

HAMILTON COUNTY REORGANIZATION COMMITTEE
TENTATIVE REPORT JUNE 1947
Robert Wilson, Secretary

At a meeting held in the County Court Room McLeansboro October 26, 1947, the school directors of Hamilton County voted to assume the task of studying the school system of this county as to the need for reorganization, and to make recommendations for such reorganization. The meeting was called by the County Superintendent of Schools in compliance with a law previously enacted by the General Assembly, House Bill No. 406, which made such a meeting and election mandatory.

The Hamilton County School Re-organization committee of nine members was thus created. This Committee was composed of the following persons, representing every section of the county. Simon Peter, of Crouch Township, who was later elected as Chairman; Ernest Tolley, of Dahlgren Township, later elected as Vice-Chairman; Dave Garrison, of Dahlgren Township; Ernest York, of Beaver Creek Township; Chris Wilson, of Crook Township; Earl Hunt, of Mayberry Township, Ed Leslie, of Knights Prairie Township; Ted Odle, of Flannigan Township; and H. E. Melton, of Mayberry Township. A vacancy on the committee occurred by the removal from the state by Chris Wilson, and Lowry Wooten of Crook Township was chosen to fill the vacancy.

This school re-organization committee of Hamilton County, Illinois, held a number of meetings to discuss the problem of school re-organization as it appears to the members of the committee, and to the people of the county, and respectfully present herewith their tentative report as required by the law.

The committee fully realizes the enormous task of making the necessary changes in the organization and management of our schools to correct the evils which have grown up in recent years, and effect a more economical and efficient system of education for our children, and they do not pretend to say that all their findings or suggestions and recommendations are final or the best solution. They sincerely hope that something has been done and said that will induce earnest thinking and study by our folks and that the best solution will eventually be found.

The committee, it should be remembered, has the power only to study the needs of the schools and recommend re-organization. It has no power to effect any changes in the present boundaries or organization of any school district.

Among the first things attempted by your committee was a survey to learn something about the trends of such things as school attendance, and school costs in our county over a period of twenty-five years. Statistics for the years 1921 and 1945 were tabulated for the purpose of comparison, and it was found that in 1921, we had approximately three pupils in the grade schools for each one in the grades in 1945. The cost of sending this one pupil to school in 1945 was approximately twice as much as it cost to send the three in 1921. Thus the cost to the people of Hamilton County and the state of sending their children to school in 1945 was something like six times as much per pupil as it was in 1921.

The comparison loses much of its value, of course, when we recall that all costs have increased enormously during this twenty-five year period, but a very distressing thing about it all is, that owing to a number of adverse factors, the quality of education we have in 1945 is, in many respects, inferior to that of 1921. We have in 1945 twenty schools with an average daily attendance of less than seven. Eleven of these schools went below five in average daily attendance. It doesn't take a college education for one to realize that these little schools are very inefficient and expensive. It is impossible to give a child even a small opportunity to get an education in such a school. In the best sense of the term, such a thing as two or three pupils together is not a school at all. It is a sheer waste of the peoples' money and the children's time.

Another factor that has added to the deterioration of quality in our education is the dire shortage of teachers. Almost one-fourth of our teachers for the past four years have been emergency teachers. While many of these emergency teachers have done excellent work as teachers, the fact still remains that a number of our best teachers have left the teaching profession for better pay in other work. And the emergency teacher at her best is a decidedly bad thing for schools. She often has only a temporary interest in teaching. Feeling that her interests are only temporary, she often avoids her responsibilities in a professional way. The results are discontent and dissatisfaction among those

who hold regular certificates. The whole teaching profession suffers---schools and education are the losers.

Many of our rural folks of Hamilton County are fully awake to the situation. They are aware that something must be done to correct it but are not sure of the best solution. It is at such times as these we are beset by a multitude of remedies. We get plans galore---many of which are colored by selfish motives. What we must all try to do is to find the plan which will bring the greatest educational opportunity to the greatest number of children. We must try hard to keep in mind that whatever is done must be done as far as possible for the best interests of the children.

Many of us, it seems, cannot separate the idea of reorganization of our schools from consolidation of schools. Reorganization of schools in Hamilton County can be accomplished with little or no consolidation. And it seems entirely probable, from careful consideration, that the best reorganization for our county would include very little consolidation.

Some of us seem too religiously attached to the little school district. Some of us seem to feel that the school district line is some sort of a dead line across which we dare not go. It is also true our state laws have encouraged this attitude of mind. Folks living in a certain school district who find it to their advantage and for the best interests of their children to send them to a neighboring school in an adjoining district learn that they cannot legally do so without going through a lot of red tape in complying with the law. This leads to the vicious habit of ignoring the law or to the refusal of some districts giving permission for outside children attending their school---sometimes even when they agree it would be for the best.

