A HISTORY OF THE SCHOOL SYSTEMS OF SWEET GRASS COUNTY

BY

HAROLD H. HOLEN

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Master of Education degree
in the Department of Education
Montana State University
August, 1965

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
	Statement of the Problem	2
	Procedure of the Study	2
	Limitations of the Study	3
II.	ORIGINS OF SWEET GRASS COUNTY	4
III.	SWEET GRASS COUNTY RURAL SCHOOLS	9
IV.	BIG TIMBER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	16
V.	SWEET GRASS COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL	19
VI.	SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	25
	Summary	25
	Conclusions	25
	Recommendations	26
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	28

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1.	Number of Rural Elementary Schools in Operation by Years in Sweet Grass County	10
2.	Enrollment of the Rural Schools of Sweet Grass County by Selected Years	13
3.	Rural Elementary Teachers Salaries for Sweet Grass County by Selected Years	14
4.	County Superintendents of Schools, Sweet Grass County, Montana	15
5.	Enrollment by Years for the Big Timber Elementary School	16
6.	Administrators of Big Timber Elementary School	17
7.	Salaries for Big Timber Elementary School by Selected Years	18
8.	Students Continuing through High School in Sweet Grass County, 1941 - 1965	21
9.	Enrollment in Sweet Grass County High School by Years	22
10.	Sweet Grass County High School Teachers Salaries by Selected Years	22
11.	Administrators of Sweet Grass County High School	23

ABSTRACT

Although Montana is the fourth largest state in the Union, with an area of 147,138 square miles, it has a total population of only 674,767 people. As a result of the large area and few people, a variety of school systems have developed. During the 1920's Montana had some 2500 school districts operating 3300 schools, mostly one-room rural units.

Sweet Grass County was created by an act of the State Legislature on March 5, 1895. The first permanent settler in the county was Horatio N. Gage who settled at the mouth of Duck Creek in 1873. Sweet Grass County presently has a population of 3290 people and an area of 1,849 square miles. The county has three separate and distinct school systems. They are the rural elementary school, the town elementary school, and the county high school.

The first school in Sweet Grass County was a one-room rural elementary school located on Lower Sweet Grass Creek. It opened in 1881 with Lizzie Evans as the first teacher. The number of rural schools increased until 1921 when it reached a peak of fifty-five. After 1921 the number steadily decreased to the nine which operated last year.

The Big Timber elementary school was established in 1884. It was a one-teacher school for the first eight years attaining an enrollment of fifty-one students in 1892. The size of the school has remained relatively stable since 1905; at that time there were 211 students, in 1964 there were 312.

Sweet Grass County High School was established in 1901 and opened for operation in the fall of 1902 with seventeen students. It is one of the sixteen remaining county high schools. The school's enrollment has grown from the original seventeen to two hundred thirty in 1965.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The various counties in Montana have a variety of school systems. There are a number of reasons for the development of these school systems. There are only 674,767 people living in Montana.[1] However, Montana is the fourth largest state in the Union with an area of 147,138 square miles.[2]

The Homestead Act played an important role in the early development of Montana.[3] The Federal Government gave 160 acres to anyone who lived on and improved on the land for five years. In 1909 the law was changed to give 320 acres to settlers. The Homestead Act attracted many people to Montana to settle.

As a result, school districts were formed to meet the educational needs of these people. During the peak of this movement in the 1920's, Montana had some 2500 school districts operating about 3300 schools, mostly one-room rural units.[4]

However, many of these people were forced to move away in order to make a livelihood. Consequently, many old districts were abandoned or left with a very small population.

---

[1] United State Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, United States Census of Population: Montana, United States Government Printing Office, Washington D. C., 1960.

[2] Collier Encyclopedia, Vol. 14, p. 110.

[3] U. S. Statutes at Large (1925), Vol. 12, Chapter 75, p. 392.

[4] Stout, Tom, Montana--Its Story and Biography, Vol. 1, pp. 505-6

Statement of the Problem

As Montana has grown, so have its educational problems. Sweet Grass County has a population of 3290 people[5] and an area of 1849 square miles.[6] Yet, Sweet Grass County has three separate and distinct public school systems all with separate facilities, separate boards of education, and separate faculties.

The problem was to trace the development of the school systems from their origins to the present time. This will provide a documented history for the local community.

The reason for this investigation was to record accurately the history of the development of the educational system in Sweet Grass County. Therefore, it is hoped that this research will add to the cumulative knowledge of education in this state.

Procedure of the Study

First, literature was reviewed to provide an introduction and to determine if any other studies of a similar nature had been conducted in Montana. Specific data was obtained from the reports of Montana schools to the State Department of Public Instruction, Helena, Montana.

A general study of the Sweet Grass County school systems was made by investigating the records of the County Superintendent of Schools, the records at the Sweet Grass County Court House, and the records of the schools

---

[5]United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, United States Census of Population: Montana, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., 1960.

[6]Montana Almanac, 1957 ed., Montana State University, p. 3.

involved. From these records, information was obtained as to, number of districts during the history of the systems, number of students enrolled during various years, administrators at different times, and the number of teachers employed by the various systems.

As a final step, present members of the school faculty as well as older members of the community were interviewed. These individuals were interviewed to obtain historical data that they could recall about the development of the school systems of Sweet Grass County. They were also asked to supply related information and documents. This information was then compared with information obtained from the records that were studied.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to one county to enable the writer to present a history of this one segment of Montana public education. The study was also limited to one county because of the availability of records and factual information pertinent to the problem.

