

# City's New Schools Far Cry from '79

By HARRY L. HAYS  
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**SAVERY—(Special)—**When I viewed the beautiful new school buildings while on a recent visit to Rawlins, it brought to my mind the first school I attended in Rawlins.

I enrolled Oct. 1, 1879, and attended two terms. The frame school building, painted white and with shingle roof, had two large rooms. It was located about one block north and a little west of the old Catholic church. The building faced south and was set on about one-half block of ground. A neat picket fence in front and a high board fence around the other three sides kept the children off the street. The same type of high board fence divided the playground in half—the boy's side and the girl's side. The boys and girls were not allowed to play together. This custom necessitated two anterooms, one for boys and one for girls on their respective sides of the playground. These anterooms were near the front of the building and the entrances faced the street.

When the pupils entered the schoolroom, the boys were required to sit on the west side of the room and the girls on the east side. The inside of the building was painted a drab gray. It had wainscoting part way up from the floor and the two rooms were divided by a partition which had two doors next to each outer wall.

The partition had sashes with windowpanes above the wainscoting and these sashes could be lowered to make the two rooms into an auditorium.

All the desks were double and in front of them were long recitation benches where the pupils sat to recite. The teacher's desk faced these.

The rooms had large windows along one side and were remarkably well lighted for that day and age.

On the front of the building was a rostrum which extended across the entire front so when the building was used as an auditorium they had a speaker's platform.

The rooms were heated by the traditional pot-bellied stove. The water system consisted of a large tin pail with common drinking cup.

Toilet facilities stood on the back of the school grounds. Schoolroom equipment consisted of a poorer grade of blackboards than now used in schools, a globe, a large dictionary, standard maps and one set of maps drawn according to scale and hand-painted in oil on window

shade material by Professor Belcher, of whom I shall tell you presently. These maps were tacked up on the walls around the room and used daily. I wonder if perchance this set of maps has been preserved.

Slates and slate pencils were used regularly. Pencils and paper were prized possessions, used for examinations only.

My first teacher there was Harry F. Belcher, a handsome man of about 35 years, more than six feet tall with black hair and eyes and black waxed mustache. His wife taught in the "little room" at the same time.

Professor Belcher was dismissed about three months before the end of the term and M. D. Houghton finished the term. Houghton was an artist. He illustrated Cotant's "History of Wyoming." It was under Houghton that I first started painting in oils.

Next came Prof. T. N. Wells, who instructed us for one term. These were nine-month terms.

## PUPILS CHOSE STUDIES

This school was designated as a grammar school and was ungraded. Neither were the students grouped as to age, a student could choose any subject he wished to take. Some of the more advanced classes were in Latin, philosophy, composition and higher arithmetic. Higher arithmetic was a stiff course and our text book, which I still have, was Davie's "Higher Arithmetic," third book.

My classmates were Charlie and Fanny Sullivan, Will and Alfie Baxter, Gillie and Morgan Maghee, Thomas Gillison, Rinnie, Annie and Katie Smith, Dan Healy, Frank and Nellie Scott, Lodi Smith, Jennie Magor, Carrie and Frieda Wolf, Molly Nicholls, Minnie Nicholson, Will and May Fouts, Charlie Matthews, Dora Goodsell, Roy Bailey, John Heagney, Fred Smith and Lillie and May Heath.

Of all these schoolmates, I know of only one who is still living—Jennie Magor Hopka, who resides in Cheyenne.

We played baseball but we spent most of our time playing marbles. I have never known since of boys playing "roly-poly for knucks" as we played it. The victors in the ordinary marble game were required to put their knuckles in a ring and other players were given a chance to shoot at the knuckles with their marbles. During marble season we were constantly nursing bloody, split knuckles.

## TEASED THE GIRLS

Our favorite pastime, however, was teasing the girls over the fence.

Square dances were held in the schoolhouse Friday nights. The sashes were let down in the partition and a caller stood on the partition and called for dances on both sides of the room. One of the callers, and there was none better, was Fred Palmer, a restaurant owner. Palmer was tall and slender and wore red sideburns. A dance he often called was "fireman's dance."

When the music started and Palmer began to call, "Couples face inside here and outside there," we knew one of our very special favorites, "Sicilian circle," would be next. Music was furnished by Lem Learn on the violin and Judge Ash on the bass viol. Sometimes they were joined by Mr. Robinson, a jeweler, on the second violin. No lunch was served at these dances and they usually lasted until daylight.

Although the equipment in this school was simple and we had no reference library, the training was thorough, and the knowledge I gained there I have retained clearly in my mind for the ensuing 71 years.

(The Lem Learn mentioned in this interesting story by Mr. Hays as playing violin at the schoolhouse dances is living in Roseburg, Ore. Mr. Learn wrote about his experiences here in territorial days in a by-line story that appeared last month in the Aug. 18 annual Carbon County Fair and Red Desert Stampede edition of The Daily Times.—ed.)