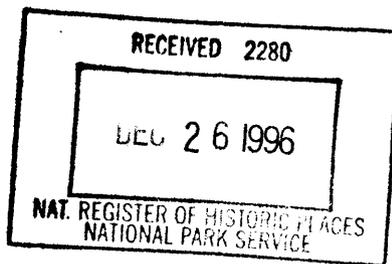


1612

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name District No. 48 School

other names/site number Collinwood School

2. Location

street & number off Co. Hwy. 6  not for publication N/A

city or town Collinwood Twp. Dassel  vicinity

state Minnesota code MN county Meeker code 093 zip code 55325

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 11/27/96  
Signature of certifying official/Title Ian R. Stewart Date  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer  
State of Federal agency and bureau Minnesota Historical Society

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official/Title Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register  See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

[Signature] Edson H. Beall Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 1.25.97

District No. 48 School  
Name of Property

Meeker County, MN  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/school  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/town hall  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Greek Revival  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK  
walls WOOD/weatherboard  
roof SYNTHETICS/Onduline  
other ASPHALT (belfry roof)  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See Continuation Sheets

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
removed from its original location.
a birthplace or grave.
a cemetery.
a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
a commemorative property.
less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT

EDUCATION

Period of Significance

c. 1870 (Exploration/Settlement)

1870-1946 (Education)

Significant Dates

c. 1870

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
previously listed in the National Register
previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:

District No. 48 School  
Name of Property

Meeker County, MN  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** less than one acre

**UTM References** Dassel, Minn. 1982  
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1 5	4 0 0 7 4 0	4 9 9 0 7 2 5
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**  
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**  
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title David C. Anderson  
organization N/A date April 26, 1996  
street & number 169 Lundy Bridge Drive telephone (319) 382-3079  
city or town Waukon state Iowa zip code 52172

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Collinwood Township  
street & number 21904 746th Avenue telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town Dassel state MN zip code 55325

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 1

District No. 48 School  
Meeker County, MN

DESCRIPTION

District No. 48 School, hereafter referred to as the Collinwood School, is located on Lot Five of Block Six of the Collinwood Village Plat, which was filed in 1870. The Collinwood townsite occupies a portion of Government Lots One and Two and the Northwest Quarter of the Northeast Quarter of Section One, Township 118 North, Range 29 West (Collinwood Township). The townsite includes about 55 acres and is located on the north shore of Collinwood Lake.

The school lot is located on what was the corner of North and Third Streets, directly across from the Bull house, which was the residence and banking location of H. C. Bull who, along with L. G. Pendergast and H. E. Taylor, was a co-developer of the townsite. The school stands on the original 165 by 93 foot lot, and together with the Bull house is the only surviving remnant of Collinwood's earliest days.<sup>1</sup>

Viewed from the school, the townsite retains some of its original feeling, although most of the original streets have been incorporated into adjacent lots, which to some extent have been consolidated into larger parcels. Most of the recent building activity has occurred on the lake shore near what was Lake Street.

The Collinwood School is a 24 by 40 by 12 foot single story rectangular wood frame structure on a brick foundation. There is a six by twenty foot lean-to section on the back (east end) which was put on after initial construction sometime prior to about 1920 for heating fuel storage.<sup>2</sup>

The gable roof includes a projecting cornice with returns at each end plus boxed eaves. This and the shed roof on the east end are covered with Onduline which was put on over the wood shingles in about 1985. There is a belfry on the west end which includes a flagpole and bell, and this is covered with asphalt roofing.

The exterior walls are covered with beveled six-inch wood lap siding. This and all the trim and windows are painted white. The brick foundation is covered with light plaster incised to resemble coursed stone.

The fenestration consists of a total of seven two over two double hung wooden sash distributed on either side of the main entrance and on each long side. An eighth window of this type on the south side was replaced by a door for handicap access in about 1980. A ramp and railing extends from this door to the west end of the building where a single round window (bull's-eye) is placed in the attic zone above the main entrance.

