

South Dakota State University
**Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional
Repository and Information Exchange**

Agricultural Experiment Station Rural Sociology
Pamphlets

SDSU Agricultural Experiment Station

6-15-1941

The Problem of Declining Enrollment in the Elementary Schools Of Campbell County

W. F. Kumlien

C. Scandrette

Raymond Hatch

Follow this and additional works at: http://openprairie.sdstate.edu/agexperimentsta_rural-socio

 Part of the [Rural Sociology Commons](#)

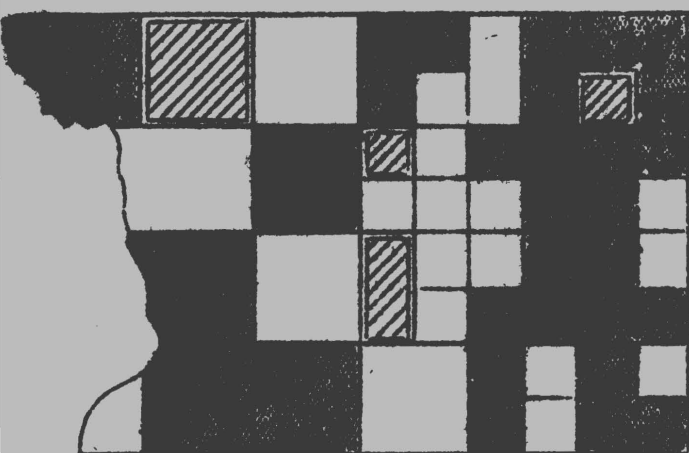
Recommended Citation

Kumlien, W. F.; Scandrette, C.; and Hatch, Raymond, "The Problem of Declining Enrollment in the Elementary Schools Of Campbell County" (1941). *Agricultural Experiment Station Rural Sociology Pamphlets*. 32.
http://openprairie.sdstate.edu/agexperimentsta_rural-socio/32

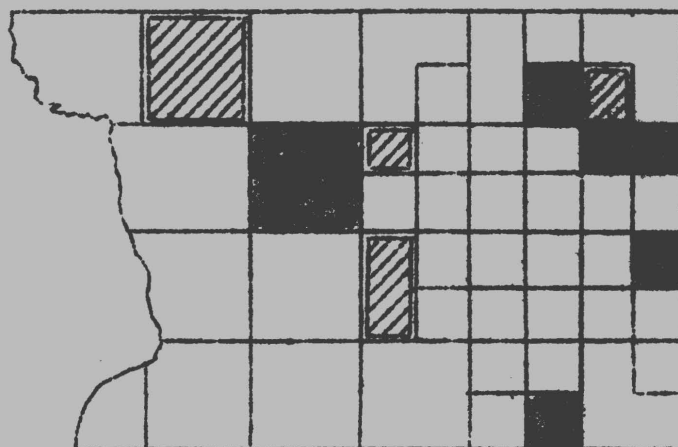
This Pamphlet is brought to you for free and open access by the SDSU Agricultural Experiment Station at Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional Repository and Information Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Agricultural Experiment Station Rural Sociology Pamphlets by an authorized administrator of Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional Repository and Information Exchange. For more information, please contact michael.biondo@sdstate.edu.

THE PROBLEM OF DECLINING ENROLLMENT
in the
Elementary Schools
of
Campbell County

W. F. Kumlien
C. Scandrette
Raymond Hatch



1930



1940

Shaded areas in the maps above indicate common districts whose schools enrolled 15 or more pupils in 1930 and in 1940. In districts having more than one school, the average enrollment is used. Twenty-three districts were found in this group in 1930, as compared with only five in 1940. Cross-hatched areas represent independent districts.

Department of Rural Sociology
Agricultural Experiment Station of the South Dakota State College of
Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, Brookings, South Dakota

EXPLANATORY NOTE

During recent years, enrollments in most South Dakota elementary schools have declined at a very rapid rate. The prevailing type of rural school district organization in most counties has proved rather ineffective in coping with dwindling enrollments and with the consequent high costs per pupil.

It is the purpose of this pamphlet to assist educators, school board members and other Campbell county leaders by analyzing the nature of the problem and by presenting suggestions for its solution as they have grown out of the experiences of other South Dakota communities.

* * * * *

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This study was made possible through the cooperation of the State and Federal Work Projects Administration and the South Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station. The project is officially designated as W.P.A. Project No. 665-74-3-143. The authors gratefully acknowledge the cooperation of Miss Mabel M. Rossow, who has recently stepped down from the office of County Superintendent of Schools, and of Mr. Wilmer Herbold, her successor. Most of the data used in this study was secured from their records. Further acknowledgement is made of high school superintendents who supplied lists of their tuition students.

