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A STUDY OF HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICTING IN
JUDITH BASIN COUNTY
1951-1954

by

THOMAS JOHN CORBETT, Jr.

B. A. MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY, 1951

Presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education

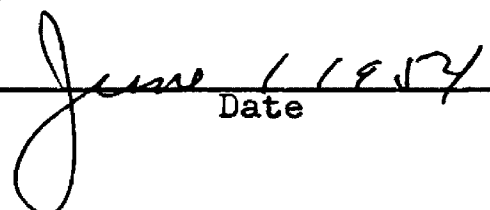
MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY

1954

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

REVIEW OF SCHOOL LEGISLATION

The Montana School Laws of 1895 define a school district as follows:

"The term 'school district' as used in this title is declared to mean the territory under the jurisdiction of a single board, designated as, 'board of trustees,' and shall be organized in form and manner as hereinafter provided and shall be known as district no. ___ of ___ county; provided, that all school districts now existing, as shown by the records of the county superintendents, are hereby recognized as legally organized districts."¹

Section 1804 of the same chapter states:

"Whenever the interests of the district require it the board of trustees may establish a high school, employ a principal teacher, and subordinate teachers, and grade the school into departments and classes."²

School districts were established in Montana and authorization given for the establishment of high schools by the territorial government of the state.³ As the people came to want high schools, the common school board of trustees

¹School Laws of the State of Montana, 1895, Chapter VI, Section 1750.

²Ibid., Section 1804.

³Emmet J. Riley, Development of the Montana State Educational Organization, 1864-1930 (Washington, D. C.: Catholic University of America, 1931), pp. 5-7, 95.

established them. These high schools were financed by taxation of the local district plus the revenue from state lands. In 1907 a law was enacted authorizing a county levy up to three mills to be apportioned to the high schools according to the average daily attendance in each.⁴ In 1917 this permissive high school levy was raised to ten mills.⁵

Present legislation provides for a state supported foundation program aimed at providing a uniform system of free public schools.⁶ This foundation program assures each high school a minimum amount of money on which to operate. The total budget may exceed but cannot be less than this. Money in excess of the foundation program must be raised on the local district or high school district.

Under this plan if the county levies a ten mill high school levy the state equalization will contribute up to 50% of the minimum budget, based on a schedule prescribed by the legislature.⁷ State support is not given to counties that do not levy ten mills for financing their high schools. If, as in Judith Basin County, the county ten mill levy plus income from other sources raises sufficient revenue to meet the minimum budget requirements no state equalization is provided (see Figure one).

⁴School Laws of the State of Montana, 1907, Chapter XXI, Article 2112, Section 2.

⁵Ibid., 1917, Chapter XX, Article 2002.

⁶Ibid., 1953, Chapter XXXVI, Section 75-3610.

⁷Ibid., Chapter 45, Section 74-4516.1.

Funds in excess		--Additional money may be raised by special levy on the district voted by the residents. \$4,000.00
		--District may levy 30% of 93% of the foundation program or 15 mills whichever is the least, without vote. 4,464.00
		--District must levy (1) mill to raise. 1,000.00
Foundation		--State equalization (May not exceed 50% of the foundation program). . . 8,000.00
High School		--Share of county high school 10 mill levy. <u>7,000.00</u>
		Total budget. \$24,464.00

FIGURE 1

THE MONTANA STATE FOUNDATION PROGRAM
AND HIGH SCHOOL BUDGETING

1. Budget based on school of 40 ANB.
2. Total foundation program is \$16,000. (40 x \$400)
3. District's taxable valuation is \$1,000,000.
4. The foundation program is to include cost of operation and maintenance only and not the costs of transportation, retirement, school lunch, and debt service.

LOCAL SETTING OF THE PROBLEM

Judith Basin County lies in the central portion of the State of Montana. Its area is about 1,860 square miles; its present total taxable valuation is \$6,387,800. In 1920 when this county was established there were 59 common school districts, eight of which were operating high schools. In 1934 the number of common school districts had dropped to forty-seven. High schools were being operated at Geysler, Stanford, Windham, Moccasin, and Hobson with districts 35, 39, and 210 forming a joint district with Buffalo in Fergus County and district 36, a joint district with Judith Gap of Wheatland County. By 1950 the number of common school districts had dropped to twenty and the number of high schools to four plus the above mentioned joint high school districts⁸ (see Figures 2 and 3).

This development is typical of much of Montana. In the infancy of the state homesteaders came and settled plots of land and as soon as a sufficient number of eligible school children were available these residents asked for a school and a district. Since then the farm unit has become larger and the farmer in many instances has moved to town making many small rural schools unnecessary. With the coming of better methods of transportation and improved roads the

⁸Mrs. Mabel Jackson, County Superintendent, Judith Basin County, personal interview, March 4, 1954.

