

A School and Its Town: Mead Consolidated School

“After walking for a mile and a half to a two room school house, from grades two to six, the Mead Consolidated School was like a journey into a wonderland to a stringy twelve year-old girl. To get to ride most of the way on a bus was more than anyone could wish for.” – Hazel Elmquist Bullock¹.

Mead. A quaint little farm town in Colorado just off Interstate 25, and a small town of about 3,400 people has its roots deep in the science of agriculture. However, do not be swayed or fooled, for this town has consistently maintained a focus on its youth and education since the days of the early 1920s. Mead Consolidated School was established and in operation between the years of 1917 and 1960, and during those forty-three years, the community grew and soon “became a hub of entertainment, with everyone participating.”² The people were involved in everything, from school sporting events, musical performances, get-togethers, teenage hangouts, and so much more. The Mead schools brought people from near and far to learn and experience new opportunities together and create a great society.

Prior to 1917, there were many small school houses in the Mead and Highlandlake areas. Schools such as Pearl Howlett School, Liberty Hall Grange, Pleasant Hill, and of course, Mead. For one reason or another, these schools, and others, combined to create what was then Mead Consolidated School (1917). The two-story, brick school building was comprised of grades first through twelfth and could be found in downtown Mead. It sat on the corner of Welker Street and just off County Road 7 – very close to where the current elementary school of the town stands now.

The school was the center and pride of the town and was well supported by the friends, families, and members of the surrounding communities. Support could be found in much of the school’s traditions, sports, and various events. Gerry Newton³, a 1956 alumni of Mead Consolidated School, recalls, “Moms, dads, and the farming community supported and attended sports games at the school. Basketball and football were the big things for the school as well as musical programs and performances.” Just as mentioned by Mr. Newton, Mead had quite the

¹ From a letter about the history of Mead, 1919-1923, written to Mead Jr. High School in 1980

² Also from letter mentioned above

³ Quick bio: Gerry Newton – 1956 alumni. Born in Highland Lake in 1938, moved to Mead at age 2. Went all twelve years at the Mead School, then moved away a year after graduating (1957)

successful sports program. He also quotes, “[Mead] was strongest in academics and sports.” They were the 1957 State Champions (class B division) for basketball and the 1949 Six-man Football State Champions. The basketball team had gone to state receiving different placements and winning various competitions. Also, many boys – especially the farm boys who were well-conditioned from the work on the homestead – were involved with the emerging success and popularity of football. They played on an area of gravel marked with white lime and wore only a helmet and shoulder pads for protective gear. In addition to football and basketball, the school was involved in many other sports. The girls played volleyball and basketball and wore, what would be considered today “peculiar uniforms.” They wore black bloomers with a sailor’s collar on a white middie blouse with a black tie. It was plain to see that the black and orange Mead [Consolidated School] Bulldogs were definitively some strong contenders in the field of athletics.

Music was also an enjoyable activity from which the community thrived. It was one of the main sources of entertainment during the early 1920s when there were no TVs, very few radios, and no local amusement centers. Occasionally, there would be a group of people singing and dancing while anyone who could play a bit of guitar or sing a few bars led the festivities. The people loved to be around each other. There were always children and people hanging out with friends, musically jamming out in someone’s home or hay loft, or taking “...a trip to Snyder’s (or Snider’s) Drug store and ice-cream parlor to order a Tin Roof, one of their specialties...Life was good and you could be so lucky!” (H.E.B). Mead was a pleasurable town. Life was simple, yet enjoyable.

However, all good things must eventually undergo beneficial and malicious evolution. As Mead Consolidated School grew, so did the world around it. The continuing years brought many changes, including changes in technology, economics, and authoritative controls. During the period of time Mead Consolidated was open, the country was constantly facing new events, conflicts, and revolutions. The “Roaring Twenties” brought new forms of technology such as automotives, electricity, and, in particular, the radio. Bullock quotes, “A never to be forgotten thrill was to hear a radio for the first time...Imagine! Capturing music out of the air with a contraption called a radio! That had to be the ultimate in technology!” Despite the advancements in technology, America began facing new struggles over the next few decades, such as the Great Depression and later, World War II. These major events put the country’s economics in turmoil

and would have had a fairly negative effect on nation-wide education and school funding during that time. But regardless of these road bumps, Mead continued to move forward. Around the 1950s, the baby boom was in full swing bringing large families with it. An example of this phenomenon could be Mr. Gerry Newton's family (1930s), consisting of eleven boys and five girls. This influx of children brought new life as well as social and economic benefits to the schools of the Mead and Highlandlake areas.

In the early 1960s, Mead Consolidated School became a part of the St. Vrain Valley School District. Shortly after being incorporated into the district, the school board voted for the Mead school to be closed down for reasons still completely unknown. They moved all the undergraduate students from Mead to Longmont in the year 1960. Gerry Newton quotes, "I hated to see it [shut down]. But, 'bigger is better' is what they decided I guess. [In my opinion,] it was not a good thing to do in retrospect; not ideal," In the early 1970s, the two-story, brick building of the Mead school was torn down, leaving only the gymnasium behind. An elementary school was then built on the same site which is present day Mead Elementary.

