

Training Schools

Beginning in 1882, and continuing until today, Western Oregon University has held the distinction as Oregon's premier school for teacher education. While this has not changed for one hundred and fifty years, the way in which potential teachers are educated has.



Photograph taken between 1896 and 1897 of the original training school located on the WOU campus. Campbell Hall, with the original bell tower, is located in the background.

Today's WOU student teachers spend a large percentage of their time observing and teaching in local area schools. These schools are run by individual school districts and student teachers are overseen by WOU faculty. In the past, however, this was not the case.

From 1898 until 1986, Western Oregon University itself ran a number of schools. These "training schools" had three essential goals: 1) to provide an education to area children; 2) to give the students of the college an opportunity to sharpen their teaching skills before beginning their teaching careers; and 3) to help solve the shortage of teachers available in rural areas of Oregon.

These training schools may be broken down into two categories. One group consists of the schools near the WOU campus, including Monmouth Training School/Campus Elementary and the Independence Training School. The others, most often referred to as "Rural Centers," consist of all the schools that are located outside the Monmouth/Independence area, including: Elkins Rural Center; Oak Point Rural Center; Greenwood Rural Center; Eola Rural Center; Mountain View Rural Center; Rickreall Rural Center; the Children's Farm Home; Valsetz Rural Center; Falls City Rural Center; and Fair Play Rural Center.

Training Schools Near the WOU Campus

Monmouth High School and Elementary (built in 1911 on the northeast corner of Knox and Powell) was used by Western Oregon University as a training school until 1915. At this time, the building presently known as the ITC was erected. The elementary students were moved to the new building, known at the time as the Campus Elementary, while the high schools students remained at the older building. In 1950, Monmouth and Independence school districts merged and the high school students were then relocated to Central High School with the grade school students remaining at the Campus Elementary. Independence, which agreed to become a training school in 1917, was dropped in 1957.



Independence Elementary and High School



Campus Elementary, known today as the ITC building.

Rural Training Schools



Elkins Rural Center was built in close proximity to a rail line running through Airlie and Monmouth. This rural center, near the town of Airlie, was added to Western Oregon University in 1912 and was dropped sometime around 1929-1930 when the Southern Pacific Rail Road abandoned the line. Like many of the rural centers, it consisted of a two room school run by five student teachers and one “critic teacher” in charge of overseeing the student teachers.

Oak Point Rural Center was located north of Independence near the intersection of Greenwood road and the Independence highway. This one room school house was incorporated as a rural center in 1917 and dropped in 1934.

Near Oak Point on Greenwood road was the Greenwood Rural Center (no photo available at this time). This building, like the one at Oak Point, was a single room school house. Greenwood was made a rural center in 1927 and dropped in 1936.



