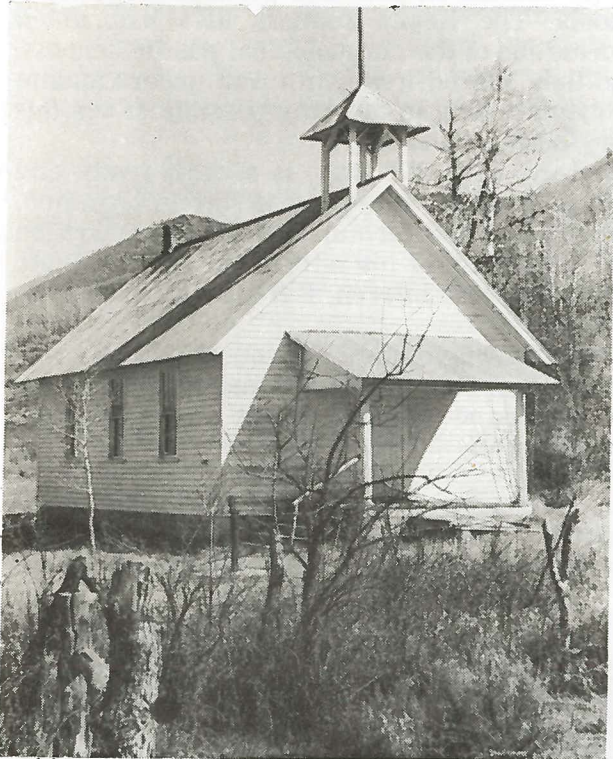


# Forgotten Country Schools

## "Yes, It Was a Privilege" ...

by Grace May and Ginger Infanger



*Moon Hill School is still used as a community center.*

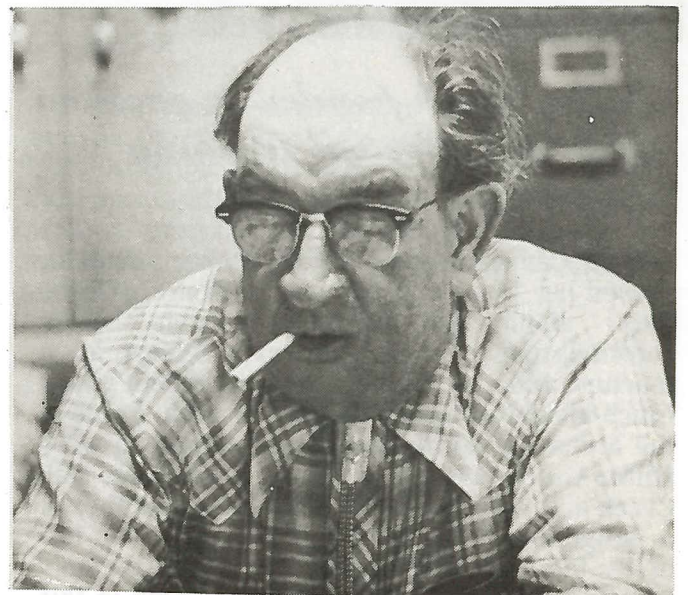


*Frances Wheeler,  
"So much depended on the teacher."*

When I first started this story I had in mind just taking a few pictures of the old deserted and perhaps forgotten schools in the area. I visualized a photo story of one-room schools that still stand desolately throughout Routt County. But as I started the photography, I uncovered more than just images of buildings on paper. I found untold stories and memories in the minds and hearts of many old timers who once attended these now deserted structures. I had to stop and think about the schools of yesteryear and remember that all of us have experienced trying years in education as well as many great moments.

The nostalgia and factual information poured forth as I (Grace May) talked with George and Frances Wheeler, both story tellers in their own right with a lot of knowledge behind their wit.

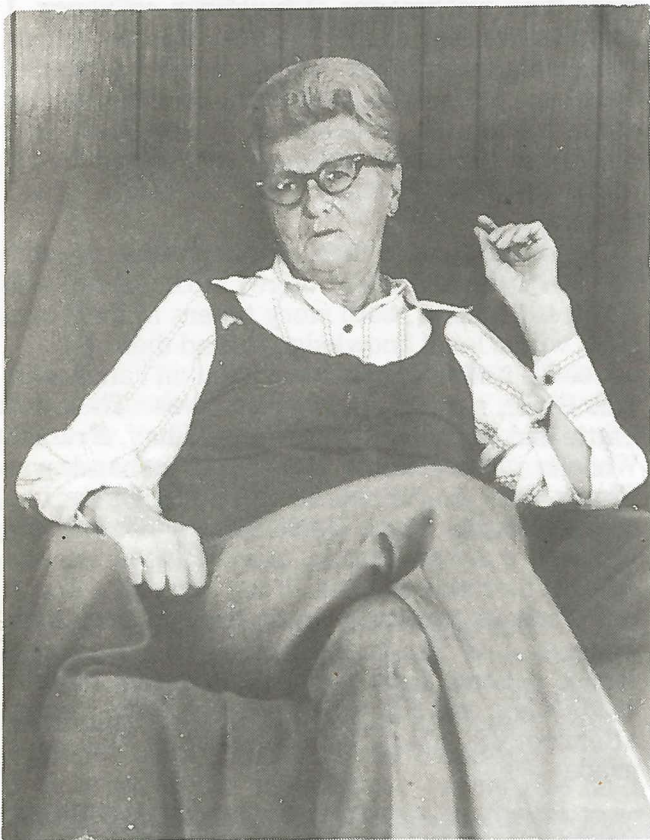
George and Frances have lived on ranches on Elk River nearly all of their lives. They run cattle and farm acres of grain and hay. Frances Wheeler is my aunt. Her first husband was Elmer Dorr. Aunt Frances and Uncle Elmer had nine children. After Uncle Elmer died Aunt Frances married George. Aunt Frances' and my dad's father and mother (Fred and Anna May) were school teachers. Both George and Aunt Frances have had many first-hand experiences in the schools. Aunt Frances attended Mystic, Mad Creek, and Fly Gulch schools while George attended the Clark school through the ninth grade.



