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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. Her own photos from her albums and her early yearbook photos provide the ONLY photo and firm documentation to confirm and supplement the memories of many others below.

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 in Wichita, Kansas

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

Ed Barkman, Eighth Grade 1952, then left, by email

Viola Regier Truitt, Class of 1959, by phone, text, and in person

Betty Jo Kirkpatrick, Class of 1960, by phone

Peggy Smith Guthrie Harris, Class of 1962, who not only provided her own memories but passed on memories from her cousins and others, or helped me to connect with them myself

Mickey Zaloudek, Class of 1956

Errol Wofford, Class of 1961

Roy Sanders, Class of 1962, (deceased during this project), who provided the first first-hand memory of the "south-end building"

Jakie Lee Rempel, in Class of 1962, but left after freshman year, by phone and email

Galen Toews, my brother, (deceased), Class of 1963, who provided his hand-written memories of his first-grade years in the Columbia school house

James Buller, Class of 1963, by phone and email and text

Connie Fisher Bittle, Class of 1956, by phone

Mary Ann Zaloudek, Class of 1951, by phone

Earl Dyck, Class of 1969, by email and text, whose identification of his mother in the Lunch Room photo helped immensely in figuring out some useful things from that photo

Dick Chelf, Class of 1961, for sharing his mother Tillie's scrapbook which had one very important photo and story

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

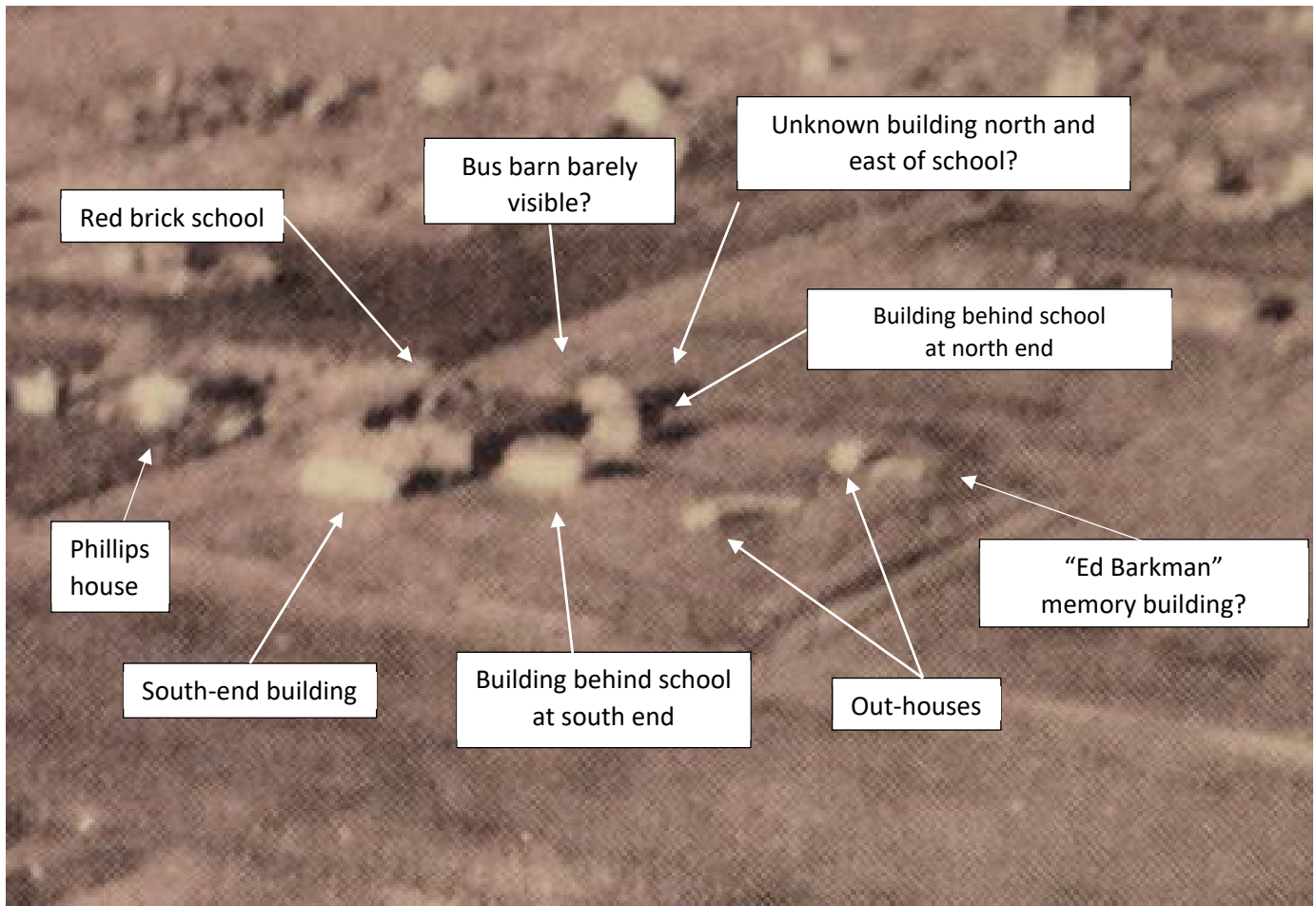
## **2. One-room schools as student population grew**

