

A Family of Teachers

Herbert Beall, my grandfather, was born in Indiana in the late nineteenth century. With little formal schooling beyond high school, he became a teacher in one-room rural schools in Indiana and Michigan (near Allegan). Suffering from allergies to pollen in Michigan, Herbert found relief by teaching in the Dakotas, where he boarded at the homes of students' families. His own family stayed at home in Michigan.

Herbert and his wife Carrie had five children, all of whom taught school at some time in their lives. The oldest, Wendell, soon left teaching to work for the U.S. Postal Service. Mamie Beall Kunde taught briefly at the Hathaway School in Bridgman before her marriage. Walter earned a B.A. from Western (now Western Michigan University), and taught high school students in Traverse City (1930s and 1940s) and Watervliet (1950s) He also found time to be in the U.S. Army in both world wars. Henry (my father) taught at the Martin and Mt. Tabor one-room schools in the 1920s, at Cribbs in the 1930s, and at Penn Yan in the 1940s and 1950s. Though he later became the principal at the South Elementary School in Watervliet, he always recalled his days as a rural school teacher with nostalgia.

When Henry began college at Western in 1928, he met a fellow student named Isabelle Anderson. (Isabelle was the daughter of Dora Sumners Anderson, who taught for many years at the Spencer Mills one-room school near Gowen, in Kent County.) Henry and Isabelle married in 1929, received temporary teaching certificates, and began teaching. Before they moved to Berrien County Henry taught briefly at Trufant, in Kent County, but during the Depression Isabelle was not allowed to teach; married men teachers were given the available jobs. In the forties she began teaching at the Cribbs School. During the 1940s I attended both Penn Yan and Cribbs, and had both my parents as teachers. In the 1950s Walter was one of my high school teachers.

Edith, the youngest of Herbert's children, taught from the forties through the sixties in the Hathaway rural school and in the New Troy and Bridgman elementary schools. Henry, Isabelle, and Edith all earned their B.A degrees and permanent teaching certificates in the late forties and fifties by attending summer school classes and taking correspondence courses from Western.

Born in 1937, I grew up during years when teachers (even in cities) were very poorly paid and undervalued. As a result, I failed to see teaching as an inviting profession. Today, in retrospect, I realize how satisfying the work was for my family, and am proud to be a product of all these teachers.

By Carol Leth Stone

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