kindex®
< Scan QR to view this original record online, or visit https://ezratclark.kindex.org/s/212690

Title: **Chapter XIII: THE COUNTRY SCHOOLMASTER**
Provenance:

Category: **Document**
Person: **Walter Edward Clark**
Date:

MY MEMOIRS RECOLLECTIONS OF PIONEER LIFE IN BEAR LAKE VALLEY Written by Walter Edward Clark Chapter XIII THE COUNTRY SCHOOLMASTER My first teaching experience came the first winter after I had return

MY MEMOIRS

RECOLLECTIONS OF PIONEER LIFE

IN BEAR LAKE VALLEY

Written by Walter Edward Clark

Chapter XIII

THE COUNTRY SCHOOLMASTER

My first teaching experience came the first winter after I had returned from my mission. A concrete and brick school building was constructed in Georgetown in 1913. In addition to a full basement, it had two floors of two rooms each, but a fourth teacher had never been employed. The enrollment for 1916-17 was perhaps as large as it has been since that year. Charles Lindsey, from Nounan, an experienced teacher was the principal. It was perhaps due to his influence that I was asked to come assist. Teaching certificates were secured by receiving a passing grade on a state examination administered by the county Superintendent of Schools. The salary for teaching did not encourage students to qualify for teaching. During World War I there was a shortage of teachers, and permits were limited. Salaries were determined at the discretion of the board. I recommended Edwin E. Pinckney, a talented young man who had married a local girl, Jenny Sorenson, as a teacher for Georgetown. He continued for many years.

For the winter months only I was employed at $70.00 a month to take the fourth game of twenty pupils from the intermediate teacher and the fifth grade of fifteen pupils from the principal. Spring was late so I continued until the school year ended and I accepted employment for the coming year. Principal Lindsay persuaded the board to employ a fifth teacher and offer a ninth grade. The enrollment was good. I taught a class in agriculture, taken by girls as well as boys, while Mr. Lindsey taught my grammar (later called English) classes. It was towards spring, 1918 when I spoke sharply to my best student, Ellsworth Clark, and he cried. That moment I decided I was not a teacher and refused an assignment for the next year.

January, 1919 I made a trip to Utah, returning February 3rd to Farmington where a letter from my mother reported the school board requested me to return and complete the teaching year for Miss Gilcrist who did not return after the Christmas holidays. I was the year the flu was so severe. I only taught six weeks spread over several months and was paid only for the days I taught, yet I had to be in readiness all the time. The other teachers received full pay. The district was not short of funds, as the railroad paid 70% of the total tax. I accepted a position for the next year at an increase in salary from $70 to $100. Due to the war, money was cheap. Melvin bought a suit to wear to the mission field. It was small so I took it. He immediately ordered another of the same quality but the price had gone from $70 to $77. I was teaching for $70 a month.

Crops in Bear Lake Valley the summer of 1919 were almost a failure, and the winter of 1919-20 a severe one. A depression followed. I resigned in April to care for the cattle, and my wife Violet, who had had seven years of teaching experience, com-

pleted my term. I assumed my teaching was at an end.

There were a few experiences that I had teaching Elementary School that are still vivid in my mind today. The first week I taught, I had five pupils from the Elizabeth Hayes home: the twin girls –Lillian, like her father's folks and Lillis, like her mother; Merlin, who I liked so well I employed him for the summer; and Lilburn and Smith, who came at the request of the truant officer while they waited for a permit to miss school to provide for a widowed mother with a large family. In a way, my first year was my most rewarding year. Of the group I taught that winter, four became successful teachers: Ellsworth Clark, who first taught in Idaho, then in the Granite District in Salt Lake; Louis Dunn who taught for many years in Pocatello; LaRue Larson (Larson) who graduated from the U. of U. and taught in the Jordan District; and Merla Bacon (Dunn) who taught in Bear Lake.

At a Bear Lake County Fair I noticed a large map of the United States with produce and pictures attached where the produced or manufactured goods were produced. A card attached read: Fish Haven School, Mirla Bacon, teacher. I knew one of my teaching techniques had been a success.

One day the three school board members spent a few minutes in my room. As whey left a whistle was heard. The chairman said, "Do you know who that was?" I did not. He informed me it was LeGrand Clark. I did not believe him, but had no evidence he was wrong. It must have been six weeks later when I heard a similar sound during recess. I asked Gladys Sorenson if she was the one who whistled as the trustees left the room. She colored and said, "Yes." I returned the answer with a smile.

One day I tapped a girl with a pointer I had in my hand. The next morning the girls from her part of town were in a jitter and I heard one say, "Mr. Clark is going to get it. Aunt M— came to school." The principal called me to his office and said, "It is reported you punished "A" with a big stick." I excused myself, went to my room, picked up the pointer and returned and remarked, "This is the club I beat her with," and left. From that hour I had the respect of the girl who had expected me to cowed by her mother's bombardment. I think I also had the admiration of the mother.

I asked a boy who was guilty of misconduct to stay after school. As he started out the door, I reminded him he was to stay. He replied he was not going to stay and reached for the window pole, a broom handle with an iron hook on the end used to lower windows. He made a pass at me, leaving a dent in the door. I straightened up and pointed inside the room. He entered. I replied, "Now you have that out of your system you may go home." He was the only student who sent me a Christmas present. From then on he was a gentleman.