### **2.a. Additional buildings around the red brick school, to about 1949**

The student population grew in the 1940s, to a significant extent because the district's one-room grade schools began to close, one-by-one. Students from those one-room schools had been coming to Kremlin for high school, but as the one-room schools closed, the grade school students came to Kremlin also. It is likely that most of those schools had closed by the late 1940s, leading to the need for more space for the grade school students. There was likely little or no increase in the number of high school students at Kremlin as the surrounding one-room schools closed. Though it was more space for grade school students that was needed, this was accomplished by building a new high school for the older students who had been using a large part of the red brick building, so that the entire original red brick school could then be used for the increasing number of grade school students coming to Kremlin. A gymnasium/auditorium on the school grounds was also needed, so that students would not have to continue to trek over to the Community Hall for their sports events, play practices, programs, and graduations. The new high school and gymnasium addition was built in 1950 and 1951; the exact months for starting and finishing that building are not clear. The changes that occurred before and during those construction years is the topic of this Chapter, what I call "the one-room schoolhouse years", for reasons you will see. Information about the new high school and gymnasium addition and the corresponding classroom changes is the topic of Chapter 3.

The photo on the next page from the 1949 yearbook is one the most important photos of the school and buildings around it from the exciting time of changes at the school covered in this chapter, 1946-1951. The top photo is a clean version, for any who may find other things of interest. The bottom photo has my notations of each of the buildings in the photo, which should help in understanding which building is referred to in the text that follows. Each building will be explained as best as possible, though a good bit remains unclear (as is the photo!). You can try zooming in, or zooming out, for perhaps better views; but this is about as good as it gets.





The first well-documented additional building on the Kremlin school grounds is either a house or a one-room school house that was used as the lunch room for at least some years. Connie Fisher Bittle was certain the building was a house, with dining in one room and kitchen in another. Gerry Toews Reimer was equally certain that it was a one-room schoolhouse. A newly obtained document with summarized memories from several early students clearly stated that it was a house, and that looks most reasonable from the photo below. This building was located behind the red brick building (east) and at the north end. John Regier said that this lunchroom was the only additional building by the school when he graduated in 1944.

The photo here is of students inside that building and labeled as "Lunch Room" in the 1946 yearbook, only the second year that a yearbook was printed, so our earliest source. There is a pot-bellied stove for heat, and the students are sitting on benches. There are no tables visible. This would be consistent with what Peggy and Joan and perhaps others remember about the earliest lunch room, and what was "documented" in the written early school history – that students sat on benches with their food on boards that folded down from the wall to be used as tables. Back then, meals cost 25 cents.