Sweet Grass County, like most of Montana, is a very sparsely populated area. Because of this, three separate school systems have developed in Sweet Grass County: the county high school, the rural elementary schools, and one elementary school in town. Therefore, each school system is considered separate and distinct from the others. A history of these school systems will be found in Chapters three, four, and five.

CHAPTER II

ORIGINS OF SWEET GRASS COUNTY

Since this is a historical document, Chapter Two is a brief review of the early history of Sweet Grass County taken from the currently available sources.

As far as can be determined from history, the first white man to travel through what is now Sweet Grass County was M. de la Verandrye.[1] He was a French Canadian who traveled through the area on his way to the Pacific Coast in 1741.

The next white man to appear was Captain Clark and his party from the Lewis and Clark expedition. They camped at the present site of Hunter's Hot Springs on July 16, 1806 and remained for six days.[2] There is a marker at the east edge of Big Timber commemorating the event.

From September 17, 1851 until 1882, Sweet Grass County in its entirety was included in the Crow Indian Reservation. In 1882, that portion north of the Yellowstone River was opened for settlement and removed from the reservation. In 1891, the remainder of the county south of the river was opened for settlement.

Montana Territory was created by an Act of Congress on May 26, 1864 from part of Dakota Territory. The first Territorial Legislature of Montana created Gallatin County in 1865. At that time, Gallatin County included

---

[1] Illustrated History of the Yellowstone Valley, Western Historical Publishing Co., Spokane, Washington, 1907, p. 191.

[2] Ibid., p. 191.

all of the area that is now Sweet Grass County. Montana became a state in 1889.

During July of 1864, John Bozeman piloted a train of immigrants on their way west through Sweet Grass County. This train of immigrants followed the Bozeman Trail west.[3]

The first permanent settler to come to Sweet Grass County was Horatio N. Gage.[4] He settled at the mouth of Duck Creek in the summer of 1873. He established the first irrigation project in the county in 1876 and also operated a stage station.

Later in 1873 two more permanent settlers arrived in Sweet Grass County. They were two brothers, Al and Waborn Harrison, who established a ranch on the Lower Sweet Grass Creek.[5] In 1877 several more settlers came to Sweet Grass County. They were W. A. Bramble, Fred Bartels, and W. L. Sharks who also took up land on the Lower Sweet Grass Creek.[6] During 1878 another permanent resident came to the area. He was Coleman Puett who located in what is now the Melville area further up Sweet Grass Creek.[7]

The first settler south of the Yellowstone River was W. F. McLeod who took up residence about sixteen miles up the Boulder River in 1882.[8]

---

[3] Ibid., p. 192.

[4] Ibid., p. 193.

[5] Inventory of County Archives of Montana, The Inventory of Public Archives, Montana Historical Records Survey, 1942, p. 529.

[6] Illustrated History of the Yellowstone Valley, Western Historical Publishing Co., Spokane, Washington, 1907, p. 192.

[7] Ibid., p. 194

[8] Ibid., p. 195

There is now a small town there which bears his name; also the Main Street of Big Timber carries his name. The town of Big Timber has had two names and three locations during its history.

> Big Timber, the county seat of Sweet Grass County, is located in the center of Sweet Grass County near the points where the Boulder River, Otter Creek, Swamp Creek and Big Timber Creek empty into the Yellowstone River. The original site of Big Timber was north of the Yellowstone River where a stage station, post office, and a few business enterprises were located in the late seventies. A toll ferry was operated on the river. When the railroad was built on the south side of the river, the old town was abandoned and a new one, named Dornix by the Irish construction crew, was established on the railroad. This town, in turn, was abandoned the latter part of 1883 when the railroad built a depot about a mile farther up the Boulder River and the post office was transferred to the new site. The town which grew up there was named Big Timber and was the site of the present city by that name.[9]

According to the Bureau of Census report, Big Timber had a population of 265 people in 1890.

During the territorial legislative session of 1887, Park County was created. It was taken from the eastern portion of what was then Gallatin County. The new county contained all of what is now Sweet Grass County.

In 1893 the first petition was presented to the state recommending the establishment of Sweet Grass County. The proposal was defeated in the state legislature being strongly opposed by the residents of the western half of Park County.[10] Sweet Grass County came into existence on March 5, 1895.

---

[9]Work Projects Administration, Inventory of County Archives of Montana, 1940, p. 660.

