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# Memoir of a Country Schoolteacher

## Dolly Holliday Meets the Ethnic West, 1919-1920

by Dolly Holliday Clark

Edited and with an introduction by Paula M. Nelson

In the fall of 1919, Dolly Holliday, an idealistic seventeen-year-old teacher from Indiana, arrived in Mandan, North Dakota, eager to assume her duties as a western schoolmarm. Because she had read so many of the western novels popular at the time, she believed that she was about to enter a world of wide-open spaces, laconic cowboys, and potential romance. Dolly Holliday found the wide-open spaces, but there would be no cowboys and very little romance. She learned first hand that there were many kinds of "west" in the West; her new home was a struggling agricultural area inhabited, at least in part, by a stern, hard-working population whose culture and values varied quite dramatically from hers.

Dolly Holliday was born in Indiana in 1902. Her grandparents had moved to Indiana from North Carolina in the 1840s because of their opposition to slavery. Her grandfather owned a general store and ran the local post office. Her parents were dairy farmers. The family followed the Quaker faith, one of the most individualistic of Protestant denominations. Dolly graduated from Cicero High School and attended a twelve-week normal course at Ball State Teachers College in Muncie. Because she came from a progressive family with strong middle-class values, she was unprepared for the very different world she would find south of Mandan.

What was this different world like? During her first year in North Dakota, Holliday lived in a German-Russian community, whose religious, family and educational values were profoundly different than hers. The locals were Catholic and heard most services in their native tongue. As German-Russians, they maintained an authoritarian family style once common among farming groups in Europe and the United States, but it was a system that was gradually giving way to a more flexible and democratic structure in many regions. In the German-Russian family, the children served the needs of the group, rather than following their own wishes; they owed an obligation to the family until they reached age twenty-one. Individual happiness was not as important as the good of the family as a unit. The wishes of the family head were always

paramount. Within this culture, education was seen as unnecessary and impractical and even destructive of family goals. Most of the German-Russian families farmed. They assumed that their children would farm as well; the ability to do hard, physical work was all that was necessary to fulfill this goal. Education's growing emphasis on innovation, experimentation, and a broad view of issues that helped people see beyond the family and the locality was perceived as a threat by these German-Russian families.

Holliday, of course, came from a family that had obviously given her wide latitude and had respected her goals and ambitions. Although she was only seventeen, they had believed her wise enough to follow her dreams halfway across the continent. Holliday's family had provided a complete, town-style education for her (she notes that she had never attended a one-room country school), including extra schooling at Ball State, which would help further her career. Dolly Holliday saw a broader world beyond the farm and participated directly in the modernizing forces that were reshaping the United States after World War I.

When two such diverse sets of ideals came into contact, of course, clashes inevitably occurred. Holliday never did come to understand the German-Russian point of view and even encouraged one Mueller son, Adam, to try to break away from patriarchal authority. The results were dreadful for him. The German-Russians, for their part, never accepted Holliday. She remained an outsider throughout her stay in the community. While she loved the children she taught and believed she provided them with a taste of a softer, less utilitarian world, she was glad to leave that area when her year was up. During her second year in North Dakota, she lived among people more like herself, but found that to have its own complications. Part Two of the memoir (to appear in the spring 1992 issue of *North Dakota History*) will describe those.

*Memoir of a Country Schoolteacher* is a frank and realistic account of a young woman's sojourn into rural North Dakota early in the twentieth century. It illustrates some of the hardships rural teachers faced, not in



*Dolly Holliday, taken on the steps of her second school, Highland Consolidated School, in the spring of 1922.*

*— Photo courtesy of Dolly Holliday Clark*

the schoolrooms but after hours, when the system of boarding limited privacy and created complicated personal relations. It is illuminating, amusing and heartrending all at once. Dolly Holliday admits to learning important lessons during this hard year. The struggle she faced in a world so different than her own

taught her to cope with the exigencies of life. Her North Dakota teaching career built her courage and her strength.

*\*The names of the families in this memoir are fictional.*

### Heading West

The year was nineteen hundred and nineteen. The rear platform of the train was windy and dirty. My clothes, face and hair were full of smoke and cinders which were belching from the engine of the coal-burning train as it thundered westward over the treeless plains of North Dakota.

It was late afternoon. The month was early September and there was the feel of autumn in the air, although the temperature was very balmy and pleasant. I was gazing at the most beautiful sunset I had ever beheld so, ignoring the cinders and soot, I reveled in the beauty of the western sky. The clarity of the atmosphere amazed me. I could see for miles across the rolling prairie.

At midnight I would reach my destination—Mandan, North Dakota. And although there would be no one to meet me and I knew nothing of the town, its size nor hotel accommodations, I wasn't in the least concerned.

To a naive, seventeen-year-old girl who had never traveled more than thirty miles from the small central Indiana community where she grew up, this was, indeed, a storybook adventure. It was the realization of my lifelong ambition to be a schoolteacher.

Why North Dakota? I will tell you. I was an avid reader of the works of Zane Grey and Harold Bell Wright. They were writers of western novels, at that time current best sellers. In many of their books, the heroine was a schoolteacher fresh from the east. My secret desire was to go west to teach, but my hopes of attaining my desires were slim.

Then I heard there was a shortage of teachers in North Dakota. That, although not exactly Grey nor Wright territory, was near enough for me.

Now my dream was coming true. There I was, with a high school diploma and twelve weeks of Normal School behind me, heading for that land of enchantment so vividly described by my favorite authors. What could be more exciting or romantic?

At last, a cool evening breeze drove me inside. I was greeted by the singsong voice of the porter calling, "Last call for dinner in the dining car." The conductor met me and invited me to dinner as his guest. I accepted. I had eaten breakfast and lunch in the dining car and was overawed with the splendor of the service. There were so many silver pieces on either side of my plate and all the serving dishes were of silver. Exotic foods were served in the diners in those days, so part

of the time I was not sure what I was eating, but it was all very delicious. A colored waiter at my elbow most of the time was, however, a little disconcerting.

At Chicago I had to change stations. I had a wait of several hours and it was ten o'clock before we pulled out. Excitement had kept me awake most of the night before, and by the time I had settled in my seat I realized I was very tired and sleepy and regretted not taking a berth. Fortunately, when I inquired of the conductor if there was a vacancy, he was able to find me a lower berth, and I am sure by the time my head hit the pillow I was asleep.

I awoke several times during the night. From my train window, the world looked so strange and eerie. The train made a few stops and, as I watched the passengers getting off and others boarding, the scene gave me a sense of unreality.

When I arrived at Mandan, the station was dark and deserted. However, another woman who looked poor and honest had gotten off the train with me. I asked her about a hotel and she suggested the Nigey. She said most of the teachers stayed there when they were in town. It was a respectable middle-class hotel, such as teachers at that time could afford. We went together to the hotel where she introduced me to Mr. Nigey, who was at the desk. He carried my bags up to my room. I undressed, bathed, and crept into a comfortable clean bed. I went to sleep at once.

### A New World

The next morning, Sunday, I slept late. I was awakened by someone whistling "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles," a popular song of that day. I was very much surprised. I supposed myself to be in the "Wild and Woolly West" where all one would hear were cowboy songs. I had been concerned because I didn't know how to square dance, supposing that kind of dance was all they knew. Since it was dark when I arrived and all that interested me was finding a hotel, I had not noticed what a modern little city Mandan was, with its around four thousand souls.