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District No. 48 School  
Meeker County, MN

From here one enters the school via three concrete steps into a small (10 by 14 foot) anteroom or cloakroom. Large metal hooks are fastened to the ceiling on which ropes were hung for calisthenics. There is a rope through the ceiling here which extends to the bell above plus a hatchway which opens into the attic space. One door from the anteroom leads directly into the classroom and another leads into a small room next to the cloakroom which at one time contained a kerosene stove for preparing hot lunches. From here there is a second entrance into the classroom.

The classroom is currently furnished with benches and desks salvaged from the old Meeker County courthouse. The floor is tongue and groove maple and the ceiling and walls are covered with gypsum board above a four and one half foot high beadboard wainscoting. The original pressed metal wall and ceiling cladding is still in place under the gypsum board, and the current furniture replaces the original four rows of desks (two on either side of a center aisle). Blackboards are located at both ends of the classroom and the brick chimney remains in place at the east end. A door at the east end of the classroom leads to the fuel storage room, from which a door on the north side leads outside.

The boxed cornice with returns, the bull's-eye window and general massing are features which identify this property as a modest example of the Greek Revival style.

An historic photo indicates that the school was once equipped with window shutters and there was a short projection over the main entrance for protection from the weather. These changes and the others discussed above are minor, and the school retains a high degree of integrity. It is in good condition overall and is currently owned by the Town of Collinwood and is used as the town hall.

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<sup>1</sup>Lamson, 1940, p. 63. Meeker County Memories, pp. 36-37. Lyndon Nelson, Jr. presently owns the Bull house and provided the information on its history.

<sup>2</sup>The description, integrity assessments, alteration dates and other details concerning the school are based on an inspection of the property on October 19, 1995; an historic photo in the Minnesota State Archive from about 1900; and information provided by Lyndon Nelson Jr., James Ostlund (Collinwood Town Trustee), Melba Anderson and Ralph Peterson, former students at Collinwood.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 3District No. 48 School  
Meeker County, MN**SIGNIFICANCE**

The Collinwood School is significant under National Register Criterion A (Exploration/Settlement and Education) for its association with early settlement and rural education in Meeker County, Minnesota. Collinwood Village was one of several small settlements that came into being between 1856, when the county was created, and 1870, when the railroad came through from Minneapolis and St. Paul, bypassing Collinwood. The village declined, and the school is one of only two properties that remain from the pre-railroad period. School District No. 48 (Collinwood) was organized in 1870, and by 1875 there were more than 40 rural schools in the county. This number later grew to 94. There were eight rural school districts in Collinwood Township at the time of its highest population (1900), and this was still true in 1941. The Collinwood School building, in which school was taught until 1961, is one of an unknown and dwindling number of extant rural school facilities in Meeker County, but it is the only such property in Collinwood Township with both structural and locational integrity.<sup>1</sup> The Collinwood School also relates to the Minnesota statewide historic context: Railroads and Agricultural Development, 1870-1940.

Meeker County is located 64 miles west of Minneapolis and is a rich agricultural area with many lakes. This part of the state was opened for settlement in the 1850s after the treaties of Mendota and Traverse des Sioux had extinguished Native American rights in most of Minnesota. Meeker County was organized in 1856 and is part of what was known as the "Big Woods," a landscape with rich soil covered with lakes and a mixed hardwood forest.

Before 1870, settlement patterns here were largely based on where the good potential farm land and water resources were located. Most of the initial hamlets and first platted village locations were at or near good water power sites. Mills were set up to grind wheat, corn, and other grains and to saw lumber.

