Presumably, the school depicted above was a likely candidate for consolidation of the type advocated by State Superintendent Frank Nelson. In 1901 Thomas County had a population of just over four thousand inhabitants, and Colby, the county seat, had about six hundred residents. It contained eighty organized school districts for a school-age population of sixteen hundred, with actual enrollment reported at thirteen hundred and average daily attendance under nine hundred. The students were educated by eighty-one teachers—twenty-three men and fifty-eight women. The former averaged thirty-seven dollars per month, the latter thirty-four, but this was not on a twelve-month contract. The average school term in Thomas County that year was just twenty-five weeks.

In most respects, statistically speaking, Thomas County schools appear to have been quite typical for Kansas at the beginning of the twentieth century. As mentioned above, however, the contrast between east and west, rural and urban was coming into focus, and as the century unfolded the disparity image took on greater and greater clarity. The seemingly endless quest for an equitable, efficient, and effective system of public education was under way.
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