*George Wheeler*

Nellie Soash, an energetic enthusiast for education, talked with us (Ginger Infanger and Grace May) about how schools were when she taught.

Nellie has lived in Routt County all of her life. Her mother came here by covered wagon, while her father arrived by stage. Nellie has three children and boasts about only leaving her lovely home in the Rockies for a few months each year for warmth in Arizona. She has had experience teaching in one-room schoolhouses in the area where her son, Richard, a Colorado state senator, had some training also in country schools. Her experiences at Salt Creek, Lancaster, Yampa, Oak Creek, Mad Creek, and Morrison Creek give her credibility when she speaks of school gone past.



*Nellie Soash ponders a question about her previous teaching experiences.*

Ruth Carver, a past county superintendent, shared her ideas and opinions with me, (Grace May) about the one-room schools before consolidation in 1962. Her experiences as a teacher and a county superintendent show much insight into education of the area. Some of the areas she administered and taught in were Hilton Gulch (1940), Fly Gulch, Deer Park, Oak Creek and Hayden. She is the proud mother of a daughter who accompanied "mom" on a few of her teaching expeditions. She is also the only former county superintendent still living in this area.

Henry Zehner and his wife, Ayliffe, of Hayden have lived in this area most of their lives. Henry is a past school principal, teacher, superintendent at Hayden, and coach who did his college thesis on a comparison of country and town schools in Routt County. His assistance with information and photos gave much enlightenment on past and perhaps forgotten schools. The Henry Zehners also had much information of the chronological past of schools, plus they shared a warmth and understanding in trying to help in any way possible to see this story become a reality.

And my dad, Bill May, is always ready and willing to help with digging up information, organization and formulation to actual written page. Because of his interest in Routt County history and his children, Bill May is an asset to any story.

The following data about country schools is a composite of these old timers and their residency and attendance of past Routt County country school houses.



Steamboat's first public school with teacher, Lulie Crawford (daughter of Steamboat's founder) and her students who were children of pioneer families.

## *One Room School House History*

Transportation to and from the country school sometimes generated a problem. The children often rode to school in the winter and had to cross the river on ice, whereas in the fall they could ford it. In the spring the water usually got too high to cross. Many students rode horseback, skied or went on foot.

The First school established in Routt County was organized March 5, 1881, on Snake River.

District number "two" was organized at Ladore, September 12, 1881. No report was received in 1882 from the district, so the district number was given to Hayden.

All of these schools have some things in common. Frances Wheeler said, "The original ones were just one-room log buildings with coal stoves and wooden desks. By 1915 they were building frame ones, like '33', Moon Hill, and Cow Creek."



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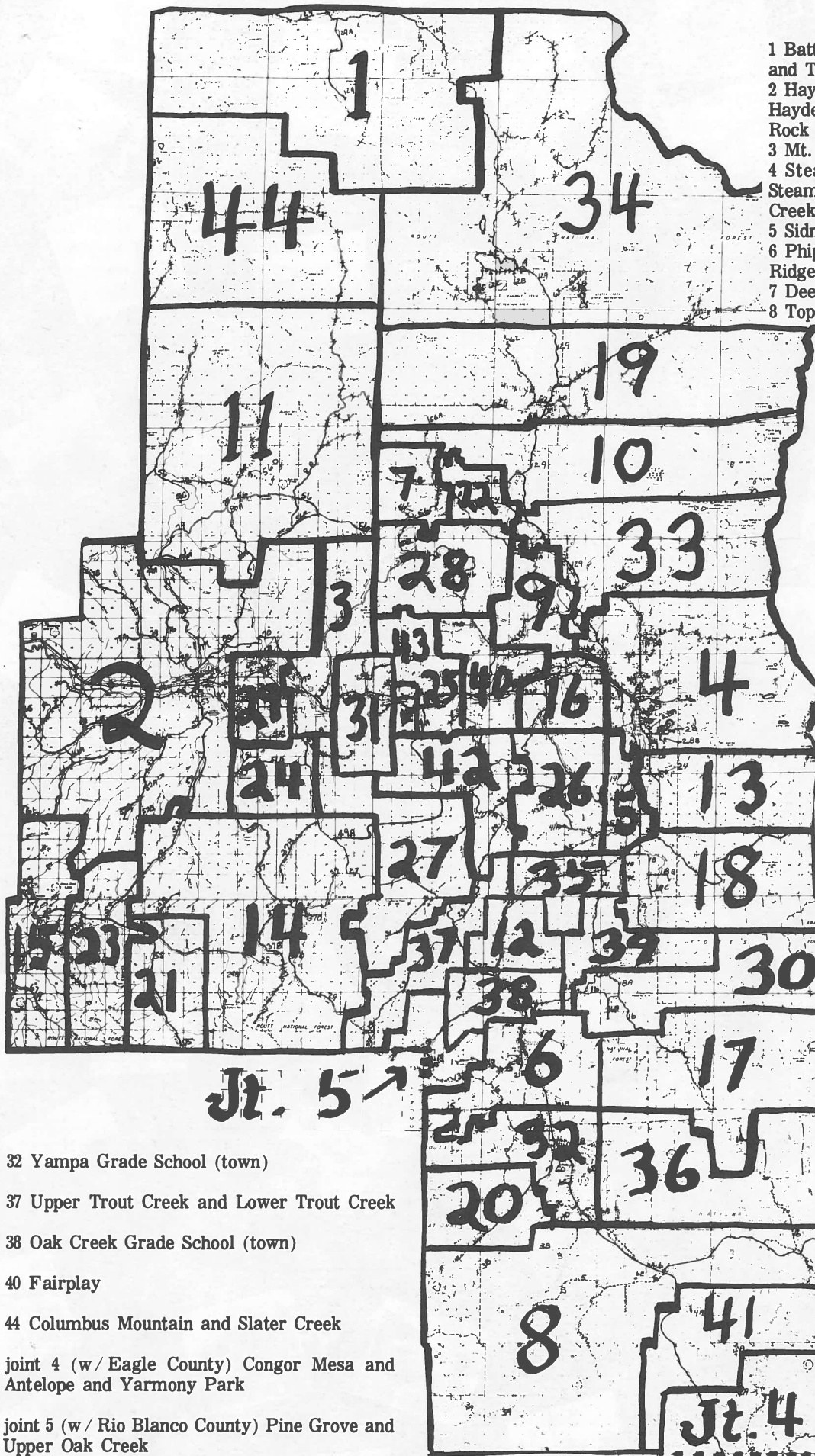
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- 1 Battle Creek and South Fork and Willow Creek and Three Forks
- 2 Hayden Edison Grade School (town), Upper Hayden and Smuen Gulch and Twin Mesa and Rock Springs and Morgan Bottom (rural)
- 3 Mt. Harris and Wolf Creek
- 4 Steamboat Springs Grade School and Steamboat Springs High School (town), Slate Creek (rural)
- 5 Sidney
- 6 Phippsburg and Hart Mountain and Green Ridge.
- 7 Deep Creek
- 8 Toponas and Cedar Creek and Egeria Park

