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THE EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF AVERY COUNTY

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School
Appalachian State Teachers College

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by

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August 1952

THE EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF AVERY COUNTY

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PREFACE

In attempting to picture the educational growth of Avery County one is immediately faced with the fact that during many of the years with which we are concerned there have been few, if any, records kept that would be of value. At other times, fire and flood have destroyed the records of the schools. Due to these facts many gaps will appear at which some readers will wonder. Regardless of the imperfection of the work, it has still served to deepen the writer's appreciation of the work of those who have gone before him in the field.

In gathering the material for this work it was necessary to investigate the records of Burke, Caldwell, Watauga, and Mitchell Counties as well as those of Avery. A debt of gratitude is owed to the staffs of the various offices where this work was done for their sympathetic cooperation and help. Likewise, invaluable aid was given by the library staff at Appalachian State Teachers College and at the University of North Carolina, especially those in the North Carolina Room at the latter institution. Little has been written about the area, so much of the material used came from the records of the Office of the Register of Deeds in the various counties and the Minutes of the County Boards of Education. For other information it was necessary to go to older residents of the area for statements of things as they remembered them. It is

the writer's wish to express his thanks to all who have helped, and especially to Mr. Jason B. Deyton, Superintendent of the Mitchell County Schools, Mr. W. K. Anderson, Superintendent of the Avery County Schools, Mrs. Ruth H. Calloway, his secretary, for their help with the official records. Free access to the D.A.R. files and records of Crossnore School granted by Dr. Mary Martin Sloop made much of the material of the first chapter available. Those who contributed from the wealth of their own memories included Mr. Harvey Clark of Pineola, N.C., Milligan Wise and T. P. Dellinger of Crossnore, A. P. Brinkley, and George M. Bowman of Elk Park, Dr. W. C. Tate of Banner Elk, and Webb Braswell and L. W. Suddreth of Montezuma. Others too numerous to mention by name have helped to clarify the picture.

Finally, special thanks go to Dr. D. J. Whitener, Head of the Social Studies Department of Appalachian State Teachers College, without whose aid and encouragement this work could never have been written.

R. E. Woodside

Crossnore, N. C.
August 14, 1952

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CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Avery County lies astride the crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains in northwestern North Carolina. The terrain of the county is extremely rough and consequently failed to attract white settlers until after the tide of civilization from the east had flowed around it and beyond. Many of the rock formations in these mountains are of the pre-Cambrian Age and are the world's oldest geologic formations.¹

Although there is only one mountain within the present bounds of Avery County that reaches above 6,000 feet, the average altitude of the entire county is among the highest in the state. Only three communities listed by the North Carolina State Highway and Public Works Commission, Division of Statistics and Planning, are at an altitude of less than 3,500 feet above sea level.²

The crest of the Blue Ridge follows an irregular course from Grandfather Mountain on the northeast boundary to Humpback Mountain on the extreme southern tip of the

¹ J. P. Arthur, History of Western North Carolina (Raleigh, N. C.: Edwards and Broughton Co., 1914), p. 544.

² Mrs. J. C. B. Ehringhaus and Mrs. Carl Goerch, North Carolina Almanac (Raleigh, N. C.: Almanac Publishing Company, 1951), pp. 96, 100.

county. There are remarkably few outcroppings of bare rock along this crest. It is covered with a clay loam that is quite porous and capable of absorbing large quantities of moisture rapidly. The soil on the slopes is productive to the extent that many of the early white settlers chose homesites and farms on the eastern slopes of the mountains in preference to the flat river and creek bottoms.³

The present area of Avery County is walled in on the east by a difficult incline of the Blue Ridge, on the north by Beech Mountain, and on the west by the even higher wall of the Yellow Mountains. To the south is the rugged Linville Gorge and Humpback Mountain which are even yet today virtually impenetrable.

The mean annual temperature of the county is 50.5 degrees and the average rainfall is 47.62 inches. There is a growing season of about 148 days, which is one of the shortest in the state.⁴

There are three rivers which rise in Avery County. The Linville originates on the southern slopes of Grandfather Mountain and flows southward through Linville Gorge to the

³ Information received from an interview with Harvey Clark, Pineola, N. C., age 93 and a grandson of one of the early white settlers in Avery County.

⁴ Mrs. J. C. B. Ehringhaus and Mrs. Carl Goerch, op. cit. pp. 539.

Catawba System and thus to the Atlantic Ocean. This river drains all of the county that lies east of the Blue Ridge with the exception of Harpers Creek Township which drains into another branch of the Catawba through Caldwell County. The Toe River rises on the western side of Sugar Mountain and flows westward through Newland to Minneapolis, thence southward into Mitchell County. It empties into the Gulf of Mexico through the Tennessee, Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. All of the central and southwestern parts of the county are drained by this stream. The Elk River rises near Banner Elk in the northern edge of the county and flows into Tennessee near Elk Park where it joins the Doe River and the Tennessee System.

Little or no documentary evidence exists concerning the possibility of Indian habitations in Avery County. There is ample evidence, however, that the Indians moved through the territory on hunting or other expeditions. S. J. Hughes of Hughes, North Carolina and Mebane Brown of Crossnore, North Carolina have extensive collections of stone weapons and tools which have been collected within the county. Some of these are made of types of stone, such as obsidian, which are not found east of the Mississippi River, indicating that the Indians either traveled or traded extensively. The few Indians who remained in the area after white man first arrived were of the Cherokee Nation. Many of them intermarried with the whites

and numerous present day inhabitants of the county claim to be part Indian. Cooper relates that an Indian village once stood at the site of the old Valley School on Roaring Creek.⁵ Near Altamont on the Linville River there is a high embankment called Indian Cliffs in which there are a few shallow caves. The large quantities of chipped and imperfect stone weapons and tools that are found there would seem to indicate that the Indians used the area at one time for a camp or a village and spent some of their time in the manufacture of tools and weapons.

Much of the area of the county was at one time covered with timber. The higher mountain peaks were the natural habitat of balsam and spruce or hemlock, while on the lower levels several varieties of hardwoods such as oak, maple, and chestnut were found. The white pine seems to have grown originally only on the eastern slope of the Blue Ridge, but in more recent years it has spread into the valley of the Toe River. The W. M. Ritter Lumber Company purchased the timber rights to much of the area in the late years of the nineteenth century,⁶ often for less than a dollar per acre, and removed practically all

⁵ Horton Cooper, A History of Avery County and Its People, 1937, unpublished, p. 8.

⁶ Ibid. p. 45.

the marketable timber from the county. Since that time the second growth has continued to furnish employment for numerous sawmills, and lumber is one of the principal sources of income for the county today. Some of the early settlers took advantage of the groves of maple trees for the purpose of making sugar.⁷

Just who the first white men to see Avery County happened to be or when they visited the area is somewhat obscure. There are stories of the "long hunters", men who went into the mountains to hunt for months at a time before returning home, who visited the Grandfather Mountain Region and the valley of the Toe River.⁸ Tradition says that one of these men by the name of William Davis, a Revolutionary soldier and a veteran of Kings Mountain,⁹ stole his bride from an unwilling family and came to Avery County to build a brush hut on the eastern slope of Davis Mountain, near the present village

7 Jacob Carpenter, Anthology, unpublished notations kept by Jacob Carpenter from about 1840 until 1915. The second entry: Franky Davis, . . . , age 87, dide Sep 10 1842 she had nirv fite wolves all nite at shogar camp to save her caff throdé fier chonks to save caff the camp wars hal mil from home noe she mus have nirv to fites wolf all nite.

8 Horton Cooper, op. cit. p. 8.

9 Jacob Carpenter, op. cit. The first entry: "Wm. Davis age 100.8 dide oc 5 1841 wars old Solder in rev wre and got his thie brok in laste fite at kinge monte . . ." Obviously the age referred to is 108 years, which is the lowest recorded for William Davis. Others record his age as high as 116 years at his death.

of Crossnore. Later he moved to Blood Camp, near the present town of Newland, where the wolves were so bad that he was forced to leave. His final and permanent home was on Three Mile Creek, where he had some neighbors by that time, and where he entered a land claim.¹⁰

The first recorded claim to land in what is now Avery County was registered by William Davenport, reputedly of the same family as the Colonel Davenport of the boundary survey. This claim was on Toe River in the extreme southern tip of the county. It was "proccessioned" in 1774 while a part of Rowan County. The survey was made by C. W. Beekman, Burke County surveyor on August 10, 1778, and the grant is recorded in book number three of the Burke County records.¹¹

This claim lay along one of the routes followed by the settlers who went from North Carolina into the Watauga settlements, later to be known as Bright's Trace, because of the second claim in the county, just upstream from the Davenport land entered by Samuel Bright on March 5, 1780.¹²

10 Information received from Harvey Clark, interview.

11 Denise M. Abbey, Folk History of Avery County, unpublished in files of Crossnore School offices. p. 4.

12 Loc. cit. "Bright was a Tory, but by taking the oath of loyalty to the patriot cause was allowed to take up United States land." This would seem to bear out the tradition that dispossessed Tories were among the early white settlers of the region.

The land on which the town of Newland now stands was purchased from the state by Waightstill Avery, the man for whom the county is named, on Nov. 9, 1783.¹³ Colonel Avery entered numerous claims about this time throughout western North Carolina. Usually the claims were for full sections of 640 acres, but the occasional exception of small tracts seems to indicate that at the time there were already existing claims. Avery paid the state at the rate of fifty shillings per one hundred acres.¹⁴

William Wiseman, another Revolutionary soldier bought the Bright claim in 1790 and some of his sons took up land nearby on the Toe River.¹⁵ Other names that appear on the early deeds registered for the area are Dellinger and Carpenter. These families were probably of the Pennsylvania "Dutch", and the name Carpenter is an anglicization or translation of Zimmerman.¹⁶

Early in the nineteenth century the value of the iron ore in the Cranberry deposit became known and the land bounties granted by the state for the establishing of forges began to attract additional settlers. The earlier forges had been in

¹³ Arthur, op. cit., p. 213.

¹⁴ Mitchell County Records, Deed Book C, pp. 27-28.

¹⁵ Abbey, op. cit., p. 5.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 24, quoted from Ralph Beaver Strasburger and Wm. John Hinke, Pennsylvania German Pioneers.

what is now the state of Tennessee on the Watauga River. In 1820 the names of Perkins and Dugger appear in connection with the Cranberry Bloomery Forge.¹⁷ There were at least two grants registered covering the Cranberry ore deposit. The first was filed in July of 1795 by William Cochran and William Tate. In July of 1796 William Cathcart filed two claims totaling 158,000 acres which overlapped the Cochran and Tate grants. The original grantees did not occupy the land, but in 1838 the Cathcart agent leased to Abraham Johnson all of their claims. Johnson then built a forge near the Old Fields of Toe, now Newland, and burned charcoal at many places over the claim for use in his forge. Over a hundred years after these grants had been taken out the North Carolina Supreme Court ruled that the Cathcart grant would stand, although younger by a year than the Cochran claim, because the registration of the Johnson lease and Johnson's subsequent use of the land gave "color of title".¹⁸

Johnson was obviously a vigorous pioneer. He has more descendants listed in the genealogical register than any other early settler,¹⁹ and he himself lived well past the century mark.²⁰

¹⁷ Arthur, op. cit. pp. 557-558.

¹⁸ Ibid., 412-413.

¹⁹ Genealogical records from files of Crossnore Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution.

²⁰ Carpenter, op. cit., 17th entry: "Abern Johnson age 100.7 died oc 15 1881 he was farmer and ran forge to mak iron . . ." (Note: Another record gives Johnson's birth date as 1771 making him 110 at time of death.)

