

A SHORT HISTORY

OF

CALDWELL COUNTY, MISSOURI

By

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PREFACE

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Breckenridge township, Radical district school in New York Township, were all started in the early sixties. Proctorville district school started in the late sixties. Van Note district east of Hamilton was organized in 1871. The first free school in Hamilton Township was built in the fifties in the present Independence district south of Hamilton. It was a log school and stood on the old Streeter farm near the Tom Creek Coal Mine. Hamilton had no free school at the time and several children walked from town to attend this district school. In 1860 the log building was moved to the Dodge farm and was known for years as the Dodge schoolhouse.

#### Early Schools in the Towns

The first school in Hamilton was a subscription school taught by Mary Gartland soon after the town was founded. The log house stood south of the present Presbyterian Church. This was followed in 1864 by the first free school in Hamilton, a one-room school conducted in the second floor of a tin shop on north Davis Street, north of the lumber yard. The teacher was Mrs. Elizabeth Lenderson. In 1865, the first public schoolhouse was built, a one-room school on the present site of the M.E. parsonage. An additional room was later built.

The early public school of Kidder was a one-room school built in 1862 by the land company. It was used on Sundays as a church. The Breckenridge schools also started in a one-room school. The early Kingston town school used the old Blythe Township schoolhouse already mentioned.

#### High Schools in Caldwell County

Before 1869 no school work of high school grade was given in this county. In that year Thayer College (later Kidder Institute) opened its doors at Kidder under the control of the Congregational Church. It offered both college and academy courses.

In 1872 the Hamilton Public School was graded and the high school organized by D.M. Ferguson. In 1873 the high school of Breckenridge was organized by Prof. Hamilton. In 1874 the high school at Kingston was organized by Stephen C. Rogers. The public school system in the county was now well established.

#### School Equipment in Early District Schools

In the early district schools the furniture consisted of long benches and desks, rudely made of logs which were planed off. The benches had no backs, and the children were supposed to sit up straight facing the wall. When they recited, they turned around and faced the teacher. The long log desks might extend along three walls of the room in front of the pupils or there might be but one desk. If the pupils wished to write, they went to it.

The subjects taught were commonly the three Rs, occasionally Geography and Grammar. Often there was no uniformity of text books even in the same school.

#### Early School Funds in Caldwell County

The record of school funds at Kingston begins with 1853. Caldwell County received school money that year. Until 1864 all school money was paid to the township instead of the school district. In 1856 the "Stray Fund" was set aside for school support. This money arose from the sale of stray unbranded stock which were taken up.

#### Early Churches and Preachers in Caldwell County

Rev. John Stone and Rev. Winant Vanderpool, both Primitive (or Old School) Baptists from Ray County, held occasional services in the cabins of the first settlers along Shoal Creek in 1832-33. During the Mormon periods, most of the preaching in the county was done by preachers of that faith. The first sermon after their departure was preached June 1839 by Rev. Rainwater, a Methodist from Knoxville. He held services at the home of a new settler west of Kingston. The yard was crowded with people who had come a great distance to hear the gospel. The field looked so promising that in 1840 another preacher came to the county and organized churches at Far West and the community west of Kingston.

The old School Baptists in 1840 organized a church at Log Creek and the church organization exists to this day, the oldest church in the county.

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