# Routt County School Districts

- 32 Yampa Grade School (town)
- 37 Upper Trout Creek and Lower Trout Creek
- 38 Oak Creek Grade School (town)
- 40 Fairplay
- 44 Columbus Mountain and Slater Creek
- joint 4 (w/ Eagle County) Congor Mesa and Antelope and Yarmony Park
- joint 5 (w/ Rio Blanco County) Pine Grove and Upper Oak Creek

- 9 Fly Gulch
- 10 Moon Hill
- 11 Elk Head
- 12 Habro
- 13 Mesa
- 14 Dunkley & Sleepy Cat
- 15 Pagoda
- 16 South Side
- 17 Morrison Creek
- 18 Pleasant Valley
- 19 Clark
- 20 Lancaster & Watson Creek
- 21 Beardsley
- 22 Long Gulch
- 23 Dunstan
- 24 Windy Point
- 25 Mac Gregor
- 26 Hilton Gulch & Cow Creek
- 27 Foidl Canyon & Pinnacle
- 28 Mystic & Chimney Creek
- 29 Pleasant View
- 30 Cobb
- 31 Bear River & Tow Creek & Coal View
- Union High School District 1 Hayden
- Union High School District 2 McCoy
- Union High School District 3 Yampa
- Union High School District 4 Oak Creek

"Kids in the town may make mischief in groups, and tend to be restless and are trying to find something to do after school. I got by pretty well, but I wasn't the best behaved child. I was inclined to know more than the teacher and let her know it. Unfortunately the things I really got into arguments about I was right. It's too bad that once in a while I didn't get put down, 'cause I would have had a better attitude, I think.

"I once had a quarrel at Mad Creek when the teacher gave us a true / false test. I had never been given one, and I don't like them to this day, unless they are really well-worded. The question said, 'Tonsils are injurious to the health', and we were to answer it true or false. I said it was false, and the teacher said it was true. I said that it couldn't be true, or else we wouldn't be born with them. If she'd meant diseased tonsils, why didn't she say so? Then she said, 'We'll just have to talk to the doctor, or the county health officer, and see what he says.' So Doctor Blackmer said I was right, that tonsils aren't injurious to your health unless infected. Anyway, I won that.

"The next year I heard the teacher telling a kid that  $9 \times 0$  equals 9. I remember vividly it was 9, and I interrupted. In a one-room school, you saw and knew everything else that was going on. And the next year I was really naughty because the teacher was a little far out. I didn't know what was the matter with her, because I was too young to realize. I knew I didn't like her or the way she talked. So on the schoolgrounds one day, somebody yelled, 'You're a liar!', and the teacher dragged us all in the school and asked, 'Who said it?' Of course nobody owned up to it. She decided it had been my voice, so she told one of the kids to go out to Clarks' meadow and cut a willow, and she was going to whip me for calling someone a liar. About that time my dad drove up and said we were to go to town to see my new baby brother. So he saved the day. I didn't get a lickin' for that, and I hadn't done it, either."



*Clark School, where George Wheeler went to school from 1916-1924.*

George had his schooling at Clark, where he started in 1916, at the age of six. He had a fun story to tell about, 'This one teacher come along, one of the ones that had the black board full of rules and regulations for us to abide by. Of course immediately we saw how many of them we could break. The folks took Clarence and me out of school a month and a half because all we did was play. Once I don't know how many doggone frogs we had in those little old cupboards in the back end of the school. When the school board come along, we all knowed better. We saw them going by, off and on all day that day, while we was out in Dickson's meadow catching those doggone frogs. They come and gave us a big spill that night on what we had to do and on what we had done. The teacher stood by the cupboard to keep the frogs from croaking, the whole time the school board was there.