* * * * *

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Trend in Elementary Enrollment, 1890 - 1940 1
Declining Birth Rates and Population Decrease as Factors in Enrollment Trends 2
Elementary Enrollments by Districts--1920, 1930, 1940 3
Elementary Enrollment as Related to Costs Per Pupil 4
When Schools can be Closed Advantageously 5
High School Attendance Areas Suggest Basis for Reorganization 6
Improved Roads Show Increasing Accessibility of Farm Areas to Village Service Centers 7
How Certain South Dakota Rural Communities are Successfully Solving the Declining Enrollment Problem 8

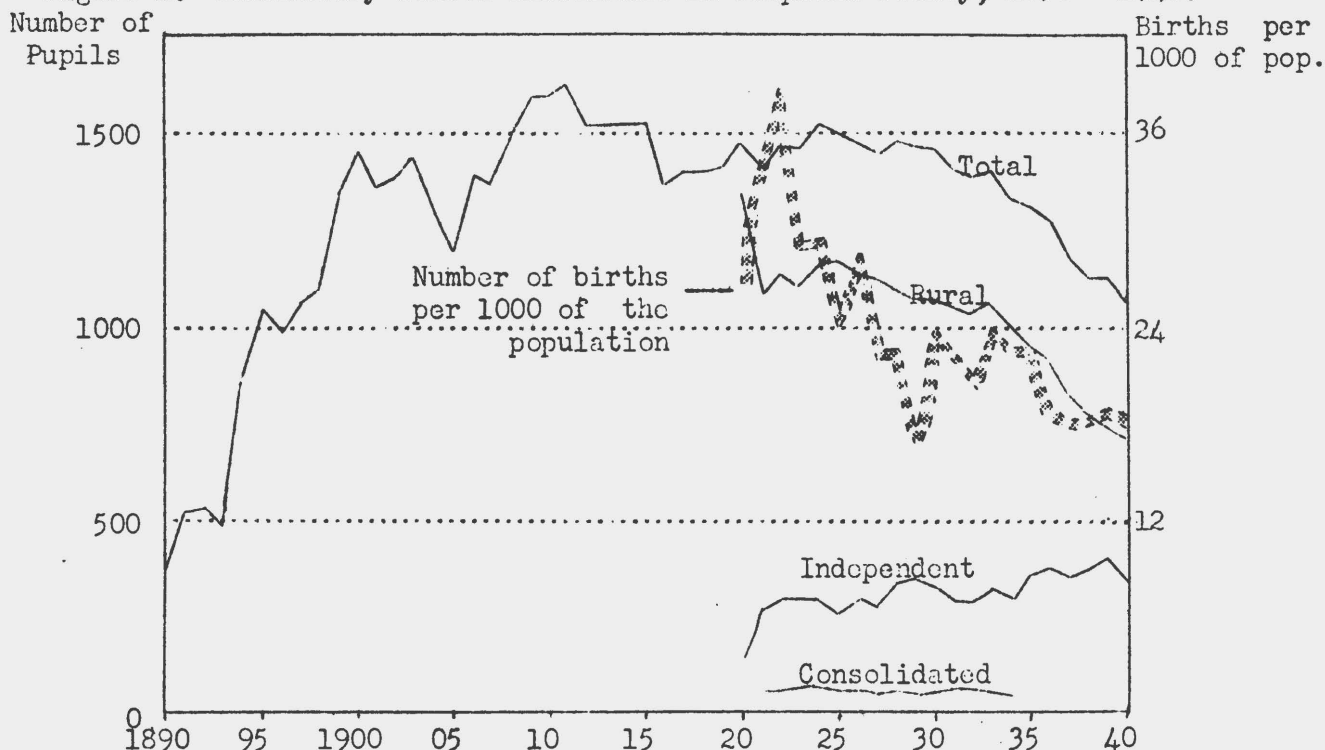
The Problem of Declining Enrollment in Elementary Schools of Campbell County

Basing their predictions on the steady fall in birth rate, population experts for a number of years have held that a widespread decline will occur in elementary enrollments.

A glance at Figure 1 will show that this prediction has been fulfilled in Campbell county. The peak enrollment was attained as long ago as 1911, but the downward trend has been most pronounced since 1930. From 1,440 pupils in the latter year, enrollment had declined over 27 percent by 1940 to 1,050 pupils. Rural enrollments have suffered heaviest losses, dwindling 33 percent during the same period. The fact that independent enrollments have apparently held their own is partially explained by the fact that since 1934 they include the enrollment for the village of Artas, which previously was classified as "consolidated."

