

*Home Talk*  
CAVALCADE OF MOSCOW SCHOOLS

Mrs. Roland  
Hodgins 1940

To one whose earliest memories are of legends, twice-told tales and living experiences of the very first beginnings of the state in which we live-- to one whose family has been, in each succeeding generation, a part of Idaho's long march in importance, from the year Captain Pierce braved the Indians to discover gold on Oro Fino creek in 1860, to fifty years of statehood in 1940, the term "pioneer" takes on a most comparative quality. After all, what dates a pioneer in Moscow? Is it experiences of eighty, sixty, forty or twenty years ago? The right to wear the title is often claimed by any who arrived within those various periods.

With this idea in mind, it is my intention to go beyond personal experiences and to tell you something about an institution that has had the greatest influence on the home and social life of the community since its earliest times. This will be our schools.

It was the finding of gold that started the rush of men to this northern country in the days before there were any boundary lines that marked the territory we know as Idaho. After a few lusty years the sun began to set on the unstable days of the gold pan and the rocker, and the miners began to leave to follow new discoveries, and in the sifting of the thousands that had rushed into the country was left a citizenry of sturdy people who wished to build homes, establish cities, and live under the respectability of law and order.



So, as an aftermath of those early, tumultuous years, farms were established, and thus began the cultivation of the rich, productive soil for which this section of the country is famous. The United States government offered rich inducements to settlers for this purpose, in grants of land under various governmental acts, and a new citizenry began to arrive.

In the late spring of 1872, my husband's parents, Mr. and Mrs. H. B. Hodgins, with their family of nine children and various relatives came to make their home in this new wilderness, and settled on land near where the town of Genesee was later located. As the years passed by and the sons in the family reached their majority, each used his privilege of taking up land under some governmental act.

I never tired of hearing my husband reminisce about those early days. He was a good story teller, and he located the events of his stories as having occurred on Brother Will's place, Uncle Henry's place, Father's place, or Oscar's or mine, giving me an idea of how wide their land holdings were in those early days.

Idaho's first city was established in 1861 at the junction of the Clearwater and Snake rivers, which at that time was the focal point for the converging of the gold miners. They called the town Lewiston. In 1863, President Lincoln approved an act organizing Idaho Territory. It was larger than the present state and included much of what is now Montana and Washington. I will mention, in passing, that the boundaries of our state were changed three times before they reached their present position.



During the second session of the territorial legislature, in November, 1964, an act was passed establishing provision for common schools. It provided that sections sixteen and thirty-six of every township should be sold for school purposes. No more than twenty-five sections could be sold annually, and ten dollars per acre was the minimum price.

If one studies the map of our town she will find that its various additions bear the names of those early settlers whose farms converged in this vicinity. The area was called Paradise Valley. When a store and a post office were started it was east of the present town on a line running due north of where the cemetery is located.\*

They called the post office Paradise. Here, in 1871, a school was opened in a log house with a dirt floor. The door was of split logs, and the benches were slabs supported on wooden legs, with the flat sides up. Under such primitive conditions our first teacher began his task.

The first specialized school building erected north of the Clearwater river was the McGuire school. It was built in 1875 and was located south and west of the original Paradise school, and was probably about two miles from our present school buildings. The building was located on the McGuire farm and faced the road which runs from Taylor's corner to the southwest corner of the cemetery. The first teacher was Noah Lieuallen. Trustees were Asbury Lieuallen, J. Haskins and George Tomer-- all familiar names to old residents of this area. Mr. Lieuallen's salary was fifty dollars a month.

\* Haskins Flat 1 mile East of Paradise P.O. 1873

J. M. Henderson  
1903

Pa-609 1  
Pa. 607. Log School House 1871- 2 yrs before Paradise P.O. was located - 1 mile West. 1873

\*Note on margin of original manuscript, not Mrs. Hodgins', "Haskins Flat". 1st School House - Latah Co - (History, N. Idaho)  
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We should remember that the early paths used by the pioneers, which were later to become roads, were only Indian trails in the beginning. Trails were the easiest grades over mountains and the shortest distances between water holes. Many trails became famous and influenced the development of the country. An alliance existed between the Nes Perce Indians and the Colville tribe. They visited each other often and hunted together. Their trail ran through this area, and probably had something to do with locating Moscow.