Tradition says that the Avery's were the first summer visitors. Soon after obtaining the land grants on Toe River some sort of house was built which was referred to as Avery's Camp, and later as Crab Orchard. Each summer during the months of July and August they brought their slaves to the camp and they, along with hired hands, cut and put up quantities of hay from the nearby natural meadows.²⁰ Crab Orchard is the present home site of the descendants of Colonel Avery near Plumtree.

With the opening of more lands in the midwest at the beginning of the nineteenth century the mountain section of North Carolina seemed no longer to be attractive to the pioneers from the east. Nearly all the land had been taken up by the large grants and about the only increase in population for the Avery area for the next fifty years resulted from the large families produced by the early settlers.²¹ By the outbreak of the Civil War many of the large claims had been broken up into small farms and the effects of long isolation were beginning to show on the mountain people. Perhaps the most noticeable effect was upon literacy. It is apparent that the first generation of white settlers and their children were relatively literate, evidenced by the clear writing and expression

20 Abbey, op. cit. pp. 14-15.

21 Genealogical records of Crossnore Chapter, D. A. R. show extremely large families during this period, but very few new family names.

in legal papers and family records of the period. By 1830 an increasing number of legal papers were being signed by an "X" mark and by 1860 the keeping of family records had fallen into disuse and the legal documents are barely legible or understandable even when read.

Only four families are listed as owners of slaves in the bounds of what is now Avery County in 1860.²² The type of farming prevalent in the area was not suited to the use of slave labor and there may have been other reasons, such as economic inability to purchase slaves or moral objections to human slavery, but the latter rarely prevented the institution from taking root where it was economically feasible. This absence of the Negro coupled with the usual tendency of isolated people to resent change or threats to their privacy perhaps led to the Union victory in the convention election of 1861 and the resounding defeat of all secessionist candidates.²³

When the war was declared in 1861 there were some who hastened to join the Confederate forces. It is obvious that at least some of these did not have their hearts in the cause of the Confederacy. Some actually joined with the avowed intention of deserting to the Union Army at the first possible

²² Information from local tradition for which no documentary verification was found.

²³ Jason B. Deyton, History of the Toe River Valley to 1865, Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of North Carolina, p. 58.

opportunity.²⁴ This attitude would probably explain the sudden defection of the area from the ranks of the old Jacksonian party which it had supported all through the period of Whig ascendancy in the state. There had been only two national elections in which the area failed to support the Democratic Party before the Civil War and it never failed to give a majority to local and state Democratic tickets during that period. The majority gained by General Harrison in 1840 might well be attributed to the effects of the panic of 1837 as well as the log cabin and hard cider propensities of the General, which latter would certainly appeal to the backwoods section. In 1848 the Taylor victory was due largely to the timely return of the Yancey Rangers under Captain Tilman Blalock who were mustered out in August of 1848 in time to participate in the election after having marched to the Mexican border and fought under Taylor's leadership.²⁵ Since the Civil War the area has elected only one Democratic sheriff and a few other minor officials of that party. Jones Dellinger of Altamont states that his reason for being a Republican is the fact that two of his older brothers were unjustly shot as deserters from the Confederate Army.²⁶ They had deserted and attempted to join the Union Army in Tennessee.

²⁴ Cooper, op. cit., p. 11.

²⁵ Deyton, op. cit., pp. 57-58.

²⁶ Information received from Jones Dellinger of Altamont, N. C. in conversations over the period from 1935 to 1940.

The war brought suffering and poverty to many of the mountain families as it did elsewhere. Deyton says:

There had been some poverty before the war and the usual tax levy for poor relief had been five cents; but suffering became acute as the struggle progressed. By April, 1863, it had become necessary to appoint a commissioner for the county and a sub-commissioner for each of the districts to distribute poor funds. By this time supplementary funds were being secured from the State, and the commissioner was placed under a bond for \$26,000 for the faithful performance of his duties. The basis of the distribution was made as follows: to wives and children of deceased soldiers, two shares each, to wives and children under twelve years of age, one share each. No doubt a great deal of aid was rendered, but the problem was too acute to be solved adequately.²⁷

The constant threat of violence and the raids of Colonel G. W. Kirk from Tennessee with his Union troops kept the whole county in a state of suspense. The fact that some of the men from the area joined with Kirk, either out of a sense of loyalty to the Union or in an effort to find an opportunity to settle personal grudges under the cloak of acts of war, made matters even worse.²⁸

As has already been noted, the area that now makes up Avery County was a part of Burke County when the first land claims were filed. It remained thus until in 1833 the extreme difficulty and expense of rendering public service by the inhabitants living in the area²⁹ led to the establishment of

27 Deyton, op. cit., p. 61.

28 Arthur, op. cit., p. 607.

29 Acts of the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina, Session of 1833-34, (Raleigh, 1834) Chapter 83.

a new county, Yancey, which included that part of the county which lies west of the Blue Ridge. The remainder of the county was included within the bounds of Caldwell County when it was formed in 1841.³⁰ In 1849 the demand for a seat of government closer home brought about the formation of Watauga County, which included the northern half of what is now Avery.³¹ The additional disturbances stemming from the approach of the Civil War no doubt widened the rift between the northern and southern ends of Yancey County and hastened the formation of Mitchell County in 1861. Kindred souls from the isolated southern end of Watauga asked to be included in the new county.³² The changes wrought by the legislature may have corrected the specific difficulties of sectionalism at which they were aimed, but others arose quickly. Immediately after the formation of Mitchell County a site for the county seat was chosen on the lands of Eben Childs on Toe River in what is now Avery County.³³ Due to pressure from some source the county court refused to levy a tax to pay for the construction of a courthouse at the selected site which was to be called Calhoun. No permanent site was chosen until 1866 when

³⁰ D. L. Corbitt, Formation of the Counties. (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1950) p. 51.

³¹ Deyton, op. cit. p. 27.

³² Corbitt, Ibid., p. 149.

³³ Arthur, op. cit. p. 200-201.

an election was called to determine where the courthouse was to be built. Over three hundred votes were cast for Bakersville where court had been held for the past two years, a few were cast for Ledger and for an undetermined point, "the center of the county." Calhoun received not a single vote. The strange and unexplained part of the whole matter is the fact that no votes were recorded for the townships that now compose Avery County.³⁴

By 1911 sufficient sentiment had developed to call for the formation of still another county so that the people living in the northern part of Mitchell County would not have so far to travel to reach their county seat. The General Assembly of 1911 erected the present county of Avery from portions of Mitchell, Caldwell, and Watauga counties.³⁵

The first courts of Avery County were held at Elk Park, and an election was called to choose a site for a county seat, which was to be called Newland in honor of W. C. Newland, Lieutenant Governor of the state at the time. The Old Fields of Toe, long a muster ground, and near the center of the county, was chosen, and a courthouse was erected there ready for use, for the first court in 1913.³⁶

³⁴ Information from Jason B. Deyton, June 20, 1952.

³⁵ Public Laws of the State of North Carolina, session of 1911, Chapter 33. (See Appendix A).

³⁶ Minutes of the Avery County Board of Commissioners, 1911, 1912, 1913.

Avery County is still largely an agricultural county. The total land area of the county is a little over 158,000 acres, 99,400 of which are in forest, and nearly 20,000 in permanent pasture.³⁷ Much of the remaining land is too rough for the use of the machinery that would make extensive farming operations possible. Consequently the average size of the farms in the county is 48.6 acres, the most of which is worked by unpaid family labor.³⁸ The Irish potato crop which is the principal source of cash income for the farmers, brings into the county approximately \$250,000 yearly. The corn crop, most of which is used for feed on the farms, is valued at slightly less, while various vegetable crops, such as green beans and cabbage, bring a like amount. The production of beef cattle does not occupy the place of relative importance that it once did during the days when the cotton belt farmers depended on the natural grasslands of the mountain area to furnish their meat, but it is still one of the major sources of income for the Avery County farmer. The improved transportation and availability of markets is rapidly increasing the number of dairy herds in the county.³⁹

³⁷ Ehringhaus and Goerch, op. cit., p. 539.

³⁸ Report of Avery County Farm Demonstration Agent, N. C. Agricultural Extension Service, Raleigh, N. C. 1950.

³⁹ Information received from Sam Cartner, Avery County Farm Agent, June, 1952.

It was obvious from the beginning that some of the land claims entered for the Avery area were taken up in the hopes of finding some valuable minerals. The few places where low grade silver ore has been found were prospected thoroughly. Some of the diggings are so old that trees of considerable size have grown up on the old mine dumps. Just who was responsible for these diggings is not known. Some say it was the Indians, others think that some of the Spanish explorers may have wandered this far northward, and still another possibility is the men who were sent into the western mountains by the early governors of Virginia and Carolina. When little or no silver or gold was located interest flagged in everything except the Cranberry iron ore bank that continued to be worked until 1930. In 1871, Charles Stewart, of Pineola, started digging out one of the old "sink hole mines" in Mitchell County in an effort to learn what the original miners had been seeking. In the process he found blocks of mica, some of which were carried to Knoxville Tennessee by a tinner named Heap. He found that there was a market for the mineral so he returned with a partner and worked the mine successfully for several years.⁴⁰ Thus began what is still today a lucrative industry in the county. In addition the related clays, kaolin and feldspar, have been found in quantity and are economically important to the county.

40 Arthur, op. cit., p. 554.

Since the most of the early settlers of Avery County were of English, Scottish and German origin it might be supposed that the Presbyterian, Lutheran, Episcopal, and Reformed faiths would be predominant, but such is not the case. The Baptist denomination is by far the most common and the Methodist next, with the Presbyterian a poor third. This has been attributed to the fact that these early settlers did not move into the area in a body, bringing their church organization with them. Trained ministers, upon which the Calvinist denominations insisted, were not available, so the people attached themselves to the only churches which were available. The Baptists, being a congregational church, could choose their own ministers and were free from outside control. This democratic approach appealed to the independent pioneer and the church flourished.⁴¹ The strength of the Methodist Church can be credited to no little extent to the vigorous ministrations of Bishop Francis Asbury and his successors as frontier missionaries.⁴²

Avery County at present has no railroad. However, a narrow guage road was completed from Johnson City, Tennessee, to Cranberry, North Carolina in 1882 by the Cranberry Iron and Coal Company, operator of the Cranberry mines at the time.⁴³

41 Deyton, op. cit., p. 49.

42 Ibid.

43 Cooper, op. cit., p. 45.

This line continued to operate until 1950. The Linville River Railway, also a narrow gauge, was built by the Camp brothers of Chicago from Cranberry to Pineola for the purpose of moving lumber. This road was begun in 1884 and after many difficulties went into the hands of receivers and was purchased by the W. M. Ritter Lumber Company which operated it until their lumbering enterprises were completed then sold out to the Cranberry Company. Later another company was formed to take over all the properties and the road was extended to Boone, North Carolina.⁴⁴ This section of the line ceased operations after the disastrous 1940 flood which destroyed so much of the line.

The highways of the county have improved along with all the other developments that have taken place. Along the trails over which Bishop Asbury journeyed with such difficulty⁴⁵ there are many paved roads. Of the 298 miles of state road within the county 86.96 miles of it was paved as of January 1, 1951, plus approximately 15 miles of the Blue Ridge Parkway that is within the county.⁴⁶ The present program of improvement will put an all weather road within easy reach of all sections of the county.

44 Arthur, op. cit., p. 482.

45 Ibid. p. 216, quotations from Bishop Asbury's Journal.

46 Ehringhaus and Goerch, op. cit., pp. 342, 344.

CHAPTER II

SCHOOLS IN THE AVERY AREA BEFORE 1900

The isolation of the Avery County area combined with the increasing difficulty of wresting a livelihood from the rough land to bring about a decline of the educational level of the inhabitants in the early nineteenth century. The gradual deterioration in the quality of the records kept, referred to in another chapter,¹ would seem to indicate the scarcity of formal school training.

