

A PROPOSED PLAN FOR THE CONSOLIDATION OF
THE HIGH SCHOOLS IN POTTAWATOMIE
COUNTY

by

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STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

It is the purpose of this investigation: (1) to study the situation as it exists in Pottawatomie County that would indicate that there was a need for reorganization; (2) to review some of the literature pertinent to consolidation of schools; (3) to develop criteria on which to base a proposal for a consolidation; and (4) to propose a plan for consolidation of High Schools in Pottawatomie County based on these criteria which would result in improved educational opportunities for the county's high school students of the future.

THE EXISTING SITUATION

There are in Pottawatomie County 12 high schools which took care of 760 students in the 1951-52 school year, this would have been an average of 63.3 students per school; yet 434 of these students were found in three of the schools averaging 144.6 students per school, while the remaining 326 students were divided among the other nine high schools for an average of 36 students per school. Actually six of the nine schools had less than the 36 average.

The six schools with the smallest enrollment employ three teachers in four of the systems, four in one of the systems and four and one-half teachers in the other one.

This of necessity limits the program of subjects that they may offer to their students, and it means that the teachers all have to teach in two or more subject fields.

In the larger systems employing five or more teachers an enriched curriculum is offered. The students in those schools have an opportunity to enjoy broader educational experiences than it is possible for the smaller schools to offer their students. The smaller schools have a high operating cost per pupil, an excessive burden is placed on the taxpayers, and many pupils do not have the educational opportunities which the amount expended ought to provide.

The population of Pottawatomie County is 12,551, with 6,129 of this number of people living in the six southern townships comprising about one fourth of the land area of the entire county. This area is served by three of the twelve high schools of the county and the total enrollment for these three schools in 1951-52 was 389, or over one half of the school students of the county. The northern three fourths of the county had nine high schools to take care of the other 371 pupils. Thirty and one-half teachers were employed by the three schools in the south one-fourth of the county. Thirty-seven and one-half teachers were employed by the nine schools in the north three-fourths of the county.

A comparison of the cost of school operation on the basis of per pupil cost in the 12 high schools of Pottawatomie County during 1949-50 and 1950-51 is made in Table 1. A study of this table reveals that the schools with the low enrollment have a higher operating cost per pupil than do the schools with the higher enrollments. This table reveals, that an increase in enrollment tends to lower the per pupil cost, while a decrease in enrollment tends to increase the per pupil cost of the individual school. In the case of Westmoreland the sharp rise in per pupil cost, without the change in enrollment, was caused by the addition of transportation to their budget with the additional expense of new busses, drivers salaries and general operating expense.

The fact that there were two small schools with a low per pupil cost, Flush and Blaine, was due to the fact that they are able to employ their teachers at a much lower salary than the other schools in the county. These two communities are predominately Catholic and they employ Catholic Nuns as teachers in their schools.

Wamego with an enrollment of 241 in 1950-51 had the lowest per pupil cost of any of the other schools in the county with the exception of the two schools just noted.

Olsburg had the lowest enrollment in 1950-51 and the highest per pupil cost.

Table 1. Pottawatomie County High School enrollment, and per pupil cost on enrollment for the school years 1949-50 and 1950-51.

School	1949-50 Enrollment	1950-51 Enrollment	1949-50 Per pupil cost	1950-51 Per pupil cost
Fostoria	17	18	551.63	545.20
Olsburg	24	15	444.56	705.51
Westmoreland	54	55	414.35	505.10
St. George	44	58	375.00	362.00
Onaga	86	95	479.97	403.95
Blaine	22	24	279.14	270.31
Wamego	246	241	324.90	312.62
St. Marys	115	98	296.51	389.21
Havensville	57	59	347.09	397.25
Emmett	35	40	529.66	477.64
Wheaton	26	29	400.03	356.67
Flush	29	32	309.59	297.37

Pottawatomie County has about 97 square miles of land that is not a part of any high school district.

Public opinion in the districts losing their high schools through a reorganization plan would have to undergo a change before progress in consolidation could be made. There are certain religious and other sociological obstacles that would be a threat to the success of a proposed consolidation program without adequate preparation being made to put the constituents in a receptive frame of mind.

It would seem that a more advantageous system could be worked out in Pottawatomie county by consolidating the small schools with schools already established that have the facilities for carrying a larger enrollment. This would necessitate the addition of transportation facilities to take the pupils the greater distances it would be necessary for them to travel to and from high school. Some of the present roads are not suitable for bus transportation, as many of the roads which would have to be used are not all-weather roads.