And now, after almost fifty years of history, the Mead schools have been restored, each hoping to bring justice to the past legacy of Mead Consolidated School and bring the small community closer together through its youth and citizens. And from the little Mead Mustangs, to the Mead Middle Bulldogs, and now, the Mead High School Mavericks, Mead is no longer just an unnoticed farming town. It is an educational mecca with a passion for creating a bright future for all its residents and neighboring communities. Its voice and character shine through as it continues to move into the future as well as remember the glorious days of the past where a "stringy twelve year old girl," and others, experienced the joys and trials of Mead Consolidated School.

"Mead School, you have contributed to all of the advances in education and learning and may you never cease doing it!" – Hazel Bullock, 1980

Why This Topic is Important to Me:

As a student at Mead High School, we hear all kinds of stories and see photos/trophies in glass cases of legacies of a particular school that existed about fifty years ago. Mead Consolidated School. These pictures and stories intrigued me, and I wanted to find out more. I wanted to find out about Mead Consolidated School's traditions and heritage, and as I learned

about it, the more I realized how important the school was to the Mead communities back then and how important it is, currently, that we have the Mead schools now. And even though we may have new buildings and traditions and standards, the Mead Consolidated Schools are still very much a part of what we know today, for it has definitely left its mark on the small town. Overall, I feel that the Mead Consolidated School has played an enormous part in the history of Mead. It brought educational opportunities, athletic and performance prospects, and most of all it brought people together, which is exactly what made the school great.

1/20/10 Interview: Mr. Gerry Newton (Mead Consolidated School Alumni)

Please explain the way the Mead Consolidated Schools functioned. As I understood it, there were many schools that became part of the Mead schools overtime. Schools like Highland Lake School, Liberty school, and others.

Several schools like Pearl Howlett School, grades 1-12

Between which years was Mead Consolidated School open and in operation?

1917-1960. moved undergraduate students into Longmont

Which year did you graduate?

1956

Have you lived in Mead your whole life? How long?

Yes, born in Highland Lake in 1938, the moved to Mead at age 2. Moved away in 1957 (a year after graduating)

Where was the High School located?

Located in the town of Mead where the grade school (elem.) is now currently located. The Mead School was torn down but gym was left. Elementary school was later built on the side. (south end of Mead)

What were the school colors and mascot?

The school colors where black and orange and their mascot was the Bulldogs.

Please describe the atmosphere of the school in appearance and/or culture.

The school was made up of grades 1-12 and the younger kids always seemed to look up to the older grades

What were some famous or widely enjoyed traditions of the school?

Moms, dads, and the faming community supported and attended sports games at the school. Basketball and football were the big things for the school as well as musical programs/performances.

I noticed a fair number of trophies and awards on display in the school showcases at Mead HS for things like sports and marching band. In your opinion, what was Mead Consolidated's strongest area? (sports, academics, performing arts, etc.)

Some of class pictures were burned in a fire and some moved to town hall now at mead. Wife and friends moved pictures to town hall which are now at Mead HS.

Strongest in academics and sports
In 1957 basketball state champions class b division
1949 6-man football state champions

How did the school influence the town and vice versa?

See above (tradition question)

What is your most memorable memory or experience from the school?

Playing basketball (played at state in 56) (came from large family 11 boy 5 girls) close enough to play basketball together. "It was a big thing" ☺

What were your thoughts on the closing of the Mead Consolidated School?

"Hated to see it" school board voted for Mead to consolidate with Longmont. Unknown reasoning.... "Bigger is better".

Mead Consolidated School provided good education.

What are/were your thoughts about the re-opening of Mead High School last fall?

Good thing

Is there anything else you would like to add or more information you would like to share?

