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A HISTORY OF THE SCHOOLS OF  
COOKE COUNTY, TEXAS

THESIS

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By

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## INTRODUCTION

This is an effort to tell the story of public education in Cooke County, Texas. Any social, economic, or educational condition does not simply "happen"; rather, it is the culmination of a long series of trends and events. It is hoped that by a close examination of Cooke County's schools during the last sixty years, a better understanding of its present educational status will be attained. It will then be easier to predict the county's educational possibilities for the future.

In this study a great deal of space has been devoted to the history of Cooke County. The writer believes that the history of a community greatly affects its schools, and the schools in turn affect the community. A community does not usually progress in all other lines of human endeavor and leave its educational system behind. The schools of a community will show progress in direct proportion to the social, economic, and religious progress attained by that community. The greatest single factor affecting education in a community is possibly economic. No one will contend that, given the opportunity, most individuals will live a clean, decent, and useful life. The same is true of a

community. If a community has economic well-being and security, its people have the means and initiative to improve their schools.

Most of the historical records of Cooke County have been well preserved, and the public records have been well kept. The history of the county has been admirably told a number of times, but usually only references were made to the schools. The various accounts of the schools have not been complete, and have naturally not been balanced against each other. In preparing this history, all available sources of information have been consulted. It is hoped that a comprehensive and somewhat interesting story will be the result.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE EARLY HISTORY OF COOKE COUNTY

#### Physical Characteristics of Cooke County

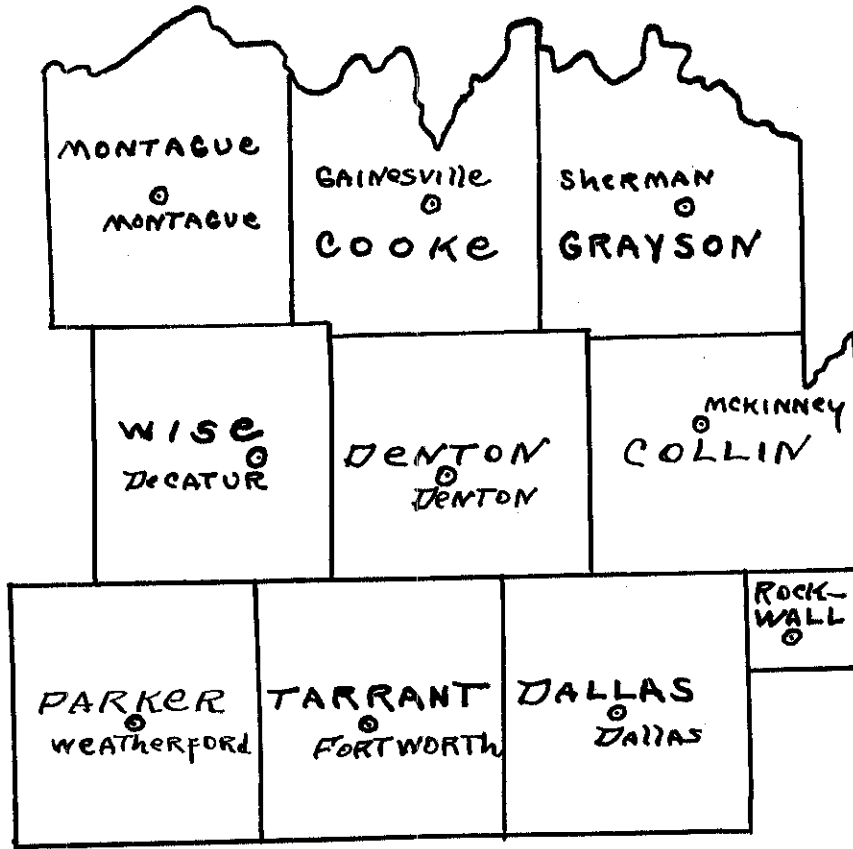
Cooke County lies in that tier of counties in North Texas sometimes known as the "Red River Counties," the river forming the boundary between Texas and Oklahoma. Along the northern boundary of the county, the course of the Red River is most irregular. Several large bends in the river are formed by its cutting deep into the county in several places. In these bends are found rich bottom lands that are suitable for farming. From this physiographic condition has grown the settlements of the county, for from the beginning the pioneers made homes and developed towns and communities in these large bottom areas. Accordingly, the term "bend" was usually used in naming them, and the reader will find any historical account of the county making frequent mention of such names as Saddlers Bend, Warrens Bend, Sivells Bend, Horse-shoe Bend, Delaware Bend, and others.

The peculiar location of Cooke County along the Red River has greatly affected its history in yet another way.



MAP I

# OKLAHOMA



Being on the border of the state and with Oklahoma to the north, Cooke County has been a "port-of-entry" through all of its history. Travelling south today (1944), Gainesville, the county seat, is the first town in Texas on U. S. Highway 77. We shall learn later in this account that, as a "port-of-entry," Gainesville has served many varied and interesting roles in the economic development of the county.

In the near future, with the development of the great Denison Dam Reservoir almost at its door, Cooke County is destined to add yet another chapter to its role as a "port-of-entry" or "Red River" county.

Like her larger political subdivision, the State of Texas, Cooke County offers a large variety in the manner of farming and in the products that may be grown within its borders. The variety of soils and plant life that may be found in the county is shown in Map II.

The eastern part of the county is in the East Texas Cross Timbers belt. It is generally wooded, unless it has been cleared; and the timber is largely post oak with a small amount of other oaks and hickory. The soil in this section is of clay and sandy origin. This sandy soil is subject to the cultivation of cotton, corn, truck, and fruits.

Then across Elm Creek, which runs through Gainesville, and extending west nearly to the Montague County line, we find the prairies. This section, comprising more than one

half of the land area of the county, has a black to dark brown soil of the Grand Prairie group. This portion of the county is given to cotton, corn, small grains, sorghums, and native grasslands. The land is rolling and is not wooded except along the streams that traverse it.

Along the western boundary of the county is found a brown and reddish brown sandy soil of the West Texas Cross Timbers belt. It is timbered mainly but includes some prairie. Here the timber is principally post oak but with some blackjack. The agricultural products grown are cotton, corn, and fruits. The Prairie portion is valuable for its grasslands. So we see that the county's soil ranges from heavy dark loam to light sands; and from an agricultural standpoint, this insures a certain degree of economic security for the county as a whole. The Texas Almanac for 1943-1944 gives the elevation of the county seat, Gainesville, as 738 feet above sea level. The average annual rainfall is thirty-four inches.

#### Early Settlement of Cooke County

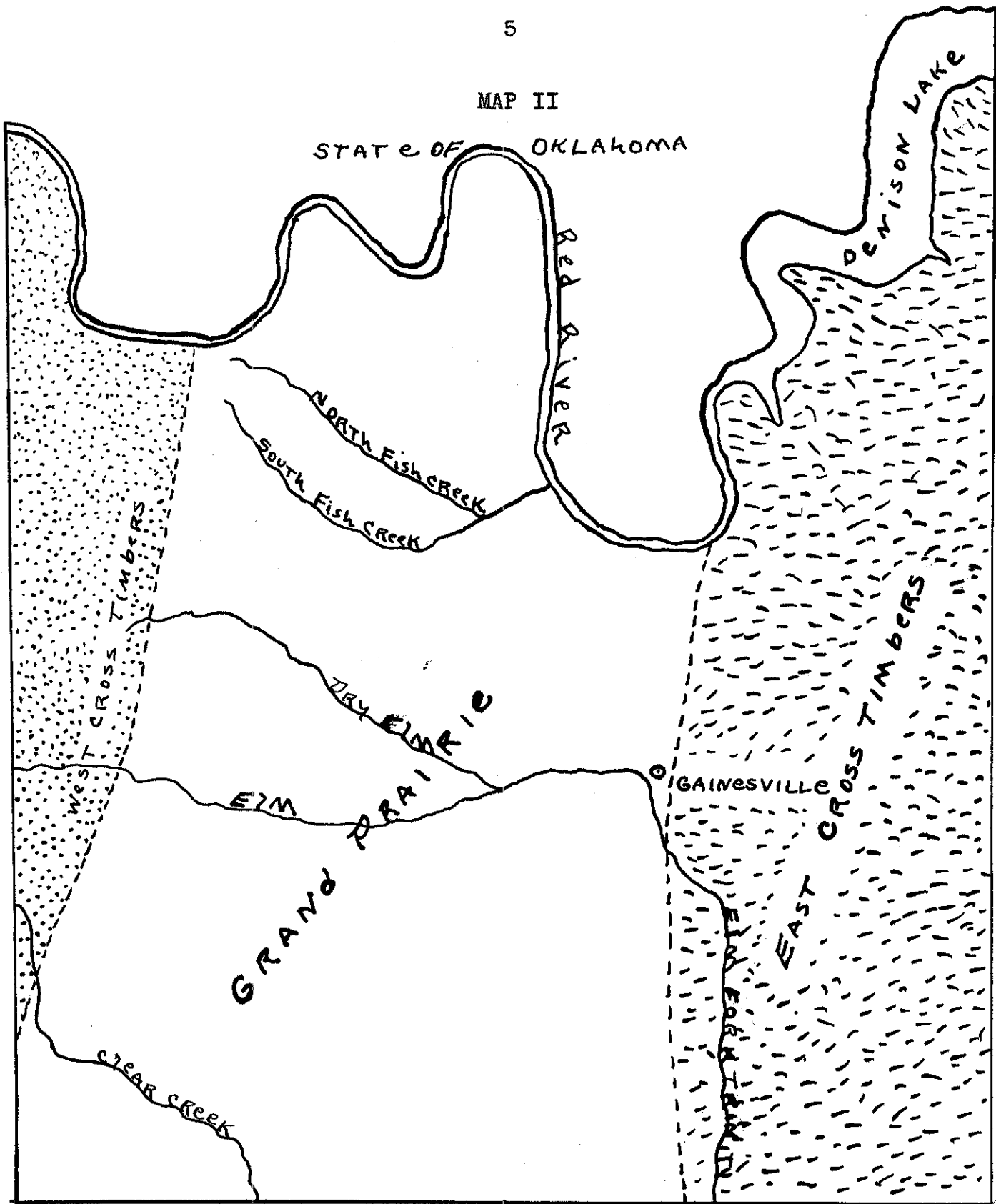
The first civilized men to enter the territory now contained in Cooke County were probably French trappers with their Indian guides. They followed the water highway of the Red River to their hunting grounds in West Texas and

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<sup>1</sup>"Notes on the Early History of Cooke County for the M. K. and T. Railway" (unpublished), in Cooke County Historical Files, Cooke County Library.

MAP II

STATE OF OKLAHOMA



Geological and Plant Life Regions  
OF  
COOKE COUNTY

New Mexico. When the season was ended, they returned down the river to market their pelts at New Orleans, and to trade with the Indians along the route.

The first American to visit the county of which we have any account was Colonel William Bean who, with a hunting expedition, passed over the site of Gainesville in 1833.<sup>2</sup> He was on his way back to his father's home on the White River in Arkansas after a two-year trapping trip to West Texas, the Indian Territory, and New Mexico. Colonel Bean must have liked the country, for later, in 1844, in partnership with Coffee and Warren, he established the first trading post in the county at Warren's Bend on the Red River.<sup>3</sup>

Both Thrall's, Bancroft's, and Austin's maps of Texas for 1835 put the Cooke County territory in a land grant made to John Cameron under the old empresario colonization system of 1828.<sup>4</sup> But the country was so remote from civilization, and the Indians proved so hostile that the project fell through. The county probably got its start through the efforts of another colonist who established what was known as "Peter's Colony."<sup>5</sup> According to an act of the Fifth Congress of the Republic of Texas, passed January 4, 1841, the President was authorized to enter into a contract

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

with W. S. Peters and others for the purpose of introducing families into Texas for settlement on vacant lands.<sup>6</sup>

Through the years various other contracts were made with the company, the next one being in 1852.<sup>7</sup> The grant was quite extensive, being described by one writer as follows: "Beginning at a point on Red River, in said four contracts specifically defined, and running thence along the extreme eastern boundary of said grant south 100 miles, thence west 164 miles, thence north to Red River, thence down said river to the place of beginning."<sup>8</sup> In speaking of the Peters colony, another writes that "Grayson County was in the northeast corner of the old Peters Colony grant."<sup>9</sup> Therefore we may assume that all of the Cooke County land that had not been patented by 1841 was within this grant. Titles had already been given for some of the land, especially to veterans of the Texas Revolution.

The Peters Colony was advertised extensively and people came from widely separated places to establish their "head rights." In this colony the head of a family was offered 640 acres of land. A single man was offered 320 acres of land, complete with house, and with forty acres

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<sup>6</sup>D. G. Wooten, A Comprehensive History of Texas, II, 824.

<sup>7</sup>Ed F. Bates, History and Reminiscences of Denton County, p. 7.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Frank W. Johnson, A History of Texas and Texans, II, 848.

broken out and fenced. In addition, Peters was to furnish the colonist with ammunition and provisions for the first year. In exchange for this assistance, the colonist, after proving his title by three years of residence, was to deed one half of his total allotment back to Peters. Many people came from foreign lands or made trips of hundreds of miles by ox-wagon to find that Peters was not prepared to fulfill his end of the bargain. Being without means of doing otherwise, these families remained to become the first settlers. They took up their head-rights in the face of incredible hardships. They built homes, conquered the soil, and clung to the land in spite of the Indians. At the end of the three years they would appear before the County Court at Gainesville and, with the help of their neighbors, prove that they had a right to the land under the terms of the agreement made. The early Commissioners' Court minutes of Cooke County are filled with such transactions. The records show that the county clerk was authorized to issue certificates to the colonists for their lands. In the September term of the Commissioners' Court, 1856, we find the following transaction:

This day in open court comes W. A. J. Finch, who being duly sworn, says that he emigrated to Peters' Colony prior to the first day of July, 1848, and has been a citizen of the colony for a term of three years, performing all the duties of a good citizen, that he was and is the head of a family, that he has never obtained any lands under any Donation Laws of Texas, and that he has never received a certificate from Thomas W. Ward, and that he

considers (that) he is entitled to 640 acres of land as the head of a family, and as a colonist in said Colony, all of which I, William A. J. Finch, do solemnly swear to be true to the best of my knowledge and belief, so help me God. -- Signed: W. A. J. Finch.<sup>10</sup>

The above claim was subsequently proved by two neighbors as witnesses, and a certificate of title was issued.

Settlement began in the county as early as 1846, and in that year Jim Martin settled on Spring Creek about one-half mile west of Valley View.<sup>11</sup> Martin Neely also settled with him at the same time. These men were among the first to settle in Cook County.

Colonel James Boreland and his son-in-law, Colonel A. B. Manion, came with their families to the county several years before the Civil War and located at the upper end of Delaware Bend, in the northeast portion of the county. These two men set up a mercantile business to trade with the Indians just across Red River and with the soldiers at Fort Arbuckle, and for many years did a lucrative business. C. N. Jones writes of this section of the county in those days as follows:

Perhaps the most lawless part of the county in those days was Delaware Bend. It was there that much whiskey was sold to the Indians who lived just across the river. From the Bend, liquor was sold

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<sup>10</sup>Minutes of the Commissioners' Court of Cooke County, I, 149-150.

<sup>11</sup>C. N. Jones, Early Days in Cooke County, p. 9.



in large quantities and sent on pack animals far into the interior of the Reservation.<sup>12</sup>

One of the foremost settlers of the county was W. R. Strong. He came to Texas with his parents in 1846.<sup>13</sup> Jacob Dye, Marcus L. Webster, and others settled on Timber Creek in the eastern part of the county. This was also about 1846. Of this settlement, Fred Massengill writes that "this was a great wooded section and the woodbine, or European honeysuckle, grew in great profusion. W. H. Mitchell and R. C. Nelson attended meetings to select a name (for the settlement), and were among those suggesting Woodbine."<sup>14</sup> This community today (1944) is only a "whistle station" on the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railroad, and has possibly twenty-five inhabitants, but we see that it had an ambitious beginning almost one hundred years ago.

In 1847 and 1848 the state located a company of Rangers at Dixon Station east of Pecan Creek and about three miles southeast of Gainesville's present site.<sup>15</sup> It was for the purpose of protecting the frontier against the Indians. It was probably a little later that another Ranger station, Fort Fitzhugh, was located on the Elm fork of the Trinity a few miles south of the present site of Gainesville.

Alexander Boutwell was an early settler in Gainesville

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>13</sup>W. R. Strong, "Reminiscences of Early Cooke County" (unpublished), in Historical File, Cooke County Library.

<sup>14</sup>Fred Massengill, Texas Towns, p. 198.

<sup>15</sup>J. M. Lindsay, "Brief History of Early Days" (unpublished), in Historical File, Cooke County Library.

and one of its foremost citizens for many years. His granddaughter, Mrs. R. V. Bell, tells how he welcomed another famous citizen, Colonel William Bean, to the little community of Gainesville:

Ominous clouds in the north overspread the sky. A fringe of clouds in the west hung like a great curtain across the horizon. It was a blue Texas norther that ushered in Christmas Day, 1850. Alexander Boutwell, a pioneer of "forty-nine," lived in his log house near the eastern clearing on Elm Creek, one-half mile west of Gainesville. Their eighteen-foot log house contained a large fireplace half across the front end in which a big fire blazed bright and cheery . . . The door on the east side, its only opening, stood always ajar. Their Christmas dinner, without friends or guests, groaned under its load of wild turkey, dried pumpkins and ponies of corn cakes. Piled on its earthen platter, lay the brown fried squirrel and rabbits, caught in the thickets and trees on the banks of the river. Native nuts of pecan, walnut and hickory were in abundance. The hawthorne shrubs were loaded with their black and crimson haw fruits. The wild grapes which festooned the tallest trees were sweet from the recent frost; while the persimmons, luscious in their purple and frosted beauty, graced the frugal board. Nature was prodigal in her gifts and provided with lavish hand many good things from her store.

The children played hide-and-go-seek among the dogwood and hawthorne bushes. The constant eyes of the mother knew always where they were. The mother sang as she cleared away the dishes and put them in order. Boutwell paced the floor restlessly, stopping at the open door and looking on the outstretched valley beyond, which is now called Fairview, and over whose brow the road ran like a silver thread.

"Alexander, what be ye so anxious about, and whom are ye looking for?" asked the wife.

"The Indians will come from the west or north; the full moon tonight will be hidden by the dark clouds, and they will not raid until fairer weather." So she assured him safety for the night. They talked long of their advancing civilization and of

the entrance of more people into their new settlement. Already, three new cabins stood ready for their occupants. Others felt the lure of the new west; its virgin forests and rolling plains held out great inducement for ownership. The wonderful opportunity of a new country -- a land of amazing romance and adventure -- lured many souls westward.

While they talked three prairie schooners were silhouetted against the eastern sky. They contained the family of new-comers, his store and household furnishings, and last of all, but not least, two families of negro slaves -- the cherished property of the Southerners. Their destination was the three cabins which were located on the north corner of the present city square, where the First State Bank now stands. Boutwell, with hurried footsteps, brought from home a "chunk of fire." The blue smoke soon curled from the wooden chimney; and its crackling fires, warm glow and warmer neighbors welcomed into town its first merchant -- Colonel William Bean.<sup>16</sup>

About 1836, George Diester came into the county hunting buffalo for the German Zoological Gardens.<sup>17</sup> On the prairies west of the present site of Gainesville, he took twenty-six buffalo cows and their calves. He drove them to St. Louis where he sold the cows and shipped the calves to Europe. This bold adventurer became so enamored of the country that he later brought a colony of Germans back with him to settle in the eastern cross-timbered section of Cooke County. The colony was finally destroyed by some mysterious disease, and Diester was about the only one that remained. He lived a long life and became a substantial citizen of the county.

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<sup>16</sup>Ye Gainesville Towne, compiled by Gainesville school children, pp. 10-11.

<sup>17</sup>"Note on the History of Early Cooke County" (unpublished), in Historical File, Cooke County Library.

There were other settlements made in the county during this time, but these are representative ones and will serve, we hope, to give a picture of that early day in our history.

#### The Political Organization of Cooke County

In the early days of its existence, Cooke County had a very different meaning to that which it has today (1944). The following excerpt will help to show how the county came into being:

Prior to the revolution of Texas against Mexico, there was no such political subdivision as the county. The State's area was divided into departments and municipalities. When the Texas Revolution began, there were three departments: Bexar, Brazos and Nacogdoches; and eighteen municipalities . . . Five additional ones (departments) were created by the provisional council in 1835, viz.: Colorado, Jackson, Jefferson, Red River and Saline.<sup>18</sup>

The records show that what is now Cooke County was part of the Red River Municipality.<sup>19</sup> It was later a part of Fannin County, out of which ten counties were created.<sup>20</sup> When Cooke County came into being by an act of the Legislature, approved March 20, 1848, it comprised all of that land area that is now Clay, Jack, Montague and Cooke Counties. The location of the county seat was on the site of

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<sup>18</sup>Z. T. Fulmore, The History and Geography of Texas, p. 278.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 286.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

Fitzhugh's fort, four miles south of the present town of Gainesville, and it was called Liberty. The county retained this size until August, 1856, when Jack County was created. The next year, in 1857, Montague and Clay Counties were carved out of the area; and we had Cooke County as we know it today. Map III shows the county as it appeared in 1848.

The county received its name from William G. Cooke, an illustrious hero of the Texas Revolution. He was a major in the army of the Republic and served under General Houston at the Battle of San Jacinto. Among his many services to Texas during the early days, Cooke participated in the blockhouse fight with the Comanches at San Antonio de Bexar (1840), and was appointed one of the commissioners to accompany the Santa Fe Expedition.<sup>21</sup> He died in Seguin, Texas, in 1847.