Figure 1, a map of Pottawatomie County shows the present high school district boundaries, the location of the 12 high schools in operation in the county, the all-weather roads in the county at this time and the territory that is not a part of any high school district. A study of this map reveals

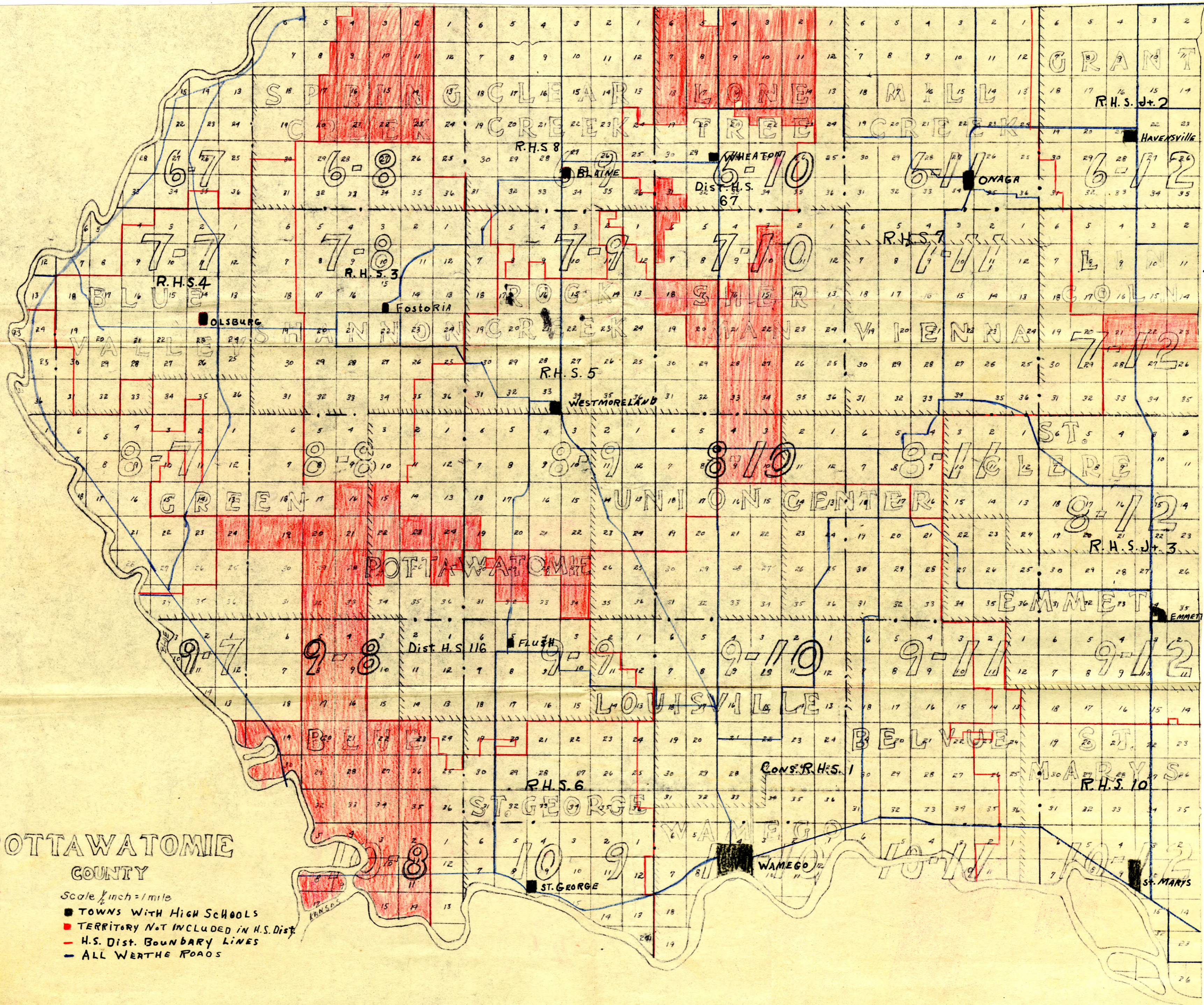


Fig. 1. A map of Pottawatomie County.

CHAMPION
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6X9

POTTAWATOMIE COUNTY

- Scale 1/2 inch = 1 mile
- TOWNS WITH HIGH SCHOOLS
 - TERRITORY NOT INCLUDED IN H.S. DIST.
 - H.S. DIST. BOUNDARY LINES
 - ALL WETHE ROADS



that the present high school districts vary in size and that each high school district has a town of some kind near the center of the district. In the three south school districts the schools are in the population centers rather than the geographical centers. The map shows that there are about 97 sections of land not included in any high school district. This map also indicates a lack of sufficient all-weather roads.

PROCEDURE

The problem of consolidation is not a new one, it has been with us since the advent of modern transportation. Some of the previous graduate students of Kansas State College of Agriculture and Applied Science have worked on the problem of consolidation for their Master's theses or reports. Much has been written in the educational journals on the subject of consolidation. In fact a review of all literature bearing on this one problem, consolidation of schools, would be a major task.

The chance to talk to schoolmen on the subject of consolidation, and particularly consolidation in Pottawatomie County, was taken at every opportunity, and their opinions on the subject have been used in helping to formulate this report. The majority of schoolmen talked to, have expressed the opinion that a program of consolidation should be started

because it was felt by them that it was only a matter of a short time until consolidation would be a necessity.

