On the cover ...

“Reggies Curtain” at Hoyt School, Hoyt, Oklahoma

Gloria Hawkins lives near Kansas City and is on the board of directors for the Country Schools Association of America. The cover photo was taken by Gloria for use in a presentation she is preparing entitled, “Curtains, Stages, Celebrations and Performances.”

“I have been photographing, as the title suggests -- curtains, stages, and memories of celebrations in country schools focusing on the painted Advertising Curtains,” said Hawkins.

Do any of the schools in Missouri have Advertising Curtains? Hawkins would be very interested in photographing them and including their histories in her national presentation. “I would love to represent Missouri Schools in my presentation if I can tie them with my topic,” said Hawkins.

Photographed below is the stage curtain from Pleasant Grove School in LaGrande, Oregon. What began as a clean-up day at the Pleasant Grove Grange hall turned into a significant day of discovery when Grange Master Howard Butts and other grangers found an ornately painted stage curtain stored and forgotten amidst decades of accumulation.

The curtain was stored up off the ground on the wall with other things and that Butts didn't notice it at first.

The canvas was unrolled on the ground outside the shed, and that's when Butts and other grangers realized they had made the discovery of the century. The canvas measured 9 feet in height and 18 feet in width. On its royal blue background were 27 colorful merchant advertisements. These included 23 from La Grande, one

Continued on page 8
A wise friend, after hearing about my retirement dream of writing a novel, suggested I commit myself to writing one page a day now. Apparently, that is how John Grisham writes his novels.

So I’m taking that same novel approach to writing a story that I’ve had outlined for several years. It is probably no surprise that the setting is a one-room school.

The story grows out of something I know well: stories told to me by my grandfather. I’m mixing in some mystery, stories from other former one-room students and a surprise ending.

I do lots of writing with my job but this novel effort is purely a hobby.

What does this have to do with this schools group? I’m wondering how many members have an interest in writing, or have stories to tell, and just haven’t taken the time to put them on paper (or in a digital file). If that is you, let me encourage you with a forum for your stories.

This newsletter is open for written submissions by members and others in the community. I want letters from former students and teachers telling about their experiences. Stories from outside people about different aspects of historic rural education is wanted too.

If I accept your submission, you will receive a complimentary copy of this newsletter. But, you will also be sharing information for future generations and others who love one-room school history.

STORIES FROM OTHER SCHOOLS

I am sharing success stories related to historic one-room schools located outside the Ozarks as inspiration, and learning examples of what can be accomplished.

You can also see examples shared on our Facebook page. When considered nationally, a person can see a significant trend toward interest in and support of one-room schools.

CONFERENCE

Details for the first schools conference this fall are being finalized. There are always extra challenges when you do something for the first time. We will be electing a board of directors at our business meeting, talking about establishing bylaws and considering an organizational name change.

NAME CHANGE?

I continue to get requests for information and help on one-room schools from all over the state. Each contact opens an opportunity for someone in MU Extension to work with a group on things like forming a non-profit, working with boards and volunteers, developing community centers, rural development grants, business plans, local government, etc. We also have members from across the state and individuals coming to our fall conference.

The name change to be considered would be from Ozarks Country School Association to Missouri Country Schools Association. We would maintain a tie with the national group, Country Schools Association of America and would also continue as an MU Extension program.

INSURANCE

A report on the survey and study done during the winter about insurance needs of one-room schools will be shared at the national schools conference in July and then at our regional conference in the fall. Thanks to those who participated in the survey.

HOW ABOUT A BUS TOUR?

Is there interest in coordinating a statewide bus tour of existing one-room schools? It is a thought worth consideration. There would be a cost to it but the group tour could be beneficial.

There are other MU Extension programs that conduct statewide and regional bus tours. I think of our successful cattlemen tours, for example. Again, there can be a significant cost but people who attend these other MU Extension bus tours always say it is worth the cost. If you are interested in helping, please let me know.

NON-PROFITS

MU Extension is working to host a workshop in Springfield on how to establish a non-profit organization. This would have value to all groups maintaining one-room schools. Members of OCSA would receive a discount, of course.
Driving Tour of One-Room School Houses in Texas County, Mo.

