

# Teaching the Teachers

by Terry Primas

During the first two decades of the Pulaski County's existence, education primarily occurred in private subscription schools. The population being sparse, public funds were inadequate to support many public schools.

## Early Educational Enterprises

The first effort to provide education and training to local teachers was made in Waynesville, the county seat, and the only town of any size in the antebellum period. In 1857, the Legislature passed "An Act to Incorporate the Waynesville Academy," and that "William W. McDonald, Jesse A. Rayl, Bland N. Ballard, Sr., B. G. Lingow, G. W. Gibson, Cyrus Colley, William C. York, Allen Hamer, V. B. Hill, James M. King, Martin Mitchell, David Johnson, M. S. Irman, H. M. McKee, H. W. King, Phillip Jackson, J. R. Arnold, Robert Hudgens, John W. Bryan, Daniel V. Smith, Samuel Hamilton, Andy Anderson, John S. King, Bennett Musgraves, Robert M. Case, W. S. Hicks, Henry York, Henderson Strong, William Carmack, and such other persons as may become stockholders in said corporation, be and they are hereby constituted and appointed a body corporate and politic, to be known by

the name and style of 'the trustees of the Waynesville Academy' to be located in the town of Waynesville." This Academy was to "have power to confer such literary honors and degrees as are usually conferred by colleges in the United States." (The names are listed as an honor roll of early settlers and educational proponents.)

A site was located on the hill overlooking the town square and lumber purchased and stacked for construction. However, this first attempt came to nothing. For reasons unknown, construction never began and the lumber was sold at auction. The Civil War brought all education to a halt.

After the war, Richland rose along the railroad tracks that traversed the northern part of the county in 1869. Richland Institute was begun early in 1870 as a private stock company. It was formed before any houses were built in the town.

With land donated by the railroad, a two-story, three-room frame building, capped by a bell tower was erected. It prospered through the early 1870s, peaking around 1876 with an enrollment of about 200. Richland built a public school in that year and, offering free public education, the enrollment at the Institute started a decline. The pub-

lic school rented the building for a time but by 1889 the building was in severe disrepair. The Institute continued, with the purpose of training teachers, into the early 20th century.

Also by 1889, Waynesville had grown enough that a new two-story, two-room building was erected at Lynn and School Streets and two teachers were required for the seventy-five students. Professor Reed was also talking up the idea of holding summer sessions for teacher education.

In 1896, the Pulaski County Institute was held at Dixon. It was conducted by G. W. Gan (administrator) and the instructors were G. W. Shelton and F. F. Thompson. The Institute lasted fifteen days with an enrollment of 27 male and 27 female students. At the end of the term, eight grade one, sixteen grade two, and twenty-one grade three certificates were issued.

## Normal School Movement

By 1906, the citizens of Missouri were thinking seriously about educational reform. A compulsory attendance law was passed in April of 1905 (see News, August 24, page 18.) In addition to universal education, increased student achievement was sought but it was realized that for better schooling to

occur, there needed to be better teachers.

Teaching in rural schools, in particular, was not seen as a job at which one could make a living. For most teachers in our area, teaching was a part time job, particularly for men. It supplemented their farm income. It neither paid enough nor lasted long enough. Twenty-five dollars a month (for men) and a sixth month school term, which was authorized in Waynesville in 1906, was not a full-time job.

Reformers believed that a democratic society depended on a literate and schooled citizenry. Our very form of government depended on effective schools. Strengthening student performance required strengthening teacher preparation and retention. Retention required more remuneration. However, taxpayer support of higher salaries required that teaching be perceived as a profession. Hence, the professional preparation in the normal schools.

The term "normal school" may seem a peculiar name for a teacher training institution. It derived from the French name for such schools, *école normale*, meaning model school.

Education had all but ceased during the Civil War, both public and private.

George Berry

Bales Construction

Rocky Top Kennel

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Storie

SPE Supply

Roger Harrison

There had been much talk and some movement toward establishing a normal school system in the 1850s. What money had been designated for school purposes was diverted for other uses.

The Constitution of 1865 established some important principles for public education in the form of the "Parker Laws", which provided for local taxation for education. However, not much was done to enforce the law until the General Assembly overhauled the statutes and the Constitution of 1875 provided "ample" and effective funding measures for school districts.

The first "agitation" for a more systematic training of teachers began in the decade ending in 1870. The usual practice in employing teachers was to recruit the most deserving eighth grade graduate. This was called the monitorial system.

Professor Joseph Baldwin of Indiana had been looking for a place to locate a normal school in Missouri and chose Kirksville as the site in 1867. When the legislature decided to establish a state supported normal school, the General Assembly made Baldwin's private college the First District Normal School in 1871, the first state supported institution of higher learning established primarily for preparing public school teachers.