Some of the theses prepared by educators in Kansas were reviewed, and reading was done in contemporary journals of education and textbooks containing material related to the problem. The records of the high schools in Pottawatomie County on file at the County Superintendents office were gone over for material that would be helpful in solving this problem. The materials gathered have been helpful in the study and will be referred to from time to time.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The desirability of a comprehensive reorganization of high school districts in Pottawatomie County has been recognized for several years by the educators concerned with that county. In the review of current literature dealing with consolidation in general, an attempt has been made to study selections that would have a direct bearing on the existing problem in Pottawatomie county as expressed by the educators and school patrons with whom the problem has been discussed. In these discussions it was not uncommon to have questions raised concerning this study. Some of the questions that came up were: Why should we consolidate, how will we benefit from a consolidation, what communities are going to have to give up their schools, how many schools will the new consolidation plan contain, and how will our children get to school. The first two questions are closely related,

and probably could be answered simply by saying that consolidation would result in better schools. An example of improved schools through consolidation may be found in Illinois:

Educational change has come to the schools of Illinois through a wisely planned and vigorously implemented program of school reorganization. Citizens within communities, educators and boards of education aided by permissive legislation, have worked toward the end of improving, adopting and extending the educational services to all children. The picture is much brighter as plans materialize for a program of continuous improvement. (7, p. 669)

It would seem from this that Illinois has found their schools reaching out to more of the children with an improved program.

Charles D. Lewis in his book The Rural Community and its Schools, stated other reasons why rural communities should consolidate:

Consolidation brings many advantages to rural communities. The advantage may be summarized by saying that consolidation makes possible a broad curriculum, excellent teaching and a rich social life within the school. Local interests should not be permitted to determine the location of consolidated schools. When the county is the local unit of school control, a careful survey should be made to determine the points where schools can be located to best serve all of the people of the county. In states where district or township organizations are units of school control, care should be taken to form school unions about natural community centers already determined by business centralization or near interesting points of main highways. The chief hindrances to consolidation are community jealousies and rivalries, poor roads, natural barriers, and public indifference. (16, p. 197)

Mr. Lewis brings us the answer not only to why we consolidate, but also the advantages to be gained from consolidation, and some points to consider in the location of the consolidated school. He also points out reasons why consolidation has taken place so slowly.

G. S. Ivory tells of yet another way in which consolidation has been of benefit, that of developing community interest.

A community unknown at the time of consolidation has grown around the school--a new, spirited community sensitive to the influence of the school and enriched because of these influences. This school is truly a powerful force in the democratic life of the community it serves. A monument to the years of hard work of the leaders of the district. (11, p. 133)

In our local communities in Pottawatomie County there is a need for this community interest. This need can not be met by a school that is so small it has a hard time to keep alive.

The Kansas Legislative Council in its study of Kansas schools, found that the large number of schools and the small enrollment per unit was wasteful.

The number of school districts in Kansas is greatly out of proportion to the number of pupils. The result is that Kansas schools have a relatively high operating cost per pupil. The large number of units and small enrollments per unit have been the basis for recent findings that the Kansas system is one of the most wasteful in the country. It places an excessive burden on the taxpayer and at the same time fails to provide the best type of school for the pupils. The lack of organization during recent years in Kansas has been

due probably to two principal factors, unfavorable public opinion and inadequate legislation. (14, p. 2)

This study points out the fact that small schools besides being wasteful, fail to provide the best type of school for the pupil, and also gives some of the reasons why we do not have any more consolidations than we have. These reasons for not consolidating keep recurring throughout the writings and they seem to fall in the same general pattern.

Studies revealed that the chief deterrents to consolidation were (a) the lack of public recognition of the urgent need for improvement in the school district system, (b) the failure of the laws to fix the responsibility for preparing school district improvement plans for submission to the people, and (c) the unwillingness of residents of local districts to vote for consolidation proposals, an unwillingness often grounded on sentiment or on a desire to retain some financial advantage inherent in the existing situation. (6, p. 348)

The Educational Policies Commission devoted Chapter III of a 416 page work on education for all American youth to describing a school set-up in a rural area in which several communities banded together to form a new high school to care for the educational needs of all the youth of the combined communities in a program that gave them an educational experience which would have been impossible in the several small systems in existence before the reorganization movement began.

CRITERIA

The following criteria are adaptations of standards recommended by: 1952 revision of the Second Progress Report

of the Education Planning Commission, called Source Book for the Schools of Tomorrow for Kansas; (15) Reeder's, The Fundamentals of Public School Administration; (19) Moehlman's, School Administration; (18) and, Dawson's, The Organization and Financing of Rural Schools; (5) and are adopted to the situation as it would seem to apply to schools in Pottawatomie County.

1. The size of the high school attendance unit will depend on the density of population and facilities for transportation, but should be large enough to provide opportunities for a varied and complete program, adequate staff and opportunities for socialized experience of pupils. A high school with fewer than 100 pupils has scant possibility of offering such a curriculum and offering an adequate educational program. To provide this type of program at a reasonable per pupil cost an enrollment of 200 to 250 is considered the minimum.

2. Schools should be located in relatively permanent centers of population as near the center of the maximum number of children and adults as possible on the most suitable sites available. Every high school pupil who lives an undue distance from school should be provided safe comfortable transportation to and from school at public expense. No pupil should have to spend more than one and one-half hours on the bus going to or coming from school.

3. An adequate program of finance should be adopted, preferably on a county wide basis, and funds distributed to the schools on the basis of children to be educated. It would be desirable to have substantial state and federal support from sources other than the general property tax. All property in the county should be included in a high school district. Present costs of education in Pottawatomie County indicate that the budget should be set up so that any district would not be providing less than \$312.00 per pupil which is approximately the amount being spent by Wamego on a per pupil basis.