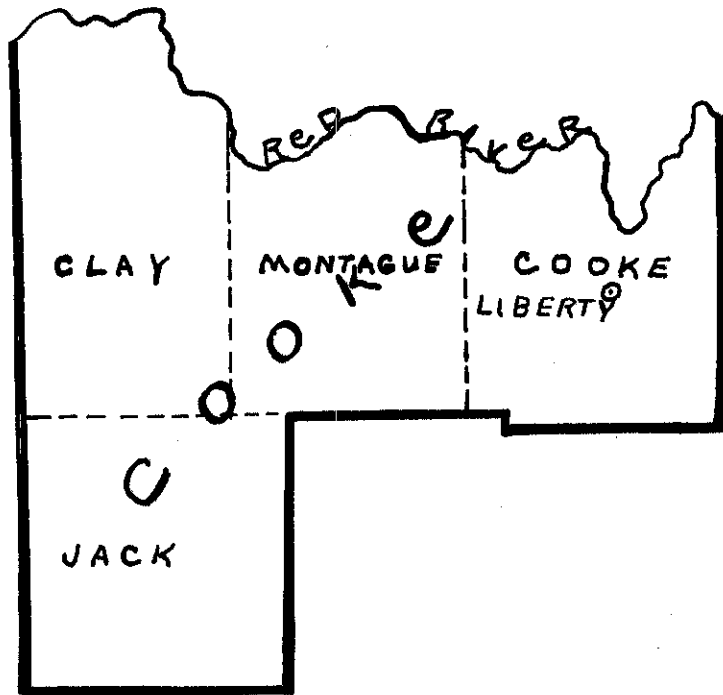
The first entry in the early minutes of the Commissioners' Court of Cooke County was made the twenty-seventh day of December, 1848, making the bond of Robert Ekey as tax collector and assessor for the county.<sup>22</sup> It is borne out that the county was just setting up for business as the following order appears in the minutes of the February term of court:

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<sup>21</sup>C. L. Douglas, The Gentlemen in the White Hats, pp. 19-22.

<sup>22</sup>Minutes of the Commissioners' Court, Cooke County, Texas, I, 1.

MAP III



COOKE COUNTY  
IN  
1848

Ordered by the Court that the clerk shall get such books as is necessary for county business, and he shall be paid out of the first funds of said county.<sup>23</sup>

This meeting of the court was undoubtedly held at the home of James C. Dickson, as the following order would indicate:

"Ordered by the Court that the Court shall be moved from James C. Dickson's to George Dyster's in Beat No. 2."<sup>24</sup>

There is apparently no special significance connected with the use of the word "beat." In other records of the same year the term "precinct" was used to denote political subdivisions.

At the same session of the court it was ordered that an election be held the second Saturday in March, 1849, for the purpose of filling vacancies in county offices. Although the records fail to report the outcome of such election, subsequent minutes of the court show that Robert Wheeler was chief justice (now known as county judge); S. D. Brown, county treasurer; M. Webster, sheriff; and Robert Ekey, tax collector and assessor.

The matter of locating the county seat was the big question of the moment, and it was some time before it was settled. At a meeting of the court held May 5, 1849, Daniel Montague was employed to survey the line between Cooke and Grayson Counties, and then run a line fifteen miles west on the boundary between Cooke and Denton Counties, and

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

subsequently fifteen miles north to locate the center of the county. This was a very practical way of locating a site for the county seat.

Then the question of naming the county seat had to be settled. When the Commissioners' Court met in August of the same year, the following order was passed:

Ordered by the court that the county seat shall be laid off as soon as possible and named Liberty; on the fifteenth day of September there will be a sale of town lots in said town of Liberty.<sup>25</sup>

We must remember that in this early day there was no such thing as county taxes; and if there had been, there were very few people to pay them. The most direct and feasible way to raise funds, therefore, was to sell town lots to prospective settlers. This practice was adhered to for years, even after some tax monies were available. Much grief was experienced by the officials in keeping the accounts active and in collecting all the money that was due the county.

The same session of the court ordered that various roads leading from the county seat of Liberty be laid out. There was to be "a road running from Liberty, the nearest and best route, to the county line towards Alton."<sup>26</sup> Alton was then the county seat of Denton County.

But the question of locating and naming the county

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.



seat was not yet settled. After almost two years it was evidently a matter of much divided opinion, so we find in the August term of court, in 1850, the following order:

Ordered by the court that five commissioners be appointed to select two suitable places for the county seat of Cooke County, having due regard to timber, water and donations. Said commissioners will proceed forthwith to advertise an election for one of those places, and as soon as the result of the election is known, said commissioners shall proceed to lay off a town, and immediately make their report to the County Court. Be it further ordered that Pat C. Dixon, Andrew Van Slyke, David Carter, B. F. Carpenter and John Boggs are duly appointed said commissioners for which service commissioners shall receive one dollar per day.<sup>27</sup>

There is no record of any report filed by the commissioners nor of an election held for this purpose, but the question was evidently settled. In the September term of court of the same year (1850), we find the county seat referred to as Gainesville for the first time.

Ordered by the court that there will be offered to sale on the first day of circuit court, town lots on twelve-month credit in the town of Gainesville.<sup>28</sup>

Joseph C. McConnell in his book, The West Texas Frontier, gives an account of how the county seat was finally named:

Inasmuch as the county authorities discovered that there was already a county and town in Texas named Liberty, the new location selected for the county seat was called Gainesville, in honor of General Edmond Pendleton Gaines of the United States Army. Colonel William Fitzhugh was commanding a ranger company stationed in Cooke County at

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

the time. He was a warm friend of General Gaines who, November 3, 1814, was voted the thanks of Congress and awarded a gold medal for his gallantry in defeating the British at Erre, during the war of 1812.<sup>29</sup>

The question of locating the county seat was also settled at about the same time. The deciding factor was the donation of forty acres of land by Mary E. Clark, land which was subsequently laid off into town lots and sold, raising the first revenue for the county. Mary E. Clark has been called the "mother of Gainesville." She was described as "a little frail woman, who had a great love for children."<sup>30</sup>

The new town of Gainesville was given the added attraction of a new courthouse about 1850. It was built by two of the county officials, S. D. Brown, county clerk, and Alexander Boutwell, sheriff. The records show that they were duly paid for their labors: "S. D. Brown received pay, by note, twenty-nine dollars for building the courthouse in Gainesville on the seventeenth day of February, 1851."<sup>31</sup> This building was certainly not an imposing structure -- being scarcely larger than an ordinary living room in one of our present-day homes -- but in it transpired events that affect us today, almost one hundred years later.

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<sup>29</sup>Joseph C. McConnell, The West Texas Frontier, p. 123.

<sup>30</sup>Cooke County Historical Files, Cooke County Library.

<sup>31</sup>Minutes of Commissioners' Court, Cooke County, I, 51.

In the August term of Commissioners' Court, in 1851, we find the following interesting note:

Ordered that on the first Monday of September there will be offered to the lowest bidder a public well to be dug and walled up well with good rock, with a good platform over it, and a curb three feet high, with a good bucket and windless. To be dug in Gainesville and get plenty of water; if rock is passed there is to be paid \$1.00 on each foot more.<sup>32</sup>

Aside from the Commissioners' Court minutes, there are records in the county that have been fairly well preserved. The "Record of Marriage Licenses, Cooke County," Vol. I, page 1, apparently records the first wedding in the county:

The State of Texas |  
County of Cooke |

To any District Judge, Chief Justice of the County Court, and Justice of the Peace or legally ordained minister of the Gospel, Greetings:

You are hereby authorized to solemnize the rites of matrimony between Henry Gilmann and Jane Boggs as by Law you are empowered and directed and make your due return of this License to my office within sixty days certified in accordance with Law. Given under my hand and seal of office this the 4th day of December, A. D. 1849. Stephen D. Brown, Clk, CCCC<sup>33</sup>

The first civil case called for trial was Case No. 1, styled P. G. Boutwell vs. Alexander Boutwell. The case was dismissed.

According to C. N. Jones in his Early Days in Cooke County, the first white child born in Cooke County was

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>33</sup>Record of Marriage Licenses, Cooke County, Texas, I, 1.

named J. K. Chadwell, and was born in 1851, six miles east of Gainesville.<sup>34</sup>

To fully appreciate these crude beginnings, it must be remembered that Cooke County was on the very edge of the frontier. Fort Worth had not been established, and west from Gainesville was truly a wilderness. Gainesville was the last town the immigrants reached until they struck El Paso. The Old California Trail passed through Gainesville, and these early years saw many covered wagons drawn with oxen plodding their way westward. It was said that fortunes could be quickly made in the fabulous gold fields of California. Doubtless the Gainesville settlement also witnessed many of these venturers returning disillusioned from the West where there was not enough gold to go around.

#### The Butterfield Trail

The principal street of Gainesville -- California -- takes its name from the rutted trails cut by wagons bound for the gold fields in 1848-1849. These wagons were blazing a trail to be used a few years later by John Butterfield of St. Louis. In 1857 a six-year contract was entered into by Butterfield and the United States Government for a stage and mail route from St. Louis, Missouri, to San Francisco, California, via El Paso, Texas. This was a

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<sup>34</sup>Jones, op. cit., p. 10.

distance of approximately three thousand miles. The Butterfield Trail crossed the Red River at Preston Bend in <sup>✓</sup>Brayson County, and entered Cooke County about six miles east of Callisburg. It passed through Callisburg and ran through Gainesville, crossing Pecan Creek at Belcher Street and leaving the town at an Elm Creek crossing a short distance below the present highway bridge. Gainesville was a stage stand and relay station for their teams. The old Fletcher Hotel, later known as the "Great Western," was the station. In describing a caravan departing for California, Mrs. Lou Darwin Matthews says that "around fifty families with as many wagons drawn by ox-teams, left the Fletcher Hotel in 1859."<sup>35</sup>

The first overland coaches began travelling the Butterfield Trail in September, 1858. The time required to travel from St. Louis to San Francisco was usually about twenty-three days. The journey was a hard one and attained with no little danger. The vehicles serving on the line were manufactured by the Abbot-Downing Company of Concord, New Hampshire, and were well fitted for the purpose. The body, built of stout oak, was braced with iron bands; and the wheels were heavy and ringed with thick iron tires. High up in front sat the driver, and behind was a heavy box in which was stored mail sacks and the passengers'

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<sup>35</sup>Ye Gainesville Towne, p. 20.

luggage. The coaches were usually painted a gaudy green or red; however, sometime later, when it was found that the bright colors made the coach more easily visible to hostile Indians, more temperate colors were employed. Usually two or three passengers were all that were carried at one time. Their lot was a hard one as almost no conveniences were provided for them. The primary purpose of the stage was to carry the mail and valuable express, and the various stations along the route were solely to care for the teams and drivers.

It must have been a colorful sight in those days to have seen the overland stage arrive in Gainesville with its passengers and mail from the East, and to wish it godspeed on its perilous journey westward to El Paso and the Gold Coast. Today may be seen, on the north side of the county courthouse, a monument erected, in 1931, by the Rebecca Crockett Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, of Gainesville, Texas, in memory of this colorful era in the history of Cooke County.

#### Economic Development

In the early days Cooke County was much the same as any other part of the frontier. About the time that the county was organized as a political entity, people were emigrating into Texas by the thousands. The frontier offered many inducements to settlers and land was to be had

very cheaply. The many streams that crossed the county with their fertile bottom lands and abundance of wood and water must have offered rosey opportunities to these settlers. Consequently, most of the settlements were made along these streams, and the fertile blackland prairies did not come into their own until later when ranching and grain raising became an important part of the economic life.

The usual procedure for the early inhabitants of the county was to settle along some stream where wood and water were plentiful, and then break out a small field for farming. Corn and food stuffs were usually planted to feed the family and the stock. Early accounts of the period tell of the difficulty in fencing the fields against deer and other wild animals that destroyed the crops. The settlers supplemented their meager crops with wild honey, grapes, berries, and wild game from the woods.

Gainesville early became important as a trading post. In this respect, John M. Hendrix says of Gainesville:

Gainesville was early established as a trading point, and the last before entering the "Nations," and port-of-call for chuck wagons seeking supplies, and for trail bosses seeking mail or instructions before they left the state with their herds.<sup>36</sup>

Shortly after the Civil War, an adventurous custom and

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<sup>36</sup>John M. Hendrix, "Texas Cow-Towns -- Gainesville," The Cattleman, February, 1941, p. 23.

## CHAPTER II

### EARLY SCHOOLS

#### The Development of Education in Texas

Since this is a study of the development of education in Cooke County, it will be well to notice briefly the progress that education had made in the state up to the time that Cooke County was settled. It must be remembered that at this time (1846) Texas had just become a part of the United States. During the half century preceding its entry into the Union, the history of Texas had been a turbulent one. Up until 1821, the state was under Spanish rule, and very little had been accomplished in the matter of education. The territory was populated largely by the native Texans who were members of various Indian tribes, together with a scattering of poor Spaniards. The government set up the Spanish missions for the Indian tribes and they were the sole implements of education for a large majority of the population. The lasting benefits from the missions in educational and moral training among these people have often been questioned. For when the power of Spain waned and the missions were abandoned, the natives returned to their savage and un-Christian ways.



enterprise began that was to play an important part in the economic life of Texas. It was called "trail driving." Texas longhorn and other breeds of cattle were fattened on the broad plains of the state and, for want of a better method, were driven hundreds of miles to market. Kansas City became a great cattle market, and some of the Kansas trails passed through or near Cooke County. One of these passed just west of Gainesville, and an earlier one crossed Red River at a place called Rock Crossing. Many of the herds veered to the northwest of Gainesville to enter Montague County and cross Red River at the Red River Station Crossing. Near the end of this era, Gainesville lost some of its trade to the Western Trail that crossed the river near Doan's Store in Wilbarger County. But until the end of the trail-driving period, it enjoyed a good business from this source. In later years Gainesville was to become the cattle capital of this part of the West, but this era in its history will be dealt with in a subsequent chapter.

The Republic of Mexico was born in 1821, when the yoke of Spanish rule was thrown off by revolution. A federal republic, similar to that of the United States of America, was set up; and Texas became, with Coahuila, an enormous state of the new republic with its capitol at Saltillo. Under the Federal Constitution of Mexico, the conduct of general education was reserved to the states. The constitution of the state of Coahuila and Texas was adopted in 1827 and generous provisions were made for education. But as the years went by, no tangible results were seen from these provisions, and about the only schools were those that were set up by the people themselves. Any student of Texas history is familiar with the fact that one of the chief complaints of the Texans against the Mexican Government was its failure to provide an educational system. In the Declaration of Independence signed at Washington, Texas, on March 2, 1836, the following charge was included among other grievances against the Mexican Government:

It (the Mexican Government) has failed to establish any public school system of education, although possessed of boundless resources (the public domain), and although it is an axiom in political science, that, unless a people are educated and enlightened, it is idle to expect the continuance of civil liberty, or the capacity for self-government.<sup>1</sup>

There was much truth in this charge that the Mexican

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<sup>1</sup>Frederick Eby, The Development of Education in Texas, p. 79.

Government had neglected the education of its citizens. The people of Texas got their chance to prove what they could accomplish themselves when Santa Anna was defeated and independence was won at the Battle of San Jacinto, April 21, 1836. Texas was now a republic, and the management of its affairs was in the hands of its own citizens.

The constitution of the new Republic of Texas was adopted March 17, 1836; and concerning education, it stated that: "It shall be the duty of congress, as soon as circumstances will permit, to provide by law a general system of education."<sup>2</sup> It is disappointing to read that so little was said about education, especially since the colonists had been so vociferous in their indictment of the Mexican Government for this same omission. The First Congress met the next year and it, likewise, was silent on the subject of popular education. Then, in 1838, Mirabeau B. Lamar was elected to the presidency of the Republic. Lamar was an educated man himself, and was thoroughly convinced that it would work to the detriment of the state if her inhabitants remained uneducated. In his first message to Congress in December, 1838, Lamar had the following to say about education -- words that have been quoted by educators up until this day in making a case for the need of popular education:

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<sup>2</sup>Frederick Eby, Education in Texas; Source Materials, p. 131.

If we desire to establish a Republican Government upon a broad and permanent basis, it will become our duty to adopt a comprehensive and well-regulated system of mental and moral culture. Education is a subject in which every citizen, and especially every parent, feels a deep and lively concern. It is one in which no jarring interests are involved, and no acrimonious political feelings are excited; for its benefits are so universal that all parties can cordially unite in advancing it. It is admitted by all, that cultivated mind is the guardian genius of democracy, and while guided and controlled by virtue, the noblest attribute of man. It is the only dictator that freemen acknowledge, and the only security that freemen desire.<sup>3</sup>

This courageous and positive stand by President Lamar had much to do with the passing of an educational bill that was to have a far-reaching effect. This bill, approved January 26, 1839, contained a provision which provided that "each county of this Republic shall have three leagues of land surveyed and set apart for the purpose of establishing a primary school or academy in said county."<sup>4</sup> The law further provided that this land was to be surveyed as soon as possible, and that it could be leased for a period of not to exceed three years. At the same time fifty leagues of land were set aside for the endowment of two state colleges or universities.<sup>5</sup> However, no provisions were made for the administration of any national system of education, and no funds were made available except that which might be derived from the lease of the three leagues of land in each county. Because of this fact, no immediate benefits

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 150-151.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 167.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 168.

resulted from these acts of the Congress; and the friends of education in Texas were again sadly disappointed.

A new law was passed by the Congress of the Republic of Texas the next year, February, 1840. This law gave to each county still another league of land out of the public domain for educational purposes, and it further provided that this land could be sold and the revenue used to establish schools. Also the chief justice and the commissioners in each county were to act as a board of school commissioners. They were to see that their county's land was surveyed, to divide the counties into convenient school districts, to examine candidates for teachers' certificates, and to inspect and supervise the schools. The student of the progress of education in Texas might well become excited at this point and assume that, at last, real progress was being made in providing educational opportunities for the children of Texas. But such was not the case. There were several factors that caused this not to be true.

To begin with, the four leagues of land granted to each county provided no immediate source of income. Land was so abundant and so cheap that there was no sale for most of it. Twenty months after the first law was passed, not a single county had surveyed its land, and of course none had leased or sold it.<sup>6</sup> There is no evidence that any of the counties did, or could, use any of this land for

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<sup>6</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, p. 92.

the establishment of their early schools.

Another noticeable fact is that the lawmakers evidently had no desire to assume the responsibility of actually providing and supervising the education of the children of Texas. Rather than have the state do it, they passed that responsibility on to the county governments, which in turn left the patrons of the children much to their own devices.

Another hindrance to a workable system of schools was the people themselves. Probably a large majority of the people firmly believed that education of the children was the responsibility of the parents rather than of the state. They did not believe that one man should be taxed to educate another man's child. Still others felt that the church should take the lead in education. They felt that education was largely a training in the morals and creeds of their particular faith. There was also the group who believed that the state had the responsibility of educating only the poor and indigent children, a belief that was an outgrowth of the "poor laws" of England. Also some people felt that any indigent children of the heroic soldiers of the Texas Revolution should by all means be taken care of in the matter of education.

Then add to this the fact that a large part of the Republic was sparsely settled -- especially in the northern

and western counties, of which Cooke County was one. This made it difficult to establish schools except in the villages and towns, where a goodly number of children could be found at one place.

#### Home Instruction and Private Schools

All of the above-mentioned factors made the job of establishing a comprehensive educational system in Texas a sizable one. It was to be a great many years before a real "free" school system was instituted in our state. Although there was little or no formal education in Texas during these early years, it does not mean that there was no schooling for the younger generation. "Home instruction" was usually to be found in the homes of the pioneers. An older member of the family -- usually the mother -- saw to it that the children were instructed in at least the rudiments of reading and writing. Much credit should be given to these pioneer mothers for their diligence in training their children when other forms of education were entirely lacking. Of this form of education, Eby says:

The fact that illiteracy in 1850 was only 12.2 per cent of the population of white men over twenty years of age, and only 20.2 per cent of the women of the same class, is evidence of considerable family instruction.<sup>7</sup>

Another form of education at this time, which was also

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 93.

entirely aside from the efforts of the state, were the "old field" schools.<sup>8</sup> Almost every town and village had its community school. The Christian ministers often took the lead in such enterprises in order to substantiate and aid in their own work. Town leaders felt that a school in their midst would help to induce new settlers to come to their communities. Almost every town, at one time or another, strove to be the "Athens of Texas." Although established and maintained outside of any coordinated effort, this form of school did a tremendous amount of good during the early years of our history.

#### The Beginnings of a State School System

When Texas ceased to be a republic and was annexed to the United States as a state in 1845, it was necessary that a new constitution be written. The Constitution of 1845 contained the following provisions pertaining to education:

Section I -- A general diffusion of knowledge being essential to the preservation of the rights and liberties of the people, it shall be the duty of the legislature of this state to make suitable provisions for the support and maintenance of public schools.

Section II -- The Legislature shall, as early as practicable, establish free schools throughout the State, and shall furnish means for their support by taxation of property; and it shall be the duty of the Legislature to set apart not less than

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid.



one-tenth of the annual revenue of the State, derivable from taxation as a perpetual fund; which fund shall be appropriated to the support of the free public schools, and no law shall ever be made, diverting said funds to any other use, and until such time as the Legislature shall provide for the establishment of such schools in the several districts of the State, the funds thus created shall remain as a charge against the State, passed to the credit of the free common school fund.<sup>9</sup>

It will be noticed that the new constitution stated that "free" schools should be established. This term had not been used in former constitutions. Also, the new law not only made provisions for the establishment of public schools, but it also took the other necessary step and provided that a tax should be voted to maintain them. Accordingly, in 1848, the Legislature carried out the intentions of the Constitution and passed a law setting aside one tenth of the annual revenue for the benefit of the schools. However, from this time (1845) to 1854 -- the same period in which Cooke County was beginning to be settled -- not much progress was made over the state generally in respect to state-supported education.

#### Schools in Rural Cooke County

When the first settlers came to Cooke County in 1846, they were pioneers in the real sense of the word. This territory was then a part of Fannin County, and although it

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<sup>9</sup>Eby, Education in Texas: Source Materials, pp. 212-213.

had been explored quite extensively and temporary trading posts had been established from time to time, no settlers had come to stay. There were no towns in the county and consequently no schools or churches. When Jim Martin and Martin Neely settled on Spring Creek in 1846, they moved their families into a veritable wilderness. As contrasted with the situation today (1944), the problem of educating the children was quite a formidable one. Today, when a family moves into a new community, one of the first questions asked is, "Where is the school house?" It is taken for granted that there is a school house and that the education of the children has been provided for. In the beginning, there were only two possible ways for the children of the Martin and Neely families to obtain any sort of education. Either some member of the family, usually the mother, had to teach them; or through the efforts of the parents, a community school had to be set up in conjunction with the neighbors.