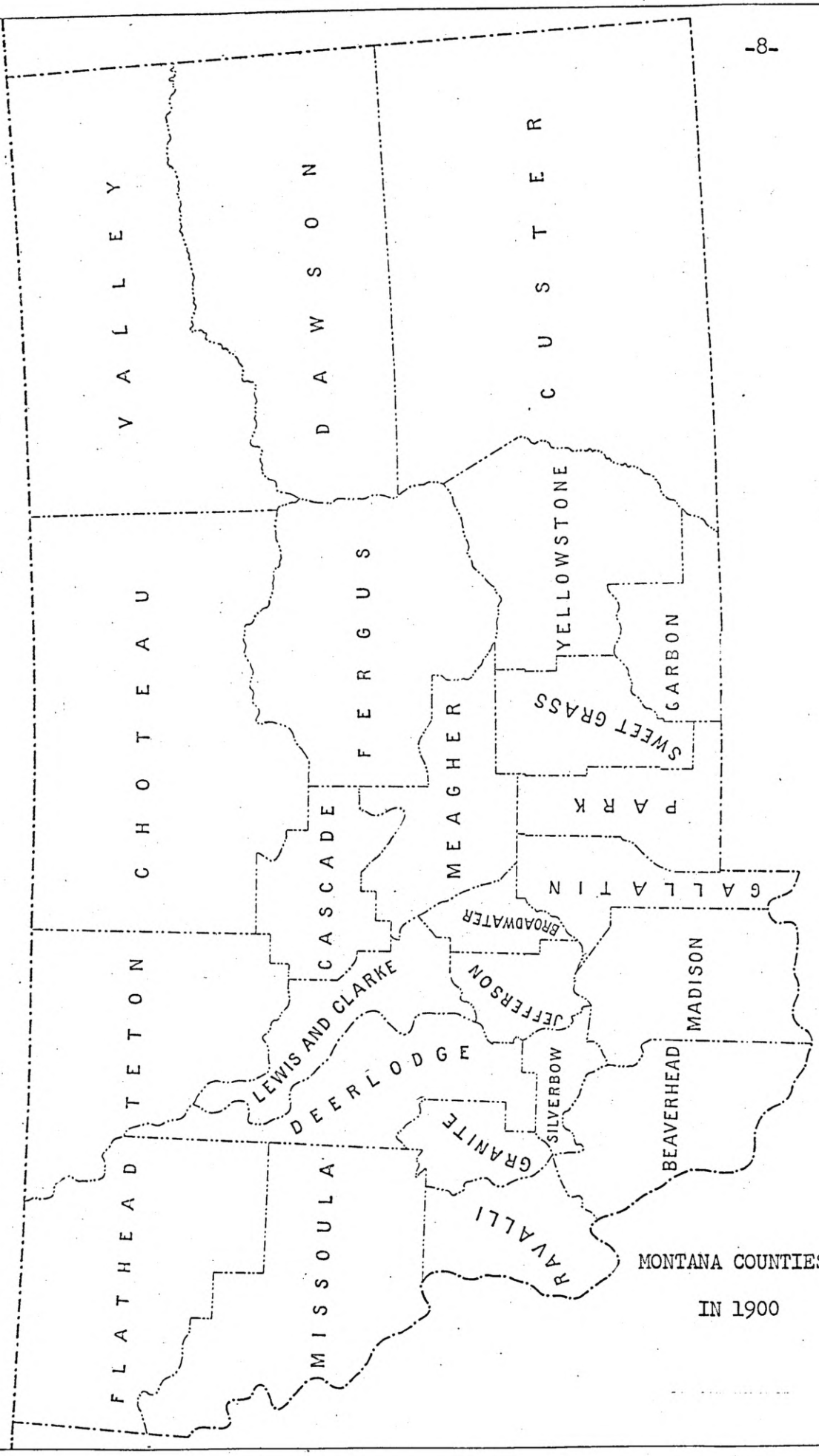
[10]Inventory of County Archives of Montana, The Inventory of Public Archives, Montana Historical Records Survey, 1942, p. 529.

> Sweet Grass County is located in the southern part of Montana midway between the eastern and western boundaries of the state. It is bounded on the north by Wheatland County, on the northeast by Golden Valley County, on the southeast by Stillwater County and on the south and west by Park County. The Yellowstone River flowing eastward divides the county into two sections nearly equal in size. In the northwestern corner are the Crazy Mountains with Crazy Peak reaching an elevation of 11,214 feet. Out of these mountains flow Sweet Grass, Otter, Big Timber, Swamp, Duck and Gage Creeks to join the Yellowstone. In the northeast corner are the Cayuse Hills. The southern part of the county, in which is located the Absarokee Range, is very mountainous. Mount Douglas, the highest peak in the county with an elevation of 11,300 feet is located in this range. The Boulder River, which has its origin in these mountains near Haystack Peak, is the principal river in the county. It flows northward from a little spring near the county's southern boundary. At times, it enters Park County as it meanders northward. At one place, the river has carved a limestone formation forming a natural bridge under which it flows except in times of high water. This river enters the Yellowstone at Big Timber. Upper and Lower Deer Creeks also drain into the Yellowstone from the South.[11]

Sweet Grass County was created from parts of Park, Yellowstone, and Meagher counties. On Page Eight is a map of Montana showing Sweet Grass County as it existed in 1900. It was named by Judge Wilbur G. Strong from the creek of Sweet Grass which is named for the fragrant grasses growing along its border. The new county grew rapidly in population during this period since much of the land was still open to homesteading.

---

[11] United States Census of Agriculture, 1959, Montana Counties, U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census.



MONTANA COUNTIES

IN 1900

CHAPTER III

SWEET GRASS COUNTY RURAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

The first school in Sweet Grass County was established in 1881. It was a one-room elementary school located on Lower Sweet Grass Creek; which is north of the Yellowstone River from Grey Cliff. The first teacher was Miss Lizzie Evans.

Since all the students were farm or ranch children, some of them had several miles to travel to school. Most of them attended school for only four or five months during the coldest part of the winter. The students were expected to help with the work at home when the weather permitted.

The next rural school was established in 1884. It was known as the Wright Valley School, and Miss Agnes Cosgriff was the first teacher.

After the middle 1880's, rural elementary schools began to appear throughout the county with increasing frequency. As the public land was taken up and the area south of the Yellowstone River was opened for settlement, the population increased rapidly creating the need for more schools.