The trend in the Campbell county birth rate is also shown in Figure 1. It will be noted that its decline corresponds rather closely to that of enrollment. There were only 18 births per 1000 of the population in 1940, as compared with a 5 year average for the period 1920-1924 of 31.4. The natural result has been that there have been fewer children who arrive at school age with each passing year.

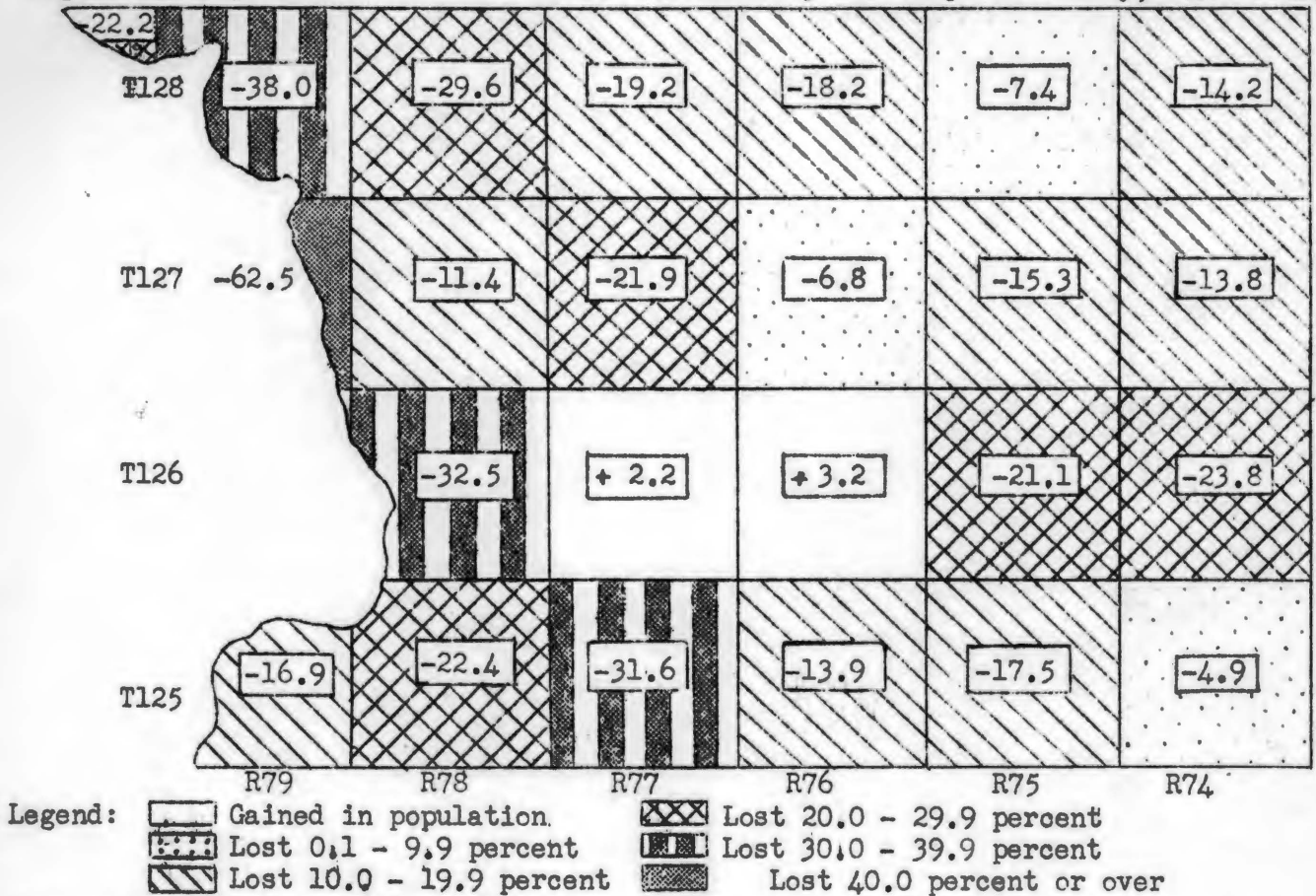
Figure 1. Elementary School Enrollment in Campbell County, 1890 - 1940.



Note: For the birth rate trend the positions 0, 500, 1000, and 1500 correspond to 0, 12, 24, and 36 births, respectively.

Source: Biennial Reports of State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Figure 2. Population Gains and Losses in Townships of Campbell County, 1930 - 1940.