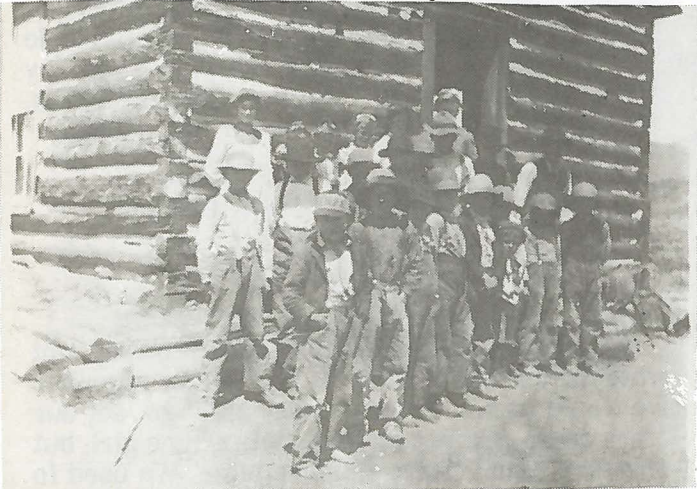
*"Kids used to think that was funny!"*

"Another time we set gopher traps, and watched out the window. If we caught a gopher we would jump out the window and go set our traps again. The teacher was a real nice girl, but she sure didn't have the discipline. We used to have her crying a lot. Once she had on one of those big ninnies with a great big collar, and she was sitting in her chair. I slipped around behind her and nailed her collar to the chair! We just did anything we pleased, and she would just go to bawling. Then one of the kids would run up with a hat to catch the tears. I have felt sorry for her since then. This was one reason why I didn't finish the eighth grade. Of course when it came time for the exam they come to the folks and wanted me to come back, because she said she knew I could pass. But I wouldn't do it, so the folks took me out of school and made me build fence. That next year I decided I would have a lot of fun and take the eighth grade over, but I didn't start for months because I stayed out and helped thrash. Mrs. Parker was the new teacher, and she come up to see the folks. She said it wasn't any use of me wasting my time taking the eighth grade over; I just as well take the ninth grade. I was a month behind on the ninth, and I still had to take all my eighth grade exams: Up 'til Christmas time that was one year that I didn't do much playing. The trouble was, it was easy for me to learn, and a lot of times I had all my lessons for the next day the day before, so if I wanted to play, I just played. Now Paddy Magill was in the same grade. I was, and his report cards weren't very good, so his mother asked him what was the matter. He said the teacher didn't give him a chance to answer any questions, that I answered them all. So after that he got a chance to answer all the questions! He never told his mother that anymore."

I asked Frances and Bill how old most students were when they started school, "Kids started school at six years old." Frances recalled some information about this, "Uncle Jack started when he was five because everybody else was going to school. Of course, I wasn't six when I went that summer, and because of having gone to school to mother and having been pushed up quite a little, I was not quite seventeen when I graduated. A lot of the boys after they got older were slowed down, not because of their ability, but because they helped out at home, late in the fall and eventually that would set them back a grade. So that lots of kids didn't graduate until they were around twenty."



*Log cabin school house at Morrison Creek.*



*Grades 1-8 at Deep Creek in 1901, school master was Fred N. May. (Grace's Grandfather)*

Attendance varied in small numbers from school to school. Only fifteen to sixteen students attended Fly Gulch according to Aunt Frances, when she went there and even less at Mad Creek. George thought at least forty students attended Clark at one time and two teachers were required to handle the load.

Rules and discipline were often not spelled out. Nellie Soash told us some about the way it was in this area when she taught, "They had to mind, and they had to study. I don't think all teachers are alike, and I don't think they need to be, but for me, I had to have order and discipline. But it didn't seem like there was much need for rules. They just came to school, and did what they were 'sposed to do, and went home.

"If I had to punish anyone I could usually look mean enough that I didn't have that many problems. One time I did spank a little boy. I taught over on Mad Creek. This boy was a good deal bigger than I, and he wouldn't mind me, (I was boarding at his house at that time), so I told his father. His father just beat him, which made me feel terrible. In those days the parents backed the teachers up. If the teacher said the kid needed to be punished, then they saw that it was done. And if you punished a child, they didn't bring a law suit against you like they're apt to now. That was the main thing, the parents backed the teachers up."

Traditions and customs were a part of country schools as they are today. Nellie remembers some of the everyday practices, "One thing we did in the morning was put up the flag and said the pledge, and usually we were 'sposed to sing, but I can hardly carry a tune, so that was always a hassle for me! We'd sing the 'Star Spangled Banner,' and 'My Country 'Tis of Thee,' and other songs from old song books. I had public school music, but when I took that class I just had fear that I'd have to get up and teach a song. I guess the teacher felt sorry for me 'cause she never made me do it."

In one-room schools there were no cafeterias, so the students brought their own lunch each day. Frances and George recalled some of their packed lunches.

"Well, I remember Mother would buy a five cent O'Henry candy bar and cut it into six pieces. That did for us three girls for two days for dessert. We carried milk in a bottle, a milk of magnesia bottle. The milk kept usually, I don't remember it ever being sour. I don't remember what we ate in sandwiches, but I liked biscuit sandwiches the best. One of my favorites was bacon in biscuits. And then we had the piece of candy bar, so we could trade our little piece of candy for things. It was quite common that you shared because there were children that didn't have very much in their lunches. Once at Fly Gulch somebody had a big dill pickle in their lunch, traded it to somebody else, after the juice was all sucked out."