After establishing Kirksville as the site of the first normal school, teacher institutions were founded in Warrensburg (1871) and Cape Girardeau (1873).

These three normal schools were quite a distance from Pulaski and neighboring counties. Teachers were required to have a certificate to carry out their scholarly duties. There were three grades of certificates: third grade, second grade, and first grade. The applicant for certification was required to take an examination. There was no requirement that a teacher be a college or even high school graduate.

The examination for the basic certificate, grade three, included tests in Spelling, Reading, Penmanship, Language Lessons, Geography, Arithmetic, English Grammar, United States History, Civil Government, Agriculture, Physiology and Hygiene, and Pedagogy. The standard for passing was an overall average score of eighty percent with no score below sixty percent.

The examination for the second grade certificate included all those subtests for grade three plus examinations in Algebra and Literature. An average grade of eighty-five percent was required with no score lower than sixty percent.

The highest classification of certification, grade one, included all the subjects in grades three and two plus examinations in one branch of History (Ancient, Modern, or English), and one Science (Physical Geography, Physics, or Elementary Biology). A passing score was an average of ninety percent

with no score lower than sixty percent. Additionally, the applicant for a grade one certificate must have had one year's experience in teaching. Examinations were organized and handled by the County School Commissioner.

The third grade certificate was renewable for one additional year after it was obtained. The second grade certificate was valid for two years and could be renewed two times. The first grade certificate was valid for three years and was renewable an indefinite number of years as long as the holder was teaching or attending school.

Most, if not all, of the rural teachers in our area had only attended through eighth grade. There must have been some anxiety among them about the examinations, fear that they were not adequately prepared. To aid in preparation for the examinations, many counties held voluntary County Institutes for the purpose of studying for the certificate examinations. The Institutes were voluntary until 1891 when the General Assembly passed a law requiring that a County Institute be held in the summer for not less than two weeks. At the end of the Institute, examinations were held.

In 1903, the County Institute Law was repealed and in its place was established the County Teachers' Association. The Association met for three days in September, October, November, and December. These meetings were for practicing teachers, the content devoted mostly to pedagogical skills, and they received their regular pay for attendance.

During this period, it seems the Institute days evolved into what was called Normal Schools in several of the county's communities. There certainly was still a need for academic instruction in preparation for the certificate examinations.

A new column appeared in the *Pulaski County Democrat*, chronicling the activities of the Waynesville Normal School.



George M. Reed initiated the Normal School in Waynesville. Courtesy Bob and Geneva Goodrich.



Academic Hall, Springfield Normal School, 1912. Springfield Normal was the fourth normal school established by the General Assembly, approved March 17, 1905. It opened in June of 1906 in some leased buildings. To attract students from its twenty-county district, it deferred the \$31.00 tuition until the fall when the teachers were employed. Courtesy Jan and Terry Primas

It was temporary, running only while the Normal School was in session.

#### Normal Notes

*This week closes one month of our school. Enrollment and interest are still increasing.*

*The class in vocal music is making rapid progress under the instruction of Prof. Lumpkin.*

*The reading class under Prof. Gove is now giving special attention to definitions and analyses.*

*Our visitors this week were Messrs. Roy Reed, Chas Wheeler, Whis Dye, and Robert Page.. - Pulaski County Democrat, May 4, 1906*

The Normal School was operated by Gove and Lumpkin, who defeated incumbent J. L. Johnson of Richland in the Democratic Primary for State Representative. Townspeople visited the Normal to show their support, just as they did the public school and visitors were reported in the paper.

#### Normal Notes

*The Normal School conducted here by Professors C. H. Gove and John Lumpkin closed Friday with a picnic and outing in the island west of town. They took their dinners and had a splendid time. In the afternoon a number of our citizens joined the crowd, the band went out and rendered a few piece[s] and a game of baseball was played between the town team and the Normal. Everybody enjoyed the day. In the evening ice cream was served in the court yard and some excellent music furnished by the Waynesville and Crocker cornet bands.*

*Saturday most of the students departed for their respective homes, conscious of having closed ten weeks faithful and valuable work in their class rooms. This was not so large as some previous normals in enumeration, but probably less time was idled away and greater advancement made in their studies than ever before. We considered it a very successful school. Pulaski County Democrat, June 22, 1906*

Waynesville Normal had a large

attendance in 1904 but was reported lower in 1906. The drop in enrollment was most likely due to the number of schools in operation. Richland and Dixon had normal schools. There was Iberia Academy and the new normal school in Springfield was deferring tuition payment until the fall when teachers returned to work.

