**ND State Founders of **

(Alpha Omicron State)

*In alphabetical order:*

1.

**Vida Austin** (1885-1969) –Treasurer 1940-1942 …………………………………………………Valley City

Vida Austin received her B.S. degree from Northwestern University, Evanston, IL, in 1908 and her M.A. degree from the University of Illinois in 1911. She came to teach biology at the State Normal School in Valley City in the fall of 1913, taught 33 years and retired in 1946. During her last years she was head of

the Biology Department at Valley City State University.

She remained enthusiastic, full of energy and vitality throughout her career. Her students learned there is beauty in the ordinary; according to them she was the “greatest.” She was born on January 24, 1885, and died August 10, 1969, at her home in Woodstock, IL. She was a founder of North Dakota (Alpha Omicron) State Delta Kappa Gamma and was a charter member of Alpha Chapter in Valley City. She served as state treasurer from 1940-42.

2.

**Ina Best1** (1882-1962) ………………………………………………….......…………………………...Fargo

Ina Best was born in Casselton, Dakota Territory, on May 6, 1882, the middle child in a family of five. Her father was William Henry Best whose father had served in the Civil War from Missouri. William Best’s grandfather came from Ireland in the early 1800s and served in the War of 1812. Ina’s mother, Abbie White Hall Best, was a descendent of Elder Brewster. The family lived in Casselton until 1891. Ina attended primary school in Casselton until they moved to Fargo where Ina entered 4th grade where she continued and graduated from Fargo High School. On a quiet street in Fargo, ND, the “Best girls,” Sarah and Ina, lived in the house their father built in 1890. 75 years later, Sarah still lived in that house, which was a museum of antiques and treasures.

Ina had 2 goals in life: to teach small children and to further her own education, which she did. First she taught in rural schools in Cass County including Prairie Grove, Amenia, and Eldred, then in Wahpeton in Richland County. Ina took time off for additional schooling including a winter in 1901 at Fargo College (a “Christian” liberal arts college that existed from q1887-1922), 2 years at the University of Minnesota from 1903-1905, and 1 year at Columbia University where she received the Bachelor of Arts degree in 1915. By attending summers and one spring term, Ina earned the Master of Arts degree at Columbia in 1920. She went to Michigan where she was a critic teacher in the 2nd grade in Central Teachers College in Isabelle County for 6 years from 1915-1021. She then went to Iowa State Teachers College in Cedar Falls where she continued as a critic teacher in 2nd grade from 1921-1928.

Ina and her sister, Mary, took a trip abroad, to Europe and Egypt, in these years. A camera was her constant companion, and later she used the pictures as illustrative material in school. When children saw the prints of the pyramids or the Acropolis on the bulletin board they said, “It’s true! See! Miss Best is riding Yankee Doodle, the camel at the pyramids.” A succession of Ford cars, all black, took Ina and Sarah on many trips to national parks, mountains, lakes, and rivers from Washington state to Quebec and to the Black Hills, the Ozarks, and the Great Smoky Mountains.

Ina returned to Fargo in 1928 to round out her career. She remained in the Fargo schools for 20 years. She taught in at Hawthorne, Agassiz, Clara Barton, and Roosevelt Schools. She taught in Cass County and Fargo schools for a total of 33 years.

Once initiated, Ina remained a life member of DKG. She was initiated at Milwaukee on July 3, 1940. She was a founder of Alpha Omicron (ND) state and was a charter member of Beta Chapter in Fargo. Ina served on the International Membership Committee for 1941-442. At the state level she chaired the Membership committee from 1944-48. In was a member of American Association of University Women, Fine Arts Club, Pioneer Daughters, Cass County Historical Society, Young Women’s Christian Association, and a life member of North Dakota and National Education Associations.

Ina Best died on December 29, 1962, at the age of 80. Her winning smile and gentle ways gave hundreds of 2nd graders that extra bit of confidence needed to succeed in the many interesting things to be learned in school. Her patient guidance, sympathetic understanding of the hopes and fears of college students and her demonstration of good teaching methods were an inspiration to cadet teachers in 2 of the foremost teacher-training institutions of the day in the Midwest. The friend who said, “Ina was one of the kindest persons one could ever meet,” summed up exactly Ina’s whole way of being.

3.

**Eleanor C. Bryson**2 **(**1879-1969) –Second Vice President 1940-1942 ……………………....………...Minot

Eleanor C Bryson, the 4th child of James and Elizabeth Anne Howard Bryson, was born on a farm in Blue Earth County, MN on April 27, 1879. This farm was an enchanting place for a child to grow up. The Blue Earth River with its “wash banks” and occasional spring floods wound through it, and passed wooded hills where black walnuts, chokecherries, wild plums and grapes grew. There were other hills for coasting and marshy haunts, near which jack-in-the-pulpits and moccasin flowers could be found.

With her siblings Eleanor attended a rural school until she was 14 and was admitted to Mankato High School after passing the entrance examinations. Four years later she graduated summa cum laud as salutatorian of her class. In the fall she began her teaching career in a rural school five miles from home, with 14 pupils and a salary of $18 a month. The following year she taught at a larger school 35 miles from home with a $35 salary and a 9-month term. Then followed 2-year stretches in the intermediate grades in Canby and Dawson, MN and 2 years with 8th grade in Le Seur, MN. During these years she attended either county institutes or summer sessions at Mankato Normal School or the University of Minnesota. In 1905 she came to Mandan, ND and taught 7th and 8th grades for 4 years. Then followed a year in Everett, WA and another in Hammond, IN.