George remembered, "I think Mary Wheeler was the first cook, but before that I had a lot of different things in my lunch. Most of the time I had a hard-boiled egg, that was standard. Sometimes we had a meat sandwich and usually a piece of cake or fruit. We used to be really ornery to one kid because he didn't have much of a lunch, most of the time just bread and butter. We would take a piece of cake or something and go out to the barn and cover it up with horse manure and tell him where it was at. He would go out and dig it up and eat it. What kids won't do! Kids used to think that was funny! We hurried through our lunches because we wanted to play ball."

Aunt Frances smiled remembering, "We also played Annie Over, especially at Fly Gulch. It was a good place because you could run clear around the school house. Of course they had no play ground equipment where I went to country schools."

I asked Ruth about interscholastic sports, "There was never much interscholastic sports, the schools did get together for a school day, but it was academic, not sports. There were no music or art programs like today, and the curriculum was basically reading, writing and arithmetic. A large book was outlined as a course of study by the state of Colorado. Also small programs on art and music and a spelling list."

"We did have a spelling meet and the winner went to Denver and represented the rural schools. It is still sponsored by the Rocky Mountain News. We entered that. We also had Christmas programs and they were quite elaborate and very well attended."



*Nellie's school at Salt Creek.*

The community really enjoyed the Christmas celebration in their rural schools. And many of the schools had a spring program, also. We had a combined graduation in the spring."

Nellie had something to say about school programs, "We had spelling bees and ciphers, you know, arithmetic ciphers. The one who could add the fastest on the blackboard, and be quick, won. Whoever got through the quickest would get to stand up there and then the next guy'd come up. It was just like a spell-down, only it was arithmetic. We also had school programs and speeches, from the teachers who could sing, and teach singing. There was one woman who taught down at Fairplay that could give the nicest little programs I ever saw."

Aunt Frances admired her fellow classmate's ability in contests, "I remember the spelling bee, and the Math bee. You got up and did it orally while the teacher just rattled it off. Lois Jackson was so good at it and I can remember vividly because she was just a little older than I was, and I thought that was pretty smart."



*A community gathering at Terhune Basin in 1936.*

"Sometimes we had Sunday school at Deep Creek and a Christmas program was the big event. Then I recall vividly when they got the school house built at Elk Mountain, we were invited to the Halloween program, either in '24 or '25, 'cause we still had the Model T. We went down to the Halloween program, and saw the Chinese lanterns, paper things with candles in them. I remember one of the paper things caught on fire, and Mother put it out. She just went up and squashed it with her hands. Everyone just started yelling and having a fit, but Mother wasn't excited."

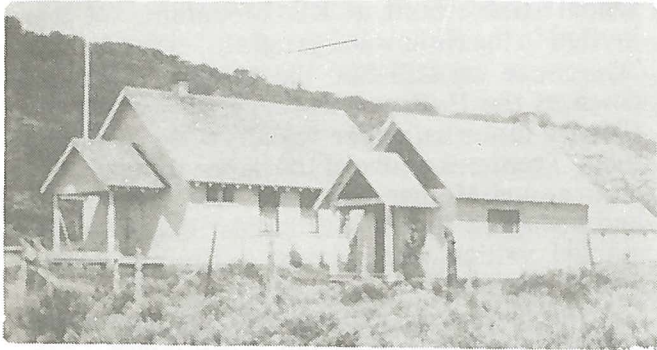
Memories and experiences in one-room schools abounded from our storytellers. Aunt Frances had some vivid memories to tell about school and summertime.

"One summer Mrs. Parker's son, a real ornery kid, and too old to be attending school, and Carl Gill, who wasn't going to school either, got us down in the buggy and were going to hang us. We were little enough to control so they put the rope around our neck and tied it to the stringers in the shed and began rolling the buggy out from underneath us. And of course I'm so wrinkled and old now you can't hardly tell, but all my life I carried the rope burn from that. His mother got there just as I was getting hung. I don't recall that it strangled me, as much as it burned. His mother was pretty upset over that. Then one night at Fly Gulch I got home and took off my saddle and the cinch had been cut all but about three strands. I knew the kids all stood around expecting me to get dumped. That also was the same year I hit a boy. That was Daddy's fault. I took everything my father said absolutely, and always obeyed him if possible. This boy would get off his horse and throw rocks at us and the horse when we stopped to open the gate. It was terrible hard to get off and on a horse that already had two sisters on it just to get the gate. So I said, what was I going to do? Well, Dad said, 'Punch him in the nose!' Daddy didn't mean for me to hit this boy, he really didn't, but I did anyway. Talk about a ruckus! His mother hit the roof. Here her poor little boy came home with a bloody nose. He didn't try to fight back at all. And so when we got to school the next day, we were all called in. We were told the other kid left first, then we could go. Well, of course you knew where he was, but he never threw any more rocks."

At times summer school would be held because of weather conditions, deep snow, bad roads or because of ranching responsibilities. Most school sessions were held from September to May but could be held from March to Christmas, or whatever made nine months. There might have been a school in each general area to handle summer students.

Aunt Frances told me about riding her Indian pony, Fliver, to school 'til she was tardy one day because on the way she stopped to play with some frog eggs. In high school she sometimes rode to town and left her horse at the livery barn.

Accidents seldom occurred, but in any event, a cinch would break or be loosened, either by accident or on purpose.