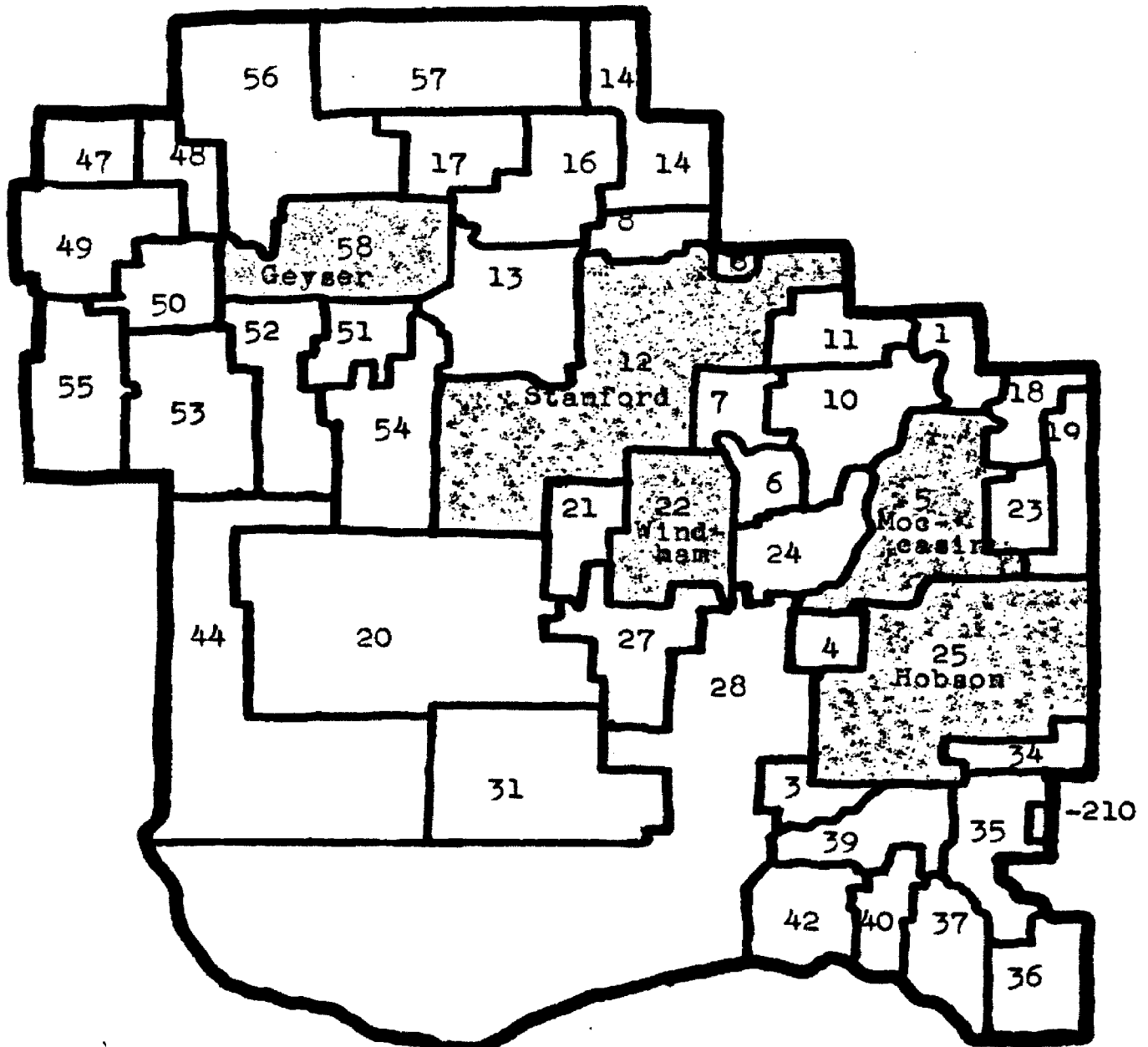


FIGURE 2

JUDITH BASIN COUNTY

SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN 1934

The shaded areas are the districts that were operating high schools.

Source: Montana Education Association, "Inequalities in the Ability of School Districts to Support Education," Montana Education, 15:40, September, 1938.