It is very difficult to know just "where" and "when" the first school was established in Cooke County. Schools were set up when the need arose -- usually in a private home. We probably do not have a record of some of these schools. However, from all available information, it appears that the first school in the county was one taught

by Miss Jane Shannon about 1847.<sup>10</sup> The school was located in the Mt. Springs community in southeast Cooke County.<sup>11</sup> One of the pupils was W. R. Strong, who, according to his own account, came to the county in 1846.<sup>12</sup> He was twelve years of age at the time.

About two years later the Wheelock school was established four miles southeast of Gainesville.<sup>13</sup> Some of the students were the Bean, Fletcher, and Boutwell children who had to walk from Gainesville. Mrs. D. L. Painter writes: "Before sending the children to school the men would scout the hills and prairie in search of Indians."<sup>14</sup>

East of Gainesville, but somewhat later, the Finch school was established. One account states that "it was build of logs, rather dark, since light only came through the cracks where the clay filling had been removed. Judge B. F. Mitchell, J. R. and Tom Lynch were among the beginning class."<sup>15</sup> This account declares that the Finch school was the first school in the county, but analyses of the settlements and other schools do not seem to bear this out.

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<sup>10</sup>Ye Gainesville Towne, p. 26.

<sup>11</sup>Jones, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>12</sup>Strong, op. cit.

<sup>13</sup>Ye Gainesville Towne, p. 32.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

The following word picture is given of an early rural school at Leo, in southwestern Cooke County:

Neighbors in that early day (1871) were few and far between, but the few families in that community (Leo) realized the importance of a school. There was no school house near and they were not able to build one. A kind-hearted and well-to-do neighbor volunteered the use of his chicken house, a small house built of logs. There was no floor in the building; seats of the split-log type were installed, and Captain Frank Todd, still remembered by some of the older people of that community, taught that school.<sup>16</sup>

It might seem strange that such a typically pioneer school was founded as late as 1871. But it must be remembered that when a new community such as Leo was founded, the pioneers had almost the same obstacles to overcome as had their predecessors in the older communities. It is also likely that the conditions described in the Leo school were typical of other pioneer schools of Cooke County.

#### Early Schools in Gainesville

It is fairly certain that the first school in the community that later became Gainesville was taught by David McCall.<sup>17</sup> His pupils were the Bean, Carpenter, and Fletcher children who had earlier gone to the Wheelock school south of town. The school must have opened about 1852.

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<sup>16</sup>Jones, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>17</sup>Ye Gainesville Towne, p. 26.

Of Mrs. Kate Bird Kennerly, daughter of J. Y. Bird, it is said that "the first school she attended was in a log cabin. It had only one room and wasn't a graded school."<sup>18</sup>

Miss Mattie Bounds, who taught in the Gainesville schools about ten years later, gives the following very interesting account of her experience:

I made my debut in Gainesville, April 25, 1863, and applied to the examining board and trustees for the school in Gainesville. After a rigid examination (this was an oral test in reading, writing, arithmetic, spelling, etc.) they turned over to me a first class certificate, and I was appointed teacher with congratulations on my proficiency.

The Board consisted of Judge Piper, Col. Gooding and Major Hill. Judge Piper, with the deepest commiseration in his eyes, said, "Little daughter, you are entirely competent to teach, but if I were you I would not undertake as rough a school as this; no man has ever been able to keep order in it; moreover, the rowdy boys have broken up schools with strong men at their head." The host at my hotel was an experienced teacher, having taught a term of the Gainesville school prior to my arrival, said that it was unmanageable. No man had ever been able to keep order in it. He said that both large and small boys would fight before him in open school. He lectured them; it did no good. He whipped them until he was ashamed of himself, and that did no good. So in order to pull the school through and not have it broken up, he just let order be ignored; and when he saw a fight coming up, he turned his back and pretended not to see it and just let them fight it out. He also told me that if I refused to admit some of the bad boys, they would break up the school inside of a month, and he gave me their names.

The building in which I taught was located on the lot where the Mosely Machine Shop now stands, east of the city hall. It was a two-story frame structure. The room downstairs was used for school and church purposes, and the upper rooms were used for lodge meetings. When the time came, we opened school with a large attendance; among them were the

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

very boys whom I had been advised to refuse entrance.

We began our school work that day, and every day, by reading a portion of the scripture and explaining it, following this by a lecture covering all the grounds of etiquette, morality and character building. We emphasized that breaking a school law or any other law was not indicative of bravery, but the want of it; that if any fighting was done on the playground or anywhere else under my jurisdiction, I would do the principal part of it. I called their attention to the fact that the secret of true attainment lies here.

I sounded each scholar's advancement and ability, gave them lessons as long as they could learn, and increased them as their minds expanded. I kept them too busy to have time for anything outside of their lessons. However, a few months later, I gave them the privilege of fighting and trading if they would do it along the lines I prescribed -- fight ignorance and trade their particular habits for wisdom. I kept a roll of honor to which all pupils were eligible who were perfect in their lessons and behavior. All whose names had been on this roll of honor for one month received a badge of honor. I treated my scholars like kings and queens, and they in turn gave me all the deference and honor they could have bestowed on a princess. We never saw in college or university better order, or students advance so rapidly as a large part of the school did.<sup>19</sup>

Concerning another early school in Gainesville, we also find an account that states, "The first school house was a log house built where the Clayton Dry Goods Store now stands."<sup>20</sup>

It is of little import as to which of these schools was the first in the county, but it is certain that they did exist, and the good that they did is unquestioned. It is also clear that there were many parts of the county

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<sup>19</sup>Mattie B. Blanton, "Gainesville Schools in the Sixties" (unpublished), Historical Files, Cooke County Library.

<sup>20</sup>Ye Gainesville Towne, p. 12.

without any sort of schools whatever. Mrs. Gunter, the daughter of a wealthy landowner, moved to the county with her parents in 1859. The family later located in the Sivell's Bend community. From a life story written by Mrs. Gunter, we learn that she never attended a school a day in her life.

When a study is made of the early schools of Cooke County, the reader often encounters the name of William Hudson. The contribution of this man to the progress of education in the county was considerable. Hudson came to the county in 1854. He soon opened a land office in partnership with J. M. Lindsay. Hudson had gained his education the hard way, having studied at home without the benefit of a teacher. He realized the need of a school in the new community of Gainesville, and was the principal factor in getting the enterprise started. He was a member of the first school board and helped organize the first public school. Hudson made many trips, at his own expense, to other states to study their educational systems.

## CHAPTER III

### PUBLIC SCHOOLS FROM 1854 TO 1870

#### Further Settlement in the County

It will be remembered that in 1854, the beginning of this period, Cooke County still consisted of all of that territory now comprising Jack, Clay, and Cooke Counties. It was not until 1857 that the county was reduced to its present area. As Texas had come into the Union in 1846, it first appeared in the United States Federal Census in 1850. This census showed the population of Cooke County to be only 220 people. By 1860, the population had increased to 3,760; and by 1870, the end of the period, it was given as 5,315.<sup>1</sup> During this same period, the population of the state had increased enormously. From 1850 to 1860 the population of Texas increased from 212,592 to 604,216, a gain of 184.2 per cent.

In spite of the increase in the county's population, it could hardly be said that the communities were "thriving." The figures show that by 1870 there were only about

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<sup>1</sup>Fourteenth Census of the United States, "State Compendium for Texas," p. 317.



four people to the square mile in the county. This compares with approximately twenty-five people to the square mile in 1944. The county seat of Gainesville was still chiefly a trading post, and its population had not increased to any great extent. One account says that "in 1868 the town's (Gainesville's) population had increased to nearly one hundred people."<sup>2</sup>

The records show that many settlers were still entering the county to take up claims in the Peters Colony. Many claims were proved and many certificates were issued, according to the Commissioners' Court records of the county. Many of these settlers necessarily had to take their claims in parts of the county where few people lived; and it is probable that, by 1870, people were thinly scattered throughout the county. But it was not until a few years later that the names of new communities began to appear. It was still principally a "one-town" county.

In 1859 the name of Sivell's Bend appears. In the fall of that year Dr. Samuel Seth Ligon came to the county. He bought four hundred acres of land on Wolf Ridge. Not liking the location because it was on the prairie, he sold out and bought land in Sivell's Bend adjoining his brother-in-law, Dr. Page Long. He then returned to Missouri to bring his wife and children to Texas. Mrs. A. Y. Gunter,

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<sup>2</sup>Ye Gainesville Towne, p. 25.

daughter of Dr. Ligon, tells of this journey:

We had seven wagons, two carriages, and a buggy in our train. . . . We had four mules to each wagon, horses to the carriages and buggy, saddle horses for all of the men, and two or three hundred head of sheep. . . .

When we reached Sivell's Bend we stopped for several days at Dr. Long's house. The next day, as soon as the wagons were unloaded, they were started at once to the pine mills near Jefferson for lumber to build our home.<sup>3</sup>

### The Indian Menace

These settlers in the isolated communities, sometimes many miles from the nearest neighbor, were in constant danger from the Indians. Mrs. Gunter tells of an Indian raid on the Sivell's Bend community in 1868. Horses were stolen from everybody; and W. P. Midkiff, another early and substantial citizen of that part of the county, lost several head of horses. When the horses were stolen, the men organized a posse and trailed the Indians across Red River into the reservation. But they were advised at Fort Sill to report their losses to the Federal Government; and some twenty years later, after endless litigation in the courts, Midkiff finally received \$4,000 for his sixty horses.

The danger from the Indians had steadily increased for a number of years. The settlers had to contend with this problem from the beginning, but several factors had

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<sup>3</sup>Mrs. A. Y. Gunter, "Recollections of an Early Settler" (unpublished), in Historical Files, Cooke County Library.

greatly intensified the danger. At first, the savage had simply moved on and kept out of the way of the white man. But the time came when the land was all taken. To alleviate the situation, the Federal Government set aside large tracts of land called "Indian reservations." One of these was located just across the river from Cooke County. Thus the county's location made it easily susceptible to the lawless depredations of the Indians. Then when the Civil War came on and during the period of reconstruction that followed, when there was an almost complete breakdown of civil authority and control, the Indians scourged the country at will. An account of the experiences of Theodore von Schausiell will help to picture the Indian menace and also the general conditions of the county at that time:

A well was dug, although the creek (Camp Creek) with nice clear water running through my land, was just two hundred yards from the cabin. Game was in abundance: deer came close to the house, turkeys roosted at the creek, wild cattle came often in sight, and hogs -- which grew wild and were not marked -- furnished us with plenty of meat. Part-ridges, quail, rabbits and squirrel were in abundance. We had been residing at the cabin only a couple of weeks when I killed a big black bear only two miles from the house. . . .

We had plenty of meat, yet we could not easily get coffee, sugar, fruit or meal. Flour was rarely heard of in that community. We made imitation coffee by roasting acorns. Ammunition was also very scarce as our nearest railroad station then was Jefferson, about 400 miles away. The teams from Jefferson were ox-teams and often got stuck in the mud. Sometimes it would take weeks to make a round trip to Jefferson.

When the moon shone bright at nights, every settler was on the alert for Indians. They generally sneaked into the settlement, stole horses, and killed the settlers and their families, after which they would burn the homes.

Captain Wallace and Joe Cross, living in Saddler's Bend, were owners of a large ranch and farm. They put up a fort to which the women and children were taken when an alarm was given. One night the entire neighborhood was ordered to that fort. Moccasin tracks had been seen on the sandy banks of Red River. While we were all inside the fort, a great many houses and fences were burned down by the Indians. However, the red devils accidentally missed our home. I told Mr. Pembroke that never again would I leave my home unprotected, and asked him to help fortify it. We cut logs eight feet long and split each in half to a point on top, and then made a ditch all around the building. We hauled the logs to the ditch where we set them on end, close together, packing one end firmly in the ground. We left a place for a heavy gate, which we fastened with a heavy iron chain. In this fort we all found room -- the Pembroke family and my own. We were sure that with our Winchesters and other shooting implements we could easily keep 100 Indians away. For portholes we made several small openings in the picket fence, intending to shoot through them should the occasion arise. I rode all over the neighborhood trying to buy a watch-dog, to wake us up in case of an Indian raid. I finally found a little dog and carried it home. . . .

One bright moonlit night Mr. Cross, who lived with Captain Wallace, rode by our house and called, "On the alert, the Indians are in!" I had hardly dressed when Mr. Pembroke and family came over, leading their horses. After his family and horses were in our fort, he helped me to get up my horses, which were staked on the grass in the valley near Camp Creek. Then we fastened and locked the gate with the log chain. I had a good needle gun, my father had a Winchester, and Mr. Pembroke a heavy rifle; and besides we had our pistols and some other muzzle-loading guns with plenty of cartridges and ammunition. Each of us had his post on a certain side of the enclosure. We saddled four of our horses for use in case of demand. We finally became lonesome at our posts and, depending upon our dogs, we took a seat under a large tree right in front of the house where we talked and smoked. The moon shone brightly and everything was

still except our little fawn (deer) which jumped and played with the dogs. It was about one o'clock, and I had fallen asleep, when the dogs began to bark and howl, facing the creek. We jumped up and looked in that direction. We saw a crowd of Indians stopping close to the creek, there being about fifty in the bunch. They looked at our place for about half an hour but suddenly stole away down the creek. In a moment I was on my horse with gun, bowie knife and pistol; the Pembrokes and my father were following. We rode and watched carefully until daylight. We were riding along the Indian trail when suddenly we heard a most terrible cry for help. It seemed to come from across the creek. We had to go a considerable distance to get across. Finally we arrived at the house of Mr. Cusher from which the outcry came. We found Mr. Cusher absent, the house set on fire at one corner (which we put out in a few seconds), three children dead in front of the house. The woman, however, gave us a sight which can never be forgotten. She lay on the dirt floor scalped alive, the blood streaming down her face. Her screams were heart-rendering. She begged us to kill her to stop the pain. While I rode home to get my father's medicine bag, Mr. Pembroke examined the wound and found that the skull was fractured and that she could only live a short time. The three children had been pierced through and through with javelins. A fourth child appeared on the trail towards the spring, where it had gotten water. It had hidden and had escaped a horrible death. The poor little boy was crying and was trembling all over. Mr. Cross had arrived to summon us to the fort where all of the neighbors were meeting to follow the Indians. He took the boy up behind him on his horse to take him to the fort. My father was left at the Cusher home with the dying woman, while Mr. Pembroke and myself rode home in a hurry to equip ourselves with plenty of ammunition, dried venison, blankets, etc. We soon arrived at the Wallace and Cross fort and waited for the arrival of other neighbors. Dr. Wilburn and sons were in the crowd. After having detailed two men to see to the burying of the dead woman and children, Ben Arnold was elected scout and he soon found the Indian trail. It was after dinner before twenty-two men started, headed by the scout, with Dr. Wilburn as captain and Mr. Cross as lieutenant. We struck the trail when we entered the prairie towards the head of Elm Creek (wherethe little town of Saint Jo is now located). According to the size of the trail, it looked as though there were 150 Indians, but by close observation we saw that a great many of the horses were

shod. We knew that such horses were stolen and were riderless.

We camped that night in a ravine. Next day we passed Red River Station. Late in the evening we saw some smoke far ahead of us, and by field-glass observation we saw quite a number of horses at a patch of timber. We rode to the next ravine, keeping under cover as much as possible. We concealed our horses and camped for the night. Next morning we girted up our saddles well, examined our shooting irons, saw that our lariats were well-arranged on our saddles, and sallied forth upon the prairie. We expected the Indians to betake themselves to their heels; however, we were mistaken. They gathered up their loose horses -- about 130 head -- and drove them quite a distance to one side. Then, giving terrible yells, making their usual fighting maneuvers, and with their shields upon their horses, they appeared like a swarm of mosquitoes playing in the air. There were only 23 Indians; and when we were a little over a quarter of a mile from them, the command was given to "charge." When we charged down on the redskins, they finally scattered. I met with them first. Not that I was so brave, but I could not hold the mare that I was on. She was the best animal in the crowd and became terribly excited and wanted to race. So I rode in through a row of Indians like a whirlwind, without having a chance for using any of my guns. The rest of our men had partly detoured to one side. I was nearly a mile away from the Indians before I succeeded in turning my horse. We charged the Indians again. When I learned that I could not manage both my horse and guns, I jumped off the horse to take good aim. Mr. Blair was near me, and he was going to get off his horse also; but just as I had taken aim at an Indian and was going to blaze away, Mr. Blair yelled, "Look out!" I turned about the gazed into the muzzle of an old pistol aimed at me by an Indian only a few paces away. At the time the Indian shot, he fell from his horse as dead as a log -- killed by Mr. Blair. Shooting was going on all about me. I also shot but my ball went towards the moon. There was so much dust and smoke for awhile that I could scarcely see anything. Finally, I felt a pain in my side and became deathly sick. It was with considerable difficulty that I got onto my horse. There were four "good" (dead) Indians on the ground around me. Upon them were heaped curses by some of our wounded men, while the others of our party were off in a cloud of dust following the escaping Indians. The loose horses, by this time, were all scattered over

the prairie, and the partly wounded men were rounding them up. I, however, was so sick that I paid no attention to anything, but left the battlefield and rode in a southwesterly direction in order to reach Mountain Creek the next day. I felt blood in my boot and my side was awfully sore and stiff. I was also very weak as I had not eaten that day. I felt in my saddle-bags but they were empty. It began to rain, followed by an electrical and thunder storm that was grand. It was nearly night when I arrived at Mountain Creek. I did not venture to cross the creek as it had risen to a dangerous height. I rolled the saddle blanket around me, and even put the saddle over me, and tried to sleep in the thick underbrush of the creek bottom. I was deathly sick, chills and fever took time about on me, and my head felt like it was bursting. Yet I must have slept well, for when I awoke it was daylight.

It took me a long time to prepare for the start, but finally I was on my way again. My horse swam the creek better than I had expected. About noon of that day I arrived at the crossing on Camp Creek, and from there I was only 500 yards from home. The crossing, however, was cut into the banks pretty deeply; the creek was high and the water was swift. I had no other way but to try and cross, so I made my horse plunge in. The current carried her down stream. I grabbed hold of an overhanging tree, while my horse floated from under me and out of sight. I gradually pulled myself up out of the water and climbed up until I was safe on shore. I staggered to the road where I suddenly became very dizzy and fell down into the mud. My father, towards evening, when he went out to look after the staked horses, happened to pass and found me. He pulled me out of the slush, calling at the top of his voice for mother and sister. All of them carried me to the house where I lay like dead for some time. It was two months before I recovered consciousness.

After I was restored to health and could walk a little, my father became ill with asthma. It developed into a congestive chill from which he died. My family and myself were, of course, alone with him. When he died, we were in a very sad condition. I rode to Captain Wallace's ranch, and not having any boards out of which to make a coffin, he took from his kitchen the long dining table. Out of its greasy boards was made a square box which had to do service as a coffin. Several of the neighbors helped to dig a grave at a small clearing in the timber; and

I, myself, had to carry the coffin with the body on my son's wagon to the place of burial. Over my father's grave we put some fence rails in order to keep the cattle and horses from overrunning it. A costly monument was built in Europe in remembrance of his efficiency -- quite a contrast to his burial ground.

I felt sad and my mother and sisters were quite disheartened. I really was sick of life, so I worked hard in order not to think of our misfortunes. I cut timber, piled and burned brush, and grubbed. I borrowed from Captain Wallace a yoke of oxen. I hooked them to a plow and broke new land. Now and then I worked for Captain Wallace to earn provisions such as corn, pork, molasses, etc. He showed himself very liberal with us indeed. Toward fall, I had plowed about five acres. I made a wooden harrow and sowed the land to wheat, which I had received from Sherman. I began to make rails for a fence around the patch of wheat. Where the rails didn't reach I made a brush fence, but when the wheat came up droves of deer trampled it deep into the ground. I had an old cow-bell, and with it and a dog, I finally drove them off. But it was to no avail as it was already ruined. I possessed patience, however, and soon made a good living for myself and family.<sup>4</sup>

The little community of Gainesville was somewhat more secure, although the danger from Indians was present even in town. The Fletcher Hotel, the only one in Gainesville, was strong and substantial and was used on occasion as a fort.

#### Social Betterment

All of the energies of the people were not devoted entirely to "making a living." The people were able to turn some of their thoughts to other things. The foundations of a permanent and cultural society began to be laid. In

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<sup>4</sup>Jones, op. cit., pp. 44-48.



1856 Gainesville secured a post office, the only one in the county. It was put in the home of Mrs. Kate Carpenter, on the corner of Pecan and Dixon Streets.<sup>5</sup> The first postmaster was Nathaniel Reed.

As further proof that Gainesville, though small, was taking some steps to better its condition socially and spiritually, we find that the Masons got together and held their first meeting April 24, 1854.<sup>6</sup> Not long before this the Masons, the congregation of the Methodist Episcopal Church, along with the citizens interested in erecting a school building, petitioned the County Commissioners' Court for land on which to build a building. In this regard, the following interesting item appears in the minutes of the court for the February, 1854, term:

Ordered by the court that a donation be made of four lots in Block No. 20, lots nos. 1, 2, 3, and 8 to be donated to the Methodist Episcopal Church South, the Masonic Fraternity, and a Public School jointly, to have and to hold said lots under the control and direction of the trustees appointed or to be appointed by the said Methodist Episcopal Church South, the Masonic Fraternity, and the School Commissioners of the County of Cooke, for the purpose of divine worship, a Masonic Hall, and a school house.<sup>7</sup>

The building was subsequently erected at the corner of Red River and Main Streets. This was evidently the same building that Miss Bounds referred to in her story

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<sup>5</sup>Ye Gainesville Towne, p. 25.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>7</sup>Minutes of the Commissioners' Court, Cooke County, I, 82.

of early teaching in the county. The building was used for preaching on Sundays, for school purposes during the week, and by the Masons at night. It was the most pretentious structure in town and was used as a community hall. It is mentioned in almost all of the accounts of Gainesville during this period. Mrs. Mary Hamilton came with her father to the county in 1857 and attended school under Miss Bounds in this building. She states that "Mr. Smith, a lawyer, then came to Gainesville and taught upstairs in the Masonic Hall."<sup>8</sup> Mrs. Hamilton's father built the first grain mill on Wheeler Creek, east of town. The creek was named after her grandfather. It seems that all church denominations were welcome to use the Masonic Building for their services, but the Cumberland Presbyterians chose to do otherwise. A few years after the hall was built, this congregation erected the first church building in Gainesville on the corner of Dodson and Church Streets.