Source: Releases of 1940 U. S. Census.

Supplementing the fall in the birth rate as a factor in enrollment decline has been the loss of population through outward migration. Between 1930 and 1940 the population of Campbell county dropped 10.7 per cent, from 5,629 to 5,033. Since the combined population for the three incorporated villages of the county--Mound City, Herreid and Pollock--increased from 1,190 in 1930 to 1,314 in 1940, it is evident that the farm population suffered rather heavy losses during the decade.

Figure 2 shows the percent of population change in townships (open country areas only) of Campbell county. It will be noted that losses occurred in all except two townships and that they exceeded 30 percent in four. As an indication that population losses have directly affected enrollments, it was found that the combined enrollment for three of these (T 127, R 79 was omitted because of its inclusion within another school district) dropped 46 percent between 1930 and 1940, while enrollment in the three districts showing the least tendency toward decline fell off less than 9 percent during the same period.

It appears that although the dwindling nature of the birth rate is probably the underlying factor in the elementary enrollment decline, losses through migration from the county have also played an important part. The problem has been rendered most severe in those farming areas from which migration has been heaviest.

Figure 3. Elementary School Enrollment in Campbell County Districts, 1920, 1930, and 1940

(32)	30 34 19	Pollock Ind. 144 141 133	(4) 54 49 34	(14) 8 50 32	(16) 37 25 25	(39) 23 7	(15) 24 63 39		
				Herreid (45)- 12 4		(40) 8 20 17	Artas Ind. 58 53 33		
(31)			(17)	Ind. 136 122 127	(26) 19 25 7	(35) 35 22 13	(34) 30 20 11	(11) 9 51 30	
	41 25 22		57 64 48	(24) 7 11 13	(25) 10 -	(36) 7 10	(18) 22 16 12	(19) 33 18 8	(42) - - 8
(8)	19 25 9	(10)	Mound City Ind. 73 40 40	(23) 21 7 9 60 46	(28) 22 10 10	(27) 16 11	(43) 33 11	(44) 9 22	
				(22) 14 9	(29) 25 10	(21) 34 17 -	(38) 16 11	(26) 7 25 11	
(9)	(2) 10 8 10	(6)	(13) 41 14 27		(33) 28 17 5	(46) - 11	(12) 9 45 42	(37) 24 5 10	
	63 52 28		82 64 38		(41) 20 29 12	(5) 14 13 17			

Legend: Top figure - 1920 enrollment
 Middle figure - 1930 enrollment
 Lower figure - 1940 enrollment

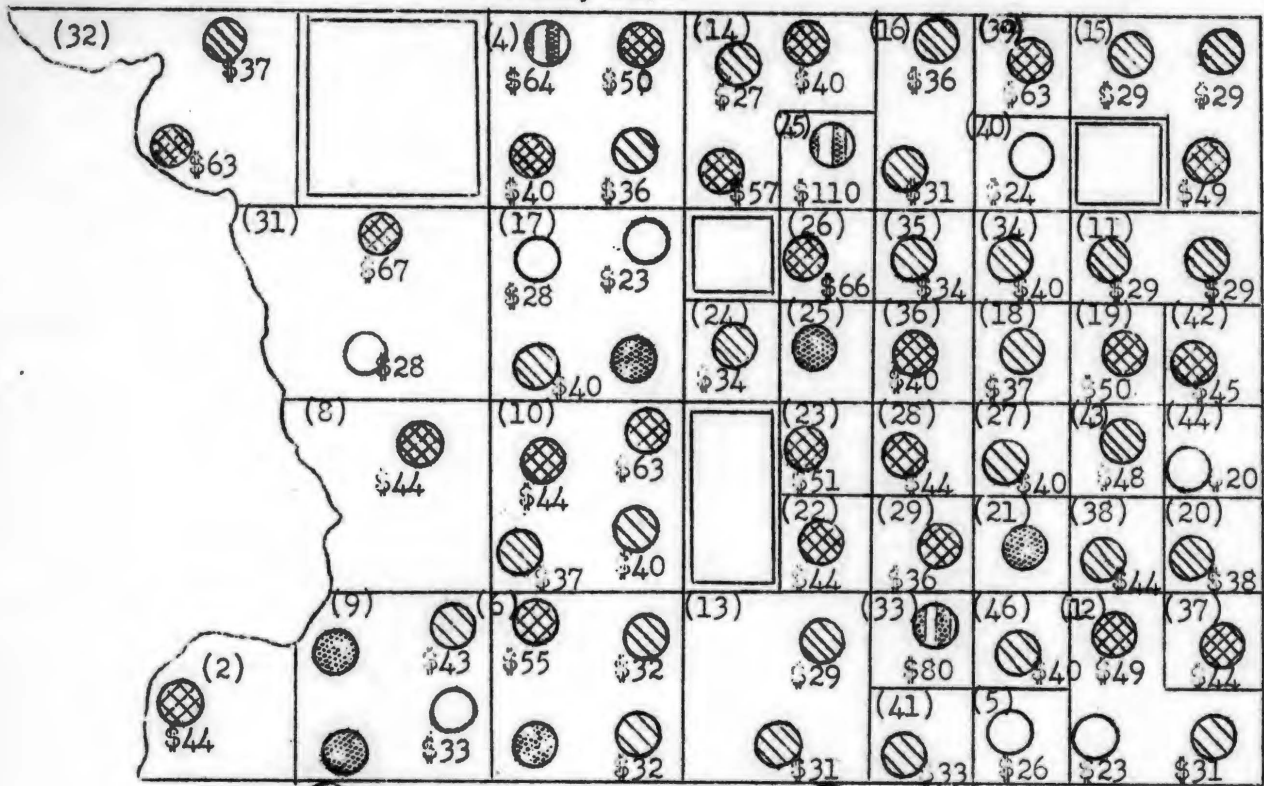
Source: Records of Campbell County Superintendent of Schools