The fact that the English, Scottish and German settlers in other areas of this state established schools almost as soon as they established homes would lead one to think that perhaps schools of the "subscription" type were conducted in some of the communities. It is true that the sparse population would discourage such schools, and thus far no record or recollection of any such school before 1840 has been found for the Avery area. Some are known to have existed in the adjoining counties of Watauga and Burke.

The first attempt on the part of the State of North Carolina to set up a Public School System was the Literary Fund Law of 1825.² Apparently little was accomplished by this

1 Cf. ante, pp. 9-10.

2 M. C. S. Noble, A History of the Public Schools of North Carolina (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1930), pp45-46.

law and it was not until 1839 that the Common School Law was passed.³ The state was divided into 1,250 school districts which were to share in the money from the Literary Fund to the extent of \$40 for each district, provided the county would raise \$20 for each of the said districts by local taxation.⁴

If any of these districts were organized in the Avery area before 1850 no record of it has been preserved. Soon after the formation of Watauga County in 1849 it was agreed to participate in the state program for Common Schools. The report for 1850 states that twelve schools were taught in the county and 520 children attended. A total of \$360 was spent on these twelve schools, and twelve teachers were listed indicating that they were all one-teacher schools.⁵ It is probable that at least one of these schools was in what is now Avery County. P. L. Johnson, of Crossnore, North Carolina, states that his mother, who was born in the early 1840's, attended a school at Bullscrape--now Montezuma, North Carolina--at about this time. Reason would indicate that if there were other schools in the

3 Ibid. p. 59.

4 Edgar W. Knight, Public School Education in North Carolina (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916), pp. 140-144.

5 W. Paul Bingham, The Growth and Development of Education in Watauga County, Unpublished Master's Thesis, 1950, Appalachian State Teachers College, Boone, North Carolina, p. 46.

Avery area they would have been in such places as the Wiseman settlement on Toe River or possibly at Cranberry because these were the most thickly settled sections.

Unfortunately, the records of Watauga County were destroyed by fire in 1878 and those of Mitchell County by a flood in 1901 so all the documentary information concerning the early schools of the Avery area must be gleaned from the reports of the State Superintendent. These reports at best are comprehensive accounts of the work for the entire county and there is little to indicate which, if any, of the schools reported concern our topic. In addition to this, there is much to indicate that these reports were not wholly accurate and dependable. Frequently the financial reports were omitted entirely and in the period immediately following the Civil War the County Examiners, who were at that time the chief county school officers, stated that no registers were kept in the Mitchell County schools. The Reverend George H. Round, County Examiner for Caldwell County in 1870, stated in his report to the State Superintendent that he had given oral examinations to the teachers that year. His report was incomplete, and according to his own words: "you will find it imperfect and I fear not satisfactory."⁶

⁶ S. S. Ashley, Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, (Raleigh: The Sentinel Printers, 1870), pp. 27-28. (Note: Hereinafter these reports will be referred to as State Superintendent's Reports.)

These reports also give the impression that the percentage of illiteracy among the inhabitants of the mountain area was extremely low for the time. Where figures are available between the years 1867 and 1885 no mention is made of there being more than fifteen percent of the children who were over twelve years of age who could not read and write.⁷ This is difficult to accept as accurate in view of the following statement from Alexander McIver, State Superintendent of Public Instruction on October 1, 1872:

There are in the State, 191,961 whites and 205,032 colored, over the age of 10 years, unable to read and write . . . The entire population of the State is 1,071,361. If from this number we deduct the whole number of children in the state under the age of 10 years, and divide the remainder by two we will find that about one half of the population of the State, over the age of 10 years, are unable to read and write.⁸

and the following from Edward King describing the Western North Carolina farmer:

He cultivated a small farm, like most of the neighbors in moderate circumstances; only grew enough corn for his own support; "didn't reckon he should stay thar long; warn't no schools, and he reckoned his children needed larnin'; schools never was handy; too many miles away."⁹

Harvey Clark, who grew up in the Saginaw--now Pineola, North Carolina--community stated in an interview that there

7 State Superintendent's Reports for the years mentioned.

8 The United States House of Representatives, Executive Document I, Part 5, 42nd Congress, 3rd Session, 1872. University of North Carolina Library.

9 Edward King, The Great South, (Hartford, Conn.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1875) p. 478.

were no schools near enough for him to attend until he was fourteen or fifteen years of age. This would have been about 1873 since he was born in 1859. He states that the school was at Crossnore and was taught in a building that also served as a church. No deeds for public school lands are registered for the Crossnore community until 1905 when one acre was deeded to the School Board for the purpose of building a structure that was to be used for a school and church.¹⁰

Since it is necessary to depend on the records of the State Superintendent for the picture of the schools between the Civil War and 1900 and during that period the present county of Avery was principally a part of Mitchell County, some extracts from these State reports will be used to show the general educational status of the area. No attempt will be made to determine which of the Mitchell schools were in the Avery area because the County Examiners and Superintendents made no such distinction in their reports.

Obviously the poverty and hardship brought on by the Civil War had their effect on schools as well as the home. J. W. Bowman, County Examiner for Mitchell County in 1868 and 1869, stated that there were nine schoolhouses in the county, all in poor condition. There were twelve white schools taught in the county during the year 1868-69 and a total of \$932 spent

¹⁰ Mitchell County Deed Book No. 48, p. 270.

on them. The only individual district mentioned was Bakersville. No registers were kept and no complete financial report was made to the State Superintendent.¹¹

The following year (1870) S. C. Vance as County Examiner, reported fifteen white teachers and one colored teacher in the county. There were twenty schoolhouses, two of which were of frame construction and eighteen of logs. One frame building and two of logs had been built during the year.¹² School attendance for the year was 1,832 white children and 32 colored children.¹³ Again no registers were kept and the financial report is missing. The average length of school term was just under eight weeks.¹⁴ The schools were on the road to recovery, but the term was a full month shorter than it had been in the pre-Civil War days. The pay for the teachers was probably about \$40 to \$50 for the term since that was the average for the other counties in the area.

There are obvious errors or misstatements in these reports that make the drawing of conclusions concerning the

¹¹ State Superintendent's Report, for 1869, University of North Carolina Library, pp. 54 ff.

¹² The previous year reported nine schoolhouses plus three built during the year totals twelve. No explanation is given of the other eight.

¹³ Total school census of children 6 to 21 in 1869 was 1,790.

¹⁴ State Superintendent's Report, for 1870, pp. 56-57.

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Appalachian State Teachers College
Boone, North Carolina

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progress of public education in the county extremely difficult.

By 1880 there were 41 white and four colored school buildings in Mitchell County. The penchant for careless reports was still present. The average term of both white and colored schools was listed as eight weeks and the average salary was \$21.90 per month, and the total salary paid white teachers was \$1,623.00 for 37 teachers, yet the total paid to the colored teachers was only \$71.62 for four teachers, or approximately \$9.00 per month. Obviously the colored school received little or no attention in the compilation of these reports. During this same year 37 schools were taught by 37 teachers, indicating that they were all one-teacher schools. The census of children between the ages of six and twenty-one showed 3,094 white and 171 colored children. The attendance report showed that 3,247 white and 154 colored children attended the schools during the year. It is not known whether the extra children in attendance were under age or were a further result of careless recording and reporting. The average attendance for the white children of the county was only 1,600 during that year.¹⁵ The round figure given here brings up a question as to the accuracy of the report again. No statement is made as to whether registers had been kept during the school year.

¹⁵ State Superintendent's Report for 1880, pp. 67 ff.

The books listed for use in the schools for that year included Holmes Readers ranging in price from eighteen cents for the first book to one dollar and twenty-five cents for the sixth; Holmes Speller, fifteen cents; Maury's Geography, fifty cents for the first book and two dollars for the most advanced; Sanford's Arithmetic from twenty-seven cents to one dollar and twenty-five cents; and History and Grammar books by Holmes were also listed without price. A set of eight of Maury's maps were recommended for class use, price, ten dollars.¹⁶

By 1885 the school budget for Mitchell County had risen to \$2,630.00, but the length of the term and the average salary for teachers remained about the same as for the past fifteen years. Both white and colored schools reported an average term of eight weeks and the teachers were paid \$21 per month. Again the inaccuracy of the reports is noticeable. There were 34 white schools taught in the county during the year and a total of \$2,070.94 paid to the white teachers which would give an average monthly salary of a little over \$32 per month for the eight week term. The attendance for that year took a sharp drop from that of previous years. Only 1, 802 white children were enrolled with an average attendance

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 50-51.

of 940. This could have been due also to the fact that registers were kept and the report for the year on attendance was more accurate.¹⁷

The funds for the operation of the schools that year came chiefly from the State and County Poll tax, totaling \$1,847. In addition there was \$654.40 from General Property Tax and \$128.55 from fines and forfeitures.¹⁸

This same year also showed a marked increase in the number of women teachers. Out of the 32 white teachers employed there were six women. Before this time there were, at most, two women teachers in the county. It is also evident that some of the teachers taught more than one school during the year.¹⁹ This was not an unusual practice because the short terms made it possible for a community to wait for a favored teacher to be free from another job before starting the school.

The enrollment in the Mitchell County schools was up to 2,387 in 1890, but the average attendance was still only 1,188. According to the census figures for that year fewer than half the children between the ages of six and twenty-one were enrolled in school and the average attendance was less

17 State Superintendent's Report for 1885, pp. 110 ff.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

than fifty percent of the enrollment. The number of school districts had increased to 56 for the whites while one colored district had been dropped, leaving only three. However, schools were taught in all of the districts even though there were only 33 schoolhouses in the county. The value of these school buildings was listed at \$3,900--a little over \$100 each. Fourteen were log and nineteen of frame construction. Thirty-seven teachers, ten of which were women, taught these schools, showing a great deal of doubling up. The length of term dropped to an average of six weeks.²⁰

The development of the schools in Mitchell County during the last decade of the nineteenth century showed no important trends except that of providing a school building for each of the districts. The 59 districts for whites and four for colored that were in existence in 1900 were each equipped with a building of some description. Nine of the white and two of the colored schools were of logs. The remaining 54 buildings were of frame construction. The total valuation placed on these buildings was \$12,250. There was an increase of about five hundred in the number of children of the school age, but the percentage of enrollment and attendance remained about the same that it had been in previous years. The length of term had increased to an average of

²⁰ State Superintendent's Report for 1890, pp. 60 ff.

eleven weeks for the whites and nine for the colored schools. At times when the building program was at its height the number of schools taught in the county would drop sharply.²¹ It seemed to be the custom to spend all the money on construction and then have nothing left to pay the teacher for the ensuing year.²²

In summing up the educational progress for the area up to 1900 perhaps the best that can be said is that some educational advantages had been brought within reach of all the children. The large number of school districts would indicate that every community was provided for. This alone is a long stride from the total absence of public education fifty years earlier. The salaries of the teachers remained stagnant. There was an increase in the number of women in the profession, but when the fact that these were all elementary schools is considered, there were not nearly enough of them according to our present standards. All of the schools within the Avery area were one-teacher schools with the exception of two private or church related institutions which will be discussed briefly in another chapter. The buildings and equipment were undoubtedly crude since their average valuation was less than \$200

²¹ State Superintendent's Reports for 1893, 1895, 1897, 1898, 1900.

²² Information from an interview with M. S. Wise, Crossnore, North Carolina, June, 1952.

per unit. The schools at the turn of the century in the Avery area were not yet reaching half the children of school age and attendance was poor, perhaps because they failed to meet the needs.