As said above, many of us, when discussing school reorganization, think only of consolidation, building new consolidated schools, transporting the children in school buses, etc. Then all the real and imaginary objections to such a plan loom big. The first consideration is usually roads. Our roads in most parts of Hamilton County are in such a deplorable condition as almost to make the use of a heavy school bus at all times of the year out of the question. Then the question of costs. The folks in the Universities and Department of Education usually speak of an expensive community school with all the modern facilities. Our

school districts, with few exceptions, are extremely poor. Many of them as it is are forced to rely on state aid for half or more of the funds they must have to operate a school. These and other pertinent considerations impel us to the conclusion that the best plan of re-organization in most communities of our county is one which does not include consolidation.

Such a plan involves the larger administrative unit. By this plan, which is approved by school authorities, the county would be divided into about eight or nine units or districts instead of about ninety as now. Such a plan for Hamilton County is herewith presented for your consideration. It is only suggestive and open to critical analysis, and amendment.

The fact that any group of schools belong to one of these larger Administrative units need not hinder them in organizing a community consolidated school where the need of such an organization seems urgent or advisable. The larger administrative unit ought to help in the direction of more consolidation. It ought to serve as one step in that direction and help us break away from our outworn traditions which doubtless in many cases stand in the way of our progress.

It is not contended that these suggestive units are the best arrangements that could be made. Suggestions and criticisms are solicited. You are urged to be sincere in your suggestions and give what you honestly believe to be best for the greatest number. Keep, at all times, the real educational needs of the children in mind. Think in terms of a long range program that will be flexible enough to admit of necessary changes as the need of changes becomes apparent.

SUGGESTED ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS
HAMILTON COUNTY, ILLINOIS

UNIT NUMBER 1

District	Average Daily Attendance - 1945-46
29 .Garrison.....	12.00
30 .Richardson	3.39
31 .Belle Prairie	12.00
32 .Maulding	14.11
59 .Lower Aden	11.00
60 Aden	<u>31.10</u>
	84.00

UNIT NUMBER 2

33 .Piopolis.....	76.08
3 Burnt Hill	<u>14.40</u>
	90.48

UNIT NUMBER 3

1..Buckingham.....	3.83
2..Turner.....	19.31
4..Cates.....	2.10
5..Dahlgren.....	71.17
6..Sunnyside	12.03
7..Preston	12.96
8..Middle Creek.....	14.35
9..Moore's Prairie	5.75
10 .Shady Grove	4.35
11 .Union.....	9.94
34 .Delafield	26.29
86 .Fairview.....	<u>9.71</u>
	191.79

UNIT NUMBER 4

District	Average Daily Attendance - 1945-46
12 .Boster	8.15
13 .Seminary	12.18
14 .Gunter	17.69
15 .Reed	15.71
16 .Antioch	9.53
17 .Moorman	4.91
18 .Yale.....	7.59
19 .Barnes	<u>12.77</u>
	88.53

UNIT NUMBER 5

20 .Little Hill	3.82
21 .Center Flannigan	6.57
22 .Braden.....	17.20
23 .Johnson	18.40
24 .East Rural Hill	7.02
25 .West Rural Hill.....	2.67
26 .Cooper.....	5.00
27 .Odle.....	0.84
28 .Old Cantrell	<u>8.23</u>
	69.75

UNIT NUMBER 6

61 .Doeskin.....	10.85
62 .Bunker Hill.....	23.00
63 .Blairsville	28.21
64 .South Mt. Pleasant.....	9.19
65 .Thomas.....	8.71
66 .Buckskin	17.96
67 .York	9.63
68 .Metcalf	7.64
69 .Logansport	18.18
70 .Thackeray	24.62
71 .Concord.....	<u>14.24</u>
	172.23

UNIT NUMBER 7

District	Average Daily Attendance - 1945-46
35 .Elm Grove.....	18.31
36 .Rally Hill.....	10.93
37 .Mason	12.50
38 .Weldin.....	11.92
39 .McLeansboro	331.50
40 .Opossum Creek.....	18.52
41 .Anderson.....	23.93
42 .Sutton.....	7.00
43 .Sulphur Springs	19.96
44 .Hoodville	25.66
45 .White.....	11.30
72 .Williams.....	12.18
73 .Oliver	19.04
74 .Sneed	14.33
75 .Farris	
76 .Walters.....	7.30
77 .Mayberry.....	<u>14.06</u>
	558.44

UNIT NUMBER 8

46 .Parker's Prairie.....	27.63
47 .Mary's Chapel	7.19
48 .Pyrtle	12.97
49 .Olga	26.24
50 .Center Twigg	11.65
51 .Dale	60.33
78 .Harrawood	21.07
79 .Cherokee	7.73
80 .Big Hill	11.90
81 .Jennings.....	9.12
82 .Pig Ridge.....	4.98
83 .Hickory Corner	4.65
84 .Young	15.47
85 .Broughton	30.98
94 .Plainview	<u>2.71</u>
	254.62

UNIT NUMBER 9

District	Average Daily Attendance - 1945-46
52 .Barefoot	17.79
53 .Union.....	14.33
54 .Smith	18.32
55 .Cantrell.....	15.04
56 .Walpole	9.34
57 .Helm	10.00
91 .Pulliam	9.00
87 .Cornerville.....	20.72
88 .Oak Grove	<u>14.84</u>
	129.38

A few suggestions and recommendations in connection with each of these suggested administrative units are offered.

