

EARLY MEMORIES OF MONROE HIGH SCHOOL

By Sylvia Collings Musig

Fifty years ago the schools of our county (Sevier) were not consolidated. Each little town supported its own school and it was not easy for a small community to maintain a high school for just a few students.

In the summer of 1907 a little group of enthusiastic mothers in Monroe (Sevier County, Utah) feeling a need for an education for their boys and girls, visited and asked the parents who had children that age to sign a petition for a high school and to pledge their loyal support to such an institution. Their efforts were successful and October 1907 marked the beginning of Monroe High School.

Our School Board, then called "Trustees", were Nephi H. Nielsen, William A. Warnock, and Carl Tuft, and they gave their support.

The northeast room on the first floor of the elementary school building was the first home of our little high school.

Mr. Earl Thompson of Annabella was our first Principal and he taught algebra, English, ancient history and physiography. Mr. Archie Larsen, the eighth grade teacher, taught bookkeeping to the high school students and during that period Mr. Thompson taught the eighth grade English.

At the opening of school there were only six students enrolled, but their numbers grew until there were more than twenty attending. A number discontinued so at the close of the school year there were fourteen students. Those who continued to the end of the year and received their credits and were listed in the Commencement announcements were Nita Collings, Dora Brown, Velma Foreman, Edna Sorensen, Carl Larsen, Walter Lundgreen, Orvel Anderson. Ray Swain. J. Lewis Jones, Franklin Goold, and Leo Birdsall.

Today so much importance is being placed on the "firsts" in history that I would like to say that the first president of this school organization was a girl, Nita Collings, later Mrs. Wilford Hansen. She also had the honor of being the first valedictorian of Monroe High School.

In the fall of 1908, Mr. Thompson accepted the principalship of Richfield High School and the Monroe students were sorry to lose him Another fine young man took his place. Mr. Joseph F. Anderson of Fillmore was our new principal.

The elementary school needed the room which the high school occupied and the only space available for the high school was the teachers' office a little room which in later years was used as a storeroom. For six weeks there were only two students, Grace Bohman and Sylvia Collings. It seemed that the people were not going to support a high school and it would fail. A meeting was held and the school Trustees appealed to the parents for support. They said they could not afford to pay a teacher \$90.00 a month to teach two students and if more did not enroll, our high school would be discontinued.

After the crops were harvested the students came and the number grew too large for the little 10 by 12 room, so they moved over to the old City Hall. This was a rock room over the old jail across the street south from the present elementary school building.

This year a second year's course was given and Mr. Anderson taught all of the subjects to the freshmen and sophomores except algebra which was taught by Mr. Edgar White, the seventh grade teacher. Fourteen boys and six girls completed the courses given that year.

Although their numbers were few they had a very good baseball team. They were Carl Larsen, Oliver Larsen, Enoch Larsen, Ervin Warnock, Elvin Christiansen and J. Lewis Jones. Franklin Goold had been one of the team the first year but he was not attending this year. We are unable to name all of the boys who played on the teams during the next few years.

In the spring of 1909 they went over and played with the Richfield High School. All of the students went -- not in a school bus as we do today -- not in Buicks and Oldsmobiles -- they went in a beet rack. They were all comfortably seated on a canvas with straw underneath. Monroe won the game.

The students chose as their motto "WE WILL FIND A WAY OR MAKE ONE", and they lived up to their motto.

This year the boys started basketball. They had no coach but they studied the rules of basketball themselves. They had no gym so they practiced on the school ground. They went to Richfield and played their team on the slick floor of the Anona Pavilion. The boys had courage, ability and good sportsmanship and they won their share of victories.

In the spring of 1909 the Monroe High School organized their first band. They had no music teacher, but Mr. Anderson was a good promoter and he played a tuba in the band. Mr. Trimble, the sixth grade teacher played a baritone and he had their support. Elliott Larsen with his comet and Dan Baker with his trombone had had experience playing in the town band. They were really the foundation of the high school band. Other members were Earl Collings and Irvin Warnock with alto horns, Ray Swain played the bass drum and Enoch Larsen played the snare drum and Lewis Jones played the clarinet. They made good music and played on a number of special occasions.