I dressed and went down to the desk to inquire about a place to get breakfast. I turned the wrong corner and missed the coffee shop that had been recommended, but I found a Delmonico's. In the western books I had read, nearly every town had a Delmonico's. That was for me! It proved to be the proverbial "greasy spoon." Men were its only occupants, and Grey's and Wright's



*Main Street in Mandan, looking east, December 11, 1923.*

cowboys would never have gaped at a woman like that. Besides, those diners didn't even look like cowboys. I took a swallow or two of coffee and left. From then on, I was careful to get my directions right.

I spent most of the morning writing letters. Presently, there was a knock at my door. There stood a wizened, little man with the friendliest grin on his face. He proved to be Mr. Hetler, the deputy county superintendent. I was to learn that Morton County was a very large county and too much for Mr. Jensen, the county school superintendent, to supervise alone. Mr. Hetler was so friendly that I began to feel less alone. He told me that I was to teach in a one-room rural school. That suited me very well. I had never gone to a country school but there was something about them that attracted me, and I had always felt that I'd like to teach in one. He said that he could not take me to my school until the following day since his schedule for that day was full.

At noon I found the Lewis and Clark Hotel and had a good dinner. The hotel was new and very modern. Besides the coffee shop there was a dining room, and at the dinner hour there was a maitre d'hotel, who, mind you, wore tails. In Indiana there was nothing so fine any closer than Indianapolis.

When I got back to the hotel Mr. Hetler was in the lobby talking to a nice looking, middle-aged man. He introduced him to me as Senator (something-or-other, I don't remember his name). He was catching the train for Washington the next day. We visited for a time until some teachers whom Mr. Hetler was taking to their school arrived, and he left with them.

"Do you like to walk?" the senator asked me. I

assured him that I very much liked to walk, so we started out. First he showed me everything that was of interest in town. One object of interest was a home whose architectural design was very lovely but quite unusual. He said the man who built it for his home was a very fine architect who had made a name for himself and was much in demand in that area. I later met this man under rather unusual circumstances.

Then we took to the country. He showed me the trenches that had been dug during the Indian Wars. There were ranges of hills that looked like low mountains—the buttes, here and there, that looked so near and yet were miles and miles away.

He introduced me to the flora and fauna of the region. For instance, there were prairie chickens that we scared up, and jack rabbits, looking very much like young calves loping across the hills. They really could jump! And the Russian thistles. When they reach their maturity they are huge balls, many as large as six feet or more in diameter. During the summer their foliage gets very, very dry. Their roots are shallow, and when the fall comes the wind uproots them and they roll across the country at amazing speed, jumping fences and obstacles as if they were alive. I have sat by the window for hours and watched them. They were quite fascinating.

It was dusk when we got back to the hotel. It had been a pleasant and interesting afternoon. The weather had been a little brisk but not cold. The sun had shone and the sky was so big and blue. When we got to the hotel he told me how much he had enjoyed the afternoon, wished me good luck, and said goodbye. I never saw him again.



Part of a German-Russian family at St. Anthony, 1933. Mother Francisca Hoffman with (in rear row, left to right) Ann, Regina, Eva, and Jack; and front row, Cecilia, Margaret, Tony, and Rose.

—Photo courtesy of Rose C. Austin, Mandan, North Dakota

After going out for a bite to eat, I went to a movie and then to bed.

### A Rude Awakening

The next day I could hardly wait for Mr. Hetler to come to take me to my school. He arrived in the early afternoon in a spring wagon. He put my trunk in the back.

The seemingly endless, rolling land held a fascination for me. There were no trees except small shrubs along the coulees. The coulees are the low places that run between the hills which, when the thaw comes in the spring, fill with water which gurgles along like a stream. One could see for miles. It was hard for me to believe that the lone horseman riding a ridge which I would have assumed to be not over half a mile away was, in fact, seven miles away. But little did I think that those rolling, treeless plains would become so much a part of me that I would miss them for years to come; that I would miss the sound of the almost constant wind and the force of it as it pushed me along when it was at my back and the effort it took to go forward when I was facing it.

As we rode along, Mr. Hetler talked to me about my school and what I could expect. He did not leave me with the illusion that my year would be without problems.

My school was in a German-Russian community. Mr. Hetler explained that these people were Germans

who, years ago, had settled in Russia.<sup>1</sup> When the migration had taken place and in what part of Russia I could never find out. Their language was a mixture of German and Russian. They had little social contact with other ethnic groups in the area. He said my first grade would know little, if any, English. My presence, he said, would be resented by some who would rather have their children at home, working, than getting an education. It seemed I would have to do my own janitor work also.

My enthusiasm was diminishing at a rapid rate. This was not what I had expected at all. I was looking forward to living on a big ranch, with a handsome foreman who would immediately fall in love with me. They were the dreams of an immature seventeen-year-old. In my foolishness, I deserved Adam, of whom I shall speak later.

It must have been around five o'clock when we arrived at Dominick Mueller's, where I was to board. The house was large and appeared to have been built within the last ten years.

As we drove into the barnyard, five or six children came running out of the house. They told us their parents were away and would not be back until the next day. When Mr. Hetler introduced me to the eldest girl, Frances, she said, "We not keep teachan dis year."

"You'll have to keep her," Mr. Hetler emphatically said, "there is no place else for her to stay." With that ultimatum he lifted my trunk from the wagon, carried it into the house, got in the wagon, and drove away. All

1. The German-Russians were German peoples who had migrated to Russia at the invitation of Catherine the Great, in the late eighteenth century, and Czar Alexander I, early in the nineteenth century. By the 1870s the German-Russians were under some pressure to Russianize and were in danger of losing their special privileges, such as exemption from the draft. These changes in their status in Russia prompted them to look elsewhere for farmland and new homes. The Great Plains became an attractive alternative. German-Russians

migrated to Kansas and Dakota Territory after 1870. They tended to stay to themselves; as late as 1930 they maintained their unique language, a dialect that combined German and Russian, and their native customs, and resisted Americanization. For more information, see Timothy J. Klobardanz, "Volksdeutsche, The Eastern European Germans," in *Plains Folk: North Dakota's Ethnic History*, edited by William C. Sherman and Playford V. Thorson (Fargo, North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, 1988), pp. 117-181.

the time Frances was reiterating, "We not keep teachan dis year."

I was panic-stricken. What was to become of me? There I was, twenty-seven miles from Mandan, no telephone, and no place to stay.

The children ranged in age from a little boy close to two years old to Adam, who was eighteen. None of them seemed concerned except to look at me soberly and repeat, "We not keep teachan dis year."

Frances set about fixing something for us to eat. As we started to sit down at the table, someone pulled my chair out from under me and I landed on the floor with a thump. They became hilarious, and although I felt more like tears, I managed a halfhearted laugh, too.

The only food we had, as I remember, was dry bread and sausages. The sausage had an unusual flavor and I was afraid it was spoiled. I was told later that it was the seasoning but I could not find out what it was for they knew only the foreign name for it. Later, I learned that it was garlic with which I had not as yet become familiar. While I was there and had to eat it I did not particularly care for it, but after I left I often thought of those sausages and realized, too late, that they were very tasty. Today, garlic is one of my favorite seasonings.

