

## **CHAPTER THIRTEEN**

### **EARLY SCHOOLS**

Up to the time Maries County was organized our knowledge of educational conditions within its borders is mostly tradition, and is almost as sketchy as the education itself. During all the time of white occupation of this territory, or from about the time of Missouri's admission as a state, up to the time of the county's organization in 1855, Missouri's school system, while nominally public and called free, was, in fact, a system in name only, so far as the rural part of the state was concerned. Then, as now, it provided for a distribution of funds from the state, county, and township to the various districts. But these funds from the state did not amount in any one-year to much more than fifty thousand dollars, with the county and township funds equally meager as judged by present standards.

So, while the schools were free and public, in reality most of the rural schools were subscription schools and were taught when, as, and if the teacher could get a sufficient number of parents to 'sign' their children. Such parents as could be persuaded to 'sign' did so at times when the children could best be spared from their farm duties, so the terms were short. The burden of 'signing' a numerous progeny rested heavily on the head of the family, so that successive terms of school in one spot were rare, the teacher usually moving on to a new neighborhood after one term--or at most two. That was usually the case unless he located in one spot and eked out a living by practicing as a 'yarb doctor,' in which he was sometimes assisted by, but was oftener assistant to, the older women of the neighborhood. Teaching singing almost always accompanied the profession of teaching school, as well as serving the public as itinerant minister on occasion.

But in spite of the scant reward Maries County had about as many rural schools, and of about the same quality, as the remainder of the state in a like situation. As early as 1833 Carter Woods taught one or more terms of school in the Crismon Settlement on the Big Maries. Schools were also opened about the same time on Cedar Creek, on the Gasconade at or near Old Bloomgarden, and on Lanes Prairie. The last was conducted by a man named Aubrey, and he had as one of his pupils, Hibler Ammerman, a pioneer in that section. The school at Bloomgarden was taught by a man named Durand, his only description being that he was 'from New York state.' About 1839 Abraham Johnson, son of Thomas, began teaching and continued to do so for many years, mostly in the south and east parts of the county.

The first school district organized in Maries County (which was also the first in Osage County) was in 1843. Its boundaries are indefinitely described, but it included the northwestern part of present Maries County and the southwestern part of present Osage, a territory in

which there are now twelve or fifteen districts. Davis Woody was the first President of the Board of Education of the new district, and Abraham Barnhart one of the directors, both residents of this county after its organization. The name of the third member is almost illegible, but is believed to be either Caleb Babb (one of the founders of Babbtown) or Caleb Burnham. Judging from the known places of residence of the directors, the district must have embraced a territory at least as large in area as our present Boone Township.

Shortly prior to the time this county was organized, at the session of 1852-1853, the General Assembly enacted a measure setting apart twenty-five per cent of the annual revenue received for the support of schools of the state. With the exception of a few years during the Civil War this percent, or more, has ever since been apportioned to the schools. The first distribution of these funds was made in 1855, and as this county was organized that same year the present school system may be said to date from the organization of the county.

The haphazard method of education prevailing up to that time had, in a measure, given place to schools held at fixed places, even though those places were few and far between. Probably at dozen schools operated in a fairly regular manner at that time, and many more districts were organized once the benefit of the state school program became manifest. Among the schools established then or shortly afterward was the Farmer School, named for James Farmer on whose land it was built, west of the Big Maries and almost in the present farm-to-market highway A on land now owned by Joseph Stratmann.

Carr in his History of Missouri in describing a similar house says 'they were often nothing more than log huts, unplastered and unceiled, with chimneys constructed of sticks, mud and straw, and without school furniture, unless long backless benches made of inverted

puncheons, and wide planks fastened to the wall for writing desks, may be called furniture.' Aside from the fact that the Farmer Schoolhouse had no writing desk, no chimney, and that a log had been left out of one side on the building to admit light, the above description is a fairly accurate one. The absence of a chimney necessitated holding school during the months when no chimney was necessary.