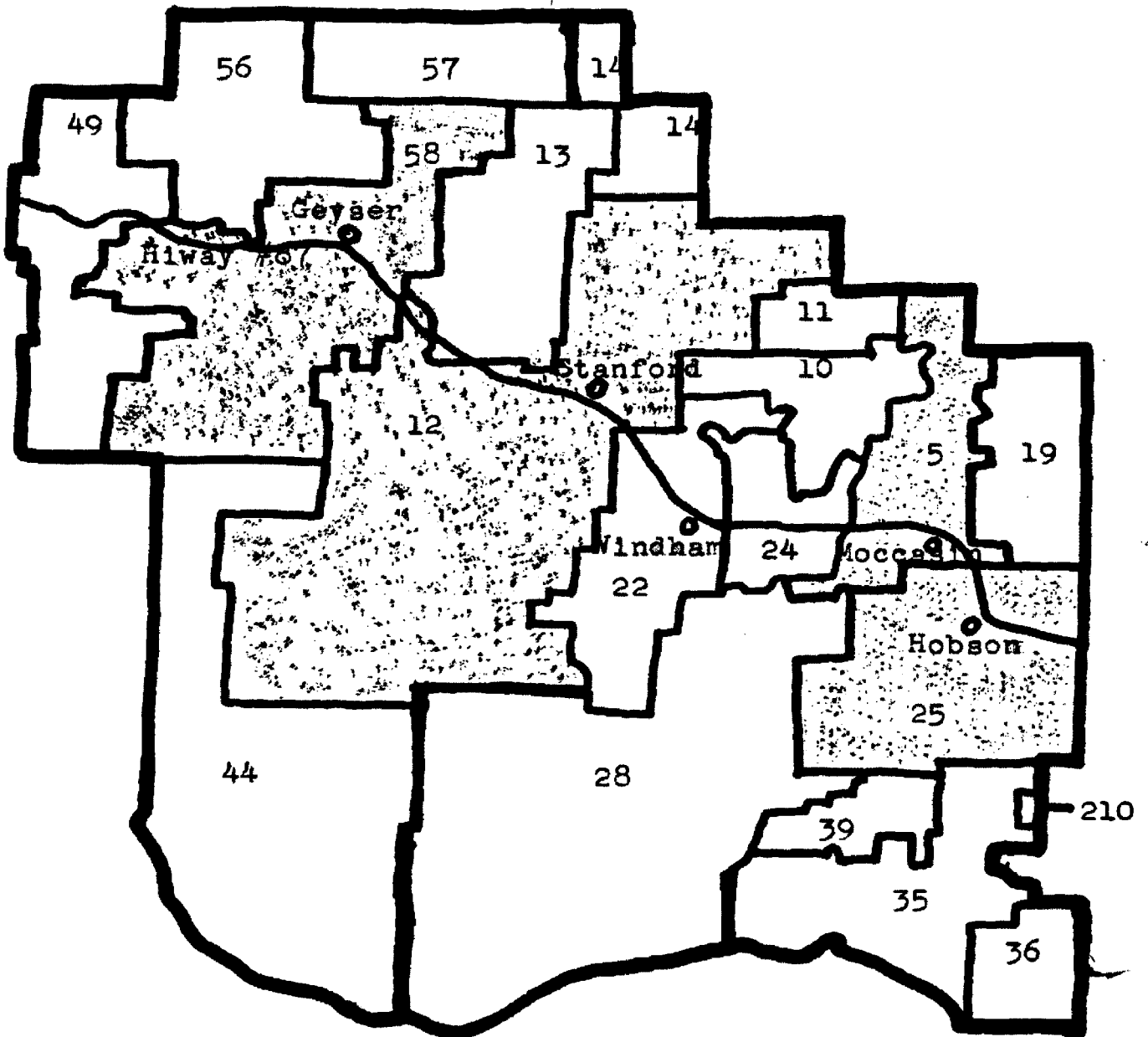


FIGURE 3

SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN JUDITH BASIN COUNTY 1950

Source: Office of the County Superintendent of Schools Judith Basin County. Shaded areas indicate the districts operating high schools..

community area has increased and school districts have been consolidated voluntarily or by abandonment, as provided for in Montana school legislation.⁹

In 1950 districts number 12, 5, 25, and 58 were the only districts in the county in which high schools were operating (see Figure 3). Each school was drawing students from neighboring districts but these districts were not a part of the district in which the high school operated. This situation caused a financial burden on the local school district when the high school budget demands exceeded the foundation program or bonding for a building program was attempted.

The distances between the four high schools operating in Judith Basin County in 1950 are as follows: Geyser-Stanford, fourteen miles; Stanford-Moccasin, nineteen miles; Moccasin-Hobson, four miles. All of these schools are on U. S. Highway 87 which is paved (see Figure 4).

No high school districts had been formed in the county until 1951 when the entire county, not including the joint districts, became a high school district with four high schools operating therein. Necessary funds in excess of the foundation program must be raised by a levy voted on by the entire district. The same is true of a bond proposal. If the vote fails those schools needing special levies or bonding are forced to ask their local elementary districts for the revenue.

⁹School Laws of the State of Montana, 1953, Chapter 15, Section 75-1522, and Chapter 18, Section 75-1813.

