

A HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE OFFICE OF KANSAS  
COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

by

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## I. INTRODUCTION

History tells us that the Office of County Superintendent of Schools has been vitally important to education in Kansas. Isaac T. Goodnow, in the Third Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, emphasized this when he wrote the following in the year 1863:

Upon this officer, perhaps more than any other, will depend the success of our school system. It devolves upon him to mould and shape the districts, examine the teachers, visit the schools, point out their defects and suggest the remedies. He apportions the school money to the several districts, and in the case of conflicting interests, acts the part of the arbiter and peacemaker. It requires a man of energy, perseverance, and education.<sup>1</sup>

### Statement of the Problem

It was the purpose of this study (1) to discover the legal and historical status of Kansas County Superintendents, (2) to identify their activities of operation, (3) to discover problems that have developed to place the Office in the educational position in which it is found in the year 1964, and (4) to determine whether there is a continuing need for the Office.

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<sup>1</sup> Isaac T. Goodnow, Third Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Kansas (Lawrence: Kansas Daily Tribune Book and Job Printing Office, John Speer, Public Printer, 1864), p. 18.

### Importance of the Study

Since rapid changes and improvements had been made in Kansas school organization, it was important to discover the causes of an apparent dilemma which existed in relation to the Office of County Superintendent. It was also important to develop a deeper appreciation for the service this Office had rendered in the development of Kansas schools.

### Limitations of the Study

A detailed legal and historical study of the Office of Kansas County Superintendent would have required more time and space than was possible in this type of report. Also to be avoided were the complicated legal aspects of school district reorganization and school district boundary changes. Personalities of individuals were in no way to enter into the findings, results, or final recommendations.

### Definition of Terms

County Superintendent. This was interpreted to mean any person serving in the Kansas county elective office known as the County Superintendent of Public Instruction or County Superintendent of Schools. In certain instances the term was used collectively to indicate all or any of the County Superintendents in Kansas.

Office. Throughout the report this term was used in referring to the position of County Superintendent of Schools.

School District. A term used to designate the many different kinds of legally authorized and designated basic local school units served in a statutory capacity by the County Superintendent.

Sources of Data and Method of Procedure

Available literature at Kansas State University, from the Kansas State Legislature, and from the Kansas State Historical Museum was used in developing the study. Informal interviews with the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Geary, Wabaunsee, and Morris County Superintendents were obtained to gain a better over-all picture of the problems of the Office and to help determine what was best to include in the study.

The fact that the writer was County Superintendent of Schools in Wabaunsee County from 1949-51 promoted the concern for the study and was of value in understanding and selecting the materials used.



## II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

American education was not developed by men who were following a blueprint. What is now the system of public education grew as the needs of a developing country were established and met. Each state had its own school system which developed from a common tradition. Each system was strengthened by the experiences of the other.<sup>1</sup>

### Early Development

The early history of the Office of Kansas County Superintendent of Schools paralleled very closely the development and organization of Kansas school districts. The first pro-slavery territorial legislature of Kansas, which met in 1855, adopted the Missouri school laws as the basis of the Kansas school system. Sparseness of settlement, the difficulty of making a living, and the general turmoil of the times made progress in educational affairs impossible and nothing was done under these laws of the first legislature. The succeeding legislature, pro-slavery as was the first, was too busy with political affairs to pay any heed to school legislation.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"The School System," Compton's Pictured Encyclopaedia (1963 ed.), IV, 301-4.

<sup>2</sup>Clyde Lyndon King, The Kansas School System--Its History and Tendencies (Vol. XI of Kansas Historical Collections, ed. Geo. W. Martin. Topeka: State Printing Office, 1910), p. 424.

But the first antislavery legislature, which met early in 1858, was quite active in the field of school legislation. Missouri school laws were repealed or revised and a school system adopted that was more nearly like the Northern than Southern systems.<sup>1</sup> Section 13 of Chapter 8 of the Kansas laws, 1858, provided for the appointment of the County Superintendent by the tribunal transacting county business, and the same law provided for an election of a County Superintendent to be elected at the same time, place, and manner that county officers were chosen. Township trustees had previously performed the duties that had come within the domain of the County Superintendent's Office.<sup>2</sup>

The territorial legislature of 1859 abolished the Office. Restoration was made in 1860 by the Wyandotte Constitution, and it thus became a constitutional Office that required the election of a County Superintendent of Public Instruction every two years.<sup>3</sup>

#### Duties of the Office

Although the activities of the Office of Kansas County Superintendents have greatly multiplied, the nature of many

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<sup>1</sup>Clyde Lyndon King, The Kansas School System--Its History and Tendencies (Vol. XI of Kansas Historical Collections, ed. Geo. W. Martin. Topeka: State Printing Office, 1910), p. 424.