Sixty-two rural schools were operating within 42 common districts of Campbell county in 1940. Campbell county combines the small one-school district, which is prevalent in eastern South Dakota but found in few counties as far west as Campbell, with the larger township district having one to four schools. Four independent districts, with schools at Pollock, Herreid, Mound City and Artas, completed the county school district organization.

Figure 3 shows the elementary enrollment in each district for 1920, 1930 and 1940. It will be noted that with a few exceptions the trend has been downward, particularly between 1930 and 1940. Six rural schools had been closed by 1940 and three others were operating during that year with five or fewer pupils. Twenty-six, or 42 percent, of the common schools had ten or fewer pupils. The average enrollment in rural schools has fallen steadily from 17.7 pupils in 1920 to 16.4 in 1930 and 11.5 in 1940.

It will be noted that between 1930 and 1940 the independent districts, with the lone exception of Herreid, also shared in the enrollment decline. Their losses however, were not as heavy as in the common districts.

Figure 4. Enrollment and Instructional Cost Per Pupil in Campbell County Schools, 1940.*



Legend: Closed school 1 - 5 pupils 6 - 10 11 - 15 pupils 16 pupils and over

Source: Figure below school site is the cost per pupil
Records of Campbell County Superintendent of Schools

The instructional cost per pupil in each of the common schools of Campbell county is shown in Figure 4. In 1940, costs per pupil ranged from \$20 in Hoff school, District 44, where 22 pupils were enrolled, to \$110 in Wacker school, District 45, with an enrollment of only 4 pupils. The smaller the school enrollment, the greater is the per pupil cost.

Table 1 (below) indicates that the operation of schools for five or fewer pupils is excessively expensive on a cost per pupil basis. Costs in this group of schools averaged \$82.86 as compared with \$25.00 for the group having the largest enrollments (16 or over). The average for all schools was \$37.56. Per pupil costs in Campbell county are relatively low, chiefly because of a low salary scale and the operation of rural schools on only an eight-month basis.

