

Thompson School District History

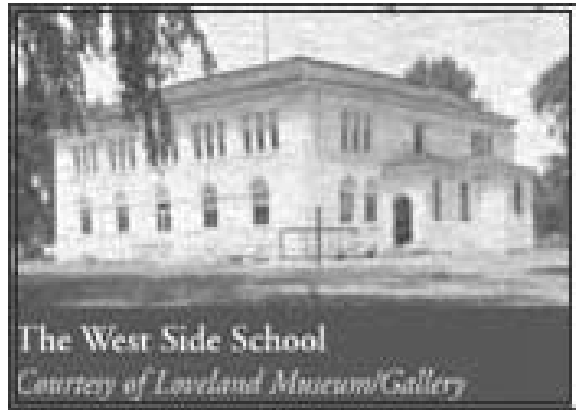
As the communities of Loveland and Berthoud evolved, so did the Thompson School District. What is now known as Thompson R2-J started as several school districts and eventually merged into one. The earliest Loveland schools date back to 1868.

In October 1868 the county superintendent's records show three school districts as "organized." They were Namaqua, Old St. Louis, and Hillsborough. The 1869 school census reports 48 students attending these first three districts, and thus began the history of the Thompson School District R2-J.

Buildings were different in the 19th century. In her memoirs, schoolteacher Sarah Milner described her first school building as a log structure that had been floated down the river and pulled into place. Her classroom furniture was very primitive—just heavy wood slabs with peg legs.

School business was conducted much as it is today, but on a much smaller scale. Calendars were set, teacher salaries were negotiated, school sites were decided, and buildings constructed.

Neighbors did not always get along, and the superintendent's records are filled with approved or denied annexations, divisions, and more. By 1880 nine school districts served 375 students in the area encompassed by today's district. By 1900 the number of districts had grown to 18 with a total student population of 1,424. In 1903 that number jumped to 2,092. District #2, known as the Loveland School District, surpassed 1,000 students, making it a Class One school district.



Did you know?

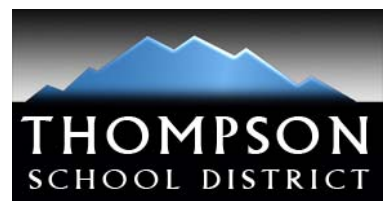
Thompson School District R2-J can claim Larimer County's:

- First school superintendent (H.B. Chubbuck);
- First recorded public school district (Namaqua);
- First public school teacher (Sarah Milner);
- First high school graduation (1872).

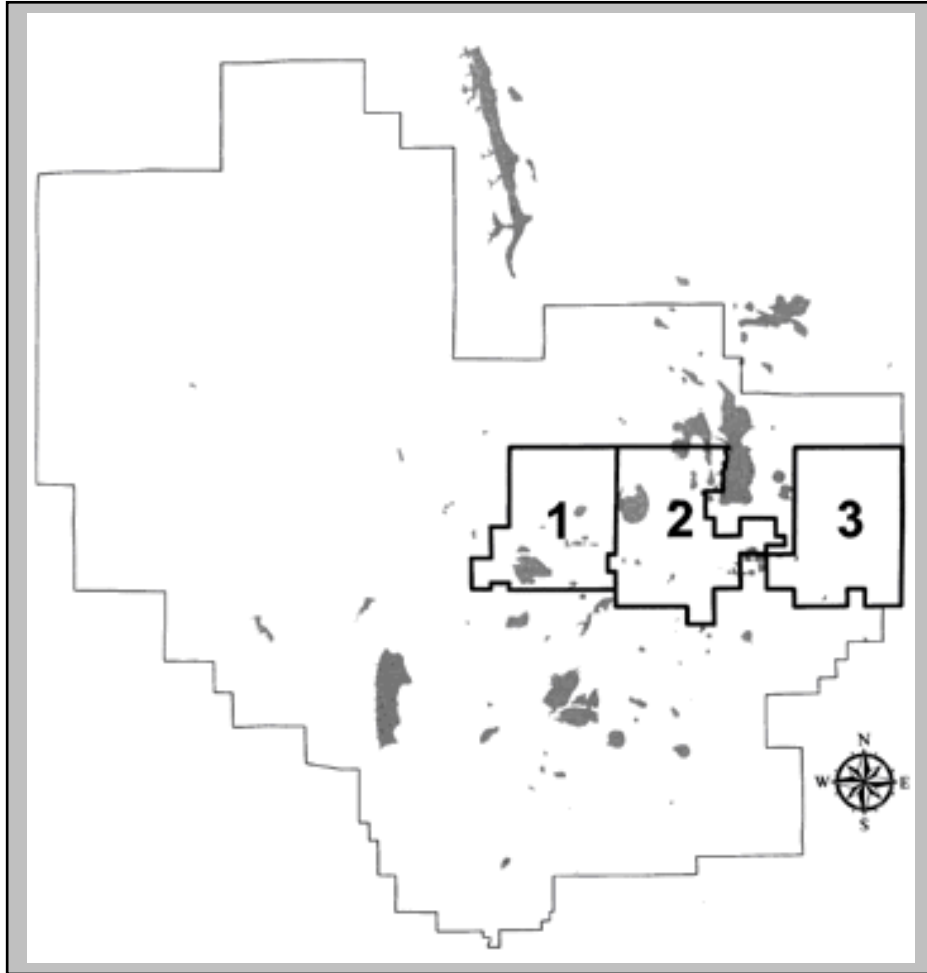
In 1900 only about 10 percent of the adolescents aged 14 to 17 were enrolled in high school, and most of them were from affluent families. As the communities of Berthoud and Loveland became more urban, strict child labor laws were passed and more students had time to attend school. By 1949 Loveland High School graduated 105 seniors—100 more than in the class of 1894.