The Texas County, Mo., Genealogical & Historical Society has a document labeled “1924 School Districts, Texas County, Mo.” The document lists 140 rural school districts that are one-room schools. There are six “High Schools-3rd Class” listed, which include Raymondville, Ozark, White Rock, Elk Creek, Shady Grove, and Gravel Point. Plato is then listed as “High School-2nd Class.” The list concludes with four “High Schools-1st Class,” which include Summersville, Cabool, Licking, and Houston.

As of March 2011, a total of 23 one-room schools have been identified as still standing in Texas County. Seven of those are now homes; one is a church, and four are community centers. Six of the seven homes are beautiful rock structures built by Work Projects Administration (WPA) Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) crews.

Assistance with this tour was provided by Top of the Ozarks RC&D—a not-for-profit organization to assist in identifying, designing, and implementing community projects in Dent, Douglas, Howell, LaClede, Oregon, Ozark, Pulaski, Shannon, Texas and Wright counties—that can be reached at 417-967-2028 or at Top of the Ozarks RC&D, 6726 S. Hwy 63, Houston, MO 65483.

This driving tour was researched by Wilbur Bill and Peter Maki for the RC&D. David Burton, with MU Extension and the Ozarks Country School Association designed the tour and this publication.

Stop #1

Oak Hill:
starting your tour in Houston, proceed north on Highway 63 to Highway E. Located on the NE corner of Highway E and Tiffany Drive is Oak Hill School, a beautiful example of WPA stone craftsmanship. The Oak Hill School is now a private residence, so please respect the owners’ privacy.

Stop #2

Brown Hill: just across from the Emmett Kelly Park on Highway 63 in Houston, take Brushy Creek Drive for three miles to Brown Hill Road, go left one-eighth mile to the school on the left. Brown Hill School is now a private residence. The field stone structure, with the spider web raised grout line, is a beautiful example of WPA workmanship. The original playground equipment and hand water pump still exist.

Stop #3

Mt. Vernon: proceed north from Raymondville on Highway 137, and just west of Oscar on Clayton Road is Mt. Vernon School, now a community center. The building is well maintained, and even has its original bell tower.

Stop #4

Ozark: east of Houston just off Hwy. 17, by the Ozark Baptist Church, is Ozark School. It is now a private residence and owner privacy is appreciated.

Stop #5

Tyrone: located on Highway H between Highways DD and 137 is Tyrone School, now a community center. It is in good condition.
Pleasant Grove: located on Cross Road just north of Malberg Road east of Highway 63, Pleasant Grove School is now a private residence. It was built by the WPA, and is another example of fine stone craftsmanship.

Gum Springs: located five miles south of Dunn on Kings Road is Gum Springs School. It is in rough condition.

Dunn: located on Old Highway 60 at Dunn is Dunn School, renovated in 2001.

Fowler: located at Highway MM and Fowler Drive is Fowler School, now used as a church.

Gravel Point: located at Hillside and Gravel Point Roads is Gravel Point School. It was built by the WPA and was a “Job High School.” After the students attended two or three years of high school, they could attend Houston or Mountain Grove and graduate with a high school diploma. It is another example of WPA stone craftsmanship, and is a private residence.

Lone Star: located in a pasture along Highway M, across from Bado Road, is Lone Star School. It is still standing, but in tough condition.

Murr: from Bado, twelve miles north of Cabool on Highway M, take Murr Road by the Piney Creek bridge west for three miles. The building has been untouched since the last classes were held.

Barnun: also know as Rackett Ridge, it is located on Rackett Ridge Drive, just off Barnum Drive, north of Bado. It is in tough condition.

Alice: located on Highways M/38, Alice School has been restored by Maxine Allen, and is in excellent condition.

Number One: located behind the church at Astoria Road and Highway M, Number One School is still standing, but quite abandoned.

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Stop #16

Long Valley: located west off Highway AE onto Long Valley Road, cross Burkhart Creek, go about a mile, and on the left is a private drive to Long Valley School, now a private residence. Built by the WPA, the beautiful stone work and spider web (the raised grout added to the mortar between the rocks) is a stunning example of WPA craftsmanship.

Stop #17

Timber Ridge: located on Highway M between Highway AE and Roubidoux Road is Timber Ridge School. It is now a private residence. The original school is a WPA stone building with the spider web raised grout. The building is in excellent condition.

Stop #18

Gladden: located west of Highway 17, turn left on Highway M, left on Gladden Road, and left on the first private road is Gladden School, now a private residence. Built by the WPA, it is a stone building with the spider web raised grout line and one of the finer examples of WPA rock work.