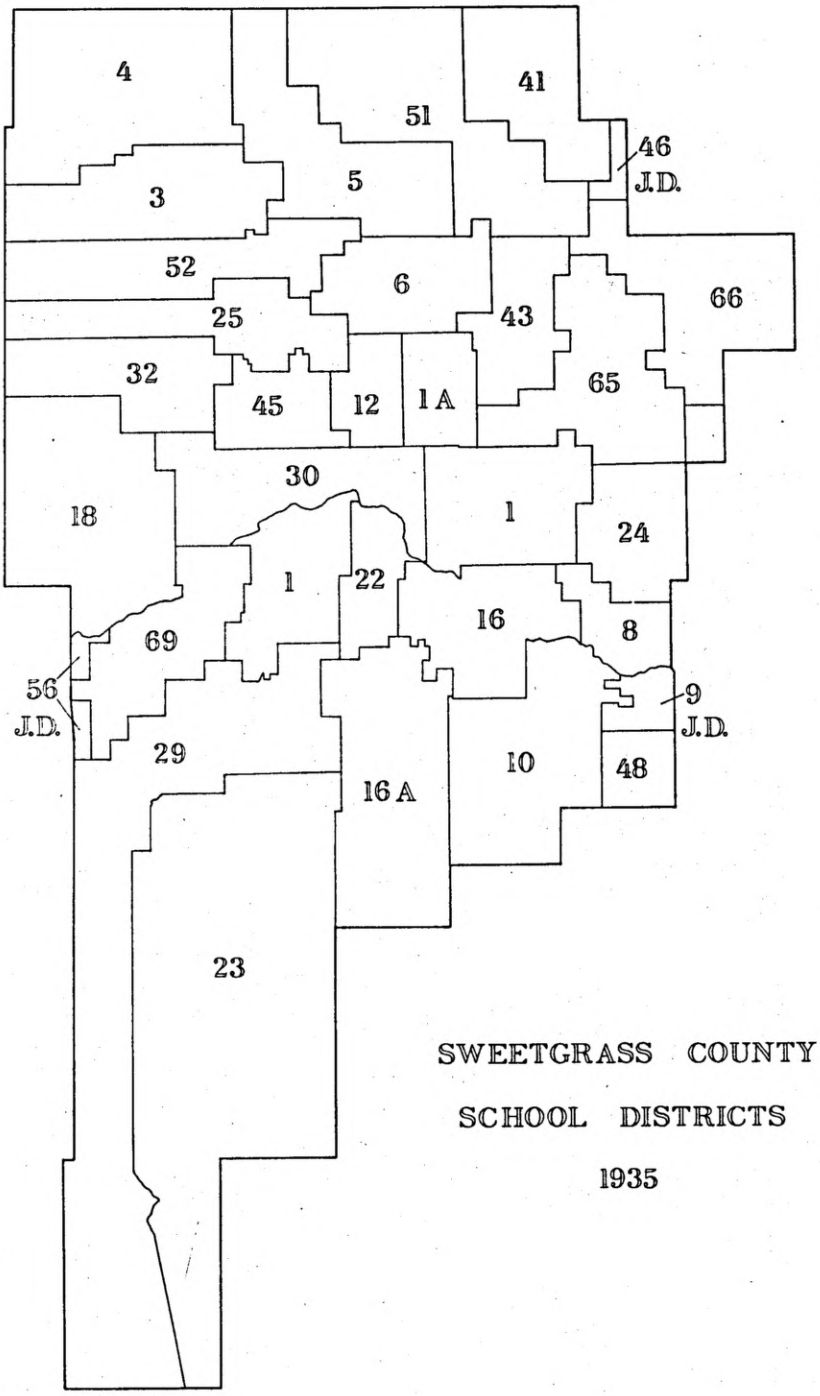
Most of these schools were one-room and one-teacher schools as the few remaining still are today. Often they accommodated only six or seven students in as many grades. The number of schools increased steadily until 1921 as shown in Table 1. From then on, the number of rural elementary schools gradually decreased to the nine still in operation today.

TABLE 1. NUMBER OF RURAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN OPERATION BY YEARS IN SWEET GRASS COUNTY.

Year	Number	Year	Number	Year	Number	Year	Number
1899	25	1916	44	1933	38	1950	24
1900	27	1917	50	1934	41	1951	22
1901	32	1918	44	1935	32	1952	21
1902	32	1919	53	1936	32	1953	23
1903	32	1920	53	1937	27	1954	22
1904	33	1921	55	1938	25	1955	22
1905	35	1922	52	1939	31	1956	21
1906	35	1923	48	1940	29	1957	20
1907	35	1924	52	1941	33	1958	21
1908	37	1925	47	1942	30	1959	21
1909	38	1926	47	1943	29	1960	19
1910	39	1927	47	1944	27	1961	18
1911	39	1928	45	1945	23	1962	16
1912	41	1929	46	1946	20	1963	14
1913	40	1930	44	1947	22	1964	12
1914	40	1931	45	1948	22	1965	9
1915	44	1932	42	1949	26		

The map of Sweet Grass County on Page Eleven shows the number and outline of the school districts that existed in the county in 1935. There were 32 districts in Sweet Grass County at that time, although not all the districts were operating schools. Page Twelve is a map of Sweet Grass County showing the school districts in 1964. Over the years, there has been continual reorganization of the school districts, from a high of sixty-nine in 1920 to 24 today. At the present time, plans are being formulated to combine a number of the remaining districts into larger units.

