

Pleasant Valley is a one-room school that fed into the Kremlin School system for which we know more about its last days in town than about its early days out in the country. It also has the distinction of being the only one of these schools for which we have a quite firm starting and ending date!

Special thanks to the following for their help in paying for the Pleasant Valley School marker sign: John Mitchell, our classmate, who lived a mile south; and several who donated more than enough to cover other school signs and allowed us to use leftover funds for this sign.

Special thanks to the following for their help with stories and photos:

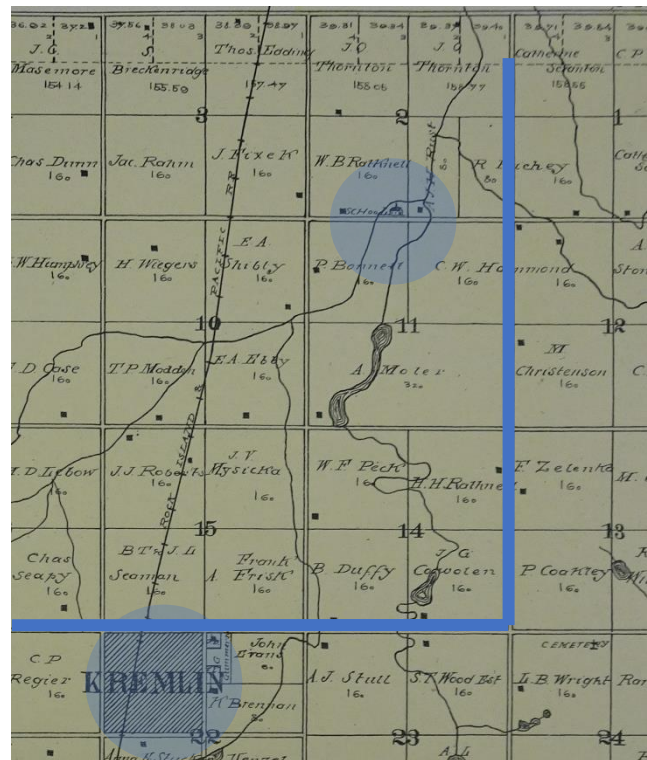
John Richey Mick Zaloudek Johnny Mitchell
Gerry (Toews) Reimer Leora (Rempel) Thesman Becky (Frisk) Lugafet
Craig Robertson

1. Facts.

District number: 8
Location: Southeast corner of SW/4 of 2-24-6 in Kremlin Township
Started: Presumably 1894
Last year of classes: 1947, best evidence, no firm documentation
Fate of building: Moved to a new life in Kremlin town; accidentally burned down in 1969

2. Location.

This school building was located ½ mile east of the east edge of Kremlin, two miles north, and then ½ mile east, on the north side of the road. The relevant portions of two plat maps showing the site of the school are below; the left is a 1901 commercial map and the right is the 1906 government map.



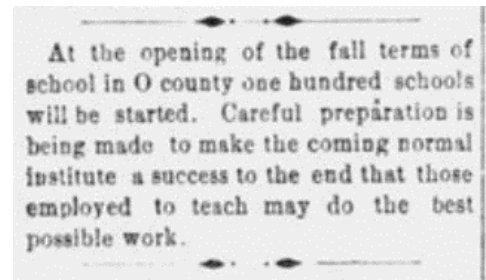
The school site is highlighted in blue, as is the town or Kremlin to help with “orientation”. The 1901 map is nice because it shows the district number for identification of the school. I have also overlaid these early maps with the current paved roads for further orientation. This location is on the furthest east-west road at the very north edge of Garfield County, with Grant County beginning one mile further north. The dividing line between Garfield and Grant Counties is a “correction line”, which is the reason that most of the north-south roads crossing that border have a jog of a variable distance in them (though not shown on these maps). That is “a whole ‘nother story”!

Plat maps show that the farm on which the school was located was owned by J. M. Rice in 1901, W. B. Rathmel in 1906, M. A. Rathmel in 1936, and Wm. A. Frisk in 1951. All owners of this farm and other farms in the area can of course be tracked down at the County Court House. Additional early plat maps are on the last page.

I purchased early aerial photos for areas to the west and south of Kremlin, from 1937 and 1945, but do not yet have a photo of the Pleasant Valley area; perhaps I will break down and purchase a copy of that area soon, assuming it exists.

3. Years of operation.

We do not have precise dates for when any of these one-room schools started, but the clipping to the right from an issue of the early Kremlin newspaper “The Cherokee Cosmos” from May 1894 states that “one hundred schools will be started” in the fall of that year. We cannot be certain, but it seems likely that this means “started for the first time”; this would be one year after the Cherokee Strip Land Run opened up this area for settlement by non-natives. **VERY IMPORTANT** – the first photo below of the Pleasant Valley School building at its later location in Kremlin has 1894 painted on the front directly above the door, and fairly clearly, to me at least; this provides more direct evidence for 1894 being the year that these schools opened in Garfield County.



Wm. A. Frisk’s son Johnnie Frisk attended Pleasant Valley for “just a few years” before it closed and he started attending school in Kremlin, according to his daughter Becky Frisk Lugafet. Kremlin yearbooks show 10 students in the third grade in 1947, but a big increase to 19 students in the fourth grade in 1948. One of those new students was Johnnie Frisk. Johnnie’s sister Bonnie, 2 years younger, likewise shows up in the second grade class of 1948 but not in the first grade class of 1947. This indicates that Pleasant Valley must have closed at the end of the 1946-47 school year. Which, if any, of the other new students who arrived for 1947-1948 school year came from Pleasant Valley has not been studied yet.

