

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND THANKS TO MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS CHAPTER

Thanks to the author, unknown, of an earlier Kremlin School history that I obtained from Gini Zaloudek's collection of memorabilia for the 2001 Kremlin Town Centennial. Information there comes from a variety of first-hand memories that are documented there.

Gerry Toews Reimer, my cousin, Class of 1950, by phone, email, text, and in person

Joan Zaloudek Markwell, Class of 1950, in person and through Peggy Smith Guthrie Harris

Vernon Janzen, first grade 1937, by phone from Reedley, California, and through his published memoir

John Regier, Class of 1951, by phone and by email, from Reedley, California

John Richey, Class of 1951, (deceased during this project), by phone, mail, and in person

Bertha Toews Thomas, Class of 1952, by phone, email, and in person

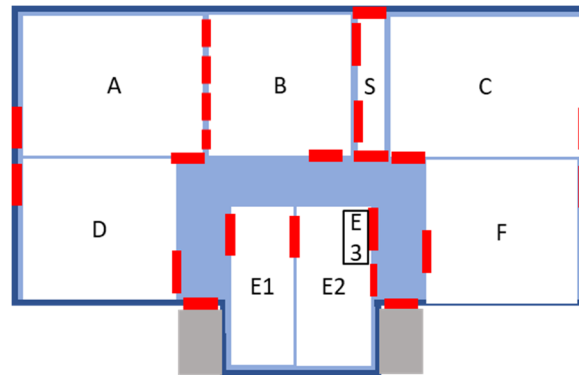
Dorothy Voth Gray, my cousin, Class of 1954, (deceased), and her son and his cousins, who gave me access to her photo albums and early yearbooks after she died; these provided invaluable documentation

My brother Arrel Toews, Class of 1966, for help with editing and style content suggestions

1. The original 6-room red brick school

This school was built at the south end of Kremlin, to replace the former white wooden school at the north end of Kremlin. It was in Block 43 on the east side of F Street; this block is shown as "School" already on a 1906 plat map, even though the school was not there until much later. We know that this school building graduated its first class in 1933, but we are not certain exactly when it was completed. In a summary of a taped interview, F. W. Zaloudek said that this school was built in 1929. Remember that Kremlin students had to go to Enid High for their senior year for many years; thus it is possible that school started in this building in 1929, but that 1932-33 was the first year that there was a senior class and graduation there.

An early picture of the first red brick school house is shown to the right, along with a layout diagram of the rooms below. The layout diagram is reasonably to scale on the outside dimensions, copied from a nice overhead view of the school in 2013. The original school was described in a newspaper article from 1939 about Kremlin (from Gerry Toews Reimer, below) as "thoroughly modern", "accommodates 128 students from 180 square miles", "evenly divided between the grade and high schools", and "with three busses".



A thoroughly modern school houses 128 students evenly divided between the grade and high schools with three busses covering an area of 180 square miles to bring the students into Kremlin.

the attractive brick building of the Kremlin school which accomodates 128 students from its 180 square mile school district territory which is combed daily by three school buses. (News-Eagle Photos)

1929, when we now believe this school may have been built, was the beginning of the Great Depression, so money was tight. Nonetheless, Marie Wuerflein Meyer's father, who was on the school board at this time, held out for at least 6 rooms for this new school, not just the 4 rooms that were being replaced from the white wooden school building at the north end of town; he was considered by many to be "too extravagant"!

In his interview, F. W. Zaloudek says that there was a stable or barn for horses between the two outhouses back behind the school, right after mentioning the brick school being built in 1929. He talks about both the white wooden school and the later brick school at this part of the interview, and it is not clear which school the horse barn he mentioned was located.

Below are color photos of some of the architectural “adornments” of the building; these photos were taken just a few days before the original building and the many other later buildings were demolished at the end of the 2015 school year. I am not certain what these were made of, but they have stood the test of time! These photos also show that the bricks were not all red, but that some dark gray or black bricks were nicely intermixed.

The new building left no doubt about the Kremlin School District number – 18! We all knew this from grade one on.