Unit Number 1 is a rural community with two small villages, Belle Prairie and Aden. Either of these villages would make a suitable location for a community school if the population of the adjacent neighborhoods was sufficient to make a consolidated school efficient and economical. As the average daily attendance of all the schools in this unit as of 1946 was only ninety, it would suggest that these folks might wish to select a place conveniently located not in either village. Someone interested has suggested a place near the fire tower might meet with favor from a majority of the folks.

Unit Number 2. These two districts present no particular problem. Both should have social and religious interests distinctive and with common aims.

Unit Number 3 has twelve schools and presents at least two desirable locations for attendance centers. The village of Dahlgren has a population of 600 or more, post office, several churches, and a four year high school. An ideal location for a community consolidated school. The village of Delafield also presents a fine location for an attendance center and eventually a consolidated school. This unit in 1946 had four schools whose average daily attendance fell below seven. One of these transported its pupils in 1946 and 1947. With one school board administering all the schools of this unit, it seems reasonable that satisfactory arrangements could be made for all the pupils in these small schools to be accommodated in neighboring schools, thus working for much needed economy and giving the children much better educational advantages. It is believed that these twelve schools could easily be housed in about four of the buildings they now have, with only a little expense of transportation.

Unit Number 4 has eight schools. This is a typical rural community with no villages or towns but it presents good opportunity for some reorganization. Districts number twelve and

sixteen might be added to a district in Franklin County and the educational opportunities---to all the children be improved. Districts thirteen, fourteen and fifteen might be united to the mutual advantage of the children of all three. Districts seventeen, eighteen and nineteen might likewise be united for mutual improvement to all. The motive behind all our thinking in suggesting these plans for reorganization is better educational opportunities for the children. Seminary, Gunter and Reed, together might have too many pupils for one teacher. If all could be housed in one good building with two teachers, opportunity for some fine work in music, or drawing or other work of similar interest might be offered.

Unit Number 5 had five schools in 1945 that went below seven in average daily attendance. The nine schools in this unit had a total average daily attendance in 1945 of about seventy. They employed eight teachers at a total salary of \$9600.00. If a plan could be worked out by which these pupils could be housed in three buildings with three good teachers, a great saving would result and much better schools would be possible.

Unit Number 6. This unit has eleven schools. It has a thriving oil field and is well equipped in many ways for much progress in schools and educational opportunity. Two or three fine locations present themselves as attendance centers and eventually community consolidated schools. At the vilages of Thackeray, Blairsville, and in the vicinity of Bunker Hill School. With a single board of education administering all the schools of this unit, the possibilities seem promising.

Unit Number 7. This suggested unit has seventeen schools and included the city of McLeansboro. It might be thought that some of the schools suggested for this unit are too far away from the main center of attendance, but it seems that all of them use McLeansboro as their principal trading center, and these communities have fairly good roads running into McLeansboro. It is believed that to have one board of seven or nine, as the conditions would warrant, the educational opportunities of many of the children in outlying districts could be improved. A number of attendance centers could be established as at Thurber, Hoodville, and possibly in the neighborhood of Mayberry School, all under the management of a single board of education. The children in districts now having very low attendance could be assigned to some of those centers and their chances for learning must be improved. Such a plan, if carefully worked out, would, no doubt, result in much saving of the taxpayers' money and give better schools.

Unit Number 8. This unit has seventeen schools and includes the vilages of Dale and Broughton. Both these vilages present ideal locations for attendance centers and ultimately a community consolidated school. The unit has one of the most productive oil fields, with attendant oil industries, in the county. The possibilities here for really far-reaching forward movement in school organization and constructive achievement in education are the most promising in the entire county. With one board of education administering the schools of this group the immense forward strides in education and good schools for our county can be made a reality instead of just a dream.

Unit Number 9. This unit has nine schools. It has one thriving village with a bank, churches, post office, but no railroads. It is an ideal location for a center of attendance and eventually a community consolidated school.

CONCLUSION

The committee desires to repeat that in presenting this report, you are urged to think of it and consider it, as it is, a tentative report---a trial report. It is quite likely that hardly a single suggested administrative unit described here would finally be considered the best arrangement for final reorganization. One of our most active and earnest members feels that several of our districts on our east boundary should be united with some districts of White County. One of our members feels that any consolidation in Crook Township should unite several districts north of State Route #14 with several districts south of that route in a community consolidated school near the little hamlet of Thurber. It is earnestly hoped that this report will incite our people to talk about this problem - examine every plan and suggestion and help find the best one. If our own people cannot - or will not solve this problem - and it is a problem - for the best interest of our children - just who can or will?