<sup>2</sup>A. T. Andreas, History of Kansas, p. 266.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

of their duties as outlined in the statutes has remained much the same. This is indicated in Table I, page 7, which compares the duties of the County Superintendents of 1861 with those of 1963.

The increased activities are a result of enlarged school services and state office requirements that include: (1) transportation, (2) special education, (3) teacher retirement, (4) school board organization, (5) teachers' institute, (6) school district boundary changes, (7) school district disorganization, (8) health requirements, and (9) supervisory and service functions of the Office.

These tasks are of more technical nature and require broader knowledge of educational procedure than was required a generation ago when most of the school districts were of the one-teacher classification.<sup>1</sup> Although supervisory and leadership qualities are considered the most important function of the Office, they have not been the subject of statutory enactment. This fact has been unique in the Office of County Superintendent and has made it different from any other county office.

The 1963 Outline and Guide for County Superintendents, published by the Kansas State Department of Education, lists seventy-five (75) statutory requirements of the County

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<sup>1</sup>Comprehensive Educational Survey of Kansas, The Elementary and Secondary Education Study, Vol. II, Topeka, Kansas, March, 1960, p. 123.

TABLE I

SIMILARITIES OF GENERAL DUTIES  
OF KANSAS COUNTY SUPERINTENDENTS, 1861 AND 1963

1861

1. Charged with all the school interests of the county
2. Required to take an oath of office and file same with county clerk
3. Divide the county into a convenient number of school districts, alter boundaries, file the papers along with the descriptions in his office
4. Apportion money received from state sources and distribute to school districts according to number of children in each between the ages of five and twenty-one

1963

1. Has jurisdiction and general supervision of all the schools in the county except those under the jurisdiction of boards of education in first and second class cities
2. Same - in addition must file a \$1,000 bond approved by county commissioners
3. Maintain an individual file for each school district in which are names of elected or appointed officers, reports from said officers and teachers, minutes of meetings of voters and officers, bonds of district treasurers, and any changes of boundary so that such file shall constitute a complete history of said district
4. Keep an accurate record of all state and county school funds for the benefit of the public schools and record their distribution to the school districts in the county

TABLE I (continued)

1861

1963

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>5. Visit each school at least once during the term for the purpose of examining the condition of the school, of ascertaining the text-books used, and of giving such advice as deemed proper in reference to the course of studies and the general interests of the school</p> <p>6. Shall see that the annual reports of the clerks of the several school districts in the county are made correctly and in due time</p> <p>7. Examine all persons offering themselves as teachers in regard to moral character, learning, and ability to teach, and each person examined and found qualified, was to be given a certificate signed by him officially</p> | <p>5. Visit the schools under his jurisdiction at least once each school year; advise school officials and teachers on matters relating to the organization and administration of the school, the discipline and methods of instruction, and the welfare of the pupils</p> <p>6. Promptly notify school boards, superintendents, principals, and teachers of any failure on their part to comply fully with the school laws of the state and the regulations and requirements of the State Department of Public Instruction</p> <p>7. Keep a register of all teachers employed in the schools under his jurisdiction - such records were to show the age of the teacher, the extent and character of his college training and teaching experience, the type of certificate held, and the registration of the certificate</p> |
|---|--|

TABLE I (concluded)

1961

1963

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>8. Make a detailed annual report between the first and twentieth of November</p>   | <p>8. Make an annual report before the first day of October - September salary to be withheld until county has been notified of the completion of this requirement by the State Department of Public Instruction</p> |
| <p>9. Discharge such duties that may be prescribed by law and deliver to his successor within ten days after the expiration of his term of office all the books and papers pertaining to the office</p> | <p>9. Same requirement</p>   |
| <p>10. If vacancy in the office occurs, county clerk notifies the county commissioners who appoint a suitable person to fill the vacancy</p>  | <p>10. Procedure is the same except in a case where county commissioners cannot find a suitable person - in that event a state superintendent is notified and a qualified person is appointed by him</p>             |

Superintendent. Ten of these duties are listed as indicative of the increased responsibilities placed on this office.<sup>1</sup>

1. Keep a continuous and complete record of his official acts in a volume for that purpose. (174) (G.S. 1961., 72-229)

2. Ten days before the annual meeting, send each district clerk a certified statement of the assessed valuation of the district as furnished by the county clerk. (174) (G.S. 1961., 72-229)

3. Make and keep available in his office a map of the school districts of the county with their proper boundaries and numbers as existing. (174) (G.S. 1961., 72-229)

4. Prepare and publish a school directory on or before December 1, of each year. (174) (G.S. 1961., 72-229)

5. Hold annually one or more conventions of school board members. (175) (G.S. 1961., 72-230)

6. In counties of over 175,000 population, has the right to appoint a public health nurse to work in the schools of the county.