1.A. Room layouts

First, a bit about the building overall. Rooms A and B were really one long room, but with a removable or fold-up divider between them that was usually in place, making them two separate rooms. Gerry Toews Reimer and John Regier both mentioned a folding door or divider of some sort to separate these rooms, but that could be removed to make one larger room. The room indicated as S was the stage in the original building, elevated a couple steps from the classroom floor; thus, removing the divider between A and B made a nice-sized “auditorium” for school performances. Larger school events were held at the Community Hall instead, a much larger facility, but several blocks to the north. There were doors for access to the stage from the front, at both sides of the south wall in room B, photo below. There was also a door onto the stage from the hallway to the west. For things like graduations or award ceremonies, students could have gone on and off the stage from room B; for plays, actors could have entered from the hallway. There may have also been one or two doors onto the stage from Room C; I am not certain about this. And there was a door from the stage to the outside and the back of the school, at the east end; this provided access to the coal chute and the basement boiler used for heat.



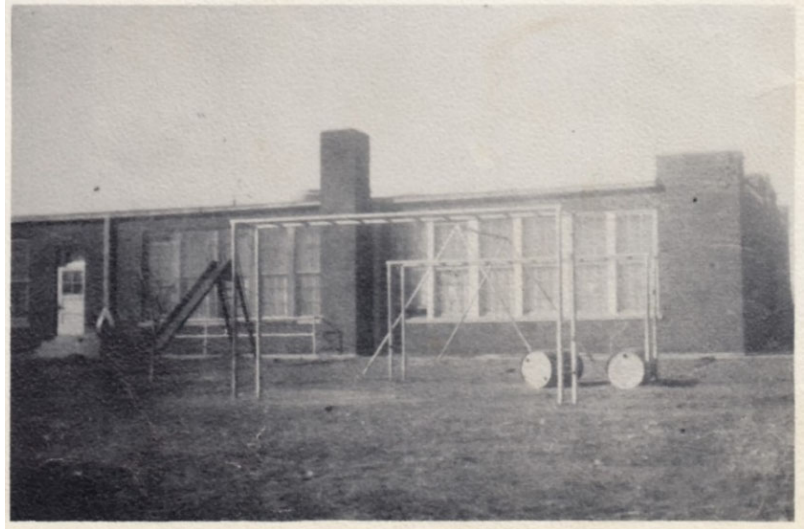
The top photo here from the 1952 yearbook provides the widest view of the entire stage end of Room B. The banner on the curtains is from the class of 1935, our mother’s graduation year. The two doors onto the stage show. There is a piano to the left, consistent with this room being used as the music room and for programs. There is also a nice view of the wood floors. One row of students are sitting on benches in front of the stage, the second row are standing on the floor in front of the stage; the back row may be standing on the stage. The bottom photo, also from the 1952 Yearbook, does a better job of showing the piano and the height of the stage.



The photo to the right from the 1946 yearbook, of the “Commercial” classroom, could be the removable divider between Rooms A and B, but I am not certain. Everyone remembers Typing and Commerce being taught in Rooms E1 and E2 “in their day”; but they also remember Rooms E1 and E2 having a permanent divider with windows in between. Rooms E1 and E2 and the dividing wall between them is described in more detail below.



Below Room B was a basement or cellar that housed the coal-fired boiler that heated the water to generate the steam that was pumped to the radiators in each classroom, to provide heat in the winter. There was a coal chute going from the outside into the east end of the cellar; one early student said the truck could dump an entire truck-load of coal directly into the basement, from which the janitor then had to shovel the coal into the burner of the boiler. There was a door from the east side of the stage to access the outside also, as shown to the left in the photo of the back of the school from the 1954 yearbook; this was presumably the route for access from the inside of the building to the cellar below. There seem to have been steps outside running down to the cellar, from south to north; the guard-rail to keep kids from falling in is visible in the photo from 1954, but this may have been added AFTER coal was no longer used to heat the school; I



have no earlier photos of the back of the school. There may also have been steps going down to the cellar from the stage inside the building, but there are no clear photos. The cellar was as large as Room B above it, according to Roy Sanders; see the outside door to the south of that room (middle set of 5 windows) and the smokestack from the coal burner at the north end of that room. Early students remember being able to get out of some class time if they would go to the cellar to shovel coal. The janitor's space was also in the cellar, and students remember hanging out down there with the janitor for as long as they could get away with it. Roy Sanders remembered the janitors tool area as being about 8 feet wide and at the south end of the cellar. One said that boys who smoked could smoke down there. The radiators that used the steam from the boiler to heat the classrooms are nicely shown in the photo extract to the right, from a 1953 yearbook photo.