At that time, Home Economics, or Domestic Science as it was then called, seemed to be a promising field. She enrolled in a Saturday morning class in Food Study at Lewis Institute in Chicago. Here she first experienced racial integration. A Chicago teacher, a young black woman, worked at the same table as Eleanor, and according to Eleanor, was a lovely person. In 1911-12 Eleanor was principal of the 3-teacher school in Garden City, a village near the family farm. In June 1915, Miss Bryson received her Bachelor of Science Degree from Lewis Institute of Technology. That summer she taught Domestic Science at Morningside College in Sioux City, IA.

In September 1915, Eleanor joined the faculty of Minot Normal School, remaining until retirement in 1945. During these years she attended summer sessions at the Universities of Colorado and Chicago. She studied at Teachers College, Columbia University, during a sabbatical leave. For the first 8 years the Home Economics Department- she insisted that it be called that- had no space of its own. The classes in foods were conducted in a crowded space in the end of the chemistry laboratory. The clothing classes “made-do” in the music and art room. With the addition of the west wing of the Old Main Building, a 4-room suite was provided for the Home Economics Department.

Miss Bryson was a life member of North Dakota Education Association. While at the College she was a founding member of the National Education Association and the National Home Economics Association. She served the state HEA as vice president and as news reporter for the *Journal of Home Economics*. At one time she edited the *State Newsletter.* She was a member of PEO Sisterhood, she served her local chapter for

1 Taken from Swanson, Nellie R & Bryson, Eleanor C (Eds.) 1965. *Pioneer Women Teachers of North Dakota:* Minot, ND: Alpha Omicron State, The Delta Kappa Gamma Society, pp. 121-122.

3 years as president and for 15 years as treasurer. She was chair of the committee that wrote the book *Fifty*

*Years of PEO in North Dakota*. She was a charter member of Business and Professional Women’s Club in Minot, a past state treasurer and a past state president. She was a state founder and past state president of Alpha Omicron (ND) State of the Delta Kappa Gamma Society. She served as National Parliamentarian of the Society on 1952-54. While state president she organized 2 of the 10 chapters in ND. She was a member of League of Women Voters and a director on its state board. She was an active member of the Presbyterian Church. She served the Women’s Association as president for 3 years and served on its executive board for 16 years.

Recognition and many honors have been given Miss Bryson; a citation by the administration of Minot State College on the occasion of her retirement, an award in 1953 from the State Federation of Business and Professional Women’s Clubs. The Minot Club named her “Woman of the Year’ in 1952 and gave her a life membership in 1964. The ND Chapter of the Delta Kappa Gamma Society presented her the Citation Award for outstanding service in 1954. She received several honors from the Presbyterian Women’s Association. Each year at the State Convention of DKG, Miss Bryson is honored as a State Founder and presented the traditional red rose.

Eleanor was active in the organization to which she belonged. She was interested in world events and community events. She lived alone in an apartment, which she occupied for more than half of the 50 years she resided in Minot. She greeted visitors at the door with a hearty handshake and entertained them with discourses on almost any topic in which they were interested. Miss Bryson was a member of Gamma Chapter in Minot. She passed away on November 10 1969 in Minot at the age of 90.

4.

**Agnes Davies** (1894-1982) ……………………………………………………………………….Valley City

Agnes Davies was born at Valley City on July 16, 1894. Her parents were Ole and Anna Anderson. She attended high school and Normal School at Valley City where she received a Standard Certificate and later a Life Certificate for Teaching.

In 1915 she moved to New Rockford to teach music and art. In 1917 she married Fred Davies and began teaching again in the 1920s. In 1932 she was elected County Superintendent of Schools for Eddy County. She held that position until 1954 when she retired and moved back to Valley City. Agnes died in 1982. Agnes was described as a stately person. She was influential in county spelling bees, declamation contests, and music festivals.

5.

**Claire Davis** (1895-1970) ……………………………………………………………………………….Minot

Claire Davis was born in Graham, Missouri, on September 15, 1895. She came from a family of educators. She earned her BS degree at Northwest Missouri State Teachers College in Maryville and her MA degree at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio. Miss Davis taught for 7½ years in elementary grades in MO, 3 years at Arkansas Agricultural and Mechanical College, and 1 year at Valley City State Teachers College. She went to Minot State Teachers College in 1934 as a supervising teacher of 3rd grade at the campus laboratory school and remained for 29 years until she retired in 1963.

She maintained membership and was very active in local, state, and national education organizations, attended many state and national meetings, and served on boards of directors. She contributed articles to the North Dakota Teacher and published an anthology of poetry for children.

She was one of the founders of DKG Alpha Omicron state in 1940 and also was a charter member of

2 Taken from Swanson, Nellie R & Bryson, Eleanor C (Eds.) 1965. *Pioneer Women Teachers of North Dakota:* Minot, ND: Alpha Omicron State, The Delta Kappa Gamma Society, pp. 67-68

Gamma Chapter in Minot. She was president of Gamma Chapter from 1943-45. She attended 24 state conventions and 3 national conventions. She loved to travel and made many extended trips and tours, and attended conventions across the United States (including Alaska). On her retirement, she was honored by several college and community groups. Gamma Chapter named their 20th Anniversary Scholarship in her honor in 1961. Miss Davis died in Minot on December 22, 1970. Interment was at Ravenwood, Mo. She was remembered as the best of teachers. *(Written by Lorraine Smith, Gamma Chapter)*

6.

