



## MIDVALE SCHOOL HISTORY

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### MIDVALE

In the winter of 1922, I received a contract from the school board of Midvale, Idaho to teach intermediate fifth and sixth at Salem School.

Midvale, as has been pointed out, held much of sentiment for me, since it was there that my maternal grandparents had settled in 1876, and too, my mother was born and reared on Keithley Creek. Through her, I knew many of the Midvale citizens. In fact, a host of our "family tree" reside there.

A proper history of this little town would be a book of heroes and heroic deeds - a Saga of Pioneering. However, I shall record here only a bit of its history as fits my story.

Midvale's hey-day could be marked in the years prior to 1922. The town had grown into a lively, rural community which boasted of a newspaper (The Reporter) edited by George Rochester; a drug store and two doctors (Dr. Schmitz and Marshall); a lumber yard, hardware, several grocery stores, garages, restaurant, barber shops, and even a bank.

Its decline seemed to date from a series of bad fires that took several business houses; then the bank failure, heralding perhaps, the depression of the 30's.

Many lost money - at that time unguaranteed - and I was one of the losers. Certainly a personal tragedy!

Gradually began the exodus of citizens

and continued until only a semblance of this former bustling, little town remained.

Midvale today has made a bit of a comeback through a live Women's Civic Club, which has sponsored a municipal park, swimming pool and other improvements.

It is still a good school town. Reorganization did not affect its status quo to any great extent other than in the assimilation of the outlying country schools. The citizens are proud of the two fairly new, up-to-date school plants. Midvale children continue to win their share of honors in scholarship and in athletics.

Always a good church town, we find them still active here.

Like hundreds of rural villages in America, the car and fine highways have brought their citizens close to larger towns and much of their trading is done there. It has been a trend nationally. However, Midvale, as many others, will continue as a rich farming and ranching center indefinitely.

### EARLY SCHOOL

The Midvale School District was organized in 1876 and extended from the Mann Creek Divide to Salubria. The very early schools were the subscription type mentioned earlier in this story, held in homes or cabins. Among these was one in the home of the M.H. Reeds, who had been the first family to enter Middle Valley (August 1868).

The teacher was a trapper named Welch.

Another subscription school was held at the David Richardson's with Mr. Richardson as teacher.

A Mr. Harold had taught on the Bob Jackson place. A severe winter closed this

#### **SALEM - NUMBER ONE AND TWO**

Around 1883 the district was divided between Midvale and Mount Pleasant. The first real school building was constructed in 1883 by William Pickett on land now owned by the Fairchild's, formerly known as the Clark property northeast of the town of Midvale. Mr. Pickett "christened" this school "Salem" out of sentiment, perhaps, for he had attended a school in Missouri, which bore that name.

In 1903 or thereabouts, this building burned down - the fate of most of the old schools - and in the interim, between the burning of this first Salem School and building of the second one, a Mr. Reeves taught in a "shack" near the village.

The second Salem School - built about 1904 - was erected on a site within the town, and was to serve for many years. The main carpenter was a man named Edson. The building, a large frame one, had four classrooms, two on either side of a wide corridor. It was very simply arranged without benefit of ornamentation other than belfry and steeple and a bit of shingle "lace".

Points of interest have been uncovered in the gleanings: The school was used at first as a place of worship; and soon after its construction a hard wind twisted it on its foundation, but it was not damaged enough to prevent its use as a school building.

This school served until 1946 when it, too, burned. It was necessary to hold school in buildings around town in order to complete the term. A new brick edifice has now replaced it near the same site.

#### **I START WITH A BLISTERED TOE**

I traveled to Midvale via train from Weiser a few days prior to school opening with a blistered toe. It became so painful that

one for awhile, and then Mr. Montgomery finished up in the spring.

The early school held in the John McRoberts' home was a subscription type with Minnie Haven (Mrs. Doc Linder) as teacher.

I went at once to the doctor. (Dr. Frank Schmitz was still holding forth here, but later in the term he moved to Weiser.)