The house had two stories, and there were at least four bedrooms. There was a basement and central heating but no inside plumbing, although they were very proud of the room that would, someday, be the bath. A wide hall ran from the front to the back through the middle of the house. On one side of the hall was the kitchen and dining room. On the other side was a small living room, the bath-to-be, and a bedroom. A stairway went up from the hall to the other bedrooms. The woodwork and floors were of beautiful oak, and I learned that the floors throughout the house were scrubbed every week by the girls on their hands and knees. Everything was very clean.

I was surprised to see such a beautiful home furnished with the most rickety old furniture. I assumed bad times came before they got it furnished. In the dining room was an old table with a well-worn oilcloth on it. An organ sat in the corner. A few old chairs completed the furnishings. The small living room was more like a shrine. The walls were covered with holy pictures and there were several statues of Jesus and the Virgin Mary. There was a shrine in one corner and that was about all. No one ever sat in there. I don't believe there was a chair in the room.

That night I slept with Frances. It didn't bother me for I was used to sleeping with my sister, Jane. Frances and I slept together during the time I was there. As the days grew colder and the time arrived to don winter longies, I noticed, to my horror, that Frances's winter underwear was sewed on. It may not have been true, but I was told that they wore the same underwear all winter, without changing. I did not inquire into the matter. I felt, since I had to sleep with her, I'd rather not know.

The next morning I was up early, but not very bright nor happy either. I had hardly slept all night wondering what was going to become of me. I was frightened too,

wondering what these strange people might do to me.

When I entered the kitchen next morning, there stood Mrs. Mueller. They had come home early to take care of the stock. She didn't look at all formidable, and I relaxed somewhat. I could see that she was in the last stages of pregnancy, and I could understand why she did not wish to keep me. I could not be sure that she would not throw me and my trunk out of the house. However, she was very kind. Her English was very limited, so we didn't have much conversation. She fixed me a breakfast of sausages (again), fried potatoes, and hot tea served in a glass with lemon.

### My Apprehension Deepens

Mr. Hetler had told me that my school would not start for a few days as some repairs had to be made. However, I could not wait to see my schoolhouse and since it was a beautiful crisp autumn morning, I decided to walk down and look it over. Mrs. Mueller told me the key would probably be over the door. I wasn't sure that I could reach it but thought I could look in at the windows, anyway.

As I approached the building, I noticed that a strip of ground about twenty feet or more wide had been plowed all the way around the building. I suppose it enclosed a square of about one hundred fifty yards with the schoolhouse in the middle. I was to learn this was a fire break in case of a prairie fire.

The windows proved to be low and they were unlocked. I raised one that had a chair sitting near it, and, with much maneuvering, pulled the chair through it. Then I got the key and entered. It was the most dilapidated and hopeless looking schoolroom I had ever seen. There had been a fire, evidently from an overheated stove. There was a large hole in the floor and a pot-bellied stove was sitting down in the hole. Then and there I gave way and let the tears flow, buckets of them.

When I had my cry, I dried my eyes and started looking around for some redeeming features. There weren't any. In the corner was a small table with a water bucket on it with a dipper from which all of them would drink. The water, I found out later, had to be carried from a farmhouse nearby. There was no library and not enough textbooks to go around. I found the register with the names of the pupils, ninety percent of which I couldn't pronounce. But "hope springs eternal in the human heart," especially when you are young, and I began to think constructively, or to try to.

As I was leaving, Adam came up leading an extra horse. The one he was riding had a saddle. The other horse had just a blanket thrown over it. I insisted on riding the one with the saddle. Adam was very reluctant but finally let me have my way. I mounted my horse and pulled on the rein to turn him. As I was to experience, western horses, when they are sharply turned, sometimes rear up on their hind legs and sort of pivot on them. When my horse reared, I screamed. Of course, that frightened the horse and he took off like a streak. I kept screaming. My feet were out of the too-long stirrups and I was clinging to the pommel with all

my might. At last it got through to me that my screaming was frightening the animal. I stopped screaming and the horse quieted down. We stopped and waited for Adam. He had not been able to get near us on the old nag he was riding. We rode on home without incident.

### The Sun Shines Again

The next morning Mrs. Mueller said, "You good girl. We keep you." Those words were surely music to my ears.

By Monday of the following week, the schoolhouse had been put in order and my school year began. I had three of the Mueller children, Frances in the sixth grade and the twins, Barbara and Thekla. I don't remember what grade they were in.

The days that I spent in the home, before school started, enabled me to become better acquainted with the family. Mrs. Mueller was a meek, hard-working woman who did whatever her brute (there is no other name for him) of a husband told her to do. Adam would not have been a bad-looking young man, with some decent clothes and a haircut. He had very little education, knew nothing of the outside world, and cared less.

Mr. Mueller, I believe, was the cruelest man I have ever met. Adam did most of the farm work while the father sat around the house most of the time. When one of the little ones played around the room, I noticed the boy would swerve away to avoid getting near his father's chair. If he got near enough his father would reach out and thump him with his big thick fingers. There was never any reason for it. I know that it hurt, but the little tyke would just back off looking frightened. His little mouth would pucker but he wouldn't cry.

About the second week I was there I came into the kitchen one morning and Mrs. Mueller was bending over a washtub surrounded by the children. In the middle of the tub, which had a few inches of water in it, was a newborn baby. It was lying on a towel and there were folded towels under its head to keep it above the water. It had been born in the night sans doctor, sans midwife. The children all chorused, "Maman iss bating de new babee."

One day when I entered the dining room, each child was sitting on a chair, being very quiet and sedate. At first I thought they were being punished. Then they all chorused, "We're ironing." And so they were. Mrs. Mueller had folded very neatly all the flat pieces, such as sheets, pillowcases, and towels, and had placed some on each of the chairs. Then she had set a child on each pile. Those were the days when everything had to be ironed and, I must say, the children did a good job. My bedding was always smooth and wrinkle free.

### Starting School

The weather had been just beautiful, so the night before my first day of school, I laid out a pink dress that came to my ankles. The skirt was long and tight, as was the style that year. Then I planned to wear white high-heel shoes and a black velvet stole around my shoul-

ders. When I got up next morning and looked out the window, my disappointment knew no bounds. The ground was white and it was still snowing, so I changed to a winter dress, coat, and boots. I never did get to wear my pink dress to school.

That little white schoolhouse holds a very tender place in my heart. I really don't know why, because I had more unhappy moments that year than in any other of my teaching experience. I was terribly homesick. I was lonely for companionship. The only people I had to talk to besides my pupils were the ones where I stayed. We had little in common to talk about, and there was the language barrier besides. I knew that few of the school patrons wanted me there. They had never had a teacher who stayed the year out, and some of them tried to make sure that I did not.

But my littleschool, with between twenty and twenty-five pupils, was my pride and joy. I loved all of them, and I think most of them loved me. We had so little to work with, but we made out.

The first morning, after we had introduced ourselves and I had thoroughly disgraced myself by being unable to spell some of their names as I entered them in the register, I suggested we start the day with a few songs. To my amazement, the only songs they knew were the ones they had learned at home which were sung in the parents' mother tongue. They said that they had never sung at school. They didn't even know our national anthem or "America the Beautiful." I asked them to sing for me, and their voices were sweet and clear. Also, I found they had a strong feeling for rhythm.