**Millie J. Fristad** (18?- 1962) ………………………………………………………………………….Minot

Millie Fristad grew up at Madelia, Minnesota. She earned a BA degree at Valley City State Teachers College and a MA degree at the Institute of Musical Arts, Teachers College, Columbia University. She taught public school music at Valley City State Teachers College for 5 years and at Wisconsin State Teachers College in La Crosse for 2 years. From there she went to Greensboro Women’s College in NC to teach public school music for 4 years. In 1931 she went to Minot State Teachers College to teach music at the campus laboratory school and college level music education courses. She taught there for 16 years until she retired in 1947.

While in Minot she was very active in several community and state music organizations. She served as chair of the music committee for the North Dakota State Course of Study in 1945. Millie was one of the founders of Alpha Omicron (ND) Sate in 1940 and a charter member of Gamma Chapter in Minot. She was president of Gamma Chapter from 1945-47. She chaired the state music committee in 1941 and was general chair of the state convention held in Minot in 1947. Millie also served as chair of the DKG national music committee in 1942. Millie transferred her membership to Stockton, CA in 1952. She died there in January 29, 1962. *(Written by Lorraine Smith, Gamma Chapter)*

7.

**Jeanette Harter Wild** (18?- 19?) ………………………………………………………………...Valley City

Jeanette Harter Wild received her BS degree from Mankato State Teachers College in MN and her MA degree from Iowa State University in Ames. She became a supervisor in Grades 1-2 at Valley City State Teachers College. She was superior at training teachers for Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grades at the Valley City Normal School. She taught there from 19290 1943.

Jeanette married the Reverend Fredric Wild in 1943 or 44. She moved to Marionette, WI from 1944-1945, and spent a number of years in Holdridge, Wymore, and Omaha, NE, until about 1954. She then moved to Excelsior Springs, MO and was a member of St. Luke’s Episcopal Church. From there she moved to Naples, FL where she died. The date of her death has not been ascertained.

8.

**Mary Beatrice Johnstone**3 (1870-1959) – Parliamentarian 1940-42 ……………………………Grand Forks

M. Beatrice, as she was familiarly known, was born of British parents with military interest and traditions. Her mother, one of 4 children, was the daughter of a British army officer stationed in Capetown, South Africa. Soon after the family returned to England both parents died. The boys were put in a military school in England, and the girls were sent to an uncle in Kingston, Ontario. Miss Johnstone’s father was born in Ontario and spent his youth on the shores of Lake Champlain. In time Mr. and Mrs. Johnstone met, married and moved to Fort Snelling, MN, where he was in army training. In 1858 he was ordered to Henderson, MN to help quell a Sioux uprising, and the Johnstones moved from St. Paul up the Minnesota River on the “Jeanette Robert” and later to Glencoe, MN where M. Beatrice was born on April 14, 1870.

M. Beatrice entered a rural school at the age of 5 and attended until April 1883, when the family moved to Grand Forks and she entered high school. In May, 1885, she was “drafted” to teach at a one-room village school, which she continued to teach for 6 summers, meanwhile continuing high school and university studies. She attended the University of North Dakota during the year 1890-91 and graduated with

Phi Beta Kappa honors. Following graduation she served as principal in Buxton for 2 years, in Thompson for 1 year, in Hillsboro for 5 years, and in Grand Forks for 13 years. Her services there were terminated in 1913 by election as county superintendent, a position she held for 12 years.

Her work in the county superintendent’s office attracted state and national recognition. She was instrumental in effecting passage of the ND Health Bill creating the position of school nurse. She believed many health problems in children could be solved before they grew into serious lifetime handicaps. She thought the answer lay in education of the parents, with whom a school nurse could work very effectively. She went to Bismarck while the legislature was in session and presented the case so effectively that enabling legislation was passed. For the first time in the nation’s history, counties were authorized to secure the services of a trained nurse; the appointee in Grand Forks County was the first county nurse in the USA.

Miss Johnstone developed the County Playday Movement which resulted in improved playground equipment for rural schools. A hot lunch program was started. Realizing the importance of advising parents on matters pertaining to trends in education, she edited a County School Bulletin, which included news of the county schools as well as new national developments.

Miss Johnstone was appointed to take charge of extension work at UND in 1925. Its purpose was to provide correspondence in many subjects to all parts of the state. The office also provided speakers, musical talent and judges for schools or organizations if requested. Through her efforts the first Homemakers Club was organized in Grand Forks County. She was much sought as a commencement and after-dinner speaker. Her talks or lectures were never dull, enlivened by bits of poetry, sparks of humor and wholesome philosophy. She was also a prolific writer with articles published in local papers, magazines and national journals of education. She is listed in the Library of Congress as a writer on education.

Though promoting education was an absorbing interest in Miss Johnstone’s life, her career had many facets. She was active in the Baptist Church, a charter member of the American Association of University Women and the Business and Professional Women’s Club in Grand Forks, a longtime member of the PEO Sisterhood and the Parent Teacher Association, a member of the National Council of Women in Education and the National Committee on Classroom Teaching. She held many positions of state and national significance. She was president of the North Dakota Education Association a 25year member of the Board of North Dakota Teachers Insurance and Retirement Fund, state chair of the Washington Bicentennial in 1932, and state president of the Parent Teacher Association in 1930-1934.

In appreciation of her devoted service the University conferred upon Miss Johnstone many honors. One, in which she took great pride, was that of being named an Honorary Colonel in the ROTC. In this the long military tradition of her family was continued. Her long career in education reached a climax in 1951 when the university conferred upon her the honorary degree of Doctor of Humanities, and at that time chose to perpetuate her name by dedicating in her honor the new dormitory, the M. Beatrice Johnstone Hall.

