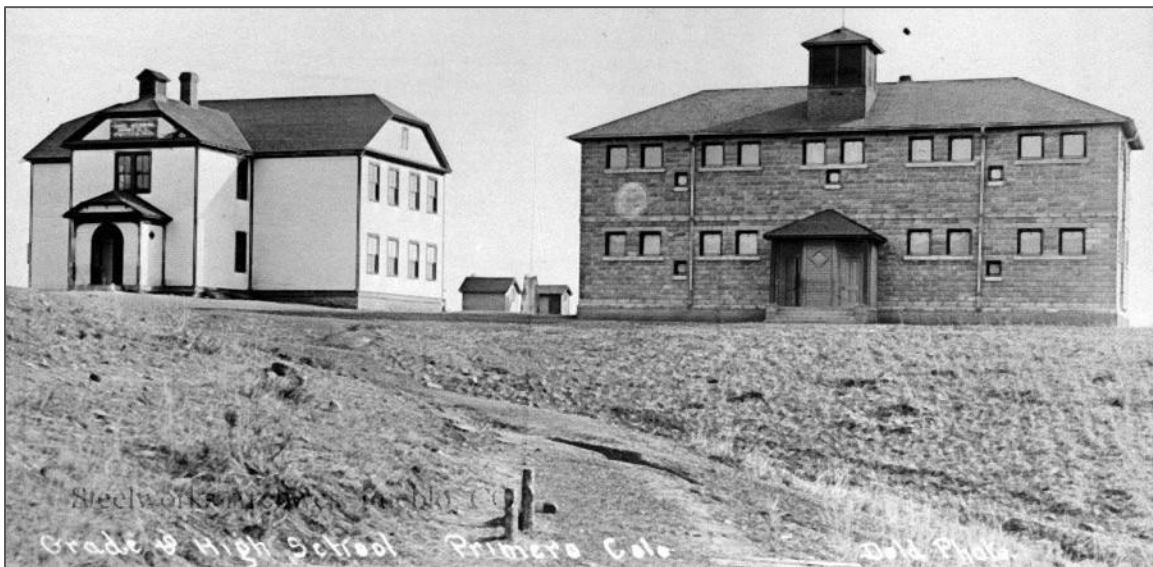


## HISTORY OF PRIMERO JUNIOR & SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Primero was a coal mine opened in 1901 by the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company. From the outset, the town was planned to be the model town that exemplified the best CF&I had to offer their workers. Near Smith Canyon and the Purgatoire River. Primero's first name was Purgatory mine, then became Smith Canyon Mine, and eventually Primero, the Spanish word for first. Primero had a state accredited high school, grade school, a Y.M.C.A., separate Protestant and Catholic churches, and 175 houses built by the company.

The town was short lived however, and was closed in 1928, with all buildings and equipment sold or dismantled by August 1st, 1933. The main goal for the property of Primero was to be a large efficient producer of metallurgical coal. Once the coal was mined out of Primero, it would be shipped to the coke ovens of Segundo. The coal that was produced while the mine operated was 8,177,567 tons total. The mining community was largely developed by the sociological department and was considered to be a model mining town. The community was modernized with the production of modern homes, clubhouses, and schools with a qualified teaching staff. All of these features were meant to further enhance, and maintain a quality of living for the families, and coals miners of Primero.

Primero was an early planned town by CF&I's Sociological Department. It became the company's model town, a way to showcase the higher quality of living for the miners and their families. The town of Primero contained schools, churches, a company stores, and neat rows of comfortable looking houses. Another reason Primero was a model town was the use of steam engines for the mine and their use of modern safety equipment.



Primero High School in Las Animas County was established during the mid-1920s, and served the students from Primero, Segundo and Frederick mining communities. The first graduating class of four students was in 1921.