In addition to enjoying a school, Masonic Lodge, and post office, the little frontier town was soon to boast a new county courthouse. The Commissioners' Court authorized such a building in the August term of court, 1856. The following excerpt from the yellowing pages of that record, written nearly one hundred years ago, will serve

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<sup>8</sup>Ye Gainesville Towne, p. 16.

to keep the events we describe in their true perspective.

Ordered by the County Court that James M. Peery be authorized to build a good and substantial courthouse 15 feet wide by 18 feet long. One door, three clap windows with sash, shingle roof, good plank floor, and weather boarding, to be finished in workmanship order, if finished as described and the Court receive the said house, he is to be paid out of the country treasury the sum of two hundred and fifteen dollars and seventy-five cents.<sup>9</sup>

So Cooke County's second courthouse was built. It was not a pretentious affair, but the building it replaced had cost only twenty-four dollars.

#### The School Laws of 1854 and 1856

In the early fifties the people of Texas began to be more insistent in their demands for a real public school system. There were essentially four distinct blocks of public opinion that sponsored the movement that culminated in the School Law of 1854.<sup>10</sup> First, there were people who had been educating their children in Northern schools, and they began to see that they were being indoctrinated with anti-slavery teachings. Second, the private-school people felt that all of the money being spent in the North should be kept at home in Texas and possibly allotted to the private schools for the services they were rendering. Third, it was recognized by all that the early efforts

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<sup>9</sup>Minutes of the Commissioners' Court, Cooke County, I, 146.

<sup>10</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, p. 112.

toward founding a workable school system had been failures. The fourth and last reason, which strangely enough had nothing to do directly with education, was probably the most powerful factor behind the movement. It was proposed to set apart a large proportion of the United States Indemnity Bonds from the Boundary Award as a permanent school fund.<sup>11</sup> It was further proposed that this fund be loaned to the railroad companies to induce them to extend their lines into Texas. This would satisfy a great economic and industrial need of the state at that time.

The real friends of education felt that at last a true system of public instruction was to be initiated. On the other hand, the idea appealed to those who favored the construction of the railroads. In the governor's race of 1853, and also in the various races for the state Legislature, the question of education was of primary importance. E. M. Pease was elected governor and a majority of the members of the Legislature won their seats on this platform. The school law was promptly passed and the first public system of education was established.

The School Law of 1854 contained four provisions. The first section of the law set aside \$2,000,000 in a permanent school fund. The fund was to be invested and the income distributed on a per capita basis. It was called "the

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<sup>11</sup>L. W. Newton and H. P. Gambrell, A Social and Political History of Texas, pp. 247-248.

special school fund."

The second section provided for the immediate organization of schools. The state treasurer was made ex-officio superintendent of the common schools. The county judge and commissioners were constituted a county school board. They were to divide each county into convenient school districts and appoint district trustees. The trustees were to provide a building, appoint a teacher, and generally look after the affairs of the school in each district. At the close of the term, the per capita money was to be paid to the teacher, and the patrons were to supply any money that was lacking.

Third, the law provided for the state to pay the tuition of indigent children. If the parents of any children were not able to pay their share of the teacher's salary, the district trustees furnished a list of these children to the county judge. This officer, in turn, notified the state treasurer, who paid the amounts out of the one-tenth of the annual revenue of the state set aside for "free school" purposes.

The last section of the law was a triumph for the private-school people. It allowed the trustees to convert a private school, which may have been a church school, into a common school for their district.

As to the actual operation of the law, we find the

following opinion given by Dr. Frederick Eby:

So far as the organization of a system of common schools was concerned, little was actually accomplished. The civil officers upon whom the responsibility rested gave slight attention to the matter, and the people generally desired as little machinery and organization as possible. The ex-officio superintendent constantly complained of the chronic remissness of the county officials in failing to file reports of the schools. Out of 100 counties in 1854 and 1855, only 89 reported the first year and 74 the second. In 1856 there were 112 counties and only 22 reported; in 1861 only 12 out of 124 counties reported. Throughout the entire state and with but few exceptions the people resorted to the use of private schools which under the law could be designated "common schools." Only in two or three counties, mainly of German population, were districts formed, and an effort made to construct school houses.<sup>12</sup>

As a result of the failure to lay off permanent districts, a new law was passed in 1856 doing away with this method or plan of organization. This law permitted any group of citizens to set up a district, organize a school, and employ a teacher. This plan of operation was the extreme of educational individualism. No state system of public schools was possible under the plan. The law of 1856 provided that a general school fund be accumulated by setting aside one tenth of the annual revenues as provided for in the Constitution, and by consolidating with it the revenue derived from the interest on the permanent fund. The annual interest from this fund was to be distributed to the counties on a per capita basis. The first monies

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<sup>12</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, pp. 120-121.

were to be used in paying the tuition of indigent children; the balance was to be distributed among the paying patrons of the school.

In operation, the system was far from satisfactory. People did not like for their children to be called "indigent." Patrons had to pay the teacher and bear the other expenses until the end of the school year when the per capita money could be secured. The lack of permanent districts and permanent school houses was detrimental. As a result of these circumstances, there was much indifference and confusion.

In searching the records for some indication of how the law of 1854, and the subsequent laws, affected Cooke County, we find some very interesting facts. As a result of that section of the law requiring that the counties be laid off into convenient districts, the Cooke County officials were not long in carrying out the law's intent. At a regular meeting of the Commissioners' Court in the May term, 1854, the county was divided into ten school districts and the boundaries designated. The following paragraph from the minutes of this court is a fair sample of the brevity and indefiniteness of the boundaries of such districts:

School District No. 1 -- Commencing at the southeast corner of the county, running west to the Zilaboy

(Creek), thence up the Zilaboy to the east line of Cooke County to form the first district.<sup>13</sup>

Although Cooke County was probably among the first to carry out the provisions of the districting law, the records show no evidence that anything further was done to make the system workable. There were apparently no trustees appointed to administer the school affairs in the districts; and up till 1856, when the law was repealed, no further mention is made of such districts. It is no wonder that little good came of the move, for districts of such size would be difficult to administer even today (1944), when there are transportation facilities that were unthought of in those days.

When the four leagues of land were granted to each county, Cooke County did take steps to secure her share. In August, 1855, Daniel Montague, county surveyor, was allowed four hundred dollars for "locating, surveying, and procuring patent for four leagues of land for Cooke County school lands."<sup>14</sup> A more detailed account of the location and disposition of this land will be treated in a later chapter.

The first provision of the law of 1854 set aside the "special school fund" to be distributed on a per capita basis. Cooke County must have participated in this fund

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<sup>13</sup>Minutes of the Commissioners' Court, Cooke County, I, 86.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 119.



during the first year that the law was in operation. The records show that the state treasurer was called upon to pay the county treasurer, Jacob Dye, the sum of \$240.52 out of the special school fund for the year ending in September, 1854; for the next year the county received, or asked for, the sum of \$950.50. In those days, the problem of getting the actual "cash in hand" was something to be considered. We find the county court passing an order providing that "J. E. Hughes be and is hereby allowed three per cent for securing the school money from Austin and delivering the same to Jacob Dye, County Treasurer of Cooke County, and is hereby authorized to retain the same out of the money when delivered."<sup>15</sup>

The per capita money was appropriated in Cooke County in much the same manner as in the rest of the state. At first, all that was required through the plan was that a list of children taught be presented by a teacher who had conducted a school. The chief justice of the county would then pay the teacher a certain amount per pupil out of the state monies. A few years later, teachers were paid on their "indigent lists" as witnessed by an order in the Commissioners' Court minutes for 1860, which provided that "the Chief Justice draw on the County Treasurer of Cooke County in favor of George Kinkade \$53.65 in full, for his

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 144.

indigent list on school report as evidence in court this day."<sup>16</sup>

Finally, in 1860, it was made the duty of the court to require the testimony of two respectable "paying citizens" to a school list. Also "paying" patrons were to be reimbursed only after "indigent lists" were honored, as this excerpt will evidence:

Ordered by the court, upon examining the school reports and paying of all the indigent lists of school reports, they find due the paying patrons of the several schools one and one-half cents per day.<sup>17</sup>

Although the records of the court show a large number of such transactions during this period, it is certain that many patrons did not take the trouble to secure their money. The amount of money was small, many people did not like to swear that they were indigent, and most of the expense incurred in operating a school had to be borne by the people anyway. However inadequate these provisions for a public educational system might be, they were to deteriorate still further in the Civil War period that followed.

#### The Schools and the Civil War

All great wars affect human progress, and any student of history knows that the Civil War between the states was

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 88.

certainly no exception. The conflict was bitter in the extreme; and when the South lost the war, a complete change was experienced in its whole economic and social order. Some of the effects were immediate; others did not materialize for a number of years, but were usually more far-reaching.

The immediate effect of the Civil War was to leave Texas prostrate economically. The greatest industry, agriculture, was completely revolutionized by the freeing of the slaves. The years of the conflict were hard ones for the people of Cooke County. It required all of their energies to provide the bare necessities of life. In order to alleviate the sufferings of some of the most unfortunate, it appears that the county government tried to render some assistance. The following orders appear in the minutes of the Commissioners' Court for November 16, 1863:

Ordered by the court that I. Browning's account for Eliza Mortan, dependent, be received and paid by the clerk for Dye Precinct. . . .

Ordered by the court that the clerk pay R. S. Salta \$40 for the hire of (a) house for Mrs. McCall for eight months at \$5 per month.<sup>18</sup>

To give some idea of how the social order and human relationships were strained and often torn asunder in the county during these dark years, it might be well to relate briefly an event the old-timers refer to as the "great

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<sup>18</sup>Minutes of the Commissioners' Court, Cooke County, I, 92.

hanging." Dr. Thomas Barrett, one of the jurors of the court that tried the men, states that "brother was against brother, and father was against son."<sup>19</sup> It seems that in the eastern part of Cooke County, in the "cross timbers," were many Union sympathizers. The war between the states had been going on about a year, when the "conscript law" was passed. This law was very offensive to many, and particularly to those who sympathized with the North. This was the spark that started the conflagration, and after awhile an organization was formed called the Union League. Its plans, as finally brought out in the trial, were to seize the stores of ammunition at Gainesville and Sherman, to take control of the county government, and to seize all property and dispense with all Southern sympathizers. The League maintained contact at all times with the Kansas "Jayhawkers." The plan was discovered and the names of a large number of the members were determined. Then, after much planning, and with the help of a militia recruited from all over the county, the trap was sprung. About 150 Union Leaguers were arrested.

A court was set up and a jury of twelve men was selected. Dr. Barrett, arriving in town to sit on this jury, describes the scene that met his eyes:

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<sup>19</sup>Dr. Thomas Barrett, "The Great Hanging" (unpublished), in Historical Files, Cooke County Library.

When I arrived in town, there were crowds in sight in every direction, armed, pressing forward, with the prisoners under guard. The deepest and most intense excitement I have ever seen prevailed. Reason had left its throne.<sup>30</sup>

The jury deliberated for about two weeks, trying each man in turn. The first seven men arraigned before the court were pronounced guilty and hung. Then a few of those only slightly connected with the organization were pronounced innocent and released. But then a thing occurred that almost ruined the whole procedure.

A Mr. Dickson, a strong Southerner, was hunting deer in the Red River bottoms one day, when he was ambushed and killed by some of the Union Leaguers. A rescue party sent to aid him was likewise ambushed and Colonel Young was murdered. This occurrence brought the trial at the county seat to an end, since a large portion of the people had wanted to take some more direct measures from the beginning. However, a compromise was finally reached, and thirty-five of the worst offenders were held and the rest released. Then on a Saturday morning in October, 1862, the "great hanging" began. By twos and threes the prisoners were hauled by wagon down the main street of Gainesville to a point on the banks of Pecan Creek, and there they were all hanged to the same tree. Different accounts all agree that it was late afternoon before the gruesome job was finished.

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

So it happened that forty-two men were hanged in Cooke County at the same time, and it furnishes us a somber picture of the Civil War period in its history.

Education has always been affected by economic changes, and the war affected education in Texas in many ways. The immediate effect was to leave it prostrate for a period of almost twenty years. During the first year of the war a very small amount of the special school fund -- sixty-two cents per capita -- was distributed for the last time. Any semblance of a state system of education ceased to exist; however, it was not missed as much as one would suppose, since it had never been seriously accepted by the people and the amount of money appropriated had not been large.

It will be remembered that the law of 1856 had provided that the permanent school fund was to be loaned to the railroads. This had been gradually accomplished, and when the final loans were made in 1861 and 1862, the amount invested totaled \$1,753,317.<sup>21</sup> Even before the great conflict, it appeared that the railroad companies might have to default in their payments. With the coming of the war their roadbeds declined, their income decreased, and they were not able to meet their interest payments. In addition to this condition, in order to carry on Texas' part of the war, the governor transferred \$1,285,327 from the school

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<sup>21</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, p. 150.

fund to the military board. Add to this the inevitable depreciation in the values of currency in time of war, and we had a situation of which Eby says:

In this way, it happened that a school fund of \$2,592,533.14 in 1861 was reduced to practically nothing by the end of the struggle between the states. Furthermore, the liberal donation of the legislature in 1858 in setting aside all funds from the sale of public lands for the schools was repealed during the war. The total effects of the war upon the endowments for public education were extremely disastrous, requiring practically a new beginning.<sup>22</sup>

As has been said, this did not mean the complete cessation of education in Cooke County. Since there had never been a true system of state education, the communities still relied upon themselves and held the existing schools together as well as they could. Many families were broken up by the war, and the mother and children had to provide for themselves. Often the children had to stay out of school to work in the fields. Many of the teachers, most of whom were men, quit the classroom to join the Confederate Army. But it is likely that most of the established schools continued to exist for a few months during each year. It is certain that in Gainesville, various private schools were carried on during these years.

When the war ended and the South had lost, a new constitution was written for Texas in 1866. The provisions

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 151.

for education closely resembled those in the law of 1854. The counties were to be laid off into convenient school districts; private schools were to become public schools; and the control of the schools was to be handled in the same democratic way. A state superintendent was authorized; and in place of large tracts of land being set aside for a permanent fund for the schools, the Legislature was empowered to levy a tax for educational purposes.

The effect of these provisions upon the schools of Cooke County is hard to determine. We do find that at the January term of the Commissioners' Court, in 1867, the county commissioners did district the county. This appears to be the second time that such action was taken in the county; and in contrast to the same action in 1854, twenty-two districts were formed in 1867. J. M. Lindsay, a prominent lawyer of Gainesville, was appointed "agent to look after the school land of Cooke County and to have supervision of the same."<sup>23</sup> But before any great amount of action resulted from the law, the Federal Government nullified the Constitution and such plans were never put into effect. Now began that dark span in our history known as the Reconstruction Period; and the affairs of the state, both economically and educationally, were plunged into a deplorable condition of internal disorder and strife.

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<sup>23</sup>Minutes of the Commissioners' Court, Cooke County, I, 164.



## CHAPTER IV

### COOKE COUNTY SCHOOLS, 1871-1883

#### The Settlement of New Communities

During that period of years from 1871 to 1883 Cooke County was steadily growing in population. Gainesville was taking on the appearance of a substantial town, and other towns and villages began to take shape in other parts of the county. Where there had been only scattered settlements a few years earlier, now there were sufficient people to form communities. D. H. Sapp, an early settler in Cooke County, gives an excellent picture of the birth and subsequent growth of one of these communities -- Marysville:

About September 1, 1867, my father, mother, two sisters and myself arrived at the place where the town of Marysville now stands. We came from Shelby County, Texas, and upon our arrival we found only one family living in the immediate vicinity, Mr. Richard Corn and wife. . . .

When we arrived, Mr. Corn was building a mill. The framework and roof were complete. The building was large, covering probably 3000 square feet of floor space. It was an ox mill, the tread wheel being 40 feet in diameter, and upon this wheel from 6 to 10 oxen were used to furnish the motive power. . . .

The mill was completed in 1868, and people came from Montague County, Clay County and the Indian Territory to get their wheat and corn ground. So far as I know there was no other mill west of this place until some years later.

In the spring of 1868 Mr. R. A. Fitch, brother of Mrs. Mary Corn, came here from California. Being

unmarried, he made his home with the Corns. One Sunday evening in December, 1868, Mr. Fitch and Mr. Corn visited my father's house. During the conversation, Mr. Fitch told my father that he was going to put in a small stock of merchandise near the mill and start a town. He proposed to name the town Marysville, principally in honor of his sister Mary, not forgetting however, that his home-town in California was named Marysville. So when my father moved to a place south of here Mr. Fitch moved one of the cabins in where he lived near the mill and used it as a storehouse. This was early in 1869.

Soon after this Stephens and Puryear put in another store, and in 1871 William Savage and Son, F. M. Savage, built a steam saw mill and put in still another store. Mr. Savage was a surveyor, and Mr. Corn, owner of the land, employed him to survey the town and make a plat of it. This plat can now be seen at the office of the Howeth Company in Gainesville. With each residence lot sold, a business lot was given in order to encourage the establishment of business houses.

The postoffice was established in 1873 with John Kelly as the first postmaster. Our mail came from Gainesville on the Gainesville and Montague star route. This route served Marysville, Saint Jo, Montague and other places, the service being tri-weekly.

In 1873 Mr. Savage donated four acres of land to the community to be used as a cemetery. It has been used for that purpose ever since and many old-timers are buried there. Among these is Colonel Daniel Montague, the man who surveyed Montague County and for whom it was named.

The Methodist Church and the Masons erected a two-story building in 1872. . . . It was also used as a schoolhouse from 1875 to 1883.<sup>1</sup>

The founding and growth of this community was representative of what occurred in many other parts of the county. It would be interesting to follow the histories of these communities more closely, but time and space will not permit. We shall notice only briefly the more pertinent

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<sup>1</sup>D. H. Sapp, "Early History of Marysville, Texas" (unpublished), in Historical Records of Cooke County, Cooke County Library, Gainesville.

facts about the most important communities that were established during this period.

The town of Valley View was established about 1872.<sup>2</sup> It was laid out by Captain L. W. Lee. A postoffice was established, and a blacksmith shop and several stores were erected the first few years. In 1873, Charles S. Newton and J. A. Julian organized a Cumberland Presbyterian Church, and that congregation met for a number of years in a building also used for school purposes. Mrs. William Johnson taught the first school. In 1886, the Santa Fe Railway was built through the town and its future was assured.

In the early seventies, three men by the name of Ross came from Grayson County and settled in western Cooke County about twenty-five miles from Gainesville.<sup>3</sup> They built a mill, cotton gin, and store, and operated the first postoffice. They named the community Rosston.

Bulcher was organized as a village about 1875.<sup>4</sup> It was located about twenty-five miles northeast of Gainesville. The first store was operated by Ben Greenwood, and a gin was built in 1875. The postoffice was named Bulcher by the Post Office Department. The first school was begun in the early seventies and the first teacher was named Hart.

Some ten miles northeast of Gainesville a settlement

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<sup>2</sup>C. N. Jones, Early Days in Cooke County, p. 82.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 88.

took shape with the usual building of a gin, blacksmith shop, and general merchandise store.<sup>5</sup> Jim Jones ran the cotton gin and named the village Custer City for General Custer. Mr. Jones also had a saw mill and sawed lumber for the first schoolhouse in the Cross Timbers.<sup>6</sup> It was called the Mountain Grove School.

In the southern part of the county was Mountain Springs. It was named by J. R. Burch from a spring of water that ran out of a small mountain.

Burns City was located about twelve miles southeast of Gainesville. It was named after Uncle George Burns.<sup>7</sup> A mineral well was found on his place about 1881 and the town was organized. It was incorporated as a city in April, 1883. Billie Daniels was the first mayor and Jake Johnson the first city marshall. The town grew to probably three hundred people and boasted eight stores, a hotel consisting of sixteen rooms, and several other business houses. The town is still incorporated today (1944), although it has only one store and probably twenty people remaining.

Callisburg was located about ten miles northeast of Gainesville and was on the Butterfield Trail. It became a village about 1883 and was named after Sam Callis, the first blacksmith.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 85.

There were doubtless other communities of equal importance established during these same years, but the scarcity of facts and lack of space precludes telling of them.

#### Political Background

With the close of the Civil War, the control of political affairs in Texas fell into the hands of radical political adventurers and "carpetbaggers" from the North. Control was wrested from the Democratic Party of the state; and with the help of the government at Washington, and in conjunction with the Negroes of the state, the Republicans took charge. Their period of control was to be brief, however, and by 1875 the state was emerging from the trying Radical Regime. The corruptness of this regime had disgusted Texans, and the state was plunged deeply into debt.

#### Economic Factors

The state as a whole suffered economically under the Radical Regime; however, in some sections industrial progress was beginning to be made. The outstanding economic factors in Cooke County continued to be trail driving and ranching. Very little of the prairie land had been turned to farming. There were several reasons why the county seat, Gainesville, should become an important center in the cattle empire of the West. Most important, it was located on the edge of the great Western Plains. During the early

years of its existence, El Paso was the next important town westward. Wichita Falls had not been settled, and Fort Worth had not assumed its present leadership in the cattle industry. Concerning Fort Worth's size in 1874, a letter published in the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, April 18, 1944, describes the town as "a nice little town of 2,000 inhabitants."<sup>9</sup> The letter goes on to say that "all of our crowd are well pleased with Texas. Furnish a horse and a plow and make a crop of cotton for a man and he will deed you the land on which it was raised."<sup>10</sup> Large cattle ranches extended west from Gainesville; and along the Red River north, stretched large cattle empires which drew upon Gainesville for supplies.

With the coming of the railroads the picture changed somewhat. For a few years following 1871 Denison was the loading point for a large part of the West. Gainesville profited from small herds being driven to Denison from Wise, Montague, and other counties west. Then in 1879 the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railroad was extended from Denison to Gainesville. There was an agreement that Gainesville was to be its western terminal as long as it was the only railroad entering the town. This was the period in which Gainesville began to be known as the "cattle capitol" of Texas. It was the railroad and cattle

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<sup>9</sup>Fort Worth Star-Telegram, April 18, 1944.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

center for a large part of the West and the Indian Territory. This era of economic prosperity was to reach its zenith in the late eighties and will be dealt with more fully in a following chapter.