I knew, some way, I had to introduce singing into the school. I knew there was no need to go to the school board for song books since they had no money even for more textbooks. The farmers had suffered some bad years. There had been several dry years when their crops were small, and there was very little demand for what they did have. There just wasn't any money. It put a strain on their budget to pay my meager salary.

In *The Normal Instructor*, a magazine that most teachers subscribed to, was an ad for paperback song books. I think the title was *The Golden Book of Favorite Songs*. There were patriotic songs, Christmas carols, and many old favorites. I think they were twenty-five cents each. When I got my first paycheck, I sent for one for every two children in the room. After the music session, I would gather them up so that they would not be mutilated nor lost.

And then we sang! How we did sing! My students loved it and there was hardly a sour note in the whole room. By Christmas they were singing part songs and harmonizing and they loved it. It just came naturally to them. I did not try to teach them to read notes. I didn't think, in that community, it would serve any purpose and there was so much to be taught.

In spite of their wearing the one suit of underwear (if they really did), most of them came to school neat and clean, their hair nicely brushed and the girls' hair braided in tight pigtales. The boys' shirts and the girls' dresses were stiffly starched and smoothly ironed. The only odor one could detect in the room was that of garlic when the dinner pails were opened.



*Groups of children at Dolly Holliday's Bender School, 1919. (top) "My first grade. The two on the right are the twins I have so much trouble with." (middle and bottom) "My school. The others were absent as it was Christmas week."*

*— Photos courtesy of Dolly Holliday Clark*

Time passed pleasantly enough for some time. I enjoyed my mile walk to and from school. Usually I scared up a covey or two of prairie chickens. Sometimes a jack rabbit would lope across my path. Their long jumps never ceased to fascinate me. I was happy in my work. Many amusing things were said or happened because of the language barrier. Although my students had a heavy accent, their vocabulary was adequate for us to communicate. Many words were unfamiliar to them, however, especially my slang words that would creep in now and then.

My pupils were very dear to me. Perhaps it was partly because I did not have anyone else to love. But they were darlings (for the most part), and I'd find myself calling them "dear" and "honey." The "honey" especially was confusing to them. One day we were reading about raccoons. The phrase was "with rings on their tails." Little Olga Hjamseth was reading and she hesitated before the word "with." I prompted her, "with, Honey." She continued to read, "With honey on their tails."

When we had spelling we always talked about the words and their meaning the day before. The next day they would make sentences with the words. One day the word "auction" was in our list. I tried to explain what an auction was. I must have said the people took their "things" out and auctioned them off. The next day, one of my little girls read her sentence, which was, "De man took his ting out and auctioned it off." I could go on and on.

The language barrier affected my churchgoing as well. This was a Catholic community. There was not a Protestant Church within miles. Every third Sunday, however, the priest at St. Anthony preached in English. I usually went to church with the family that day.

### Winter Arrives

Mid-October brought snow and bitterly cold weather. Adding to our discomfort was the strong wind that blew almost constantly, it seemed. I enjoyed the snow. I have always loved it, and there is no walk quite as enjoyable for me as when the snow is coming down. It is like a fairyland, and the flakes, stinging my face and clinging to my eyelashes, make me feel as if I am a part of that fairyland.

Now the hills that had been so barren were white, rolling white, looking like huge drifts. I could see the scattered homesteads, a mile or so apart, with barnyard manure heaped around the base of the homes, nearly up to the windows, to help keep out the winter's chill. Now, not much could be seen of them except the roof and the chimney with smoke pouring from it. They really looked very cozy, nestled in their blanket of white.

In the fall, after the crops were in, the horses were turned loose on the range for the winter. Of course, the people kept hay and feed out for them. It seemed cruel to me at first, but when I saw how nature provided for them I felt better about it. By the time the bitter cold weather arrived, the horses had grown a heavy long coat. It really looked more like fur than hair. I have

never seen anything like it.

I shall never forget the very cold morning that I arrived at school and found the schoolhouse completely surrounded with horses, several horses deep at that. I could not get to the door for them. I was perplexed and frightened. I knew some of them were really wild, for they had roamed the range and had never been broken. I wondered if they would turn on me if I tried to shoo them away. I had to get in the building, and I finally found the courage to work my way through them to the door. They cooperated very well. From then on I could expect to find them there nearly every morning. The schoolhouse was a shelter and there was a little warmth coming from it since I kept a fire all the time. We became good friends and I did not hesitate to give them a slap if they were in my way. I often wished I could bring them inside and let them get their noses warm.

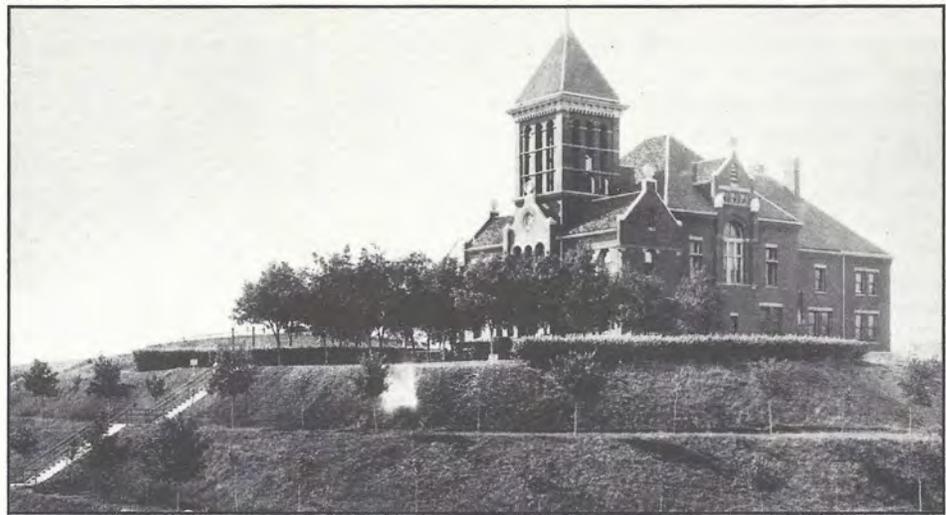
### The Inimitable Adam

As I have said previously, western novels were widely read, and cowboys, whom few around home had ever seen, were depicted as fascinating and romantic characters. I was hungry for a little fun which was so lacking in my life at that time. So I concocted a plan that I thought would afford amusement for a number of people. I persuaded Adam to write to my sister Jane and pretend that he was a cowboy. I wrote the letters, and he copied them. Then he signed his name "Wild Horse Harry." The letters I wrote for him sounded very authentic. He would tell her he was writing to her by the light of his campfire, how he slept under the moon and stars, etc., etc. Jane was quite thrilled and showed them to all her friends. This went on for some time. Then Adam began to take their correspondence seriously. He even started planning to go see her. I dissuaded him from doing that. Then the lid blew off. He wrote a cowboy letter and then, unknown to me, he wrote another and signed his own name. Since I had described Adam to her, the whole farce came to light. I could have murdered him gleefully.