The girl with blond hair and glasses to the left in the Lunch Room photo was confirmed by Earl Dyck to be his mother, Sarah Esther Toews, who likely lived somewhere in or near North Enid at the time. He said that her ability to bend her elbow backwards, as in the photo, was “her signature move” and a clear give-away that it was her, in addition to her face and glasses matching his memory and her photo in that yearbook. She was from the Class of 1948, so this would make the older girls to the left in the photo the sophomores from that year. At least some meals were prepared in that building, with the cook standing in the middle of that photo; other students brought their own lunches from home. I cannot be certain, but the first girl by the stove may be Bertha Toews, with Marilyn Janzen as the girl with blond curly hair and then the twins Doris and Dorothy Voth behind her; all of these students were sixth graders in 1946. Something very puzzling to me in this photo is that there are only girls shown in the lunch room! Did boys and girls have separate lunch hours? Or did girls eat at this end (by the stove) and boys ate at the other (colder) end of the lunch room? A bit of a puzzle.

The next buildings moved onto the school grounds in Kremlin were both multiple and complicated, with no completely definitive source, but many highly reliable sources. The 2001 School History document says that a one-room school house was moved in to the south of the kitchen and lunchroom building “about 1948”, and that two additional one-room school buildings were moved in at the south end of the red brick school at the same time. We only know the identity of one of those, the Rose Bud school, originally located several miles south and east of Kremlin. Class stories in the 1948 yearbook describe the complicated changes that took place that year (fall of 1947). Grades 1-3 in Room C and grades 4-6 in room F were both too crowded that fall because of one-room school closures. So, at the end of the first six-weeks, teacher Anna Ruth Thesman took the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders to have class in the Fred Phillips house across the street to the west from the school. The 3<sup>rd</sup> graders moved from Room C to room F with the 4<sup>th</sup> graders – now for the first time there were only 2 grades per room, 1-2 remaining in Room C, 3-4 in Room F, and 5-6 in the Phillips house temporarily. After 11 weeks in the Phillips house, the yearbook story says that the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders moved into the former Rose Bud one-room schoolhouse “which was moved here and newly decorated for us.” We presume that school house was moved to the south end of the red brick school, close to the 1-2 and 3-4 grade rooms; a building can be seen there in the photo above, and a school being there was remembered by Roy Sanders in his childhood days, and by several of the oldest graduates. The playground area appears to be further south, between the south-end school building and the road to the south. Mick Zaloudek clearly remembered being in the south end white wood school, at least for 5<sup>th</sup> grade (1948-49), maybe 6<sup>th</sup> (1949-50). I think that Mick is the only person I talked to who remember being in that building for classes, though several others remember the building being there.

The 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade story from that same 1948 yearbook says that grades 7-8 also moved “out of the school house to the new building to the south”, but sooner, after the second six weeks, 5 weeks earlier than for grades 5-6 in their story. This fits with the 2001 School History document saying that two one-room schools were moved in to the south of the red brick building. I think we cannot be certain whether Rose Bud was the building directly south of the school or perhaps the building further east at the south end. Regardless, at least for this year, it seems fairly certain that grades 5-6 and 7-8 each had their own one-room school classroom building at the south end of the red brick school. The different moving dates in the yearbook stories for 5-6 and 7-8 each moving into their one-room schools is consistent with this. The identity of the of the two one-room school houses besides Rose Bud that were moved onto the school grounds is not certain; [I still have some hope of obtaining documentation of which buildings were where and what they were used for in different years](#). The Wild Horse, Pleasant Valley, and Red Rock one-room schools were the other schools that fed into the Kremlin school system, so these are all possibilities if not likelihoods.

Uses of those buildings may well have changed from year to year to year also. Errol Wofford, Class of 1961, remembered being in the wooden building at the south end and east of the school for Grades 1 and 2, and



he remembered a similar building to the west of that building, i.e. the building at the south end and south of the school; one of those two buildings was Rose Bud, but again, we still do not know which building was where.