The first influx of settlers in Meeker County was impeded somewhat by the Sioux Uprising of 1862 and the Civil War. There was rapid growth after 1865, however, and Collinwood Township was organized in 1866 as "New Virginia," reflecting the place of origin of many of the early settlers. Shortly thereafter the name was changed to Collinwood at the request of H. C. Bull from the state of New York who, together with D. E. Taylor and L. G. Pendergast, became the developer of Collinwood Village, which was platted in 1870.<sup>2</sup> These men bought out David Parks, the "pioneer merchant" at this location who had set up a sawmill, and by 1868 they had established a grist mill and general store, and had built homes on the north shore of Collinwood Lake. Other facilities

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District No. 48 School  
Meeker County, MN

put into operation over the next few years included a banking operation in one wing of Bull's house, a hotel, dance hall, saloon, blacksmith shop, post office and the Collinwood School.<sup>3</sup>

According to one account, the preferred route surveyed by the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad Co. (later the Great Northern and now the Burlington Northern) went through the Collinwood townsite, but a certain landowner in the area refused to grant rights of way.<sup>4</sup> Consequently the line was moved one mile north, and Litchfield, Dassel, Darwin, and Cokato became the centers of economic growth.

Lumber production plus flour and livestock feed milling remained important economic activities at the village site and at the south end of Collinwood Lake for several years after the village began its decline. But within 10 years Pendergast, Bull, and others had sold most of their local assets and moved on to more promising locations. Bull moved to Cokato where he established a bank and later served in the state legislature.

The advent of the railroad, then, marks the end of the first phase of settlement in Meeker County and the beginning of a second period of settlement and rapid growth of what are still the area's leading towns and cities. The railroad not only facilitated the movement of goods and people, but it was also directly responsible for a large influx of Swedish settlers, which was largely achieved by aggressively marketing its extensive land holdings in the area which it had been granted by the federal government.<sup>5</sup> Large segments of Meeker County, including Collinwood Township, are still characterized by a strong Swedish-American element.

After the boom period of railroad expansion and construction, farming became the mainstay of economic activity in Meeker County, and this maintained a stable population in rural areas which enabled many one-room schools, including Collinwood, to survive well beyond the middle years of the present century.

The history of rural education in Collinwood Township and Meeker County is part of a larger context which includes Minnesota and the Midwestern U.S. The material of this segment of American history includes federal land policy, local government, rural community, school curricula and buildings, and more. These elements must be reviewed and related to the Collinwood School to establish its significance in education.

The Land Ordinance of 1785, which set up the township system of land division for those areas of the continent which would be added to the original thir-

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District No. 48 School  
Meeker County, MN

teen-state Union, also stipulated that proceeds from the sale of section 16 in each township be set aside for school purposes. This allotment was doubled in 1848 to include section 36.

In Minnesota this money was put into a permanent fund to be invested in government bonds. By 1905 this fund had grown to over \$14,000,000, but a rather small proportion of the income went to the rural one-room schools.<sup>6</sup> Also known as "common" schools, these included grades one to eight or the ungraded equivalent. Public high schools were located in towns and cities, and many students in rural areas did not attend school beyond the eighth grade. The State high schools, university, teachers' colleges, and a variety of special schools (reform, for the blind, etc.) very soon were the main beneficiaries of this fund, which was later augmented by a portion of the Swamp Land monies, timber sales, and a tax on iron ore.<sup>7</sup> The rural schools in Minnesota and elsewhere got most of their funds from a local property tax and were permitted to levy special taxes for school construction. The rural school districts also raised additional funds by such means as the "basket social" and other events.<sup>8</sup>

The upper Midwestern states of Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota plus Nebraska and Kansas made provision for public education at or shortly after their admission to the Union. In his two books on rural education in this region. Wayne E. Fuller has demonstrated that there was a remarkable similarity in all aspects of rural education here, from how the school districts were organized and administered to what was taught, how, and by whom. This common pattern extends to the school buildings, their locations, and the facilities provided on the lot outside.<sup>9</sup>

While the states maintained some central control of these schools via superintendents of public instruction and the administration of the state school funds, one-room rural schools were locally run. In Minnesota -- and this pattern is by and large true in the rest of the region -- the school district was the smallest unit of government. Quite often there were several school districts in each township, since their number was based on population plus the consideration of how far children could be expected to walk to school.