Stop #19

Liberty: located on Turley Road north of Highway M is Liberty School. It is in dangerously poor condition.

Stop #20

Craddock: located NW of Licking, take Highway AF off Highway N to Craddock Drive. Craddock School is now a community center.

Stop #21

Pine Ridge: located ½ mile east of Lynch Road between Bucyrus and Ellis Prairie is Pine Ridge School. It is in good condition and is on private property.

Stop #22

Oak Grove: located west of Simmons on Highway Z is Oak Grove School. Oak Grove School became Lone Star School, and now serves as a community center. It is in excellent condition.

Stop #23

White Rock: located on White Rock Road west of Houston, take Highway ZZ off Highway 17 to German Road, to Norris Road and then White Rock Road. The concrete block building is the fourth White Rock School building, as the previous three buildings all burned. Around 1960 classes ceased, as White Rock School consolidated with Houston Schools. In 2010 the use as a community center ceased, and the property reverted to the original deed. White Rock School is listed on the 1924 School Districts list as a “High School-3rd Class.” Also called a “working high school,” students could attend high school for a few years and then attend a high school in town and receive a diploma.

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Critical Part of Our History

I’ve been thinkin’ about one-room schoolhouses. I grew up with stories of one-room schoolhouses. My mom went to a one-room school through eighth-grade and I always loved listening to her stories. It was a different world back then -- a pre-consolidation world when communities were far smaller and education much closer to home.

It was a time of rough-and-tumble games, demanding schoolwork, stubble-filled pasture that doubled as a playground, schoolyard bullies and a band of kids more like family than friends.

As a little kid hearing such stories, it seemed both exciting and formidable. I'm still not sure whether I wished I could have experienced it (or am glad I missed it).

Just the same, one-room schools (and their culture) are a critical part of our history, shaping multiple generations for the better.

"I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United State of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

Joshua Heston, editor
State of the Ozarks
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Josh@StateoftheOzarks.net

Lasting Memories of Days in the Old Schoolhouse

The old schoolhouses really had just one room, but sometimes one had an entryway where coats and tin drinking cups were hung and lunches were stored until mealtime. Otherwise the coats and cups were hung on nails at the back of the room and lunches placed on a bench nearby.

There was a large old wood or coal heating stove in the center of the room. It was the teacher’s job to do the janitor work and build and keep the fires. Some of the boys might be persuaded to carry in the wood or coal. A blackboard was across the front of the room. There were large maps hanging that could be pulled down like window shades, one at a time for geography lessons.

Bookcases might be on each side at the front of the room with well-thumbed books. We never had many books so everyone read them all. There was usually a set of World books. A large dictionary was placed on a small table for everyone’s use. A pencil sharpener was probably placed on the wall by one of the windows. There were windows on each side of the room in my school, but children were discouraged from gazing out.

A teacher’s desk and chair were at the front of the room with the roll call and grade book on top; also a small school bell which the teacher used to bring the children in from play. A globe was one of the supplies for everyone to share. A dunce stool could be seen setting in the corner, too.

The seats could be either single or double, with a space for books and supplies. In the double seats, two children sat together if the space was needed. The smaller seats near the front were for the younger children and the larger ones at the back were for the older students.

School began at 9 a.m. with a 15 minute recess at 10:30. Lunch was from noon to 1 p.m. and another 15 minute recess at 2:30. School dismissed at 4 p.m. The recesses and lunch period allowed plenty of play time for the children. They usually all played together with the teacher participating as well.

The drinking water came from a well in the yard with a pump. Each child had their own tin cup. A few really lucky children might have a folding cup.

Two outhouses sat in opposite corners of the back yard, one for the boys and one for the girls. In really old times, there might be a shed to shelter horses that children or the teacher might ride to the school.

The first eight grades were taught by only one teacher. The school board that hired the teacher and took care of any business consisted for three neighborhood men. They hired the teacher, bought the wood or coal for fuel and the other items that needed tending to.

The schools were held for eight months. Some that I heard of were for only six months. I guess that was lack of money to pay the teacher, though the pay wasn’t much in those days. In the 1920s or earlier, the pay was only about $20 per month. In 1938, the pay was about $60 per month. In 1945, about $90 per month and in 1950, it was $125 per month.

On the last day of school they usually had a basket dinner for parents and children at the school or, sometimes, the teacher and pupils went on a picnic to celebrate their freedom from school. Children in school now could not imagine the schools then, but they learned as much, if not more, than they do now.