4. The curriculum of the high schools in Pottawatomie County should be well rounded and determined by the needs of the students. Since this is primarily an agricultural community, agricultural and homemaking occupations should have a relatively high place in the curriculum together with mechanical and commercial subjects. An opportunity to take the subjects required for college entrance should be given for those who plan to go to college. Social studies should be a part of the curriculum giving the student a background for our democracy, ideals and principals of democracy, community work, civic projects, consumer education and current political economic and social problems. The curriculum should develop personal interests and aptitudes through family life,

health, mental hygiene, physical education, leisure and recreational interests, music, art, literature, science and an understanding of the cultural heritage. The program should include a student interest-centered program of extra curricular activities planned as an integral part of the whole work of the school.

5. The teaching staff for these high schools should include sufficient teachers to provide a minimum of one instructor for each twenty-five pupils exclusive of administrative officers. Each teacher should teach only in his or her subject field. The teaching load should consist of not more than four class periods per day and not more than one extra curricular activity. The staff members should be selected on the basis of preparation and qualifications. No partisan political, religious, or other interest should determine the selection.

6. The educational program in Pottawatomie County should not be forced to fit a physical plant but the plant should be designed and equipped to enable the school to carry out its carefully determined program. If it can be demonstrated that in the long run the abandonment of usable school houses will be more economical, the existing buildings should be abandoned without regard to their present condition, and new buildings on new locations provided.

These criteria for the high schools of Pottawatomie County were set up in the belief that they would tend to improve and equalize the opportunities for education for all the youth of the county. The first criterion states that a high school with less than 100 pupils has scant possibility of providing opportunities for a varied and complete program, adequate staff, and opportunities for socialized experience of pupils.

A study of Table 2, reveals that of the 12 high schools in Pottawatomie County only one, Wamego, reaches the standard of enrollment where the type of program recommended can be put into effect on a reasonable per pupil cost basis. Two schools, Onaga and St. Marys, reach the minimum standard of enrollment, while the other nine schools fall below the minimum, Fostoria, Olsburg, Blaine, Emmett, Wheaton, and Flush fall far below the minimum. It would not be possible to do much with the rest of the criteria for the county high schools until this first one is met. On this basis, it is proposed that a consolidation program be set up in which districts with low enrollments be consolidated with other districts where possible to bring the enrollment up to at least the minimum figure. The consolidations proposed would be regulated by transportation limitations, natural community and population centers, and existing facilities.

Table 2.. High Schools of Pottawatomie County showing Enrollment, enrollment capacity, and building conditions.

School	Enrollment	Enrollment capacity	Condition of building
Fostoria	21	40	poor
Olsburg	18	40	fair
Westmoreland	61	100	good
St. George	59	75	fair
Onaga	97	200	very good
Blaine	23	40	poor
Wamego	229	325	very good
Havensville	59	120	very good
Emmett	35	50	poor
St. Marys	101	200	very good
Wheaton	30	40	poor
Flush	35	50	fair

PROPOSED PLAN OF CONSOLIDATION

The total enrollment of Pottawatomie County High Schools for the past year was 767, this figure divided by 200, the minimum school enrollment at which a school can start to operate on a reasonable per pupil cost basis, would indicate that Pottawatomie County should be operating less than four high schools. Travel distance and road conditions enter the picture however and make it necessary to recommend the consolidation on a basis of four schools located as near their permanent population centers as possible. These four main centers of population are: Westmoreland, the county seat; Onaga, a trading center for the northeast corner of the county; St. Marys, a trading center for the southeast corner of the county; and Wamego, the largest city in the county on the south border of the county. Table 3 shows that even with the number of schools reduced to four we will still have three of the schools with an enrollment of less than the desired minimum of 200. The schools of increased size however do offer a chance to better meet the criteria for more teachers, richer programs and a more diversified extra curricular activity program. The schools that are recommended for the absorption of the other schools (Table 3) are the schools that today are offering the richest programs to their students and are also the schools employing the

most full time teachers (Table 4). The four schools, it is also shown in Table 4, are the only schools in the county having a Class A rating from the state Department of Education. The four schools recommended for consolidation centers include in their curriculums the most complete programs of agriculture, shop, and home economics courses and the most complete college preparatory courses. It would probably be necessary for all of them to add teachers to their staffs and additional classes in some of the courses offered to meet the increased enrollment. Westmoreland in particular would have to add to the present school plant or take this as an opportunity to provide a new plant better fitted to the needs of the present day educational program.