7. Make a quarterly report on amounts received from district boards for teacher retirement to the retirement board. (796) (G.S. 1961., 72-5515)

8. Report to the superintendent of the state school for the blind and the deaf, the number of residents deficient in sight and hearing to such an extent that they are unable to acquire an education in the public schools of the state. (1013) (G.S. 1949., 72-5301)

9. Certify attendance of teachers at the county teachers' institute so that they are eligible for pay. (1137) (G.S. 1961., 72-1409)

10. Approve, disapprove, or amend and approve an increase in the amount of transportation mileage paid by school districts. (1164) (G.S. 1949., 72-821)

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<sup>1</sup>Adel F. Throckmorton, Outline and Guide for County Superintendents (School District Organization Procedures), Topeka, Kansas, 1963, pp. 6-13.

Because there are only 105 County Superintendents in Kansas, the demands and needs of the Office are not generally known. Throckmorton emphasized this and also called attention to the fact that the County Superintendent's duties are the same in working with all districts except for the administrative and supervisory responsibilities in first and second class cities.<sup>1</sup>

The Comprehensive Educational Survey, in discussing duties of the County Superintendent, places his activities in four general categories as outlined in Table II, page 12.

#### The County Normal Institutes

A phase of education requiring a smaller amount of work on the part of the County Superintendent is evident in the activity known as the county normal or county teachers' institute. As early as 1864, school law provided for the State Department of Public Instruction to conduct institutes of two to five days in length. The need for longer sessions helped place institute responsibility upon County Superintendents, and in 1877 a law was passed compelling institutes to be held for not less than four weeks' duration.<sup>2</sup>

Control was exercised over the institute course of study by the State Board of Education, the State

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<sup>1</sup>Adel F. Throckmorton, "County Superintendents Have Many Responsibilities to Schools," Kansas Schools (February, 1955), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>A. T. Andreas, History of Kansas, p. 272.



TABLE II  
CONDENSED FORM OF COUNTY SUPERINTENDENTS' DUTIES<sup>1</sup>

I. County Government Relationships

(1) Works with county commissioners, county clerk, and county treasurer, in budget making and distribution of funds, (2) performs school district organization procedures and provides machinery under which school districts can function

II. Educational Supervision

(1) Has administrative and supervisory responsibilities for all schools except those in first and second class cities, (2) advises school boards in selection of teachers, (3) assists in preparing budgets, (4) provides in-service training programs for teachers, (5) supervises classroom teaching, (6) aids school boards in selection of supplies and teaching material, (7) distributes educational information to teachers

III. Agent of the State

(1) Collects information in calculating state funds for the various districts, (2) reports form the basis for many tabulations made in the state office, (3) distributes teacher guides and other materials prepared by the State Department of Public Instruction

IV. Leadership

Judicial responsibilities such as: (1) Dismissal of teachers, (2) change of school district boundaries, (3) formation and disorganization of districts, (4) the making of decisions relating to any aspect of school which find their way into his office

<sup>1</sup> Compiled from the Comprehensive Educational Survey of Kansas. The Elementary and Secondary Education Study, Vol. II, Topeka, March, 1960.

Superintendent, and the Kansas State Teachers' Association. After 1885, county teachers' examinations were based on the institute course of study. Institute attendance by teachers and prospective teachers was compulsory.<sup>1</sup>

Institutes remained an important medium of teacher training until the advent of high school normal training in 1909. Normal training and college summer sessions helped make the longer teacher training institutes unnecessary. In 1915, a law was passed permitting County Superintendents to hold institutes of one to four weeks in length with scheduling, staffing, and programming the duty of the County Superintendent.<sup>2</sup>

The 1963 school laws state that institutes "may be held" for not more than five days. All teachers, other than those in first and second class cities, who are under contract, are required to attend and receive pay at the rate of their contracted compensation.<sup>3</sup>

#### Qualifications and Salary of the Office

The Kansas Constitution provides that "a Superintendent of Public Instruction shall be elected in each county, whose term of office shall be two years and whose duties and

