

Old Fort Lupton School had interesting history

In 1875, the territorial days of Colorado were coming to an end and schools were making vast improvements. The recently organized Weld County School District 23 voted to build a new school building. A site was selected and in 1876 the first lessons were taught by Mr. John Perry, in the little white school house known then as "Acorn Academy."

This one-room schoolhouse has not been used for school work since 1900; however, the Watada brothers recently donated the building to the South Platte Valley Historical Society, and plans are in the works to move and reconstruct it.

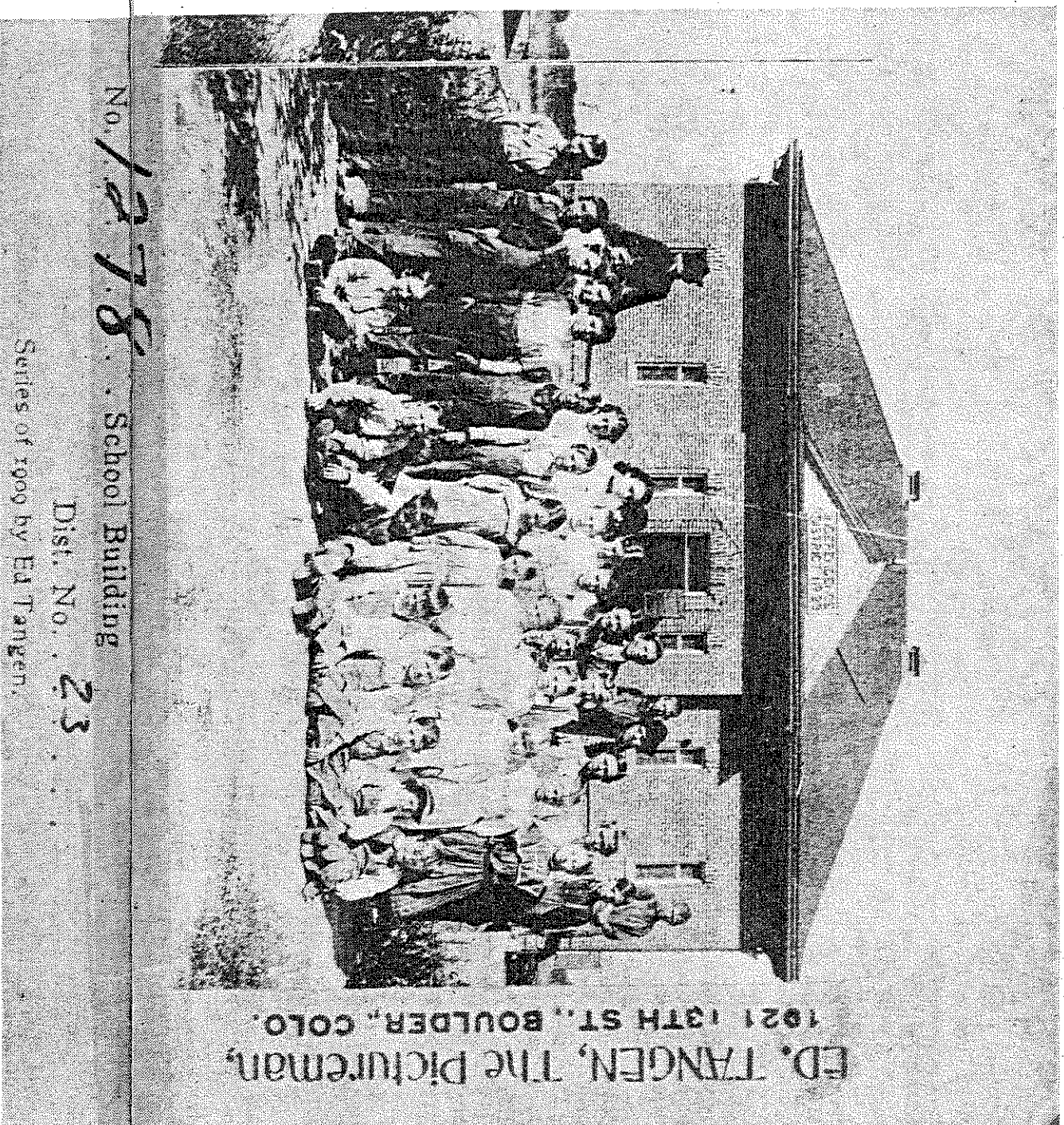
The first school in the district was a log cabin which was "Independence District" at the time from about 1864 to 1867. Nothing remains of this building. In 1867, another log schoolhouse was built on the same farm by the people who lived in the district.