The top photo, of the back of the school, also shows that Room A was longer than Room B to its south; Room A shows 6 windows, whereas Rooms B and D each have 5 (see first photo in this chapter). The same was true for Room C having 6 windows; the photo below, from a Dorothy Voth photo album, probably 1950-1951, shows the 6 windows at the south end of the school (left in the photo). The extra space in Rooms A and C, or the smaller space in Rooms D and F, was because of the entry hallways coming in from the west, using up the equivalent of "one window" of classroom space.



Room E was similarly interesting. It was about the same size as the other rooms, but it had a permanent divider running east and west to separate it into two rooms, with at least two windows, maybe three, allowing each room to be seen from the other. I document this dividing wall more than most school features, because I have found very few people who remember it, even though photos show that it was there, even in their later years. There was a door between the two parts of the room, allowing passage between the two rooms. For at least some years, Typing was taught on one side and Bookkeeping and Shorthand on the other; thus, a single teacher could be on the Bookkeeping side while students practiced Typing, or on the Typing side while students worked on their Bookkeeping. The “Commercial Class” photo on page 3 and the several photos below from later yearbooks show this wall, with three of the five west windows in E2 (south side), leaving 2 outside windows for E1 (north side); thus E2 was larger than E1. The windows and door in the dividing wall can be seen in several of the photos below. These photos are not from the earliest days of the red brick school, but they nicely show the layout of Room E as it was at least into the 1960s and perhaps beyond, and the way that early students remember.

The photo to the right, from the 1960 yearbook, would be Room E2 (south room) looking to the northwest corner. This is where you can see three windows in E2; and through the window in the dividing wall, you can see the two windows that would have been in E1

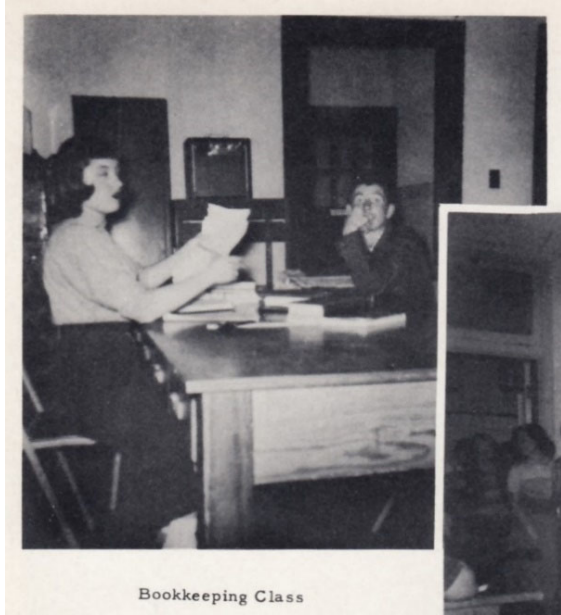


The photo to the left, from the 1953 yearbook, is looking to the southwest in Room E1 (north room), showing only TWO west windows in this room; two dividing wall windows are visible, with the left window seeming larger than the right (west end) window. Typing in E1 (north room) is also clearly

Typing Class

Larry Sowle, Dean Ruth, Don Chelf, Darryl Hays, Dorothy Voth, Dorothy Rickabaugh, Helen Coakley, Wanda Travis, Clyde O'Connor, Sylvia Kirkpatrick, Dorothy Long, Rubena Toews.

The photo to the right from the 1954 yearbook is looking into north-east corner of E2 (south room), with two dividing wall windows and and then what appears to be a blackboard showing. You can see into E1 (north room) through the window.



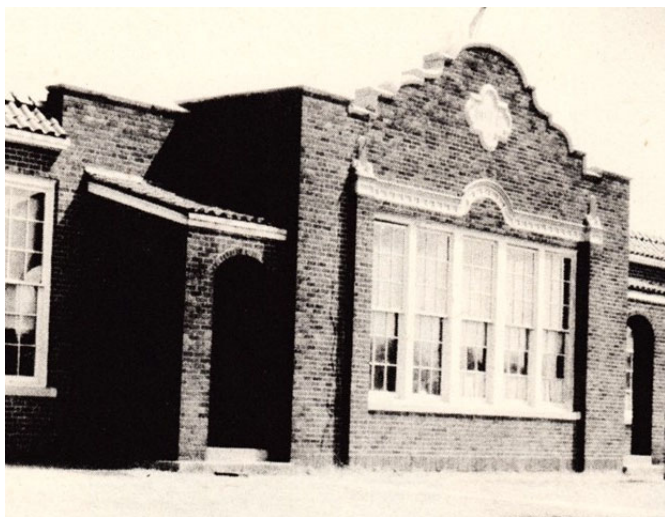
The Bookkeeping Class photo to the right, from the 1953 yearbook, MAY be taken from the south entrance of E2, facing north into E1, with the east end door in the divider wall to the right and the north door into E1 showing