Submitted by
Della Whitesell
El Dorado Springs, Mo.
Good Ole’ School Days

Nothing captures the character of the good ole’ school days like photos. Photo submissions are welcome (by e-mail or actual prints) for publication in this newsletter. This month’s photos were submitted by Sharon Nahon of Springfield.

In photo #1: Whitlock School, 1885. Woman on the far left is Annie Whitlock.

Whitlock School stood at the southwest corner of Hwy. AA and Farm Road 183 just north of Springfield.

In January 1951, the school became part of Pleasant View R-I. Reorganized into Springfield District R-XII in April, 1968. Named after Jim Whitlock who donated the property. District purchased hand-made walnut chairs for the students in 1939. School photo that year shows the students seated in those post-depression chairs.

Photo #2: Pleasant Hill School, Nov. 11, 1904. The school stood north of Springfield just west of New Salem Church at Hwy. H and Farm Road 56. Previously named Johnson during the 1890s when it was a one-room frame building one mile north of New Salem Church. Later, it was moved across from the church and named Pleasant Hill. Identified as a third-class (Job) high school in 1932. Effective January 1951, became part of Pleasant View R-I. Reorganized into Springfield District R-XII in April, 1968. If you recognize any of these students, or their male teacher, please call the History Museum for Springfield-Greene County at (417) 864-1976.

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Multi-Property Historic Sites Nomination for Missouri One-Room Schools Already Exists

If you are located in Missouri, your one-room school might be eligible for inclusion on the National Historic Sites Register as part of an already approved multi-property historic sites nomination for one room schools.

“Pursuing this can make the property eligible for both state and federal grants along with being prestigious,” said David Burton, a community development specialist with University of Missouri Extension.

Burton contacted the state coordinator and told her there were several schools in the Ozarks that would be eligible. Her response back was: "If any of them are working on nominations, we'd be able to assist if they would just call us."

Here is her contact information:

Tiffany Patterson
National Register Coordinator
State Historic Preservation Office
Missouri Department of Natural Resources
1101 Riverside Drive
P.O. Box 176
Jefferson City, MO 65102
Phone: 573-751-7800
tiffany.patterson@dnr.mo.gov

Patterson will be speaking at the Historic Schools Summit in September about doing historic school nominations.

Future issues of this newsletter will include summary articles about the schools in Missouri that are already recognized as historic one-room schools.

“There is a great listing already and these schools can provide lots of lessons to groups that own one-room schools in the Ozarks,” said Burton. “Being on the national register is prestigious and a worthy goal for all of the schools being preserved in the Ozarks.”

According to Patterson, there are a number of rural Missouri Schools already listed on the National Register.

Below is a mostly-complete list with links to the nomination forms. The nominations range in age and quality, but provide good information on the schools they nominate.

Hudson City School, Bates County: http://www.dnr.mo.gov/shpo/nps-nr/02001110.pdf
Kage School, Cape Girardeau County: http://www.dnr.mo.gov/shpo/nps-nr/05001090.pdf
Big Bend Rural School, Crawford Co.: http://www.dnr.mo.gov/shpo/nps-nr/78001643.pdf
St. John's Evangelical Church & School, Holt Co.: http://www.dnr.mo.gov/shpo/nps-nr/07001339.pdf
Greenwood Estate (includes White Hall School), Howard Co.: http://www.dnr.mo.gov/shpo/nps-nr/83000994.pdf
Pleasant View, Johnson County: http://www.dnr.mo.gov/shpo/nps-nr/99000935.pdf
Hicklin School, Lafayette County: http://www.dnr.mo.gov/shpo/Lafayette.htm
Plum Grove School, Linn Co.: http://www.dnr.mo.gov/shpo/nps-nr/94001203.pdf
McVey School, Pettis Co.: http://www.dnr.mo.gov/shpo/nps-nr/99001255.pdf
Sylvan (Pig Ankle) School, Ripley County: http://www.dnr.mo.gov/shpo/nps-nr/02001109.pdf
Harper School, St. Clair County: http://www.dnr.mo.gov/shpo/nps-nr/07000751.pdf

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One-Room Wonders: Iowa Filmmakers Explore America’s Educational History in "Country School: One Room – One Nation."