### **1915-1917 The beginning**

In March of 1917, several boards of education in the Trinidad District met and decided upon the addition of higher grades such as ninth and tenth grade in high school, to ensure the students could carry on from eighth grade. The importance the community placed on education was immense as, for most young men could not work in the mines legally until the age of sixteen, and it was a couple of years before this meeting. Around 1915 Primero added a junior high school that taught up to eleventh grade. The high school was added a short time later for the growing number of students who were reaching towards secondary quality grades, education, and an opportunity for a future in higher education.

### **1918-1919**

High School students of Primero gave entertainment to the community at the club house, at the end of the school year. Teachers of the school district were the guests of honor. *Industrial Bulletin*, 1918-1919.

### **1920 Primero High School doing well, and expanding**

The *Industrial Bulletin* mentions a successful year at Primero high school in 1920. Known as the Primero-Segundo-Frederick high school, the students were properly equipped with manual training located in the basement for boys, and domestic skills are expanding for the girls.

The *Industrial Bulletin* makes note of the first issued high school paper called, "The live wire", in 1920.

March 1920, the *Industrial Bulletin* makes note of two teachers, Miss Cameron, and Mrs. Flowers have entertained the naturalization class, as known as night school. Men and women attended, and there was a high number of men enrolled, the count of men being 23. The classes were held every Tuesday and Friday night at Primero high school, and subjects such as mathematics, English, and civics.

A mine official's class meets every Monday and Saturday night at Primero high school. The class is conducted by W.E. Banks, the acting fire boss. The *Industrial Bulletin*, 1920.



**1921 First High School Graduates of Primero High School**



The *Industrial Bulletin* posts first high school class to finish four years at Primero high school was June 9, 1921. Commencement was in the auditorium of the clubhouse. Superintendent Stutsman gave a speech in honor of the special day. The four graduates were Charlotte Ellison, Marjorie Givens, Donald Haske, and Letha Mathews by the mid nineteen-teens, the high school and middle school of Primero were started and begin to flourish. By 1921, publications recognized the developments of the Primero high school, by pointing out unique courses offered to the high school students such as practical work stations designated for boys, and domestic sciences favorable to girls. Both the high school and the junior high school of Primero were used by the kids from Primero, Segundo, and Frederick.

### **1922 Second year ever, for Primero High School Graduates**

In 1922, the *Industrial Bulletin* mentions a class of five graduate from Primero high school. The graduating class put on a play called, "A box of monkeys". The seniors gave all proceeds, to Primero high school. Professor J.F. Keating of Pueblo gave the commencement speech address. The Services were held at the Y.M.C.A. building, and a big crowd of people witnessed the event.

The week prior to graduation, there was a Primero high school dance that was held on the last week of school, and a large crowd attended the dance as well. Music was provided by the Dells orchestra from Pueblo, *Industrial Bulletin*, 1922.

Students at Primero high school were expected to finish a full four year term at the high school. The school's motto was, "Pluck", according to the *Pinon Year Book*.

Freshmen Experience: Assemblies, rallies, and social events. Have to "do by the other classes".

Sophomore Experience: Harder study, not as bothered by the other classes, more important, and dance at the end of the school year.

Junior Experience: Won entire class meet. Excelled in most things. Held a party.

Senior Experience: In 1926, fourteen are in the senior class. This is the largest graduating class thus far.

\*All mentioned in the *Pinon Year Book* of 1926.

### **1923 Junior High News**

According to the *Industrial Bulletin*, 1923, Primero had gained a three year middle school. Originally, there was only going to be two grades added to the middle school, but the board of education voted to add another year to the middle school after all. Due to the change, "all the teachers have been re-engaged". There was a junior high built prior to 1923, but the official middle school of Primero took over with only three grades 6-8, as oppose to the three grades, in addition to ninth, tenth, and eleventh (which was how the junior high school ran until the high school was built, before 1923 as well).

### **1926 The Primero High School Experience and Athletics**

The *Pinon* year book of 1926 took note of Primero starting an Athletic program in 1924. However, in 1923, there was a Football team established. There was a girl's basket-ball team for girls and boys in high school. Both teams had a slow start in the league due to lack of equipment and experience. As the next couple of years progressed, the students on both teams showed performance improvement. There was also a high school track team. There was also a few clubs present at the high school in Primero, and in the *Pinon* year book of 1926 mentioned the Spanish Club, the Science Club, and Press Club.