In recognition of her long and useful life in the field of education and her humanitarian efforts, the *Senior Citizen Magazine* in May 1959, published the article, “Thirty Thousand Call Her Sweetheart,” written by Dr. EL Grinnell of Grand Forks. This was the last nationwide recognition to come to her, and it came only 4 months before her death in Grand Forks on September 17, 1959, in her 89th year. Tireless and zealous in her quest for all things good in education, Miss Johnstone was hailed as North Dakota’s best-known woman. She treasured her 89 years, she lived joyously, and she remained ever young in mind and spirit.

3 Taken from Swanson, Nellie R & Bryson, Eleanor C (Eds.) 1965. *Pioneer Women Teachers of North Dakota:* Minot, ND: Alpha Omicron State, The Delta Kappa Gamma Society, pp. 10-12.

9.

**Esther Maxwell**4 (1887-1948)- Corresponding Secretary- 1940-1942 ……………………………Bismarck

Like many another girl in the early days of statehood, Esther Maxwell took the teacher’s examinations and qualified for a third grade certificate to teach an ungraded school. When she was 16 she started teaching in the Grass Lake #3 School in Burleigh County. In the summer she rode horseback to school and in the winter drove a horse with an open cutter over ice and through snowdrifts. The winters were severe; frozen fingers and toes were common, as was the thawing of frozen cheeks and noses- teacher’s as well as pupils’.

Esther Maxwell was born on November 24, 1887 at Perry, Iowa. When she was 3 years old her parents moved to Dakota Territory to the area where Wilton now stands. Her early education was secured in a country school, typical of the prairies. She entered the Valley City Preparatory Department in 1906 to begin her high school courses. She alternated teaching with attendance at the Normal School to complete the Standard Curriculum in 1921, with a special certificate in art and one in manual training. Miss Maxwell enjoyed going to college and went, every summer that it was possible to do so during her later years, to the University of Washington to take more art courses and study methods which she could use with children.

Between 1905 and 1920 she taught in rural and small town schools in Burleigh, McLean, Walsh, Oliver, and Barnes Counties, including Grafton, Center, Coleharbor, Wilton, and Valley City. She taught in Bismarck from 1920-1949. Teaching was her vocation and avocation as well because she was Sunday School Superintendent for primary grades at the Bismarck Presbyterian Church as well as Vacation Bible School Superintendent. For Church School she gave lessons in weaving with several types of looms. She was an instructor of handcrafts for children at Camp Grassick. Handicrafts were her hobby and she used this skill in occupational therapy for handicapped children, as well as making furniture for her own apartment. Her interest in Bible study is indicated in a letter to Mr. A. C. VanWyk who, in November 1943 was superintendent of the Bismarck Public Schools. An excerpt:

“I do believe we have filed somewhere, whether in home, school or church, to have pupils appreciate the Bible as real reading material. Certain Bible passages could be classified as Bible literature.”

Miss Maxwell was active in social and club work as well as church and charitable work. She was a member of the PEO Sisterhood, Business and Professional Women’s Club, American Legion Auxiliary, Inter-church Council and the Gray Ladies. She participated in numerous Red Cross activities. She was one of the founders of Delta Kappa Gamma in North Dakota. She was initiated at Valley City in November, 1940, and was a member of Delta Chapter in Bismarck. The interests of the Society were in her heart, evidenced by an excerpt in the Delta Chapter secretary’s minutes, “Esther Maxell made a study of the Constitution and Bylaws and explained them to Delta Chapter.” She was an active member until her death on August 14, 1949. Her varied interests and genuine service attracted many friends. She will long be remembered. Of herself she said, “My greatest ambition is to take what life can give and be cheerful about it- to meet others on the square and to give of myself whenever possible.”

10.

**Susan McCoy5** (1880-1957) ………………………………………………………………………Valley City

“She was a wonderful, wonderful person.” Miss McCoy was my teacher and I remember her as a scholar, grammarian, and an English critic.” She left behind her many “hostages to fortune, for wherever one of her English Majors lives her love of good literature; wherever one of her Clionian girls resides, there too will live Miss McCoy’s ideals.” She was always interested in the news of the alumni and solicitous for the

many graduates. She worked closely with the Alumni Association and when a survey of the graduates was

4 Taken from Swanson, Nellie R & Bryson, Eleanor C (Eds.) 1965. *Pioneer Women Teachers of North Dakota:* Minot, ND: Alpha Omicron State, The Delta Kappa Gamma Society, pp. 41-42.

Made, Dr. Kleinpel, then president of the College, named Miss McCoy the chairman of the project. The alumni held her in high esteem, as did all who knew her.

Susan McCoy was born in Tipton Iowa, on August 6, 1880, and at an early age moved with her parents to Des Moines where she graduated from high school, then attended Des Moines College in 1900-1903. She was awarded a Bachelor of Arts degree by the University of Chicago in 1905, and a Master of Arts degree by the University of Wisconsin in 1916. She was invited to attend the Breadloaf Conference of Writers and Teachers of College English at Middlebury College, Vermont- a signal honor. She enrolled in graduate courses at Stanford University for particular courses she wanted with specific professors in English.

Prior to joining the faculty at the State Normal School in Valley City in 1914, Miss McCoy taught English in several high schools. She was head of the English Department during her long association with Valley City State College. She first taught in Clear Lake, Iowa in 1905. She also taught in Yankton, SD, Brainard, MN, and Fargo, ND. In each high school, she sponsored group activities related to literary study as an extra-curricular project. She continued this at Valley City College in the Clionian Society.