School buses changed the face of the district in the late 1910s. Smaller school districts gave way to larger ones due to annexation and consolidation. By 1960, when Larimer County reorganized its schools,

there were only 30 districts remaining to be consolidated. Nine of those remaining districts formed what is now Thompson School District R2-J.



Thompson School Districts 1, 2 and 3 - 1868



The Early Days

- Log buildings with dirt roofs were replaced by larger, brighter wooden and brick buildings.
- Berthoud built a new two-story, two-room schoolhouse in 1877.
- Loveland opened its all-brick East Side School in 1881.
- Berthoud built a second school with two classrooms on each of two floors in 1896.
- By 1889 Loveland's East Side School was scheduling split sessions.
- In 1905 Washington School was built, replacing East Side School which was destroyed by fire in 1904.
- At the turn of the century, these schoolhouses were considered symbols of the community, just like courthouses and churches.
- In the 1980s the Washington School was remodeled into offices for the City of Loveland.

Rules for Teachers in 1872

1. Teachers each day will fill lamps, clean chimneys.
2. Each teacher will bring a bucket of water and scuttle of coal for the day's session.
3. Make your pens carefully. You may whittle nibs to the individual taste of your students.
4. Male teachers may take one evening a week for courting purposes or two evenings if they go to church regularly.
5. After 10 hours in school the teachers may spend the remaining time reading the Bible or other good books.
6. Women teachers who marry or engage in unseemly conduct will be dismissed.
7. Every teacher should lay aside from each pay a goodly sum of his earnings for his benefit for his declining years so that he will not become a burden on society.
8. Any teacher who smokes, uses liquor in any form, frequents pool or public halls, or gets shaved in a barber shop will give good reason to suspect his worth, intention, integrity, and honesty.
9. The teacher who performs his labor faithfully and without fault for five years will be given an increase of twenty-five cents per week in his pay, providing the board of education approves.

Loveland High School Class of 1894

*Gertrude Smith, George Riker,
Myrna Johnson, Elbert McCreery,
Emily Louise Milner (from the left)*

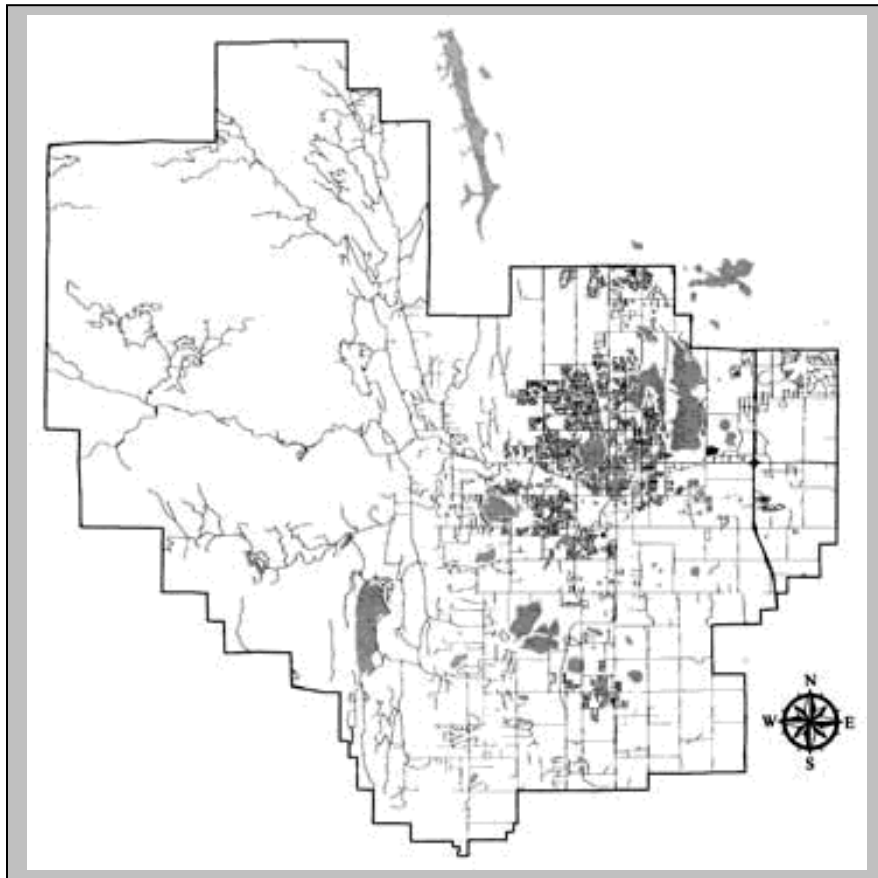


Courtesy of Loveland Museum/Gallery

What does R2-J mean?

The “R” indicates that this is the “reorganized” second district, not the original school district #2. The “J” indicates that the district is “jointly” located in more than one county: Larimer, Weld and Boulder.

Thompson School District R2-J Current Boundaries



Modern times at R2-J

In 1960 the Thompson School District reported 3,675 students. Elementary schools served students in kindergarten through 6th grade. Junior high school was for 7th and 8th grades and senior high school served 9th through 12th grades. The elementary schools at that time were: Big Thompson, Garfield, Lincoln, Washington, Berthoud, and Summit. The building we now call Bill Reed Middle School housed both the junior and the senior high schools. By 2007 the Thompson School District reported 15,024 students. Eighteen elementary schools serve students in kindergarten through 5th grade. Five middle schools serve students in 6th through 8th grades. Five high schools serve students in 9th through 12th grades.