All land in the county not at the present included in any high school district should be included in the consolidation program. Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4 are maps of the four proposed consolidation districts for Pottawatomie County and on these maps is shown the proposed division of land not included in any high school district among the new consolidated districts. These maps show the old district boundary lines and the new boundary lines are shown by the heavy outline around the entire area of the new district. The present all-weather roads are shown on these maps and a brief

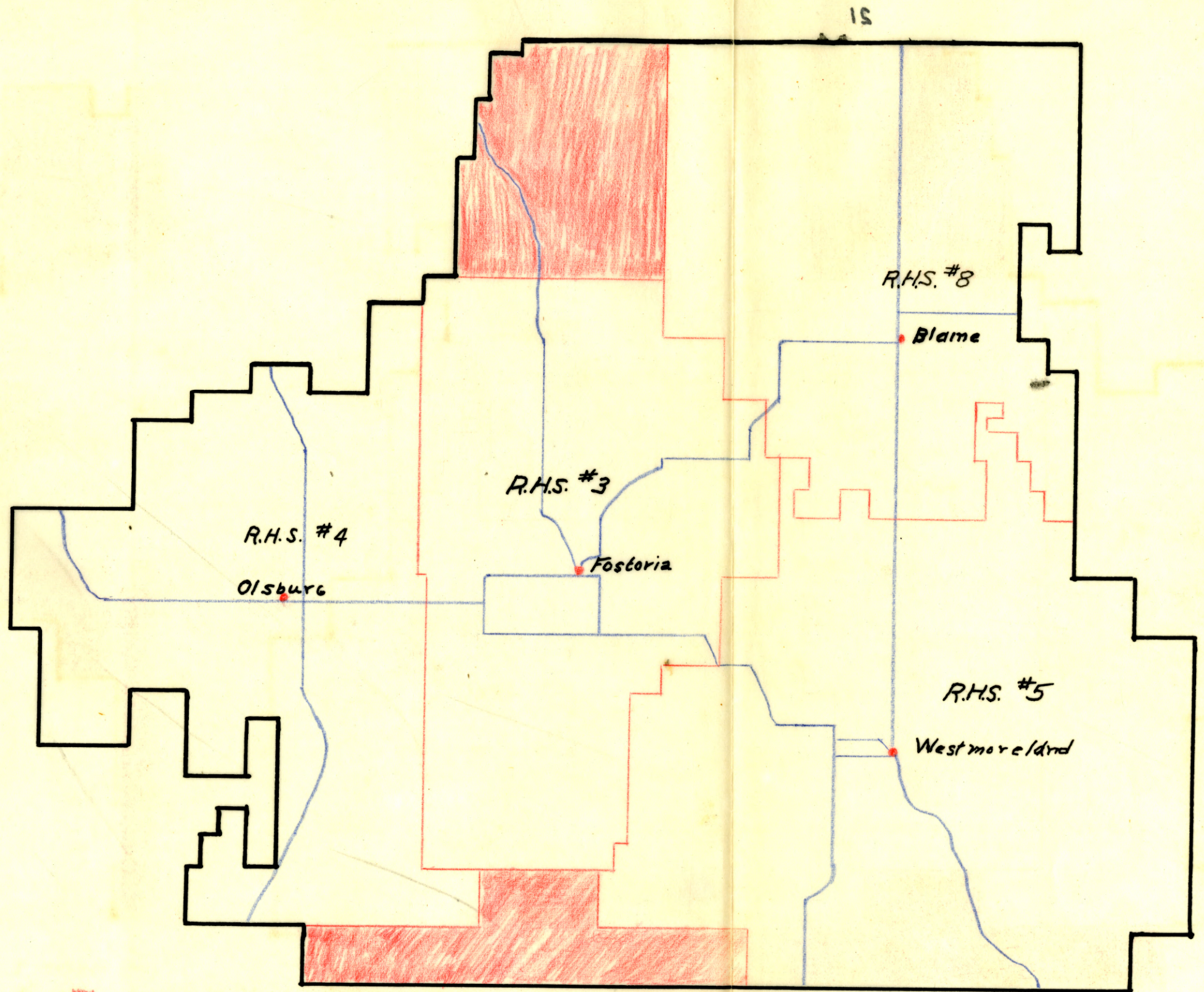
Table 3. Proposed Consolidation of Pottawatomie County High Schools showing probable enrollment, condition and capacity of receiving school.

Consolidated: schools	Dist. No. :	Enrollment :	Enrollment: : capacity :	Condition of building at present
Fostoria	3			
Olsburg	4			
Blaine	8			
Westmoreland	5	123	100	good
Wheaton	67			
Havensville	J + 2			
Onaga	7	186	200	very good
Emmett	J + 3			
St. Marys	J + 10	136	200	very good
Flush	116			
St. George	6			
Wamego	1	323	325	very good

Table 4. Pottawatomie County High Schools, the number of teachers employed and present state classification.

School	Number of subjects offered	Number of teachers employed	Classification
Fostoria	15	3	M
Olsburg	14	3	C
Westmoreland	23	5	A
St. George	20	4.5	B
Onaga	34	8	A
Blaine	13	3	M
Wamego	41	16	A
Havensville	18	4	B
Emmett	21	4.5	C
St. Marys	32	10	A
Wheaton	14	3	M
Flush	14	4	C