The school year of 1909-10 a third year course was given. Mr. Anderson taught in the old City Hall and Mr. Jacob Magleby, a new member of the high school faculty, taught in the old Methodist Church. Mr. Joseph Davis, one of the elementary teachers taught one class.
age three

In the spring of 1910, the "H" was made on the hillside east of Monroe. The students planned to make M.H.S. but later they decided that three letters would be too many, so they let the "H" stand alone signifying "High School." The last Friday of March each year was set apart as "H" Day and the letter received a new coat of white. When the work was done. a celebration was held. A dance in the pavillion always concluded the events of the day.

Now in the Spring of 1918, eight years after the "H" was made, the students who were attending school at that time decided to change the "H" to an "M" for Monroe. When it was accomplished they admired the "M" with pride But they had not asked the consent of the students who had made that "H". Those boys had worked hard to make that letter on the steep hillside. It meant much to them. They were men now, each doing his own work, but they got together and in the words of the poet "While their companions slept they were toiling upward in the night." And the next morning when the high school students looked to the east to admire their beautiful "M", they couldn't believe their eyes. There stood the "H" with its new spring coat of white! Then the students of 1918 showed their fighting spirit and tore out part of "H". A few days later, however, the two groups got

together and went up to repair the "H" and it stood for a number of years. Then with common consent it was torn out and "SS" was made signifying "South Sevier".

The year of 1910-11 the Home Economics department was added to the curriculum. Two elementary teachers taught the classes after their grades had been dismissed. Lottie Larsen taught cooking in one little room of a dwelling house. They had no electric ranges or refrigerators as we have now. They used an old second hand coal range. They didn't have cabinets or sinks. They didn't have the convenience of hot water. In fact, there wasn't even cold water piped into the room. Delma Hunt taught sewing in the old Methodist building.

That same year Mr. Seymone Rasmusson, another elementary teacher, taught physiography to the high school students.

The year 1911-1912 John D. Speirs was our new principal. A room in the elementary school building was divided and Mr. Speirs taught in one little room and Mr. Magleby in the other.

Susie Johnson, the fourth grade teacher, taught cooking in a little frame room at the back of a store, one and a half blocks from the school building. The girls chopped the wood, made the fire, carried the water from quite a distance, and furnished the material that they cooked. The class could not be held until Miss Johnson had dismissed her grade so it was late and on a winter day the girls didn't get home until dark. Just before Christmas they made candy and cookies and on Christmas Eve some of the boys took them in a big bob-sleigh and they delivered Christmas boxes to the older people, the sick and the lonely.

Miss Lavern Stevens, the first grade teacher, taught sewing for a time in the Methodist building. Then Mrs. Jennie Spreague, a Monroe lady who was an expert seamstress taught in the old City Hall and later in the elementary school building. The girls had to furnish machines from home.

Alta Erickson, another elementary teacher, taught speech. At that time they called it "elocution."

To all these teachers in pioneering the Monroe High School and who worked so diligently and patiently, we express our appreciation.

During the school year 1911-12 the schools of Sevier County were consolidated and later the Monroe High School became the South Sevier High School as it included a district and not just Monroe. Mr. Lewis W. Jones was the first representative from our district on the county school board. He served faithfully for thirty-two years. Much credit is due him for built in the Summer and Fall of 1913 and was ready for use in January 1914. (The building spoken of here was demolished).

The fourteen students who were the first graduating class of Monroe High School have been useful and honorable citizens. Four of the boys were in the service during World War I. Three boys have been doctors. Two were our Post Masters. Some filled responsible positions in other lines. All of the members of that class have served faithfully and well in the communities in which they have lived. Six have now passed away. Only one of the fourteen is living in Monroe -- Dora Brown. Hers has been a life of service and who in our community has influenced many lives for good.

After hearing of the few advantages that the early students of our high school had, we should appreciate the many opportunities that are ours today. Let us make the most of them