#### The Radical School System from 1871 to 1876

The school system in Texas was in a deplorable condition when the radicals came into power. The National Bureau of Education reported in 1870 that Texas was "the darkest field educationally in the United States."<sup>11</sup> The radicals blamed their opponents for this condition, and they determined to set up a system of their own.

The first step toward the organization of a new school system for the state was the Constitution of 1869. It provided for a superintendent of public instruction, the dividing of the counties into school districts, and for control by local boards in charge of school affairs. All funds and lands formerly appropriated to the schools were recuperated, and all monies coming from the sale of public land was to be vested in a permanent school fund. For the first time there was likewise provided an available school fund. It was to come from the following sources:

1. The income from the permanent fund.
2. One fourth of the annual revenues derived from

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<sup>11</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, p. 157.

general taxation.

3. A poll tax of one dollar on every voter between twenty-one and sixty years of age.

4. Local taxation of such an amount "as will be necessary to provide the necessary schoolhouses in each district and insure the education of all the scholastic inhabitants both white and black for ten months each year."<sup>12</sup>

The following year, 1870, a law was passed to carry out the intentions of the constitutional provision, but this law was met with indifference by the people of Texas. They did not like the men who were in control of their government, and they did not care for any of their educational schemes. This apathetic attitude angered the radicals, and as a result the most centralized and obnoxious system of education ever to be set up in the nation was forced upon the people of Texas in the drastic law of 1871.

Essentially, the plan was to organize a school system along military lines with the control in the hands of the state. The legislature would no longer invest the school funds, as this was to be done by the state board. Instead of its being the responsibility of the county officials to divide the counties into districts, this fell to the various supervisors. Instead of the local trustees appointing the teachers, setting the salary, and determining the length of the term, this was done by the state

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 159.



superintendent. The theory behind the new system was that the schools had not progressed under local control, and that only the state could foster an efficient system of education.

The plan was certain to fail from the beginning, but there were a few outstanding reasons for its collapse. Probably that phase of the law that required the compulsory attendance of the children was the most obnoxious to the people. They still believed that the mental welfare of their children was their own concern. They also argued that the age of six was too young to go to school, and the age of eighteen was too old, for they needed the children's help at home and could not spare them for ten months in the year.

The part of the law that finally brought about the whole system's complete collapse was that relative to a local school tax. In April, 1871, the state board ordered the directors of each district to levy a tax of one per cent. The purpose of the tax was to support the schools and to construct new schoolhouses. At once a great outcry arose all over the state. Citizens assembled everywhere to protest this law. A general Taxpayers' Convention was held at Austin. The outcome of this convention was to advise every one to ignore the new law. The law was challenged in the courts; and years later it was declared to be null and void.

The exact effect of the radical system upon the schools of Cooke County would be difficult to determine, but some interesting facts about this period are available. When the system was set up, the state was divided into twelve districts, and a supervisor was placed over each district with almost dictatorial powers. Cooke County was included in the sixth district along with Fannin, Lamar, Collin, Grayson, Denton, Wise, Montague, Clay, Jack, Young, Archer, Wichita, Wilbarger, Throckmorton, Haskell, Knox, and Hardeman Counties.<sup>13</sup> A. G. Stobaugh of Honey Grove was appointed supervisor. In Cooke County very little in the matter of supervision was accomplished. This is not surprising, since even today (1944), with our vast improvements in transportation, such a large territory would be difficult to administer efficiently.

When the school-tax law was passed and the taxpayers met in Austin to protest, Cooke County was probably represented.<sup>14</sup> A county convention was called to elect delegates to attend at Austin. Three delegates were chosen, but no record can be found of their attendance. It is probable that the people of Cooke County reacted much the same as did people all over the state; that is, they ignored the law as much as possible and continued to manage and pay

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<sup>13</sup>Second Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Texas, 1872, p. 18.

<sup>14</sup>Thomas Hardy, Development of Education in Cooke County, p. 25.

for their own private schools as well as they could. In 1872-1873 only thirteen counties made complete scholastic reports to State Superintendent DeGress, and twenty-one made partially complete reports.<sup>15</sup> Cooke County was not among those that made a scholastic report, although it did report the expenditure of per capita and "county funds" for education during the year. For the next year, 1873-1874, scarcely any counties reported. "The public educational condition again had become completely chaotic."<sup>16</sup>

Before we leave this period it might be well to notice that, after all, the radical school system was not "all bad." To begin with, the idea of a state superintendent of public instruction has since been accepted. The state is divided into districts, and supervisors check the schools for affiliation, rural aid, etc. Almost every district in the state levies a local school tax of some amount. Compulsory attendance has been accepted by the people for years. The present tendency is toward the county-unit system of school administration which DeGress arbitrarily adopted.

We might conclude that it was "not what was done but how they did it" that caused the system to fail; also, the mass of the people had not come to see that such things as

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<sup>15</sup>Second Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Texas, 1872, pp. 84-85.

<sup>16</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, p. 168.

compulsory attendance, local school taxes, and state supervision were fundamental in a successful system of education.

#### Community School System, 1877-1883

In the field of education, as well as socially, economically, and politically, Texas emerged from the radical regime in a completely chaotic condition. When the convention met to write a new constitution in 1875, the tide of wrath had reached its peak; and the article on education became the storm center of the convention. Under such conditions it was only natural that the provisions for education should be the very opposite of those fostered by the radicals. The pendulum was truly swinging to the opposite extreme. The Constitution of 1875, and the law of 1876 that put it into force were as loose and simple as the "radical system" had been definite and exacting.

In its intense hatred of the radical school system, the convention sought to wreck the whole organization, destroying both the good and the bad. The article on education abolished the office of state superintendent. It did away with the compulsory attendance law. The free-school age was to become the period from eight to fourteen years. Local taxation for building schoolhouses and maintaining schools was made impossible. In the matter of the permanent school fund, the convention dealt graciously, but this did not materially help the schools at once.

The law of 1876 was then passed to carry out the

policies set forth in the constitution. It set up a state board of education, and a secretary was made available to it to collect reports and otherwise act as clerk. He had no supervisory powers. There were no districts, but people simply got together and formed "school communities." The parents submitted a list of the children to be taught to the county judge. This officer in turn appointed three school trustees for the school to serve for one year only. They employed the teacher and, in general, ran the school.

There were some advantages claimed for the community system. It gave the parents complete control of their school, and there was no restriction upon the number of children necessary to have a school. The parents could enjoy the benefits of the state school fund with a minimum of state interference -- a phase of the law that appealed to most people very much.

In operation, the community system proved to be disappointing. Its weaknesses began to appear almost at once. The objections to the new system were numerous:

- (1) No local taxes could be collected, as there were no district lines.
- (2) The schools, having no permanent organization, could erect no permanent buildings.
- (3) Because of petty jealousies, a number of small schools operated in a community where one large school would have been more efficient.
- (4) The state school fund was expended year after year with no lasting benefit.
- (5) New school boards had to be appointed each year.
- (6) Parents might join a school miles from their home and thereby injure the school in their own community.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 173.

In spite of all the shortcomings of the system, education did make some progress during this period. The enrollment in Texas as a whole increased from year to year. In 1876-1877 there were 133,568 children enrolled in Texas schools, and in 1878-1879 this number had increased to 192,654.<sup>18</sup> In 1881-1882 there were 2,579 scholastics in Cooke County,<sup>19</sup> while in 1883-1884 there were 3,268.<sup>20</sup> In comparing the county judge's school records for Cooke County for the years 1881-1882 and 1883-1884, the only records available, we find some interesting facts. In 1881-1882 there were ninety-one schools in operation in the county, whereas in 1883-1884 there were ninety-nine. Of the ninety-one schools in operation in 1881, all except sixteen were operating under the same name and number, and apparently in the same location, two years later. In spite of the lack of district lines, the fact that trustees were appointed for one year only, and the absence of permanent buildings, the communities held their schools together fairly well.

The teachers' lot must have been a hard one. Of the ninety-one teachers employed in 1881-1882, only four were teaching at the same schools two years later. The average salary paid the teachers was forty dollars per month for a period of approximately four months. However, there is

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>County Treasurer's School Account Register for Cooke County, 1881-1882, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup>County Judge's School Record for Cooke County, 1882-1884, p. 112.

no way of ascertaining how much, if any, additional salary was supplied by the parents to supplement the state money. Whereas in 1881-1882 every district had a one-teacher school, two years later three schools had "assistants." The principal was paid a certain amount of money per month, and he in turn paid his assistant. In order to supplement their meager salary, some of the teachers had a novel way of earning more money. It is not unusual to find the same teacher's name appearing on the accounts of two, and sometimes three, different districts during the same year. Apparently a teacher would teach two or three months in one community and then move on to another location for a term of school there.

We have seen that Cooke County was still on the frontier, and this fact is sustained by the appearance of the names of only a few natives of the state on the school records of the period. In 1883-1884, the teachers applying for a county teaching certificate in Cooke County came from thirteen different states in the Union. The number from each state was as follows:

Kentucky . . .	10	Georgia . . . .	2
Texas . . . .	7	West Virginia .	2
Tennessee . .	5	North Carolina.	1
Missouri . . .	5	Illinois . . . .	1
Mississippi .	3	Virginia . . . .	1
Alabama . . .	3	New York . . . .	1 <sup>21</sup>
Ohio . . . . .	3		

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 114-115.

It will be noted that only seven out of the forty-five teachers were natives of Texas.

It has been pointed out that under the community system, there were few inducements for a school to become permanent in location, or even in operation. But in spite of the absence of permanent district lines and the lack of a school tax to construct buildings, there was some progress. There is no way of knowing just how many communities had buildings strictly for school purposes, since many buildings were constructed and maintained solely from donations by the parents. However, during the school year 1883-1884, the records show that in fifteen communities part of the state and county money was spent for "buildings."<sup>22</sup> Whether or not a majority of the school communities had acquired schoolhouses at this time is doubtful, since the same records show that sixteen communities used part of their funds for rent during the same year.

#### The Beginning of a Public School System in Gainesville

The situation was somewhat different in Gainesville -- the only urban community in the county. For a great many years the incorporated towns of Texas had been granted special privileges by the Legislature. These towns could assume by election the control of their schools, and because of this fact were superior to the rural schools in a

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 150.



number of ways:

- (1) The towns were permitted to levy a tax not to exceed 50 cents on the \$100 valuation of property in order to continue their school terms for as much as ten months of each school year.
- (2) The teachers received better salaries in the towns.
- (3) The country schools, on the average, ran about  $4\frac{1}{2}$  months each year, while the average for the towns was approximately 8 months.
- (4) The town schools had trained supervisors, while the rural schools were supervised by the county judge who had no training for the job and often no inclination to do much about it.
- (5) The towns were able to provide permanent buildings for their schools by taxation, while rural communities could not levy a tax.

Up to 1880 the private schools had educated the children of Gainesville, but they had served their purpose. Gainesville was incorporated in 1873 and was issued a charter by the Legislature. The constitution and the law of 1876 had granted any incorporated town or city exclusive control of its public schools in case a majority of the taxpayers voted in favor of this measure. The Record of Public Free Schools, City of Gainesville, Volume I, shows that on August 16, 1880, the city council met "for the purpose of permanently organizing said council to assume control of the Public Free Schools and institutions of learning within said city."<sup>23</sup> Certain rules and regulations governing the operation of such schools were agreed upon. One regulation required that all teachers employed should hold certificates from the county board of examiners as

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<sup>23</sup>Record of Public Free Schools, City of Gainesville, Vol. I, p. 1.

provided by the state school laws. Another interesting note regarding this venture into the business of "public free schools" was the manner used to pay the teachers. The minutes of this first meeting specified that "to teachers holding a first class certificate who are principals of schools there shall be paid the sum of seven and one-half cents per day (holidays excepted) for each scholar within scholastic age."<sup>24</sup>

The school law of 1879 permitted cities and towns to levy taxes for schools not to exceed fifty cents on the \$100 valuation. The City Council Council of Gainesville, meeting in regular session on October 12, 1880, passed the following order:

Now at this time came to be examined the reports and returns of presiding officers of an election held on the 24th day of September, 1880, to determine whether or not a tax should be levied for school purposes not to exceed fifty cents on the one hundred dollars valuation of property in the City of Gainesville. Said returns showing the following result:

	<u>For School Tax</u>	<u>Against School Tax</u>
Ward 1.....	35 .....	13
Ward 2.....	40 .....	12
Ward 3.....	29 .....	11
	<u>104</u>	<u>36</u>
Totals		

The requisite two-thirds vote having been cast in favor of said tax, the result of said election is hereby declared in favor of tax.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>25</sup>Minutes of the City Council, Gainesville, Texas, Vol. I, pp. 520-521.

This must have been the first tax voted for school purposes, since the annual report of the city treasurer for that year reflects for the first time "school funds."

It was now necessary to provide more adequate building facilities. Sufficient funds were not on hand, so Judge J. M. Lindsay donated the money to build a new school and gave the lot to set it on. Later the money was repaid by the city from local taxation. This was called the South School, and it was staffed with six teachers with a Mr. Brooks as principal.

On June 16, 1883, the City Council of Gainesville took a step that went a long way toward insuring a good school system in the town. On this date, James A. Race was elected the first superintendent of the city schools. He received a salary of \$1,800 per year and was allowed an assistant and eleven teachers as his staff. This, and the events just described, were the beginning of a truly progressive school system for the town of Gainesville.

In summing up this period, it might be said that some progress was made by the schools of Cooke County. Any such progress, especially in the rural schools, was certainly made in spite of school laws of the time rather than because of them. The same situation probably existed all over the state, and people in general began to see the serious deficiencies in the laws. They were beginning to

realize that in seeking to throw out the radicals and carpetbaggers they had injured their chances for an efficient system of schools in Texas. In 1881 Governor O. M. Roberts came out strongly in favor of reform in the state system of education. The wave of public sentiment demanding educational reform finally culminated in 1883. At this time an amendment to the state constitution was passed by the people that was to change greatly the public school system of the state.

## CHAPTER V

### COOKE COUNTY SCHOOLS FROM 1884 TO 1900

#### Gainesville as "Cow-Town"

As has been mentioned in an earlier chapter, the first railroad came to Cooke County in 1879 when the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas was extended from Denison to Gainesville. The coming of the railroads made it apparent that trail driving was at an end. The cattle industry continued to furnish the life-blood for the economic life of Cooke County, but in a different manner. As the county became more thickly settled and the open range was almost gone, large ranches fenced with the new barbed wire made their appearance. The records show that the first ten spools of wire sold in Texas were bought by the hardware firm of Cleaves and Fletcher in Gainesville.<sup>1</sup> There were some cattlemen who saw the end of the free range, and many of them bought large ranches to the south and west of Gainesville. However, there was still a free range in the vast and still unorganized West; and across the Red River in the Indian Territory, the Indian and government land was loosely governed in respect to grazing laws. As a consequence, many

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<sup>1</sup>John M. Hendrix, "Texas Cow-Towns," The Cattleman, February, 1941, p. 27.

large cattlemen still were able to profit from the free range, and many of them operated from Gainesville which was strategically located for such an enterprise.

It is a little surprising, even to some residents of Cooke County, to read the following allusion to the county as a center of the cattle industry:

To Gainesville in those days came the biggest of the cowmen from South Texas seeking buyers for their cattle or fattening ranges for them. They came from -- wherever cattle grew, for Gainesville was "cow-town" then. Fort Worth, a trail outfitting place and trail crossing on the Trinity River, was in later years to assume the title with the coming of the packinghouses.<sup>2</sup>

Strangers came to Gainesville in abundance. Eastern money found its way there seeking quick increase in the cattle industry. Several cattle companies were organized, and at one time the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers' Association numbered about fifty of its members who gave Gainesville as their address. New buildings were erected and new businesses were opened. The stores sold supplies to range bosses who hauled them by wagon one hundred to two hundred miles to the ranch headquarters. There were three banks, The Gainesville National, The First National, and The Red River National, that handled the business of the cattle industry; and their deposits ran into the millions of dollars. A street-car line, drawn by small mules, was installed upon the principal streets of the town and an

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

opera house was erected. It was truly the "hey-day" of a great industry, and Gainesville as the "capitol" of the cattle empire in this part of the West enjoyed a great boom of prosperity. Little remains today (1944) to remind one of this glorious era in the history of Gainesville unless it is a few stately mansions of that time and a few old brick buildings with the inscription "Built in 1880" on their facades.

#### Settlement in the County Is Concluded

During the period from 1884 to 1900 the population of the county as a whole continued to increase. While the population of Gainesville increased from 6,594 in 1890 to 7,874 in 1900, the population of the county had grown from 24,696 to 27,496 during the same period.<sup>3</sup> This was an increase of 11.3 per cent, and it was the last decade in which such an increase was to be shown in the county. The fact of the matter is, the next ten years saw a loss of population in the county by a small per cent.

The long period of colonization and settlement, which had begun about 1846, had come to an end. The land area of the county was fairly well saturated and the last communities were being settled. Era was located near the southwest corner of the county about 1887.<sup>4</sup> About the same time

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<sup>3</sup>United States Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, Population, pp. 48, 78.

<sup>4</sup>Jones, Early Days in Cooke County, p. 84.

Hemming was settled in the south-central part of the county.<sup>5</sup> The man after whom it was named, C. C. Hemming, donated four acres of land for a school, and a building was erected. The first school opened in 1889 and was taught by Miss Viola Riley.

When the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railroad was extended westward from Gainesville in 1886, it passed through a small community about twelve miles from Gainesville that was destined to prosper during the next few years. The town was named Myra in honor of the daughter of the first station agent.<sup>6</sup> A telephone exchange was opened by Jack Felty in 1902, and the next year a flour mill was built. The first schoolhouse was built in 1900 and the school was taught by Mr. Wren.

A village known as Hood came into being about sixteen miles west of Gainesville.<sup>7</sup> Mr. A. P. Hood was the first postmaster and the office got its name from him. The first school was opened in 1890 and the teacher was Miss Pauline Felker.

In 1889 a settlement was made in Cooke County that was different from all the rest. In October of that year the Flusche brothers, Emil and Anton, of Westphalia, Kansas, entered into a contract with Jot Gunter and associates to settle a pasture in the western part of the county, containing 22,000 acres, with German Catholics. They named the

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 86.



new colony Muenster, after the capitol of their home province of Westphalia, in Germany. The contract provided that the new town should be located on the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railroad, in the center of the land. The land was subdivided into suitable farm blocks, and at the end of the first year of colonization 8,000 acres had been sold to approximately seventy-five Catholic families.

Encouraged by the great success of the colony at Muenster, two of the Flusche brothers, Anton and F. A., in January, 1891, closed a contract with Judge J. M. Lindsay of Gainesville for the colonization of 3,500 acres of land south of the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas railroad about six miles west of Gainesville. This community was named Lindsay.

#### The District School System

The constitutional amendment of 1883 favored the district school system. It provided for the voting of local school taxes when the people wanted them. By this amendment, the following sources of revenue were provided for the state school fund:

- (1) One-fourth of the revenue from the state occupation tax.
- (2) A poll tax of one dollar on all voters between the ages of twenty-one and sixty.
- (3) An ad valorem tax of such an amount, not to exceed 20 cents on the \$100 valuation, as with the available school fund arising from all other sources will be sufficient to maintain and support the public free schools of the state for a period of not less than six months in each year.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, p. 194.

In conformity with the amendment, the school law was entirely rewritten the next year, 1884, and this law became the basis of all future progress of education in Texas. There have been many minor changes in Texas school law since this time, but such changes have been "within" the law rather than a reversal of policy. The fundamental features of a true public school system were at last firmly established.

The school law of 1884 contained the following important features:

- (1) A state superintendent was to be elected to have general supervision over all of the schools of the common school system.
- (2) All counties except 53 which were especially exempted were to be divided into school districts.
- (3) District or local taxation was authorized up to 20 cents on the \$100 valuation, provided two-thirds of the property owners who paid taxes voted in favor of such a tax.
- (4) A state tax up to 20 cents on the \$100 valuation was to be collected on all property, or as much of this as was necessary with other sources of income to maintain the schools for a term of six months in the year.
- (5) The school fund was to be invested in county and other bonds, thus enlarging the means of steady investment of the permanent fund.<sup>9</sup>

After the law was passed, the first thing to be done was to divide the counties into convenient school districts. Cooke County was not long in doing this, and we find that the Commissioners' Court passed the following order on September 17, 1884:

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 195.

This day came for consideration and approval the various school districts of Cooke County, Texas, made in accordance with an act passed at the called session of the General Assembly for the State of Texas, in the year 1884, and the Court having examined the record and manner of laying out of said districts, and it apparently being evident to the court that each and every district having been laid off and established by metes and bounds, and showing the number of acres in each and every district, and that the same is properly recorded in a record for that purpose, and that the law governing the same has been in all things complied with, it is therefore ordered, adjudged and decreed by the court that said boundary lines and the records of said districts be and the same is hereby adopted and approved as recorded in said record.<sup>10</sup>

Thus Cooke County was divided into eighty-one school districts, numbered consecutively from one through eighty-one. The basis used to locate boundaries is not revealed. That the number of districts was so large can be explained by a multiplicity of factors. Transportation as we know it today was unheard of, and the school had to be in walking distance of the pupils. A district could be established regardless of the number of scholastics in the district. But probably the deciding factor in most cases was whether or not a school had previously been maintained in the neighborhood. The following comparative lists of districts reveal some interesting facts:

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<sup>10</sup>Minutes of the County Commissioners' Court, Cooke County, Texas, IV, 26.