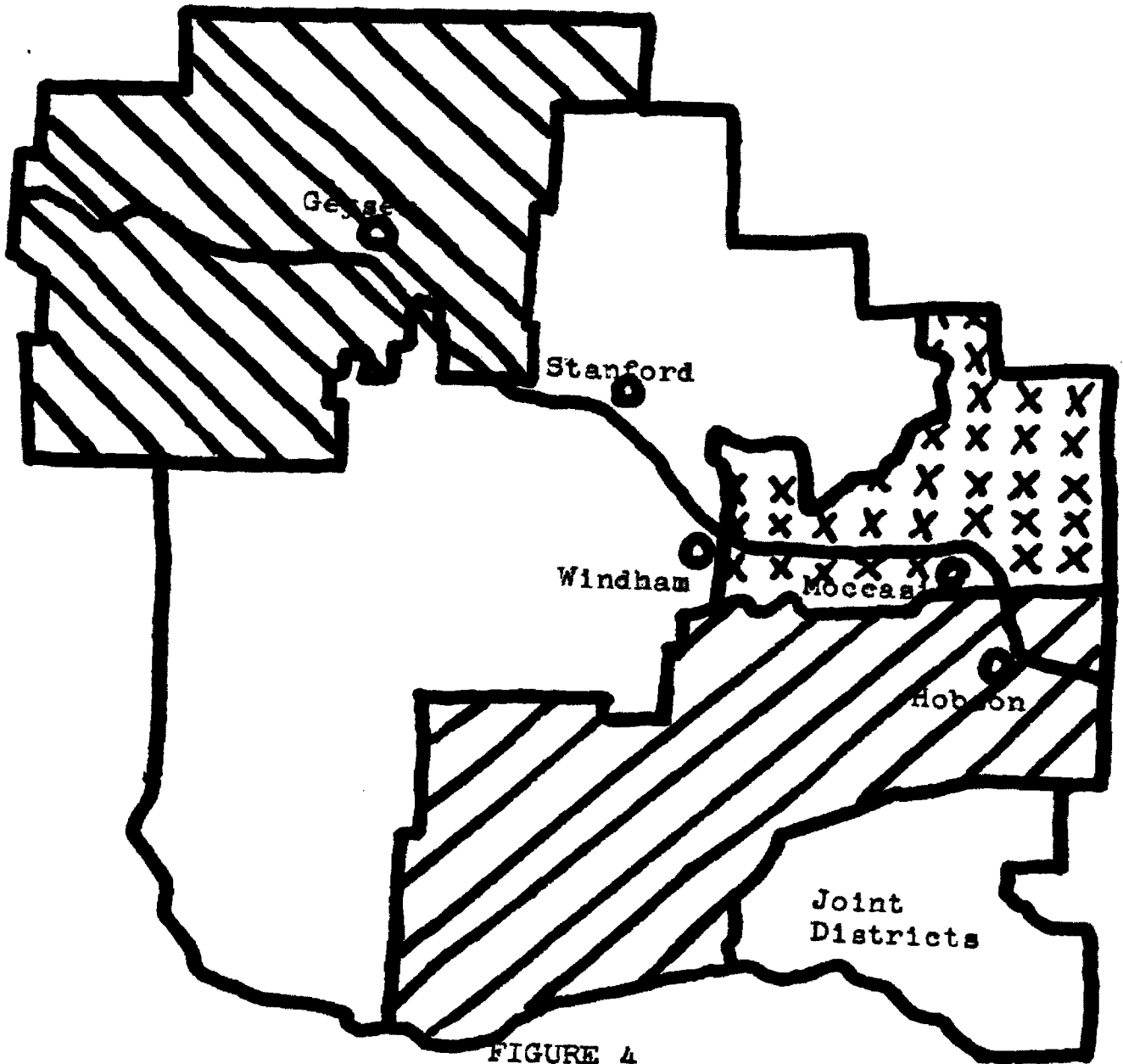


FIGURE 4
HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN JUDITH BASIN COUNTY 1954



A plan which divides the county into several districts in which there is only one high school per district allows the persons served by a high school to support their own high school expenditures over the foundation program. This high school district generally includes other common school districts in addition to the one in which the high school plant is located. This allows for a greater valuation, lowers the tax rate, and does not subject one high school's costs to a county-wide vote. Up to the foundation program and permissive levy the plans are almost the same but special levies and bond issues that must be voted on, are more likely to pass under the multi-district system where only the residents of the area served by the school may vote. With the single district plan the special levies and bond issues for any high school were voted on by the entire district.

Prior to 1951 in Judith Basin County, as mentioned in the introduction, common school districts operated the high schools. After districting in 1951 one high school district operated the four high schools. Following the 1954 district change each high school has a separate high school district. Each high school district must continue to operate at least one accredited high school or be joined to another district, or other districts.¹⁰

¹⁰Ibid., Chapter 46, Section 75-4602.

THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the two plans for high school districting which were adopted in Judith Basin County in 1951 and 1954. Consideration was given to the planning and functioning of the single high school district plan and the plan adopted in 1954 creating four high school districts.

Limitations of the problem. The study did not include the joint high school districts in the county which were unaffected by the organization and reorganization of high school districts. It did not propose to solve the high school district problems of Judith Basin County but to study and evaluate what has been done.

Importance of the study. The situation that faced Judith Basin County was one that exists to some degree in other counties in Montana and throughout the nation. The National Commission on School District Reorganization has summed up the situation nationally:¹¹

School district reorganization is imperative. It is imperative for the simple reason that a large majority of the school districts now operating in this county cannot give people the kind of educational programs they need to deal with the complex problems of present-day life or adequately prepare youth to cope with the problems of the future.

¹¹National Commission on School District Reorganization, Your School District (Washington, D. C.: National Education Association, 1948), pp. 15, 20-21, 24.

The problems of adaptation and reorganization of local units of school administration are never completely and permanently solved. Changes in the structure of social and economic life are continually creating new types of educational needs and vitally affecting the nature and extent of the resources available for educational purposes. Frequently, patterns of community life that a generation ago were well adapted to the support of an educational program and to participation in its activities have changed. The attendance areas of many school districts no longer conform to the boundaries of either neighborhood or community. An educational program that was satisfactory for a pioneer community would be very unsatisfactory at the present time, and the educational opportunities offered by the schools a decade ago, or even in most school districts operating at the present time, have many serious limitations when viewed in the light of present-day problems.

No one type of school district has been proved superior to all others. There are undoubtedly a number of satisfactory administrative arrangements. But the one thing that is certain is that there needs to be an immediate reorganization of school districts throughout the United States. Reorganization is imperative now.

In many Montana counties high schools continue to operate under the original legislation that permitted school districts to operate high schools. Any county that has not had a reorganization for high school districts should do so. Areas that are not fully contributing to the support of a high school would be forced to do so by such reorganization. Valuations for bonding and budget needs in excess of the foundation program would be increased, making better school programs possible at a lower tax rate.

In 1938 a reorganization plan was proposed for the schools of Montana. The important points emphasized by this report were: (1) inequalities in the ability of school districts to support the education; (2) the need for larger units for administration; (3) state aid to equalize

educational opportunity for all Montana pupils.¹² This state equalization was not the plan adopted in 1949 but indicates the thinking of educators at that time.