*Fly Gulch, where Frances & Bill May attended school.*

Aunt Frances remembered attending summer school in Fly Gulch, "We started in at Fly Gulch, because they decided to have summer school. And I went for a while in the seventh grade, but I didn't go the whole year. The next year I went three or four months in the summer to the eighth grade. Then I wanted to go to high school. That's when I learned not to cheat Grace Ann. I didn't cheat myself, but I helped someone else cheat. In those days you had to take your exam to go to high school through the county superintendent, and the county superintendent came out and gave this exam to this girl that wanted to go to high school. She was two years older than I was, and couldn't take the test, so I took the test for her. In country schools the teacher didn't give a hoot about us, anyway. So it wasn't hard to do somebody else's work. And then I asked if I could take it because I wanted to go to high school. And the teacher told me, 'Heavens no I couldn't take it!' That I couldn't possibly pass it. Well I couldn't very well say that I had just then, could I? Because that would have given it away for the girl that wanted to go to high school. And I went home, talk about crying! I was really upset. I told my mother all about the test and what the teacher said. My mother said, 'That's the rules, that's what you get for cheating. You shouldn't have done it.'

next semester, I went to town and stayed at Aunt Jo Brown's, and took the last half of the eighth grade over in town, because I had never finished any of the grades in the country, you see. I went back to Aunt Grace's in Iowa for my freshman year."

I asked Ruth Carver how many summer schools there were, "Three or four. They were closing those by the time I was superintendent. Hilton Gulch was one and Deep Creek was one."

Nellie Soash spoke to us about problems with winter that necessitated summer school, "Just up that creek is an old log cabin, and I went to school there. I rode five miles and went to summer school, too. Then as we got older, my mother wanted us to go where we would get more school. See, we were only getting seven months of school because the roads weren't passable longer, so we went down here to the Fairplay school by the Wheeler's."

In early years country schools were more often than not taught by women, unmarried status preferred and sometimes required.

Ruth Carver told me about the regulations. "There were very few men. We had one, I remember, when I was county superintendent, Galen Waite, but most of them were women. When I first came here in 1940, you had to be single. They wouldn't hire married women because there were more teachers than there were jobs. But I was married when I was teaching at Fly Gulch, and my husband went immediately into the army and overseas. So they said that could count as a single person, because I was alone. And from about that time on, there was no restriction. When I was county superintendent about seven years later, most of them were married women."

Aunt Frances talked about this subject, too, "Of course they weren't married then, and even the county superintendent wasn't supposed to be married. You had to be a widow, or if you were divorced under circumstances that the school approved, then they would hire you. But, they wouldn't hire married women, this was against all regulations, and it caused a lot of problems. By 1943 there were married teachers."

There were other rules and regulations governing the teachers' behavior. For example, Nellie Soash recalled for us, "Let's see, well, the teachers couldn't smoke. And I remember the county superintendent saying just before I started, that she wouldn't recommend anyone with short hair to teach school. And in two years' time she had her s cut, too! My father was terribly against me cutting my hair. He just wouldn't hear to it, but finally did."

Another example of rules is this newspaper article.



## CONTRACT TERMS MUCH DIFFERENT FOR HIS FIRST TEACHING POSITION

Things have changed since Samuel M. Barbiero began teaching school in 1927 in the now-vanished community of Mount Harris near Steamboat Springs, in the Colorado Rockies.

Here are some of the contract provisions in his first teaching assignment:

"Women teachers are not to keep company with men and agree to be at home between the hours of 8 p.m. and 6 a.m. unless attending a school function.

"Women teachers agree not to get married. This contract becomes null and void immediately if a woman teacher marries.

"All school employes are not to leave town at any time without the permission of the chairman of the school board.

"The teacher agrees not to smoke cigarettes.

"This contract becomes null and void immediately if the employe is found drinking alcoholic beverages.

"Women teachers are to dress and conduct themselves in a puritanical manner as follows: Not to dress in bright colors, not to dye her hair, to wear at least two petticoats, not to wear dresses more than two inches above the ankle, not to use face powder, mascara or paint the lips.

"Men teachers may take one evening a week for courting purposes, providing they attend church regularly or teach a Sunday school class.

"The teacher agrees to keep the classroom clean; to sweep the classroom floor at least once daily; to scrub the classroom floor once a week with hot water and soap; to clean the blackboards at least once daily and to start the fire at 7 a.m. so the room will be warm at 8 a.m. when the patrons arrive; to carry out the ashes at least once daily and shall perform other duties as prescribed by the board of education.

"Each teacher should lay aside from each pay a good sum of his earnings so he will not become a burden to society."

Barbiero, who recently retired as supervisor in the pupil personnel department of Jefferson County public schools, turned up the contract while going through mementos of his 47 years in teaching.

For meeting all the qualifications, the pay was \$120 a month.

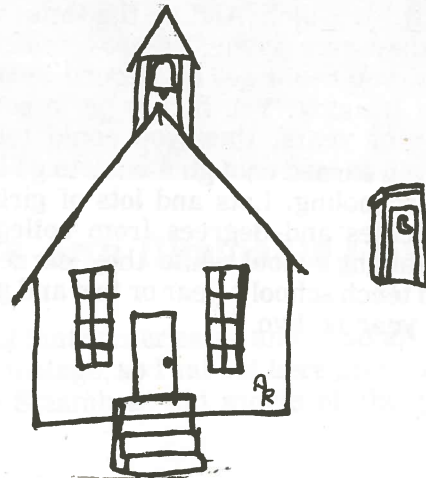
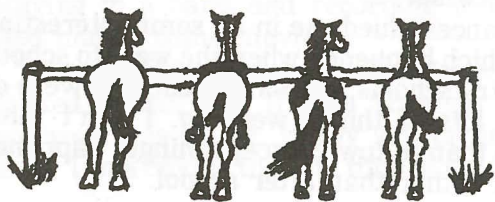
Barbiero said there wasn't much grumbling about the contract terms.

"Jobs were not easy to come by, and at least you knew you had a warm place to spend the winter," he said.