In the early seventies, Asbury A. Lieuallen decided he would start a town. He bought a large acreage from the John Neff tract of land, established a general store, secured a post office, and thus began Main Street, Moscow, Idaho. The little town grew, and it was soon evident that the McGuire school was too far away. A petition was circulated to bring it nearer, but the farmers opposed, so an election was called to decide the question. The astute Mr. Lieuallen brought voters to the polling place in a free bus, and the proposal to bring the school into town carried.

There was no special school building in Moscow, so children were housed in various rooms and halls.

McDaniel's Hall, an upstairs room in a building at Fourth and Main streets, where the Owl Drug Store now stands, was the main school room and was also the popular gathering place of the community.

Of interest among the old records in the Court House, which were transferred from Nez Perce county when Latah



county was created, is a patent signed by President Grant for a grant of land to William Jones. The land, then in Nez Perce County, Idaho Territory, is the SW quarter of section eight, township thirty nine. In 1875, Mr. Jones sold this land to John Russell, and thus, in the annals of our town, was established a name which will always remain part of its history.

One who knew John Russell can not forget his kind, venerable personality. He was an old man, when I knew him, and he looked like a picture of the poet Longfellow with his heavy, white hair and full, flowing beard. Kindness and honesty emanated from his being. In the year 1884, he gave to the town of Moscow, for the sum of one dollar, the block of land bounded on the north and south by First and "A" streets, and by Adams and Jefferson on the east and west. The deed certified the land was to be used for school purposes. On this site, in the same year, Andrew Baxter built Moscow's first public school building.\* There were two rooms, one above and one below, one hundred and twenty five pupils were crowded into these two rooms. In the room in which I taught, there were three large windows on each side, which came nearly down to the floor. No arrangement had been made to drop the windows from the top, and in cold weather it was unendurable to have them open from the bottom. A large stove of sheet and cast iron stood in the north-west corner. Children in the back of the room often had to wear their coats, while the front seats could not be used because of the intense heat from the big stove. Lack of sanitation, improper heating and ventilation, and over-crowding were

\* Note on margin of manuscript: "On John Russell Block. 1885 first school on this property. Later another larger building was built".



a constant danger to the health of the children.

... In 1888, a memorable year, the Moscow School District was organized. Two problems, scarcity of room and scarcity of funds, became ever more acute in the growing town. The clerk of the School Board, Dr. Henry Blake, who was Mrs. Summerfield's father, advertised a bond election. One hundred fifteen votes were cast, and ninety six of them favored the bond issue. Twelve thousand dollars was thus raised, and with this money four rooms were added to the front end of the Baxter building, two above and two below. The entire building would seat six hundred pupils by putting an average of one hundred in each room. The structure was named in honor of John Russell.

Up to this time, there had been little attempt to work out a graded system of education, but, with the erection of the new building, steps were taken toward an eventual high school course. Boise, then Boise City, had boasted of a high school for five years, but there was no other public secondary school in the state. Lewiston and Moscow were eager to copy the capitol city. The new county of Latah had just been created by act of congress-- a proceeding which has no precedent, then or now. Artesian water had been discovered, and everything seemed ready for growth and progress by the community. Four new teachers and a principal were to be added to the school, and the new building was to have a permanent janitor. That this janitor was John Russell has always drawn on my compassion. Time, with the tricks of fate, had deprived him of his living, and he seemed thankful to serve as janitor on property he once owned and generously gave away.



...of the school board, Dr. Henry Blake, who was then  
of Idaho, became very much interested in the growing community. The  
was organized. The program, especially of local and national  
In 1889, a newspaper said, the Moscow school district  
a constant center to the center of the city.