The photo to the right, from the 1958 yearbook, is looking into the southwest corner of E1 (north room). You can see the west dividing wall window, and through the window you can see the west windows in E2 (south

The photo below, from 1946 yearbook, is of the OUTSIDE of Rooms E1 and E2, between the two front entrances. It nicely shows different window "treatments" and "looks" for the left TWO (north) windows and right THREE (south) windows of

The photo below, from the 1952 yearbook, again shows different window "looks" for the left TWO (north) windows (open at top and bottom) and right THREE (south) windows of Room E (closed), consistent with the different sizes of these rooms.



Room E2 also included the space for the original office, indicated as E3 in my room layouts, and very small. Gerry and John Regier both confirmed that the original office was to the left as you came in the south front door. Arrel remembers a storage room in this area in the early 1960s, for pop and school supplies; but he thinks it way too small of a room to have ever been an office. Joan Zaloudek remembered the office being in the southeast corner of Room D, not in E2; so perhaps to the left in the NORTH hallway, not the SOUTH hallway? If so, we do not remember or have photos of any remnants of an office there.

Rooms A and D had a coat closet (always called a “cloak room”!) at the north end, with a door at each side. The first two photos below show these for Room A; the left photo, from the 1960 yearbook, nicely shows both doors; the right photo, from the 1957 yearbook, shows the bookcases on the east wall and the coats hanging on the wall through the left door into the cloak room.



I did not remember the cloak room in Room D, my 5-6 grade room, but the left photo below, from the 1961 yearbook, shows that it was in fact there. Similarly, I did not remember a cloak room in Room C, my 7-8 grade room, but the fourth photo below, from the 1968 yearbook, when that room was used for Typing class, clearly shows the cloak room there. Vernon Janzen's memoir mentions putting his lunch pail on a shelf in the “cloak room” in Miss Rathmel's first grade room in 1937, which was in Room C at that time, consistent with the right photo below from much later. Although we have no photos of the original south end of Room F, it seems safe to assume that there were “mirror image” cloak rooms at the outside ends of Rooms A, C, D, and F. We have no photos or memories of any coat storage for the middle two rooms, Rooms B and E.

Perhaps students for those rooms, which were for high school classes, shared the cloak rooms in Rooms A and D, which were also for high school students. Alternatively, there may have been coat hooks on the back (south) wall of the stage for that purpose.



There were two entrances from the front/west; these were behind/inside a sheltered “porch”, a covered entrance, indicated by the gray boxes in my rooms layout diagram; these are nicely shown in the photos below. There were two doors to the outside at the north end, from rooms A and D; and, also two doors to the outside at the south end, from rooms C and F. The outside doors for rooms A and D remained until the building was torn down, or certainly until the late 1960s, when I graduated. The left photo below, from the ??? yearbook, nicely shows both the covered entry areas at the front of the building. The right photo below, from the ??? yearbook, provides a rare look at the entire south end of the original building, with a small window in each room that presumably let some light into the cloak rooms; and the doors into the classrooms at the south end. Other photos of the entry way and double doors to classrooms are shown below. Note the nice concrete walkway visible in the third photo.



Vernon Janzen thought he remembered doors from Rooms C and F into the hallway to the north, allowing access to the other parts of the building for both students and teachers. The likely location of these is indicated in my room layout diagram at the start of this document.

1.B. Room uses.

The earliest graduates I could interview in 2022-2024 -- Gerry Toews Reimer, John Regier, John Richey, Viola Regier Truitt, perhaps others -- clearly remembered the first 6 grades being at the south end, in rooms C and F, with 3 grades per room; the 1946 and 1947 yearbooks confirm this, describing grades 1-3 as primary and grades 4-6 as intermediate.

Mick Zaloudek and Vernon Janzen specifically remembered grades 1-3 in room C and grades 4-6 in room F. John Regier clearly remembered that grades 7-8 were in Room E2; this would have kept the first 8 grades together at the south end of the school. However, John Regier said that grades 7-8 were considered part of the high school at that time, making Rooms C and F the grade school and all of the other rooms as high school. The photo to the right from 1939, copied from Vernon Janzen's memoir, is a nice photo of Grades 1-3, presumably at their south end of the school. It is also nice photo confirmation that Grades 1-3 were together at that time.