Some of the schools had two teachers, when there was enrollment enough to be divided. At one time Clark had two teachers, but most were one-room schools. A lot of the schools were so isolated that they had to have teacherages because they were too far for the teacher to get to.

Aunt Frances said, "The teachers were hired through the local school boards, and most were college educated, but they didn't have to be. A test was required. Granddad May hiked on the crust in March over the mountains from Deep Creek to Hayden and took his test to teach school. Although not a college graduate, he was a very well-read person, and was quite capable of teaching school." Granddad May at one time taught as many as 45 students one year and 75 another. This would not have been possible without the help of the older girls helping the younger pupils.

One-room schools often were not a certain grade. The teacher was trying to teach a child many of the things that they are now. However, it really depended on the teacher. Aunt Frances said, "Some of the teachers in the one-room school houses were marvels, and they saw to it that it was a well-balanced education for all the students whether they were slow or fast. They had interest in each child. I truly believe that there were more people teaching then that wanted to be teachers. I feel there are people teaching now because it is a job. Also, a lot of our teacher time is taken up in book work for the administration and they aren't allowed to spend as much of their own time with their students like they should. I don't think it has anything to do with how long they have gone to college. A science teacher in high school and advanced math, teachers have to have training. "Up to the sixth grade I don't think it made any difference whether the teacher had gone to college or not. That's one reason why I think the teacher was a little more fitted for the job. She usually was a dedicated person and worked real hard to get to school. But you didn't have to know as much then as you do now, so it was much simpler. After all, teaching a child how to read, write, and do arithmetic, were the basics. I think maybe teachers did a little better job in one-room school houses, because that's all they had to do."





*Nellie (Gray) Soash taught this typical country school.*

Teaching school has never been very lucrative as a job, but compared to schools of yesteryear, teachers might be considered as being well paid today.

Nellie Soash told us, "When I first went into teaching, they paid us \$100 for twenty days. And then the Depression came, and I didn't get paid except for the months I taught. The salaries went down to about \$75. And after I got married, I didn't teach for a few years, and when I went back to teaching, I got \$85 a month. So it went down pretty much, and some of the districts didn't even have enough money to pay the banks."

Aunt Frances told me, "Back in the days when Daddy (Fred May) taught, (1901-1904), you were really being paid if you got more than \$50 a month. I think they paid around \$75 a month over at Fly Gulch. And by the time we moved here they were paying \$95-100 a month. In other words, you could get up around \$1000 for your school training. You had to go to college for a couple of years, then you could teach school until you earned enough money to go back to get more schooling. Lots and lots of girls got their certificates and degrees from college because they taught school while they earned it. They would teach school a year or two and go to school for a year or two."

Ruth informed me, "I came here in 1940. The salary of a teacher in one of these little districts was around \$80 a month. Now that would not pay for two days, but we were better off than it sounds, because we had the teacherage to live in. There we paid no rent, and it was furnished free. We had coal and electricity furnished by the districts, but in 1940, there was no electricity in the country. In 1942 or 1943 the schools were connected to the R.E.A., and we had electricity in the teacherages and school houses. Then, before electricity, we had a lot of chores to do."

Nellie spoke of chores, "We had to chop our wood, build our fires, carry in the coal, and take out the ashes, plus sweep and dust!"

The school day in the one-room school houses was similar in many ways to today. School started at eight or nine, and ended at four.

Nellie also told us, "We always left here at eight, not any earlier than the kids leave now. We could make five miles in an hour. I never let school out before four o'clock, except on Fridays sometimes, a half-hour earlier. I was married on a Friday evening, but I kept the kids 'till 3:30. I don't know if they learned anything or not! We didn't lock the school when we left at night, it wasn't necessary."

Aunt Frances clued me in on some interesting stories which happened when she went to school, "In country schools, unless the teachers were on the ball, lots of things went on. I don't think anymore than in town, except things happened at school rather than after school."

Country schools often were social centers and a common meeting place. Frances believed these activities made education more interesting, "I got more fun out of the country schools when Mrs. Lodwick was there and they had an active P.T.A. People used the school as a community place. It was lots of fun. I think they started the P.T.A. in about 1931 and that was a good thing.

"Another thing that was fun was if you had a county superintendent that could sing or play. Because when they came around the teacher could play the piano and the superintendent could entertain. She came usually once a month. When I was in country school at Fly Gulch she came around and brought books. We didn't have a lot of workbook-type things, but the superintendent could order them for you."

Ruth Carver had some information about being county superintendent, a position she held for two years, "The county superintendent was much the same as the principal in a grade school. She saw that the curriculum was the same and that different studies were carried out. She made up the eighth grade examination, and took care of commencement. She sent in the annual report to Denver of the district and was supposed to know the school law and help the district see that things were legal. She also helped in establishing the budget for the coming year and setting the tax levy.

"Each school was a separate district and they each had their own tax rate. The school board and the county superintendent figured out their expenses for the year. From that they made up the tax levy. And it was very low then. Some of them were lower than others, but it was very low compared to what we pay now.

"In 1952 or '53, the county superintendent's office visited the schools about twice a year. They furnished workbooks and the same textbooks throughout the county rural schools. We gave achievement tests and ranked them. And had a selection of library books which different school boards sent, and the county superintendent bought library books with money from all the districts. And on her visit she would take books and exchange them for others they had. In between times the teacher came into the office and picked up library books.

"I went from nine to five and a half day on Saturday. I also had to go to State Meeting in January and visit the schools regularly. I worked with the town superintendents, but I didn't really have any authority in town. We just worked together. I took care of things for the rural school. Mr. Sauer helped me understand the tax formula and figuring the tax levies for various little districts. That was something. Books had to balance. I had to balance every little district's books. It was quite a chore. I think I got paid eighteen hundred a year for that.