Professionally, Miss McCoy participated actively in the work of the National Council of Teachers of English. She was state director of the Council and served on many of the key committees at state and national levels. She was proud of the contribution to literary interest and taste made by the North Dakota Poetry Association. Other professional memberships included the National Education Association, the ND Education Association, the American Association of University Women, the American Association of University Professors and the American Council of English Teachers.

Miss McCoy was a founder of the North Dakota Chapter of the Delta Kappa Gamma Society International and a charter member of Alpha Chapter in Valley City. In her will provision for a DKG scholarship. While a student, she was elected to membership in Alpha Psi Omega, national honor society in drama, and to Kappa Delta Pi, national honor society in education.

When Miss McCoy retired in 1952, she had been a member of the college faculty for 38 years and she taught English for a total of more than 46 years. In the years between retirement and hospitalization prior to her death on May 2, 1957, she found much pleasure in each of the several interests she had outside of the classroom. One was her house, near the College, architecturally perfect, with much-loved furniture and furnishings. Another was her garden, compact, neat, well groomed, with fresh blossoms all summer. Dearest of all she enjoyed a wide circle of friends, both professional and non-professional folks who stopped by to visit. There was always something of interest to share. Miss McCoy was truly a remarkable woman and a devoted teacher who “saw life steadily and saw it whole.”

11.

**Margaret Montgomery** (18?- 1950) …………………………………………………………………Minot

Margaret Montgomery was a teacher in the public schools of Iowa and a county superintendent there before she moved to Minot in 1924. Prior to this she earned her BA degree at the University of Michigan and her MA degree at Columbia University. She spent 5 years teaching in elementary schools, 8 years in high schools, and 1 year in a college before accepting a position at Minot State Teachers College in 1924. She spent 20 years there as a supervising teacher of 6th grade, teaching at the Campus Laboratory School. She was described as a very energetic and dedicated teacher.

Margaret Montgomery published many articles in the *Normal Instructor.* She also wrote arithmetic, history, and hygiene manuals. She was one of the founders of Alpha Omicron state in 19940. She was also a charter member of Gamma Chapter in Minot and served one term as chair of the state Social Committee.

5 Taken from Swanson, Nellie R & Bryson, Eleanor C (Eds.) 1965. *Pioneer Women Teachers of North Dakota:* Minot, ND: Alpha Omicron State, The Delta Kappa Gamma Society, pp. 147-148.

It is said that Margaret worked everyone hard- pupils, student teachers, colleagues and administrators- in her efforts to accomplish the goals her vision caught. But hardest of all, she worked herself. She retired in 1944. At some point she moved to a rest home in Chicago where she died on April 11, 1950. In 1955 Gamma Chapter honored her memory by sending $120 to the building fund of the national headquarters of Delta Kappa Gamma as a memorial for her. *Written by Lorraine Smith, Gamma Chapter*

12.

**Hazel Belle Nielson6** (1888- 1957)- State President 1940-42 ……………………………………Valley City

Hazel Belle Nielson was born on August 26, 1888 in Valley City. She grew up there as the new state of North Dakota began unfolding. Both of her parents, Wylie and Mary Stewart Nielson were born in Scotland. Her grandparents, for whom Stewart Township in Barnes County was named, were pioneer builders, having arrived at Worthington, now Valley City, in 1878. Her parents came in 1880. They too were active community builders. Hazel was a member of the first Kindergarten class in Valley City. She was a member of the girls’ basketball team, which played winning games in North Dakota and Minnesota.

On Senior Class Day in 1906 she predicted that oil would be discovered in North Dakota, which seemed so unlikely that even she was surprised when the prediction came true. Her interest in athletics continued while a student at the University of North Dakota. She was the first woman to serve on the Athletic State Board of Control. She was a charter member of Alpha Phi sorority at UND and later was a member of the sorority’s Alumni Society.

Always interested in patriotic and historical affairs, Miss Nielson was dedicated to the promotion of good citizenship. Following graduation from UND in 1910 she taught history and German for 2 years at Valley City High School and for 4 years at Fargo High School. She resigned from the latter position to go overseas in World War I as one of two young women chosen from ND to join the General Federation of Women’s Clubs Overseas Unit.

When she returned from France she lectured on historical subjects at Teachers Institutes, stressing “appreciation of the United States.” Shortly after returning, she became Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction in North Dakota. From this position in Bismarck she was called to Washington, DC, to write textbooks for the National Literacy Crusade. She was soon invited to join the staff of the Federal Commission for the Bicentennial Celebration of the Birth of George Washington, where she was Director of Education. Her handbook for teachers regarding George Washington was distributed nationwide. Later she was Director of the Sesquicentennial of the Constitution of the United States. In all, she spent almost twenty years in Washington, DC, five of which were as secretary of the Committee of National Defense for the Daughters of the American Revolution. During that time she edited a bulletin sent out to high schools 6 times a year. She spoke frequently to patriotic groups both in DC and in others cities.

Despite her heavy schedule, wherever she was she found time for community service. While in Bismarck she was president of the Business and Professional Women’s Club, and the American Legion Auxiliary. While State President of the Auxiliary she organized more that 29 units and headed the delegation to the convention held in Paris in 1928. She was a member of the PEO Sisterhood of North Dakota. At one time she was president of Chapter O of the PEO Sisterhood in Washington DC. For several years she served as secretary of the historical division of the ND Education Association, and later as its president. In Valley City, she was president of the Pioneer Daughters Club. Her membership was in the Congregational Church, where she taught Sunday school for many years.