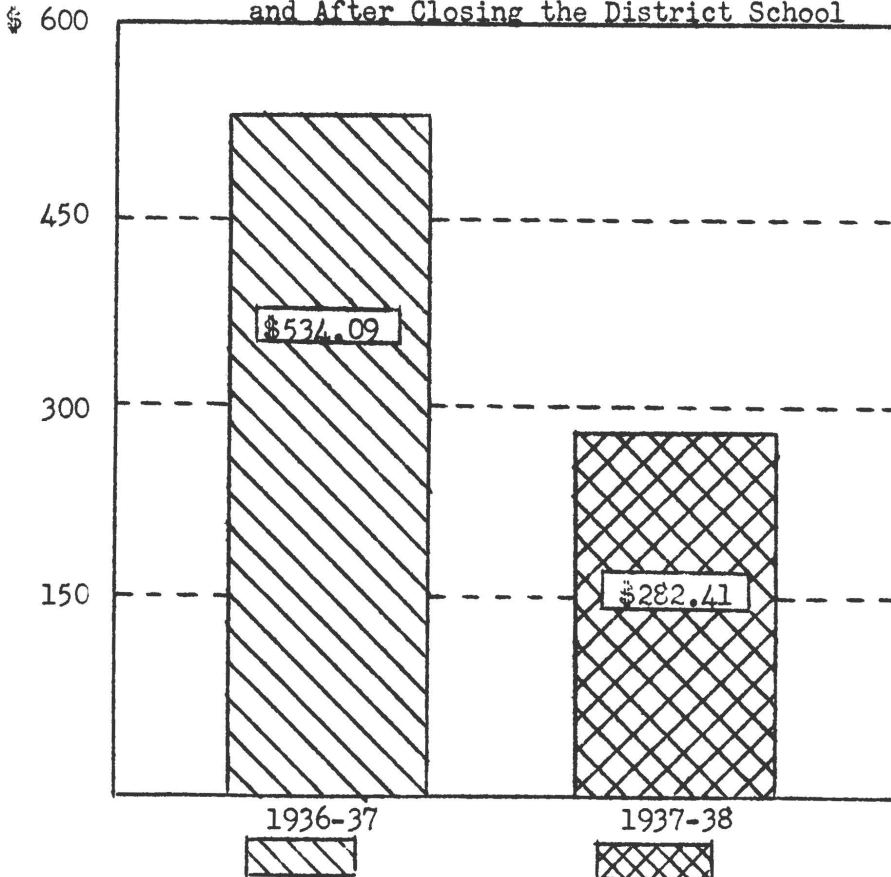
Table I. Cost of Operating Schools of Various Sizes in Campbell County, 1940*

Size of School	Number of Schools	Number of Pupils	Total Cost	Cost per Pupil
Total	62	712	\$26,745.00	\$37.56
5 or fewer pupils	3	14	1,160.00	82.86
6 to 10 pupils	23	198	9,640.00	48.69
11 to 15 pupils	28	356	12,345.00	34.68
16 or more pupils	8	144	3,600.00	25.00

Source: Records of Campbell County Superintendent of Schools.

*Based on teachers' salaries only.

Figure 5. Costs of Elementary Education in District 21 Before and After Closing the District School