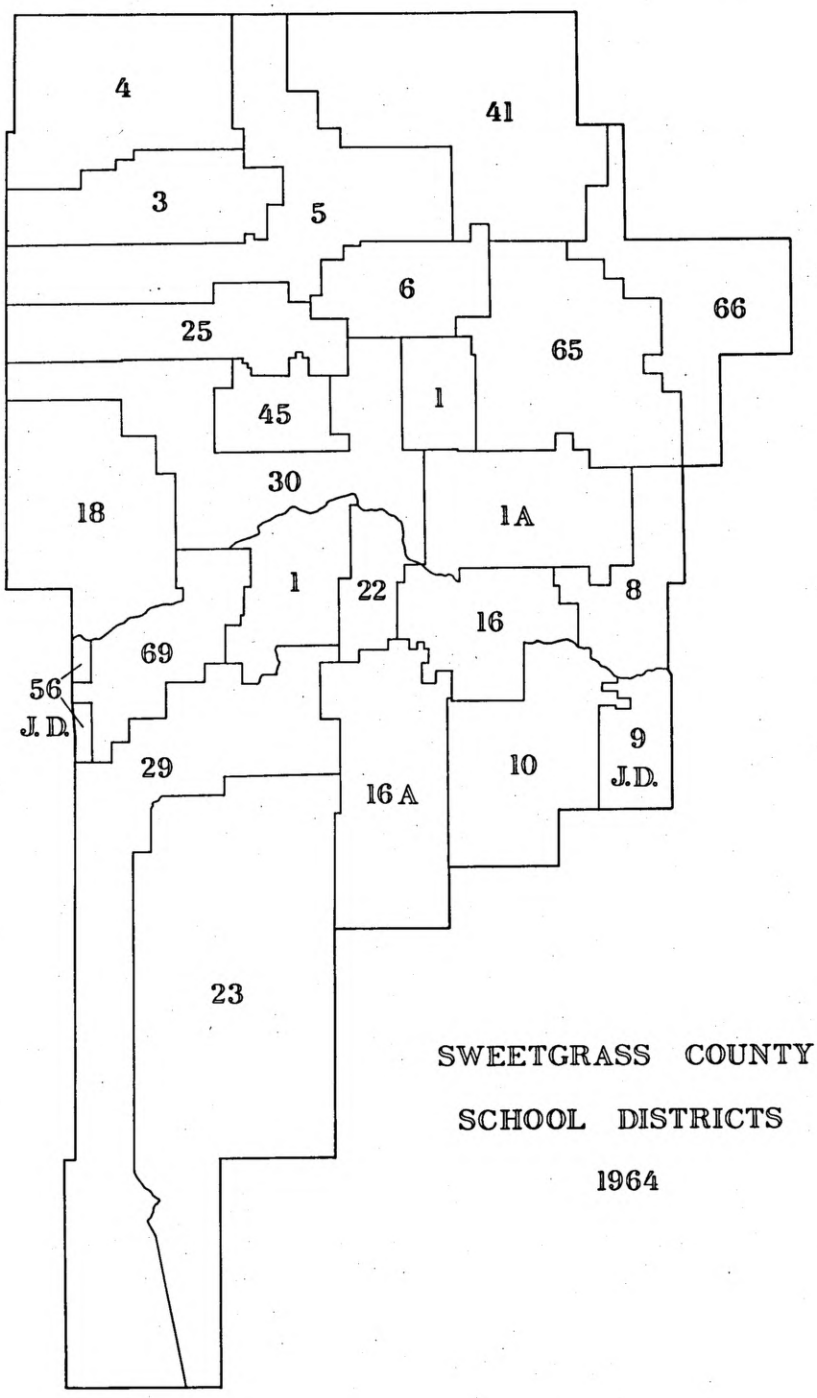
The number of strudents enrolled bears a direct relation to the number of schools in operation. Enrollment increased quite consistently until the early 1920's. At that time, it began a steady decline with the exception



SWEETGRASS COUNTY

SCHOOL DISTRICTS

1935



SWEETGRASS COUNTY

SCHOOL DISTRICTS

1964

TABLE 2. ENROLLMENT OF THE RURAL SCHOOLS OF SWEET GRASS COUNTY BY SELECTED YEARS.

Year	Number of Students	Year	Number of Students
1901	630	1933	391
1902	869	1936	329
1906	814	1939	268
1908	678	1942	247
1910	729	1945	197
1912	666	1948	251
1914	861	1951	242
1917	1,105	1953	243
1920	1,057	1956	208
1921	923	1959	208
1924	544	1961	203
1925	560	1964	169
1927	498	1965	117
1930	462		

of the late 1940's and early 1950's. Rural elementary school enrollment has declined from a high of 1105 in 1917 to only 117 in 1965. Table 2 illustrates the trend of rural enrollment in Sweet Grass County. The rapid decline of enrollment during the 1920's was caused by consolidation of many small farms and ranches into large units. The average size of farms in Montana today is 2,864 acres. This consolidation resulted in an over-all decrease in population. The depression of the 1930's forced many people to leave the land causing still another drop in population in the rural areas. During the 1950's there was a slight increase in enrollment because of the so-called "war babies," but they probably had completed elementary school by the end of that decade.

Salaries in the rural schools have increased from a low of forty dollars a month in 1899 to a high of four hundred fifty dollars a month in

TABLE 3. RURAL ELEMENTARY TEACHERS SALARIES FOR SWEET GRASS COUNTY BY SELECTED YEARS.

