

Lacombe



The first Lacombe School. Its date of construction and opening is unknown, but it must predate the second school, built in 1912, by a good many years.



Built in 1912, the second Lacombe School was a much more spacious building, housing high school students as well as elementary. The sign on the bell tower reads "Union District No. 4" indicating that already, one or more schools had consolidated with Lacombe.



Taken from a slightly different perspective, this photograph gives a better overall view of the 1912 Lacombe School.



Lacombe School:
Changing Faces and Facing Change
by Hannah Eckhold
from A Piece of the Past

Sunlight pours over the rim of the Cascades, soaking the ripening strawberries and blackcaps with color. Children wearing school clothes purchased with last summer's picking money begin their familiar journey to the schoolhouse.

Situated on a two acre lot on East Lacombe Road, twelve miles northeast of Lebanon, Lacombe School entered 1924 boasting a basement and three rooms, two of which were separated only by a folding wall. While significant, steady change characterized the early years of the district, an enormous burst of action filled the time between 1951 and 1963.

Prior to 1951, Lacombe School experienced significant changes, but they were fewer and farther between than in later years. Children spent their recesses outside or in the basement until 1924, when a bid of \$137.00 was accepted to build a play shed. Former students recall playing on inside swings, shooting baskets, and playing games such as dodgeball, red rover and tag. The old play shed still exists at the current school as a music room and equipment shed, to which it was converted in 1974.

Electricity narrowly squeaked into the school in the 1930's, to the disapproval of many community members, who resisted supporting a convenience lacking in many of their own homes. Around the same time, the Works Progress Administration installed a concrete floor in the school, originally built "right over the stumps."

A \$2500.00 building project was undertaken about 1943 to install a well, septic tank, bathrooms, and drinking fountain. Located at the northeast corner of the building, the well, composed of six inch casing, penetrated the earth seventy feet. Interestingly enough, supplies being limited due to World War II, the contractor acquired many of his building materials on the black market. Still accessed today through a trap door in the girl's bathroom, the well provides water for a vastly larger building than in its early days.

An impressive number of building modifications characterized the Lacombe district in the 50's and early 60's. By 1951, overcrowding forced classes to spill over into the basement for a short time, an action only tolerated because of plans to expand.

During the summer of 1952, the rush of building began with two new classrooms and a boiler room, built on three acres purchased from undertaker Glen Houston. Financed by a \$52,000 bond, the new addition was begging for students by fall.

The tools had scarcely been put away when they were pulled out for the next project, the gym. Rather than being one large project, the gym was built in two stages, the first around 1955, and the second in 1963. Construction of the second part prompted the

purchase of five additional acres from the neighboring strawberry plant, and included more rooms, an office, and a library. The second boiler, also added at this time, was a diesel model, rare to the area yet extremely reliable. Frank Peoples, former janitor and board member, only remembers a single morning in which it did not start promptly.

Providing space for the second stage of the gym, the contractor planned to charge the school for the leveling of the old building. Convincing the builder to let them do the work themselves, several community members collaborated to salvage the usable lumber. Pushing the remaining debris into the basement, including boxes of old records stored in the belfry, they burned the last of the old schoolhouse. Completing the task in a single weekend, they cleared out in time for building to begin on Monday.

Intermingled with the various building projects were four separate consolidations with neighboring districts. Performing a survey of Oregon Schools, Dr. Holy of Ohio recommended that we form "large reorganized districts."

Initiating the rash of reorganization, Mt. Pleasant School, although pursued for consolidation by Hamilton Creek, decided to merge with Lacombe. Before 1951, Mt. Pleasant School had existed as a single room schoolhouse on the road with the same name. Provoked by this consolidation, the district hired someone to drive the students, ending the daily walks to school for many children. A year later, the district purchased its first bus.

Two shakes of a lamb's tail later, in 1952, both Gaines and Salt Lake school districts were combined with Lacombe. Although without a school building, the majority of people in the Gaines area, northwest of the Lacombe School, resisted consolidation and were only brought in by one vote. After rejecting two attempts by Lacombe to join their district, Salt Lake insisted instead upon the reverse. The three room building on the corner of Kowitz and Lacombe Drive was used by the district for two or three years after consolidation for the primary grades.

Concluding the consolidation frenzy, Green Mountain School, a two room building across from the dairy on Green Mountain Drive, consolidated with Lacombe in 1959 because of overcrowding.

Having grown up in Lacombe, I have neither witnessed nor heard tell of any time before or since boasting change comparable to that which marked the years between 1951 and 1963.

Works Cited

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Hannah Eckhold, class of 1995, completed eight years of school in Lacombe, a farming community outside of Lebanon. She is an active member of the Linn County Search and Rescue Post and spends her summers working for the Oregon State University Wheat Project. Hannah plans to attend college, pursuing a career in computer science.



The “new” school, shortly after its completion in 1952.



Although work is still underway on the remodeling of Lacombe School in this August 2002 picture, the new look of the school is obvious.