Community Schools in  
Cooke County  
1883-1884

District Schools in  
Cooke County  
1884-1885

<u>Number</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Name</u>
1	Mt. Gilead	1	Deleware Bend
2	Long Branch	2	Sycamore
3	Concord	3	Dexter
4	Hickory Chapel	4	Rocky Mound
5	Dye	5	Liberty Hill
6	Prairie Grove	6	Black Jack
7	Bethlehem	7a	Bethlehem
		7b	Bethlehem Colored
8	Downard	8	Mt. Gillead
9	Skinner	9	Hibbit
10	Ussery	10	Walnut Bend
11	Mountain Grove	11	Mineral
12	Nelson Grove	12	Fairview
13	County Line	13	Callisburg
14	Blackjack Grove	14	Friendship
15	Friendship	15	Union Hill
16	Durham	16	Brothers Springs
17	Spring Creek	17	Concord
18	Bermuda	18	Haggard
19	New Hope	19	Nelson Grove
20	Jackson	20	Woodbine
21	Era	21	Union Grove
22	Oak Hill	22	Dye
23	Bear Head	23	Rock Creek
24	Williams Creek	24	Elliott
25	Valley View	25	Whaley Chapel
26	Mt. Pleasant	26a	Canada
		26b	Canada Colored
27	Tiptons Chapel	27	Six Mile
28	N. Fish Creek	28	Prairie Grove
29	Mt. Olive	29	Pleasant Hill
30	Rocky Mound	30	Indian Creek
31	Wolf Creek	31	Tiptons Chapel
32	Millwood	32	Lemons
33	Union	33	Burns City
34	Walling	34	Walling
35	Shady Grove	35	Mountain Springs
36	Loving Ranch	36	Bloomfield
37	Center Hill	37	Oak Hill
38	Brothers Springs	38	Mt. Olive
39	Callisburg	39	Breedlove
40	Spring Hill	40	Ussery
41	Cotton Valley	41	Gates
42	Liberty Hill	42	Valley View
43	Hibbit	43	Downard

44	Fairview	44	Hunty County School Land
45	Fish Creek	45	Spring Creek
46	Bloomfield	46	Bermuda
47	Jones	47	Buck Creek
48	Indian Creek	48	Flat Creek
49	Six Mile	49	Live Oak
50	Canada	50	Shady Grove
51	Brown Creek	51	Rosston
52	Rock Creek	52	Prairie Point
53	Mt. Hope	53	Williams Creek
54	Woodbine	54	Era
55	Dripping Springs	55	Union Chapel
56	Walnut	56	Reed
57	Sadlers Bend	57	Union
58	Warrens Bend	58	Loving Ranch
59	Graham	59	Settle
60	Elliott	60	Freemound
61	Lemons	61	Summerfield
62	Tyler Bluff	62	Johns Branch
63	Little Valley	63	Tyler Bluff Center
64	Rosston	64	Center
65	Union Hill	65	Illinois Bend
66	Sivels Bend	66	Saddlers Bend
67	Valley Creek	67	Brushy Mountain
68	Center	68	Valley Creek
69	Center Point	69	Hayes
70	Shiloh	70	Marysville
71	Marysville	71	Mt. Hope
72	Dexter	72	Warrens Bend
73	Hackberry	73	Hickman
74	Buck Creek	74	Spring Hill
75	Red River Colored	75	Van Slyke
76	Bourland	76	Trinity
77	Mineral	77	Wolf Ridge
78	Valley Ranch	78	Fish Creek
79	Elm	79	Sivells Bend
80	Virginia Point	80	Hickory Chapel <sup>11</sup>
81	Pleasant Hill		
82	Gates		
83	Freemound		
84	Haggard		
85	Dry Elm		
86	Black Hollow		
87	John's Branch		
88	Union Grove		
89	Blue Mound		
90	Flat Creek		

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<sup>11</sup>County Judge's School Record for Cooke County, 1883-1884, pp. 98-112, 90-100.

91	Union Chapel
92	Brushy Mound
93	James Hays
94	Summerfield
95	Prairie Point
96	Stone Hill Colored
97	Clear Creek
98	Anchor
101	Maxville <sup>12</sup>

It will be seen that there were ninety-nine schools in the county under the community system, when any neighborhood could have a school if it desired. When the country was districted, eighty districts were formed in the county, with colored schools in two of them. This made a total of eighty-two schools. Therefore, there were seventeen fewer schools in 1884-1885 than had been operated the previous year.

There is no way of knowing how the various names were chosen. There were thirty-four names under the community system that do not appear under the district setup. Such picturesque names as Bearhead, Dripping Springs, Little Valley, Virginia Point, Black Hollow, and Cotton Valley were lost. On the other hand, sixteen new names appear on the district list. From an examination of the districts' trustees and teachers, it appears that of the sixty-five school names that were carried over to the district system, all of them applied to the same districts and only the numbers had been changed. From the above comparisons, it must

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 1883-1884, pp. 98-112.

be deduced that the county was not districted on any scientific basis but rather to fit existing conditions.

Some of the districts did not like it because they lost their schools. The Bearhead community petitioned the commissioners court at various times during the next few years in an effort to have that community designated as a school district. However, the new district setup was generally accepted by the people, probably because it caused little change in school conditions.

From the time the county was districted in 1884 to the end of the period in 1900, quite a number of changes were made in the district lines. During this period sixteen new districts were formed by the commissioners court upon petitions signed by interested parties. Many more petitions were rejected by the court. During the same span of years, thirty-seven changes were made in the lines of existing districts. In some instances two small districts were consolidated by the court. From the great number of changes, it can be seen that such changes must have been quite easy to obtain; usually the petition of only a few landowners was all that was necessary. The change from the community system had not entirely established permanent districts, and a few years were to elapse before this was accomplished.

The district system did insure some permanency. As a concrete example of this in Cooke County, only a few years

after the districts were established, it was not unusual to hold a prohibition election within the boundaries of a school district. By 1900 the districts were generally accepted as permanent. The fact of the matter is, about twenty-five years later when transportation and greater efficiency demanded the consolidation of small rural schools, these district lines were considered not only permanent but almost sacred by many people.

After the county was districted, the next step was to elect trustees for the various districts. Whereas under the old system the county judge had appointed the trustees for each school year, now they were to be elected by a vote of the people for a two-year period. The commissioners court minutes show that three persons in each district were appointed to hold elections in their respective districts on August 1, 1885, "for the purpose of electing three trustees in each district."<sup>13</sup>

#### Districts Vote School Taxes

That section of the law that provided for a local school tax was far from perfect. Since people had not been accustomed to such a tax, it was difficult to obtain a favorable two-thirds majority in an election. The twenty-cent limit was entirely too low, and only property owners could vote; however, since before this time common school

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<sup>13</sup>Minutes of the County Commissioners' Court, Cooke County, Texas, IV, 168.



districts could not vote any sort of tax for school purposes, the law was a progressive step.

When the county was divided into school districts in September, 1884, some of the districts did not wait long to vote a local tax. Apparently the first district to endeavor to vote such a tax was the Turner District No. 29. A petition from this district to the county judge, dated November 13, 1884, stated that they wished to have an election to "levy a tax of not to exceed 20 cents on the one hundred dollars worth of taxable property in said school district for the purpose of building a schoolhouse or houses."<sup>14</sup> About the same time another school district, Sivells Bend, also voted a twenty-cent tax. Another district, Rock Creek, held an election but the court found that there were "for the school tax 7 -- against the school tax 5, and it further appearing that less than two-thirds of the votes cast were in favor of said levy, it is therefore ordered that said tax be not levied."<sup>15</sup> By the time to set the tax rate the next summer, 1885, it appears that only the two districts mentioned had voted a local tax. The first district in the county to levy a school tax, the Turner district, which voted its tax in February, 1885, voted off the levy three years later. It is all too apparent that the idea of a school tax had not been generally accepted by the people at this time, and quite a number

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 104.

of years were to pass before the sentiment entirely changed.

By 1900 there were ninety-one common school districts in the county, and of this number twenty-nine, or less than one-third of the districts, had a local tax. To give an idea of the inadequacy of this method of financing, the records show that one-hundred per cent collection of the tax in these districts in 1900 would have amounted to only \$2,037.84. On the whole, the schools were financed in much the same manner as they were under the community system. A sample budget of the period appears as follows:

Hays School District No. 69  
School Year Ending August 31, 1901

Receipts

September 1, 1900...	Balance on hand.....	\$ 7.61
"	" ...State & County Per Cap.....	180.00
		\$187.61

Disbursements

November 16, 1900...	R. A. Adams, census..	\$ 1.68
December 17,	" ... J. H. Roach, teaching	40.00
January 23, 1901....	" " "	40.00
February 21, 1901...	" " "	40.00
March 21,	" " "	40.00
April 2,	" " "	17.93
August 31,	" ...Balance on hand.....	8.00
		\$187.61 <sup>16</sup>

From a further examination of the records, we find

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<sup>16</sup>County Superintendent's Records, Cooke County, Texas, 1900-1901, p. 79.

that the Hays school term opened on November 19 and was to extend for five months. Since the state and county funds were not sufficient to pay the teacher's entire salary, it is safe to assume that the parents of the pupils paid the balance due on the last month's salary. The other expenses of the school such as rent, furniture, fuel, and other supplies must have been provided by donations from the parents. The forty-dollar per month salary was about the average paid throughout the county. The beginning of the term, November 19, was earlier than that of some other districts which did not begin their school terms before Christmas. The children evidently were used in the fields until late in the fall.

#### School Buildings Are Constructed

In those districts where a local tax was collected, the money was usually used for a building and supplies. Under the community system the schoolhouse situation had been deplorable. Under the district system it was a little better since the schools were more permanent and were not operated on a year-to-year basis. In 1884-1885 the county superintendent's records show that there were thirty-nine state-owned schoolhouses in Cooke County in the eighty school districts.<sup>17</sup> The average value of a building was

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<sup>17</sup>County Judge's School Records, Cooke County, Texas, 1884-1885, p. 145.

\$318. By 1900 the number of state-owned buildings had increased, although the records do not show just to what extent. Some of the buildings were constructed with local tax money; others, by public donation. The reason that all districts did not own their own school buildings was due to the weakness of the school law. The law did not make proper provisions for the building of schoolhouses in rural districts. There was no legal way by which a rural community might be bonded and thus distribute the cost of a building over a long period of years. Many years were to pass before a rational plan was evolved by the state.

Thus we see that the district school system did not immediately solve all of the problems in our common schools. It did help in many ways and the foundation for an efficient school system in Texas was laid. The following paragraph expresses the situation clearly:

The chief effect of the law of 1884 was to lift the responsibility for educational progress from the state as a whole and to place it upon the local communities. The districting of the counties, the voting of local taxes for school purposes, the building of schoolhouses, and local supervision, were not imposed upon the people by the legislature. Whether the people of any community desired these improvements necessary for a more efficient school system was now left to their own choice.<sup>18</sup>

#### Progress in the Gainesville Schools

In the town of Gainesville school conditions were somewhat better than in the rural areas. During the last

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<sup>18</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, p. 210.

two decades of the century, more progress was made in this sort of district. The towns were gaining in population and wealth and the people were becoming more and more cosmopolitan in character. In speaking of the town schools in Texas, Dr. Joseph Baldwin said in 1885:

The graded schools of our towns and cities are rapidly taking rank with the best in the older states. They have thorough organization, efficient supervision, local taxation, and long terms. Our county schools have utter disorganization . . . no supervision, no local taxation, short terms. I earnestly protest against this discrimination in favor of the cities. I look upon the elevation of our county schools as the most important work now before our statesmen and educators.<sup>19</sup>

This statement rather adequately pictures the disparity between the city and rural schools of Cooke County.

Earlier in this chapter we have seen that from 1880 until the end of the century Gainesville enjoyed great prosperity. New inhabitants by the score came in to make their homes. The population increased until in 1900 it amounted to 7,874 inhabitants.<sup>20</sup> The scholastic population for that year was 1,362 white children and 253 colored. Therefore, there was a great need for an expanded educational system. The citizens were not long in seeing this need, and we find very decisive steps being taken in the right direction. In January, 1885, the Gainesville City Council appointed a school board of seven members to

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 208.

<sup>20</sup>United States Bureau of the Census, Abstract of Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, p. 147.

have exclusive control and management of the public school system. A. E. Dodson, mayor, was made chairman of the board, and other members were prominent business and civic leaders of the town. Up to this time the city council had directed the progress of the school system.

The increased population made a new school building necessary. A two-story brick building was constructed in the northern part of the city.<sup>21</sup> It was known as the Belcher Street School after a Mr. Belcher who lived near it. Later, when the town was divided into wards, it became known as the North School. Professor J. A. Race secured the plans for the building from a school in St. Louis, Missouri. The first graduating class in Gainesville was from this school. This was in 1885 and Claude Weaver was the only one in the class.

The first high school in Gainesville was begun in 1886. It cost \$13,000 and was constructed from brick made at the Staniforth Brickyard, a local concern. The lime used in its construction was prepared just south of Red River and hauled to town by oxen.<sup>22</sup> The school opened two years later with J. P. Glasgow as principal. Captain E. F. Comegys, who was to remain at the head of the Gainesville schools for many years, was superintendent at the time.

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<sup>21</sup>Ye Gainesville Towne, p. 75.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

About the same time a colored school was constructed at a cost of \$4,000.

In 1892 the fourth brick school was built in Gainesville. This was a new high school building, and it was built on the site of the present junior high school at a cost of \$25,000. It was then considered a fine high school. At that time Gainesville ranked among the highest in the state in respect to its schools. By way of comparison, we learn from Eby that from 1881 to 1895 there were fifty-four school buildings constructed in Texas at a total cost of \$376,604.<sup>23</sup> During this same period Gainesville built five new buildings costing \$81,900.

It has already been seen that Gainesville voted its first school tax in 1880. Four years later, in 1884, only fifty-one districts in the state had a local tax.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, Gainesville was among the first to support schools in this manner. The valuation of Gainesville's property when the tax was voted was \$1,326,219. The first tax voted was fifty cents on the one-hundred-dollar valuation. The tax levy for school purposes remained at this rate until 1920. But this does not mean that no progress was being made in the support of the public schools. The fact of the matter is that a great deal more than fifty cents per hundred-dollar valuation was being spent on the

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<sup>23</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, p. 208.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 209.

Gainesville schools. For instance, in 1887, the total funds applied thereto would amount to a rate of about seventy-six cents. The rate was simply left at fifty cents for maintenance, and in addition bonds were voted which were taken care of by the city separately.

From the beginning, the average salaries paid to the Gainesville teachers were above the average in the rural schools in the county. In 1883, when the first superintendent of schools was elected, the average salary paid to the Gainesville teachers was fifty-five dollars per month. For the same school year, two colored teachers were paid forty and thirty dollars per month, respectively. A nine-month term was instituted long before 1900.

When Gainesville organized the high school in 1888, it was following the steps of a few other Texas cities. The first high schools were organized about as follows:

1875 -- Brenham  
 1878 -- Houston and Denison  
 1879 -- San Antonio  
 1880 -- Sherman  
 1881 -- Austin and Weatherford  
 1882 -- Cameron  
 1884 -- Corsicana, El Paso, Fort Worth, Waco  
 1885 -- Galveston and Marshall  
 1888 -- Gainesville<sup>25</sup>

In closing this account of the most important period in the development of the Gainesville schools, a short resume of the administrations of the city superintendent might be timely. It has been seen that James A. Race was

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<sup>25</sup>Hardy, Development of Education in Cooke County, p. 45.



elected the first superintendent in 1883, and the service that he rendered at that critical time is immeasurable. He was succeeded by J. E. Hughes. Then W. A. Howard came to Gainesville from Ogden, Utah, as the next superintendent. After Mr. Howard came C. A. Bryant, who later went into the school supply business in Dallas, Texas. Frank McMurray succeeded Mr. Bryant but served only a few years. Captain E. F. Comegys, who was then at the head of the Denton schools, became the next superintendent. This was in the summer of 1890. This man possessed a very strong character and proved to be one of the best superintendents that Gainesville ever had. He served in this position for almost twenty years, and died in his office January 27, 1910.

## CHAPTER VI

### COOKE COUNTY SCHOOLS FROM 1900 TO 1917

#### Transition to Farming

By the turn of the century a decided change was taking place in the economic life of Texas and also of Cooke County. By this time much of the grassland had gone under the plow and the free range was no more. Men had learned that money was to be had from planting the fertile plains with grain. The western, dark-land section of Cooke County was well adapted to the raising of wheat and oats, and the production of small grain soon became an important factor in the county's economy. The Whaley Mill and Elevator Company, begun in Gainesville long before the Civil War, was greatly enlarged about the end of this period. The mill had a milling capacity of six hundred barrels of flour and two hundred barrels of corn meal per day. The concern handled approximately from 1,000,000 to 2,000,000 bushels of grain per year. Grain elevators were also erected at Myra, Valley View, and Muenster.

After 1900 the number of large cattle ranches that remained in the county diminished year by year. The most important means of livelihood became farming, and most of

this was on a moderate scale. The United States Census of 1910 shows that Cooke County fell into that class of counties having eighty to ninety per cent of its land area in farms.<sup>1</sup> This same census report also shows that of the 2,000 farms in the county, over 1,000 of them fell into the group containing from fifty to ninety-nine acres; the next largest group of 920 farms contained from 100 to 174 acres; and only seventy-eight farms contained over 500 acres each. The average size of a Cooke County farm was 145.5 acres.<sup>2</sup> An indication of the economic value of farming in the county during this period is the increase in the value of farms from 1900 to 1910. In 1900 the total value of farm property in Cooke County was \$10,179,493, and in 1910 this value had soared to \$18,423,511, which was an eighty-one per cent increase.<sup>3</sup>

Cooke County was well adapted to various kinds of farming because of its variety of soils. The eastern section of the county with its sandy soil was conducive to truck farming, and was well adapted to orchards, peanuts, cotton, and corn. The western, black-land section was good for small grains, cotton, and corn. As above indicated, most farms were of a moderate size and were given to diversified farming. That the farm population of the

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<sup>1</sup>United States Department of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, Abstract of the Census with Supplement for Texas, p. 662.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 686.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

county must have been fairly successful is shown by a comparison of the average value of farm land in the county with the state at large. In 1910 the average value of farm land in Cooke County was \$26.10 per acre, while the average value per acre for the state was \$14.53.<sup>4</sup> The farm income of Cooke County in 1910 was \$2,473,664, of which corn was the principal crop since it was raised in all sections of the county.

Thus we see that about 1900 farming came to take the place of ranching as the principal means of livelihood in Cooke County. Ranching did not cease to exist in the county, but it simply yielded first place to farming. As the old cowmen said, "The hoe-man had come to stay." In 1910 there were still 29,695 cattle in the county.<sup>5</sup>

#### The Westward Movement

In 1854 Horace Greeley had said, "Go West, young man, go West."<sup>6</sup> That great movement which saw many people going to seek their fortunes in the "Golden West" affected Cooke County, as it did most of the nation. The free range had come to an end on the western plains, and literally hundreds of thousands of acres of fertile and tillable sod awaited the plow. Land was cheap since it needed to be fenced; water had to be provided and houses erected. Many

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Gamaliel Bradford, As God Made Them, p. 145.

Cooke County farmers took their families and sought new opportunities in the West -- usually on the western plains of their own state. As a consequence, in the United States Census of 1910, the population of Cooke County showed a loss for the first time since the county's organization in 1848. The following table reflects this loss:

TABLE 1  
COMPARISON OF THE POPULATION OF COOKE COUNTY,  
TEXAS, FOR THE YEARS INDICATED<sup>7</sup>

Year	Population	Per Cent Gain or Loss
1890	24,696	...
1900	27,494	11.3 gain
1910	26,603	3.2 loss

The decrease in the county's population from 1900 to 1910 was both rural and urban. A decrease was also shown by neighboring counties, but the western counties of Texas showed a population gain for the same period. Although the population loss in Cooke County was not in an alarming proportion, such loss continued during the next ten-year period. The time was to come soon after 1920 when the shortage of population, and consequently children, was to have a

<sup>7</sup>Data from Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, Abstract of the Census with Supplement for Texas, p. 48.

very decided effect upon the rural school system of the county.

#### The Rural School Reaches Its Peak

During this period from 1900 to 1917 the rural school probably reached its peak in Cooke County in respect to a number of factors. First of all, the population of the county reached its peak in the census of 1900 with a count of 27,494, as shown in Table 1. The scholastic population would be expected to reach a maximum at about the same time, and in the scholastic census of 1917 the count was 7,357 -- the highest ever recorded in the county. Since it is axiomatic that "regardless of wealth, school buildings, or other school facilities, it takes children to have a school," it was only natural that the schools of the county flourished at this time. The following table will show the trend in scholastic population in Cooke County over a sixty-year period, with the figures given for five-year intervals.

It will be noted from the table that during this period from 1900 to 1917 the scholastic population of Cooke County reached its peak, not only in the county as a whole, but also in the rural districts as compared with Gainesville. Not until a few years later do we find a trend of scholastic population away from the rural to the urban community. Table 3 will show that, compared with the situation

TABLE 2

TRENDS IN SCHOLASTIC POPULATION IN  
COOKE COUNTY, TEXAS (WHITE)<sup>8</sup>

Year	Common School Districts	Gainesville	Valley View	County Total
1884-1885	3,934	973	...	4,907
1889-1890	3,994	1,164	...	5,158
1894-1895	4,097	1,226	...	5,323
1899-1900	4,468	1,326	...	5,494
1904-1905	4,132	1,274	135	5,541
1909-1910	4,726	1,728	238	6,692
1914-1915	4,824	1,570	216	6,610
1919-1920	5,006	1,738	201	6,999
1924-1925	4,503	1,737	180	6,502
1929-1930	3,850	1,844	215	6,079
1934-1935	4,079	2,000	232	6,461
1939-1940	3,701	2,019	211	6,113
1944-1945	2,911	1,724	211	5,004

today, in 1916-1917 a large majority of the county's scholastic population was to be found in the rural districts.

TABLE 3

A COMPARISON OF THE SCHOLASTIC POPULATION OF  
GAINESVILLE WITH THE RURAL DISTRICTS OF  
COOKE COUNTY FOR THE YEARS INDICATED

Year	Common School Districts	Gainesville
1916-1917	5,480	1,877
1944-1945	2,811	1,824

<sup>8</sup>Texas State Department of Education, Biennial Reports of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (for the years indicated).

As has previously been noted, Cooke County was well populated with small land-owners who made their living by farming. Large families were the rule rather than the exception in those days, and each school district found an abundance of children within its boundaries who needed to be schooled. A list of the rural teachers of the county for the school year 1901-1902 shows that there were twenty-seven post offices in the county at that time. Today (1944) there are nine, or one third as many. This means that there were twenty-seven community centers in the county. These were small villages consisting usually of a post office, blacksmith shop, gin, and one or two general mercantile stores. Other villages existed that did not have post offices. Most of these communities had their own physicians, and they were self-sufficient in many ways. The local school was usually the center of the community life; and most school buildings were used for all community functions, including church on Sundays. It was almost unheard of for a child to attend school outside of his own district; and when he had finished that school, his education was usually complete. The automobile had not made its advent and there was no conceivable way for it to be otherwise.