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<sup>1</sup>John L. Eberhardt, Kansas State Department of Public Instruction, Governmental Research Series, No. 14, Teachers' Institutes, Ch. V, pp. 51-4.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>3</sup>School Laws of Kansas, 1963, Article 14, 72-1409.

compensation shall be prescribed by law."<sup>1</sup>

In spite of this constitutional recognition, no qualifications were required of the Office at the time it was established. This study shows in Table 3, page 15, that thirty years elapsed before there were any requirements for the person seeking the Office of County Superintendent. Not until 1947 was a college degree required, and then only for counties of more than 15,000 population. In 1961, a college degree for all County Superintendents became a reality. In the same year a master's degree and a principal's or administrator's certificate was required in counties where the population was more than 30,000.<sup>2</sup>

Specific criticism has been directed at the poor educational qualifications and meager salaries of County Superintendents. In his Fourth Annual Report in 1864, State Superintendent Goodnow wrote: "With regard to this Officer I have no words, save those of sympathy and appreciation. . . . He is very much inclined to reflect the wishes of the people."<sup>3</sup> The following year in the Fifth Annual Report, Goodnow called the \$3.00 per day wages of the County Superintendent "horse and buggy hire." He further stated:

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<sup>1</sup>Comprehensive Educational Survey of Kansas, The Elementary and Secondary Education Study, Vol. II, Topeka, Kansas, March, 1960, p. 171.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>3</sup>Isaac T. Goodnow, Fourth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Topeka, Kansas, December, 1864, p. 14.

TABLE III

## HISTORY OF QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE OFFICE OF KANSAS COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT

Years	Population in county		No qualifications required	No qualifications required	No qualifications required
	Under 15,000	15,000 to 30,000			
1861-1888	No qualifications required	No qualifications required	No qualifications required	No qualifications required	No qualifications required
1889-1906	(1) Have eighteen months' experience as a teacher, (2) held a second grade, third grade, or state certificate, or (3) be a graduate of an accredited college or normal school	Same requirements as under 15,000 population	Same requirements as under 15,000 population	Same requirements as under 15,000 population	Same requirements as under 15,000 population
1907-1946	Same requirements except professional certificate substituted for second grade certificate	Same as 15,000 population	Same as 15,000 population	Same as 15,000 population	Same as 15,000 population
1947-1950	No qualifications required	(1) Have a four-year college degree and a certificate valid in Kansas, (2) have five years teaching or supervisory experience of which at least two years were in the elementary schools in any of grades one to eight inclusive,			Same requirements as 15,000 to 30,000 population

TABLE III (concluded)

Years	Population in county		
	Under 15,000	15,000 to 30,000	Over 30,000
1947-1950 (cont.)		(3) have been engaged in teaching or supervision for at least one of the three years immediately preceding the date of filing for office	
1951-1960	At least sixty college hours and a certificate valid in Kansas	Same as required from 1947-1950	Same as required from 1947-1950
1961	Same as required in 15,000 to 30,000 population	(1) A bachelor's degree and a teacher's certificate valid in Kansas, (2) have had at least five years' teaching or supervisory experience in Kansas, two of which were in the elementary school in grades one to eight inclusive, (3) have taught at least one of three years immediately preceding the date of filing for office	In addition to qualifications listed for less populated counties person seeking office must have (1) a master's degree and (2) hold either a principal's or administrator's certificate

Under any circumstances the man really qualified for this position does not receive pay for his work, and if he is faithful it is not because he is remunerated. Need we wonder that we have some "good for nothing" County Superintendents!

. . . But it will not do in the great cause of education as a whole to rely for success upon the disinterested benevolence of men. Here as well as in all other departments, men should be well remunerated for service rendered. To secure first class teachers, school directors, and superintendents, we must pay them.<sup>1</sup>

Figure I, page 18, gives a general picture of the history of County Superintendents' wages from 1870 to 1960. Not shown is the fact that, as late as 1935, County Superintendents in counties of less than 500 school population were receiving as little as \$4.00 per day for only 180 days work per year. In counties with from 500 to 1,000 school population, the pay was \$4.00 per day for not more than 200 days.

Varied practices in laws determining County Superintendents' salaries make the plotting of an accurate historical graph extremely difficult. Some of these practices were: (1) the payment of \$1.00 to \$2.00 per school visited from 1917 to 1935, (2) the making of wages subject to approval of county commissioners, and (3) the making of a salary scale in 1955 based on preparation, experience, and school census.