PLANNING FOR REDISTRICTING

Before any change may be undertaken in high school districting, consideration must be given to the following procedures adopted by the legislature:

In all counties having a high school, or high schools, a Commission consisting of the County Commissioners and the County Superintendent of Schools shall at the request of any High School Board of Trustees in the county, divide the entire county into and establish one or more High School Districts for the purpose of this Act, after hearing; provided, that each High School District so formed must have one or more operating, accredited high schools within its boundaries. That the commission shall fix the time, date and place, and at such time, date and place hold a public hearing of the requested division of the county into High School Districts, at which hearing any interested person may appear and be heard concerning the requested division. Written notice of such hearing shall be mailed by the County Superintendent of Schools to the Chairman of each and every Board of Trustees of each and every school district in the county, and the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the County High School, stating the time, date and place of such public hearing, and shall be mailed not less than two (2) weeks preceding the date fixed for such hearing. The certificate of the County Superintendent of Schools filed with the Commission reciting that said notices were mailed shall be conclusive.

The boundaries established by said commission shall be subject to the approval of the superintendent of public instruction.

If any High School District shall cease to have within its borders an operating, accredited high school, then

¹²Montana Education Association, "Inequalities in the Ability of School Districts to Support Education", Montana Education 15: 12-111, September, 1938.

it shall be the duty of the County Superintendent of Schools to consolidate and annex the Common School Districts comprising said High School District to one or more operating high school districts within a period of six months after one (1) year of being declared non-operating or non-accredited.

In creating such districts the commission shall give first consideration to the factor of convenience of the patrons of the several schools. Common school districts may be grouped for the purpose of this Act and when practicable High School Districts shall be made up on (of) contiguous and adjacent Common School Districts but the Commission must take into consideration the existence or nonexistence of obstacles of travel, such as mountains and rivers, and existence or non-existence of highways and distances to high school. No common school districts shall be divided for the purpose of this Act but must be made a part of a High School District in its entirety, unless such division is approved and authorized by the voters of the Common School District involved, at a special election held for that purpose and such division shall be on the basis of equal area, or as near thereto as practicable in relation to the geographical features of such district; provided that the entire portion of a joint school district within the county shall be included within a High School District.

In any county which has been divided into high school building districts, at the request of any high school board of trustees, the commission, provided for in section 75-4602 of the Revised Codes of Montana, 1947, may, in accord with the procedure provided in said section, alter the boundaries of said districts or re-divide the county into a different number of high school districts, provided that such alteration or redivision may not be done within three (3) years from the original division or the last alteration of boundaries and last redivision. (En. Ch. 130, L. 1949; Amd. Ch. 120, L. 1953)¹³

Preceding the actual redistricting undertaken in 1951 the school officials of Judith Basin County spent at least two years preparing for a better system. By 1950 four different plans had been worked out as follows:¹⁴

¹³School Laws of the State of Montana, 1953, Chapter 46, Sections 75-4602 and 75-4607 (underlined portions are amendments since 1949).

¹⁴Mrs. Mabel Jackson, County Superintendent, Judith Basin County, personal interview, March 4, 1954.

Plan I. This plan suggested four districts with high schools at Geyser, Stanford, Moccasin, and Hobson. This plan was very similar to the plan adopted in 1954 except for the inability in 1950 to split a common school district between two high school districts.

Plan II. This would have formed the county into three districts with high school districts at Stanford, Geyser, and placing Hobson and Moccasin in one district. This plan probably resulted from the State Department of Public Instruction's suggestion that Hobson and Moccasin be placed in the same district so that further districting would not be needed in case Moccasin High School lost its accreditation.¹⁵

Plan III. The county under this system would have had two high school districts each operating two high schools. Stanford and Geyser would be in one district and Hobson and Moccasin would be in the other.

Plan IV. This was the one district plan asked for by the Stanford High School Board of Trustees on or about April 30, 1949. The Redistricting Commission composed of the County Commissioners and County Superintendent of Schools of Judith Basin County ordered this plan into effect in February of 1951.¹⁶

¹⁵Letter from Mary M. Condon, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, to Robert McGuire, Judith Basin County Superintendent, July 27, 1950.

¹⁶Resolution for the Creation of a High School District for Judith Basin County, Montana, February, 1951.

Miss Condon approved it in a letter to Mrs. Mabel Jackson.¹⁷

In correspondence between the State Department and Judith Basin County School personnel it is apparent that the status of the Moccasin High School in 1950 was a factor which prompted the districting at that time. In a letter Mr. McGuire informed Miss Condon that a new request had been received for redistricting and the same problem, the status of the Moccasin High School, faced the county.

Paragraph three of Mr. McGuire's letter acknowledged the three year delay requirement before another redistricting could be undertaken. The last sentence states, "It has been decided that a single high school district is not feasible."

Paragraph four: "To put it plainly, will the State Department approve a high school district for Moccasin High School? Practically everyone here is agreed on the desirability of creating the high school districts and it is not fair to those who are operating high schools to postpone action any longer."

Paragraph five: "This letter is not to be considered a 'pressure' to close the Moccasin High School, I am only seeking advice and statement of policy."¹⁸

¹⁷Letter from Mary M. Condon, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, to Mrs. Mabel Jackson, Judith Basin County Superintendent, February 20, 1951.

¹⁸Letter from Mr. Robert McGuire, Judith Basin County Superintendent until 1951, to Miss Mary M. Condon, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, dated July 20, 1950.