The two buildings behind the school, to the east, but quite close to the school, are barely distinguishable in the aerial photo of the school shown on pages 2 and 3. These are also nicely shown in the photo of Dorothy Voth and some classmates in the space between these buildings and the brick school, looking to the north. This is not a yearbook photo, but is likely from 1953 or 1954, Dorothy graduating in 1954. At this time, it seems there would have been a need to leave enough space between the two east buildings for the coal truck to continue to deliver coal to the middle part of the east side of the red brick school, and the photo appears to show such a space. [An unanswered question is how students accessed these two buildings. This could have been "the long way around", from the doors at the north and south ends of the red brick building. Or perhaps students would have used the doors at the east and west ends of the stage as a convenient way to get from the inside of the red brick building to these temporary buildings to the east; but it seems this would have been disruptive for classes in Room B, with only a curtain separating those classes from the stage and potential doors to the back of the building.](#) The bus barn immediately north of the school is also visible, with a bus between the school and the bus barn. This is NOT the bus barn that many of us remember from later, a full block or more north of the school.



A very important photo of the two buildings to the east of the red brick school is shown here, from a newspaper story from Tillie Chelf's scrapbook; it is my most recent photo discovery. This photo was taken after the school at the south end was moved (fate unknown, as above), and when construction on the foundation for the new high school and gymnasium was just beginning (see the brick foundation and stacks of cement blocks at front of photo). The building east of the school at the south end is clearly visible, and it seems to clearly be a one-room schoolhouse; there is nothing to nail down its identity, except to show that it is NOT the Pleasant Valley one-room schoolhouse, which had a much shorter entry/porch. The building east of the school at the north end, by all accounts a house used as the lunchroom, also shows, but only its southeast corner.

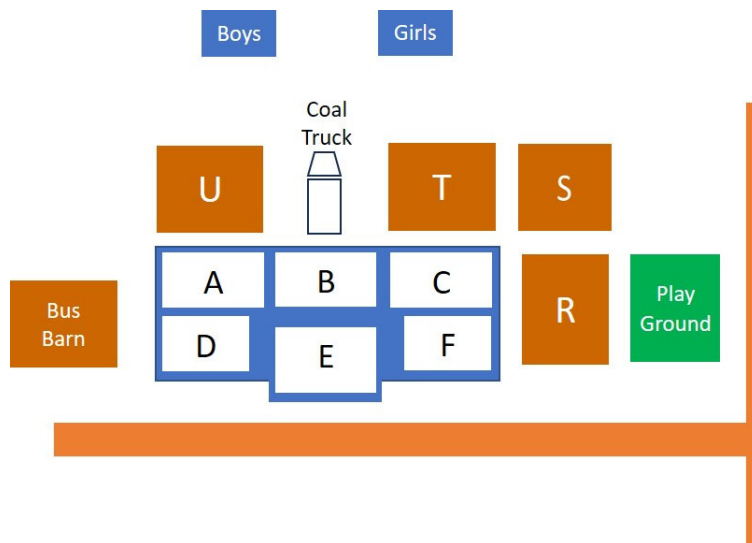


Pictorial Mail, Farm Paper Photo.

John Richey remembered Home Economics being taught in the building at the south end of the east side of the red brick building that shows clearly in the sepia aerial photo. The photo to the right from the 1951 yearbook seems to clearly show the inside of that Home Ec building; it is not clear whether it was a house or a one-room school building, but it had a nice modern-looking kitchen area, likely added or renovated when it became the Home Ec room. John Richey remembered that a sewing machine in that building did not work, and the superintendent could not fix it; so, John Richey was called in, and he DID fix it. He was proud that he got it fixed, but he seemed even more proud that he was perhaps the only boy ever to be allowed into the Home Ec room! John Richey also clearly identified the Home Ec building as being east of the red brick school and at the south end.