The 1950 Yearbook of the County Superintendent of Schools in the United States and the Kansas School Survey are

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<sup>1</sup>Isaac T. Goodnow, Fifth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Topeka, Kansas, December, 1865, pp. 10-11.

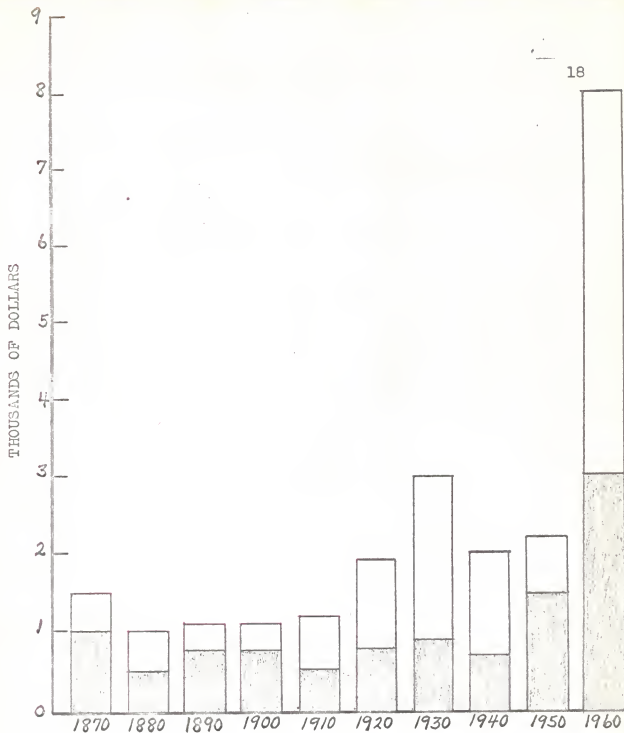


FIGURE 1

KANSAS COUNTY SUPERINTENDENTS' SALARIES 1870 TO 1960  
 (COMPILED FROM THE GENERAL LAWS OF THE STATE OF KANSAS)

□ MAXIMUM

▒ MINIMUM

the sources for the following tabulations of Kansas County Superintendents' salaries:

TABLE IV  
SALARIES PAID KANSAS COUNTY  
SUPERINTENDENTS IN 1948 AND 1960

Salary range	Number 1948	Number 1960
Less than \$2,000	39	0
Less than \$2,500	54	0
Less than \$3,000	9	2
\$3,000 - \$3,499	1	19
\$3,500 - \$3,999	0	24
\$4,000 - \$4,499	2	29
\$4,500 - \$4,999	0	15
\$5,000 - \$5,999	0	12
\$6,000 - \$6,999	0	2
\$7,000 - \$7,999	0	2

In counties of 80,000 or less, County Superintendents are allowed traveling expenses of seven cents per mile for the use of a privately owned vehicle in the performance of their duties. Amounts of \$750 to \$1,200 are allowed County Superintendents for maintaining a private vehicle in counties of more than 80,000 population.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School Laws of Kansas, 1963, 28-169.



Important to the Office of Kansas County Superintendents and also the subject of much criticism is the item of clerical assistance. Table V shows a definite deficiency in the Office in respect to this item.<sup>1</sup>

TABLE V  
CLERICAL ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE IN THE  
105 KANSAS COUNTY SUPERINTENDENTS' OFFICES, 1959

Number of clerical assistants	Number reporting
No full-time help	28
One	68
Two	7
Three	1
Four	1

#### Problems of the Office

The Kansas Educational Survey in 1960 recorded that: "Despite a long history of public service, no phase of public education is more uncertain than the role of County Superintendent."<sup>2</sup>

Specific criticisms were directed at (1) Poor educational qualifications, (2) meager salaries, (3) limited staff and clerical assistance, (4) poor office facilities, and (5) a continuous struggle for recognition and support. All of

<sup>1</sup>Comprehensive Educational Survey, op. cit., pp. 174-5.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 171.

these criticisms had contributed to a lowering of esteem for the Office. Improvements in salaries and qualification requirements which came from 1947 to 1961 were too late to change the status of the Office appreciably.

Another important cause of the County Superintendents' uncertain position was found in the study of the history of Kansas school districts. The force that over the years built, harmonized, and popularized the common school system in rural areas was found in the Office of County Superintendent. The Office served as an intermediate unit during pioneer days when school districts were small and communication slow and difficult. These small, relatively isolated districts needed services which they could not provide for themselves. Also an agency to represent the state was needed. The County Superintendency seemed to fit both of these requirements and thus began its service as an intermediate unit. As the larger schools came into existence, they were staffed by professionally qualified teachers and administrators who no longer needed the supervision or service the County Superintendent's Office had to offer.<sup>1</sup>

A comprehensive picture of this situation may be gained by a study of Figure 2, page 22, where the growth and decline in the number of Kansas school districts is graphically

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<sup>1</sup>Comprehensive Educational Survey of Kansas, Summary Report, Kansas Legislative Council, Topeka, Kansas, May, 1960, p. 93.