FIG 2: MAP OF PROPOSED CONSOLIDATED DISTRICT No. 1

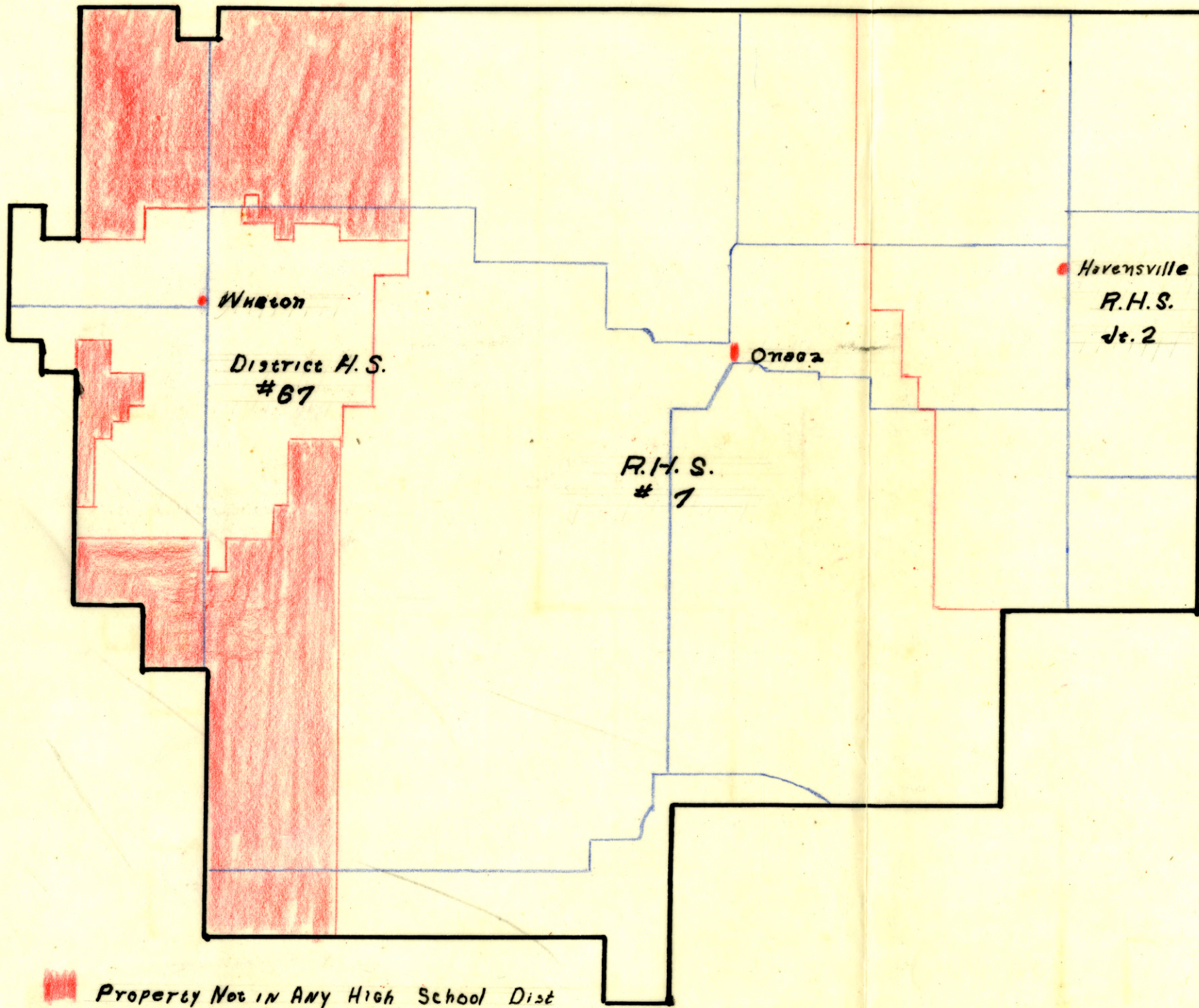


- Property Not in H.S. Dist.
- Old Boundary Line
- Proposed Boundary Line
- All Weather Roads

Fig. 3. MAP of Proposed Consolidated

District 2

SS



- Property Not in Any High School Dist
- District Boundary Line
- Proposed Boundary Line
- All Weather Roads