Hazel was a charter member of the first chapter of Delta Kappa Gamma to be organized in the District of Columbia. Five years later she assisted in organizing Alpha Omicron, the DKG state chapter of North

Dakota. As the first state president she organized several local chapters in ND and was happy to assist in

organizing Alpha Chapter in Valley City, the first local chapter to be organized in the state. Hazel spent the last days of her life with her sister, Minnie J. Nielson, in their home in Valley City, where she passed away on July 10, 1957.

13.

**Minnie Jean Nielson7** (1874- 1958) ………………………………………………………………Valley City

Minnie Jean, the eldest of the 3 children of Wylie and Mary Stewart Nielson, both natives of Scotland, was born January 18, 1874, in Jackson, Michigan, where her brother, James, was also born. The family moved to Dakota Territory in 1880 and settled at Worthington (now Valley City) on the homestead that Grandfather Stewart had acquired in 1878. Her sister, Hazel B, was born 14 years later in Valley City. Minnie and her brother, James, thoroughly enjoyed life there. In summers, they attended school in a little one-room building. This experience helped Minnie solve problems she met when, as a high school girl of 16, she began her first teaching job in a rural school in Barnes County. She continued to teach there for several years while continuing her own education. With this experience she gained a position in the Valley City Public School as a primary teacher. After a few years she was assigned to the grammar grades. Later she was put in charge of the high school science department, teaching chemistry and physics in alternate years.

Miss Nielson’s formal education was obtained in the high school of Valley City, the University of North Dakota, Fargo College, a church related school, and in summer sessions, University of Michigan and University of Chicago. In 1920 Fargo College conferred upon her the honorary degree of Bachelor of Laws. In 1907 Minnie J was elected Barnes County Superintendent of Schools, an office she held for 12 years. In 1919 she was elected Sate Superintendent of Public Instruction, the first woman in North Dakota to be elected to that office. She held the office for 8 years, winning 4 hotly contested elections. During the years she served Barnes County she concentrated on improving and reorganizing school districts with such zeal that in 12 years, 40 one-room rural schools were replaced by consolidated school and 7 new high schools were established. She also implemented several new school activities and services. During her tenure in the state office she led a campaign to eliminate illiteracy, with the result that ND moved from one of the states with the highest percent illiteracy to one with the lowest.

After leaving state office Miss Nielsen became nationally known through her work in organizing Parent Teacher Associations, using North Dakota as the demonstration state. From 1929 to 1931 she was Field Secretary for the National Illiteracy Crusade, with headquarters in Washington, DC. For 7 years she traveled and lectured in 42 states, working with state departments in the effort to eliminate illiteracy. In 1938, at the request of the trustees of the ND Teachers Insurance and Retirement Fund, she returned to her home state to become the Executive Secretary of the Fund. She resigned from the appointment in 1950. She spent the last years of her life in the beloved family home in Valley City, where she died on February 27, 1958.

Because of her various activities Miss Nielson was well known throughout the state. While living in Bismarck she was a member of the State Board of Health, State Board of University and School Lands and State Board of Administration. She was one of the founders of the state Historical Society and for several years served on its Board of Directors. She was a member of ND Education Association, a life member, past director, and past vice president of the National Education Association. She was an early member of the Women’s Auxiliary of the American Legion, also the National President of the Past Presidents’ Parley of the Auxiliary; a National President of the Administrative Women in Education as well as the organizer and first president of that organization in ND.

Minnie served 2 terms as president of the Federation of Women’s Clubs in North Dakota. Mrs. Pennybacker, National President of the Federation, publicly commended Minnie’s excellent planning and management of the 1915 state convention. She was the first initiate of Chapter A, the first chapter of the PEO Sisterhood to be organized in ND. Both Minnie and Hazel Nielson were state founders of The Delta Kappa Gamma Society in ND. It was through their leadership that the Society came to the state.

6 Taken from Swanson, Nellie R & Bryson, Eleanor C (Eds.) 1965. *Pioneer Women Teachers of North Dakota:* Minot, ND: Alpha Omicron State, The Delta Kappa Gamma Society, pp. 153-154.

7 Taken from Swanson, Nellie R & Bryson, Eleanor C (Eds.) 1965. *Pioneer Women Teachers of North Dakota:* Minot, ND: Alpha Omicron State, The Delta Kappa Gamma Society, pp. 154-155.

14.

**Adelaide Phillips Fryar** (c.1908- 1960s ………………………………………………………………Fargo

Adelaide Phillips attended school in Valley City and later graduated from the Valley City Normal School in 1914. She completed her Standard Course in 1920at Valley City. She worked through continuation courses, extension, summers, and evenings to complete her BS and MS degrees at North Dakota Agricultural College. She did advanced graduate study at the Universities of Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Miss Phillips first taught elementary school in Chaffee, North Dakota from 1914-1919. She moved to 6th grade in Fargo in 1920-21. She also taught the Auditorium Course in the 1920s. The Auditorium activities were a series of work-study-play activities based on a Platoon system started in 1922 in elementary schools in metropolitan cities across the country. This became popular 5 years later when the first guidebook was published in 1927. Lela Lee Williams, one of the founders of the Delta Kappa Gamma Society was the author of the guidebook. Miss Fryar became principal of Lincoln and Clara Barton Elementary Schools in Fargo. She later met Dick Fryar, retired, and moved from Fargo to Sumner, Washington in 1942 where she substitute taught for several more years.