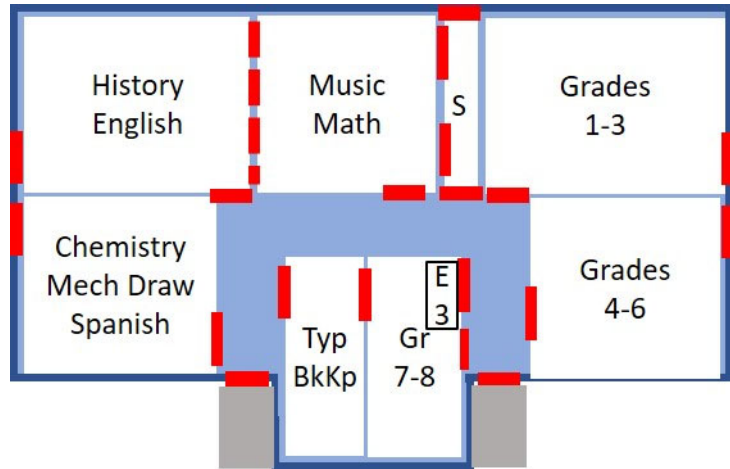


This would leave rooms A, B, D, and E1 for the high school classes. Consistent with this, John Regier remembered taking two years of high school Spanish in room D. He also remembered taking math in room B his senior year, 1950-51. He remembered taking Typing in room E1, as did John Richey. John Richey remembered special tables being in Room D, where he took both Chemistry and Mechanical Drawing. Joan Zaloudek Markwell remembers maybe taking History and English in Room A. Joan also remembered Math in Room B, and music as well; music there would make sense, so the piano could be near the stage for programs. The photos of the stage at the south end of Room B showing the piano there confirm this as the likely location for Music. Viola Regier Truitt remembered doing rhythm band performances on the stage, Room S. The 1946 yearbook Music write-up (by teacher Helena Janzen Toews) says that Music was every day at 11:15 – some days girls, some days boys, some days both; no indication what the boys did on girls' music day and vice versa. Then 1947 yearbook says boys had Music at 11:15 and girls at 1:45.

Gerry Reimer said that the high school library was on the north wall of Room B, but that was the removable divider wall. John Regier remembered it as a space about 6-feet wide that had shelves in it, at the north end of Room A. This makes more sense, and would be consistent with English being taught in that room. Whether this was the cloak room space, or perhaps on the wall in front of the cloak room, is not clear. Actually, when I asked John Regier about the library, his response was "What library?!" He told me where it was, but then said "I never got there in 4 years!"

There are no memories or photos of a lunch room for the earliest days of the school, so presumably students brought their lunches to school with them, and they most likely ate at their desks in the winter and perhaps on the playground in warmer weather. A lunch room was moved in behind the school in later years, though perhaps fairly early; see Chapter 3.

The diagram to the right shows what is known about what grades and classes were taught in which rooms as of about 1945, before room usage began to change as one-room schools closed and more grade school students began attending school in Kremlin.



1.C. Layout of the schoolgrounds.

1.C.i. An important aerial photo.

The image to the right is the earliest aerial view of the school that I have found, from aerial photos of the entire town and surrounding farms from 1937 that I purchased from the National Archives in Washington, DC. The school building is there, the dark structure, with the sidewalks to the two west entry doors and to the north and south entrances clearly visible. The sidewalk appears to extend a good way north of the school also, though Peggy thought that there had been no sidewalks, and the street was not paved, and students having to walk in the mud to get to the school. The two whitish areas east of the school could be ball-field play areas; but they also look like they could include buildings—they look very much like the bus barn area north of the school, where the building is really just barely visible. The house across the street to the west was the home of Fred Phillips, an early custodian and bus driver; it served as a part of the school for a brief time, as described in the next chapter!



1.C.ii. Outhouses.

Multiple people remember two out-houses behind the school to the east, one for boys to the north, one for girls to the south. They were quite a ways east of the school, as shown in the photo; various people thought this was at least 30-50 yards or more east of the school – not all of the way east to the farmland there, but “a long way back”, presumably to avoid the bathroom odor at the school building. Mainly, early students remembered how far it was to get to the toilets, and how cold it was to use them in the winter. I had assumed that the walkways to the outhouses that show in the aerial photo were well-worn paths, but John Regier said that there were nice concrete sidewalks going back to both outhouses.