Movie will make Missouri Premier at the Historic Schools Summit in Springfield, this fall

“The biggest problem we have, I think, is always getting people in the door,” says local filmmaker Kelly Rundle. “Because we find that most people – not everyone, of course – do enjoy our films. With this one, though. There’s just something about one-room schools that doesn’t sound very sexy, you know what I mean?”

He may have a point. The latest collaboration between director Kelly Rundle and his wife, co-writer and co-producer Tammy Rundle, is “Country School: One Room – One Nation,” the third documentary released by the couple’s Moline-based production company Fourth Wall Films. As the movie is an examination of, and tribute to, the one-room schools that flourished throughout the rural United States in the first half of the 20th Century, “sexy” isn’t exactly the adjective that springs to mind.

Other descriptions, however – including “fascinating,” “insightful,” and “really, really entertaining” – are more than appropriate. Like the pair’s 2004 true-crime doc Villisca: Living with a Mystery and 2007’s “Lost Nation: The Ioway, Country School,” takes an in-depth look at a mostly unknown, or largely forgotten, chapter of American – specifically Midwestern – history. Also like those films, the Rundles’ most recent endeavor delivers a history lesson that is anything but a dry lecture.

Running a quick 75 minutes, the film examines the one-room-school phenomenon – in which students in grades one through eight would share both learning materials and a single instructor – through interviews with more than five dozen individuals closely connected to the subject: scholars, teachers, and former students of rural schools in Iowa, Wisconsin, and Kansas. And with these interviewees (most of them in their 70s, 80s, and 90s) enthusiastically expounding on the struggles and joys of their class-room experiences, Country School emerges as a definitive portrait of education in a one-room environment, a work that’s every bit as informative, engaging, and impassioned as those telling its tales.

“I think a lot of people think our film is just about the architecture of country schools,” says Tammy of the movie. “But it’s not. I don’t think it’s what people are expecting it to be.”

The Nostalgia Thing

“It’s hard to explain how we find our subjects,” says Kelly during my recent interview with the Rundles, “because it’s so convoluted and accidental sometimes.” To hear the filmmakers tell it, Country School wasn’t in any way planned or expected.

“It was during our [2007] Des Moines premiere of Lost Nation: The Ioway,” says Tammy, referencing the Rundles’ documentary on the Native American tribe that inspired the state of Iowa’s name. “I was heading down to the stage in the elevator, and this man, an older guy, got into the elevator with me. And he goes, ‘Wonderful movie. You really ought to think about doing a movie on country schools.’ And he handed me a packet of information.”

That man turned out to be Bill Sherman, a noted Des Moines preservationist and member of Preservation Iowa’s board of directors as well as founder of the Country Schools Association of America.

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(“He’s the guy who got the one-room school on the back of the Iowa quarter,” says Kelly. “He doesn’t take credit for that – it was a decision made by the governor – but he’s the one who said, ‘That’s what should be on there.’”) On the night of the Rundles’ Lost Nation premiere, though, Sherman was at most an afterthought.

“We were petrified that night,” says Kelly. “We had a couple hundred Ioway people there, and we were unsure of how the film was going to be received, and so the last thing we were thinking about was another film.”

“I told Bill, though, ‘Why don’t you e-mail us?,’ figuring this probably wasn’t going to go anywhere,” Tammy recalls. “I mean, country schools? It didn’t sound very interesting to me, and I didn’t know if it was really up our alley … .

“But he did e-mail us,” she continues, “and we met with him and talked to him about it, and that’s when we decided we would develop it and see if there was anything worth pursuing. You know, we thought maybe there might be a story there, even though we weren’t seeing it initially.”

“We did, though, have a little bit of family connection to the subject,” says Kelly, “because both of our fathers went to one-room schools – Tammy’s in Iowa, and mine in Wisconsin. So we grew up hearing some of the stories.”

The Rundles began their research, says Tammy, “by seeing if there were any other documentaries on country schools or one-room schools. We started looking at what had been done, and there really wasn’t anything on the scale of what we’d be doing. They were all very nostalgic, and very positive.”

“We told Bill early on,” continues Kelly, “that we wanted to do the film, because we’d done some preliminary research and figured this was going to be a good topic. But we also told him, ‘We don’t want to just do the nostalgia thing.’ I mean, that’s part of it – you can’t avoid it. But if we were gonna do it, we were gonna look at the positive and the negative. And he was okay with that.”