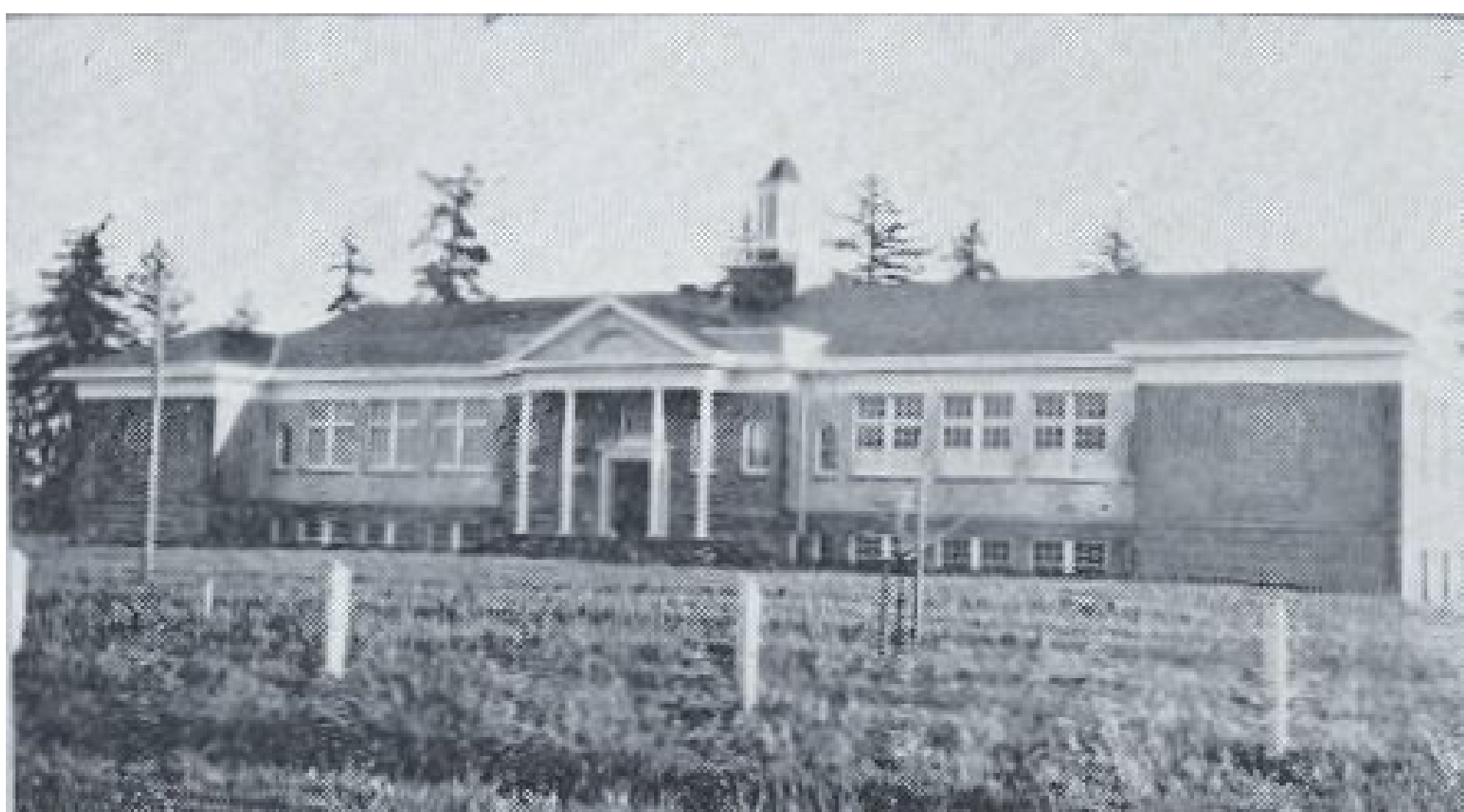
The Eola Rural Center was located northeast of Oak Point and Greenwood Rural Centers, in the hills just above the Willamette River. This one room schoolhouse was incorporated in 1921 and dropped in 1927.

Rural Training Schools



Mountain View Rural Center was located five miles north of Corvallis. This multi-room school house was added in 1918 and dropped in 1927.

The Rickreall Rural Center is one of two (along with the ITC building on the WOU campus) rural centers that are still standing; the building is currently used by the Rickreall Grange. At the time of construction, it was considered to be a model school building with running water and electricity in every classroom. The rural center was added in 1923 and dropped sometime between 1936 and 1940.



The Children's Farm Home was located just north of Corvallis, Oregon, with classrooms staffed by students from the Oregon Normal School (currently WOU). In addition to their studies, the children living at the institution were also required to work on the farm as a way to fund the home. The Children's Farm Home was added around 1924 and was dropped in 1931.

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The Valsetz Rural Center was located in the now extinct town of Valsetz, Oregon, fifteen miles west of Falls City in the mountains of the coast range. The Valsetz Rural Center was included in 1927 and dropped in 1932.



Falls City Rural Center was added as a rural center in 1925 and later dropped three years later in 1928.



Fair Play Rural Center was added between 1925 and 1926 and was later dropped in 1930. Little is known about this rural center and currently the location of the school is unknown.



These training schools and rural centers helped shape the way in which students at WOU received their education. They established early on that the best way for an aspiring teacher to acquire necessary classroom management skills is through first hand experience. While most of these buildings are gone, their legacy continues on in WOU's current teacher education students.