Year	Per Month High	Per Month Low	Year	Per Month High	Per Month Low
1899	$ 50.00	$40.00	1930	$125.00	$ 88.88
1900	60.00	55.00	1933	111.00	65.00
1903	70.00	45.00	1938	85.00	50.00
1908	65.00	55.00	1940	90.00	65.00
1910	90.00	50.00	1945	165.00	125.00
1912	70.00	50.00	1950	300.00	200.00
1914	75.00	50.00	1955	350.00	264.44
1916	90.00	65.00	1960	375.00	300.00
1920	110.00	85.00	1964	425.00	340.00
1925	125.00	85.00	1965	450.00	340.00

1965. As Table 3 shows, this increase was very slow until about 1950. The salaries took a reverse trend during the 1930's because of the inability of the schools to raise enough money. By 1945, however, salaries had reached a new high; and they more than doubled during the next decade. One of the major reasons for the rural teachers having low salaries has been the county's tendency to employ mostly teachers with two-year certificates. Also, the rural schools have about a fifty percent turn-over of teachers each year. Many of the new teachers have very little or no experience, which places them at the bottom of the salary schedule. The average tenure of the rural teachers in the county is eight years. However, this average is misleading since two of the nine teachers have taught in the county for over 30 years.

Sweet Grass County, like the other counties in Montana, employed a county superintendent of schools to supervise the rural teachers. There have been only fourteen county superintendents in Sweet Grass County. As Table 4 shows, one of them, Mrs. Margaret Deegan, held office on two different occasions for a total of twenty-six years.

TABLE 4. COUNTY SUPERINTENDENTS OF SCHOOLS, SWEET GRASS COUNTY, MONTANA.

Years	Name
1895 - 1897	L. C. Olmstead
1897 - 1899	B. H. Merrielless
1899 - 1901	E. L. Dona
1901 - 1903	S. Walker
1903 - 1909	A. M. Webster
1909 - 1911	M. Powell
1911 - 1915	J. F. Evans
1915 - 1923	I. Solberg
1923 - 1927	M. Deegan
1927 - 1933	E. K. Steensland
1933 - 1937	H. M. Rein
1937 - 1959	M. Deegan
1959 - 1964	G. M. Carney
1964 -	V. C. Widdicombe

CHAPTER IV

THE BIG TIMBER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The elementary school in Big Timber was established in 1884. For the first eight years, it remained a small one-teacher school. By 1892 it had increased to an enrollment of fifty-one students. By the turn of the century, there were over one hundred and fifty attending the city school. The size of the school has remained relatively stable since 1905, varying from two hundred eleven in 1905 up to the three hundred twelve at the present time. As Table 5 shows, the number of students has remained

TABLE 5. ENROLLMENT BY YEARS FOR THE BIG TIMBER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.

Year	Enrollment	Year	Enrollment	Year	Enrollment	Year	Enrollment
1899	169	1918	244	1934	267	1950	280
1902	141	1919	280	1935	276	1951	281
1903	180	1920	275	1936	260	1952	274
1904	184	1922	146	1937	300	1953	301
1905	211	1923	265	1938	294	1954	285
1906	238	1924	273	1939	292	1955	306
1907	223	1925	290	1940	262	1956	291
1908	225	1926	278	1941	293	1957	306
1909	230	1927	287	1942	272	1958	295
1910	214	1928	307	1943	266	1959	300
1911	213	1929	279	1944	255	1960	300
1912	203	1930	266	1945	266	1961	296
1913	201	1931	281	1946	282	1962	288
1914	198	1932	261	1947	262	1963	319
1916	218	1933	247	1948	279	1964	312
1917	263						

almost constant over the past decade and will remain so for the next six years according to the latest school census.

The administrators at the Big Timber Elementary School have in general remained for long periods of time. As Table 6 shows, there have been only ten since the first superintendent was appointed in 1899.

TABLE 6. ADMINISTRATORS OF BIG TIMBER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.

Years	Name
1899 - 1900	J. D. Orr
1901 - 1905	J. Connel
1906 - 1908	W. C. Ryan
1909 - 1919	A. E. Erickson
1920 - 1921	W. H. Clark
1922 - 1924	E. Skarda
1925 - 1929	A. J. Jahr
1930 - 1937	G. A. Berges
1938 - 1942	M. J. Greenshields
1943 -	A. C. McDonald

Mr. A. C. McDonald, who is the present superintendent, has enjoyed a tenure of twenty-two years. The present superintendent's long association with the school appears to have had a beneficial effect. Under his leadership, a new and completely modern school was built during the mid 1950's. Also, a new gymnasium was built to accommodate the school's physical education activities. A free milk program has been carried on at the school for several years since he became superintendent.

The salaries of principals and teachers have followed a pattern similar to that of the rural elementary school systems. By most standards, the salaries were rather low until about 1920 when they began to show some increase. There was a slight reversal of this trend during the 1930's because of the lack of funds during the Great Depression.

The major reason for lower salaries is the hiring of teachers with two-year and emergency certificates. Several teachers of this type are still employed by the school system. Several of the teachers who comprise the present staff have been at the school for a number of years. They are mostly married women whose husbands have positions or business interests in or around Big Timber.

Table 7 shows salaries at Big Timber Elementary School from 1899 to the present time.

TABLE 7. SALARIES FOR BIG TIMBER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BY SELECTED YEARS.

	Per Month			Per Month	
Year	High	Low	Year	High	Low
1899	$102.50	$55.00	1925	$150.00	$130.00
1900	102.50	60.00	1930	160.00	140.00
1903	102.50	60.00	1933	150.00	130.00
1908	116.66	70.00	1940	250.00	155.00
1910	116.33	70.00	1945	275.00	168.77
1912	116.33	50.00	1955	450.00	240.00
1914	133.33	50.00	1960	583.33	370.88
1916	141.66	50.00	1964	645.83	401.11
1920	141.66	65.00	1965	763.66	455.00

CHAPTER V

SWEET GRASS COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL

The state legislature of Montana provided for a change in the high school system in Montana by the passage of the County Free High School Act.