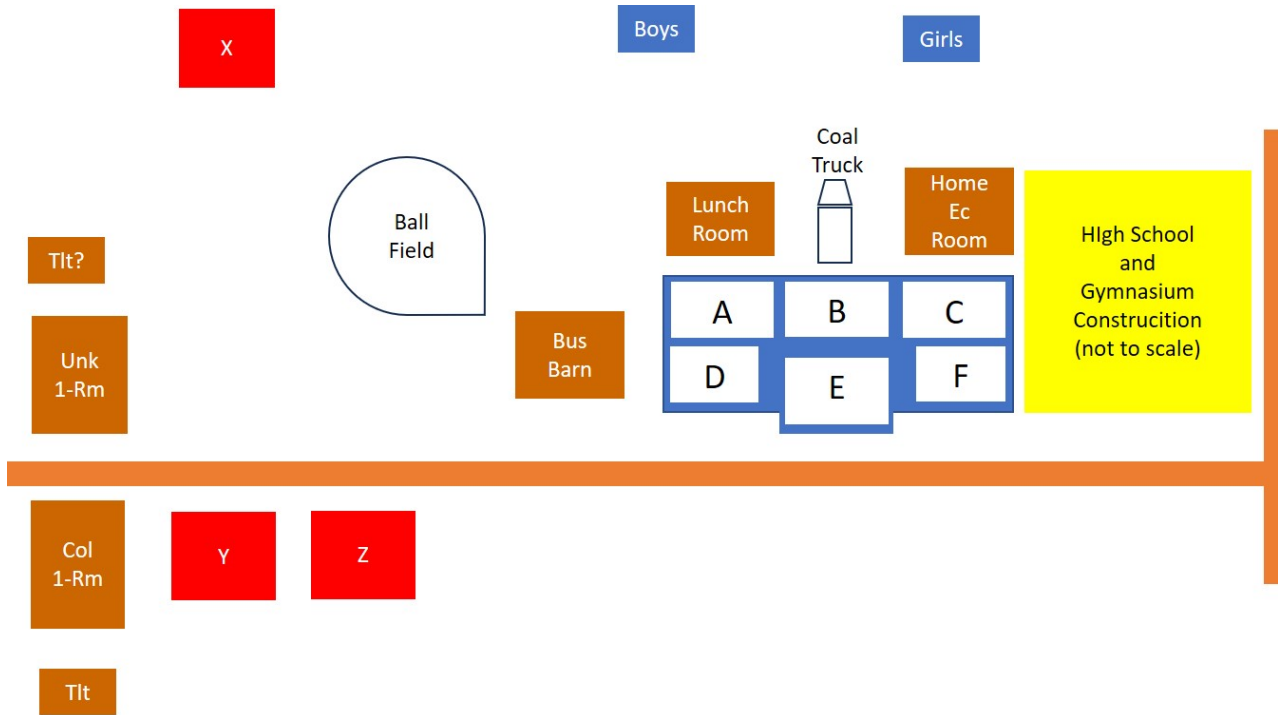
To the right is the layout diagram for what the school grounds likely looked like as of 1949-50, before additional changes were made for construction of the high school and gym addition. This layout diagram is also consistent with what seems to be shown in the sepia aerial photo from the same time period.



Either R or S would have been the Rose Bud school house, but we cannot be certain which. My assumption is that R was Rose Bud, housing 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders for some years, described as having been moved in “to the south”. Rose Bud is the only building for which a move-in date is known from yearbook stories, in the fall of 1948. S would be the other one-room school building for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders. T was the Home Ec room, and U was the cafeteria and lunchroom.

2.b. MORE buildings near the red brick school, 1949-1951, for construction of the high school and gym addition.

Sometime during or at the end of the 1949-50 school year, things had to change, to make way for the new high school and gymnasium addition at the south end of the original 6-room red brick building. The schoolhouse at the south end had to be moved (or demolished), because that is where the new high school building would be. A diagram of the buildings “around” the red brick school is shown below, indicating where buildings were known or thought to be in 1950-51, as described in more detail below.