CHAPTER III

EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF AVERY COUNTY FROM 1901 TO 1920

As has been mentioned before, the records of Mitchell County were destroyed by a flood which struck that area on May 21, 1901, and seriously damaged the office of J. H. Greene, who was Chairman of the County Board of Education at the time. It had been customary for the Board to meet in his office, and consequently the minute books and all the records of the county schools were kept there. There was not even a record of the boundaries of the various school districts. One of the first acts of the County Board of Education, composed of Chairman J. H. Greene, J. W. Gudger, and John A. Bailey was to elect D. W. Greene as Superintendent of Schools and direct him to re-determine the district boundaries and record the same on the minute book of the County Board of Education.¹ This work was done for only about half the districts of the county, and no record was found of any questions arising over the matter so it is assumed that these lines were pretty well known by the people of the various districts and that they were able and willing to continue with their own knowledge without demanding official sanction.

¹ Minutes of the Mitchell County Board of Education, Book I: Office of the Superintendent of Mitchell County Schools, Bakersville, North Carolina, pp. 1-3. (Note: Hereinafter these reports will be referred to as Mitchell Minutes.)

The listing of the various school districts within Mitchell County in 1901 shows that 28 of these white schools were in townships which were to become Avery County ten years later. Two of the colored schools were in the Avery area.² The section of the county which was annexed from Caldwell County, that is, Harpers Creek Township, had five school districts,³ and there were ten schools in the Beech Mountain and the part of Shawneehaw Townships which came from Watauga County.⁴ These districts remained substantially the same for the next ten years. At times there were requests for minor changes in district lines and on a few occasions a new district would be established for a year or two and then it would disappear. When Avery County was erected by the Legislature of 1911 there were 45 white and two colored schools in the county.⁵ This would make it appear that the Avery area was well provided with schools even before the beginning of Governor Charles B. Aycock's program for the extension of educational opportunity to all the children of the state.

2 Mitchell Minutes, Book I, pp. 36-37.

3 Minutes of the Avery County Board of Education, Book I, Office of the Avery County Superintendent of Schools, Newland, N. C., pp. 4-6. (Note: Hereinafter these minutes will be referred to as Avery Minutes.)

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

Continuing a study of the Mitchell County schools as typical for the area, it was reported that the average term for the county schools in 1901-1902 was nine weeks and the white teachers were paid an average monthly salary of \$22.00 while the teachers for the colored schools received \$18.75.⁶ There were nine women and 18 men who taught in the white schools of the Avery area during that year. Both of the colored schools were taught by D. R. Wiebe,⁷ who according to local information was a white mission worker sent to the area by the Mennonite Church.⁸ The educational activities of the Mennonite Church will be discussed in a later chapter.

Obviously the Board of Education was uncertain as to the actual ownership of many of the buildings that were used for schools during this period. Only a few scattered deeds to school property are registered, and of those that are in the record the wording of the deed implies that the building was to be used for both educational and religious purposes. The older residents of the area who attended these schools usually had the impression that the buildings were primarily churches, and were used by the schools only with the permission of the church officers.⁹ Due to this situation it is extremely

⁶ Mitchell Minutes, Book I, p. 67.

⁷ Ibid., p. 69.

⁸ Information from A. P. Brinkley, Elk Park, N. C., July 7, 1952.

⁹ Horton Cooper, A History of Avery County and Its People, unpublished, p. 20.

difficult to obtain any accurate estimate of the value of school property. Superintendent Greene, in his report to the State Superintendent for the school year of 1901-1902 stated that there were 32 buildings in the county, 20 of which were of frame construction and 12 of logs. A valuation of \$6,075 was placed on all school property, or an average of just under \$190 per building. During that same year it was also stated that there were 68 districts in Mitchell County, indicating that over half of them were without buildings.¹⁰ The reports for the years 1904, 1905, and 1906 show considerable activity in the building field, but just what happened is not clear. The total valuation of school property increased from \$5,000 in 1903 to \$10,000 in 1904 when only four buildings were constructed. The 1905 report shows an increase of 12 buildings, all of which were frame, and yet the value rose only to \$12,500. The 1906 report showed an increase of 15 in the total number of buildings, a decrease of ten in the number of log structures, and no increase in the total value of school property.¹¹

This building program seems to have furnished some sort of a building for almost every district in the county. Schools

¹⁰ Mitchell Minutes, Book I, pp. 67-68.

¹¹ J. Y. Joyner, Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, for the years cited. (Note: Hereinafter this report will be referred to as Biennial Report of State Superintendent of Public Instruction.)

were taught in 68 districts in 1906 for a term of 16 weeks, and the teachers were paid an average monthly salary of \$28.60.¹²

The following table indicates something of the increased efficiency of the schools in the county. It will be noted that

TABLE I 13

Year	Number of Districts	Schools Taught	School Population	Enrollment	Average Daily Attendance
1902	68	62	6378	3693	1924
1903	67	67	6263	3914	2215
1904	68	67	6187	4613	2436
1905	69	69	6324	5331	2443
1906	70	68	6503	4733	2678
1907	70	70	6422	5004	2839
1908	69	68	6463	4552	3065

the school population changed very little and that there was a net increase of six schools in the county, yet the enrollment increased at times over 1,500 and the average daily attendance made steady advances during the entire period to a net gain of 1,141.

¹² Mitchell Minutes, Book I, p. 254.

¹³ Biennial Reports of State Superintendent for years cited.

The finances of the Mitchell County schools during the ten year period from 1900 to 1910 reflected the same gradual increase that was shown by the enrollment and attendance. The report of funds received for school purposes in 1901 was \$4,637.42. In 1905 the total had risen to \$11,381.53, and in 1910 to \$16,467.47. The major portion of the increase shown in the first five of the above years was from the Equalization Fund of the state and an increase of about \$1,000 from the general county property tax levied for schools. The increase during the next five years came almost entirely from local and county taxes. At the beginning of the decade approximately one-fourth of the total was from the state treasury. After ten years of growth the proportions were about forty percent state funds and sixty percent local and county.

The largest single item of expense all through the ten year period was for teachers' salaries, although the percent of the total figure going for this purpose declined from seventy-five percent in 1901 to about fifty percent in 1910. The monthly salary of individual teachers increased only from \$22.00 to about \$32.00, but the lengthened term and larger number of teachers raised the total cost of the instructional services in the county from \$3,812.29 in 1901 to \$8,465.00 in 1910.¹⁴

¹⁴ Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction for the years mentioned.

The Avery County School System was established soon after the formation of the county by act of the General Assembly on February 23, 1911.¹⁵ The first two members of the Board of Education, M. W. Clay and R. T. Lewis, qualified and were sworn in on April 4 of that year at Elk Park, North Carolina, and Professor James P. Hall, head of the Plumtree School for Boys, entered his duties as Chairman of the Board on April 15. W. M. Francum was chosen as the first county superintendent. He had served as superintendent in Watauga at one time and had taught for many years in the one and two-teacher schools of Watauga and Mitchell.¹⁶

The first order of business for the new board was to review the school situation to determine what schools were within the bounds of the new county and what teachers were needed and to establish the maximum salaries for the coming year. In the area which had formerly been Mitchell County there were 30 school districts for whites and two for negroes. Ten districts were annexed from Watauga County and five from Caldwell. Nine of these schools, eight from the Mitchell area and one from Watauga were two-teacher schools, the remainder were all one-teacher. Some kind of a building was reported from each district. Two of these buildings were of logs. No

15 Cf. Appendix A.

16 Avery Minutes, Book I, pp. 1-3.

statement is made as to the condition of any of them. Two teachers were to be allowed for the coming year at Big Meadows (now Pyatte), Horse Creek, Cranberry, Elk Park, Montezuma, Saginaw (now Pineola), Roaring Creek, Slippery Hill, and Flat Springs. The principal of each of these schools was to receive \$40.00 per month while the salaries for other teachers throughout the county ranged from \$22.50 to \$35.00 monthly with an average of about \$30.00.¹⁷

There were no special tax districts in the county in 1911, but at the June meeting of the Board of Education that year a petition was received from the Montezuma district asking for a special tax election. The amount of the tax to be levied was not stated in the minutes of the Board, but the County Commissioners were asked to call such an election for July 6, 1911.¹⁸ On July 3 of the same year a similar election was ordered for the Smoky Mountain district without designating either date or the amount of tax to be levied.¹⁹

The county superintendent was ordered to enter into agreements with the adjoining counties concerning the schools which served communities on both sides of the county lines.

17 Avery Minutes, Book I, pp. 4-6.

18 Ibid. p. 6.

19 Ibid. p. 8.

These schools included Kellersville, which served parts of Watauga County, Henson's Creek, which had some students from Mitchell County, and Linville Falls, to which some students from Burke County came.²⁰

The July and August meetings of the Board brought the first requests for money for building purposes in the county. The Carey's Flats district was granted \$150.00 to complete their building and \$125.00 for furnishing it. No reference was made to an old building in that district, so it is assumed that the building project was started before the county was formed and that the old building had already been disposed of, if it had existed at all.²¹ The Banner Elk Village School was judged unfit for further use and was sold for \$100.00, thus leaving one district in the county without a building.²² School was taught in privately owned buildings for the next two years in that community until a new building was erected.

From this time until about 1920, which was the beginning of the move for consolidation and the development of accredited high schools in the county, the number and location of the school districts remained somewhat the same. The maintenance of 47 buildings brought requests for money at almost every

20 Ibid., p. 7.

21 Ibid., pp. 7, 12.

22 Ibid., p., 14.

meeting of the Board. It seemed to be the custom to encourage local contributions to building construction and maintenance whenever possible by offering to appropriate limited amounts from county funds on condition that a like amount be raised by private subscription.²³

Avery County was one of the first of the counties of the entire state to insist on a compulsory school attendance law. The Elk Park district, on January 1, 1912, presented a petition to the Board of Education signed by a majority of the freeholders of the district, requesting that the then existing law be made applicable to their district. The request was granted without an election.²⁴ One year later the county superintendent was instructed by the Board to advise the member of the Legislature from Avery County that a state wide compulsory attendance law was desired and to request him to introduce a special local bill if the state wide measure failed of passage. The local measure required attendance of all children from seven through sixteen years of age. Attendance officers were appointed for each township in the county.²⁵

At the time of the formation of the county there were no recognized public high schools in Avery, although high

23 Ibid., pp. 68,74.

24 Ibid., p. 25.

25 Ibid., p. 66.

school subjects were taught at Elk Park, Minneapolis, Montezuma, and at one other school in the county which was not listed by name in the minutes nor recalled by any of the now living members of the Board of Education.²⁶ These courses were usually first year Latin or algebra, taught by one of the teachers who spent the remainder of the time with the subjects in the lower grades.²⁷ On July 1, 1912, Montezuma was allowed \$325.00 as a special allotment for high school purposes for the four months term.²⁸ This was the first appropriation of its kind ever made by the Board. One month later a special election was ordered in the Montezuma district to increase the tax for high school purposes by 20 cents on the \$100.00 valuation and 25 cents on each taxable poll.²⁹ Superintendent Francum resigned his post to assume the work as principal of the Montezuma High School and Frank A. Edmonson was appointed to complete his term as superintendent.³⁰

The next recognized high school established in the county was in Elk Park, known as Avery County High School, which

26 Ibid., p. 57.

27 Information received from A. P. Brinkley, July 7, 1952.

28 Avery Minutes, Book I, p. 47.

29 Ibid., p. 50.

30 Ibid., p. 59.

received its first appropriations from the County Board of Education on January 6, 1913.³¹ The following year applications were received from the Minneapolis and the newly formed Newland district for high school appropriations. Due to limited funds granted by the state only the Newland request was granted.³² These schools offered only two years of recognized high school work before 1920 and no graduates from high school were listed in reports to the state superintendent during that time.