Sometimes I had trouble keeping Adam on casual terms with me. Among his own acquaintances he was considered a sort of Romeo, and I think he felt all women were attracted to him. This was the strategy that I used. I was corresponding with two young men back home and received a letter from each at least once a week. I enjoyed the company of one but he was not what I was looking for in a husband. The other, I tried very hard to love. He had the qualities I wanted in a husband but I just couldn't find anything in my heart for him but friendship. But I enjoyed their letters and the books and candy that they sent. However, my candy started getting lost in the mail. The Muellers had to pick their mail up at the Post Office at St. Anthony. I inquired there about my candy. It seems Adam had been picking it up and, I suppose, he and his friends had eaten it.

But I have wandered from what I started to tell. He knew of my correspondence with these two young men. I told him I was going to marry one of them but

*The Morton County Courthouse in Mandan was noted for the steep ascent of stairs on its south side.*



I hadn't decided which yet. One evening when he was hanging around my chair, too close for comfort, I said, without thinking, "Adam, I have made up my mind whom I am going to marry and we will be married as soon as school is out." After that he left me alone. I will give him credit for having a sense of honor.

#### **I Attend Institute**

The last week in October was the Morton County Teachers' Institute.<sup>2</sup> It lasted a week, and those teachers who had come from a distance stayed in Mandan. Since I could not possibly commute, I made reservations at the Nigey. It really was crammed with teachers that week. Institute began on Monday, and Adam was to take me to St. Anthony on Saturday to catch the stage for Mandan. It was a bus, but they still called it the stage.

On Friday Mr. Mueller told me that the stage was not running that Saturday. I forget what reason he gave for its not going. However, he said he would take me in to Mandan for five dollars. That was a lot of money for me and much more than the stage fare would have been. But I had no alternative; I had to be there Monday morning. Later Adam told me that his father was going to Mandan anyway. I found out also that the stage had been running that day.

It was very cold that Saturday morning, and the wind was blowing fiercely. We went in an open sleigh or vehicle of some kind. Mr. Mueller had put straw and warm bricks under our feet and Mrs. Mueller gave me

a huge heavy fur coat to wear over my cloth one.

He did not follow the road but cut across country. I wondered how he could find his way as it all looked the same to me. We went up hill and down dale. At first, it was very enjoyable. The country was beautiful in its white blanket and, although the wind whipped around my face and head, my body was warm.

But twenty-seven miles behind a team of horses is a matter of several hours. After an hour or so, I began to feel cold and I grew colder with every minute. I don't know how long we were on the road. It seemed like days but I suppose it was four or five hours. The snow was deep and the horses did not make very good time.

When we reached the hotel I was so stiff with cold I could hardly get out of the vehicle. The Nigey did not have an elevator and I was sure I could never get up the stairs to my room. However, with God's help, I am sure, I made it. My room was warm. I took off my coat and lay down on the bed. When I began to get warm the agony, and I mean *AGONY*, started. I had experienced the pain in my hands before when they were very cold and started to get warm. How they would cramp and ache! I believe every bone in my body was cramping in that way. I writhed on the bed and could hardly keep from screaming. I thought of calling for help but I was sure it would pass. After a time the pain started to subside. I do not remember how long the pain lasted, but it finally left and I had no ill effects from it. I believe I was closer to freezing than I have ever been.

Institute was held in the courthouse which was situated on a very high hill at the edge of town. I have

2. Teachers' Institutes began in the United States in New England in 1839. The goal of the Institute was to improve the quality of teaching by teaching teachers how to teach. They were most popular in the Midwest; by the 1870s many legislatures mandated teacher's institutes for each county to provide easy access for teachers. Institutes were the rural teachers' normal school, their chance to absorb some information about technique and method. For more information

about the importance of the Institute system and about rural education generally, see Wayne Fuller, *The Old Country School: The History of Rural Education in the Middle West*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 157-184. An excellent and informative compendium of information on country schools past and present is Andrew Gulliford, *America's Country Schools* (Washington, D.C.: the Preservation Press, 1991).

often wondered why they built it there. There was something like a hundred steps leading up to it. However, if you wished to go a roundabout way, you could come in from the back and there were no steps to climb. But we younger ones enjoyed climbing the steps, although we griped about it and pretended we thought we were abused.

The Institute was designed, for the most part, for young or inexperienced teachers. It was very interesting and helpful to me. There were lectures on classroom methods: how to present a lesson, how to handle discipline, etc. We adjourned at three every afternoon and that gave us teachers a chance for some social life. The town surely turned out to entertain the teachers while they were there. There was a dance every night in the school gym. Women's clubs gave teas for us. And most of us were starving to see a movie.

The week ended too quickly. On Saturday I took the stage back to St. Anthony and hired someone to take me out to the Muellers.

### **I Speak Out of Turn**

Deep trouble was catching up with me at my boarding place, and it was all of my own making. At least I started the ball rolling. I could have stayed at the Muellers the entire school year and lived in relative peace and quiet if I had just kept my nose out of family affairs. But I was young and vulnerable, and I allowed the way Mr. Mueller treated his family to get to me. As I have said before, the father did very little work, but he worked Adam very hard and all Adam got for his labors were his food and a few badly fitting clothes. I thought it was shameful and told Adam so. I told him he could go to town and get a job and make enough to board and clothe himself and have money left for some amusement. How sorry I was that I did not keep my feelings to myself.

It was on Thanksgiving morning that I heard a terrible rumpus in the dining room. I ran downstairs and found Adam and his father in a terrible fight. They were smashing each other in the face with their fists. I was sure Mr. Mueller would kill him, for Adam was no match for him.

When it was over, Adam was a sight. I really don't believe he was able to get in one lick. Mr. Mueller's shirt was torn at the shoulder. That was the only damage done to him. Poor Adam! He was bleeding at the mouth and nose and so exhausted he could hardly stand up. He had an eye that shortly turned black. Afterwards he told me what it was all about. He had told his father that he was leaving home. Whether Adam's parents suspected that I had put the idea into Adam's head I do not know, but I was not accused of it.

However, I made up my mind that I could not stay in a house where such things went on. It was cold and snowing, but I put on my warmest clothing and started out to the home of the school director, a Mr. Stenkhe, who lived about four miles from the Muellers.

The first things Mrs. Stenkhe did, when I arrived, was to bring me a cup of hot tea and some cookies. Then

they heard my story. Mr. Stenkhe said he knew of no place that I could go but he would see what he could do. Then he drove me home.

A few days later he stopped by the school and said he had found me a place at Anton Muellers, Dominick's brother, with whom he was on very bad terms. He called for me after school and I was packed and waiting for him. I do not remember how I parted from the family. If I did not say "Goodbye" to Mrs. Mueller and thank her for her kindness, I am ashamed. But I was young and frightened, so I probably just walked out without a word.

The Anton Muellers greeted me with open arms. They were only too glad to take me away from his estranged brother. It did not take me long to learn that Mrs. Mueller was the despotic ruler of this household. She was tall and gaunt with very black hair and eyes. She seldom smiled. In fact, she looked as if she was snarling most of the time. Anton, so different from his brother, was a meek little man who never, to my knowledge, disagreed with her.

There were three children whom I would have in school. Then [there was] Erasmus who was fifteen and Mary who was in disgrace because she was twenty-one years old and did not have a husband. Although she spoke very little English, she and I managed to communicate somewhat. I learned a little German (or whatever it was they spoke), and she learned a little English.