Even though Athletics was not officiated in Primero until 1924, Primero Junior and senior classmen were a part of Country Track and a special field day, mentioned in the *Pinon* Year Book.

May 1923, the first meet held, Primero took first place, and a pennant was given to the school. Primero students won the meet well, with the *Pinon* stating, "Captured this trophy with a wide margin of points to spare."

Authors of the above history:

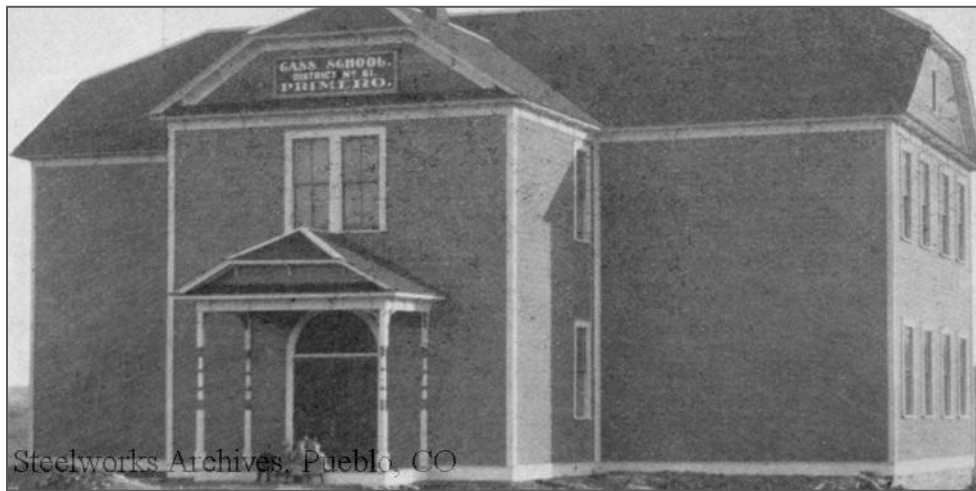
Blake Hatton

Abbie Specht

Christopher Schrech

Courtesy: Industrial Bulletin, 1923 Junior High News

## **THE HISTORY OF CASS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, SEGUNDO**



Steelworks Archives, Pueblo, CO

### **Cass Elementary**

#### **1901-1902 building Cass Elementary**

In 1901, Primero had just begun to flourish and was being built into an ideal mining community. There was not a school available in 1901, however, classes were held in a public dwelling house. Cass Elementary was constructed in 1902, and was completed on November 1, 1902. The school was located at the end of the first row of houses, which was in the upper part of town by the hill. Superintendent Mr. Everhart was in charge of the construction.

Before the junior high and high school of Primero were erected, Cass elementary was not only a place for education, but also a place for the community to house group meetings, social events, and community gatherings.

The elementary school children in Primero attended Cass elementary school, which was a two-story building that contained four rooms total. Another school called Jerome was also being built around the time Cass elementary was built. The CF&I company contributed a total of \$5,775.99 to both Cass and Jerome. \$439.25 was also advanced to both schools for the texts books, and a \$1,405 advance was given to aid in the cost of the teacher's salaries. On November 1, 1902 Cass Elementary opened. The school was not only provided to educate children, but was also a place for entertainment and social events of the camp.

### **1903-1904 Cass Elementary: Teachers, Students, Events**

Miss Mary Beneficial was principle of Cass Elementary in 1903. Mary was in charge of 20 advanced students. Also in 1903 both Miss Jessie Morgan and Miss Edith Carrington were in charge of students as well. Miss Morgan looked after the 38 primary students, divided into 8 grades, and Miss Carrington looked after the 21 kindergarten children. The ethnicity of the children were listed as American, Mexican, and Italian. The School Board pays the teachers' salaries, however all of the cost for materials and needs of the school were provided by the CF&I company.

**Submitted by the research of Phillip Arnold Vigil, 2/11/2025**