All teachers were certified by the county superintendent before being allowed to teach in the county. The law at the time required that an examination be given in various subjects to determine the professional and mental qualifications, and the grade of certificate granted depended upon the average grades attained on this examination.³³ It had been customary for these examinations to be administered by the county superintendent, but on August 5, 1912, the County Board of Education gave the superintendent permission to endorse certificates granted to W. T. Holsclaw and J. F. Keller by the Appalachian Training School at Boone, North Carolina.³⁴ This evidently became the general practice for the certification of teachers in

31 Ibid., p. 66.

32 Ibid., pp. 122-123.

33 Section 4162, Public School Law of North Carolina, 1911. See Appendix B for copy of certificates.

34 Avery Minutes, Book I, p. 50.

later years, because no further reference is made to such permissions in the minutes of the Board of Education and numerous certificates granted in this manner are now in the hands of the older teachers of the county. The regular Teacher's Institutes continued to be held in the county, first at Montezuma then later at Newland until 1916, when the County Board agreed to vote funds for it provided local talent could be used to conduct such Institute.³⁵ Steps had already been taken to encourage the prospective teachers in the county to attend summer school at Boone, and an agreement was entered into with Appalachian Training School whereby the county would pay tuition fees not exceeding \$12.00 per teacher for anyone who attended during the summer and taught in the county school system the following year.³⁶ In 1917 the county superintendent was ordered by the board to teach courses in the two High Schools (Newland and Elk Park) in the Theory and Practice of Teaching and that any teachers taking advantage of these courses would be allowed to teach in the county schools for the ensuing year without being required to attend any further

³⁵ Ibid., p. 192. Superintendent Edmonson and Prof. Jamison of the Elk Park School conducted a Normal at Elk Park in May and an Institute in Newland immediately thereafter.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 160.

Normal or Institute.³⁷ The following year Miss Minish was allowed to give special instruction to teachers in the Normal Department of Elk Park High School under similar conditions.³⁸ This was the last record of special summer training for teachers in the county.

Teacher Training Departments were continued at Elk Park and later at Crossnore High School for a period of several years. These courses enabled high school graduates to attend for a full year during the regular term and qualify for an Elementary B State Certificate upon completion of the course.

By 1920 the report to the state superintendent showed that 39 of the 76 teachers employed in the county held regular State Certificates, three were Primary or Grammar Grade, and 34 were Elementary. The remaining 37 were made up of 28 county certificates and nine provisional or temporary permits.³⁹

At the time Avery County was formed the census showed approximately 4,000 children between the ages of six and twenty-one. This figure remained fairly constant for the first decade of the existence of the county, but the average daily attendance rose from 2,088 in 1911-12 to 2,657 in 1919-20. This would indicate that the schools were becoming more efficient

37 Ibid., p. 229.

38 Ibid., p. 274.

39 Biennial Reports of State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1920, p. 213.

in attracting and holding the students. Part of the increase is due, of course, to the adding of some high school subjects in various districts thus making it possible for those who wished to do so to continue in school for one or two years longer.

The valuation of the school property during this same period increased from \$10,225 in 1912 to \$31,500 in 1920.⁴⁰ The major part of this increase was due to the construction of brick or masonry buildings at Newland and Elk Park, completed at a total cost of \$12,250. The Elk Park School was financed by an \$8,000.00 bond issue approved by a vote of the district on April 29, 1915.⁴¹

Between 1911 and 1920 there were 19 special school tax elections and one school bond election held in Avery County. These elections called for the levy of from ten to thirty cents on the \$100.00 property valuation and from thirty to ninety cents on each taxable poll; the bond issue was for \$8,000.00 in the Elk Park district. The special levy or bonds received a comfortable majority in all 20 cases.⁴²

The length of the school term in 1911-1912 averaged 83 days in the non-local tax districts. Montezuma, which had

⁴⁰ Biennial Reports of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction for the years cited.

⁴¹ Avery Minutes, Book I, p. 157.

⁴² Ibid., pp. 6-358.

voted a special tax in the summer of 1911, had a term of 125 days. The length of term gradually increased, with a brief lapse in the war years, until 1920 when an average term of 158 days existed in the non-local tax districts and better than 160 days for the local tax districts. One school, at Crossnore, had a nine month term that year.⁴³

The move toward consolidation of schools did not begin to have its effect in Avery County until after 1920. There were still 47 school districts in the county--the same number that had existed at the time the county was formed. These were not exactly the same as had existed ten years before and there had been a few attempts at consolidation. Numerous petitions for consolidation had been presented to the County Board of Education, but when notice was given for those who opposed it to appear and give their reasons it was evident that the opposition was most vocal and effective in their arguments. The condition of the roads at the time was a potent factor in discouraging any attempts to increase the distance that the children would have to travel. There were no school buses and very few automobiles in the county in 1920.

The first recorded petition for consolidation came from the lower Toe River districts of Piney Grove, Oak Grove,

⁴³ Biennial Reports of State Superintendent of Public Instruction for years cited.

and Walnut Grove on April 6, 1914. This was granted on condition that the patrons of the school would vote a special tax of 20 cents on each \$100.00 valuation and 60 cents on each taxable poll. The consolidation eventually went through after a few small segments on the outer fringes of the districts concerned were allowed to secede and move to other schools.⁴⁴ This new school came to be known as the Toe River Consolidated School, one of the larger units that later became the present Riverside School.

Very few other consolidations were carried out, and none on a large scale. The report for 1920 showed that one school had six or more teachers, two had four teachers, nine schools had three teachers and the remainder were one and two-teacher institutions.⁴⁵

The budget for the Avery County schools increased in proportion to other phases of the work. It is true that a heavy debt was piled up during the first few years that the county operated independently, but a major portion of this was for buildings and equipment. The first year after the county was formed, 1911-1912, the school fund amounted to \$10,052.83. Of this amount \$7,505.79 went to pay the teachers. About \$3,800.00 was received from the state that year and the remainder came from county and local sources. The county levied a

44 Avery Minutes, Book I, pp. 115-116.

45 Ibid., p. 361.

general property tax of 20 cents per \$100.00 valuation for school purposes. By 1920 this picture had changed quite a bit so far as the sources were concerned. Out of the total of over \$42,000.00 only about \$12,000.00 was coming from local and county sources while the state furnished the remainder. The teachers were paid about \$24,000.00 and the next biggest single item was debt service which called for over \$11,000.00.⁴⁶

It might be interesting or enlightening to some of the present day school personnel to learn of some of the unusual items for which county funds were appropriated during these early years. On September 1, 1913, \$12.50 was set aside to pay the admission of 500 children to the County Fair at a rate of two and one-half cents each. This custom was kept up over a period of several years. The teachers were allowed pay for the day if they accompanied the children to the fair.⁴⁷ On October 2, 1914, \$60.00 was appropriated for premiums to be awarded at the Avery County Commencement, which was to be held on December 18, and the plan was "heartily endorsed" by the Board which recommended that the practice continue in future years.⁴⁸ On still another occasion the County

⁴⁶ State Superintendents Reports for years cited.

⁴⁷ Avery Minutes, Book I, p. 97.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 140.

superintendent was allowed \$50.00 expense money from county funds for a trip to Raleigh in the interest of special school legislation.⁴⁹ Dr. E. H. Sloop was allowed a claim of \$20.00 for examining teachers and issuing health certificates.⁵⁰ Appalachian Training School was paid \$160.00 as tuition for the teachers who attended summer school.⁵¹ On the other side of the ledger, Superintendent Teague and the chairman of the Board of Education were instructed to confer with the judge who would preside at the next term of Superior Court and ask him, in cases where justice might be served by doing so, to levy fines instead of imposing jail sentences in order to provide more funds for the schools and thus enable the county to have a lower tax rate.⁵²

In summarizing the educational progress of Avery County during the years from 1900 to 1920 one can see no abrupt or pronounced changes of course or new trends. The development of high schools and large consolidated schools had not yet begun, yet there was present the demand for these things on the part of what was still a minority. The way had been paved for the start of these movements by extending to all communities the best that education could offer in the way of small schools,

49 Ibid., p. 72.

50 Ibid., p. 357.

51 Ibid., p. 307.

52 Ibid., Bk. II, p. 47.

Avery had outstripped her neighbors in the length of school term offered her children, and in 1920 she awaited only the development of a passable road system and the urging of a progressive leader to set her on the way toward a vastly improved school system.

CHAPTER IV

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL PROGRAM IN AVERY COUNTY FROM 1920 TO THE PRESENT

The Avery County schools of today are centered in three communities, Cranberry, Crossnore, and Newland, where the consolidated high schools are located. Each of these three schools is the outgrowth of a private or semi-private institution located in the immediate area prior to the establishment of public high schools. The presence of this educational opportunity during the earlier period of educational development awakened in the citizens of the communities concerned a recognition of the need and the value of better schools. When the opportunity for publicly supported high schools was presented, these people were the first to take advantage of it. In order to trace this progress properly it will be necessary to look briefly at the private school background in each case even though such schools themselves are not the immediate concern of this work.

The first of these private institutions was located at Elk Park. Unfortunately, no written record has been found that would give much light on the early history of this school, but some of the older residents were able to supply the names and approximate dates together with a description

of the work as they recalled it.¹ The entire program was under the sponsorship of the Mennonite Church which sent a Miss Pruden to Elk Park in 1886 or 1887 to work among the people of that community and render whatever services she could in an educational and religious way. She established a school in rented buildings and taught the children of the community for a period of several years. She was joined by other workers for shorter periods and some secondary school subjects, such as Latin, algebra, and advanced English courses were offered. The school was discontinued only after a public school was made available to the children of the community by Mitchell County about 1900.

The Mennonite Church also saw fit to send two men, Joseph M. Tschetter and D. R. Wiebe, to Elk Park to carry on work with the colored people of the county. Wiebe taught in the public schools for the colored children after 1900.² The two men established an orphanage for colored children in the town of Elk Park and a building was put up to house the institution. This created some resentment in the community,

¹ The information concerning this entire private school venture is from interviews with A. P. Brinkley, member of the Avery County Board of Education from 1912 until 1923, and George M. Bowman, Superintendent of Schools from 1931 until 1951, both residents of the Elk Park community. None of Miss Pruden's former students were able to furnish her first name.

² Minutes of the Mitchell County Board of Education, Book I, p. 69.

but Tschetter, by his sincerity and devotion to his work, was able to overcome this feeling or at least keep it from becoming too serious. One resident said; "We boys would often decide that we would run him (Tschetter) out of town, but you can't hurt a man who prayed like he did."

The orphanage closed about 1905 and the building was sold to a doctor who used it as a hospital for several years. It has since been rented for residential purposes.

After the closing of the private school in Elk Park, one of the earliest of the two-teacher schools in Mitchell County was established there.³ Local residents remember that some of the best traditions of the old private institution were carried over to the public school and that some high school subjects were taught almost every year from its founding.

The residents of the Elk Park district were the first in the county to request that the compulsory attendance law be made applicable to their community,⁴ and on January 6, 1913, \$125.00 was appropriated by the County Board of Education for high school purposes.⁵ This was the beginning of the present Cranberry High School which now serves well over a third of the area of the county.

3 Ibid., p. 37.

4 Minutes of the Avery County Board of Education, January 1, 1912, p. 25. (Note: Hereinafter this report will be referred to as Avery Minutes.)

5 Ibid., p. 66.

At about the same time that the Elk Park community school was started certain citizens of the Montezuma area initiated a movement that led to the founding of Aaron Seminary under the auspices of the Methodist Episcopal Church.⁶ This school was being conducted in some form as early as 1887, but the deed to the property on which the Seminary was built was executed on September 3, 1889, by J. H. and Nancy Rominger to the Trustees of the Seminary.⁷ The main building was constructed and ready for use by 1891. In addition, several small cottages were built on the ten acres acquired from the Romingers and other residents of the community. Students who lived too far from Montezuma to be able to commute daily were permitted to live in these cottages and do light housekeeping on a cooperative plan while attending school. Names which appear among the founders of the school in various capacities are Jacob Harris, Carter Matney, Thomas A. Love, C. C. Banner, Martin Banner, Luke (Luther) Banner, Brown Hughes, W. C. Franklin, and Gus Childs. Some of these men gave land or money for the school or served as trustees or in other capacities during its existence. All of them were residents of the Avery County area, indicating something of the local interest

⁶ Information concerning this school was gathered from interviews with Webb Braswell, Lloyd Suddreth, and Albert Banner, all residents of Montezuma, and C. H. Hughes of Newland, all of whom were students at Aaron Seminary.

