had to meet in. I remember a dance that was held at the school. You see, there were three hundred lumberjacks that worked at the old sawmill up the West Gallatin River, not far from Central Park. I can remember they had the walls decorated with these big saw blades, axes, and these picks that they used to stick in logs.

I was only five when I went to that dance. You know, the whole family used to go to dances and other social events. They had no babysitters then. And everybody danced with everybody else. There was nothing wrong with high school girls dancing with the lumberjacks. And even when I was going to high school there was none of this "going steady." You could go stag and have just as much fun; probably more!

We moved to Nigger Hollow when I was about eight. I went to school in a one room school where they had all eight grades. The teacher's name was Sadie Joyce. I went there for one term and part of another. We had to walk two miles to school and carry our lunch and water. There was no well at the school. We didn't go to school during the winter months on account of the weather. We had more of a summer school instead.

I finished the grades in Manhattan's old grade school, and graduated from their then new high school. Even when I started high school, kids who lived on farms rode horses or drove old cars to school. And I also can remember that they started a hot lunch program while I was in high school, but they didn't fix the whole meal. You could buy a hot dish, say soup, but you had to bring your own sandwiches and other food.

We had a girls' basketball team when I was in high school. They had one a few years before, but didn't have enough girls again until I was a junior and senior. We were only defeated once in two years, and that was by Helena. Most of the girls' teams we played against weren't too good, so we used to play against the second boys' high school team to have a good workout.

We played all the little schools around the valley that had teams. We traveled on the train and would stay overnight for some games. I remember playing at Pony one time. We rode the train with the Belgrade boys. The Manhattan girls played the Pony girls, and the Belgrade boys played the Pony boys' team. After the game we danced in the gym 'til the wee hours of the morning. And there was no hotel in Pony, so families had to keep us in their homes. Our coach was the chaperone. We weren't turned loose like girls are now days, I'll tell you.

That reminds me of a school assembly we had on dating etiquette. It was given by an older man. You weren't even supposed to take hold of a fella's arm unless you were crippled or something! Of course, we believed everything he told us.

I think education was just as important for all children then, as it is now. But I think for a person to get a job, it's more important today. I think, at the time, I advanced as far with my education as I wanted to. It certainly broadened my knowledge of things. I also learned to cope with people; to give and take. I really believe in education today, mainly because my folks have really done well by it.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS

SUMMARY

This study was conducted in an attempt to learn if an historical search into the educational events of early public schools in the Manhattan area could identify various characteristics that typify early public schools; which, in turn, would possibly provide educators with information pertinent to assisting in the development of valid direction for the future of public education. Primarily through the procedure of study and analysis of subject testimony, an inspection was made into early activities surrounding public education in Montana as they related to learning environment, school policies, community, curriculum and parent-student attitudes. In the second chapter, several questions were put forth on the assumption that all possible effort would be made to establish valid answers to all questions. In this chapter, the questions are restated and followed, in each case, by an answer based on evidence derived from the study.

Learning Environment

1. What was the nature of discipline?

The discipline in Manhattan area schools was quite authoritarian, and apparently effective. Certainly some teachers had disciplinary problems with students, but parental influence and attitude seemed to eliminate most problems. None of the subjects interviewed could ever recall a student being expelled from school and attendance was good. Parents insisted that all their children needed a minimal amount of reading, writing, spelling and arithmetic--the children were just told they had to attend school.

Secondly, it seems that teachers were given ultimate authority with students in terms of disciplinary action. Perhaps most noteworthy is the nature of the discipline. Even though it was expected that students rigidly adhered to rules and regulations, disciplinary measures were a far cry from the image of the stern schoolmaster, with cane in hand, of the Nineteenth Century. Corporal punishment, of course, existed and was accepted, but was seldom administered.