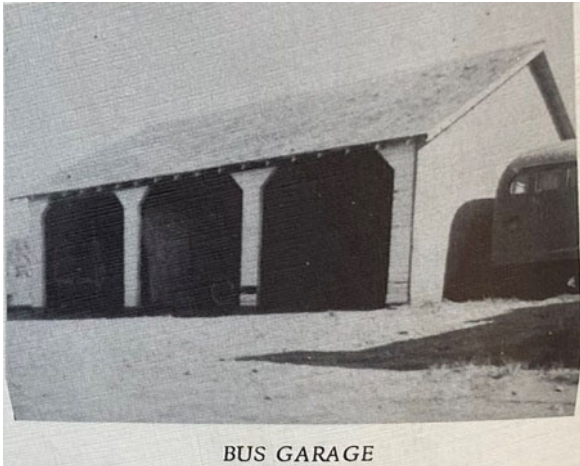
To maintain class space for all of the students, two one-room schoolhouses were moved a long block north of the red brick building. Peggy, Roy, my brother Galen, James Buller, and others all clearly remember two one-room school houses across the street from each other in their earliest years. We know that the school on the west side was the Columbia one-room school house, moved into town from the Jake Thesman farm 1.5 miles south of the Midway. John Richey thought that the Pleasant Valley one-room school house from about 1 mile east and 2 miles north of Kremlin was the other building moved into town, but details of the east school do not seem to be completely consistent with what we know about Pleasant Valley. We do know that Pleasant Valley ended up at the east end of the Community Hall, with nice photos of it there; and Gerry Toews Reimer thought that the school by the Community Hall (Pleasant Valley) had been moved in straight from the country, and she had no memory of it ever having been north of the school. *(I continue to hope that there may be some official documents somewhere to establish which buildings came from where and when they were moved in!)*

Grades 1-2 were on the west side of the street in the Columbia school house, and best memories are that grades 3-4 were on the east side. Peggy remembered her second-grade year (1950-51) being at Columbia, and Galen and James clearly remembered their first-grade year there. Peggy remembered students throwing dirt clods at each other across the street. The street was not paved, and these grade school students had to walk down that street, often muddy, to get to the lunchroom. Peggy remembered one younger girl, she thought Donna Richey, having her shoe get stuck in the mud and not being able to retrieve it! People remember an outhouse behind Columbia School. In particular, Jakie Lee Rempel remembered getting his finger smashed in the west door of the Columbia school on the way to the out-house, and that his teacher, Miss Rathmel, had no sympathy at all, saying that she had clearly told them to always use the east door to go to the bathroom, even though the bathroom was to the west!



Mick Zaloudek was in 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade during the construction years. He was fairly certain that he was NOT in either of the two one-room schools to the north those years, but somewhere in the 6-room red brick school. [I hope to talk to more students from these years in person to try to get more definitive information.](#)

Below are two nice photos of the first bus barn, or “bus garage”, just a few yards north of the school building.

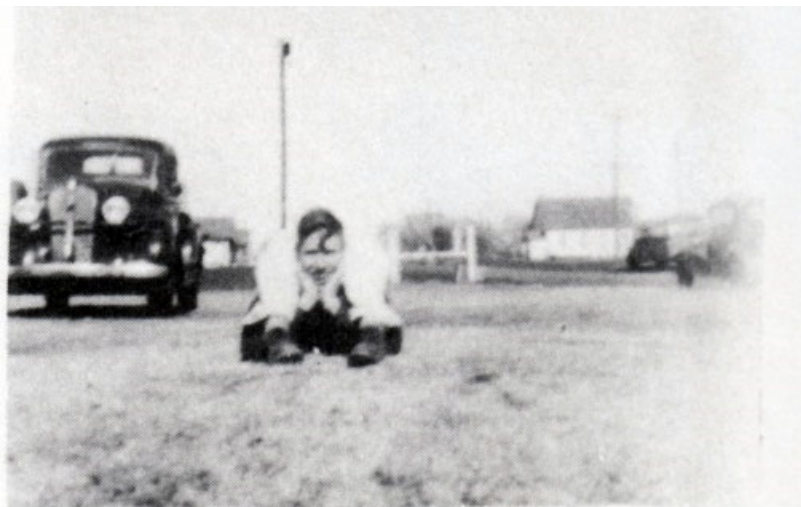


The photo to the right, from the 1955 yearbook, is a nice close-up view of the Columbia one-room schoolhouse at its location on the west side of the street and about a block north of the school.