One term attended by John H. Bodendick who is still living at Vienna was taught by a man named Fraker, whose given name is unknown, and another by one named Duncan. Fraker relinquished teaching at the beginning of the Civil War and was appointed to command one of the union companies organized at this time. The first engagement participated in by them caused some nervousness on the part of some of the privates, who ducked and dodged as the bullets whined over their heads. Fraker reproached them bitterly. "Don't be a set of damned cowards, but stand up like men," he exhorted. Just then a zinging ball barely missed his own ear and he shouted, "Or else don't stand up at all!" as he dived for shelter.

Another school of about the same age and standing was built on the farm of Solomon Copeland, now owned by Henry Stratman down the Maries below the Farmer School. One of the first terms in it was taught by William (Red Head) Branson, for many years connected officially with Maries County affairs. Of the schools on the east side of the river the one at the William Kinsey place at High Gate and one on Lanes Prairie southeast of old Lindell were among the oldest and most regularly conducted. Reuben Terrill taught at both places among others.

The recollections of Professor J. B. Hayes, yet living (1939) at St. James at an advanced age, is that the first school he attended in this county, after attending one term in Tennessee, was about 1854. The school

then known as the Bailey or Hayes District, was some-where in the neighborhood of the present Lacy Schoolhouse. The school facilities were almost perfectly described in the quotation from Carr's history. There were no blackboards, slates, globes, or any other equipment now deemed necessary, and very few books. Spelling, reading, writing, and arithmetic were the subjects taught, all in a limited way. Allen Bailey taught this first school he attended, later terms by men named Shelton, who also doubled as a preacher, Thompson, and Edelman, among others. None of them except Bailey had any but casual connection with this county's affairs and drifted to other places after a term or two.

During at least a part of this prewar period a school was held in the Barnwell District, now the Star, southeast of the Bailey School. Some terms there were taught by James Noll, who afterwards married a Southard and moved to Nebraska. William Mortimer Lee, born in Louisville, Kentucky, October 24, 1824, was married when he came here and began teaching in early manhood, a calling he followed something like fifty years before his retirement. He served also as one of the early day school commissioners. He died in Texas January 6, 1917. Of the three children born of his marriage a son died in early manhood and one daughter, Doll ie, married a man named Hayden and, with her father after the death of her mother, moved to Texas and died there many years ago. She is survived by a son and daughter, both in that state. The remaining daughter, Amanda Lee, first married John Dodds and was the mother of two daughters, Alice Jones, a widow, and Grace, wife of Hosea Crismon, both of this county. Three children, Lucy, wife of John Sudheimer, Elmer, and Edgar Blanton, survive her second marriage, which was to Richard Blanton. Professor Lee's wife was a Montgomery, thought to have been related to the family of that name on the Phelps-Maries County line.

Under the allotment of twenty-five percent of the

general revenue for their support Maries County schools became public and free in reality, and both their number and attendance grew rapidly. Solomon Kimzey became the first School Commissioner in 1858, and by the time the Civil War began the county was divided into about twenty-five districts, in each of which a term of school was fairly regularly maintained every year. The war, with its attendant disturbances, gave the schools a severe setback and for a number of years during and immediately after the war hardly half of the districts maintained schools.

About 1868, however, the effects of the conflict began to disappear, and during the term of office of Dr. A. L. McGregor as Commissioner the schools recovered until in number and attendance they at least equalled that of the prewar period. R. W. Mahaney and Jacob A. Love succeeded Dr. McGregor as Commissioner in 1870 and 1872, respectively. In 1873, during the administration of Judge Love, the first enumeration list of which we have a record was filed; it showed 2,598 children of schoolage in the county. In 1877 there were 2,656 white and nine colored children, thirty-nine school districts and nineteen employed teachers, who were paid an average monthly salary of \$30.73 (owing to the short terms several teachers probably taught in two districts in the same year).

In 1886 the salary had risen to \$35.18; 2,187 pupils were enrolled out of an enumeration of 2,945 white and two colored children, and the average daily attendance was 1,436. Forty-four teachers were employed and there were likely that many districts. School property in the county was valued at \$12,874.00.

The period from 1868 to 1886 maybe termed the patriarchal epoch of Maries County schools, for the teachers in that interval meant to be, and generally were, the absolute masters of their pupils both in school and out. Indeed, an infraction of the teacher's idea of propriety

outside of school hours often brought heavier punishment than an offense committed in school.