2. What physical characteristics defined the learning environment?

Prior to the replacement of the one room schools, limited space was probably a factor that influenced the

learning environment. Lona Meece's observation on her moving to a larger school was that it gave her a sense of freedom that she hadn't experienced in the one room school. It would seem that a feeling of physical confinement would affect a student's attitude in class.

The inadequate heating facilities of Manhattan's one room school probably provided for some comradery as pupils huddled around the stove in their coats, yet it was also likely that this situation had a deleterious influence on the daily lessons. Improper ventilation definitely altered the learning environment of Leeta Townsend, a girl who very much enjoyed school, but many a day left school and trudged home with headaches caused by noxious fumes from the furnace.

Of course, the classical early American classroom setting, with rows of desks, and the teacher positioned on a platform at the front of the room, still exists in public schools. Nevertheless, it seems that student and teacher behavior were as likely influenced then by this structured arrangement as they would be now.

3. How did class makeup affect the learning environment?

The class makeup in the Manhattan area was probably not unique at the time, but it contrasts sharply from that of today's schools. The first public schools were one room buildings, with one teacher for eight grades. Students aged from five to twenty, and not surprisingly, some students were as old, if not older than the teacher, who needed only three months of normal school, in addition to a high school diploma, to be certified.

School populations in the Manhattan area varied, but apparently were no less than twenty, and probably grew to close to forty before the schools became departmentalized with additional teachers. It is easy to comprehend why Lona Meece recalled her inability to concentrate as a young student. The fact of having siblings sitting at the same desk would also seem to be a factor.

School Policies

1. What situations brought about the establishment of school policies?

School policy seemed to have evolved in part out of necessity and convenience, more than desire for codes and regulations. For example, Manhattan established an entertainment program which excluded dancing due to the fact that

several students' religious beliefs prevented them from participating in dances. School terms were designed to accomodate the pupils who were needed to help with planting and harvesting. In some cases, the combination of weather and geographical location influenced regulations for length or school terms. The Nigger Hollow School, which was located in an area of rugged terrain and heavy winters, held school during the summer months only. In addition, Lona Meece was allowed, perhaps even encouraged, to finish high school in three years to become a member of the first graduating class. Leeta Townsend was moved ahead a grade to help balance out the students per grade. Yet, another student, who was an incredibly gifted athlete and a classmate of Violet Lilly, was allowed to linger in high school for some seven years before he was graduated.

2. What role did teachers have in terms of school policies?

The early schools in Manhattan had school trustees, but their functions were minimal, and any policies that had a bearing on the students were encompassed in the rules and regulations of the individual teacher. Disciplinary procedures were a teacher's individual prerogative. Recess and noon hour restrictions varied from teacher to teacher.

In addition, it seems that in many cases the teacher was the official contact between school and community. Various copies of Manhattan's first newspaper, The Manhattan Record, dating from 1906 through 1912, were located at the residence of one of the subjects. Several issues contained news articles released by the teachers in Manhattan, notifying readers of policy-related information.

Community

1. What was the relationship between school and community activities?

The school building provided a social facility for dances and programs; a town meeting place, and a place for church affairs.

2. What was the degree of community interest in school affairs?

Initially, it seems that community interest was limited to an occasional literary program, or attendance at an annual track meet. With the growth of the community and school, and the addition of a high school, community interest became stronger, particularly in extracurricular activities.

Curriculum

1. What subjects were taught?

Reading, writing and spelling were the standard subjects in the early grades in Manhattan area schools, and these courses were generally retained through the eighth grade. Arithmetic as a course was probably introduced before the third or fourth grade. Geography, assorted history courses, civics, and physiology (health oriented) were added in the upper grades. Art was also later introduced as a course at Central Park Grade School. Music was not formally a course, but all pupils were exposed to some vocal music.

Course offerings at Manhattan's first high school included: arithmetic, algebra, geometry, physics, biology, first year science, English, spelling, Latin and German; bookkeeping, ancient history, modern history, American history, Montana history, manual training and domestic science (sewing and cooking).