When I was a girl, I attended school in the east for a time. I returned to my home in Boise in May, 1889, and found the <sup>town</sup> preparing for a notable event. Idaho was to be admitted at last into the family of states, and Governor Stevenson, in one of his last acts as Territorial Governor, had called a Constitutional Convention to meet in Boise on July fourth. It is doubtful if another such distinguished group of men has ever assembled in Idaho. In that body were men who were destined to honor their state as United States Senators, Governors, Congressmen, Judges, and leaders in professional and business life. Seventy members were called and sixty eight attended. Among them was W. J. McConnell of Moscow, later United States Senator for a short period and Governor of Idaho for two terms.

Many years before, in the Boise Basin, my parents had become friends of Governor McConnell. That friendship was renewed when he was in Boise for the convention, and he was a frequent visitor in our home. He told us of the need for teachers in Moscow, and, at his request, I came to Moscow to teach in the new building.

A Mr. Williamson had been employed as principal, and I was to be an assistant in his room. My salary was to be fifty dollars a month and his was seventy five. However, Mr. Williamson was a sick man when school opened, and, as the term advanced, he was less and less able to be in the school. His resignation was accepted at the beginning of the second term, and in his place a Mr. M. M. Lane was secured as superintendent. Under Mr. Lane's supervision, Moscow High School was started.



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION' IN ONE OF THE FIRST YEARS OF THE UNIVERSITY  
TO BE ASSIGNED AT THAT TIME THE TITLE OF 'SCHOOL' AND  
TO THE 'SCHOOL' OF EDUCATION FOR A SHORTER PERIOD. I WAS  
A LITTLE. I RETURNED TO MY HOME IN 1903 IN 1903, AND  
WHEN I WAS A LITTLE, I RETURNED TO SCHOOL IN THE FIRST YEAR

My pupils were a miscellaneous assortment. They ranged in age from fourteen years to boys and girls of my own age or older. The trustees of that early school were men who took their responsibilities very seriously. The passing years have added to my appreciation of their interest, but at the time I wondered if they came so often and stayed so long because they felt I needed support or watching. Mr. Hattabaugh, Mr. Coats and Mr. Matthews came in alternate weeks. Each had at sometime been a teacher, and quite often one or the other would take part in conducting the class. These men were my friends, and in after years we often talked about the difficulty of my position until the new principal, Mr. Lane, arrived. The great irregularity in attendance was a constant irritation and bewilderment to me. To keep any kind of planned program in the class was almost an impossibility. The big boys and girls straggled in as the farm work diminished, and as they could be spared for a few weeks of schooling. At the peak of attendance, the room was crowded beyond its capacity.

At that time, the school employed six teachers and a principal. Fanny Reeder, who later became the second Mrs. Coats, was the primary teacher. The other four were girls of my own age from Moscow families. They were Cora Kelleher, Carrie Vanderwalker, Mary McConnell, later Mrs. Charlie Shields, and Viola Scully. Before long we were a group which was together on most occasions. Dancing was our favorite pastime. Select dances were a thing unknown. The balls that were given upstairs in the Shields building, and those in the old G.A.R. hall on Third Street, were wide open to anyone, but the parties seemed most lovely to us.



took their leave, and the young men of Moscow were gallant, generous and very good looking. Every man I knew wore a most becoming moustache, and a few wore well trimmed beards. I wish I might, in some measure, give you a picture of that Moscow that has now disappeared. The tandem bicycle had not yet arrived, and we were still years before the Model T Ford, but Moscow had two livery stables with good turnouts. We and our escorts, on many Sundays, would drive in single and double buggies to Palouse, Colfax or Pullman. In winter these gave way to the cutter and the sleigh, and as spring came on, these and all other means of getting anywhere gave way to horseback riding.