The school was moved to another log house in 1875 which was the last year school was held in a log building. The new schoolhouse was a vast improvement over the little log schoolhouses in the past.

The original location of the white schoolhouse was east of Road 27, across from the brick "Independence" school (Acorn Academy) which is still standing. In the summer of 1885, the school was moved from this location to where it still stands (across the road and about one-fourth of a mile north).

The children who attended the white school named it Acorn Academy because a local cattle ranch owned by the Coggins family had an acorn brand. The school's name changed from "Acorn Academy" to "Independence" during the 1890-91 school year. The children had voted to call it "Independence," although a number of early settlers preferred the old name due to its historical significance.

The school is thought to have held approximately 15 children, comprised of first through eighth grades. A teacher was hired for a term, as long as funds were available. This often resulted in a teacher's average term being one or



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School Building

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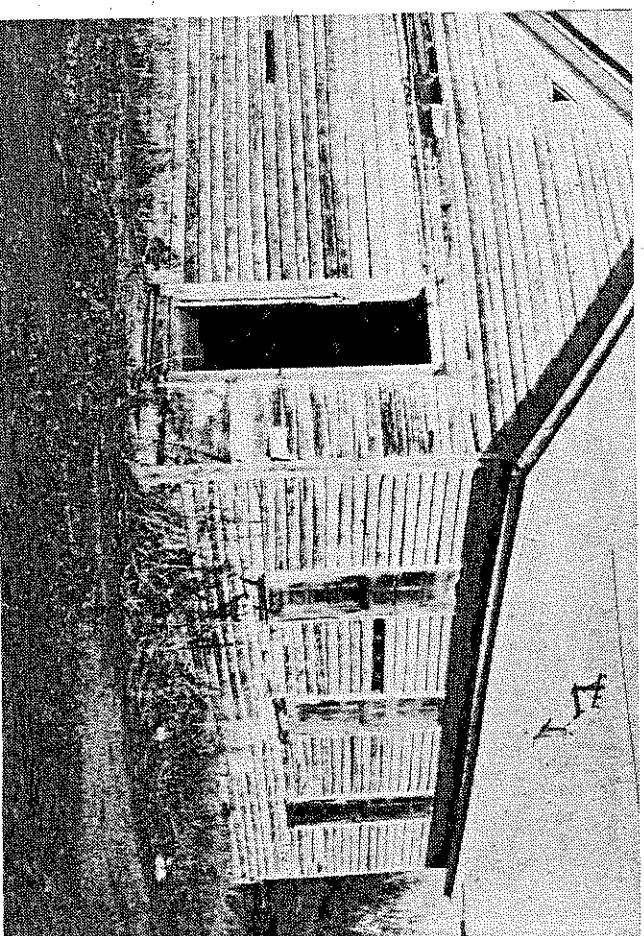
1909 Class photo at the Independence School

two months, but sometimes the term lasted six months or longer. The average salary was approximately \$45 per month and the teacher was responsible for his own boarding. Occasionally parents would pay extra to have their children taught after school hours.

The 1899-1900 school year proved to be one of great advancement for the school district. Two teachers were employed for the first time, Miss Ella Ball and Miss Dumphy. They taught in the little white school until Christmas of 1899, at which time they moved into a new brick building one-fourth of a mile south (across the road from the original site). The building had two rooms to divide first through fourth grades from the fifth through eighth grades.

Thus ending the era of this little white school house!

A special thank you to Mrs. Mary Nordell for sharing her memories and for the use of her Independence School History booklet.



Old Acorn Academy school house.

Without education, we are in a horrible and deadly danger of taking educated people seriously.

---G.K. Chesterton