> Substitute for House Bill No. 69, an act to establish County Free High Schools and to provide for their maintenance. Be it enacted by the Legislative Assembly of the State of Montana: Section I. Any county in the State may establish a county free high school on the conditions and in the manner hereinafter prescribed, for the purpose of affording better educational facilities for pupils more advanced than those attending district schools.[1]

This act became law on March 3, 1899 and provided for at least one high school in each county. It encouraged the establishment of high schools throughout the state once they could use the entire county as a tax base for the school.

At one time there were twenty-one county high schools in Montana. Today there are sixteen still in existence. Sweet Grass is one of the remaining county high schools in the state. Sweet Grass County High School first opened for operation in the fall of 1902 with a total enrollment of seventeen students. Table 9 shows the enrollment of Sweet Grass County High School from 1902 to the present time.

It is obvious from Table 5 in the preceding chapter that only a small percentage of the elementary students continued on to high school. After 1920 more and more of the elementary graduates continued in to high school.

---

[1] Laws, Resolutions, and Memorials of the State of Montana, Sixth Regular Session, Legislative Assembly, Helena, Montana, 1899, p. 59.

In general, the enrollment in the school has grown continuously with two noted exceptions during the periods of World War I and World War II. Although the county population has remained almost constant over the past two decades, enrollment has increased. This is due to two factors: fewer dropouts and larger families.

Table 8 shows the number of eighth grade graduates, ninth grade entrants, and high school graduates from 1941 to the present time. In general, as the years passed a larger percentage of the grade school students entered the ninth grade and continued on to finish high school than in previous years. This speaks highly for the students, parents, and community for their desire to provide and take advantage of the available school system. The writer has made no effort to account for students who transferred into or out of the high school during this time period. Adequate records are not available that could supply such information. It is assumed that gains and losses because of this type of change in enrollment probably were about equal over this time period.

At the present time approximately seventy per cent of the graduates of the high school continue on to post secondary education of some type. For the past two decades, six or seven out of each graduating class from the high school have gone on to earn masters and doctorate degrees in various fields.

There appear to be several reasons why the students continue to go on for advanced education beyond high school. Sweet Grass County is basically a rural community. This situation offers little in the way of employment opportunities for young people. A few enlist in the military; some find employment elsewhere, but the majority continue on to school. The local residents seem to be education oriented--most of them are first or

TABLE 8. STUDENTS CONTINUING THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL IN SWEET GRASS COUNTY, 1941-1965.

Year	Rural Eighth Grade Graduates	Town Eighth Grade Graduates	Total Eighth Grade Graduates	Ninth Grade Entrants	High School Graduates
1941	37	33	70	53	
1942	21	31	52	51	
1943	19	36	55	56	
1944	13	22	35	61	31
1945	28	39	67	57	35
1946	16	32	48	52	32
1947	23	31	54	45	36
1948	28	40	68	60	22
1949	28	49	77	61	39
1950	25	23	48	47	38
1951	25	28	53	45	39
1952	24	34	58	58	50
1953	32	32	64	61	37
1954	31	33	64	60	49
1955	23	31	54	62	37
1956	20	30	50	50	43
1957	16	40	56	58	40
1958	28	29	57	48	49
1959	29	32	61	59	46
1960	26	35	61	60	40
1961	23	42	65	69	46
1962	22	38	60	61	39
1963	17	41	58	62	56
1964	23	38	61	54	56
1965	20	42	62		54

second generation Americans and they encourage their children and friends to obtain all the education possible. They have sent their children to schools all over the United States, and a few have even sent their children to Europe for graduate study. Because of this attitude, it is not surprising that the people of Sweet Grass County have given generous support to the high school.

TABLE 9. ENROLLMENT IN SWEET GRASS COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL BY YEARS.

Year	Enrollment	Year	Enrollment	Year	Enrollment	Year	Enrollment
1902	17	1918	52	1934	193	1950	187
1903	28	1919	54	1935	188	1951	192
1904	30	1920	64	1936	213	1952	187
1905	45	1921	99	1937	229	1953	188
1906	57	1922	100	1938	199	1954	197
1907	50	1923	121	1939	206	1955	203
1908	52	1924	150	1940	172	1956	199
1909	30	1925	176	1941	180	1957	196
1910	28	1926	174	1942	186	1958	204
1911	65	1927	193	1943	181	1959	191
1912	68	1928	181	1944	157	1960	191
1913	69	1929	190	1945	154	1961	207
1914	99	1930	184	1946	161	1962	221
1915	51	1931	158	1947	158	1963	231
1916	51	1932	178	1948	162	1964	236
1917	52	1933	183	1949	162	1965	230

One indication of the generous support given by the people of Sweet Grass County to the high school is the salaries that have been paid by the school. Table 10 shows salaries at Sweet Grass County High School from 1902 to the present time.

TABLE 10. SWEET GRASS COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS SALARIES BY SELECTED YEARS

	Per Month			Per Month	
Year	High	Low	Year	High	Low
1902	$111.11	$ 75.00	1933	$200.00	$155.55
1904	120.00	75.00	1945	333.33	200.00
1908	222.22	100.00	1950	383.33	308.33
1912	150.00	100.00	1955	541.66	380.55
1916	180.00	100.00	1960	625.00	471.11
1920	250.00	133.33	1964	750.00	550.00
1925	233.33	161.11	1965	836.36	613.88
1930	225.00	161.11			

At first glance, these salaries may appear reasonably good. In actual fact, they are rather low. They do not compare very favorably with other professions requiring the same amount of preparation. In fact many people with skilled vocations earn considerably more. Unfortunately, this causes many excellent teachers to leave the profession and seek out other opportunities in more profitable fields of employment. It also discourages many talented young people from becoming teachers.