In Minnesota, the 1851 Territorial Legislature authorized the county commissioners to divide the counties into school districts and levy a property tax for school purposes. Each school district was a legal corporation with an elected board of supervisors whose responsibilities covered all aspects of school operations including hiring teachers, asking bids on heating fuel, and so on. There was a further provision to establish "independent" districts in each township whenever the existing districts grew too large in population and

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District No. 48 School  
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when said proposed district contained ten or more families. The Territorial Legislature also established the office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.<sup>10</sup>

These provisions were amended and supplemented over the years, for example in 1877 by providing for county superintendents to oversee the districts and examine and license the teachers. Students at Collinwood and elsewhere clearly remember the annual visits of the county superintendent, since everyone had to be in best form. There was also considerable standardization of texts and subject matter in Minnesota's rural schools. The "Palmer Method" of penmanship training is well remembered by virtually all students in elementary schools until World War II at least. Another standard was the McGuffey Readers series.<sup>11</sup>

By the turn of the century a statewide school tax was added to what was collected and spent locally, a fund for helping schools purchase books was established, and summer schools for the teachers ("teacher institutes") were being regularly funded. By 1924 a compulsory school attendance law was in effect and a State Department of Education had been created (1919).<sup>12</sup>

In closing out this brief historical overview of rural education in Minnesota, we need to note that consolidation, which would eventually bring about an end to one-room country schools, was by 1905 already on the minds of education experts and high administrators. In 1911 the Minnesota Legislature passed the Holmberg Act which made the consolidation of rural districts possible by a vote of the people in the affected areas.<sup>13</sup>

In 1929 it was further provided that any county with less than seven school districts could by petition consolidate such districts into a single county district. In 1930 Lake County, which never had a large rural population, voted and became the first county school district in the state. And even though several schools continued to operate in the county, a concentration of administrative authority was accomplished. This became a key factor in the campaign to consolidate rural schools elsewhere in the state.

After about 1914, the development of motorized transportation and better roads had an impact as well, but mostly in those parts of the state with relatively low rural populations.

The arguments for consolidation as put forth by state and higher level educational authorities were both economic and pedagogical. More and better equipped facilities were promised, of course, but it was also claimed that more students in a school would be good for learning because of the increased

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competition. Fewer teachers would be needed for a given population. Better supervision of both teachers and students would be possible and the students could be graded and classified with ease. Transporting the students with wagons and buses would also improve attendance. And it would all cost less.<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, literacy rates during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries as gathered by the U.S. Census Bureau indicate that by 1890 states in the Midwest ("North Central Division" of the U.S.) had the lowest rates of illiteracy in the nation, a position that was maintained at least until 1930, after which this information was no longer gathered. And other tests devised later to measure the advantages of large consolidated schools failed to show what the experts had claimed in the way of educational benefits.<sup>15</sup>

Wayne Fuller concludes that Midwestern farm families resisted the closing of their one-room schools for several reasons, and not all were related to education per se. He suggests that farm families for the most part appreciated their necessary involvement in the many aspects of running their school and were afraid to have their children sent away to be schooled with strangers by teachers they didn't know and taxed for matters out of their control.<sup>16</sup>

Another important reason why the one-room school persisted so long in the upper Midwest was that it served as a community focus in providing space for various functions including voting, political rallies, Grange meetings, religious services, and more. Important social events at Collinwood included an annual Christmas program, basket socials, and a last-day-of-school celebration, all of which were typical all across the Midwest. But these comprehensive social functions of the schools were consistently ignored by education professionals in their relentless agitation for consolidation.

The reluctance to close the rural schools in Collinwood Township in spite of several large schools in nearby towns and cities reflects attitudes in the region as a whole. We have noted above that in 1941 there were still eight districts in the township, the same number as in 1900. Numbers of one-room schools had been slowly declining all across the north central U.S. at least since 1930, but in 1958 this region had the largest number in the nation. In Minnesota the number was somewhere between 1500 and 2000.<sup>17</sup> In the end it was the continuing decline in rural population numbers that put an end to these schools and this kind of education.