Crippling around, I managed to rent a furnished little house of Aunt Ella Stewart; wash windows; clean floors; paint walls; launder curtains; rent a piano; and stock up with groceries.

In the meantime, I met a train bringing a high school teacher, Lavina Sargeant, from Minot, North Dakota. She was intrigued by the plan of batching, so moved in with me. Places to board and room were scarce, and, too, we felt this way would be more economical.

Following prescribed treatment, my toe -- that just missed being blood poisoning -- was much better by the time school opened, and I was there (wearing a soft shoe on the crippled foot) and thrilled, as always on opening day, facing a room full of fresh, expectant faces.

My colleagues for the year were:

T.C. Woods - Principal - with seventh and eighth

Minnie Dunham - third and fourth

Katherine White (Hupe) - first and second

#### **A GOOD SCHOOL TOWN**

We soon discovered that Midvale was an ideal school town. There was a live PTA which did not exploit the children; and parents on the whole supported the teacher. Disciplinary "hassles" were few and those only minor. Parent-teacher relationships were pleasant.

Teaching (this fifth year in my experience) in fact, took on new meaning. Perhaps I was learning to teach. Then there was stimulus in the two-grade system with 25 or 30 pupils. One could accomplish a great

deal.

I treasure the contacts with the lovely children of these years, many of whom had religious training and background. We found them amenable to further education. T.C.

No doubt this pleasant, well-conducted school was due in great part to the fine principal we had. T.C. Woods was a teacher extraordinaire! He had a wonderful way with children and parents, too. He was mentor for the farmers of the area, giving expert advice when called upon, and in fact, doing most anything from measuring hay to coaching the village quartet.

Best of all, both "T.C." (as we fondly called him) and Jessie Woods were ever the good friends of the teachers. Our problems were their problems.

As I recall, T.C.'s tenure at Salem School -- as principal -- covered 15 years.

## "K"

I must write of our Missouri farm "gal," Katherine White (Hupe). She had come West to visit relatives (the Clares and Rogers at Midvale), had fallen in love with our beautiful state, and stayed on for several years.

It was my privilege to live and work with this wonderful woman for three terms at Midvale when we "batched" together, and for a summer term of Normal at Boise. She became almost like a member of my family, in fact.

She was an intellectual and a fine student, yet she bore the common touch, ever reaching out in her relationships with others. She loved people and people loved her.

Never had I seen a more capable person than "K". She always said she was her father's "boy". Farm chores were her "meat." She could hitch and drive a team; ride a horse; and pitch hay with equal aplomb. At simple carpentry and mechanics, she was a wizard.

Cars, as many remember, were cantankerous things in those days. Often

they stalled in the middle of the road for no apparent reason. To our dauntless K, this was all in a day's work. She'd grab a screwdriver, be out under the hood in a twinkling, and in no time we were "sailing" along again. If asked what the matter was, she replied, "Oh, the carburetor got too hot and quit feeding." All "Greek" to us for we didn't know what a carburetor was.

## CURRICULAR AND OTHER

Idaho History was taught in the fifth or sixth. As part of our English we wrote an Idaho History play and presented it to the room, inviting seventh and eighth graders as guests. There was an exhibit, too, of maps, booklets, themes, drawings, and relics in our History "Round-up."

In the 20's there was an acute paucity of aids and media. We didn't have much more to work with than in 1918 in the one-roomed school. I supplemented the library books by using the Traveling Library Service from Boise.

During these years, through the County Superintendent's office, we were required to administer "IQ" tests. They have proved not merely inefficient and misleading, but a curse. They were designed in the beginning for children of middle-class backgrounds, environments, and preparation.

Application of the standard 'IQ' test to children with an environmental background of extreme poverty and schooling in the average poor rural or slum school is an injustice. It is unjust to the child. It does not give the test makers any real indice of the child's capacity or psychological needs.

"IQ" tests no doubt have their place somewhere in the scheme of things, but not here. We thought at the time that this was tenuous procedure. I cannot recall any use being made of the tabulations.

The present-day Iowa Achievement Tests have functional value in that progress is shown, and strengths and weaknesses of the student are indicated.