Miss Condon replied in a letter to Mr. McGuire, "Moccasin High School is now on final probation." Further on in this letter Mr. McGuire was told that, "Certain conditions must be rectified or the population of the high school increased in order for Moccasin to continue as a four year high school." She suggested that Moccasin should be included in the same district as Hobson. Under this arrangement both high schools would continue to operate with separate school boards and only in case of voted levies or bonding proposals would they have to meet as a joint group.¹⁹

Although the above information was sent to the State Department in July, 1950 the Redistricting Commission adopted the single district plan in February of 1951. Miss Condon approved their plan and stated in the letter of authorization that she felt the division might not be the best possible.²⁰

From interviewing school personnel in Judith Basin County the four major difficulties that defeated the other three plans were: some parents wished to send their children to a neighboring school; some objected to being placed in districts where operational costs were higher; and others just did not want to be placed in a high school district all

¹⁹Letter from Miss Mary M. Condon, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, to Mr. Robert McGuire, Judith Basin County Superintendent, July 27, 1950.

²⁰Letter from Miss Mary M. Condon, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, to Mrs. Mabel Jackson, Judith Basin County Superintendent, February 20, 1951.

because of its effect on taxes and community ties.

In placing the entire county in one district the local ties were weakened and the tax burden was equalized. Another accomplishment was the inclusion of all common school districts in a high school district in accordance with school legislation.²¹ Parents felt less restricted as to where their high school children were enrolled. This is true in any high school but generally people feel obligated to send their children to the high school they support.

²¹School Laws of the State of Montana, 1949, Chapter 188, Section 75-4602.

CHAPTER II

THE SINGLE HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT PLAN IN OPERATION 1951-1954

The information in this chapter was gained through personal interviews with district and county school administrators in Judith Basin County, March 4 and 5, 1954.

The county under the single high school district plan continued to operate the four high schools that had been in operation in 1950. Each school was individually governed by its local school board and each employed a superintendent of schools. The county high school board was made up of these same local school board members. One representative from each of the other common school districts, except the joint districts, had to be added to this membership when considering special levies to be submitted to the people of the high school district.²² This made the total board membership twenty-nine persons. The only time the county board met was to compile the county high school budget from the separate budgets submitted by the four schools, and any other business of a financial nature in accordance with Montana school legislation.

²²School Laws of the State of Montana, 1953, Chapter 45, Section 75-4609.

Each high school board prepared a budget for its own school and then a master budget for the county was prepared from these. The amount of special levy was then determined from the valuation of the whole district. No bonding for building purposes was attempted under this plan.

The advantages of the single high school district will be discussed next. At first one would be inclined to assume that over twenty people meeting about school problems would result in confusion. In the opinion of the County Superintendent, the opposite was true. Mrs. Jackson felt that many good suggestions and ideas came from the larger group and that a decision by this group carried more weight than one by a common school district board. It was easier to prepare the budgets and check items before the final presentation to the budget supervisors. Many budget problems could be discussed and explained at one time instead of, as is many times the case, each school presenting the same problem at different times during preparation of their budgets.

The tax burden county-wide was equalized (this does not include the joint districts) and those in one community of the high school district paid the same levy as those in any other. Under this plan teachers' salaries, maintenance, and programs seemed to have improved and equalized. Noted especially was an increase in the teaching staff at Geyser and Moccasin.²³

²³Information gained through interviews with high school administrators and the County Superintendent of Schools of Judith Basin County, March 4, 5, 1954.

An important disadvantage of this plan showed up in a situation that occurred in 1953. The special levy asked for was voted down twice by the all-county high school district. The money was needed by some high schools and therefore had to be raised on the local elementary districts, which was similar to the plan used before 1951.

Another disadvantage of this plan grew out of the fact that any bond proposal must be voted on by forty per cent of the qualified electors of a district.²⁴ Should a bond issue to build be submitted by one high school, the normal response of those from other high school communities would be negative and passage unlikely.

The feeling on the part of those interviewed was that the budget requirements increased due to "padding" and "bargaining" between schools. By "padding" is meant that a school would ask for more money under the county-wide district than if the revenue were to be raised on the local level. The "bargaining" aspect would come up in a situation such as this: Hobson School asks for money for new desks, Stanford agrees to purchase new typewriters, Geysler agrees to both requests with the stipulation that they receive permission to buy a new bus and Moccasin in turn wants to install a new heating plant. All of the items asked for might be needed but if the

²⁴School Laws of the State of Montana, 1953, Chapter 39, Section 75-3914.

expense had to be borne by the smaller local district some of the expenditures would not be made. On the other hand, more improvements might have been made, with a lower tax levy, in districts where the enrollments and valuations were higher. This selfishness is not due to the type of people in Judith Basin County but a normal human response to such a situation. One individual remarked that he thought the plan was "socialistic". The foundation program with state and county aid helps equalize educational opportunity, but he thought that the local people should provide the buildings and revenue in excess of the minimum budget.

CHAPTER III

HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICTING IN 1954

Each year during the operation of the single district plan special levies had been voted on and had always passed until 1953. This also was the first time that all the schools had not asked for extra revenue. In the Spring of 1953, as mentioned in the previous chapter, a special levy for the high schools failed to pass. Following this, those schools that needed special levies passed them on their own local elementary districts. Stanford did not need a special levy to operate its high school.