The following Table 4 will show the great proportion of school districts in the county during this period as compared with the situation today:



TABLE 4

COMPARISON OF THE NUMBER OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS  
IN COOKE COUNTY, TEXAS, FOR YEARS INDICATED

Year	Rural School Districts	Independent School Districts
1902-1903	87	3
1943-1944	38	2

Contrary to the present situation where a number of districts do not maintain a school at home, in 1902-1903 every school district operated a white school and some had schools for their colored populations.

During this period a rural school usually meant a one-teacher school. In 1901-1902 there were in Cooke County:

- 83 one-teacher schools
- 4 two-teacher schools
- 3 three-teacher schools (independent districts)
- 7 one-teacher colored schools

The total of one hundred white and seven colored teachers was probably the greatest number of teachers employed for any one year in the rural schools of the county. Truly, the rural school was in its "hey-day."

In many respects there was little change from 1900 to 1917 in the rural schools of Cooke County. Only one new district was formed, and only five schools were abandoned during these seventeen years; and two of these were colored schools. As has been seen in an earlier chapter, the

district system had its beginning in 1884, and the county had been completely districted by 1900. Since the scholastic population increased or remained about the same until 1917, there was no apparent need for consolidation or abandonment of districts because of a shortage of scholastics; and since transportation facilities were not available, the grouping of small districts to form larger units was not practical. So we see that the economic, financial, and population factors were all conducive to the school system as it then existed, and there was nothing that made change expedient. Since in any enterprise progress is usually the child of necessity, there was little educational advancement made in the rural schools at this time. For these reasons it might be said that during the seventeen years covered by this period, the rural school districts of Cooke County maintained their "status quo." To bear out this contention, a few comparisons will be enlightening:

TABLE 5

SOME COMPARISONS FOR THE SCHOOL YEARS 1901-1902  
AND 1916-1917 IN THE RURAL SCHOOLS OF  
COOKE COUNTY, TEXAS

Item	1901-1902	1916-1917
Average salary per month	\$42	\$60
Average term in months..	5.4	5.9

Table 5 shows that over the seventeen-year period, the increase in the length of the average school term in Cooke County was only ten days. The increase in the monthly salary average was \$18, which was also slight progress; although one or two venturesome districts did pay their teachers as much as \$85 to \$100 per month.

Then on the brighter side, when we made other comparisons between the two extremes of the seventeen-year period, we find that progress had been made in other phases of the school situation:

TABLE 6

A COMPARISON OF THE NUMBER OF DISTRICTS WITH LOCAL SCHOOL TAX AND NUMBER OF SCHOOL BUILDINGS CONSTRUCTED IN COOKE COUNTY RURAL SCHOOLS FOR THE SCHOOL YEARS 1901-1902 AND 1916-1917

Year	Number of Districts with Tax	Number of New Buildings Constructed	Number of Districts
1901-1902	29	5	92
1916-1917	75	12	89

The above table shows that in 1901-1902 twenty-nine districts levied a local maintenance tax to supplement their state funds and sixty-three districts did not. Thus only thirty-two per cent of the schools in the county had a

school tax, whereas in 1916-1917 seventy-five out of the eighty-nine districts, or eighty-four per cent, levied a local maintenance tax. In addition to buying fuel and other school supplies, these funds were usually used to extend the school term when the state funds were exhausted.

#### New School Buildings Are Provided

When Cooke County was organized into districts in 1884, there were few school buildings available. Prior to this time almost any building served as a schoolhouse. With the establishment of permanent boundaries, the districts were more stable and buildings were gradually erected to house the district schools. By about 1912 most of these buildings had worn out; others had become inadequate when an additional teacher was added. As a result, about 1912 an era of building began that lasted until about 1924. All during this period the manner of financing the district building programs was quite different from what it is today. Of the five buildings built in 1901-1902 and the twelve built fifteen years later, all of them were financed by donations by the school patrons in the districts. The records show that one district built a new schoolhouse costing approximately \$1,200, and four years later donations were still being received to pay off the notes at the bank. However, the problem was not a local one. In 1900, State Superintendent Kendall in his report said:

In the matter of buildings, the cities and towns can vote upon themselves a bonded debt for the erection of school buildings, which bonds can be made payable in five, ten, twenty, or forty years. No such privileges are accorded by the law to the county school districts. The school patrons and citizens of the county district must provide out of their own private means the necessary buildings for the use of the public schools.<sup>9</sup>

In 1905 the legislature provided that common schools should be permitted to vote bonds for the erection of new school buildings, and in 1909 a new school law was passed permitting the state board of education to invest the permanent school fund in common district schoolhouse bonds. But up to 1920 there were only two schoolhouse bonds voted in the common school districts of Cooke County. The Era School District voted a \$5,000 fifteen-year bond to build a new building in 1912. This was the first one in rural Cooke County. The next district to vote a bond was Dexter in 1917, when a \$4,500 ten-year bond was voted. There persisted the same aversion to voting bonds that had earlier existed in the matter of voting a maintenance tax.

#### The Compulsory School Law

The Texas Legislature passed the first compulsory attendance law in 1915. It went into effect with the beginning of the 1916-1917 school year. It provided that all children from eight to fourteen years of age, unless properly excused, were required to attend school at least

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<sup>9</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, p. 225.

sixty days during the school year. The next year, eighty days were required as a minimum attendance, and thereafter one hundred days.

In the beginning there was much opposition to this law. Many people believed that the state was taking too much authority in the matter and were still very voluble in their argument that the welfare of their children was their own business and not that of the state. There were naturally many violations of the law. Since it is true that any new law doesn't mean much until it is enforced, the compulsory attendance law did not at once greatly alter school conditions. The minutes of the Cooke County Board of Education reflect the dissension over the law during the years immediately following its passage. The county board apparently wanted to follow the dictates of the law in the county, but generally found either bitter opposition or a complacent attitude on the part of the people. As time went by, however, this opposition became less and less; and more local school boards, teachers, and parents began to cooperate in the enforcement of the attendance law. People came to see that to have an equal chance with his fellows, a pupil had to attend school regularly for most of the term, and not just when it was convenient. Finally, the law was more generally accepted, and another important milestone in educational progress had been achieved.

## High School Education in Rural Cooke County

In 1916-1917 there were only three eleven-grade high schools in Cooke County, but there were twenty-nine rural schools that taught one or more high school grades. This situation was not unusual over the state and there were ample reasons for it. It has been pointed out earlier that school transportation was unheard of, and pupils usually finished their education in their home districts. The records of the transfers of the period show this clearly. In 1916-1917 there were in all grades eighty-five transfers to Gainesville, thirty-one to Valley View, and sixteen to Myra.<sup>10</sup> It is safe to assume that considerably less than one hundred rural Cooke County children were going away to high school.

Aside from the difficulty of transportation, there were numerous other difficulties that faced the ambitious rural boy and girl. Textbook and tuition costs had to be borne by the parents. Usually the student had to be "boarded out" with relatives or friends in town. All of these obstacles were insurmountable for most of the people; and in addition, the desire for a high school education was then the exception rather than the rule. Quite a number of years were yet to elapse before the desire and

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<sup>10</sup>County Superintendent's School Record for Cooke County, Texas, 1916-1917, p. 25.

means for a high school education were to make such an education available to every boy and girl.

#### Gainesville Schools from 1900 to 1917

As Gainesville had previously depended upon the cattle industry for its economic well-being, it now came to rely principally upon agriculture for its livelihood. The business houses of Gainesville stocked their stores with supplies and implements for the farm population, and new enterprises were established to purchase large quantities of farm products. The banks of the town carried large numbers of clients on their books to whom they made substantial loans "to make a crop on." There were no "boom days" as there had been when Gainesville was "cow-town," but there was a substantial degree of prosperity and it was to last over a long period of years.

As agriculture grew in importance, several industries began to flourish that were directly dependent upon agriculture. The Gainesville Compress, the Whaley Mill and Elevator Company, and the Gainesville Oil Mill had been established long before, but they took on new growth with the development of farming. The compress was incorporated under the laws of the state in 1903. The time came when fifty laborers were employed, and they had under cover about 14,000 bales of uncompressed cotton. Aside from farming, there were other industries of some importance. In



1914 the Empire Refinery and Tank Farm located about two miles north of town. Two hundred acres of land were purchased and many installations for refining crude oil were made. At its peak, about 125 men were employed at the refinery, and large quantities of gasoline, kerosene, naphtha, and other oils were produced. So Gainesville was still a growing and substantial community, and its schools were handled in a manner becoming such a community.

In 1900 there were three ward schools and a high school in the city of Gainesville. By 1917 the scholastic enrollment had grown to 1,902 children, white and colored. It was necessary that an additional ward school be built. This school was located in the southeast part of Gainesville. The land for the building was donated by J. F. McMurray and the school was named in his honor. It was a brick structure with eight classrooms and an auditorium. The McMurray School opened in January, 1917.

The maintenance tax of fifty cents on the \$100 valuation was retained during this period, but all building debts were provided for outside of this levy. Teachers' salaries gradually increased. By the school year 1916-1917 the number of city teachers had increased to thirty-eight white and three colored. The superintendent of schools was paid a salary of \$1,800 per year, and the overall average for all teachers and principals was \$74 per

month. There was quite a difference between the salaries of the high school and elementary teachers. For the year 1916-1917 high school teachers received an average salary of \$102 per month, and the elementary teachers an average salary of \$60 per month. An interesting sidelight is the fact that the four janitors of the system for that year received an average salary of \$57 per month, or only three dollars per month less than the average elementary teacher. It is very interesting to notice the salary schedule prepared by the superintendent, Mr. Anderson, for the next school year. The following schedule was adopted by the school board and became effective in September, 1917, and it evidently applied only to teachers in the elementary field:

TABLE 7

MONTHLY SALARY SCHEDULE USED BY THE SCHOOLS OF  
GAINESVILLE, TEXAS, BEGINNING WITH THE  
SCHOOL YEAR 1917-1918<sup>11</sup>

Years of Training Above High School	Experience in Years							
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
0	\$45	\$48	\$51	\$54	\$57	\$60	\$63	\$66
1	46	50	54	58	62	65	..	..
2	48	53	58	63	65	..	..	70

<sup>11</sup>Minutes of the Gainesville School Board, II, 61-62.

It will be noticed that training was designated as so many "years above high school." It was also specified that one year of experience in the city school was equivalent to two years of experience in a country school. By 1916 the Gainesville School Board required that all of the teachers in the city schools have a first-grade state certificate. About the same time, other measures were taken that were likewise progressive and commendable. The school board passed a resolution stating that "five days or ten half-days attendance of institute work be required of the teachers during the scholastic year."<sup>12</sup> The board was to pay the expenses of the lectures necessary to the institute.

As in the county schools, some difficulty must have been experienced when the compulsory attendance law was passed. The records show, however, that the board took cognizance of the law and apparently tried to apply it. In 1916-1917 the city school board designated the "fourth scholastic school month as the time set for the beginning of the enforcement of the compulsory attendance law."<sup>13</sup>

The offerings of the Gainesville High School were increased from time to time. In 1916 a manual training department was added to the course of study. In 1917 a dozen typewriters were purchased, and a commercial course was added. The same year a movement was started to provide a

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

kindergarten for the younger children. It was finally decided to house the new enterprise in a room of the public library. A Miss Leonora Smith was employed as teacher at a salary of \$60 per month. When Mr. O. R. Anderson was employed as superintendent in 1917, he was instructed by the board "to visit the surrounding cities with a view fo increasing the efficiency of the Gainesville schools."<sup>14</sup> Surely progress was being made in the educational system of Gainesville.

A matter of interest, but not necessarily affecting the general school situation in the city or county, took place in August, 1917. Mr. O. R. Anderson, who had been teaching in the Gainesville schools for some time, had been elected head of the city system in April, 1917. He must have been a very capable man, and he certainly had the whole-hearted support of his board. We have seen that many progressive steps were taken between the time of his appointment and his resignation on August 31 of the same year. On this date the city school board was called into special session for the purpose of "passing upon the question of Mr. Anderson's release to take effect at once in order to enable him to go to the training camp with the first quota."<sup>15</sup> A leave of absence was given Mr. Anderson, and W. E. Parris was elected to fill the vacancy until his

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 75.

return. Mr. Anderson was among the first volunteers to join the armed forces in 1917, and he was the first Cooke County man to be killed in action. He still holds a very revered place in the memory of the citizens of Gainesville and of all Cooke County.

## CHAPTER VII

### COOKE COUNTY SCHOOLS FROM 1917 TO 1944

#### A Period of Change

During the twenty-seven years covered by this period, there was a greater change in school conditions in Cooke County than during any comparable period of years in its history. This change in school conditions was not brought about entirely by the enactment of new school laws, though certain laws did contribute toward the transition; neither was the change due to the progressive ideas of any one man or group of men. The change was rather due to a new mode of living and thinking on the part of the people in this and most other communities throughout the nation.

There is much evidence that a great change has taken place. In 1916-1917 there were eighty-nine common school districts in Cooke County, while in 1943-1944 this number had dwindled to thirty-eight. In 1916-1917 there were eighty-eight schools operating in the rural districts of the county, while in 1943-1944 there were only twenty-five. These facts alone are sufficient evidence to show that something drastic has taken place, but there are still other comparisons that are just as convincing. In 1916-

1917 Gainesville had the only affiliated high school in the county, while in 1943-1944 there were three such high schools. Surely a great and fundamental change in school conditions had come about; let us look more closely for the causes underlying it.

#### Causes for Change in School Conditions

Probably the greatest inducement for change in the school setup in Cooke County was the almost yearly decrease in scholastic population. Table 2 has shown that the scholastic population in the rural districts of the county dropped from 5,006 in 1919-1920 to 2,811 in 1944-1945. Such a drastic reduction was certain to have decided repercussions. Rural districts, which had previously had an abundance of children within their boundaries, found such a scarcity of children in their districts that even a small school could not be supported. From the beginning the state per capita money had been the principal source of income in most districts; therefore, when the number of scholastics in a district became small, the district's financial means were likewise greatly diminished. This decrease in scholastic population not only encouraged changes in school conditions, but it made such changes almost imperative.

Another cause for change in school conditions, almost as great as the loss in scholastic population, was the

development of school bus transportation. Prior to 1915 Cooke County had practically no improved roads, but the advent of the automobile made the building of good roads necessary. The effects of good roads and the automobile upon the small country towns and communities are well known; and as people went to the city to trade, to see their physician, and to attend church, they also wanted to take their children to a better school than their community could offer. Improved roads made bus transportation of children possible, and this in turn induced school districts to group themselves by consolidation to form larger and more effective teaching units. The school bus also made it possible for a district to transport its pupils to high school. Before the time of the school bus, the rural boy and girl usually had to obtain board and room in town in order to attend school. When high school bus routes were set up, the rural child could stay at home and still finish his high school education. Of special benefit to the districts in this matter of providing for the high school population has been "transportation aid" received under the various rural-aid laws. Such assistance from the state has enabled many districts to provide first-class high schools for their children.

A final cause of changed school conditions has been the nation-wide emphasis placed upon a high school education. Following its establishment in 1883, the University



of Texas encouraged the organization of high schools in the cities and towns of Texas. In order to have students qualified to take up courses there, the university carried on the inspection and accreditation of Texas high schools for a number of years. In 1917 this work was taken over by the State Department of Education.<sup>1</sup> More and more towns and villages organized high schools and secured affiliation. It became the ambition of almost all parents that their children should at least have a high school education. The small rural school with one or two years of high school work no longer appealed to most people. They demanded an affiliated four-year high school with specialized teachers and a nine-month term. This ambition for such an education was made possible, and doubtless encouraged, by the advent of bus transportation. The granting of tuition aid by the legislature also encouraged and made possible a high school education for many Texas boys and girls. Surely conditions had changed from the time when a rural child's only ambition was to finish the local school, where probably one or perhaps no high school grade was offered.

#### The Effects of Changed Conditions

The most outstanding effect of the conditions just described was the grouping of school districts. To a

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<sup>1</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, p. 261.

large number of people the word "consolidation" had a very obnoxious sound. It was regarded by many as some sort of devious method by which schools that had existed for many years in a community were uprooted and abandoned. In this, as in any social movement of such magnitude, it is well to study the reasons and causes underlying it.

First of all, consolidation was not a device that some one conjured up to cause unhappiness and hardship for a great number of people. Consolidation was not really a positive movement, but rather a "result." In Chapter VI we found that the rural schools reached their peak and enjoyed a "big business," not because the bogey-word "consolidation" had not been thought of but because of very real reasons -- many rural children, substantial rural communities, and no urge to or means of attending school outside of the home community. Consolidation came only when the school population of districts became so small that the district was not able to operate. Consolidation came when districts did not have enough children to have a school even though local taxes would have supported one. Consolidation came when parents looked to larger and more efficient school systems, and realizing that they could never have that sort of school in their district, made an effort to get their children into a better school. Consolidation came with the advent of the automobile which

made it possible to transport children miles from home to attend school.

When we study the records over the period of years from 1916-1917 to 1944-1945 and look to see what has happened, we are impressed with the fact that some districts lost through consolidation while others gained. On the whole, those districts lost which were not strategically located for a grouping with their neighbors; which were satisfied with their condition and did not seek a better school; and which did not see the trend of scholastic population and realize that small districts would "all hang together or hang separately," as Franklin said of the thirteen colonies. As a consequence, many districts have disappeared from the map of Cooke County, and other one- or two-teacher schools have grown to be large and efficient school centers for their section of the county.

The first grouping of districts in Cooke County was at Dexter. Under the rural high school law of 1911,<sup>2</sup> the county board of education grouped the Sycamore, Rocky Mound, Mount Gilead, and Dexter districts to form the Dexter Consolidated District No. 3. This was June 26, 1917.<sup>3</sup> About one year later the Leo Consolidated District was formed by the joining of the Live Oak and Shady Grove

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 260.

<sup>3</sup>Minutes of the Board of Education, Cooke County, Texas, I, 30.

districts.<sup>4</sup> Then in 1923, the Thirty-eighth Legislature passed the consolidation law that required a vote of the people when districts were to be consolidated.<sup>5</sup> At first, it was difficult to carry an election in favor of consolidation, but as time went on the procedure became easier. The following table will show the grouping of districts in Cooke County from 1917 to 1944:

TABLE 8

CONSOLIDATED DISTRICTS IN COOKE COUNTY, THE  
NAMES OF THE DISTRICTS THAT WERE GROUPEd,  
AND THE YEAR OF CONSOLIDATION

Consolidated Districts	Districts Included in Consolidations	Year of Consolidation
Dexter	Sycamore	1917
	Rocky Mound	1917
	Mount Gilead	1917
	Black Jack	1931
Leo*	Live Oak	1918
	Shady Grove	1918
Valley Creek	Saddlers Bend	1919
	Brushy Mound	1937
	Mount Hope	1937
Coppers	Winterbrush	1923
Muenster	Coppers	1940
	Linn	1942
	Bailey	1944

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>5</sup>State Department of Education, Public School Laws of Texas, 1941, p. 119.

TABLE 8 -- Continued

Consolidated Districts	Districts Included in Consolidations	Year of Consolidation
Rad Ware*	Nelson Grove Woodbine Hopewell Dye Salem	1924 1924 1924 1941 1942
Ross Point*	Settle Prairie Point Rosston	1920 1920 1924
Valley View	Lone Oak Johns Branch Elm Grove Lois	1925 1925 1941 1943
Callisburg	Hibbitt Union Hill Hickory Mineral	1928 1931 1937 1937
Union Grove*	Bloomfield Hemming Mt. Olive Oak Hill Breedlove Walling	1929 1929 1929 1929 1929 1935
Loving*	Red River Fish Creek	1931 1931
Era	Bermuda Buck Creek Melvin Center Point Flat Creek Hood	1936 1937 1937 1938 1938 1943
Sivells Bend	Hickman Warrens Bend	1939 1939

TABLE 8 -- Continued

Consolidated Districts	Districts Included in Consolidations	Year of Consolidation
Walnut Bend	Bethlehem	1940
Hays	Spring Hill	1941
	Wolf Ridge	1941
	Van Slyke	1941
	Marysville	1942
Burton	Lemons	1942
	Mt. Zion	1942
	Oak Dale	1943
	Burns	1943

\*New name as a result of grouping.

The general condition of schools in Cooke County improved as consolidation progressed. When a consolidation of districts was effected, it was usually necessary to construct a new school building. Construction was usually financed by the voting of bonds. Whereas in 1916-1917 there had been only one schoolhouse bond voted in rural Cooke County, by 1944 a total of twenty-four districts had issued bonds to finance the construction of school plants. Not only were new buildings erected, but other school facilities were likewise improved as a result of consolidation. More money was made available for teaching supplies and equipment, and many Cooke County schools became as progressive as any in the state.

A companion of consolidation was the contracting of schools. The contract movement was also a product of changing school conditions. Instead of joining its neighbors by consolidation, a district would simply transport its scholastic population to another district for school purposes. By 1943-1944 there were fifteen districts in the county which were employing this means of schooling their pupils. Many of these districts had been contracting their schools for years, especially those that came to Gainesville; and many of them had disposed of their school buildings at home. The contract method was just another way of joining a district with a larger school unit in an effort to receive better school advantages, although it has never been as satisfactory as outright consolidation.

Another product of the changing conditions was the acceleration in the affiliation movement. Increasing demands and more favorable means encouraged the affiliation of schools in Cooke County, as elsewhere in Texas. We have seen that Gainesville affiliated the first high school in the county in 1888. In 1893 a larger building was constructed on the site of the present junior high school building; then in 1922 the Newsome Dougherty Memorial High School, costing \$167,000, was opened for use. From 1888 until 1944, the course offerings in the high school have been steadily increased. At present the Gainesville High School has forty-one units of affiliation, including such courses as

manual training, domestic science, speech, Spanish, Latin, commercial subjects, and vocational agriculture.

With the building of a new high school in 1921, the city of Gainesville entered into a period of fifteen years of school-plant construction that now finds it with as modern a group of school buildings as almost any city in the state. During this period of years there have been constructed three new ward schools, a junior high school, and a colored school -- all completely modern both in construction and in respect to all school facilities. In addition, a modern high school gymnasium was completed about 1940.