So we learn by trial and error, and sift the dross from the good.

#### ENTERTAINMENT

School programs were put on at the old Odd Fellows' Hall to observe all special days. One year Katherine White presented a little Operetta with her first and second graders called "Peter Rabbit." It was clever and cute. I had the fun of helping to coach and of playing the piano for it.

The Salem teachers themselves tried their hand at dramatics one year and presented a play. It was a farcical thing titled: "Aaron Slick of Punkin Crick."

Mr. Woods played the part of a hill-billy farmer. Katherine White was a dancer and entertainer, and I, a hill-billy widow. "Sis," the lead of the comedy, was played by Lottie Dunham. This was a heavy part calling for much memorizing, and giving Lottie a chance to create a real characterization. She did a superb job.

We felt that we, as teachers, perhaps, were far out of character to present this kind of thing. It certainly wasn't intellectual, and the English would "curdle one's blood," yet the patrons enjoyed it to the fullest.

#### ODDS AND ENDS

Katherine was our outdoor enthusiast, and there were plans in the offing for horseback rides in the fall; toboggan parties in winter; and skiing.

In the spring it would be hiking, when, dressed like tramps, we sallied forth in search of wild flowers -- buttercup, lupine, or violet -- that grew among the sage. Sometimes we found rock specimens to take home and always the inevitable tans, blisters, and ticks.

"K" kept us in touch with the school patrons, too. In those days it was customary for the teacher to visit in the home -- stay the

Following another session at Lewiston Normal (1925) I received my life certificate.

night -- and Katherine and I went together. I think we knew the parents almost as well as the children. Perhaps to know one was to know the other.

One teacher possessed a Model T Ford Roadster, and often on weekends we (the three of us) journeyed to Weiser to visit my family. Mother fed us well and declared we were not properly nourished. Prodigious appetites indicated that.

After my Dad bought me a Chevrolet Landau, traveling became a luxury. We drove in style to Boise on shopping tours, or to see a football game. Thirty-five to thirty-eight miles per hour was a fabulous speed!

I cannot forget the frequent Sunday dinners at the Bert Wninger home. These were festal occasions. Bert and Jessie were such wonderful friends!

The reader may wonder when we got time to teach. We had hard and fast rules concerning school nights. We never went out except to PTA

I'm sure we teachers never worked harder in our lives and *at teaching*.

#### "LITTLE BLUE HEAVEN"

For several years, the little house I had rented when I first came to Midvale was used as a teacherage. At the end of the first year Lavina Sargeant decided on marriage and a family and became Mrs. Jack Lewis.

The second year Lottie Dunham joined Katherine and me in "The Little Blue Heaven," as "K" had fondly christened it, and the third year a high school teacher - Liz Handy - joined us. Liz was a good morale builder -- peppy and fun-loving -- always in for a laugh. At cooking she was a complete "dud" and admitted it. Her forte was the piano! We listened to lovely music, and all else became secondary. (I have heard that Liz in later years spent much of her life as an invalid in a wheel chair.)

#### OREGON INTERLUDE

This (under the old law) had required a year of Normal training and nine years of teaching

experience. Now I was inspired to take the year (1925-1926) off, to do some extension work and get back on the "Normal Path." Somehow the law permitted shift from County to Normal but not the reverse.

We know what happens to "best laid plans----" as told in the poem. The school year had barely started with the teacher at a nearby Oregon school suffered a nervous breakdown, and the board asked me to take over. I accepted. (The wage was attractive.) It was soon apparent that conditions in this school were conducive to anyone's breakdown. There were eight grades, 45 pupils, many incorrigible and retard.

One incorrigible was a third grade girl who ate paper in gobs, then stood on her head in the aisle to show the kids she could swallow it. I guess her need for achievement was satisfied -- but in what a way!

Anyway, the earnest pupils - and there were those - hadn't much chance to learn since most of my time was directed toward "policing." However, I did the best I could under these circumstances.

In the spring, the board asked me to stay on through June and give special tutoring to the eighth graders. This I did.