2. What subjects were emphasized?

The only subjects that were emphasized seem to be those required by the State. When Manhattan High School first opened, the State required four years of English, two years of math, and a total of sixteen credits to graduate.

In addition, school officials evidently recommended that college bound students take at least two years of foreign language.

Parent-Student Attitudes Toward School

1. Were parental attitudes positive toward public education for their children?

Most parents had very little schooling. Undoubtedly, they both regretted their lack of education and valued an education for their children. Parents insisted that their children go to school.

2. Did students seem to enjoy school?

Most students enjoyed school. This was probably more true of the girls than of the boys.

3. Did former students perceive their education to be beneficial?

It seems that students viewed their education as a definite benefit in being a better and more learned person, but not as a means to acquiring a job.

4. Did former students perceive their education as being adequate?

Apparently most students felt they received sufficient education, yet in terms of the three main subjects

of this study, all women, there seems to have been some restrictions. Money was a factor. So was marriage.

5. Did former students perceive public education today differently than they perceived their education?

The former students seemed to view education today as an occupational necessity. They also apparently perceived today's public schools as lacking in providing students with sufficient training in reading, writing and other basic skills. In addition, although they perceived schools of today as necessary for acquiring a job, they considered their own schooling responsible in part for making them better persons.

Limitations to Conclusions

The conclusions made from the experiences of early Manhattan area students were limited for several reasons. The subjects were asked to recall incidents that occurred from fifty to seventy-five years ago. Primary sources of information are considerably valuable when retrieving historical data; yet, in this study the reliability of these sources could not be ascertained to any great degree. However, due to the subjective nature of much of the information, accuracy was not considered a critical factor.

A more major limitation on the conclusions of this study was created by the number of subjects interviewed. Early schools in the Manhattan area had relatively few students, and as best as could be determined from the people who began attending during the period from 1899 to 1910, only ten survived when this study was done. Of this group one died prior to being interviewed, one was mentally incapacitated, one could not be located and seven were interviewed. Of the seven, only three provided comprehensive, seemingly reliable material.

Another limiting factor in this study was the absence of school experiences of male students.

One further limitation on conclusions was related to the content of the questions used in the interviews. It seemed mandatory to develop a structured approach to interviews of historical nature. Certainly any person doing this type of study needs to control the nature of the information collected. Yet, in many of the interviews, it was apparent that the original questions needed refining. In some cases, this resulted in the providing of several leading or probing questions which were subordinate or related to guideline questions.

Some Implications for Education

It seems that educators should take note of the relationship of parent and school in our early public schools. Despite the fact that early schools could not offer much that is taken for granted in today's institutions, it seems that public schools provided that which parents wanted schools to provide. As logical and necessary as the relationship is in public education, it has disintegrated considerably. In fact, there seems to be a certain insular quality characteristic of many of today's public institutions. Even in a school as small as Manhattan's there is almost no concept by parents of what is done in their school and very little concept by teachers of what the community believes is important in education. Fault finding is counter-productive. The time has come for educators to help establish two-way communication with their constituents.

Perhaps contigent upon establishing positive, effective interaction with the community in order to establish a meaningful and accepted public education for children, is the fostering of positive attitudes toward school in students. If public schools could overcome two major obstacles of disinterested student bodies, poor

attendance and disciplinary problems, the quality of education, it would seem, would certainly improve.

When this study was being completed, the researcher became poignantly aware of a change in attitude in terms of perception of his role as educator, and his view of Manhattan and its schools. One question that came to mind was: "Why wouldn't it be beneficial to students to learn about the history of their own community, and particularly, the history of its schools?" Public schools offer a considerable quantity of history: history of wars, countries, states, politics, cultures, etcetera. Local educational history would certainly appear to be relevant, and certainly help students conceive what the process of change is. In addition, local educational history would not only provide students with perspective on current education, and what they want to derive from it, but also assist them in clarifying their value systems.