Reuben Terrill continued to teach in the eastern part of the county during this time, and Judge Jacob A. Love, R. N. Mahaney, Micaiah Williams, William Branson, J. B. Hayes, Robert A. King, D. N. Gardner, and others, were recognized as successful educators. The list also includes James O. Ferguson, who removed from Illinois to this county about the time of its organization, and for almost forty years had close connection with educational matters in the west end of Maries and the east end of Miller counties. His second wife was a sister of William Massey, whose father was among the first settlers on the Little Maries. Henry Warren was also a prominent teacher in the west end of the county during the same period, serving as School Commissioner as early as 1864, and later as Representative in the General Assembly.

It was during this period, also in 1872, that Vienna acquired ownership of its first school property, the lot in the north end of town where for forty-five years ninety-nine per cent of the youngsters of the district received the only education they ever acquired. A term or two of school had been held inside the city limits of the town prior to that time, but the early citizens sent their children to the Farmer School, two or three miles west of town, for such schooling as they received.

Both during and preceding this time a school maintained in Phelps County, just over the line in York's Leg, attracted many children from Maries County. The teacher was Professor Krewson, also known as Captain. The Captain had been a seaman for many years, his family settling in Philadelphia. But he grew tired of the sea and moved his family to what is now Phelps County where he taught most of the rest of his life. Textbooks being scarce and not altogether to his liking, the Captain wrote most of the textbooks from which he taught, some of

which are still in existence as heirlooms owned by his former pupils. His teaching included several terms at the Meramec Iron Works School in Phelps County. Here he obtained a clerking job in the company store for young Bert Long of Maries County, thus starting him on his long and successful mercantile career in Phelps County.

In a short time, probably within a year after the Vienna schoolhouse was built, R.A. Daniels took charge of it. For the next ten or twelve years he exercised a greater influence over the educational affairs of the county than any other one man. He taught several terms in Vienna, about ten in all, and also taught at other schools, among which were the Burns and Washington, in the western part of the county, and Grove Dale and High Gate in the east end. Well educated, far above the average teacher of his time, it was only natural that he attracted to the school many pupils from outside the district. Many who had taken the ordinary course in other districts, at the close of their own term came to any school being taught by him for further instruction. This was done regardless of where he taught, and during one on his country terms the hospitable homes in the district were overflowing with non-resident pupils who had the year before, or would the year succeeding, attend school under him in a district at the opposite end of the county.

Among pupils he instructed from Vienna and other districts were numbered L. N. Ramsey, still living; Kate, Effie, and Cora William, all now dead; B.F. Branson, dead; Mart Emory, dead; Kate and Eliza Bray, both living, the former now Mrs. Thomas Lair in Oklahoma, and the latter Mrs. Eliza Spurgeon of High Gate; Robert A. King, long since removed to California where he died; Judge I. H. Burns of Vienna; P. F. Letterman now in Colorado; Louis C. Satterthwaite and Robert Rowden, all dead; George E. Cansler, present and for many years cashier of The Maries County Bank at Vienna; Samuel L., Davis S., and Betty Mosby of whom only Davis

now living; Nettie, Hattie, Jennie, T. A., and Clay Felker of whom only Jennie and T. A. are living; Will, Millie, and Don Ellis, the last two living; Mamie, Andrew, and Lincoln Tainter; Will and Elizabeth Rowan, the latter living; and many others.

Daniels maintained an iron discipline in every school he taught, whether in town or country, subscription or public, and never failed to punish an infraction of his rules, whether known to the offender or not, nor did the time or place make any difference to him. In nine cases out of ten the punishment was administered on the spot as soon as the offense was discovered, and the punishment was a whipping. He rarely reprimanded; he did not 'chastise' or 'punish,' he WHIPPED. Nor do any of his former pupils believe that any man before or since could wield the rod in a way to inflict half the punishment with it that he could. No matter where he was, in school on on the street, a switch of formidable size was always within six inches of his fingers. Many a man now past or well into middle age, including at least one millionaire, can recall with a shiver the 'gone' feeling in his midriff that overtook him when, happening to glance up while he fashioned a grapevine cigarette, or engaged an enemy in combat in fancied security, he beheld the avenging Daniels bearing down upon him. All his courage left him and terror overtook him as he sidled as much as possible of his exposed anatomy against the nearest protecting fence or tree. But all in vain. A hand skilful in twisting youngsters away from protection grasped his collar, he was hauled out into the open, as a switch the size of a warclub materialized in the other hand. It swished through the air and was followed--sometimes preceded--by a howl of anguish from the offender. It lifted and fell again and again, governed by the offense and the mood of the wielder.