The regional similarity in patterns of school organization, funding, curriculum, and social function extends to the school building itself, which of course changed over the years in response to changing needs and educational philosophy. The very first public school buildings in the Midwest were often

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District No. 48 School  
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log or sod structures, depending on which material was locally available. Later these would be replaced by structures reflecting the materials and building types that were common then.

While there is no firm date of construction available for the Collinwood School, since District No. 48 was organized in January 1870, it is safe to assume that the existing structure was put up not long thereafter.<sup>18</sup> In all respects it represents the first common type of rural school building to emerge historically in the U.S. The single story, single classroom, rectangular, gable roof building with windows on the long sides was the most common type up to about 1910 in this part of the U.S., and the form was never totally abandoned as long as small rural schools were built. After about 1910 the various state departments of education across the Midwest began providing standard plans for the rural schools, and these reflected a variety of size needs, changes in educational philosophy, as well as standards of lighting, heat and sanitation.<sup>19</sup>

In Minnesota, standard plans date from 1917, and by the 1920s the most common rural school type being built was a squarish plan with hipped roof, columned porch, and a bank of windows on only one side of the building. This provided light from a single source coming in from the students' left side.<sup>20</sup> It was assumed that all students would write with the right hand.

While architects and educators had been publishing rural school plans and specifications since at least 1850, the Collinwood type school building is really a vernacular form whose features undoubtedly owe something to architects, but also to vernacular house and church forms and the balloon frame construction method.

In his first report to the Minnesota Legislative Assembly (1852), the Territory's first Superintendent of Public Instruction highly recommended "Bernard's School Architecture" for school plans.<sup>21</sup> Henry Bernard's publications were probably the earliest of the schoolhouse pattern books, followed during the course of the century by those of James Johonnot, T. M. Clark, Samuel Eveleth and others.

Bernard was the Public Schools Commissioner of Rhode Island, and the first edition of his pattern book came out in 1842. Several editions followed down to 1854, and the later editions had textbook and school equipment catalogs appended. Most of the plans are of schools that had been built, mostly in the New England states but also in Virginia and Michigan. There are several variations on the Collinwood type and size in the various editions, but none is strictly speaking a prototype.

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In general Bernard's plans include Greek Revival details, which suggest the hand of architects who, however, are seldom identified. Bernard's specifications include detailed floor plans and recommendations as to the school lot location, size, and relationship to the school building. They are not working drawings, but offer general dimensions and indicate how windows and doors are to be placed, and so on.

But the Collinwood plan represents a tradition predating Bernard's publications, as illustrated by the 1840 Hawks School built in Wapping, Massachusetts and now located in Historic Deerfield.<sup>22</sup> Thus it would seem that architects and ideal plan publishers started with a vernacular form and modified it according to the prevailing ideas of what would best serve and represent education.

Yet the Collinwood type school remained a vernacular form, and a builder's contract for the construction of a similar school in the township dating from 1887 makes this clear.<sup>23</sup> It also supports Fuller's contention that "Midwestern farmers drew their own plans and debated them at their school meetings."<sup>24</sup> The details of construction would be familiar to any farmer, who had probably built some or all of his own farm buildings. If guidelines were needed, one could always consult the county superintendent or visit existing schools.

The Collinwood School and its type elsewhere generally embody several features that had been recommended in sources like Bernard and that had become standard by 1870 or 1880. Bernard and others had recommended separate entrances for boys and girls, and in schools the size of Collinwood, for up to 60 students, the seats should be grouped in two rows on either side of a center aisle facing the teacher's position on a low platform at one end of the classroom. It was further advised that the school be placed on a large ( $\frac{1}{2}$  acre) lot planted with shade trees for outdoor play and physical education. The entrance should face the road and the school should be oriented east-west to permit light to enter from the north and south sides.<sup>25</sup> These features hold for Collinwood except that the lot is closer to one-third acre in size. The Collinwood School had segregated (boys-girls) privies located at each far corner of the lot.