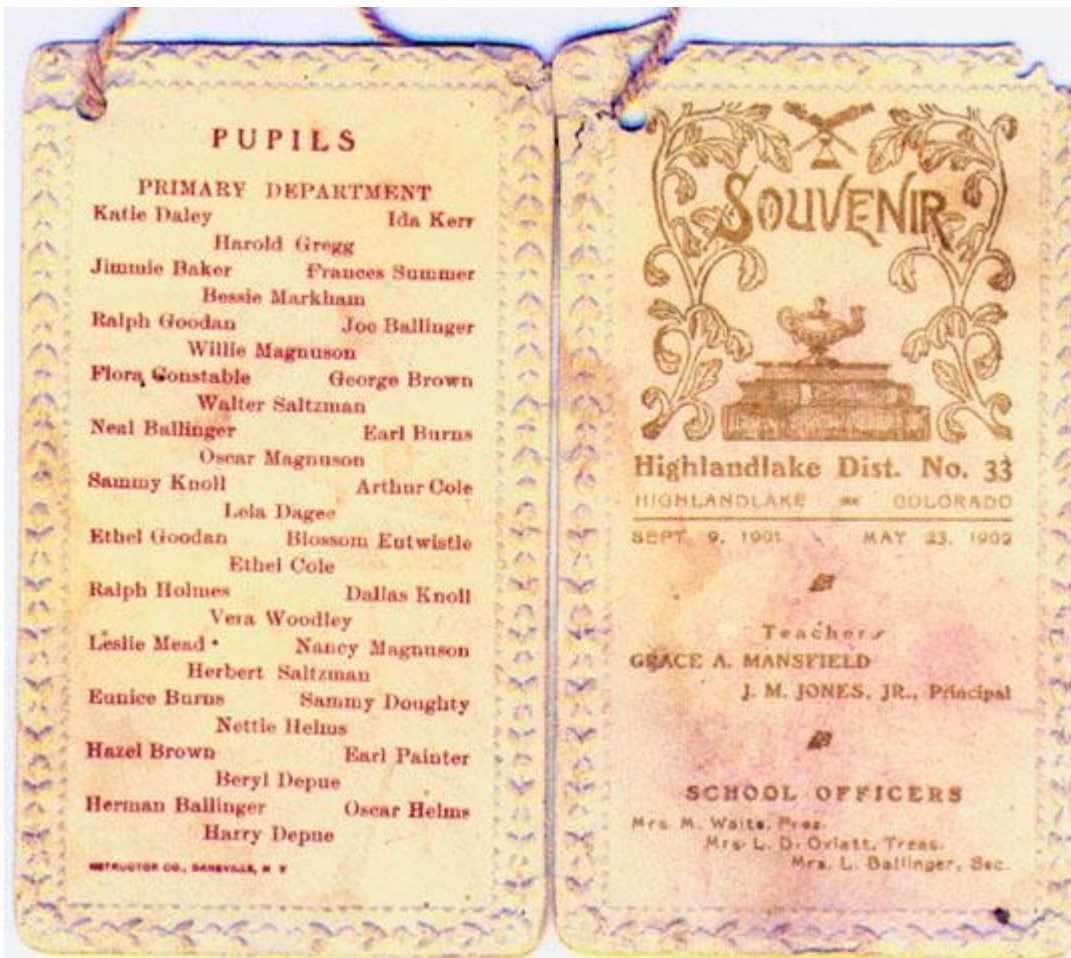
Mead+Longmont: "not a good thing to do in retrospect" transportation from mead to Longmont was not ideal.

Works Cited

- Bradley, Becky, Sue Goodwin, Bettye Sutton, and Peggy Whitley. "American Cultural History: The Twentieth Century." *Lone Star College- Kingwood Library*. n.p., 1999. Web. 18 Feb. 2010. <<http://kclibrary.lonestar.edu/decades.html>>. (pages updated 2008/2009)
- Bullock, Hazel E. "Some Memories of Mead & The Mead School 1919-1923." *Historic Highlandlake*. Colorado Historical Society State Historical Fund, 21 Oct. 2009. Web. 8 Feb. 2010. <<http://historichighlandlake.org/bios/bullock.htm>>.
- Gammill, Homer L. "Little History of the Early Days of Mead." *Historic Highlandlake*. Colorado Historical Society State Historical Fund, 21 Oct. 2009. Web. 8 Feb. 2010. <<http://historichighlandlake.org/bios/gammill.htm>>.
- Mead Area Community Foundation*. Longmont Community Foundation, n.d. Web. 8 Feb. 2010. <<http://meadfoundation.org/history.html>>.
- "Mead, Colorado." *City-Data.com*. Onboard Informatics, n.d. Web. 8 Feb. 2010. <<http://www.city-data.com/city/Mead-Colorado.html>>.
- "Mead Newspapers: Newspaper Stories." *Historic Highlandlake*. Colorado Historical Society State Historical Fund, 17 Oct. 2009. Web. 8 Feb. 2010. <<http://historichighlandlake.org/mead/meadnews.htm>>.
- Newton, Gerry. Telephone interview. 20 Jan. 2010.
- School bus, Mead Consolidated School*. Colorado State University Libraries, Archives and Special Collections, Historical Photographs Collection. *Colorado Agriculture Bibliography*. Web. 8 Feb. 2010. <https://lib.colostate.edu/research/agbib/images/CSUarch_EXT5-auto-transpooration.jpg>.
- Web. 8 Feb. 2010. <http://historichighlandlake.org/_assets/images/school/Meadhs.jpg>.
- Web. 8 Feb. 2010. <http://historichighlandlake.org/_assets/images/emphemera/1901-02School_Roster.jpg>.



Mead Consolidated School building (year unknown)



Highlandlake District Class Roster for the school year of 1901-1902 (before Mead Consolidated School)