⁷ Records of Mitchell County Register of Deeds, Deed Book 25, p. 226.

in the movement. The first principal at the Academy was a Professor Rowen, from east Tennessee, and Professor N. S. Ridenhour served in later years.

At times there were seven or eight teachers in the Aaron Seminary and courses were offered all the way from the primary grades through high school. The Methodist Church withdrew its support from the school in 1905, but the work was continued by private contributions and with some public support until 1910. At one time there was an effort to persuade Dr. B. B. Daugherty to locate the Appalachian Training School at Montezuma, but this movement failed to gain enough popular support to become effective. Immediately after the formation of Avery County in 1911 the residents of Montezuma applied for permission to establish a special school tax district. This request was granted after an election held on July 6 of that year.⁸ One year later a high school in the district was recognized by the appropriation of state funds to the district for that purpose.⁹

The high school continued at Montezuma until 1915 when it was transferred to the newly formed county seat at Newland, where it has existed since as one of the three centers in the county.

8 Avery Minutes, Book I, p. 6.

9 Ibid., p. 48.

The third of these public school centers at Crossnore was less in the nature of a private institution in its beginning than the others.¹⁰ When Avery County was formed in 1911 only a one-teacher school existed in Crossnore. In that same year Drs. E. H. and Mary Martin Sloop, a husband and wife team of medical doctors, came to Crossnore to establish a private medical practice and to make their home in the community. The couple had lived for five years before this at Plumtree where a private school had existed. Dr. Mary M. Sloop, more familiarly known as Mrs. Sloop, soon shifted her main interest from the medical field to that of education. During the first year of her residence in the community an extra teacher was added to the small school to take care of the added attendance which she encouraged. She made an effort to give those children who had completed all the work that was offered in the local school an opportunity to further their education elsewhere. She was aided in this work by numerous friends and acquaintances who made contributions and offered work for those who were interested. In the meantime Mrs. Sloop was striving to build up the local school as rapidly as possible. In May of 1912 she appeared before the County Board of Education and asked for the construction of a building at Crossnore to be

¹⁰ The information concerning Crossnore has been gathered from various people of the community over a period of 17 years during which the writer has served as a teacher in the Crossnore School. Dr. and Mrs. Sloop were the chief sources.

used exclusively for school purposes.¹¹ Only a part of the money needed for the building was appropriated and the rest was raised by private subscription in the community and from friends of Mrs. Sloop. In 1915 similar sources provided a third classroom at Crossnore and \$320 toward the teacher's salary.¹² Soon afterward high school subjects were offered and the children who lived too far away to walk to and from school each day were provided with rooms. A group of boys stayed in an old abandoned mill house and the girls were kept in the attic of the home of one of the teachers. By 1920 Mrs. Sloop had raised funds for the construction of dormitories and a twelve room school building. The county board later appropriated money to reimburse the private institution for the classroom building. This was the beginning of the institution now known as Crossnore, Incorporated, A Home for Mountain Children, which has provided an educational opportunity for over 3,000 children, often free of charge when the need was great. It still remains as a valuable adjunct to the Crossnore High School, furnishing additional teachers and workers for the school as well as providing room and board for children who otherwise would find it difficult to continue their education.

11 Avery Minutes, Book I, p, 37.

12 Ibid., p. 160.

Still another church sponsored institution has made its imprint on the educational picture of Avery County, but has been less directly connected with the public schools than the other three. About the turn of the century, Reverend Edgar Tufts, a Presbyterian minister, came to the county and entered zealously into the task of providing educational opportunity for the area. A school for boys was set up at Plumtree with the help of J. P. Hall who was later to become the first Chairman of the Avery County Board of Education, and a school for girls was established at Banner Elk, under the name of Lees-McRae. These schools offered a full high school course and continued to operate as separate units of the Lees-McRae Institute until 1922 when a separate Board of Trustees was appointed by the Holston Presbytery for Plumtree School for Boys. In 1927 a fire destroyed the main building of the Plumtree School so the entire unit was moved to Banner Elk and has been operated under the Edgar Tufts Foundation since that time. The Foundation also operates Lees-McRae College, Grace Hospital, and Grandfather Home for Children, all under the joint auspices of Holston and Concord Presbyteries of the Presbyterian Church.¹³ Lees-McRae is now an accredited Junior College, the only institution of such level within the county.

¹³ Information from Dr. W. C. Tate, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Edgar Tufts Foundation. July 2, 1952.

The development of high schools and the consolidation movement were simultaneous in Avery County. By the time schools opened for the 1920-21 term the number of one-teacher schools had been reduced to ten in the county. (There had been 40 according to the 1915 report). The number of districts reported for the entire county had been reduced to 23, although there were still 35 school buildings in use.¹⁴ This was a system that was followed all through the consolidation program as a means of gradually bringing about the union of the smaller schools. First, several small units would be put under joint administration, then as they reached the point where they could work together more harmoniously and building facilities were made available, the children were all brought to one building. The roads were in such poor condition that transportation was difficult. On one occasion at least, the School Board found it necessary to appropriate \$500.00 to make a road passable for the transporting of children to a newly consolidated school.¹⁵ County owned school buses were first mentioned in the records on July 3, 1922, when it was stated that five vehicles would be operated during the coming year. One each was to be assigned to Altamont (Crossnore), Banner Elk, Cranberry, Linville,

¹⁴ Biennial Reports of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, for the years cited. (Note: Hereinafter this report will be referred to as Biennial Reports of the State Superintendent.)

¹⁵ Avery Minutes, Book I, p. 503.

(Newland) and Toe River (Riverside).¹⁶ It is known that private bus transportation was available at Crossnore before that time. Perhaps some similar situations existed at other places in the county.

The first public high school to grant diplomas for the completion of the full four year course was the Altamont Consolidated High School, which hereinafter will be referred to as the Crossnore High School, its present name, and the name under which it has been familiarly known all through its existence. The first graduates, in 1921, were Gurney Franklin and Mrs. Nell Johnson Buchanan. Mrs. Buchanan is still teaching in the county and Mr. Franklin has served as a teacher. Both still reside in the county. The Crossnore High School did not become an accredited school until June of 1922 when it was listed as a Group II, Class B School. This indicated that it offered a full four year course of study, had a term of 160 days, a minimum of three full time teachers with proper certificates, recitation periods of 45 minutes, 120 clock hours were required for each unit of credit, laboratory facilities for Biology and General Science, a library of over 300 volumes, 15 standard units were required for graduation, and at least 45 students were in average daily attendance. B. D.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 448.

Franklin, who later became the county superintendent, was listed as the principal.¹⁷

The Elk Park High School, later moved to Cranberry when the new building was completed, became a Group II Class B accredited school in 1923. Newland was certified as a Group III Class B School in the same year, offering a four year course of study with two full time teachers. Two years of recognized high school work was offered at Riverside, but that was discontinued after a few years and the students transferred to Cranberry and Crossnore.¹⁸

In 1923 the county ranked 25th in the state in the amount per pupil spent on high schools. This position was due more to the small numbers enrolled than to the size of the budget for high school purposes. The enrollment was 19.4 pupils per teacher with an average daily attendance of 14.9. The expenditures were listed as 45.1 cents per day per student.¹⁹

The county entered into a rather ambitious building program in 1922 to provide suitable buildings in the Banner Elk, Cranberry and Newland districts. The first contract was

17 J. Henry Highsmith, Fifteenth Annual Report of the State Supervisor of Public High Schools of North Carolina (Raleigh, N. C.: State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1922), pp. 17 ff.

18 Ibid., Sixteenth Report, 1923, pp. 26 ff.

19 Ibid., p. 18.

awarded to A. L. Barbour in April of that year for a frame building at Banner Elk. The contract price was \$17,000.00 and the building was ready for occupancy at the opening of school the following autumn.²⁰ After considerable wrangling over the site, involving a court injunction which stopped the entire proceedings for a while, the contract for the Newland building was awarded to Beeler and Ray, General Contractors, on July 21, 1922, for \$45,000.00.²¹ This structure was of brick and contained 12 classrooms and an auditorium. It is the same structure that is in use at present for the Newland High School, although the auditorium has been divided into classrooms. It was first used during the school term of 1923-24. On December 20, 1922, a contract was awarded to the same contractor for a building on the same plan at Cranberry for \$40,095.00.²² The Cranberry building was used for the first full school term in 1924-25, and is still in use.

The funds for these buildings were borrowed through bond issues and from the State Literary Fund. This raised the county's school indebtedness to over \$150,000.00²³ and put an end to all major school building construction in the county until the period when W. P. A. funds became available for the

20 Avery Minutes, Book I, p. 425.

21 Ibid., p. 450.

22 Ibid., p. 478.

purpose. The county was not able to collect enough taxes to maintain the schools and meet the payments on indebtedness in the late 1920's. In order to keep some of the schools open for the eight months term during 1929, 1930, and 1931 some of the teachers taught with no pay save the promise that they would be paid if money could be found. Most of these promises were made good although the delay was often as much as a year.²³

The County Board of Education began seeking a loan of W. P. A. funds to the extent of \$100,000.00 as early as 1934 for new construction at Banner Elk, Elk Park, Newland, Crossnore, and Riverside.²⁴ None of these projects was approved or the funds made available until late in 1936. This started the county on its second major building program and provided many of the buildings that are in use today. There are no figures available as to the total cost of any of these W. P. A. projects, and it is impossible to determine from the minutes of the County Board of Education or the records of the office of the county accountant what the local share in this construction was. Whenever capital outlay funds were available they were placed in the building fund without any specification as to where they were to be used. On July 7, 1941, an application

²³ Information from teachers who were employed in the county at the time.

²⁴ Avery Minutes, Book II, p. 134.

was made for a loan from the State Literary Fund of \$30,000.00 for the county's part in the construction of the buildings at Cranberry, Newland, Elk Park, Banner Elk, Beech Mountain, Minneapolis, Riverside, and Crossnore.²⁵ The valuation placed on these eight structures at the time of their completion in 1941 was \$330,000.00.²⁶ The buildings were as follows: Cranberry, gymnasium, frame construction; Newland, gymnasium with four classrooms, stone; Elk Park, elementary school, stone; Banner Elk, elementary school, stone; Beech Mountain, elementary school, stone; Minneapolis, elementary school, frame; Riverside, elementary school, stone; Crossnore, high school, frame.

The school indebtedness at the time the above loan was being negotiated was \$76,175.31. The additional \$30,000.00 again raised it to over \$106,000.00.²⁷

The third and most recent building program was begun when the county received \$357,936.37 as its share from the 1950 State bond issue of \$50,000,000 for school building construction. Two major units were built with these funds. The new elementary school building at Crossnore which was occupied in November of 1951, was built at a cost of \$170,241.00 by the

25 Avery Minutes, Book II, p. 143.

26 Information from principal's reports for years from 1938 through 1941.

27 Ibid.

W. E. Dale Construction Company, and the new elementary building at Newland which will be ready for occupancy at the beginning of the 1952-53 term which was built by the same contractors at a cost of \$162,169.00. The remainder of the fund is being used for minor additions at Riverside and one or two other schools already in existence.²⁸

This most recent program has brought the total value of the buildings used for school purposes in Avery County to \$971,000.00, exclusive of sites, furniture, equipment and libraries. The 1952 reports placed a valuation of \$30,350.00 on the building sites, \$93,439.00 on furniture and equipment, and \$24,914.00 on library books, giving a grand total of \$1,120,303.00.²⁹

Upon moving into the new building in 1923, Newland High School received an accredited rating the same as that of Cranberry and Crossnore.³⁰ This brought to three the total number of accredited high schools in the county. Banner Elk continued to offer some high school courses until 1928, but never reached the accredited status. The status of the high schools remained the same until 1950 when Newland was dropped from the list because of the crowded conditions existing at that school. The

²⁸ Information from records in office of Superintendent of Avery County Schools.