**Work Begins**

Having agreed on their main subject, the Rundles next sought a specific premise for their film. “That’s the very first thing we do before filming,” says Tammy, “try to get an idea of what it is we’re going to want to focus on.”

“That has to be done for grants,” adds Kelly. “We’re reliant on obtaining grants, so you have to develop your idea on paper fairly completely.” And within the grander scope of the one-room-school experience, the Rundles eventually found their film’s planned subject in the schools’ students – children of first-generation immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, some of whom spoke only their parents’ native languages. (One of Country School’s interviewees – writer Jerry Apps – describes the Wisconsin county of his youth as boasting 50 separate ethnic groups.)

“That part of it was something we hadn’t seen done anywhere else,” says Kelly. “The way that those little schools took people from so many different ethnic backgrounds, mixed them together, and turned out these American citizens. The different ways that they dealt with language issues. Schools were much under local control, so if they wanted to use immersion techniques – where they just threw kids in a classroom, sink or swim – they had that option. If they wanted to hire a bilingual teacher, then they did. “I kept feeling that was a historical story that still spoke to us today,” he continues. “Very much so.”

With grant funding in place from several Midwestern humanities councils – in addition to funds supplied by individual contributors – the Rundles were able to commence filming in 2008. Yet while the documentarians planned to focus on immigra-

**Continued on the next page**

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tion issues, experience told them that it would be the interviewees themselves who dictated the movie’s true course.

“You never know what people are gonna say,” says Kelly, “which is what really determines, in the end, what your film is.” As the Rundles began their initial talks with those knowledgeable in country-school history, they had reason to suspect that some might not wish to say anything.

“We had one scholar who warned us about one-room-school people,” says Kelly. “He said, ‘They don’t want to hear anything negative. Be careful. They’re easily upset by talk of anything negative about one-room schools.’”

To the Rundles’ relief, however, “it wasn’t like that,” says Kelly. “Everybody we asked questions of – including the scholars, and including the former teachers, and including the former students – had no qualms about talking about it all.”

“That School Means Something”

“We decided we wanted to go where the funding was,” says Tammy of which one-room schools the Rundles would include. “So if we got grant funding in Kansas and Wisconsin and Iowa, those were where we were gonna focus.”

Through research and the aid of Bill Sherman, the Rundles eventually outlined a preliminary list of former one-room schools worth visiting – a roster that included such Scott County sites as Forest Grove near Bettendorf, the Pleasant Hill Schoolhouse near LeClaire, and the District No. 9 Schoolhouse located at Davenport’s Mississippi Valley Fairgrounds.

It was, as Kelly remembers, a somewhat daunting assemblage. “I had this thought that all of the schools were the same,” he says. “I think, early on, we thought it was maybe going to be 40 schools or so, and it ended up being over 70 schools. And I thought, you know, ‘Is my interest really gonna be sustained over the course of visiting 70 one-room schools?’”

Happily for the Rundles, though, they found their subject rife with points of interest, beginning with the schools’ architecture.

“What I like about these schools is that they really reflect where they are, and where they came from,” says Kelly. “Up here, in this [Quad Cities] area, we have plenty of lumber, so many times they’re made of wood. If there was a brick factory in a nearby community, suddenly you’d have a brick schoolhouse. In Kansas, where timber wasn’t really available, you have all these beautiful stone schools. So there’s all this diversity. They’re built in a way reflective of the resources that were available.”

(One of them – Wisconsin’s Wyoming Valley Grammar School – was even the work of a famous architect: Frank Lloyd Wright. “I was really excited about that,” says Kelly with a laugh. “I’ve always admired his architecture, and so what fun, you know, to discover that he had designed a country school.”)

The Rundles agree that what made their country-school subject so especially fascinating were the reflections and recollections of those they interviewed.

Tribute to Teachers

“We went to this little Kansas town called Arvonia,” says Kelly. “The town itself doesn’t exist anymore, but they had a church and a one-room school, and we met with these seniors who had been former students of the school. Probably about a dozen of them. They had scrapbooks, and they had photos, and they had the blueprints of the school that had been laminated ... . They had all this stuff out and were just so proud of the school, even though it was really just a shell with a roof.”

“They were so passionate – that school means something. The education they got in that little school meant something to all those people we spoke with,” said Tammy.

As viewers will see in Country School, these and dozens of other former one-room-school students spoke to the Rundles eloquently, and in great detail, on memories of daily schedules, schoolwork, recess and, in one of the more informative passages, the specifics of how a classroom functions when grades one through eight are instructed simultaneously.