Connie Fisher Bittle clearly remembered that the girls’ toilets had stalls with walls. Mick Zaloudek thought the boys’ outhouse was a 2-holer, perhaps with a “trough” also; he said, of course, he did not know about inside the girls’ outhouse! Errol Wofford had very clear memories of the boys’ outhouse. He said it faced west; that there was a kind of picket fence around it. Students entered from the north, made a left turn to the east, then another left turn to the north, to get into the outhouse. He thought maybe there had been 3 holes, and said for certain

that there were NO stalls or walls between. He remembered that little kids like him only went to use the outhouse only in an emergency, because there were always big kids there who would threaten to throw them down one of the toilet holes! He said there was a urinal trough, I gather running east-west, that was partly outside against the picket fence, and partly inside the building (likely for winter use). Great and interesting details!

I have no good information on how boys from the south end of the school got to the boys' outhouse walkway at the north end, or girls from the north end to their outhouse walkway at the south end. There does appear to be a sidewalk behind the school for this, but it appears to be interrupted in the middle, likely for the coal truck to dump coal into the cellar. It is also possible that students could have used the doors at both ends of the stage as a route to the back side of the building, but it seems this would have interrupted the classes going on in the classroom on the other side of the stage curtain. I do not know of any other exits to the east side of the school besides the stage door.

1.C.iii. Playground.

Some remembered there being a ball field of sports to the east and near the outhouses, presumably for the older students. This is likely to be the light area between the two outhouse walkways in the photo above. There were several who remembered the grade school playground being at the south end of the building, where the grade school rooms were at that time. In Vernon Janzen's memoir, he says the playground had "swings, merry-go-rounds, slides, and monkey bars", pretty much the same playground equipment that was at the school in our days in the 50s and 60s. This could be one or both of the light areas to the south of the school in the aerial photo above. In fact, the slide from that playground is still at the south end of the building as the new high school and gymnasium were being added in 1951, in the photo here. Also note the unpaved dirt street south of the school, still in 1951.



1.c.iv. Sports and athletics.

Basketball was likely the only organized sport in the early days of the school. Both basketball practices and games were held at the Community Hall, 3-4 blocks north and one block west of the school. Photos of Community Hall use for school events are included in Chapter 3. It seems likely that practice would have been at the end of the day, and that the bus may have picked up students there, so that they did not need to walk back to the school; but I have no good information on this. The Community Hall was also used for other school events for which the auditorium and stage in Rooms A, B, and S were not adequate. John Richey or John Regier, I think, told me that the dressing room at the Community Hall was in the basement there, with a dirt floor. One year the boys got permission and poured themselves a concrete floor and were quite proud of that. From my days, I well remember what I assume was a dressing room at the southwest corner, just inside the west door. In my day, there was a concession stand at the southeast corner; it is possible that this may at one time have been a similar dressing room, but I have no evidence nor anyone's memories to support this idea. It seems more likely that it was always a concession stand. I am somewhat surprised that there seem to be no photos of sports events at the Community Hall in any of the yearbooks from these years.

1.C.v. Stable and/or bus barn.

The first Kremlin school building, before this one was built in 1933, would have needed some sort of stable for horses during the day. By 1933, I presume that nearly all students walked, drove, or rode a school bus to get to school. I do not know when bus service started to be available for those not in “town”. The newspaper article from 1939 at the start of this document clearly indicates three buses and bus routes. John Regier stated firmly that the white structure just north of the school in the aerial photo above is the original bus barn. There are no ground-level photos that include that bus barn until early 1950s yearbooks, so I had assumed that it was added about that time. But John Regier said that the bus barn “was there from the start”. Bus barn photos are included in Chapter 3, covering the time frame when those photos were taken. John Regier thought that ALL of North Enid high school students came to Kremlin in his days; that Kremlin was perhaps their only choice for high school. He remembers one bus specifically for North Enid kids, one for the Valley Center kids (John Regier, Barkmans, others), and another for the kids who lived north of Kremlin (including John Richey).

1.D. Years of school grounds changes.

This ends the story of the years of ONLY the first red brick school. Chapter 3 covers the interesting and complicated years from 1946 to 1951, to accommodate more grade school students as their one-room schools closed. Then in 1951 a new high school and gymnasium/auditorium addition was built onto the red brick school, making room for all students in a single school building again. That addition is the subject of Chapter 4. Later chapters deal with yet more additions and changes.