²⁹ Principal's reports fro year 1951-52.

³⁰ Biennial Report of State Superintendent, 1923.

other two have maintained their rating until the present date, and Newland hopes to regain theirs since the erection of the new elementary school building will relieve the congestion that led to their being dropped.

The consolidation program did not move so rapidly during the years from 1920 to 1925 except at the administrative level. The total number of districts was reduced to 16 in 1925, only four of which did not levy a special school tax. Three of the districts were for colored children and had a local levy for their support. However, school was still being taught in 34 buildings during that year. Nine buses were being used to transport the children in the county schools with daily distance of 160 miles being traveled and 503 pupils were transported. This average of only 18 miles per bus would seem to indicate that the roads were in such poor condition that motor transportation was too difficult to make consolidation practicable. The average daily attendance for the year was only 66.3% of the enrollment which is extremely low according to present standards. Eighty-seven teachers were employed for the white schools and three for the colored schools. The total budget for 1925 was nearly \$128,000.00 of which about \$70,000.00 was used for teaching and supervision. Over \$40,000.00 was for debt service, which in reality was for building construction, since the greater portion of the indebtedness had been incurred for that purpose. The state furnished about \$40,000.00 of this total and the county was responsible

for the remainder. It was forced to borrow nearly \$38,000.00 in order to keep from defaulting on the bonds and other indebtedness as they came due. This shows something of the slow pace at which the county was forced, even at that date, to pay off its debts.³¹

By 1930 the State Equalization Fund had increased the amounts that were coming from the state for the operation of the Avery County schools to over \$70,000.00, thus relieving some of the extreme burden which the local and county taxes had been carrying. The total budget had not increased in the past five years and by this time the county was defaulting on some of its indebtedness. Little further progress had been made on consolidation. The report for that year showed that there were still 30 schools in operation in the county and the same number of districts, 16, that had existed five years previously.³²

The adoption of the state wide eight month school term in 1933 probably had less effect on Avery than on many of the other counties of the state since so many of the districts in the county had voted a special tax for the purpose of maintaining a school for the extended term. The average term, even in

31 Biennial Reports of the State Superintendent for 1925.

32 Biennial Reports of the State Superintendent for 1930.

the non-local tax districts had been well above 150 days since 1925. However, the additional funds from the state did ease the financial burden which had been causing discontent and giving rise to demands for the removal of the special school tax in some of the districts.

George M. Bowman who became the county superintendent in 1932 set as his goal the consolidation, not only at the administrative level, but in actual practice, all of the one and two-teacher schools of the county. By 1935 the administrative units had been reduced to three, centered at the three high schools. There were still 20 schools in operation for the whites but the colored schools had all been brought to Elk Park and were under the Cranberry administrative unit. The chief barrier to absolute consolidation was lack of centralized classroom facilities, and in a few instances, roads were not passable enough to make transportation safe.

The W. P. A. funds helped to solve the first of these problems and by 1941 only 14 schools were in operation and only four of these were one-teacher schools. The improvement of roads which came gradually, made it possible by 1951 to bring the pupils from the Roseboro school to Newland thus doing away with the last of the one-teacher schools.

Only one recommended consolidation remains unaccomplished in Avery County. The committee appointed by the State School Board to make a study of the Avery County school system in 1951 suggested that the Heaton School be combined with

Elk Park. At present there are insufficient facilities at Elk Park to care for the extra children there, and insufficient funds to build these facilities. Both of the above are elementary schools within the Cranberry district.

The county now has four districts, three of which are the high school units that have been mentioned before and the fourth is the Riverside Elementary School, formed after the building was erected there in 1937. The high school students from Riverside attend either the Cranberry or the Crossnore High School. The Cranberry School is high school only. There are elementary schools at Banner Elk, Beech Mountain, Heaton, Elk Park, and Minneapolis all in the Cranberry district. All of the children from the first grade through the twelfth in the Newland district are now brought to Newland. Crossnore has no outlying small schools within the bounds of the district, but draws high school students from Riverside and from the Jonas Ridge School in Burke County.

In the school year 1951-52 the county operated 24 school buses over a distance of 1,345 miles daily and transported an average of 2,611 children each day.³³

The schools of Avery County have grown almost phenomenally within the past forty years. From the more than forty one-teacher schools that existed when the county was formed

³³ Principal's Reports for year 1951-52.

it has developed an educational system of which it may well be proud. In the beginning there were no opportunities for education beyond the elementary level. Now, all children have a high school within reach. Of course it is realized that this would have been absolutely impossible without aid from outside the county. This might be pointed out as an example of what equalization can do for the poorer localities in the way of educational opportunity. At present a move is under way to bring about the accreditation of the elementary schools of the county. The Elk Park School achieved this status in 1951, and Crossnore, Banner Elk and Minneapolis will be placed on the list in 1952. Beech Mountain and Riverside have already begun to take steps to bring their schools up to this level and when Newland occupies the new building they hope to make the same move. This will leave only two schools without accreditation. The Heaton School is too small, and so is the Elk Park Colored School.

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APPENDIX A

CHAPTER 33

PUBLIC LAWS OF THE STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA SESSION OF 1911

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH AND PROVIDE FOR THE ORGANIZATION OF THE COUNTY OF AVERY FROM THE TERRITORY OF MITCHELL, WATAUGA, AND CALDWELL COUNTIES.

The General Assembly of North Carolina do enact:

Section 1. That a county by the name of Avery, in honor of Col. Waightstill Avery of Revolutionary fame, be and the same is hereby created and established out of and embracing the following described territory:

Beginning at the highest point of Grandfather Mountain, the corner of Watauga, Caldwell and Mitchell counties, and running a direct line to the Hanging Rock Mountain; then with the dividing ridge to the Turnpike Road in the gap of Bower's Mountain; then a direct course to the eastern prospect on the eastern end of Beech Mountain; then a direct course to the Buckeye Spring; then down and with the meanders of Buckeye Creek to Beech Creek; then with the meanders of Beech Creek to Watauga River; then with the meanders of Watauga River to the Tennessee line; then with the Tennessee line to the Grassy Ridge Bald; then a direct line to Spear Top; then with the main height of Yellow Mountain to the highest point on Little Yellow Mountain; then a direct line to Pine Knob; then to the mouth of Gouge's Creek on Toe River; then south forty degrees east to the Bald Ground on Humpback Mountain at the McDowell County line; then with the McDowell County line to the Burke County line; then with the Burke County line to the Caldwell County line; then with the Burke and Caldwell line to the highest point on Chestnut Mountain; then a direct course to Anthony Creek so as to include all of Carey's Flats; then to the beginning.

Sec. 2. That the said county of Avery shall be and is hereby invested with all the rights, powers, and privileges of the several counties of the State under the general laws regulating the same, and shall be subject to such laws as now exist, or may be hereafter enacted for the government of counties.

Sec. 3. That M. W. Clay and J. W. Burleson of the said county of Avery be and they are hereby appointed commissioners on the part of Avery County, and they, or either of them, shall

meet a commissioner or commissioners of the counties of Mitchell, Caldwell, and Watauga, some time within the year one thousand nine hundred and eleven (1911), and the said commissioners herein provided for shall select a competent surveyor and being sworn, they shall survey and mark the lines between the said counties of Avery, Mitchell, Caldwell, and Watauga as designated in this act, and shall make a report under their hands and seals, or the hands and seals of two of them, representing the opposite sides of the said dividing lines, to the board of commissioners of each of the said counties, which report shall be spread upon the records of each of the said boards as a part of their record. The said commissioners shall furnish the said board of commissioners of each of said counties with a map of their said surveys. Said commissioners who survey said line shall have power to employ such persons as may be necessary for making such survey, and said commissioners and their helpers shall be allowed a reasonable compensation for their services, to be allowed by the board of commissioners of the county of Avery: Provided, the commissioner of commissioners from the county of Mitchell and the county of Caldwell and the County of Watauga shall be paid by the board of commissioners of the respective counties, and that said survey between said counties, as aforesaid, shall be made in accordance with the act creating the said county.

Sec. 4. That the sheriffs and other county officers of the counties of Mithcell, Caldwell and Watauga shall continue to exercise the functions of their respective offices, in the detached portions of their respective counties, until the officers of the county of Avery shall have qualified as provided for in this act. All township officers of said portion herewith detached from Mitchell, Caldwell and Watauga counties shall continue to be officers in the county of Avery as freely and fully and with like duties, powers, and requirements of the said officers as in other counties and for such terms as they may hold in and for the counties of Mitchell, Caldwell, and Watauga: Provided, that all such officers shall, within the month of April, A. D. one thousand nine hundred and eleven (1911), file with the Clerk of the Superior Court of Avery County, or the Board of Commissioners of Avery County, as originally required, a proper certificate that such officer has duly qualified in the county in which he had held office prior to the establishment of Avery County; and Provided further, that each of said officers shall qualify in the county of Avery and renew his bond, where required by law.

Sec. 5. That on or before the fifteenth day of May, one thousand nine hundred and eleven, the Governor of the State shall appoint the following officers of the county of Avery, viz.: A board of county commissioners, consisting of three members; a clerk of the Superior Court, a sheriff, a register of deeds, a treasurer, a coroner and county surveyor, who shall, until their successors are elected and qualified, exercise the powers and duties incident to their respective offices as completely and fully as if they had been regularly elected thereto; which said officers shall qualify and enter into the discharge of their said offices on the first Monday in April, one thousand nine hundred and eleven.

Sec. 6. That the several courts of the state shall have jurisdiction over and in the said county of Avery, as such county, on and after the first Monday in April, A. D. one thousand nine hundred and eleven, to the same extent and in the same manner as the said courts have in and over the several counties of the state, and that on and after the first Monday in April, A. D. one thousand nine hundred and eleven, the said courts shall have jurisdiction of all matters in the county of Avery as the said courts would have over the same matters and things, without the formation of said Avery County. And it shall be no defense by pleading or otherwise, as to the jurisdiction of said court over causes of action arising or that may have arisen within the territory embraced in said Avery County boundary line, brought into court of said county of Avery, that the said cause of action arose before the formation of the said county of Avery: Provided, that this shall in no way affect the statute of limitations governing said causes generally.

Sec. 7. That the Superior Courts of the county of Avery shall sit at such places as shall be provided by the board of commissioners of said county, and the several officers shall be required to keep their offices at such places as shall be provided and designated by the board of commissioners until the courthouse can be erected for said county.