Not all Cooke County rural districts chose to educate their high school boys and girls in Gainesville. In the southwest part of the county, the Era District grouped itself with its neighbors and established a rural high school. Table 8 shows the consolidations that were effected to form this high school center, and by 1943-1944 Era was also serving the pupils in four additional districts by contract. Bonds were voted and a modern school plant with gymnasium, bus garages, tennis courts, and a football field was completed in 1939. The cost of the improvement was \$80,000. Era High School now has twenty-seven affiliated units of work, employs a staff of twelve teachers, and has an enrollment of approximately three hundred pupils.

The other affiliated high school in Cooke County is



Valley View. This district has extended its boundaries from time to time, as indicated in Table 8. In addition, it takes care of one district by contract, and receives high school transfers from five other districts. This district completed a building program in 1940 that gave it one of the most beautiful and modern school plants in the state. In 1943-1944 the Valley View School had a staff of eleven teachers, an enrollment of approximately 250 children, and twenty-three affiliated units of work.

Changing school conditions demanded more efficient school systems, and the formation of larger teaching units in the county was only logical. The one-teacher school no longer satisfied the wishes of most people. Table 9 shows the transition from the "one-teacher school era" to the situation as it existed in 1943-1944.

This table shows that there were only eight one-teacher schools in the county in 1943-1944 as compared with sixty in 1916-1917. The number of two-teacher schools had likewise diminished from twenty-three in 1916-1917 to seven in 1943-1944. The table indicates also that whereas in 1916-1917 only 4.4 per cent of the Cooke County schools had four or more teachers in their faculties, in 1943-1944 more than thirty-eight per cent of the schools had four-teacher faculties or larger. Then the drastic reduction in the total number of schools in the county from ninety-one in 1916-1917 to twenty-six in 1943-1944

completes the picture of a definite trend towards fewer and larger school units.

TABLE 9

COMPARISON OF THE NUMBER OF ONE-TEACHER, TWO-TEACHER, AND LARGER SCHOOLS IN COOKE COUNTY IN 1916-1917 AND 1943-1944

Number of Teachers	Number of Schools	
	1916-1917	1943-1944
1.....	60	8
2.....	23	7
3.....	4	1
4.....	1	3
5.....	1	2
6.....	1	2
12 and over	1	3
Total...	91	26

The trend towards larger schools resulted in better school buildings, in better teaching equipment, and in all-round greater school efficiency. One of the greatest factors in the improvement of standards in rural schools has been the rural school accreditation program of the State Department of Education. The movement was started in the fall of 1926 when a score card was prepared for the purpose of stimulating and guiding the improvement of small rural schools. Later, the need for rural school improvement was partially stated as follows:

(1) Approximately 25% of the children who enroll in elementary schools do not remain to complete the work to enter high school.

(2) 78% of school enrollment is in the elementary schools.<sup>6</sup>

The first school in Cooke County to enter the program was the Loving School in 1935-1936. By 1943-1944 there were thirteen schools in the county which had raised their standards sufficiently to meet the requirements of the program.

#### Oil Development in Cooke County and Its Effect upon School Financing

During the period from 1916-1917 to 1943-1944 the greatest factor in the economy of Cooke County continued to be agriculture; but in 1924 a thing occurred that was of great economic importance to the county. In November of that year the "Big Indian" oil well was discovered on the B. W. Davis farm in northeastern Cooke County. The discovery caused a great deal of excitement and much land was leased for further exploration. However, after another well or so was drilled and nothing was found, the excitement died down. Activity in the oil business subsided somewhat until in 1929 another pool was discovered in the Bulcher community in northwest Cooke County. The Bulcher field was shallow production; but when it had been fully explored, the field had over a hundred producing wells.

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<sup>6</sup>Texas State Department of Education, The Twenty-ninth Biennial Report, 1934-1935 and 1935-1936, p. 44.

In the early thirties another shallow pool was discovered in the Muenster area, and this field grew to cover a large area.

As the years went by, oil activity in the county continued brisk, and several new fields were discovered. Among these were the T. C. U. pool south of Muenster, the Anderson-Kerr field southeast of Gainesville, and the Walnut Bend field northeast of Gainesville. The Walnut Bend field became the largest in the county. Its oil came from a deep sand, was of high gravity, and many of the wells flowed when placed on pump. Recently, three new fields have been discovered. They are the Winger, Woodbine, and Montgomery fields. The exact extent and possibilities of these new discoveries have not been determined.

By January 1, 1944, Cooke County had to her credit 1,225 producing oil wells of various depths. During the past twenty years oil production in the county has increased from ten barrels a day to 10,701 barrels a day.

The effect of the oil industry upon school financing in Cooke County has been considerable. In 1943 four school districts in the county each had a valuation exceeding one million dollars because of the discovery of oil within their boundaries. Other districts profited to a less extent. It is probably true that some districts have not improved their school facilities as much as they could have done under the circumstances; but the oil industry

in Cooke County promises much development in the near future, and it is probable that some districts will take greater advantage of their increased wealth and opportunity.

#### Rural Aid in Cooke County

Because of a higher than average land value in some sections, and because of the discovery of oil in other districts, Cooke County has received comparatively little rural aid. When the Thirty-fourth Legislature made the million-dollar appropriation for the school years 1915-1916 and 1916-1917, only three Cooke County schools participated, and they received only \$1,300.<sup>7</sup> In 1927-1928 all county schools, Gainesville included, received \$12,445 of all types of aid.<sup>8</sup> In 1943-1944 all county schools received \$22,857 under the last rural-aid bill. The fact that Cooke County has not received large amounts of rural aid does not deter from the benefit that such aid has been to many districts. Most of the rural-aid districts are located in the eastern part of the county where land values are lower than elsewhere, and the money received from the transportation, tuition, and salary-aid funds has been of inestimable benefit to the children in these districts.

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<sup>7</sup>State Department of Education, The Twenty-first Bien-  
nial Report, 1916-1917 and 1917-1918, p. 372.

<sup>8</sup>State Department of Education, The Twenty-fifth Bien-  
nial Report, 1926-1927 and 1927-1928, p. 42.

Cooke County Free Library and  
Circulating School Library

The XLI Club of Gainesville sponsored the opening of a public library in the town in 1890. Members of the club acted as librarians and kept the library open for loans two days of each week.<sup>9</sup> In 1914, when Miss Lillian Gunter was city librarian, a mass meeting was held to make an appeal to Andrew Carnegie for the erection of a building to house the library. The building was secured, and in 1921 the city and county merged their efforts and the Cooke County Free Library came into existence. The Cooke County Free Library now has 28,000 volumes on its shelves, and the circulation in 1943 was 95,303. Thirty branch libraries are maintained in the various communities of the county. The head librarian is now Mrs. Olna Boaz, and she has as her assistants Mrs. Carrie R. Hudspeth and Mrs. Josie Edwards. Mrs. Boaz is a trained librarian, and her ability is attested to by the fact that she was elected president of the Texas Library Association for 1944-1945.

In the school year 1937-1938, twenty Cooke County schools pooled their library funds and established a circulating school library. The idea developed rapidly, and the next year there were thirty-nine participating schools. In November, 1939, a custom-built bookmobile was purchased

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<sup>9</sup>Hardy, Development of Education in Cooke County, Texas, p. 63.

on which to transport the books to and from the member schools. The idea behind the project was to make library service available to every boy and girl in Cooke County. The schools of the county contributed more than \$1,600 for the first year's operation of the library after the bookmobile was purchased.

Along with the library services, a visual education program was instituted. A sound motion picture projector was purchased, and educational movies were shown to all the student bodies.

For the remaining five and one-half months of the 1939-1940 school term, after the bookmobile was purchased, the Cooke County Circulating School Library made the following impressive record of service:

1. Forty-three schools served approximately every three weeks.
2. 13,296 books circulated to school children and teachers.
3. 5,100 miles traveled by the bookmobile.
4. 1,408 new books purchased.
5. 262 showings of educational movies.

#### The Texas State School for Girls

In 1913 the Twenty-third Legislature passed the law creating the Texas State School for Girls. The plant was constructed four miles east of Gainesville, and the

institution was opened in September, 1916. Further plant improvements were made in 1924, and the institution now consists of six modern buildings valued at approximately one-half million dollars.

In 1943-1944 there were 177 girls enrolled in the school. The girls ranged from twelve to twenty-one years of age. When a girl is brought to the institution, she is enrolled until she is twenty-one years of age, although upon good behavior she may be paroled at the end of fourteen months.

School is maintained for twelve months during the year, the students attending classes one-half of each day and working the other half. The work consists of gardening, dairying, sewing and manual training. The girls also assist in the laundry, kitchen, and dormitories.

The purpose of this institution is a laudable one. It strives to train and discipline the girls so that, upon dismissal, they will be fitted to assume a beneficial place in society.

#### The Gainesville Junior College

The Gainesville Junior College first opened in the fall of 1924. The college occupies the same building with the Gainesville High School; and its president, Mr. H. O. McCain, is also superintendent of the Gainesville schools. The college offers two years of standard college work;



and among other affiliations, holds membership in the American Association of Junior Colleges.

The faculty of the Gainesville Junior College consists of twelve instructors, ten of whom hold Master of Arts degrees. The instructional facilities include commercial, chemistry, biology, and home economics laboratories. It also has a commendable and well-managed library. In normal times enrollment in the college is approximately one hundred students.

#### Catholic Schools

A history of education in Cooke County would not be complete without mention of the county's parochial schools. St. Mary's Parochial School was founded in Gainesville in 1891. In addition to the regular high school subjects, the school has an outstanding commercial department in which shorthand, typewriting, and bookkeeping are taught. The Sacred Heart Parochial School is located at Muenster. This school offers work through the high school with a faculty of twelve teachers. The enrollment is approximately three hundred pupils.

#### Camp Howze Military Reservation and Denison Lake

In the spring of 1942 the United States Government acquired approximately 58,000 acres of land in north-central Cooke County for a military reservation. Camp Howze was

constructed in the summer of that year and two army divisions were moved in for training. Cooke County found in its midst probably twice as many people as had previously constituted its entire population. The economic effect upon Gainesville was, of course, considerable, and many adjustments had to be made.

The location of Camp Howze in Cooke County affected the county's schools in two principal ways. First of all, the scholastic enrollment in the Gainesville schools was naturally increased, but not to the extent that had been expected. For the school 1943-1944, the increased enrollment because of the camp was probably around 250 pupils.

In some rural districts the establishment of Camp Howze brought about about some very material changes in the county. When the 58,000 acres of land were finally surveyed and mapped, it was found that the camp area encompassed large portions of six rural school districts. The districts affected and the disposition made of the district fragments were about as follows:

1. The Sivells Bend District lost about half of its area and was reduced from a three- to a one-teacher school.

2. The Loving District lost its schoolhouse, most of its territory, and all of its scholastics except three. These children are now contracted to Gainesville.

3. The Marysville District lost three fourths of its territory and most of its pupils. The remainder of the

district consolidated with Hays.

4. The Valley Creek District lost one half of its area and was reduced from a five-teacher school to a one-teacher school. This district had just completed a new school building, and the remaining one half of the district was left with a \$17,000 debt.

5. The Hays District lost approximately one half of its area and children. It was necessary to move the Hays schoolhouse off the reservation.

6. The Lindsay District lost approximately one fifth of its area, but was compensated somewhat by having added to it some fragments from other districts.

All affected districts have made commendable adjustments in their situations; but if and when Camp Howze is returned to private ownership, the job of making adjustments will need to be redone.

In the early part of 1944, the great Denison dam on Red River was completed. The Denison Lake Reservoir extends into northeastern Cooke County and, like Camp Howze, has seriously affected some rural school districts. The Walnut Nut Bend District lost about one fifth of its area and approximately one third of its children. The Dexter District lost some territory but not many scholastics. The district most seriously affected, Deleware Bend, lost three fourths of its territory, its schoolhouse, and all of its scholastics except nine. For the 1944-1945 school

term, this district has contracted its remaining pupils to Whitesboro in Grayson County.

The drastic reduction in the scholastic population of Cooke County, the development of the oil industry, and the location within the county of Camp Howze and the Denison Lake have all worked together to usher in a period of great change in the school conditions of Cooke County. We have just told the story of the Cooke County schools from their beginning up to this period, and the fate of the schools as a result of these great changes will be determined during the next few years. Recognizing the fateful situation that faces their schools at this time, county officials and school leaders have enlisted the assistance of a school planning committee from the University of Texas. It is hoped that through careful planning and study the schools of Cooke County will be brought safely through this period of change and upheaval, and that they will be better able to serve the boys and girls of the county in the future.

## APPENDIX I

### COOKE COUNTY SCHOOL LANDS

The Third Congress of the Republic of Texas, on January 26, 1839, passed a law giving three leagues of public land to "each county organized or to be organized for the purpose of establishing a primary school or academy."<sup>1</sup>

At the next session of Congress in 1840 and at the instigation of civic and educational leaders of the Republic, an additional league of land was given to the counties.

It is not to be presumed that such large grants of land to each county was of immediate benefit to their schools. By 1855, only forty-one counties had taken the trouble to survey their land.<sup>2</sup> Land was cheap and no benefits could accrue from the grants until the land had been sold. Many years were to pass before the public schools of the various counties received any material benefits from their land.

The procedure that a county followed to secure its land was about as follows:

1. A certificate for the land was issued to the county.

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<sup>1</sup>Eby, Education in Texas, Source Materials, p. 167.

<sup>2</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, p. 92.

2. The commissioners' court of the county proceeded to have the land surveyed.

3. When the land was surveyed, the field notes were returned to the General Land Office of Texas, where files were set up under the county's name.

4. The commissioners' court then applied for the patents on the land, and the General Land Office issued patents signed by the land commissioner and the governor.

When Cooke County took steps to secure its land, much of the public domain had been taken up. The first two leagues of land received were located "on the waters of Big Sandy Creek, a tributary of the Trinity River, Wise County, 12 miles northwest from the town of Decatur."<sup>3</sup> The land was surveyed in 1855,<sup>4</sup> but the patent was not received until December 13, 1861.<sup>5</sup>

When the first two leagues of land were secured, the commissioners' court did not take any further action in regard to the county's school land for a number of years. The reason for this inaction is apparent. When the last of the four leagues of land was granted in 1840, it was specified that "the three leagues could only be leased and the fourth could be sold by the county commissioners."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Cooke County School Land, Field Notes, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup>Surveyor's Records, Bk. B, General Land Office of Texas, Austin, p. 467.

<sup>5</sup>File Fannin, First Class, 849, General Land Office of Texas, Austin.

<sup>6</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, p. 89.

Then when Texas became a state in 1845, the new constitution forbade the sale of school lands for twenty years.

Eight years after Cooke County received her first two leagues of land, a new state constitution was written. This was during the reconstruction period, and the radicals had control. Under the constitution of 1869, all county school land was placed under the control of the Legislature. At the end of the reconstruction period, in 1875, the constitution was rewritten. Under the new constitution all grants of land were returned to the counties; and this time the counties were not long in taking steps to secure their land and have it surveyed.

Cooke County's two additional leagues of land had been surveyed in 1855, but the patent had not been issued. The commissioners' court now got busy, and a patent for 8,608.63 acres of land was issued May 19, 1877.<sup>7</sup> This land came to be known as the Cooke County School Land, and was located in southeastern Cooke County on Elm Creek. Since this patent was for only 8,608.63 acres, and two leagues of land calls for 8,856 acres, there remained approximately 248 acres to be secured elsewhere. This land was finally secured in four separate tracts in various parts of the county, the last patent for 153.48 acres being issued October 8, 1879.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>File Fannin, First Class, 1873, General Land Office of Texas, Austin.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

When the four leagues, or 17,712 acres, of land had been secured for Cooke County, the next problem was to dispose of it so that the proceeds therefrom could be used for the schools. The land was divided and placed on the market for sale. The records of these sales are long, but very interesting, but only one or two samples of transactions will be given here. The first sale of Cooke County school land apparently was made October 3, 1877. The record of this sale reads in part as follows:

I, J. M. Neely, the subscriber hereunto, a resident citizen of Texas in the County of Cooke, do promise to pay the County of Cooke the sum of three hundred and thirteen dollars and eighty-eight cents, with interest thereon as hereinafter specified, the same being for the purchase money for the following described tract of land . . . containing  $139\frac{1}{2}$  acres of land more or less, and valued at two dollars and fifty cents per acre. The annual interest of ten per cent upon the above amount, together with one-tenth of the principal, I am to pay or cause to be paid to the Treasurer of Cooke County, Texas, on or before the First Day of December of each year, until this entire obligation is liquidated.<sup>9</sup>

On December 18 of the following year, Mr. Neely made the first payment of interest and principal, which amounted to \$62.76. In three years he had liquidated his debt, and on February 13, 1882, the county issued him a deed for his land.

The transactions were not so simple with most of the sales. Often land would change hands a number of times

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<sup>9</sup>County School Land Obligations of Cooke County, Texas, I, 1.



before it was finally paid for in full and the deed could be issued. The price obtained for the land in the above transaction was about average. According to available information, the lowest price received was seventy-two cents per acre, and the highest was nine dollars per acre.

As the land was sold, the money received from the sales was invested for the schools by the commissioners' court. One of the first investments of the Cooke County Permanent School Fund was on April 12, 1886.<sup>10</sup> The commissioners' court purchased a \$1,000 bond at six per cent interest from the Cooke County Road and Bridge Fund. It seems that the court wished to buy a wrought iron bridge from a county in Ohio for \$1,000.

By August, 1892, all of Cooke County's school land had been sold, and the Biennial Report of the State Superintendent for 1890-1891 and 1891-1892 gave the following recapitulation of its disposal:

Number of acres . . . . .	17,712
Located in . . . . .	Cooke & Wise
Sold on . . . . .	Various dates
Price received . . . . .	Various prices
Amount received . . . . .	\$48,870.17
Expense of selling land . . . . .	\$480.00
Land remaining . . . . .	None <sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Minutes of the Commissioners' Court of Cooke County, Texas, IV, 295.

<sup>11</sup> Texas State Department of Education, Eighth Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1890-1891 and 1891-1892, p. 543.

The present status of the Cooke County permanent school fund is shown by the following information taken from the financial report for Cooke County for 1943:

SECURITIES OWNED BY THE PERMANENT SCHOOL FUND  
OF COOKE COUNTY, TEXAS, AS OF DECEMBER 31, 1943<sup>12</sup>

Description	Date of Maturity of Final Bond	Rate of Interest	Amount
Valley Creek School District.....	5-26-65	3.75	\$ 7,000
City of Muenster sewer bonds.....	2-1-63	4.0	3,000
City of Quitaque water bonds.....	4-1-58	4.0	3,000
Fisher County road bonds.....	4-1-44	5.0	400
United States Series G War Bonds.....	9-1-55	2.5	36,100
		Total	\$49,500

For the school year 1943-1944 the income from the Cooke County permanent school fund was \$1,807.50. This amount was accredited to the available funds of the various districts of the county on the basis of thirty cents per capita. The county available fund has been of inestimable value to the schools through the years, and the efforts of

<sup>12</sup>R. A. McElrath, county auditor, Financial Report of Cooke County, Texas, for Year Ending December 31, 1943, p. 41.

those who made it possible are now bearing fruit.

## APPENDIX II

### ADMINISTRATIONS OF COUNTY SUPERINTENDENTS OF COOKE COUNTY, TEXAS

The office of the county superintendent was created by law in 1887.<sup>1</sup> The question of whether the office should be established in a county was left to the county commissioners' court "who may hold an election when in their judgment it may be advisable."<sup>2</sup> Up to 1907 the school affairs of Cooke County were left in the hands of the county judge, but in that year a new law affecting county school officers was passed.

Under the law of 1907<sup>3</sup> every county with a population of 2,000 scholastics was required to have a county superintendent; so on July 15, 1907, the commissioners' court appointed E. N. Blackburn as the first superintendent of Cooke County.<sup>4</sup> At the next regular election, Blackburn was elected to the office by the people, and he served in that capacity for a period of ten years. The successors

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<sup>1</sup>Eby, Development of Education in Texas, p. 201.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 202.

<sup>4</sup>Minutes of the Commissioners' Court of Cooke County, Texas, VII, 285.

of E. N. Blackburn and their tenures in office are shown in the following tabulation:

COUNTY SUPERINTENDENTS OF COOKE COUNTY,  
TEXAS, FROM 1907 TO 1944

Term of Office	Name of Superintendent	Years in Office
1907-1916	E. N. Blackburn	10
1917-1922	F. J. Clement	6
1923-1927	John S. Hardy	5
1928-1930	F. J. Clement	3
1931-1938	Roy P. Wilson	8
1939-	Randolph O'Brien	6
Total		38

The above table shows that during the thirty-eight years that Cooke County has had a county superintendent, there have been only five different men who have held this office. This would make an average tenure in office of almost eight years. This is a commendable record of which the county should be proud. When a superintendent is allowed to remain in office for a reasonable number of years, he has sufficient time to carry out a comprehensive program of school improvement for his county.

In the course of this study the writer has often been impressed by the constructive work that has been accomplished by the various superintendents in the interests of the schools of Cooke County. No attempt will be made to

give a detailed account of the efforts of each superintendent, but the following tabulation will show the highlights of each county superintendent's administration:

HIGHLIGHTS IN THE ADMINISTRATIONS OF THE COUNTY  
SUPERINTENDENTS OF COOKE COUNTY, TEXAS

E. N. Blackburn  
(1907-1916)

- (1) Being the first to hold this office, the task of gaining the prestige and respect that the office required fell upon this man. That he remained in the office ten years attests to the fact that he accomplished this purpose.
- (2) He succeeded in leading eighty per cent of the districts to vote their first local maintenance tax.

F. J. Clement  
(1917-1922,  
1928-1930)

- (1) He encouraged the enforcement of the compulsory attendance law.
- (2) He carried out a comprehensive program for the improvement of school equipment.

John S. Hardy  
(1923-1927)

- (1) He carried out an extensive program of consolidation.
- (2) He encouraged the voting of bonds and secured the construction of many new school buildings in the rural districts of the county.

Roy P. Wilson  
(1931-1938)

- (1) He instituted the ten-month plan for the payment of teachers, thus saving the teachers interest charges and making salary warrants payable when issued.
- (2) He instituted the permanent record system for rural schools.

Randolph O'Brien  
(1938- )

- (1) He secured the accreditation of a large number of rural schools.
- (2) He expanded the services of the Circulating School Library through the use of a bookmobile with visual education equipment.

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