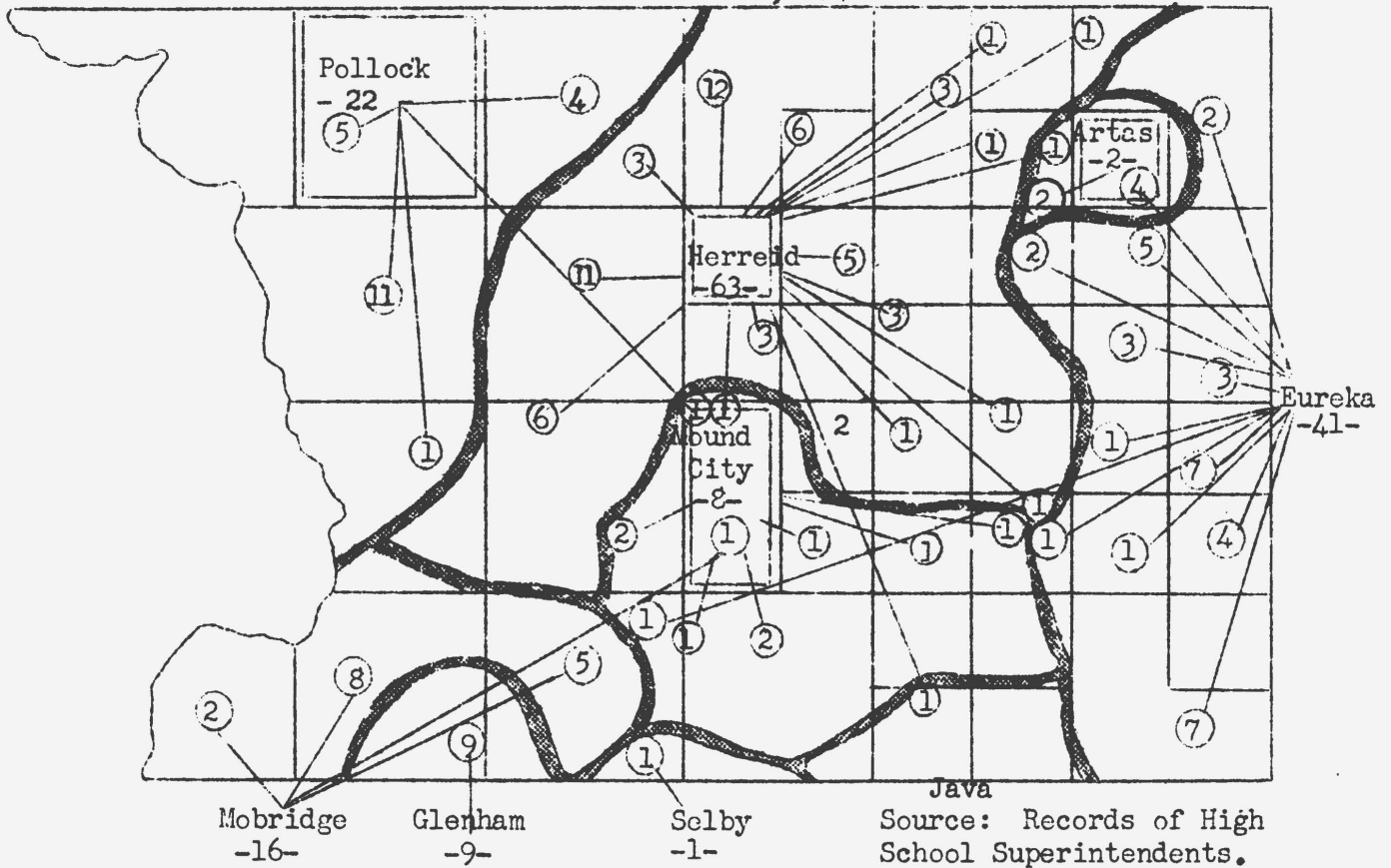
Legend: Before closing After closing

Source: Records of Campbell County Superintendent of Schools

That it is advisable to close a school when enrollment declines to a minimum is shown in Figure 5. During the 1936-37 school term, District 21 operated its lone school for eight pupils at a total cost of \$534.09. By the following year the number of pupils had dwindled to five, so the district closed its school and sent the remaining pupils to a nearby district, paying transportation and tuition charges (tuition amounted to \$155). The total costs to the district in 1937-38 were \$282.44, with a net saving to the district of \$251.65 in a single year.

The experience of other districts in Campbell and other South Dakota counties points to the advisability of closing schools in which enrollments have fallen to a low figure - especially if the enrollment does not exceed five pupils. In almost every instance such action has made possible substantial savings to the district without impairing the educational advantages of the pupils.

Figure 6. Open Country Areas in Campbell County from which High Schools Drew Their Students, 1940.