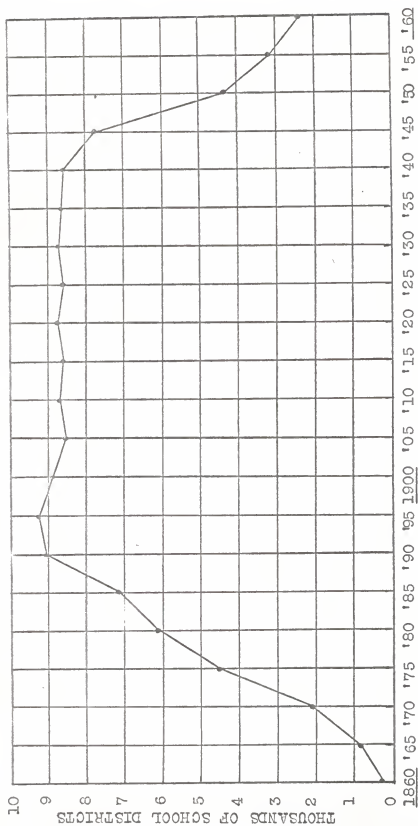


FIGURE 2

DEVELOPMENT AND DECLINE OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN KANSAS 1860 - 1960  
 (BASED ON DATA FROM ANNUAL REPORTS OF  
 STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION)

illustrated for the years from 1860 to 1960. The highest number of school districts existed in the year 1896 when there were 9,284. The rapid decline in number from 1945 to 1950 came about through the disorganization and consolidation of many one-teacher rural school districts that could no longer operate because of a lack of funds or students.

From 1920 to 1960, the number of one-teacher rural school districts decreased from 7,600 to 1,000, and enrollments in these schools decreased from 140,000 to 13,000. These data, shown in Figure 3, page 24, emphasize a decreasing need of the Office of County Superintendent.

Figure 4, page 25, shows a comparison of the number of Kansas school districts of all types by counties, existing in the years 1961 and 1962.

The totals for all districts 1961 through 1963 were as follows:

<u>1961</u>	<u>1962</u>	<u>1963</u>
2,303	2,023	1,800

Of the total 1,800 operating districts in 1963, only 427 were one-teacher rural districts.

The statutes in Kansas School Laws of 1963, Article 67, outline plans for further consolidation and disorganization of existing school districts. According to Dr. O. K. O'Fallon, Professor of Education at Kansas State University, Kansas

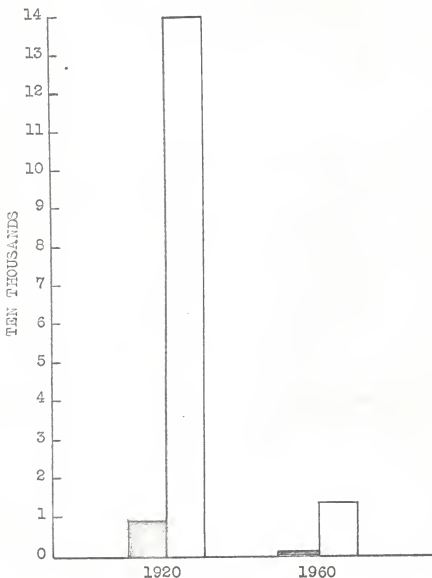


FIGURE 3

COMPARISON OF NUMBER  
AND ENROLLMENTS IN ONE-TEACHER DISTRICTS  
(BASED ON DATA IN KANSAS SCHOOL SURVEY)



Districts



Enrollment



could operate effectively with 160 school districts.<sup>1</sup>

### Resolution of the Problem

Results of the study at this point indicated that the Office of Kansas County Superintendent was no longer operating effectively as an intermediate unit. The status of the Office had reached a point where it was evident that planning was needed to (1) improve the Office as it existed, (2) disband the Office, or (3) re-organize the Office along with the development of a new unified district plan in such a way that districts would be served adequately through a newly organized intermediate unit.

Obviously, little was to be gained in attempting to improve the Office as it existed. It seemed unwise to disband the Office because some type of link between existing school districts and the State Department of Public Instruction was needed.