Sec. 8. That all the civil and criminal cases pending in the Superior Courts of Mitchell, Caldwell, and Watauga counties which would have been properly triable in the county of Avery, if the county of Avery had existed at the time said cause was instituted or the right of action therein accrued, or where the criminal offense charged was committed in the territory of the said county of Avery, shall, upon motion of any defendant in any criminal case pending or upon the motion of any party of a civil cause, be transferred to the Superior

or other proper court of Avery County. Such motion for removal shall be made at the first term of the court wherein the cause shall be pending, which shall sit or be holden after the first Monday in April, A. D. one thousand nine hundred and eleven, and such transfer shall in no way work any preference or prejudice. It shall be the duty of the clerks of the Superior Courts of Mitchell, Caldwell, and Watauga counties to transmit the original papers in all such causes removed, together with a proper record of all such causes removed, to the Clerk of the Superior Court of Avery County. All actions, causes or proceedings, matters and things pending before the clerk of the Superior Court of the county of Mitchell or the clerk of the Superior Court of the county of Caldwell or the clerk of the Superior Court of the county of Watauga which would have been within the jurisdiction of the Clerk of the Superior Court of Avery County, had the county of Avery existed at the time the said cause, proceeding or matter was begun or the right therein accrued, shall upon the motion of any party thereto or interested therein be transferred to the county of Avery and to the jurisdiction of the clerk of the Superior Court of said county, to be heard, determined, or proceeded with before him, in all respects as if the said matter, cause or proceeding had been begun in the county of Avery. Upon such removal, it shall be the duty of the clerk of the Superior Court of the county from which the removal is made to transmit to the Clerk of the Superior Court of the county of Avery the original papers in the cause, matter or proceeding, together with a proper record thereof.

Sec. 9. That if this session of the General Assembly shall make no provision for the holding of Superior Courts in said county of Avery, it shall be the duty of the board of commissioners of said county of Avery to apply to the Governor of the State for a term to be holden as often as once each spring and once each fall, and it shall be the duty of the Governor to order such a term to be held at such times as he shall be able to assign a judge to hold the same, preferably when the judge riding the district embracing said county shall be able to hold the same. And it shall be the duty of the judge assigned to hold said court, as fully as if said court were regularly provided for as one of the regular courts of the district; but if said judge be unable for any cause to hold said court, whenever it may be ordered, then it shall be the duty of the Governor to assign some other judge to hold the same, who shall receive the usual compensation for the holding of extra terms of court. And it shall be the duty of the board of county commissioners of the county of Avery to advertise the time of holding the said court, for

thirty days beforehand, in some newspaper published in said county or in some newspaper having circulation in said county. All processes, both civil and criminal, shall be made returnable to said courts, and when it shall be necessary to issue summons or other process, or take any recognizance or bond for the appearance of any person at any of the said courts, and if the time of holding same be not known by the person or officer issuing same, it shall be sufficient to make the same returnable to the next term of said court, without specifying a day certain: Provided, that if the time for holding said court be otherwise regulated by statute this section shall be void.

Sec. 10. That it shall be the duty of the registers of deeds or clerks to the boards of commissioners of the counties of Mitchell, Caldwell, and Watauga, to transmit to the register of deeds or clerk of the board of county commissioners of the county of Avery, on or before the first Monday in June, A. D. one thousand nine hundred and eleven, a certified list of all persons liable to jury duty residing within the detached portion of their respective county, and within the county of Avery, and which shall constitute the jury list for the county of Avery, subject to the changes and revision thereof required by law. The board of commissioners of the county of Avery shall revise the just list at its meeting on the first Monday in June, A. D. one thousand nine hundred and eleven, in the manner prescribed by law for the revision of jury list at other times, and shall have power to adjourn from time to time to complete said revision, or to postpone the said revision until the next regular meeting, when the said revision shall be made.

Sec. 11. That the following named persons be and the same are hereby appointed a special committee to select two or more locations for a county seat for the said county of Avery, upon which the court house and jail shall be erected, viz.: Brown Hughes, Robert Houston, T. A. Love, J. L. Banner, M. W. Clay, W. H. Ollis, T. B. Vance, Ralph Young, T. J. Ray, Harrison Baird, J. H. Walsh, J. M. Cameron, T. L. Lowe, and C. B. Voncannon. The said committee will meet together at a time and place agreed upon by a majority thereof, and at said meeting shall elect one of their number as chairman and as a secretary, and after a majority of said committee shall have agreed upon the said sites, they shall make their report in writing to the board of commissioners of the county of Avery on the first Monday in May, A. D. one thousand nine hundred and eleven, unless the time for making such report shall be extended by the said board of commissioners; and upon the

receipt of such report it shall be the duty of the said Board of Commissioners of Avery county to order an election to be held in said county of Avery, submitting to the qualified electors of said county the question of the location of the said county seat, and to advertise said election by notice posted in five public places in each township of said county, naming the purpose of such election and the time and places of holding the same, and to make all the necessary arrangements for the holding of the said election as required by law. And in the case the committee hereinbefore provided shall select more than two sites or locations to be voted upon in said election, the location or site receiving the majority of the votes cast at said election shall be declared the county-seat: Provided, that in case neither of such locations voted upon shall receive a majority of all votes cast, then and in that case the said board of commissioners of the county of Avery shall immediately order another election, advertising the same as in the first instance provided for, at which election the two locations receiving the greater number of votes at the first election shall be voted on and the site or location receiving the majority of votes cast at such second election shall be declared the county-seat and shall bear the name "Newland".

Sec. 12. That for the purpose of erecting a courthouse and jail for and in the county of Avery, the board of commissioners herein provided for shall have the power to issue county bonds in the sum of not exceeding thirty thousand dollars, bearing interest at a rate of not greater than five per centum per annum; none of said bonds shall mature in less than ten years and none shall run for a period longer than twenty years; and for the purpose of paying off and discharging said bonds, together with the interest accrued thereon, the said board of county commissioners is hereby authorized empowered and directed to levy a special tax annually to pay the interest on said bonds, and to pay a portion of said bonds after the expiration of ten years; or if, instead of issuing said bonds, the board of county commissioners shall deem it expedient, they shall have authority to purchase or receive by donation a suitable tract of land, and after first selecting suitable sites for a courthouse and jail upon said tract, they shall lay off the remainder of said tract so purchased or donated into lots and sell the same at either public or private sale, and apply the proceeds arising from the sale of said lots to the erection and construction of said courthouse and jail; and if there should be a surplus, after paying for the erection of said courthouse and jail, the same shall be held by the county treasurer for general county purposes; but in the event that the fund arising from the sale of said lots as herein provided for shall not be sufficient for the erection of said courthouse and

jail, the said board of commissioners shall issue bonds as hereinbefore provided for to meet the amount required to complete the same.

Sec. 13. That the county of Avery shall bear its proportionate part of the debt of Mitchell County, Caldwell County, and of Watauga County, both bonded and floating, outstanding on the first Monday of April, A. D. one thousand nine hundred and eleven, and the proper levying officers shall proceed, according to law, to levy taxes to pay the same as it becomes due, and the tax collector of said county of Avery shall collect the taxes so levied.

Sec. 14. That the boards of commissioners of the counties of Mitchell, Caldwell, and Watauga, at their April meetings of the year one thousand nine hundred and eleven, shall each appoint two freeholders of their respective counties as arbitrators, and the board of commissioners of the county of Avery shall appoint two freeholders as arbitrators, to settle with the county of Mitchell, and two such freeholders to settle with the county of Caldwell, and two such freeholders to settle with the county of Watauga, and the arbitrators herein provided for shall meet in the towns of Bakersville, Lenoir, and Boone, respectively, on Monday next after their appointment, and from time to time thereafter until their work has been completed; and after being duly sworn, shall ascertain the outstanding indebtedness of the respective counties on the said first Monday in April, A. D. one thousand nine hundred and eleven, and upon the basis of the tax valuation of the respective counties of Mitchell, Caldwell, and Watauga, embraced within the boundaries of the county of Avery, shall determine the amount proportional to each county of said indebtedness, based upon the tax valuation at the time such indebtedness was contracted, which indebtedness shall be paid in accordance with such finding. And the said arbitrators shall determine the proportionate part of the funds on hand the first Monday in April, A. D. one thousand nine hundred and eleven, or the funds due the said counties of Mitchell, Caldwell, and Watauga at that time, which shall be awarded to each of said counties, and shall determine what taxes shall be due and collectible by each of the said counties, and shall certify their findings to the board of commissioners of their respective counties, and their findings shall be binding upon said counties. Said arbitrators shall be empowered to select an umpire who, after being duly sworn, shall serve with them, said umpire to be selected from some county in North Carolina not affected by this act, and the said arbitrators and umpire

shall be empowered to send for parties and papers, administer oaths, and punish for contempt as provided for boards of county commissioners.

Sec. 15. Provided, however, that the territory included in the boundaries of Watauga County shall not be annexed to or become a part of the county of Avery until the question of annexation to the county of Avery shall have been submitted to a vote of the qualified voters living within that portion of Watauga County proposed to be annexed to the county of Avery, at an election to be held under the rules and regulations required to law for the election of members of the General Assembly of North Carolina on the first Tuesday in May, one thousand nine hundred and eleven; and that it shall be the duty of the board of elections of the county of Watauga to appoint registrars and judges for Shawneehaw and Beech Mountain townships, which registrars shall proceed to open the registration books for their respective townships as required by law for the election of members of the General Assembly of North Carolina, and said election shall be advertised for not less than twenty days in at least four public places in the townships of Shawneehaw and Beech Mountain respectively, and those voting for annexation to the county of Avery shall vote a ballot, either written or printed, the words, "For Annexation to the County of Avery", and those opposed to the said annexation shall vote a ballot, either written or printed, the words, "Against Annexation to the County of Avery". It shall be the duty of the said registrars and judges of said election to make due return of the result of the said election on the second day after the said election by one of their members to the Board of Elections of Watauga County, who, together with the board of elections, shall canvass the returns of said election, and under their hands and seals certify the results thereof; and if a majority of the qualified voters in said election shall have voted for annexation to the county of Avery, then the said territory shall be and become a part of the county of Avery; but if a majority of the qualified voters voting in said election shall vote against annexation to the county of Avery, then the same shall be and remain a part of the county of Watauga: Provided further, that it shall be the duty of the registrars of the townships of Shawneehaw and Beech Mountain respectively to make a list of the qualified voters living in the territory proposed to be ceded by this act to the county of Avery by the county of Watauga, and that no person living outside the boundary shall be a qualified voter in said election: Provided further, that the county of

Avery shall constitute a part of the Ninth Congressional District and a part of the Thirty Sixth Senatorial District.

Sec. 16. This act shall be in force and effect from and after its ratification.

Ratified this the 23d day of February, A. D. 1911.

APPENDIX B

Teacher's _____ Grade Certificate

Certificate issued by County Superintendent according to provisions of Section 4162 of Public School Law of North Carolina.

NAME OF HOLDER _____

DATE ISSUED _____

DATE IT EXPIRES _____

ISSUED BY _____

County Superintendent

COUNTY _____

Scholarship

The following grade of Scholarship made by the holder of this Certificate on an examination held on _____ day of _____ 191____.

SUBJECT _____ GRADES _____

SPELLING _____

READING _____

WRITING _____

ARITHMETIC _____

DRAWING _____

LANGUAGE LESSONS AND COMPOSITION _____

SUBJECT

GRADE

ENGLISH GRAMMARGEOGRAPHYNORTH CAROLINA HISTORYUNITED STATES HISTORYCIVIL GOVERNMENTAGRICULTUREPHYSIOLOGY AND HYGIENETHEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHINGAVERAGE

A general average of ninety percent and over shall entitle applicant to a First-grade Certificate; a general average of eighty percent and less than ninety percent shall entitle the applicant to a Second-grade Certificate; and a general average of seventy percent and less than eighty percent shall entitle the applicant to a Third-grade Certificate. Section 4162, Public School Law of North Carolina.

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CERTIFICATE OF COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT

This Certificate entitles the holder of same to teach in the Public Schools of _____ County for the period of _____ year__ from date; and has been issued upon presentation to me of satisfactory evidence of good moral character and the foregoing evidence of mental and professional qualifications, ascertained by an examination as required by Section 4162 of the Public School Law of North Carolina.

(Signed) _____

County Superintendent

_____ County

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Note: This is a copy taken from a certificate issued to Mr. T. P. Dellinger, Altamont, North Carolina, on July 10, 1914, and still in Mr. Dellinger's possession. It is similar to others issued in the county between 1900 and 1920.