“When younger kids were learning lessons up at the recitation bench,” says Tammy, “older kids would be working on their own homework, and helping younger students. But they’re also hearing what’s being taught up at that recitation bench.”

“You’d get your own course work,” continues Kelly, “but you’d constantly get a preview of coursework to come, and a review of coursework that you’ve already gone through. So after eight grades, even if you fell behind at some point, you had the opportunity to catch up.”

Yet for all of the happy reminiscences, the former students also shared numerous tales of hardship.
Some weren’t unique to the one-room-school experience – among them memories of foul weather conditions, bullying, and terrifying instructors. But Country School also finds interviewees describing burdens that children in city schools likely never endured.

In addition to students and scholars, Tammy says they “were fortunate in speaking with these teachers that were extremely passionate about what they did, and passionate about the country-school experience.”

“So many of the ladies we talked to,” said Kelly, “they just have teacher DNA, you know what I mean? They were just wired that way. They loved what they did. And to be able to teach eight grades, and all subjects, every day, and take care of a building ... .”

“I don’t think I thought about it during the filming,” says Tammy, “but I think the film turned out to be a tribute to teachers.”

**Overlapping Timelines**

With the interviews and exterior and interior one-room-school footage filmed, the Rundles began the three-month process of editing Country School, a task that Tammy says was initially “very difficult, because we had so much footage – over 80 hours of footage that we had to boil down into 75 minutes.”

“That was the most we had ever shot for a documentary,” says Kelly. “With Villisca, we had about 25 hours, and with loway, we had about 50. But once we started working on it ... I don’t know, it felt like it was working as we were putting it together. Sometimes you have a moment in editing where things just seem really right, and we had more moments like that, on this film, than on the other two.

“What we ended up with,” he continues, “were three kind of overlapping timelines, if you will. There’s the linear history of the one-room schools. There’s the school day itself, from the time the students came to school to the time they were dismissed. And then there’s the passing of the seasons – we kind of start in the spring and end in the spring.”

“That was kind of a complex way to tell the story,” says Tammy, “but we don’t want to hit the audience over the head with our stories. We didn’t want to have to say, ‘The school day started at nine, and the students needed these tools every day ... .’”

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**One Room - One Nation**

Voice-over narration, in fact, is entirely absent from the film’s presentation. “I never felt that we needed a narrator for this,” says Kelly, “and I think it maybe makes the film watchable a second time if everything isn’t so laid out.

“We don’t make instructional videos,” he says with a chuckle. “I mean, there’s nothing wrong with somebody making an instructional video, but it’s just not what we do, and I think – I hope – that that’s a good thing.”

Following a two-year filming and editing process, Country School debuted at Des Moines’ State Historical Building in November of 2010.

“After the film was done,” adds Kelly, “we knew it was going to be okay, because the scholars were telling us that they liked it, and we were getting good feedback from other people we showed it to.

“I didn’t know anything about country schools, really, when we started the project,” says Tammy. “I think I just had some kind of myth in my head about them, probably from watching Little House on the Prairie or something. But I think that’s what I found most interesting about the project – this unique sense of community, and how the country school really was the identity for so many rural communities.”

“It isn’t so much the fact that these schools are still there,” says Kelly of country schools’ – and Country School’s – significance. “I mean, they’re just buildings, really. But the buildings are filled with the memories of what took place there. And so the fact that you can go to a one-room school, and stand in that building, and be in that environment, and get a sense of what it was like – there’s a big difference between being able to do that and reading about something in a book.

“It’s our history and our heritage. And it’s important that we don’t forget that these little schools are the foundation for the educational system that we have in this country. You really can’t understand where you are now if you don’t know where you came from.”
Newport School Near Lamar Finds Second Life

The settlement here was formerly called Horse Creek. The town was laid off by Miles Boord, and the plat was filed June 24, 1874. The plat of Griffin’s first addition was filed July 25, 1879, on Highway BB, west of highway F.

The Newport Community Building was the Newport School. It is about four miles northeast of Lamar and it is used as a voting center. The voting actually takes place in an adjoining room on the west side of the original school.

The main school room looks like it is still in place for classes to be resumed tomorrow. Even Washington & Lincoln are still hanging at the front of the classroom.
Twice-a-year Fundraiser Keeps Schuyler Community School Going

Schuyler Community center held a fundraising breakfast on April 23 like it does every spring and fall. The former one-room school is located 3885 W. Farm Road 94 in Springfield, near the entrance to Fantastic Caverns.