#### Teacher's Examination

*The regular teacher's examination met at Waynesville on June 22 and 23 conducted by County Commissioner Robert R. Green and Profs. Gove and Cole. There were thirty two teachers wrote and the following persons received certificates:*

W. . Nichols,	Third Grade
Emir Christeson,	Second Grade
Fred Christeson,	" "
Robert Ray,	" "
Mae Gan,	" "
William Clark,	Third Grade
Myrtle Henson,	" "
May Payne,	" "
A. C. Thomson,	" "
Grace Zumwalt,	" "
A. F. Thomson,	Second Grade
Emma Page,	Third Grade
Sherman Page,	" "
Will Ichord,	Second "
Olive Lumsden,	Third "
D. L. Nickols,	Second "
Maude Christeson,	Third "
Virgil Barlow,	First "
Seba Baker,	Second "
Will LaFever,	First "

*Besides the above new certificates being issued also a number of certificates were renewed. Pulaski County Democrat, July 6, 1906*

Education seemed to be coming to the fore in Pulaski County. Schools were built or under construction in Hooker, Big Piney, and Richland approved \$9,000 for a new school building in 1906.

However, a high school education was still a few years away for most county students and those first high schools would offer only one or two years of secondary schooling.

*Ernest Christeson attended the Waynesville Normal School. Ernest reflected upon his days there, as well as many other local experiences, in his "Autobiography of E. L. Christeson", written in March of 1943 at his home in Monkato, Minnesota. Ernest was associated with the Monkato Commercial College for nearly thirty years. Ernest began his teaching career in Pulaski County and Hooker School. His autobiography comes to us courtesy of Mike Christeson of Little Rock, Arkansas.*

The next year there was a spring and summer term of school conducted in Waynesville to train would-be teachers and to coach them for the regular teachers' examinations. I managed to attend that term, and when the examination time came around was successful in passing for the county's Second Grade certificate. That was the highest that could be granted without a year's experience at teaching.

The school was in charge of Professor W. A. Lumpkin, and at times he had as some of his additional help his brother John, Ambrose Decker, C. H. Gove, and others, men of exceptional ability as teachers. While it was not a recognized school as far as college standings went at the time, it offered a complete course for teachers, and those who completed that course satisfactorily found no difficulty in passing the regular county examinations as they came along. In order to attend I had to ride horseback the four miles from our home daily and to do my studying by lamp light at night at home. Sometimes the weather made this a very severe task for me. Of course I had to bring my lunch from home. But realizing the handicaps under which I had to work I think I put just a little more into most of my work than did others who had it somewhat easier...

Professor Lumpkin's strong points were Mathematics and English Literature, though good in other subjects, too, as well as possessing the ability to inspire one to greater achievement. While his methods perhaps were not always orthodox, in most respects he produced results. I recall that he used to conduct contests in his classes in mathematics, calling for excessive speed and accuracy in solving unexpected problems from the text. I have taken part in some of those contests and have done reasonably well. One day dame fortune smiled on me and I defeated the braggart of the class in some of his pet work. It hurt him to the core and he made all kinds of "alibis" as to how it occurred, and bragged what he would do the next time. I was offered most anything by the student body if I would take him on again. But I knew when to quit, and the matter rested right there.

Another teacher under whom we worked was Professor C. H. Gove, a very likable man, and proficient. His specialties were English Literature and the Sciences. I think these teachers molded the minds of a good many of us more effectively than they or we ever realized.

I had been reared in the hills, and had very little opportunity for self improvement, and therefore appreciated to the fullest extent the chance that was mine to go to school. I also knew something of the value of money. In these modern days of luxury and ease I am led to believe that young folks do not appreciate their opportunities, or their good fortune, if it may be called that. Life has been too easy for them and for their parents. It seems to me that when one has been taught the value of honest labor, and of how to take care of himself, he has made a long step in the process of a practical education.

That summer, following the teachers' course in the spring term, I secured a contract to teach the winter term of school, six months, in the Hooker district some twelve miles east of Waynesville, on the Big Piney river. The term was to begin in August, and I was to receive a salary of \$25.00 a month. That sounds like little money in these days of high living, big incomes, etc., yet out of it I was able to pay board and room for myself, pasture my horse, and to save enough to attend a spring and summer term at college in Springfield the next year.

Only one or two events or occurrences stand out in my mind for that year of teaching. There was no grading system. The classes went from the a, b, c's on up to history, geography, arithmetic, etc., and there were about fifty enrolled. That is enough to wilt the courage of most any tyro at teaching. I was a beginner, and enthusiastic, so made the most of it.

On that first day, when the First Reader class was called, a young

German by the name of Fred Wiener came forward. This was Fred's first day at school, and when the class was called he came forward with all the German confidence one can imagine. I asked him if he could read and he said, "Oh, sure, sure." I asked him to read a certain lesson that I pointed out to him on the page, and away he went, the whole page in German, before I realized what he was doing or before I could stop him. He had it all memorized. That was a "stunner" for me, who thought I knew all the answers in elementary teaching. But Fred was a wonderful student. I have often wondered about him. There were four or five in the Wiener family, all good students.