Table 11 is a list of the principals of Sweet Grass County High School from its establishment in 1902 until the present time.

TABLE 11. ADMINISTRATORS OF SWEET GRASS COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL

Year	Name	Year	Name
1901 - 1902	L. W. Warrill	1927 - 1943	J. B. Hinds
1902 - 1903	W. L. Gillette	1943 - 1944	H. P. Schug
1903 - 1906	W. C. Ryan	1944 - 1946	R. S. Knelland
1906 - 1912	H. Derr	1946 - 1948	W. Walker
1912 - 1915	C. V. Brown	1948 - 1953	G. A. Aller
1915 - 1918	L. W. Beam	1953 - 1954	W. W. Personen
1918 - 1921	W. C. Ryan	1954 - 1956	J. E. Fisher
1921 - 1924	P. Templeton	1956 -	A. R. Collins
1924 - 1927	A. J. Martz		

From 1921 to 1924, the principal of the high school was also considered the city superintendent of schools, which in effect placed him in charge of the grade school. Payne Templeton held this position during his

three years in Big Timber. However, some petty jealousy developed in 1924 due to the fact that the elementary board felt that Mr. Templeton devoted too much of his time to the high school. Due to this disagreement, the two schools were completely separated in 1924.

W. C. Ryan holds a rather distinct position of having been principal at the grade school from 1906 to 1908, and also principal of the high school at two different times from 1903 to 1905 and again from 1918 to 1921.

The high school faculty has had a rather low turn-over rate. The current science teacher has been employed by the system since 1923. The English teachers and the vocational agriculture teacher have been in the system for eighteen years. Most of the other teachers have been in the school from seven to ten years. This probably has been one of the contributing factors to the apparent stability of the school program and the quality of the graduates.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY

As settlers move into an area to take up the land, schools are soon organized to meet the needs of the children. The history of the state of Montana illustrates this development. Schools appeared in Virginia City and other communities almost as soon as they were settled.

This same development also occurred in Sweet Grass County. The first school was established in 1881, shortly after the first settlers came to the county in the 1870's. As the population increased, so did the number of schools reaching a total of fifty-seven in 1921. From that time to the present, the number of schools has steadily declined to a total of nine remaining in operation today. The student enrollment in the rural schools followed closely the number of schools, reaching a peak of 1,057 in 1920 and declining thereafter. Enrollment in the town elementary school and the high school have gradually increased to a total of 312 and 230 respectively.

Rural salaries have risen from a median of $45.00 per month before the turn of the century to a median of $382.50 per month at the present time.

Over all, the county superintendents of schools and the principals have tended to stay for long periods of time.

CONCLUSIONS

Apparently, Sweet Grass County has a reasonably good school system. This is attested to by several facts. The administration officials stay for a number of years. Most of the presently employed teachers have been in the system for many years. A large percentage of the high school

graduates continue on to college and are able to compete satisfactorily. Many have gone on to earn advanced graduate degrees.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are several things this community could do to improve its school systems. First, all of those teachers now employed on two-year certificates should be phased out of the system as soon as possible. This would provide more highly qualified teachers. To do this, the rural schools would have to increase their salary schedules. Secondly, some of the rural districts should be reorganized. There are several small schools located on the city school bus route and their students should go to the city school. To encourage this type of reorganization, the state should revise its school finance laws. Thirdly, the school system should employ some method to encourage the teachers to return to school more frequently than the state law requires. Financial assistance could be given or sabbatical leave permitted to encourage frequent returns to school by the teachers. Lastly, the school clerks should keep more accurate records; and they should be stored in a safe place where the records will not be lost.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abbott, Newton Carl, Montana in the Making, Gazette Printing Company, Billings, Montana, Revised, 1951.

Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, State of Montana, Independent Publishing Company, Helena, Montana, 1924.

Burlingame, Merrill C. and Toole, E. Ross, A History of Montana, Vol. II, Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc., New York, N. Y.

Colliers Encyclopedia, Vol. 13, 1957 ed., 682 pp., P. F. Collier & Son Corporation, New York, N. Y.

Illustrated History of the Yellowstone Valley, State of Montana, Western Historical Publishing Company, Spokane, Washington, 1907.

Inventory of County Archives of Montana, The Inventory of Public Archives, Montana Historical Records Division of Community Service Programs, Works Projects Administration, 1942.

Laws, Resolutions, and Memorials of the State of Montana, Sixth Regular Session, Legislative Assembly, Helena, Montana, 1899.

Minutes of the High School Board, Sweet Grass County, Vol. I, 1901-1911.

Montana Almanac, 1957 ed., Montana State University, 392 pp.

Montana Bureau of Agricultural and Labor and Industry Report, for year ending November 30, 1900, Independent Publishing Company, Helena, Montana, 1900.

Montana Educational Directory and Circular of Information Pertaining to Teacher Certification, 1916-1923.

Register of Students, Sweet Grass County High School, 1901-1964.

School Record, Sweet Grass County, Vol. I, 1899-1964.

School Register, Big Timber Elementary School, 1899-1964.

Stout, Tom, Montana--Its Story and Biography, Vol. I, American Historical Society, Chicago and New York, 1921, 639 pp.

Teachers Register, Sweet Grass County High School, 1901-1964.

United States Census of Agriculture, 1959, Montana Counties, U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census.

United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, United States Census of Population: Montana, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., 1960.

U. S. Statutes at Large (1925), Vol. 12.