The historic Schuyler School began classes in September 1905 and continued holding classes in the one room until 1940 when it was enlarged to two rooms.

In the spring of 1951, Schuyler residents voted to consolidate with the Willard School District, and the last classes were held in the spring of 1953.

On May 7, 1983, a group of Schuyler neighbors met at the school to explore the possibility of forming an organization to purchase and maintain the school property. Fundraisers were held and the Willard School District sold the property to a neighbor who later sold it to the group. Since that time, its’ been known as the Schuyler Community Center.

Charter members were asked to contribute $100 per family in an effort to reach the goal of $10,000. Since that time, Schuyler community center has been operating within a budget and scheduling regular events.

Announcements about fundraising events at Schuyler are communicated via the Ozarks Country School Association email list (send an email to burtond@missouri.edu to be added to the list) and also shared online at the Ozarks Country Schools Association facebook page.

The Schuyler Annual Meeting begins at 6:30 p.m., June 18 and the fall fundraiser is planned for October.

Schuyler, District #60, stands north of Springfield on the northeast corner of Farm Roads 125 and 94.
Replica School a Central Part of Museum at C of O

A trip to the Ralph Foster Museum would not be complete without visiting the Star Schoolhouse located next door.

Originally built in 1910, the one room school was relocated from Barry County, Missouri to Point Lookout for preservation in 1981. Complete with desks, McGuffey’s Readers and an authentic school marm costume, the Star Schoolhouse will give you a look at what it was like to attend grade school back in the early 1900s.

Star School had its beginning in 1863, in Barry County, Missouri, on Flat Creek near Willow Branch. The school was started by two mothers who saw the need. In 1867, tax money became available and a clapboard schoolhouse replaced the original log structure. Captain George Stubblefield, U. S. Cavalry, was hired to teach that year.

The clapboard building was destroyed by fire in 1900 and another clapboard schoolhouse was built. The school closed its doors in 1936, with only three students attending the last year it was open. The schoolhouse was eventually given to the College of the Ozarks by Dr. Donald Sater, a native of Cassville, Missouri.

From the original location a few miles downstream from McDowell, the building was moved to the College campus in 1972 and was relocated from its original position on campus to become part of the Ralph Foster Museum in 1984.

Be watching for a photo essay and feature story on this school in the next issue of this newsletter.

Star School in the snow, January of 2011.
Higgerson School Historic Site a Great Summer Roadtrip Stop

Missouri has one school that functions as a state historic site and Higgerson School in New Madrid is worth a visit. Restored to the one-room school that operated at Higgerson Landing in 1948, the Higgerson School is a window to the educational practices that shaped and served rural America from the early 19th century.

The town advertises the school as a trip back in time: “Experience the typical school day of youngsters attending all eight grades in one room with one teacher. Relive the days of playing "Wolf Over and River" and "Caterpillars," a trip to the outdoor facility and crossing the fence on the stile.”

The restored school was dedicated in June of 1998. The school ceased operation in 1967 and was relocated to New Madrid. Volunteers worked more than a year to restore the building to the late 1940s period. The school was established on Higgerson Landing along the Mississippi river in 1928 to replace area schools which were damaged during the great flood of 1927. It operated as a one-room school for all eight elementary grades through the 1967 school year.

This state historic site emphasizes the history of early education in New Madrid County and the role of the rural school in the lives of its residents.

The eight grade system is thought to have its origin in southeast Missouri, as well as the practice of graduating students who completed the eight years.

Higgerson School Historic Site
300 Main Street,
New Madrid, Mo.
Ph: (573) 748-5716

Operating hours are Memorial Day to Labor Day
Monday thru Saturday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sunday, noon to 4 p.m.

The Ozarks Country School Association is a program of University of Missouri Extension
Pictured above and to the right is New Bethel School which was built in 1915. “I am working on preserving a rural school in McDonald County (southwest corner of Missouri). It is on the market right now, so I am looking for funds to acquire it. It looks like applying to get it on the National Historic Register is the first order of business,” said Karen Almeter. The school building, property and nearby home are located at 669 New Bethel Road, Anderson, Mo. and are priced to sell at $75,000. Do you have photos of a one-room school in Missouri? Feel free to submit information and photos for publication in this newsletter.