The 1960 Kansas Educational Survey recommended that the Office be abolished pending the completion of a redistricting plan.<sup>2</sup> The Survey also recommended and was supported by Cook<sup>3</sup> in the following:

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<sup>1</sup>Dr. O. K. O'Fallon, Professor of Education, Kansas State University, Statement made in a college course, November 1963. Permission to quote secured.

<sup>2</sup>Comprehensive Educational Survey, op. cit., p. 212.

<sup>3</sup>Phil A. Cook, "A Proposal for the Intermediate Administrative Unit of Educational Organization in Kansas" (Doctor's Dissertation, University of Kansas, 1962), p. 4.

It is recommended that the office of county superintendent be replaced with a central office for a new intermediate unit. This system would be planned by the State Board of Education and created by legislative action. It should consist of units each containing one or more counties and a pupil population of at least 5,000 and preferably 10,000 or more. Each intermediate unit should be directed by a fiscally independent board whose members are elected by the school board members of the districts included within its boundaries. The board of the intermediate unit should appoint the superintendent, who should hold the highest administrative certificate issued by the state.<sup>1</sup>

The function of the intermediate unit as newly formed would be to supplement the services provided by the local districts. Cook listed as a general criterion relating to the intermediate administrative unit, the following.<sup>2</sup>

The intermediate administrative unit should consider providing as a minimum, the following basic services determined upon the need for such services and the ability of the constituent districts to provide these services economically and efficiently: (1) curriculum, (2) guidance, (3) health, (4) instructional supervision, and (5) special education. Additional services which should be considered as the need arises are: (1) administrative services including financial advisement and pupil personnel, (2) adult education, (3) central purchasing services, (4) library services, (5) psychiatric and psychological services, (6) research services, (7) transportation services, and (8) vocational education services.

The Professional staff of the intermediate administrative unit should include the intermediate administrative unit superintendent, the professionally trained specialists,

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<sup>1</sup>Comprehensive Educational Survey, op. cit., p. 212.

<sup>2</sup>Cook, op. cit., p. 94.



and clerical personnel deemed essential by the intermediate unit board to carry out the educational program needed in the intermediate administrative unit. Personnel professionally trained in areas of guidance, curriculum, instructional supervision, health education, and special education would be needed in carrying out the responsibilities of the intermediate administrative unit.<sup>1</sup>

The intermediate administrative unit appeared to be the solution to the dilemma that existed in the Office of County Superintendent. The position of leader in the proposed intermediate unit would be one in which status and prestige could be restored to the Office. And what is more important, the education of rural and city youth alike would be better served, and the State Department of Public Instruction would have a more effective arm in carrying out State obligations to education.

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<sup>1</sup>Cook, op. cit., p. 94.

### III. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Office of Kansas County Superintendent originated during territorial days and was considered to be of such importance that the provision for it was written into the Kansas Constitution. It has been a county elective office calling for re-election every two years with the term of office beginning the first Monday in July of every odd year. As the prairies of Kansas were settled, the Office acted as an intermediate unit between the many and rapidly developing rural school districts and the State Department of Education.

As a county office it had been unique in that its most important functions, those of supervision and educational leadership, had not been subject to statutory requirements and authority. As a political office it had suffered from: (1) partisan elections, (2) poor salary, (3) lack of professional qualifications, (4) lack of supervisory and service personnel, (5) poor office facilities, and (6) apathy on the part of the public.

The development of large city and high school districts with qualified and professionally trained administrators and teachers tended to place the County Superintendent in a role of diminishing importance. The rapid decline in number of school districts that came about after the year 1940 placed the Office in a position where it was questionable if it were

wise to provide for its continuance during the early 1960's. The duties of the Office had become primarily defined as clerical for the State Department of Public Instruction in relation to school retirement, state school finance, and numerous reports to the State Department and other State agencies. In reality, the Office had in many ways become a branch for performing State functions although supported by county funds. The situation was one to challenge the minds of educators and lawmakers alike in determining the place of the County Superintendent in a changing educational situation.