FIG. 4: MAP OF PROPOSED
CONSOLIDATED
DISTRICT 3

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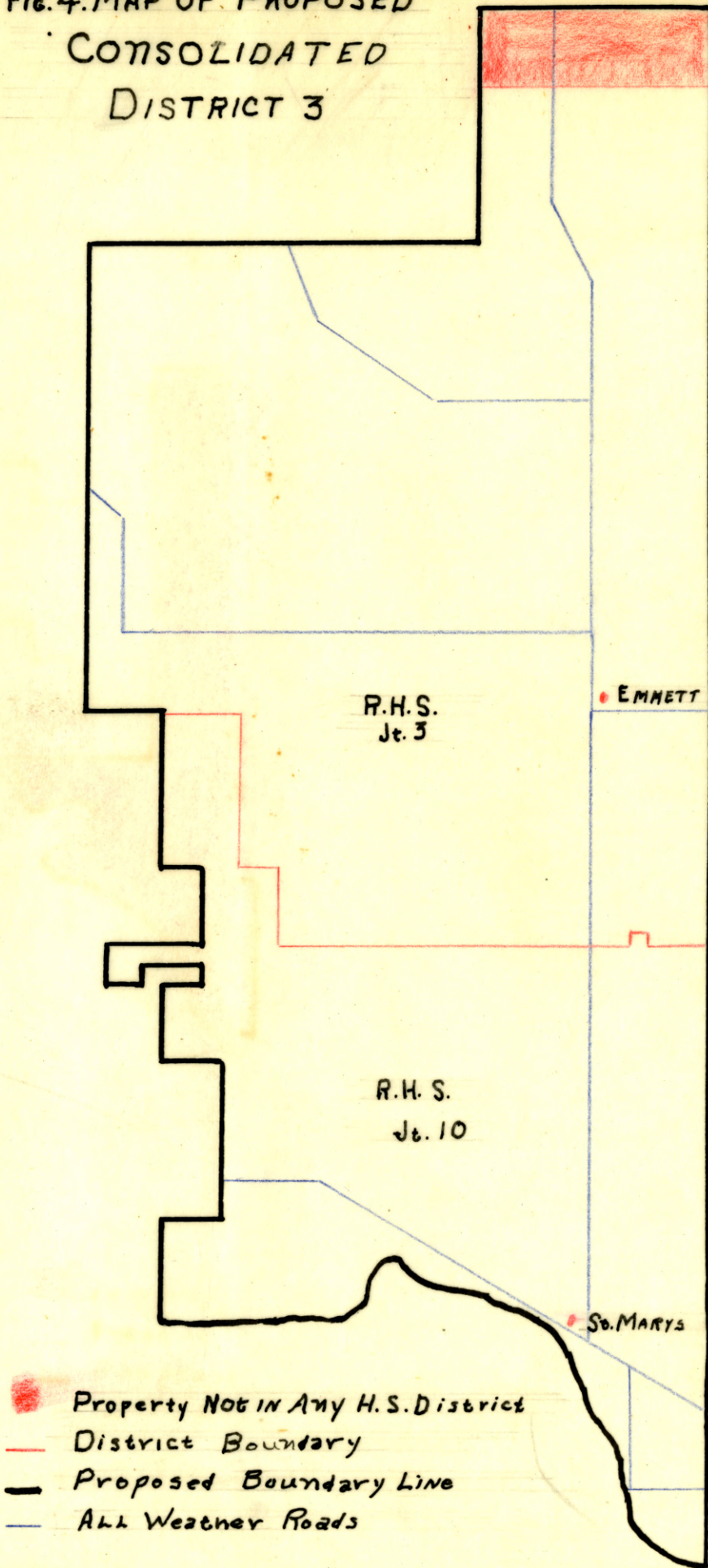
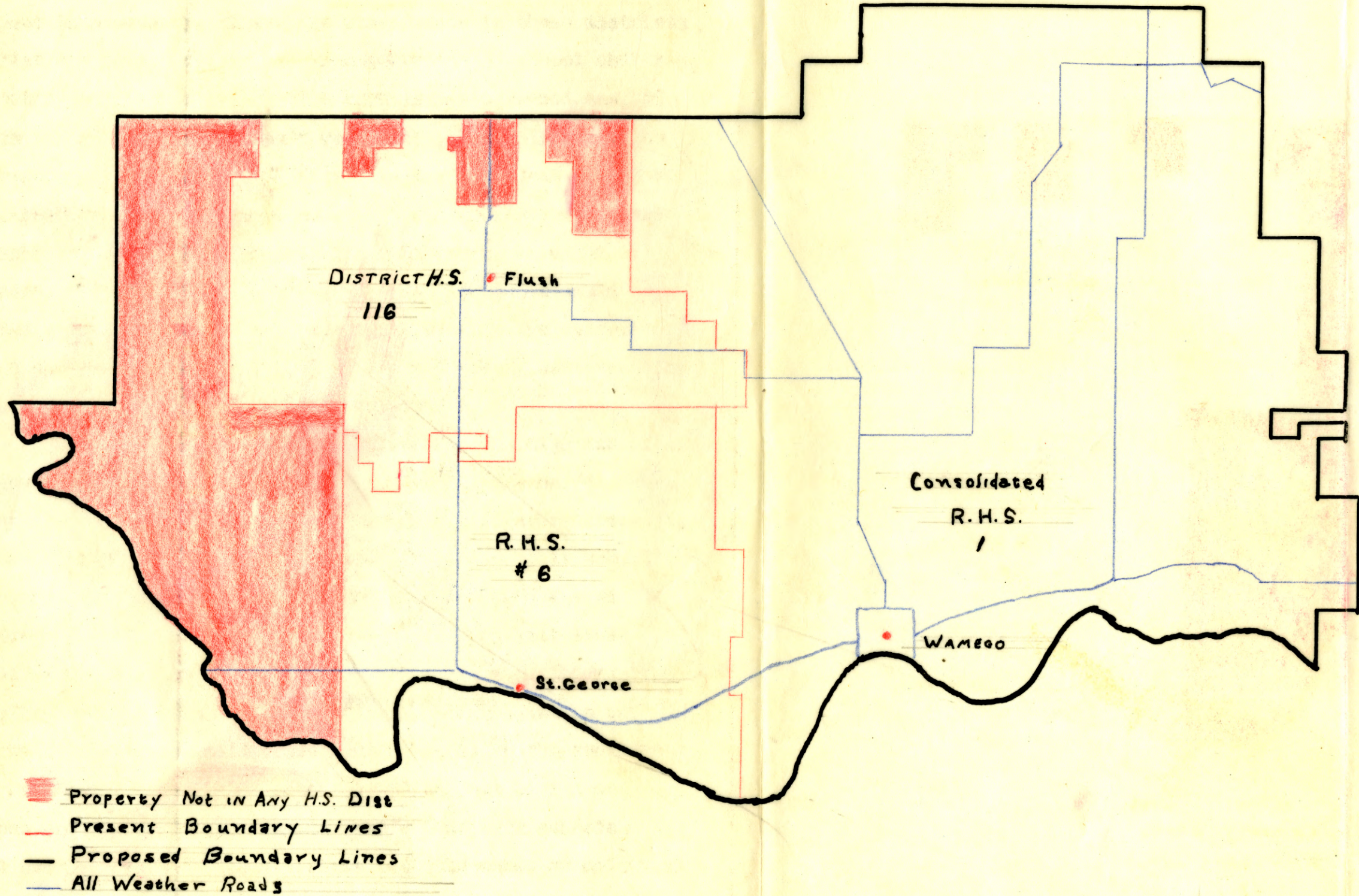