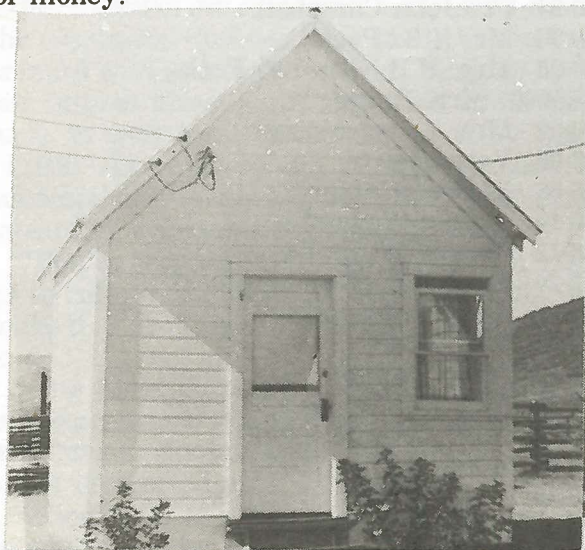
Deep Creek school house now. Some school houses have been converted to residences, barns or graineries.

## *County Superintendents of Schools Routt County, Colo.*

- 1879 James Crawford (appointed by Gov. Routt - Mr. Crawford declined)
- 1879 T. Pattin (appointed by Gov. Routt to fill vacancy)
- July 4, 1882 S.D.N. Bennett (appointed by Gov. Routt - resigned 10 / 4 / 82)
- 1884-86 J. H. Cheney - elected
- 1886-88 John T. Whyte - elected
- 1888-90 Ezekiel Shelton - elected
- 1890-94 Dr. John Campbell
- 1894-96 Mr. H.B. Peck
- 1896-98 Mrs. H.B. (Emma) Peck
- 1898-1900 Mrs. Barnard
- 1900-02 Mrs. Laura Monson
- 1902-06 Verna Bartz
- 1906-08 Florence Adair
- 1908-10 Mamie Weyand
- 1910-12 George W. Smith
- 1912-20 Mrs. H.B. (Emma) Peck
- 1920-22 Anna Funk Reid
- 1922-26 Nan Scales
- 1926-28 Irene Parker
- 1928-34 Mrs. James (Pearl) Funk
- 1934-36 Mrs. Blanche Elliott
- 1936-40 Anna Prella Wood
- 1940-49 Tommie Hix Brannick
- 1949-53 Vivien Maxwell
- 1953-55 Mrs. Roy (Ruth) Carver
- 1955-63 Geraldine Elkins
- 1963-67 Robert H. Shaw

"The most trouble we had was when it came time to consolidate the districts. It took quite a few years for it to become final, but it started at that time. In 1952 Steamboat Springs realized that they needed to build a new elementary school, so they called a meeting and wanted to know whether the districts were interested in coming in. They didn't want to build the school, and have these districts closed and combine with the Steamboat Springs district after the school was built. They wanted to know before they built the school. There was quite a lot of trouble about it. The country schools were unwilling to give up their control, and they hated to see, especially the primary children, so far away from home all day. They would have to ride the bus so early in the morning and get home late at night, and still be so far away from home. Parents were used to having them close, and they also hated to give up their social centers in the neighborhood. The children from three to twenty-five (in a school room) had lots of individual help. Even though reluctant to give up the district, especially as social centers, eventually they all joined the Steamboat Springs district. By the time the new grade school opened most of them were consolidated. Actually, I worked terribly hard to get consolidation because I thought it was the thing. There just weren't enough kids to do anything else."

Frances and George shared some thoughts about consolidation, "I think one thing that made consolidation was country schools began to have trouble getting teachers. You might say they had to go out of existence because the women didn't like to live in homes or teacherages any longer. Also many many schools didn't have good water, '33' didn't have any water. They had to have it put in the stone cooler. Fly Gulch had a well, but it was very alkaline, not the pleasantest to drink. Each community had to pay more for a teacher and provide a place for her to live so they just ran out of money."



A teacherage at Long Gulch has been preserved by Quentin and Evelyn Semotan. Teacherage - where the teacher lived while teaching country school

Many country schools could rival town schools of today. All interviewees stressed the importance of the teacher and her dedication. Frances, George and Ruth summed up a basic philosophy of rural schools of yesteryear, "So much depends on the teacher, no matter what. Certain kids got more out of it because they were hearing the other classes. Others worked ahead and some reviewed behind. Of course some schools are operating now on the idea of the old one-room schools. You are working according to what you are able to.

"There are arguments on both sides, country and town. It was nice to have the children near home, especially the small ones. And they did get a lot of individual attention. But I believe in the long run, it is probably much better as it is now. I am sure they get more physical education, art and music and things like that. Rural schools did quite well academically. The little one learned from the older ones. The older ones helped the little ones. And it was a good attitude, almost like a family."



*Grace May - today's student imagining what it would be like to be yesteryear student.*

We would like to dedicate this story to those people who have an interest in the preservation of the country school houses and memories of them throughout the United States. Perhaps our children and others will have the privilege to see, or attend a social activity at some of the country school houses that still stand today. We would like to thank everyone who made this story possible. Frances and George Wheeler, Nellie Soash, Ruth Carver, Henry and Ayliffe Zehner, Thelma Stevenson, Bill May, Ginger Infanger who did a lot of typing and helped me throughout this story, also Tanna Eck for assistance. It was a great privilege to do this story on our forgotten country schools.