Emphasized in the Kansas Comprehensive Survey was the fact that the indictment of the County Superintendency was not directed at persons who had served the Office in time past or who were at that time holding Office. The feeling was that County Superintendents had served well and had achieved marvelous results under miserable working conditions.<sup>1</sup> The 1950 Yearbook, The County Superintendent of Schools in the United States, paid effective tribute to County Superintendents who had served the Office faithfully when the following was stated:

His neighbors do not regard him as a particularly important person. He is one of them--lives with them, works with them, plays with them. He understands their problems of living because many are similarly his own. He sympathizes with their points-of-view because he is able to see the world from where they sit. He enjoys the confidence and

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<sup>1</sup>Comprehensive Educational Survey, op. cit., p. 179.

respect of persons at every level of social life in the county. The county superintendent can well be described by saying, "He is a good citizen and a good neighbor."<sup>1</sup>

But the changing character of the Office had brought about a condition where school districts and the State Department of Public Instruction were no longer being served effectively by the existing intermediate unit. The modern concept of an intermediate unit or district had become one in which "the school district was served more directly through leadership, administrative, and educational functions."<sup>2</sup>

Since the Office would become decreasingly effective as an intermediate unit, it had been recommended that the Office be abolished upon the successful completion of a Kansas school re-districting plan under which new types of intermediate administrative units would be established. The superintendent within the new administrative unit would be appointed by a board representing the school districts. The superintendent's position would require the highest type of administrator's certificate and call for a salary comparable to that of city school superintendents.

#### Recommendation

If the plan for re-districting of the Kansas schools into unified districts, as outlined in Article 67 of the 1963

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<sup>1</sup>1950 Yearbook, The County Superintendent of Schools in the United States, Department of Rural Education, National Education Association, p. 174.

<sup>2</sup>Cook, op. cit., p. 80.

Kansas School Laws fails to materialize as a result of delay or of the law's being declared unconstitutional, it would be well to consider a proposal made by the County Superintendents themselves in June, 1964.

At the annual meeting of the County Superintendents' Organization of Kansas a motion was made that the group go on record as favoring "legislation that would abolish the Office of County Superintendent in those counties as the time came when the Office services were no longer needed."<sup>1</sup> Although the motion did not carry, the discussion indicated that many were cognizant of the need for a change that would accelerate the process of establishing more satisfactory intermediate units to better serve the educational needs of Kansas youth.

This alternative plan of legislative disbandment of unessential County Superintendents serving a minimum number of districts would, of necessity, become the stepping-stone whereby the more effective total plan of new types of intermediate administrative units for all of Kansas would evolve. Incorporated within the legislation for disbandment should be provisions for larger areas to unite in securing qualified administrative personnel needed for the types of districts envisioned. With adequate leadership, re-districting and/or unification would become a reality through effective counseling with residents of the areas.

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<sup>1</sup>Jane Roether, Geary County Superintendent, in personal interview, June, 1964.

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A HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE OFFICE OF KANSAS  
COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

by

GEORGE L. FURNEY

B. S., Kansas State University, 1961

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

School of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

1964

The purpose of this study was (1) to discover the legal and historical status of Kansas County Superintendents, (2) to identify their activities of operation, (3) to discover problems that have developed to place the Office in the educational position in which it is found in the year 1964, and (4) to determine whether or not there is a continuing need for the Office.

A review of the literature was made in relation to the historical and legal aspects of the Kansas County Superintendency.

The study showed that the Office of Kansas County Superintendent originated during territorial days and was considered to be of such importance that the provision for it was written into the Kansas Constitution. It has been a county elective office calling for re-election every two years with the term of office beginning the first Monday in July of every odd year. As the prairies of Kansas were settled, the Office acted as an intermediate unit between the many and rapidly developing rural school districts and the State Department of Public Instruction.

As a county office it had been unique in that its most important functions, those of supervision and educational leadership, had not been subject to statutory requirements and authority. As a political office it had suffered from: (1) partisan elections, (2) poor salary, (3) lack of professional qualifications, (4) lack of supervisory and service

personnel, (5) poor office facilities, and (6) apathy on the part of the public.

The duties of the Office had become primarily defined as clerical for the State Department of Public Instruction in relation to school retirement, state school finance, and numerous reports to the State Department and other State agencies. In reality, the Office had in many ways become a branch for performing State functions although supported by county funds. The situation was found to be one to challenge the minds of educators and lawmakers alike in determining the place of the County Superintendent in a changing educational situation.

The changing character of the Office had brought about a condition where school districts and the State Department of Public Instruction were no longer being served effectively by the existing intermediate unit. The modern concept of an intermediate unit or district had become one in which the school district was served more directly through leadership, administrative, and educational functions.

It was recommended that the Office of County Superintendent be disbanded through legislative action upon the establishment of larger unified districts as recommended by the Kansas School Survey. The new intermediate units resulting should be staffed by a superintendent appointed by an intermediate area board of education and who would receive a salary commensurate with the qualifications and duties required of the position.