This was supposed to be one of the better districts in the county, however it had an old-fashioned log building of ample size. At one time it had a fireplace at one end, but at the time I went there it had been "modernized" to the extent that it was fitted with a huge box stove and drum, with the old fireplace closed up. This was a typical rural school during my first years at teaching, beginning as I have said, with the younger pupils with the a, b, c's, and running the gamut of the three R's.

This included the Franklin Readers, the old McGuffey's speller, and texts in Arithmetic, History, and Geography, with emphasis on Arithmetic. I had my hands full that winter.

The next year I was again employed to teach that same school at an increase of \$5.00 a month. That was considered the best in the county, so far as rural schools went. It is hard for people these days to understand how we existed on such a salary. But out of such earnings from year to year I was able to meet all of my expenses and to pay for all future schooling.

I have mentioned my enrollment in the Public School in Waynesville and the teachers' courses conducted there dur-

ing the spring and summer. These terms were conducted for a number of years. Here I must give credit to the one man who more than any other played a vital part in starting me out in a profession that was to become my life's work, though I didn't realize it at the time. My big ambition was to become a doctor, but I was prevented from that through financial handicaps. Professor W. A. Lumpkin, as has been suggested before, was head of the school in Waynesville, and it was he, together with the efficient help mentioned, who conducted the courses I followed. He took me "under his wing", so to speak, and gave me every encouragement and help it was humanly possible for one man to give. It was under his direction that I finally secured a First Grade Certificate to teach, the highest the county could give. I shall always remember the day I received it.

It has been a hard summer's work, and several of us hand vied with each other relative to our class standings. The first Grade Certificate was the coveted high prize, and I wasn't any too sure of myself. I recall that I rode into town on a Sunday afternoon to get the mail, for we know when to expect the reports on our examination. There were several of us in the post office when the mail was opened, and sure enough there was THE LETTER for me. I wouldn't open it there in the presence of the others, though they begged me to do so, but carried it out to my horse which was tied to the rack on the public square, mounted the horse, and then tremblingly opened the letter. Sure enough there was my FIRST GRADE CERTIFICATE looking to me like a million dollars!! I at once dismounted, went back to the post office, and showed the certificate to all and sundry, and hung around for an hour or so, proud as a peacock, before going home. That was a "red-letter" day for me.

Later through study at the Normal School in Springfield, I was able to go before the State Superintendent of Schools and to pass successfully the examination for a State Certificate. Professor Lumpkin's influence reached out so strongly among us that at one time there were about a dozen of the Christeson family teaching in the county at the same time, four of them being my own brothers and sister.

#### Sources

- *A History of Education in Missouri*, Claude A. Phillips, Hugh Stephens Printing Company, Jefferson City, MO., 1912.
- *History of Laclede, Camden, Dallas, Webster, Wright, Texas, Pulaski, Phelps and Dent Counties, Missouri*, Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1889.
- *Pulaski County Democrat*, 1906.
- *Pulaski County Rural Schools*, Pulaski County Historical Society, 1990.



Waynesville Normal School baseball team. Ernest Christeson is in the front row, far right. Cousins Alf Christeson is far left and Dolph Christeson is fourth from left. Courtesy of Mike, Christeson.



Waynesville Normal School, 1904. Courtesy of Pulaski County Historical Society.

A good portion of the Pulaski County teaching corps is pictured at left. Normal schools were also operating in Richland, Iberia, and Dixon around this time. Ernest Christeson is in the third row. There are six other Christesons in the photo.

**First row:** left to right: Martha York, Lulu Dodd, Georgia Saling, Sylvia Christeson, Mabel Tice, Anna Anderson, Orpha French, Fay Long, Anna Anderson, Donna Wheeler.

**Second row:** Etta Adkison, Ethel Davis, Lucy Bradford, Carrie Falsline, Mabel Clark, Unknown, Unk, Mae Payne, Olive Lumbson, Lena Ragsdale, Minnie Hobbs, Eliza Johnson, Ethel Smith, Unk, Lena Rayl, Emma Page Hicks, Pearl Mitchley.

**Third row:** Unk, Ernest Christeson, Fred Brownfield, Virgil Clark, LaViga Davis, Harry Wallace, Dave Lewis, Unk, possibly Tabby Anderson, Unk, Vick Long, Unk, Bill Ichord, Virgil Mitchley.

**Fourth row:** Russell Wingo, Jimmy Lane, Charley Dodd, Emir Christeson, Dolf Christeson, Paris Christeson, Unk, Eddie Christeson, Unk, Arthur Tice, Unk, Wilber Johnson, Alf Christeson, Claude Burchard, Bob Page, Price Anderson.

Lower right portion of the picture are Professors Charles Gove (at left), William Lumpkin (above), and John Lumpkin (at lower right)

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