## BACK TO MIDVALE

Now it was the summer of 1926, and I received a contract from the Midvale School Board to return and teach grades five and six. This I consented to do.

Following this year, the T.C. Woods decided to move to Weiser, and I had the honor of being selected as principal of the grades and teacher of the seventh and eighth, which position I held for two years. To step into Mr. Woods' place was indeed a larger order to fulfill. These were pleasant years, and I recall many fine teachers who gave of their best to make it so. The names of Warren, Meyers, Williamson, and Keithly come to mind.

At this time the "bachelors" were Eileen Warren (Petersen), Annette Jacobson (Briggs) and myself. Living in close

proximity, one gets to know others very well - for weal or woe. I'm glad to say that we three were very compatible from the start.

Somehow, a bit of Emerson comes to mind at this point, high-sounding, perhaps, yet so true, regarding friendship: "I awake this morning with devout thanksgiving for my friends, the old and the new . . . . who hear me, who understand me, become mine - a possession for all time."

Eileen Warren (Peterson) a Normal graduate, taught grades five and six. She was a brilliant teacher with keen insight in pupil analysis: ever inspiring her students to a higher degree of excellence. She was herself so well-versed in the skills that she would not accept mediocrity in others. She could have taught at college level.

The Home Economics and Music instructor in the high school was Annette Jacobson (Briggs), a College of Idaho product. Annette was extremely capable, thorough and painstaking in her work; popular with her pupils and with the patrons, too.

Each spring in a grand finale of the Glee Club work, Annette presented an operetta. One year it was the "Mikado" - quite sophisticated for a small high school group, yet very effectively done.

It was my pleasure to help coach and to play for this production, and I recall that the students presented me with a gold lame purse in appreciation.

## FEW CONTACTS

With the passing of years, one loses touch with former students. Once in awhile I meet men and women in their 40's and 50's who were my Midvale pupils, which tells me it has been a long time ago.

During the war often one saw names of boys (who had sat in my seventh and eighty grades) then serving their country in some branch of the armed services. Here, I shall write of two of them -- Jack Colson and Alva Hood -- both of whom were caught in the maelstrom of the war.

We could cite a parallel between these two lives up to a certain point. There were both farm boys: both were "A" students; fine school citizens and outstanding school leaders. As I recall, they had traveled the first 12 years of the school road together. Then came the war and fortunes were changed.

Jack served with a tank unit which operated in the European Theater and which won national attention for meritorious service. Their story was featured in an American Magazine of the 40's. Jack was awarded the Purple Heart for wounds sustained and was discharged from the army in 1945.

Years since the war have been good to him. His wounds were not serious enough to curtail normal living. He is married; owns his own home; and has a good position.

Alva entered the Air Corps and became navigator on a bomber of the 707th Division stationed in England. This unit had flown many successful missions (the exact number is not available) then on returning from one in March, 1944, they were shot down over Germany. The family were apprized by a message that read: "Missing in Action."

After the war, research was made to find out the fate of these men. Somewhere contact was made with an old German farmer who turned over to the investigation the "dog-tags" of the crew members and a piece of the plane that bore the number.

Place of the burial was revealed and the remains exhumed. Only one could be identified and that by his teeth. The

condition of the remains prohibited sending them home for burial, hence they were laid to rest in the National Cemetery at St. Louis.

So it was that Alva Hood made the supreme sacrifice, as thousands of young men have throughout our history and as thousands are still doing, that you and I might be free.

The words of Thomas C. Clark come to mind:

"In no small plot of ground our sons are laid;

As wide as earth the tomb that holds their dust.

In fiery deserts their last beds are made,

Or in far seas, where warships gather rust.

In bristling isles some take their final sleep;

Some lofty battles rest in vales of ice;  
And others on lone heights their vigils keep.

O, Land of Lincoln, great thy sacrifice!  
And he who spoke at Gettysburg for God

Speaks once again. For every dear son slain

he cheers the brokenhearted, lifts the rod

of righteousness, and bids: 'Seek peace again!'

No longer let God's purpose be withheld;

Let us now build his world of Brotherhood!"