Erasmus played the violin and, quite often, he would play for Mary and me to dance. He composed his tunes as he played and most of them had a "catchy" melody. He had a good sense of rhythm, too. The only trouble was that he could never play the same tune twice. If we especially liked one of his tunes and asked him to play it again he would say, "I can't," and he couldn't. I often have wondered what he could have accomplished with a musical education.

The first trouble with this Mrs. Mueller occurred soon after I came to live with them. The school board sent out four new desks. They were different sizes and I placed them where they were most needed. One of the Mueller children got one of them. The day the desks arrived, I stayed a while after school, as was my habit. As a rule, I'd sweep out, wash the board, bank the fire, and make plans for the next day's work. Also, I enjoyed the walk home alone. It gave me a chance to think things through, make decisions and sort of reinforce myself. I did a lot of praying on those walks, too.

When I arrived home that day, Mrs. Mueller was very angry. She thought I should have given each of her children a new desk. She looked and acted like a wild woman. I couldn't reason with her, so at last I just gave up and let her rave. But the desks stayed where they were.

### **I Find New Friends**

One Saturday night there was a dance at the town hall in St. Anthony. The Muellers were going so I went along. I was a little fearful of what I might run into but eager for something different. I found several teachers from the area were there. I guess I was the only stranger

so they all migrated towards me. They all had heard of me and were wondering, under the conditions, how long I would stay.

The first ones I met were Frank and Charley Heiney. They were brothers, in their early thirties, and were originally from Minnesota. Each taught in a little country school, but their environment was quite different from mine. They were really great fellows, well-read and interesting but without an ounce of ambition. They liked country schools, were fine teachers, and had no desire to better their position. Both loved music and sometimes played in a dance orchestra. Charlie played a slide trombone and Frank a violin. Frank was the "violin type," sensitive and thoughtful. I can't imagine his playing anything else except the violin. He was not satisfied with just the popular music. He played good music, too. Charlie and his trombone were well-mated. He was a clown and kept us all laughing. He could mimic anybody.

Then Inez Jorgenson came up. She was from Wisconsin, and her parents were from Norway. Next was Norman Sarenson, a Norwegian from Minnesota. He was a nice-looking young man about my age. He was nicely dressed; I never saw him when he was not immaculate. We chatted a while and had a few dances. During the evening Norman said to me, "I want you to meet Elizabeth Kinder. She is the daughter of the people with whom I board and I'll bet she'll invite you over for the weekend." I met her and she did invite me over for the next weekend.

I want to tell you about the Kinder family. The two Kinder brothers came to America before the first world war. They were from Austria and must have been very well-educated in their own country. They both spoke English perfectly and had an excellent vocabulary. Their accent was very slight. One of them had a general store and was postmaster in St. Anthony. But Lizzie's father was a farmer. They had three children. Dotty was away at school and Henry, who helped his father in the summer, went to the Southwest with the rodeos in the winter. I met him just before I left in the spring, and he put on a special exhibition for me. Lizzie was the only one left at home and her parents were always glad for her to have company, the more the better.

Norman came for me the next Saturday afternoon. I could tell that the Muellers were displeased that I went. The Kinder home was large and comfortably furnished. And they had a piano! I hadn't touched one since I left home. Lizzie didn't play but her sister did, and there was a lot of sheet music. It was like heaven being in a home like that among people whom I could talk to and enjoy.

Mr. Kinder entertained us that first evening, telling of interesting things and customs in his homeland. He also gave us a brief history of North Dakota when it was a frontier state (to me it was still a frontier state).

The next morning, about ten o'clock, Frank Heiney opened the door and walked in. Then a little later Charlie came. They both liked to sing and both had nice voices so they kept me playing most of the morning. That afternoon we played, sang some more, and just sat around and talked and sort of got acquainted. Charlie

provided us with a lot of amusements with his antics.

Lizzie insisted on my staying Sunday night. The next morning she, Norman, and I got up early, had breakfast, and Norman took me directly to my school.

I spent a number of happy weekends at the Kinders that winter. The whole gang would come in Saturday and stay until Sunday evening. We played and sang, played a lot of cards, and just sat around and talked. We were just a group of young people having fun. There was no thought of pairing off nor any romantic gestures.

Sometimes Inez Jorgenson would join us. Then Otto Schnell, a rural teacher who taught several miles away, started coming over. He had three years of college and was an honor student but he nearly had a nervous collapse, and the doctors told him to get away from it for a while and get employment somewhere with less stress. He was an epileptic, too. We girls did not know it at first, but the boys did.

The boys and Mr. and Mrs. Kinder slept upstairs, and Lizzie and I slept in the downstairs bedroom. It was about midnight one evening and everyone had retired but Lizzie and me. We were sitting on the davenport eating apples and chatting. Suddenly, one of the boys came rushing down the stairs. He said Otto had one of his seizures and he demanded some hot water (or something, I forget what). We got him fixed up and he rushed back upstairs. Then Lizzie and I got curious and decided to go up and see what was going on. We found Otto stretched out on the floor and Norman on top of him holding him down. Norman was getting ready for bed and he was in his long underwear. He couldn't move and he was so embarrassed. Lizzie and I acted as if we didn't notice. After a while Mr. Kinder suggested that we girls had better leave. As badly as we felt about Otto, we went to bed and lay there giggling at the way Norman would look at us, his eyes pleading with us to leave. Her father should have given us a dressing down. He may have scolded Lizzie after I left.

Next morning Otto was gone. I suppose he hated to face us after that. However, he did come back several times. He was a nice person and very good company.

### I Attend a Wake

That year there was a death in the community. It was a lad about fourteen, I would guess. They did not live in my school district so I did not know him or his family. However, the Muellers knew them and were going to the wake. I had not planned to attend but the Muellers insisted that I would be expected to go, so I went.

The body was laid out in the home and when we arrived there were a number of people there. Everybody was talking in their native tongue and I felt very uncomfortable and out of place.

However, there was one man there who, while he appeared to understand what was being said, always answered in English. He was a nice-looking man in his forties, I would guess.

After a while he came over and sat down by me. He introduced himself and said he was from Mandan.

When he mentioned his name, I recognized it and said, "Are you an architect?" He assured me that he was. Then I told him that I had heard of him and had seen his beautiful home in Mandan.

He talked to me until the Muellers were ready to leave. I don't remember all that we talked about. He told me of his childhood and the struggle it had been for him to get an education. I told him of my troubles in trying to adjust to my surroundings. Then he answered many of my questions about the state and especially the community where I was teaching, things that I felt I should know. I enjoyed my talk with him a lot and hated to leave when the Muellers were ready to go. I thought it was strange that I should meet him under those unusual circumstances. I never saw him again. When I look back it amazes me at the number of interesting people I met that year for a brief encounter. Then they were gone and never touched my life again.

More trouble at the Muellers. One of the girls was running on the playground when she caught her dress on a nail that was sticking out of a post and tore a rent in the skirt. When I arrived home, Mrs. Mueller was frothing at the mouth. I was to blame. I should have seen the nail and removed it. She raved and carried on until I told her I would buy material for a new dress for the daughter. I was going to Mandan and asked her how much yardage I should get. I knew very little about sewing then so I got the amount she asked for. It was enough to make both the girls a dress. Then she mended the rent until it was not noticeable. She was a slicker.