Adelaide was initiated into Delta Kappa Gamma in 1940 at a National NEA meeting in Milwaukee. She was a founder of Alpha Omicron State in 1940. She helped organize Beta Chapter in 1941 and served as its president in 1941-42. She chaired the ND State Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women Teachers in 1940-41. When she moved to Washington in 1942 she transferred her membership to Epsilon Chapter and later served as Alpha Sigma (WA) State Secretary for 1 year. When she no longer substitute taught she withdrew from Delta Kappa Gamma.

In a letter sent to Jessie Wycoff in May 1962, Mrs. Fryar stated that, in her retirement, she enjoyed gardening, had a little greenhouse, a big yard and lots of flowers. She did volunteer work at a children’s hospital once a week in Tacoma as of 1956. Her new interest in 1958 was that she had started piano lessons. Dick and she traveled extensively, including trips to Hawaii, Cuba, Guatemala, Europe, Egypt, Lebanon, Israel, Greece and Spain. They went on cruises to Alaska, Mexico, West Indies Islands, Panama, and South America. They later traveled to the Scandinavian countries and around the top of Russia. She also enjoyed sewing. She died in Washington, no specific place or year given.

15.

**Adeline Stevenson Nurse** (1889-1983)- State First Vice President 1940-42 …………………………Fargo

Adeline Stevenson was born on January 22, 1889 in Neponset, Illinois. She attended elementary and secondary schools there and graduated with class honors. In the early 1900s qualifications for rural school teaching in Illinois consisted of having a high school diploma and passing a teacher’s examination. Adeline began her teaching career with these qualifications and taught in a rural school in Illinois until her family moved to Moorhead, Minnesota. After settling in MN, Adeline enrolled at the Moorhead Normal School to work on her standard teaching certificate. She taught second and third grades in the Moorhead Public Schools from 1914 to 1918.

In 1918 when a better teaching position became available in Fargo, Adeline began teaching first grade in the Civic Center Building, which housed some grades after the Central School was destroyed by fire. Concurrently, she enrolled in extension courses and summer school sessions. She completed her BS degree in 1929 from Moorhead State Teachers College, formerly the Moorhead Normal School. After completing her degree, Adeline developed a summer home on Fish Lake in Minnesota to be closer to her interest in outdoor life. She personalized her cottage by building a fireplace of rocks that she had gathered as she traveled during summers while attending colleges in the eastern and western parts of the United States.

In 1932, when Emerson Smith School was completed in Fargo, Adeline was transferred to auditorium teaching in that building under the principalship of Mrs. Sadie Walker. Adeline continued as auditorium teacher\* at Emerson Smith until 1942 when she was appointed principal of Clara Barton School. She remained in that position for the next 7 years until the time of her resignation. During her career, Adeline also served in the faculty of the State Normal and Industrial School at Ellendale for several summers.

Adeline Stevenson’s effective leadership qualities were recognized by her fellow teachers. They elected her president of the Fargo Education Association, president of the North Dakota Education Association, and chair of the Kindergarten and Primary Section of the National Education Association. Adeline carried out her work with unfailing professionalism. She had an air of quiet confidence and dignity about her, which led others to turn to her for advice. They were always rewarded with capable assistance. Known for being gracious and friendly, she was particularly attentive to new and inexperienced teachers in her building.

Adeline was initiated into membership in The Delta Kappa Gamma Society on July 3, 1940, at the time of the NEA Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. On November 22nd of that year, when Alpha Omicron state was organized at Valley City, she was one of the 16 state founders and was elected to the office of First Vice President of Alpha Omicron state. Soon thereafter she was involved with the founding of Beta Chapter on January 30, 1941. Adeline was credited with nurturing the chapter in the beginning years and for working earnestly to advance chapter welfare. She was very committed to Delta Kappa Gamma and served at all levels of the Society. She was a member of the International Committee on Legislation from 1942-43. At the state level, she chaired several committees including Constitution, Progress of DKG, and Program. She also served as Beta Chapter president from 1947 to 1949.

After a long and successful career in teaching, her marriage at age 60 to Dr. Frank Nurse came as a surprise to her friends and associates. Dr. Nurse was a scholar and professor of literature, languages, and philosophy. He was also known as something of a poet. Frank and Adeline had been friends for years, and they shared many interests. After their marriage they moved to La Jolla, California, where Adeline quickly became involved in the community devoting many hours to church and civic organizations. Any extra hours in her week were spent flower gardening, golfing, and homemaking. The happy couple returned to Adeline’s lake home in Minnesota for a number of summers where her friends enjoyed her ever-gracious hospitality. Adeline and Frank had been married for 22 years at the time of his death in 1971.

Twelve years later, at the age of 94, Adeline Stevenson Nurse died in July 12, 1983, at the health care center in Muncie, Indiana. Her interest in Delta Kappa Gamma and her affectionate loyalty to Beta chapter was evidenced shortly thereafter when Beta Chapter was notified that she had bequeathed $10,000 for a scholarship in be established and administered by Beta Chapter in the name of Adeline Stevenson Nurse.

16.

**Sadie Elliott Walker**8 (1865-1965)- Recording Secretary 1940-42 ……………………………………Fargo

Sadie Elliott was born in Chester County, Pennsylvania, on December 20, 1865. In 1880 her father brought her and her mother from PA to Spiritwood, Dakota Territory. Mr. Elliott came to supervise a

2,000 acre Adams Ranch owned by the Northern Pacific Railway Company. He filed on a quarter-section homestead near Spiritwood where Sadie spent her time until college and teaching took her away from home.