We rode smartly, too, in those days, in our sleek, well fitted, black riding habits. The skirts ~~were~~ were of approved length, designed to hang well over the three-horned side saddle, and equipped with a loop to hang on the left arm to adjust the length for walking. The permanent wave was unknown, and, although it was in the transition from kerosene lamps to electric lights, we were still heating our curling irons in the chimney of a lighted lamp. Girls were sweet and lovely in their Victorianism. Dress skirts were long and full, trimmed with pleats or panniers. A basque or a polonaise was fitted and boned, and, except on evening dresses, neck lines were soft and high. A high hair dress was usually preferred, the hair waved or crimped, and drawn loosely to the top of the head, finished in a soft knot or



a group of curls. Short bangs, straight cut or curled, lay on the forehead. We were still in the years when young ladies were not supposed to cross their legs. It was the day of romance and poetry-- the day when I read Keats and Shelly-- and how I loved the sentimental lushness of Ella Wheeler Wilcox.

Time has dimmed my memory of Main Street, but I can remember that Moscow was a lively, thriving town with many lovely homes, even then. There were four hotels that I remember, the McGregor Hotel, later Gritman's hospital, the Del Norte, now Sherfey's apartment house, the Johnson Hotel, and the Barton House where Hotel Moscow now stands. There were two large general mercantile stores, McConnell-Maguire, and Derrham and Kaufman. The outstanding drug store was White and White, located where Samm's Furniture Store now stands. In the fall of 1890, Mr. Hodgins bought this store and began his firm's fifty years of service to the Moscow public. There was no Episcopal Church here then, and I attended the Presbyterian. The church was small but was later enlarged and incorporated into the present building. There, early on Sunday evenings, we would draw our chairs around the stove in the corner for young people's meeting. A lovely memory to me is a picture of a serious, sandy complexioned, young Scotchman, who was our leader. His name was Alexander Ryrie.

In the spring of 1891, Moscow School District paid \$4,000 for a site on the corner of Third and Adams streets, and an election was held to vote \$25,000 in bonds. It is interesting to note that the sale of these bonds was advertised



far away in the New York Herald, the Chicago Tribune and the Portland Oregonian. The building was finished in 1892, named Moscow High School, and the town held a great celebration at its dedication. Mr. J. C. Muerman, a favorite teacher in Moscow, became its superintendent. We see that the salaries were still low, for Mr. Muerman received only \$100 a month.

One year later, on Friday evening, May 26, 1893, Moscow High School presented three girls in its first graduating class. It is not until the fourth commencement that we find any record of a boy graduating, then, on May 26, 1896, twelve girls and two boys graduated at the exercises in the old Grand Army Hall.

There was always a pressing need for more room. To somewhat relieve the situation, a wood house which stood on the Russell grounds was moved forward, reconditioned, and made into a small school house which was called the Annex. Myra Moody was the teacher in this room. Four years later, this Historical Club equipped the room for classes in domestic science work. Plumbing was installed, dishes, cooking equipment, and linens were bought. This generous act is only one of the many fine, altruistic things our club has done for the community, but it will always stand as one of our most notable achievements.

We will briefly mention the Irving school, which was built on the northeast corner of the Russell grounds. Mrs. Forney and Mrs. Orland, two of our members, were on the school board when it was built, and I am sure they named it for the illustrious author. It was a gaunt, ungainly, two-story frame building, with battlemented roof. After a few years it was condemned as unsafe, but it still stood-- a dare to tragedy. When it was finally razed in 1926,



(1910 or  
1911?)

the beautiful, new Russell structure rose on its site.

Occasionally, fate takes a hand in the destinies of men and institutions, and things are settled quite by accident. So it was with the old Russell school, which burned to the ground one evening after school was dismissed. We watched it go without excitement or regret, knowing that better things would come in its place. On the wall of the new Russell building hangs a fine portrait of John Russell. It was a gift from our club.

Was it twenty-eight years ago that we built our new High School? It does not seem so long, but time passes rapidly, and it was erected in 1912 at a cost of \$90,000. In that same year, the old high school was modernized with an addition, a new flat roof, and its name was changed to Whitworth. We, who are sitting in this room today will probably always think of the building erected in 1912 as the high school of Moscow, because our sons and daughters had their training there.

Twenty eight years! Not a very long time, but, after all, more than a quarter century. It would not become us to debate where this building should come in the cavalcade of pioneer schools. Certainly, she does not stand with the pathfinders, but, after all, it is something to be even a tenderfoot pioneer.