FIG. 5: MAP OF PROPOSED CONSOLIDATED DISTRICT 4

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inspection will indicate that a program of road development is necessary. There are other roads in these districts that are being used in the transportation of school children, but in a larger consolidation such as the proposed one, it is necessary that the roads be all-weather roads where the buses have to travel. If it should be found that some students are having to spend more than one and one-half hours on buses having long routes with many stops, it might be necessary to work out a new plan. One such plan could be, the use of feeder routes, have buses pick up the students at their homes and take them to the old school centers, from here they would go directly to the school.

Better educational opportunities for the high school youth of Pottawatomie County, was more the reason for this study, than the saving of money for the tax payer. However, if the implications of this report are correct, it should be possible to more completely educate our boys and girls for the same amount now being spent, and probably less. Table 5 shows: the evaluation of the present districts; the mill levy for each district; the combined evaluation for the suggested consolidations; and includes the 97 sections of land not in any high school district, now paying only one and one-half mills for the support of high schools. A further study of Table 5 shows that the three schools with the lowest mill rate, excepting Blaine, are the three high-

Table 5. Evaluation of present districts, combined evaluation, levy, land to be attached.

Schools	1951 Evaluation	Combined 1951 evaluation:	Levy	No. Sections added * territory
Fostoria	1,042,219		7.10	
Olsburg	1,019,223		6.70	
Blaine	1,171,213		2.94	
Westmoreland	1,792,195	5,024,850	6.77	23
Wheaton	601,694		12.47	
Havensville	2,059,404		6.82	
Onaga	4,138,573	6,799,671	5.00	34
Emmett	2,289,851		6.98	
St. Marys	3,262,365	5,552,216	5.55	3
Flush	906,938		6.11	
St. George	1,509,795		6.67	
Wamego	7,904,620	10,321,353	5.08	37

* No evaluation on the territory not now in any high school district being available, it was included in this table by number of sections to show that the districts would have some additional revenue.

est in enrollment in the county. If this continues to hold true, the consolidation of the twelve districts to four with the increased enrollment in each of the receiving schools, a downward trend in the tax rate may be expected.

In the proposed reorganization, Rural High School District 4, Olsburg, Rural High School District 3, Fostoria, and Rural High School District 8, Blaine, should consolidate with Rural High School District 5, Westmoreland. High School District 67, Wheaton and High School District Joint 2, Havensville should consolidate with Rural High School District 7, Onaga. High School District Joint 3, Emmett should consolidate with High School District Joint 10, St. Marys. High School District 116, Flush, and Rural High School District 6, St. George should consolidate with High School District Joint 1, Wamego.

These consolidations are suggested in the belief that they would enable Pottawatomie County High Schools to more nearly reach the proposed criteria set up in this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are advanced in the hope that all are worthy and that they will be used at least in part:

1. That a consolidation take place on the basis that

each high school attendance unit be set up to meet these criteria: (1) A minimum enrollment of at least 100 pupils; (2) schools located in community centers, with not more than one and one-half hours of travel time needed to get to and to go home from school; (3) A sound financial plan, adequate to meet the needs of the time; (4) A rich curriculum, with a well defined extra class activities program; (5) A well trained staff of enough members to offer a wide selection of subjects; (6) A building designed to fit the education program.

2. That a survey of Pottawatomie County high schools be instigated by the County Superintendent to determine the practicability of a consolidation program of this nature.

3. That the county road engineer start a program of road improvement and construction, so that existing transportation routes and new roads that would be needed in an expanded transportation program will not be the element that keeps a consolidation program from succeeding.

4. That Westmoreland, Onaga, St. Marys and Wamego, the proposed centers of consolidation, strive constantly to improve their program and facilities. To the end that they will be in a better position to more completely educate all of the high school students of Pottawatomie County.

5. That a consolidation program not be gone into with-

out a carefully thought out plan. Selfish interests should be buried in the interests of schools that are able to more nearly meet the proposed criteria for Pottawatomie County High Schools.

6. That a public relations program set up by the county high school teacher's association should work toward the elimination of religious and sociological obstacles to the proposed consolidation plan.

7. That all land not now a part of any high school district shall become a part of one of the districts to which it is adjacent.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

To Dr. M. C. Moggie, my major instructor, for the advice that he has given and the inspiration that he has been to me; to Margaret Channel, Pottawatomie County Superintendent for allowing access to the material in her office, and for her interest in this report; and to my wife and family for the many hours that they have devoted to "quiet please".

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