The stories of the Pleasant Valley school building’s later life in the town of Kremlin and its “demise” there in January of 1969 are told later in this document.

4. Known teachers.

Mrs. Bill (Mary) Richey, from John Richey memories

John H. Scott, from Enid, from the September 5, 1931, Enid Events newspaper listing

Mrs. Frank Devery, from Mick Zaloudek memories

4. Photos and memories.

I had the pleasure of visiting with John Richey in person in 2022, a few months before he died, and on the phone and by mail a few times before that. His childhood home was pretty much exactly one mile east – ½ mile east of the Kremlin-Pond Creek blacktop – with Pleasant Valley ½ mile west of the blacktop. He and his older siblings went to school there. A look at the plat map will show that the Richeys also owned part of the quarter section directly east of the school and west of the current highway. John Richey also remembered that his mother said she had taught there for several years, giving us at least one teacher!

Mick Zaloudek, son of Lou Zaloudek, lived on what we knew as the Mitchell farm a mile to the south of Pleasant Valley for part of his childhood. He said that he should have attended Pleasant Valley, but his parents wanted him to go to the Kremlin School in town, and they succeeded in making that happen! A lost chance for some more memories. Mick did remember that Mrs. Frank Devery had taught there; he then confirmed for me that she had been a teacher at the Kremlin town school later when he was a student there.

Another connection (comes from my high school classmate Craig Robertson. His father's family lived a mile north of the Richey farm, on the south side of the county line road, east of the current blacktop, and they attended Pleasant Valley also.

I recently connected with Becky Lugafet, Johnnie Frisk's daughter; Johnnie's family owned the farm where Pleasant Valley was located and he attended school there through 3rd grade. Johnnie told Becky stories of his time at Pleasant Valley. He remembered that there was a creek behind or near the school where children would play during recess. Johnnie was a prankster and took delight in tying the other kids' shoe laces together while they were playing in the creek, so that it would be hard for them to get their shoes back on and to get back to class when the teacher called. "The good old days!"

Those listed above are pretty much the only things we know about the school when it was active. Unfortunately, none of those people had any photos or stories from the school, of their own or from their parents

[As with all of these schools, we hope that others have more information and will share it with us!](#)

5. Pleasant Valley school building's later years.

What we do know of the Pleasant Valley School building is that it was moved into the town of Kremlin and re-located directly east and connected to the Kremlin Community Hall. Our cousin Gerry Toews Reimer grew up in the house directly to the east. Her memory was that Pleasant Valley “just showed up one day” and had been pulled in on a “sled” on a very cold and snowy day. She thought that it was moved there directly from its original location. This is important because several one-room school-houses were moved onto the Kremlin School grounds between 1945 and 1950 to serve as additional classrooms, until and while the new high school was being built there. We wondered whether one of those might have been Pleasant Valley, but Gerry thought not; and she should know – she should have recognized it if it got moved close to her house from a former location at her school.

The photo to the right is of the Pleasant Valley school-house in its Kremlin town location, from the 1952 Kremlin yearbook, the first yearbook in which it appears. We are fairly certain that the house behind it in the left photo is where our cousin Gerry Toews and our Uncle Henry and Aunt Elsie Toews lived. The school is shown in the Kremlin School yearbook because in the early days of the Kremlin School, the Community Hall was used for basketball games, school plays, and graduations, and thus was somewhat a part of the school. The Pleasant Valley building was connected to the Community Hall by a walled-in connector (see next page), and we are fairly certain that it was used as the girls' locker room there. The name Pleasant Valley can be read fairly clearly on the front of the school. The little wooden “shelter” behind the man (so far unidentified, but perhaps the Superintendent, Mr. Stratton) has the word GIRLS painted on it, suggesting that this might have been the former “ladies' room” for the Community Hall.

The Community Hall was located at the northwest corner of the same block that housed Rathmel Grocery and the Bank of Kremlin, with a small playground between those businesses and the Community Hall.



The left photo below shows the Pleasant Valley School connected to the Community Hall, and with the name more clearly legible here. The right photo shows the west edge of Pleasant Valley and the east edge of the Community Hall and provides a nice view of the connector. The cars in both photos show that these two photos were taken the same day – perhaps at play practice – they are not dressed for basketball season, and graduation practice photos would not likely have made it into the yearbook (1953). It is interesting that there are still Community Hall photos in this 1953 yearbook, because this was the first year that the new high school and gymnasium were completed and used for events that were formerly in the Community Hall. Perhaps these are photos taken in the fall of 1952, and perhaps the gymnasium/auditorium was not quite ready for use yet. Someone who was there should have documented all of this much better back then!



The other thing that we know about the Pleasant Valley school-house is how its "life" ended. Our Uncle Henry Toews was burning weeds and grass around the Community Hall early in January of 1969, and the fire got away from him and burned down both the Community Hall and the adjoining Pleasant Valley school building. I was on location, for reasons I don't remember, likely still home from college over winter break, and remember the fire well. A few photos from after the fire that focus on the Pleasant Valley school building framework are shown below; these were taken by Leora Thesman, who lived in Kremlin at the time. More on the Community Hall and other details of the fire can be found in Arrel's [Kremlin Town History](#) document in the Kremlin Town History section of this website.



JAN 69 *



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