By this time the people of Judith Basin County, in general, seemed dissatisfied with the single district plan. Also they knew after the plan went into effect that it would have to be used for three years or until 1954. The amount of the special mill levy in 1953, 4.8 mills, was not excessive. The vote against the special levy may have been an indication that people wanted a change rather than that they were reluctant to support education. Many thought that the high costs at Moccasin should be borne by the people of that community if they were to continue to operate a high school.

Following the defeat of the special levy on the single

high school district, Mrs. Jackson, the county superintendant of schools, advised the Hobson Board of Trustees to file a request for redistricting the county.²⁵ This action was taken by the Hobson Board and in February of 1954 the county was reorganized into four high school districts, exclusive of the joint districts.

With the previous planning and the three years experience with the county in one high school district, the new division was easier to make. The schools realized that for bonding purposes a district for each high school was necessary. They also realized that each town that had a high school should support it regardless of comparative costs. The only problem then was to divide the taxable valuation fairly among the four schools.

The redistricting commission planned to divide the county valuation in proportion to the average enrollment or "average number belonging (ANB)" in each high school. Should past, current, or future enrollments be used? The final basis used for division was the average ANB for the past ten years. One administrator said that he thought that the projected enrollment for future years should have been the basis.

The ANB for each school was found in the records maintained by the county superintendent of schools for the

²⁵Letter from Thornton E. Fuson, Superintendent of Hobson Schools, to Mary M. Condon, Superintendent of Public Instruction, July 24, 1953.

ten years, 1943 to 1952 inclusive. These were totaled and the average ANB for the period determined. This figure then became the basis for each school's share of the county valuation. The average of the county ANB's for the ten year period was found to be 155.032. With a total valuation in the high school area of \$6,387,800.00, the valuation per pupil was found to be \$41,203.106. This figure was then multiplied by the ten year average ANB for each high school to determine what its valuation should be. The districting commission tried to give each high school district a valuation as nearly equal to this amount as possible. When the county was divided, Hobson's valuation was \$9,360.65 greater; Moccasin's was \$34,556.83 greater; Geyser's was \$706,850.11 greater; and Stanford's share was \$758,767.52 less than anticipated under this formula (see Table I). Windham closed its high school seven years prior to the most recent year's figures used for the ten year average and its enrollments were added to those of Stanford.

To date, the present districting plan might be considered the only actual high school districting that has been done in the county as the single district plan did not involve boundaries, valuation, and enrollment studies. The school personnel and citizens of the various areas are generally well satisfied with the new division but some people are dissatisfied.

TABLE I

HIGH SCHOOL ENROLLMENTS IN JUDITH BASIN COUNTY, 1943-1953

Year	Moccasin	Stanford	Windham	Hobson	Geyser
1943-44	23.06	75.00	18.35	27.10	18.00
1944-45	20.06	67.14	8.33	28.60	24.76
1945-46	17.97	65.10	11.98	33.87	18.46
1946-47	27.55	64.55		35.34	24.16
1947-48	26.80	59.77		33.80	22.12
1948-49	24.43	62.19		41.83	15.85
1949-50	26.40	75.91		34.01	20.62
1950-51	28.12	79.71		30.64	19.47
1951-52	25.60	76.29		38.40	24.49
1952-53	29.10	80.47		29.80	35.15
Totals	249.09	706.13	38.63*	333.39	223.08
Average (ANB)	24.909	70.613	3.863*	33.339	22.308

*Windham's enrollments were combined with those of Stanford where its students have attended since 1946.

TABLE II

ESTIMATED AND ACTUAL TAXABLE VALUATIONS OF HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN JUDITH BASIN COUNTY, 1954

High School	Estimated Valuations (ANB x per pupil share)	Actual valuation of new district
Geyser-----	\$ 919,158.89	\$1,626,009.00
Hobson-----	1,373,670.35	1,382,031.00
Moccasin-----	1,026,328.17	1,059,885.00
Stanford-----	3,068,642.52	2,309,875.00
	<u>6,387,799.93</u>	<u>6,387,800.00</u>

Total taxable valuation of the high school area concerned was \$6,387,800. Dividing this by the total average enrollment (155.032) the per pupil share of valuation was found to be \$41,203.106

The center of most of the dissatisfaction is again in the Moccasin area. During the operation of the single district plan busses from Stanford came into the western area of what is now the Moccasin high school district. Some people who were served by this bus will want it continued. Moccasin on the other hand needs students to comply with state department enrollment requirements. This district has been operating a bus the past three years almost to the end of the Stanford route and could easily run a bus to its western boundary on and near Highway 87. The county transportation committee must determine the bus routes for each school but pupils may go to any high school in the county. The Stanford bus probably will operate only to the east boundary of its high school district. Parents who want to send their children to school in another district will be forced to supply transportation to the school or bus route in that district.

Because of the short distance between Hobson and Moccasin high schools some people favor their consolidation. Because of dissatisfaction in parts of the new Moccasin high school district the movement for consolidation may be accelerated. A \$40,000 high school vocational training plant was built at Hobson in 1953. This building places Hobson in a favorable position to become the high school for the district should a consolidation take place. Prior to the erection of this new building the plants were quite comparable and either school might have been used for a combined high school. Now the facilities at Hobson could absorb the high school enrollment

of Moccasin without an immediate building program.

All four high schools in the county have old buildings which soon should be replaced. Any of the schools under the new high school districting may issue bonds and build independently of other high school districts in the county. According to Montana School Law, as interpreted by the Montana Supreme Court, a high school district cannot issue bonds in excess of an amount that would cause the indebtedness for school purposes on any one common school district to exceed 5 per cent of that district's assessed valuation.