The photo below of the “Pretzel” from the 1952 yearbook is the only photo I have found that clearly shows BOTH of the one-room school houses to the north of the red brick building. Both buildings have sheltered entryways protruding toward the street; they look like mirror images! In the background of the photo of the woman at the flagpole to the right, the west end of the schoolhouse on the east side of the road can be seen, with its sheltered entryway just barely visible. The northwest corner of the roof of the bus barn can also be seen in this photo, just to the right of the flagpole.



The buildings described above are the buildings that seem fairly well documented, including in photos, yearbook stories, and memories of multiple students. But there may well have been more. Dick Chelf fairly strongly thought there were three buildings on the west side of the street north of the school during the construction years, for grades 1-6; but it was not clear that he remembered the building on the east side of the street that is clearly shown in the photos above.

Ed Barkman seemed certain there was a building far to the northeast from the school, “past center-field of the ball field north of the school”; he seemed to have clear memories of walking across the ball field to get to that building, but he did not remember what grades or classes he might have had there. It is possible that the building in the photo at the top of the next page, again from the 1952 yearbook, could be that building; but it seems too small, and no windows are visible, so it seems more likely that this is the boys’outhouse to the east of the red brick building. In fact, it looks like the walkway to the girls’ outhouse may be visible running from left to right across this photo. The aerial photos of the school grounds seem to show a large open play area east of the red brick school and west of the outhouses. The material in the foreground could be piles of debris



from the new school construction. I DO think that the “extra” building near the men’s outhouse in the aerial photo of the school at the beginning of this chapter may be the building remembered by Ed Barkman. The lighter area to the left (west) of this building would be the “ball field” that Ed remembered; this would have then been the building for grades 5-6 when grades 1-2 were in Columbia on the west side of the street and grades 3-4 in the building on the east side of the street.

Returning to the school buildings layout diagram on page 7, several questions remain. Grades 1-2 and 3-4 were in the two buildings a block north, Columbia on the west side of the street (Col) with grades 1-2, and an unknown (Unk) one-room school on the east side of the street, with grades 3-4; TIt indicates the known or likely toilet locations. It seems likely that the east building might have been Rose Bud, because it had to be removed from the south end of the school anyway to make way for construction of the high school and gymnasium addition.

We are not certain where grades 5-6 and 7-8 were at this time. Ed Barkman’s memory suggests 5-6 at the northeast corner of the school property; 7-8 were always somewhat part of the high school and may have remained in the red brick building during construction. The photo earlier of the very beginning of construction shows the Home Ec room still in place, and it is possible that the gymnasium could have been built without removing that building. It seems that Rooms C and F would almost certainly have been completely closed during construction, but perhaps only for the final stage of connecting the old and new buildings. It is also possible that temporary partitions were built across Rooms C and F, to allow classes to continue in the north end of those rooms while construction was happening at the south end of those rooms.

The red building X in the diagram is the temporary 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade room remembered by Ed Barkman as to the northeast and across center field of the ball field, and perhaps shown as marked in the 1949 aerial image shown again below. Red buildings Y and Z are included to fit with memories of Dick Chelf, but with no photos or other memories to confirm these.

The big remaining questions that remain to learn or for confirmation are where 5-6 grades and 7-8 grades were in those years, and more firm identification of the buildings that became the lunch room, the Home Ec room, and which of the two added buildings near the south end of the school was the Rose Bud school. [Hopefully a student with clear memories of those years remains to be discovered! Thanks to anyone and everyone for any further help!!](#)