Schools of this vintage were initially heated with wood or coal that was stored in a shed out back, often attached to the school building. The large heating stove would have been close to the center of the classroom, and this appliance and the whole process of getting it started each morning and keeping it going is a strong element in the recollection of students and teachers alike.<sup>26</sup>

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The Collinwood School was equipped with exterior window shutters and has a large attic window, a boxed cornice with returns, and a bell and belfry. These features made it more ornate than many of its type. Concerning the belfry and bell, Fuller has concluded that these were not so much functional devices as status symbols. Moreover, some schools had either a belfry or bell but not both because of the expense.<sup>27</sup> Fuller also suggests that the bell and belfry may have originated in those cases where the school and church shared one building, for which there is no evidence at Collinwood. However, many of the first schools in rural areas were parochial, and a religious element persisted in many public schools in the way of Christmas programs, prayers each day, and Christian reading matter used in lessons.<sup>28</sup>

Whether painted white or red, the Collinwood type school building has become an "American icon," which status dates to about 1870 in the eastern U.S. where at that time depopulation of the countryside was well underway.<sup>29</sup> It is this fact more than any other which has made the one-room school an icon standing for a vanished way of life, and in the Midwest this meaning was to come somewhat later, when the same trend in population decline set in here.

Concerning the teachers in the one-room schools of rural America, it was Midwestern folk wisdom that, "the teacher made the school."<sup>30</sup> These were mostly single women who lived in the area, and many had attended the same schools where they taught. They may have only just received their diploma, and in group photos of "scholars" and their teacher it is, as at Collinwood, often difficult to locate the teacher among the teenage boys and girls. Early on men were evenly matched with women in numbers, but by 1870 the balance had already moved in favor of women, who virtually monopolized the field by 1900 in the Midwest.<sup>31</sup>

With eight grades and up to 40 or more students in a single room plus the fact that some of them may have been older than the teacher, it seems clear that without community support teachers would have faced an impossible task. And this included backup at home for the teachers faced with disciplinary problems. At Collinwood the number was manageable (15 to 30 over the years) and some of the teachers were quite popular since their contracts were renewed for several years running. As two alumni expressed it, "Collinwood was a friendly school (with) no discord whatever between families." Moreover, "We had good teachers in the rural schools, and we learned how to read, write, spell, etc. There were no special activities to take up our time."<sup>32</sup>

Teachers were licensed by the county superintendents and had little or no formal training beyond the eighth grade or high school, but as products of the one-room school themselves they would have had ample opportunity to discover

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any innate talent for or interest in teaching, since it was quite common for older students to help their younger colleagues with lessons. Fuller contends that these strongly motivated young women learned what they needed on their own, on the job, and in the annual teachers' institutes held in each county, and not in the state normal schools set up explicitly to teach teachers to teach.<sup>33</sup>

Summary

The Collinwood School is the remnant of a typical early settlement village whose future was eclipsed when the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad came through Meeker County. It also represents rural education in Minnesota between 1870 and 1946. The eight-grade curriculum which was taught by one person in a single classroom was the most widespread means of educating children in the basic subjects of mathematics, reading, and writing during this period. In spite of the negative views of administrative and academic professionals over the years, Collinwood and other one-room schools have been praised by former students as having provided a very adequate and often exciting learning experience, which is an assessment reflected in literacy rates. This success and a fairly stable rural population through the period of the Second World War sustained the Collinwood School long after the demise of Collinwood Village.

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<sup>1</sup>Figures for Collinwood Township provided by James Ostlund, Supervisor. Paula Nelson, Director of the Meeker County Historical Society, suggests that most of the original rural schools in the county have been demolished or moved and converted to other uses.

<sup>2</sup>The original Collinwood Village plat is on file in the Meeker County Recorder's Office. Historical data on Meeker County, Collinwood Township, and the Collinwood townsite is in Meeker County Memories, Lamson (1937, 1949), the 1888 County history, "A Short History of Meeker County" in the SHPO file, and the W.P.A. Inventory of County Archives in Minnesota (Meeker County).

<sup>3</sup>See the 1869 photo of Collinwood Village in Lamson, 1937, p. 10. The quotation is from the 1888 Meeker County history, p. 580.