### I Meet My First Indian

Once when I was at the Kinders, I mentioned that I had never seen an Indian. They immediately started planning to go to a dance on the Indian Reservation at Solen. They all agreed that I must meet a certain Indian. I don't remember his Indian name or his last name, but everyone called him Francis. He had graduated from some college in the East. He spoke several languages,

had been in World War I, and altogether was quite a fellow. He was now Administrator of Indian Affairs on the reservation.<sup>3</sup>

I spotted him the minute I entered the hall. In retrospect, I think he was posing. He was tall and slender and stood very straight, looking very well-dressed in his blue serge suit. He was standing over by the wall with his arms folded across his chest. He was really quite handsome.

I was introduced and had several dances with him. I thought to myself, "I must be careful to act as if I don't notice that he is an Indian." But I found that he was very proud of his Indian heritage. He started telling me about it almost at once. He told me his father was a chief of the tribe; also that he had some French blood in his veins. There was an old toothless woman sitting cross-legged on the floor, a shawl around her shoulders, and her hair done in braids. He said, pointing to her, "That is my mother." Every time we danced past her, she'd look at us with her toothless grin.

It was a motley group that attended the dances. There were the dentist, the druggist, and the doctor, and their wives. Then there were the banker and other businessmen and their wives. The town of Solen was small to have all those services, but the community was so remote that they served the whole countryside and were kept busy. Everybody mingled at the dance. The Indians were very good dancers, naturally light on their feet. The white people and Indians danced together, but it was taboo for a white girl to date an Indian.

We came often after that to the Solen dances. Sometimes Frank and Charley played with the orchestra which was called "The Howdy Orchestra." Their theme song was "How-di-do, Bill."

### The "Other" Mrs. Kinder

The days passed pleasantly enough for some time, and I spent many weekends at the Kinders. But I must not forget to tell you of the other Mrs. Kinder, the wife



*St. Anthony Roman Catholic Church in the "Little Heart" valley served the St. Anthony parish between 1901 and 1930, until a fire destroyed it. The church was later rebuilt.*

of the brother who lived in St. Anthony. She was jolly and Irish. She took a liking to me for some reason, or she just felt sorry for me, and I spent quite a few weekends at their home. There were eight children at home and a teenage boy off at school. I have never seen a more beautiful sight than the long table, where he sat at the head, she sat at the foot and the children on either side. They were such sweet children and were so well-behaved. Mr. Kinder had just one arm. The other was off at the elbow, but he did the carving and served the plates.

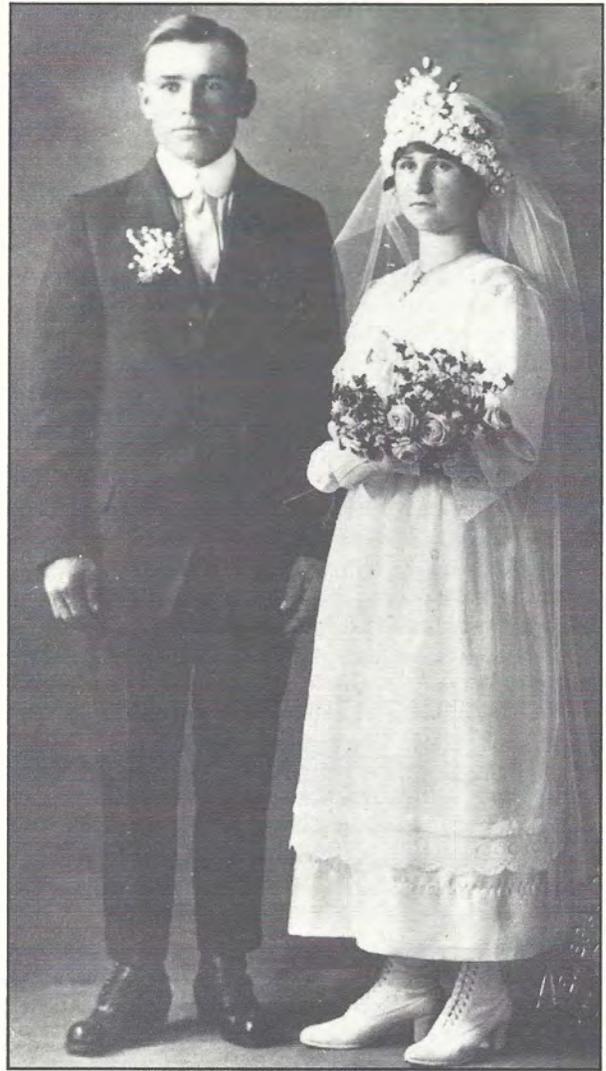
It was a Catholic community and, on Sunday morning, the churchgoers all went to Mass without their breakfasts. Then, when church was over, they all came to Kinders for breakfast, free of charge. She must have averaged fifty for breakfast every Sunday morning. And they were scrumptious meals: bacon and ham, eggs, pancakes, and cereals. Usually some of the women helped her in the kitchen.

Although she had red hair and I'm sure she had a temper, I never saw her angry but once. A couple arrived for breakfast whom she could not remember having seen before. She asked them their names and if they were newcomers to the community. They told her no but that they did their trading down at the other store (there were two groceries in town). She retorted, "Well, you can just go down there and get your breakfasts." The other store didn't serve breakfasts. She was like a mother to me and I shall never forget her.

### I Change Boarding Places

In February, Mrs. Mueller informed me that she was raising my board. Henceforth, it would be forty dollars a month. The going rate for rural teachers was twenty-five, and some were lucky enough to pay only twenty. I told her that on my salary I couldn't pay it. She said, "You have to. There is no place else for you to go." I retorted, "I'll stay in the schoolhouse first." And I meant it.

I began to make inquiries. It so happened that one of the Stein boys had just gotten married. He and his wife had repaired an old "dugout," one of the pioneer homes that was built partly down in the ground for warmth. The roof and some small windows were above the ground. They would be glad for the extra money. They were young and good-natured and, although my bedroom had no heat and I had to pile some of my clothes on the bed to keep warm, it was better than the Muellers or the schoolhouse.



*George Hoffman, born in Sitka, Russia, and Francisca Leingang from St. Anthony were among the parishoners married in St. Anthony's Catholic Church while Dolly Holliday taught in the area.*

*— Photo courtesy of Rose C. Austin,  
Mandan, North Dakota*

It was Friday when I received the word that the Steins would take me, but they were going away for the weekend and sent word that I could move in on Monday. I had not intended to tell the Muellers until I

3. The Francis of whom Dolly Holliday speaks is Francis (Frank) B. Zahn, then of Solen, North Dakota. Zahn was the son of William Presley Zahn, member of Co. G. 17th U.S. Cavalry, 1873-1876, as well as Indian trader and interpreter, and Josephine (Princess Kezewin Flying Cloud) Zahn, only daughter of Chief Flying Cloud. Zahn had been educated at the Agency Mission School at Fort Yates; Riggs Institute, Flandreaux, South Dakota; and Carlisle Indian College in Pennsylvania. He served in the 351st U.S. Infantry 88th

Division during World War I, and at the time Dolly met him he was an official federal interpreter at Fort Yates and may have been serving as a clerk, Examiner of Inheritance, Indian Service in the State's Attorney office. He later served as Senior Judge of the Standing Rock Reservation with jurisdiction in North and South Dakota. See *South of the Cannonball: A History of Sioux, the Warbonnet County* by May E. Hinton, (Grand Forks: Washburn Printing Co., 1984), pp. 164-165.

was ready to leave, but the grapevine was active and they heard of it. That night, after I had gone to bed, they all came into my room and stood around my bed, shaking their fists and yelling at me. I couldn't understand a word they were saying, but I'm sure I was being called all kinds of nasty names. I never was so frightened in my life. I wasn't sure these strange people wouldn't kill me.