When Daniels finally loosed the punished one's collar and bade him go home and behave himself he 'stood not on the order of his going, but went hurriedly,' even

though way down in his heart he knew the storm was not yet over. The parents of the district had the peculiar notion that when Daniels gave a child a whipping he not only needed that one but another from his folks, so the sobs from the first were hardly more than stilled when they were turned into whoops and yells of grief as the victim endured his second whipping for the same offense. Nor did attending a school taught by him ever grow monotonous, if for no other reason than that his orders were for that day, possibly for that hour, only. A pupil was commended for a thing one day and soundly thrashed for the same thing the next.

While a most pleasant and companionable man, and in spite of his severe methods, a general favorite with his pupils, very little is known of his life either before or after his residence in Maries County. He is thought by many of his former pupils to have come to this part of the state from the St. Joseph, Missouri, area, to which place he removed about the middle eighties. He had taught at Dixon and Richland before coming here. Nor did he keep up any connection with his acquaintances here after moving away. Except for a rumor that he abandoned teaching and engaged in railroad work after his return to St. Joseph, if it were a return, and that he was killed in a railroad accident several years thereafter, nothing more is known of him.

A. L. Benage was also a prominent educator of that day, having taught at least one and possibly more terms at Vienna, besides others in various parts of the county, afterwards moving to Miller County. W. M. Redford and John Sullins succeeded each other in the Vienna School after the departure of Daniels.

Aside from the schools conducted by Daniels which, with the exception of subscription schools in the spring were the public schools of the districts, the only other institution aiming at higher education in the county was the Vichy Normal and Business Institute. It was organized

at Vichy in 1887 with J. B. Hayes and D. N. Gardner as its owners and teachers. Both were experienced and had the confidence of the community, with the result that the school was successful from the first and soon enjoyed a wide reputation, necessitating employing more teachers, John A. Ferrell was first employed as assistant, together with his wife, then O. L. Lyon and G. H. Sughrue. The school continued to flourish until 1890, when its then owners. Professors Hayes and Ferrell, decided to move to Steelville in Crawford County, where they re-established themselves in teaching and conducted a school along the same lines as the one at Vichy for many years.

After their departure the Vichy school was conducted for several years by Albert B. Sloan, of Cape Girardeau, who later entered the military service during the Spanish-American War as Captain of I Company of the Sixth Missouri Infantry Volunteers. He was sent to the Philippines with his command where he served well and bravely and played a part in the capture of Aguinaldo, the leader of the insurrection. After the rebellion was put down he elected to remain in the army, entering the regulars as Second Lieutenant and rising to Colonel in which rank he served in China, Alaska, and other places. Retired from the army after reaching the age limit, he died a few years ago in California.

Miss Mattie Beard, also of Cape Girardeau, forsook her place in the school to become the wife of J. G. Salte, then a rising young lawyer of Vienna, and later removed to Jefferson City where she still lives, surviving her husband who passed away shortly after retiring from the bench as Judge of the Fourteenth Judicial District. C. H. Smith of southwest Missouri took the place vacated by Miss Beard, and was later succeeded by Miss Sallie Millard of Rolla, later wife of Cornelius Roach, twice Secretary of State of Missouri.

Added facilities at the state normal schools, together

with better transportation facilities, and the drift of the younger generation toward education in business colleges led to the close of the Institute in 1895 after about ten years of valuable work, during which time they enrolled pupils from almost every county south of the Missouri River, as well as from many other states.

Among other teachers prominent in the seventies were P. B. Rainier who taught writing at Vienna in 1874; Miles T. Walker who taught music about the same time; J. B. Powell, Shell Gray, and William M. Lee, the last named having also served more than one term as School Commissioner.