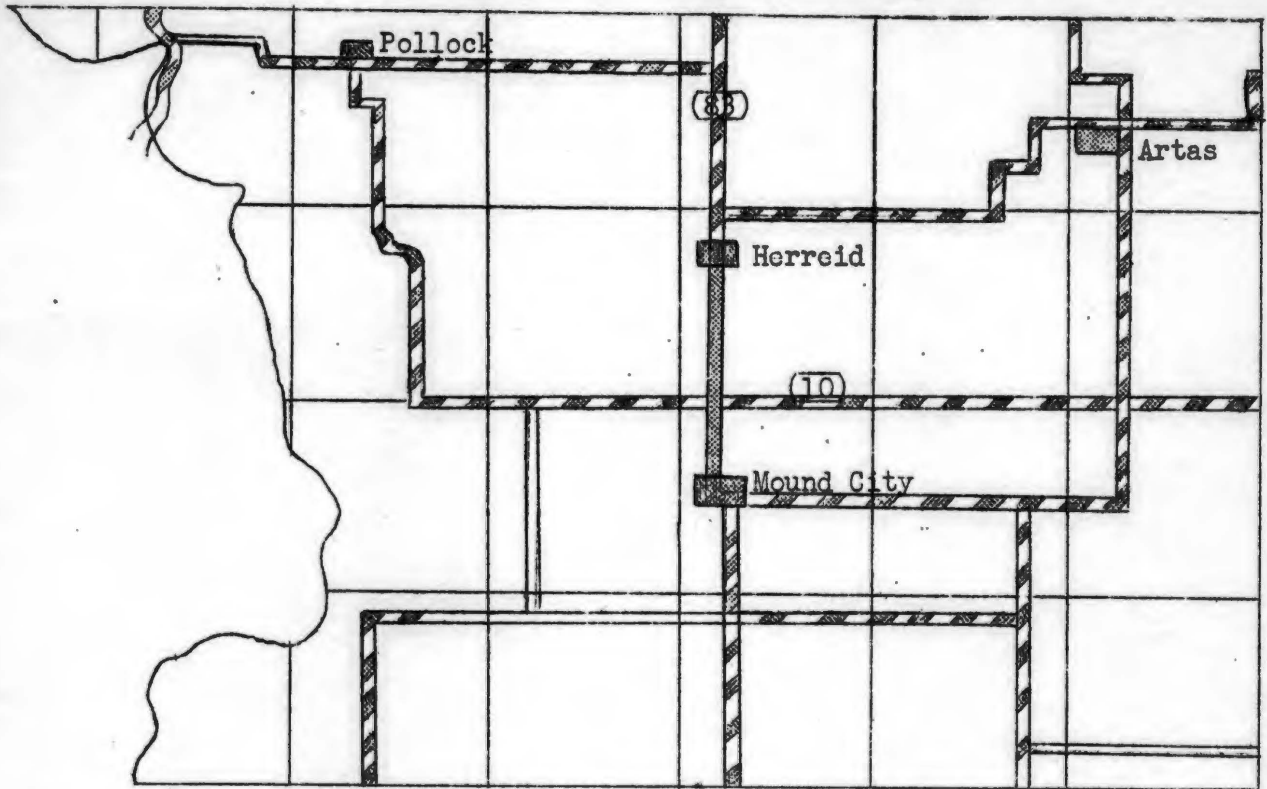


Since 1921 it has been compulsory for school districts having no high school of their own to pay tuition costs for their students who attend high school in towns and villages. Common districts of Campbell county, realizing that the costs of operating their own secondary schools would be prohibitive, have availed themselves of the high schools already located in town and village centers, and in 1940 were sending almost two hundred students to high schools in towns and villages within or adjacent to the county. Figure 6 shows the areas from which each of these high schools drew their tuition students, as well as their non-tuition students from rural areas, in 1940.

This plan, which has operated to the satisfaction of both town and country, presents a possible ultimate solution to the problem of declining enrollments. As rural enrollments decrease and costs per pupil continue to mount, does it not seem practical for common districts to close their schools and send their few remaining pupils to town schools, paying tuition costs, much as the high school students are now being handled? In addition to effecting savings to the common districts involved, this plan would enable children from rural-farm areas of Campbell county to enjoy the superior facilities which are to be found in town schools.

Some districts may find it more convenient when the closing of a school has been deemed advisable to send their remaining pupils to the nearest rural school still in operation. In districts having two or more schools this step can be readily taken and no tuition costs would be involved. One or two centrally located schools could probably handle the needs of any of the large districts quite adequately. In small one-school districts tuition would have to be paid to the district to which the pupils were sent.

Figure 7. Highway System in Campbell County, 1940.



Legend:  Hard surface  Gravelled  Graded

Source: Official Map of the State Highway Commission, 1940

As may be seen in Figure 7, improved roads extend throughout Campbell county. This factor, together with the automobile, makes village centers in or near the county readily accessible to farmers wherever they might live.

Chiefly because of the increased base of transportation, a large number of the services formerly performed by open country institutions on a localized neighborhood basis have been shifted to village centers which are assuming the role of service stations for their surrounding country areas. The farmer of today goes to the village to buy groceries, machinery, clothing and other articles for the farm or home; to sell his produce; to attend church; and to participate in group meetings and social activities. His sons and daughters, as previously observed, attend the village high school. The next step in the concentration of services in the village center--one which will likely be hastened by such factors as shrinking enrollments and staggering per pupil costs--may involve the sending of the farmer's younger children to the village elementary school.

How Certain South Dakota Rural Communities Are Successfully Solving the Declining Enrollment Problem

School boards confronted with the problem of declining enrollments should study their local situation carefully before taking action. The four plans listed below have all been tested by different South Dakota communities and have been found practical. One or the other of the first two alternatives has frequently been used as a temporary measure until further action was necessary. The last two plans are in the nature of a more or less permanent reorganization of the present rural district system.

Cooperating with nearby rural schools

When enrollment has dropped to five or fewer pupils certain districts have kept their district organization intact but have closed one or more schools. In cases where all schools of the district have been closed, the remaining pupils have been sent to the nearest adjoining rural school where satisfactory arrangements for tuition and transportation could be made.

Tuition pupils to town schools

Where satisfactory arrangements could not be made with nearby rural schools, the remaining pupils have been sent as tuition students to the nearest independent school in village or town. This plan is frequently no more expensive than the first, but has the further advantage of better educational experience than is usually possible in the one room school. In effect, it is essentially the same method which has been successfully used in sending farm children as tuition pupils to high school.

Consolidation

Where the second plan has been in operation for a number of years, town and nearby country districts have frequently consolidated into a single district. Such a plan has many advantages, but should first be tried out informally as a centralized school system before determining the details of consolidation

County-wide district plan

In at least one west river county a county-wide district plan is now in operation. Under such a plan one county school board determines the location of rural schools and can regulate the number of such schools to fit in with the enrollment trend.