The next morning I packed a bag. I didn't know where I was going but I knew I was not going to stay there another night. We teachers paid our board at the end of the month. This was the middle, and they told me I could not have my trunk until I had paid my board. My bag was a cowhide, leather-lined traveling bag and was heavy when it was empty. I packed all I could get into it. It was so heavy I could hardly lug it along.

My first stop was at the Steins, the father of my future landlord. I asked them if they thought their son and wife would mind if I moved in that day. I assured them that I would not be afraid. They thought it would be all right so they gave me the key and I started out. It was snowing very hard but not very cold. I'd walk a while, then sit down on my bag and cry a while. I have wondered since why some of them didn't drive me over there. It was two miles and that bag was so heavy. They were hard people. The son and wife were surprised to find me there on Sunday evening when they got home.

I wrote Lizzie about my predicament and the following Sunday, she, Norman, Frank, and Charlie came over. They lent me enough money to get my trunk and then we went over and got it.

Life was not unpleasant in my new home. The Steins had friends with whom they played cards quite often. I was busy with lesson plans, and I read a lot. Lizzie and Norman kept me well-supplied with reading material. And I had a lot of letters to write.

The Steins did some very peculiar things that were hard for me to understand. For instance, she always helped him milk and they went to the barn after I got home from school. One evening they left for the barn, as usual, but they didn't come back. I waited and waited and finally became uneasy and decided I'd better see what was wrong. I lit the lantern and went to the barn. They were not there, but I noticed that the wagon and team were gone. Then I knew they had left but had not told me because I might object to staying alone. I was not afraid but would have liked to lock the door. However, I was afraid they would come home and not be able to rouse me. They were still gone the next morning but when I got home that evening they were there. No explanations were given and none were asked.

### **The Blizzard**

On March fifteenth, it started to snow. That evening the Steins had company, a couple with whom they played cards regularly. In the morning they were still there. I thought it was strange for they always went home. They had never stayed all night before.

The snow was coming down quite thickly, but I bundled up good and went to school. I built up the fire

and waited. Still no one showed up. I decided it must be a Holy Day. They never came to school on those days and they never let me know in advance. I wrote a letter or two. Then I happened to glance out the window and saw that it was snowing very hard and the wind was swirling it around. I decided I'd better go home. The wind was blowing furiously, and I could see only a few feet in front of me. To get to my new boarding place I had about two and a half miles to walk. I followed a fence for the first mile and a half. At the end of the fence, I turned left on a road that had no fences. I went on it for half a mile and came to the driveway that led to my boarding house. The house was about half a mile off the road. That day I followed the fence until it ran out. Then I turned left. I walked and walked but could not find the driveway that led to the house. I finally cut across the field. I grew so tired buffeting the wind and snow that I grew very confused. I thought once of sitting down and trying to figure out where I could be. I was told afterwards that if I had, I would never have gotten up. Anyway I plodded on, I don't know how long.

Finally, I came to a road. The wind had swept the snow off it and I could see the ruts. I had no idea what road it was nor where it led but I knew it went somewhere. I decided to go in one direction for a while and if I did not find anything to turn and go the other way. I didn't know how far it was nor how long but all at once a shadow loomed out of the whirling snow. I knew it was some kind of building. I still don't know how I got there, but it turned out to be my boarding place. My thankfulness knew no bounds. By that time my coat was a sheet of ice and icicles were hanging from my hair. When I went in, they all started laughing. Mr. Stein said, "We didn't think we'd ever see you alive again." They had let me leave the house that morning without a word of warning.

There were several casualties in that blizzard. One was a schoolteacher who lost her way. Then there were three children who tried to find their way home from school. When they realized that they were hopelessly lost, the oldest girl took off her coat and spread it over her younger brother and sister, threw her body over them and froze to death. The other children were still alive when they were found.<sup>4</sup>

The blizzard raged three days. Farmers strung ropes from their houses to the barns so they could care for their stock.

### **Welcome Spring!**

At last signs of spring began to appear. Warm winds blew over the prairie. Crocuses began to peep through the snow. Meadowlarks sang to me all the way to and from school, with a little lilting song that is very lovely and is different from the song of the eastern meadowlark. The snow started to melt and the coulees filled with water. Everything seemed to come alive at once. Spring brought a glorious feeling after the cold silent winter. But the melting snows also presented a problem for me. The coulees were full of water, and often it was hard to find a place narrow enough to cross. One

morning it was ten o'clock before I got to school. Spring in North Dakota also meant "gumbo" which is more like glue than mud. It stuck to your overshoes. Then more gumbo would stick to that until, by the time I would get home or to school, my feet would be about the size of a man's number fourteen shoe. And it was so very tiring, trying to walk with all that weight on my shoes.

### The Play That Did Not Materialize

[That spring] the "bunch" decided to put on a play. I forget the name of the play or why we were going to "produce" it. It fell through anyway, so it doesn't matter. Norman and I were delegated to make the posters. He'd come over to my place and we would work at the kitchen table. One evening my landlady invited him to dinner, so he came early and rode on down to the schoolhouse to meet me. He planned for me to ride home and he'd walk. Well, I had on a very tight skirt and could not possibly decently get it up high enough to ride a horse. The horse would not lead. Someone had to ride her. Norman insisted that I ride and I was disgusted with him because he was too stupid to know why I could not ride. Well, Norman had to ride and I walked alongside. The farmers all were out in their fields and they saw it and ribbed me terribly. I tried to explain but they wouldn't listen. They didn't want to understand. They had a joke on a teacher, and they carried it to St. Anthony where poor Norman was razzed unmercifully.

Most Saturday nights we attended the dance at Solen. Our car was a beat-up tin lizzie that was not in the least dependable. Sometimes we had to get out and push to get it started. I never was sure to whom it belonged. The

dances started at nine. At twelve, we went over to the hotel for lunch. Then we went back to the hall and danced until dawn.

My school year was drawing to a close. I could not bear to think of parting with my new friends, but I was homesick, too.

[When the school year ended, Dolly returned to Indiana for the summer. She had decided to come back to North Dakota in the fall to teach another year, but in a different district.] ND

**Editor's Note:** Dolly Holliday Clark lives in Anderson, Indiana with her husband Harold. They remain active, and their doctor says they will live to be one hundred. I would like to thank her for allowing the publication of her manuscript, for her help with biographic materials, and for the loan of photographs.

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4. The blizzard that took the life of Hazel Miner, a tragedy remembered since in countless articles, stories and at least one ballad, occurred March 15, 1920, in Oliver County, North Dakota. Hazel, sixteen, and her younger brother and sister,

eleven and nine respectively, were lost in a blizzard while trying to make their way home from school. Hazel's courageous effort spared the lives of her siblings. See *The Center Republic* (Center, North Dakota), March 18, 1920, p.1.