Ranches were miles apart, and graded roads were a refinement of civilization not yet appearing on the frontier. Snow and mud frequently stalled traffic entirely, except for the most determined who went on foot or horseback. At first all “country” schools were in session only in summer months, but most children were

\*The Auditorium activities were a series of work-study-play activities based on a Platoon system started in 1922 in elementary schools in metropolitan cities across the country. This became popular 5 years later when the first guidebook was published in 1927. Lela Lee Williams, one of the founders of the Delta Kappa Gamma Society was the author of the guidebook.

8 Taken from Swanson, Nellie R & Bryson, Eleanor C (Eds.) 1965. *Pioneer Women Teachers of North Dakota:* Minot, ND: Alpha Omicron State, The Delta Kappa Gamma Society, pp. 172-174.

kept home during August to help with the harvest. For that reason some schools were in session during June

and July and again in September and October. In these months the weather was pleasant and roads were usually passable, so 4 months of the year was the extent of the education Sadie received from 1880-1883.

When Jamestown College held its first registration on September 28, 1886, Sadie Elliott was the first student to enroll. The following year this private college became the first teacher training institution on Dakota Territory. After 3 years at Jamestown and some teaching, her education was continued in summers at

Valley City State Normal School, the University of Pennsylvania, Indiana University, and the University of Wisconsin. After her 2nd year at Jamestown College, she taught the spring term in a school 12 miles north of Jamestown for $35 per month. One of her friends taught the fall term so Sadie could return to college.

In 1888 Sadie’s mother was called east because of illness in the family and Sadie took over the duties at home temporarily. The following spring she taught a 6-month term 5 miles from home and lived in the schoolhouse when travel was difficult. Usually she drove a team and buggy. She taught at this school the following year, March through August, at $40 per month. In the fall of 18980 she taught at the Mutz School, a really difficult assignment. Of the 30 pupils of Polish descent, only a few spoke English.

The fall of 1891 was a milestone. She taught an 8-month term, continuing through the winter. There were 25 pupils. One year later she had 30 pupils in a village school, including all grades. A framed photograph of the school, its teacher and children went to the Chicago World’s Fair as part of the ND exhibit.

In those days pupils were divided into 6 “reader” classes. Having finished the 6th reader was equivalent to completing 8th grade. Most of the time was devoted to the 3 Rs. The older boys and girls were excellent scholars in oral and written mathematics. More time, proportionately, was spent with the older children in class work, and the smaller one had many forms of seatwork for learning and review. In the 1-room schools where Sadie taught there were usually several children in each reader.

Sadie’s school closed on Good Friday 1892. The next Monday she went to Urbana, ND, to open a 6-month term and continued to teach there for 3 years. In the fall of 1895 she was hired by the Jamestown Schools to teach 2nd grade, her first work in a single grade and in a graded school. She continued in this position for 5 years at a salary of $95 per month.

In 1900, at the age of 35, Sadie married Charles Walker and they established their home in Fargo. She was widowed within a short time, and 6 years later she applied for work as a substitute teacher in the Fargo schools. She was a regular staff member before the year was over as the teacher of the 2nd grade in the old Central building. Here her salary was $60 per month. She continued at Central School until 1912. When Agassiz School was completed she was transferred to the 2nd grade with 50 pupils. She recalled that contracts issued to new teachers promised annual raises of $5 per month; whereas, teachers already on staff got raises of $2.50 per month, a rather common practice in many schools.

In December 1916, Central School was destroyed by fire after an explosion in the chemistry lab. 3rd grade was put in a portable building on the high school grounds while 1st, 2nd, and 4th grades were taught in what was the Civic Center building. Here Sadie taught 4th grade and acted as principal for the 2 buildings.

In 1921 when the Central High School building was ready for use, Sadie was the principal and taught 2nd grade. In 1931 when Emerson School was completed Sadie Walker, at the age of 66, was asked to take the principalship of this new school. She was one of first “full time” elementary principals in Fargo, having no further teaching duties. She remained in this position until retirement in 1941, at age 76. She taught in the schools of North Dakota for 551 years, 36 of them in Fargo.

Sadie Walker was initiated into the Delta Kappa Gamma Society on July 3, 1940, at the time of the NEA Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She was a founder of Alpha Omicron state when it was organized at Valley City on November 22, 1940. She served as the first state recording secretary from 1940-42. She also served as state president from 1944-46. She was a charter member of Beta chapter and remained active for many years.

Sadie was also active in the National Education Association and the Elementary Principals Association for which she served as chair for North Dakota. She was equally active in the ND Education Association and was a founder of the “Lollipops,” the women’s organization formed after the Chancellors’ group for men in education. She was a charter member of the Fargo chapter of Pioneer Daughters, one of the North Dakota Federation of Women’s Clubs. She was an active member of Eastern Star for 57 years and a Past Matron. She served as secretary of Mecca Chapter for 17 years and was awarded a life membership. During World War II she devoted many hours of service to the Red Cross. She maintained her membership in the First Presbyterian Church in Fargo where she taught Sunday school and served as a deacon.

Sadie received many honors for her conscientious, efficient, and forward-looking performance in education through the years. She was cited for having influenced thousands including leaders in the social and civic life of Fargo and the nation. She was long recognized as an independent, self-reliant, and alert woman who had a radiant personality and a kindly disposition. Friends and acquaintances described her as one of the most interesting conversationalists they had ever met. Sadie Elliott Walker lived past her 100th birthday before she died in 1965.