In Table III, Column I indicates the high school district special levy of 4.8. Column II shows the special high school levies that were passed. In Moccasin and Hobson these special levies were much higher than the proposed levy on the county's single high school district. Moccasin passed a levy of over 23 mills and Hobson, 18.5 mills. The Geyser district passed a special levy for the high school which was slightly less, 4.5 mills. Stanford remade its budget and did not ask for a special levy for its high school. In each case these special levies were made on the local elementary district in which the high school was located. In addition to these levies the Hobson elementary district voted to bond itself for \$40,000 for the construction of a high school vocational training building. Utica, which has been added to Hobson to form the Hobson high school district, will not be paying toward the retirement of the bonds for this building but students from there will

benefit from this improvement.

What the high school special levies would have been in 1953-54 had the four new high districts been organized at that time is indicated by the third column in Table III. Moccasin's levy would have been 8.45 mills; Hobson's, 12 mills; Geyser's, 1.8 mills; Stanford would have required no special levy.

TABLE III

COMPARISON OF SPECIAL LEVIES FOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN JUDITH BASIN COUNTY, 1953-54

DISTRICTS	Proposed Levy 1953 <u>in Mills</u>	Actual Levy <u>1953</u>	Same Levy under <u>New Districts</u>
Moccasin High School District:*			
Moccasin	4.8	23.	8.45
Kolin	4.8	0	8.45
Benchland	4.8	0	8.45
Hobson High School District:*			
Hobson	4.8	18.5	12.
Utica	4.8	0	12.
Geyser High School District:*			
Geyser	4.8	4.5	1.8
Raynesford	4.8	0	1.8
Lillegard	4.8	0	1.8
Mansfield	4.8	0	1.8
Merino**	4.8	0	1.8
Stanford High School District:*			
Stanford	4.8	0	0
Windham	4.8	0	0
Willow Creek	4.8	0	0
Fairview	4.8	0	0
Arrow Creek	4.8	0	0
Hughesville	4.8	0	0
Merino**	4.8	0	0

*The four high school districts were to become effective July 1, 1954.

**The Merino district was divided equally between the Geyser and Stanford high school districts.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In 1950 Judith Basin County needed to be redistricted. Few of the common school districts in the county were contributing to the operation of the high schools. The tax burden for high school operation was very unequal between the large and small school in the county. The special levies ranged from nothing in some districts to about twenty mills in others. The condition of the school plants in 1950 was poor. During the three years of the single district plan repair work was done on each of the high schools, and new equipment was purchased for instructional purposes.

The planning prior to actual change was good. The pressure on Moccasin High School from the State Department of Public Instruction seemed to be a strong force influencing the redistricting as to time and plan of action. The County Superintendent of Schools was certain the plan of one district was not desirable, but approximately six months later the districting commission placed nearly all of the county in one high school district. Apparently Moccasin was insistent on a district for themselves or the single district plan. When areas were considered for inclusion in a district for Moccasin high school some of the residents of these areas objected because of its high operational cost. Others wanted their children to go to a larger

school.

One question asked of those who had worked with this plan was, "Under what conditions would this plan operate satisfactorily?" Points brought out by this query were that schools greater distances apart undoubtedly would have a better chance of using such a plan. Another factor to consider would be the condition of the school plants. If all communities had adequate facilities in excellent condition the bond issue factor would not arise for a number of years.

Under present legislation, a single high school district for a county which would operate multiple high schools is not advisable. The requirement for the entire county passing bond issues and special levies limits the functioning of the high school district. When special levies are voted down the support reverts to the oldest type of high school organization, an elementary district operating a high school. There are situations in this state where similar plans are in use and seem to be satisfactory. They are not, however, operating more than three schools; the schools are separated by greater distances than those in Judith Basin County; and in each case only one board of trustees is involved.

A plan such as the single district plan would require an exceptionally good county-wide program of public relations plus a sound long-range plan for improvement and building. Communities and administrators would have to think unselfishly in terms of the entire county and the requirements of each school plant.

In 1954 each of the high schools in Judith Basin County was placed in a district with tax base and bonding capacity greater than that of the elementary district which built the original school plant, unless limited by the previous indebtedness of a common school district. Sanction for such a bond issue is subject only to the approval of the people served by that high school. According to the administrators all of the high schools have old buildings. How soon building programs are undertaken will be determined by the outstanding bonds, state recommendations, and local public desires.

Recommendations. Due to the age and condition of portions of the plants in each town, planning for future building should be started soon. There is always a possibility that buildings, especially if old, will not meet the state requirements for safety and health. The people of the community should help with the planning. When buildings are necessary the planning will be already under way and people will not be shocked by the request.

Moccasin and Hobson together should study the possible advantages of a consolidation. A decision should not be made until a careful study has revealed the facts and a good understanding of them has been achieved by the people of both districts. If the people want consolidation and what it has to offer, this should be done. Should they decide to continue operating separate schools they must be willing to provide programs equivalent to that which could be offered by the

combination, regardless of the cost.

Each county in this state should instigate a continuous program of school district organization study. School organization to be efficient demands constant evaluation and occasional change. The trend now is towards larger units of administration. This may not be true in the next few years. The administrative unit is no more static than education itself and must be changed to keep pace with the teaching programs.

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