<sup>4</sup>Lamson, 1940, p. 63.

<sup>5</sup>Nordstrom, p. 20.

<sup>6</sup>Kiehle, pp. 358-359.

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<sup>7</sup>ibid., p. 395. Burnquist, p. 11.

<sup>8</sup>The basket social was an event that students from in and out of the district could attend and where the boys would offer cash bids on lunch baskets prepared by the girls. The successful bidder would get to share lunch with its maker and perhaps also be permitted to walk her home after the event, according to Ralph Peterson, a former Collinwood student who now lives in Cokato, MN.

<sup>9</sup>See the Bibliography for publication data. Much of the general contextual material included here is based on Fuller's research.

<sup>10</sup>Kiehle, p. 357.

<sup>11</sup>Fuller, 1982, pp. 16-17. This and most of the other information on attending school at Collinwood is from former students Ralph Peterson and Melba Anderson. Mrs. Anderson also taught in a one-room school.

<sup>12</sup>Kiehle, p. 363. Burnquist, p. 16.

<sup>13</sup>ibid., Fuller, 1994, p. 79.

<sup>14</sup>Fuller (1982) in Chapter 11 gives a full discussion of the consolidation issue.

<sup>15</sup>Fuller, 1994, p. 77. Fuller, 1982, pp. 240-244.

<sup>16</sup>As in note 14 above. See also Fuller (1994), pp. 98-100.

<sup>17</sup>ibid., Tables 11.1 and 11.2.

<sup>18</sup>Title to the school lot was granted by L. G. Pendergast on June 1, 1870. Meeker County Book N of Deeds, p. 32.

The statement by Frank Lamson in both his publications that a two-story building was the first District 48 school is apparently erroneous. This idea was also reiterated by Lyndon Nelson in Meeker County Memories. A thorough examination of the existing property offers no basis for this contention. The records of the District No. 48 School Board have not been located.

<sup>19</sup>Fuller, 1982, p. 79.

<sup>20</sup>Gulliford, pp. 192-194.

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<sup>21</sup>Neill, p. 568.

<sup>22</sup>Heath, p. 212.

<sup>23</sup>Minnesota State Archive. Meeker County Superintendent of Schools Miscellaneous Records (115.I.16.2.F). The contract for District 77 (Lake Jennie) calls for an 18 by 30 by 12 foot wood frame single story building with three windows on each long side to be equipped with hinged shutters. A "Skuttle hole" into the attic at one end of the entry (anteroom?) is the only reference to the internal layout. Most details in the contract refer to the kind of lumber, interior finished surfaces, flooring, and paint, in other words the level of quality in construction. The amount to be paid upon completion is \$445.00.

<sup>24</sup>Fuller, 1994, p. 14.

<sup>25</sup>Fuller, 1982, p. 72.

<sup>26</sup>ibid., p. 21. Noted also by Peterson and Anderson.

<sup>27</sup>Fuller, 1994, pp. 15, 21-22.

<sup>28</sup>This can be found in the teachers' reports on file in the Meeker County archival holdings cited in Note 23 above and was reported by Melba Anderson as well.

<sup>29</sup>Schroeder. Hartford.

<sup>30</sup>Fuller, 1994, p. 58.

<sup>31</sup>Fuller, 1982, pp. 159-160.

<sup>32</sup>Quotes from personal correspondence with Melba Anderson. The student numbers for Collinwood were corroborated by Ralph Peterson and a random check of attendance reports in the State Archive for District No. 48 and others in Meeker County. Other than these incomplete attendance records which were submitted by each district to the county superintendent, there is almost no other material for Collinwood in the Archive. The single additional piece of useful documentation is a historical photo of the school, teacher and pupils from about 1900.

<sup>33</sup>On the education of teachers, see Fuller, 1982, Chapter 9 and pp. 163-180.

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**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The nominated property occupies Lot Five of Block Six, Collinwood Plat, Meeker  
County, Minnesota.

**VERBAL BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The boundary includes the entire lot that has historically been associated  
with the property.