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Editor's note: Port, now a ghost town of sorts, had its days of vigorous glory as Shields develops here.

NOT REALLY A PIONEER . . .

— by Donita Lucas Shields

Known by her many students as Miss Ruby, Ruby Leonard Lucas is one of the few remaining pioneers who can relate vivid memories of early-day Western Oklahoma schools.

"I'm not really a pioneer," she emphasizes, "because by the time we moved to Port there wasn't a family living in dugouts. The true pioneers had already built good homes, a town, and a fine three-room school with a belfry and bell."

No doubt she is right about not being a pioneer. She missed out on controversies that raged for several years after the Run in 1892. Two settlements, called East Wood and West Wood, were located one mile apart. Both desired the post office and school.

At gunpoint West Wood stole the post office from East Wood. The community's dugout school remained at East Wood, but West Wood families stubbornly did not allow their children to attend it. Washita County officials settled this dispute by designating that another school be placed between the two rival villages. Both factions were required to send their children to this new school.

When West Wood's post office was officially named Port after its postmistress in 1901, East Wood gradually faded away. By 1902, the second dugout school overflowed with children. Before the fall term opened, innovative families took time out from field work to build a three-room frame structure across the road from the dugout. Being situated one-half mile east of Port town, it was also named Port.

By the time eleven-year-old Miss Ruby and her family moved from Shawnee to Port in 1909, all hard feelings had apparently been forgotten. At that time the school provided primary, intermediate, and advanced levels of learning for a least eighty students.

Miss Ruby joined the intermediate group taught by Janie Lucas. Miss Janie was several years older than Miss Ruby, but the two became lifetime friends. Years later they became sisters-in-law after Miss Ruby married Miss Janie's younger brother Ralph.

In addition to instant rapport with her first teacher at Port, Miss Ruby was also surrounded at home by others she admired. Her mother ran a boarding house where various teachers stayed during the school year. It was no wonder that Miss Ruby decided at an early age that she too would become a teacher.

She studied her lessons in McGuffey readers and grammars and solved her arithmetic in Big Chief tablets. She did her work accurately so as not to wear out the small, pointed eraser on her penny pencil. Sewell's Merchantile in Port sold school supplies, but prairie people learned frugality.

"If I used up my eraser, I did without until the pencil was gone. No one ever had extra erasers," she reminisced.

The country school then held seven-month terms so children could help with field work. Fertile soil in Port area flourished with cotton, corn, and alfalfa. Crops were planted, tended, and harvested by mule, man, and child power.

"I was fortunate in having older brothers so I did not have to work in the crops," she stated. "I could go to school both winter and summer. Back then there were subscription schools during the summer which were actually enrichment classes. Each family paid a small tuition for their children's enrollment. These subscription schools also provided year-around income for some of the teachers."

"Mr. George Coffey was one of my favorite teachers. Everyone liked his son John, too. John became president of Cameron College in Lawton," Miss Ruby remembered.

"We admired Mr. Coffey, but we were afraid of him. He always held an opened pen knife as he walked up and down the aisles checking our work. Mr. Coffey used it to sharpen our pencils when they became dubby. Sometimes he tapped the tip of the blade on top of a student's hand if he daydreamed or dawdled. I kept busy when he walked near my desk."

Mr. Coffey might leave Port for a term, but the school board always called him back to restore order and progress. Port parents demanded good education for their children and were proud of the academic program. They expected the best because the prosperous area usually paid teachers extra bonuses.

"During my school years Mr. Coffey taught a few high-school classes, but there were not enough courses for accreditation. Port was accredited for eighth-grade work, though," Miss Ruby explained.

She continued, "In those early years eighth-grade graduation was very important because most young people ended their schooling after eighth grade. The State Board of Education required that every student pass an achievement test. Those who failed it didn't graduate. Mr. Coffey allowed two days for these exams. I remember taking tests in arithmetic, U. S. history, grammar, physiology, reading, geography, domestic science, agriculture, music, and penmanship."

Miss Ruby passed her exams as did her eleven classmates. Port's first graduation exercise on May 28, 1913, was a memorable occasion. To commemorate the celebration, the class selected orange and black colors which were retained throughout the remaining fifty-three years of the school's existence.

After graduation Miss Ruby began her high-school education at a subscription school held at West Springcreek where Mr. Coffey offered a six-week course. Next she attended a county normal school at Sentinel while living with family friends.

In the spring of 1915, Miss Ruby felt prepared to take the teacher's qualification examination at Washita County Court House in Cordell. The State Board of Education required any aspiring teacher to pass this difficult battery of tests before awarding the teaching certificate.

Miss Ruby received a rare honor for a sixteen-year-old when the State Board deemed her qualified to teach grades one through eight. Her childhood ambition was fulfilled—or would be as soon as she found a school needing a teacher.

Her teaching career began that fall in a school near Port Independence, an attractive one-room school that had twenty-five youngsters in grades one through eight. Their former teacher suffered from nervous exhaustion and had resigned. Miss Ruby found her days filled with hard work, but she was young, determined, and inspired. She loved teaching, and her students loved her.

"My biggest problem was with the school clock," she laughingly recalled. "It wouldn't run after the room got cold at night. I had no watch to set it by when it warmed up next morning. I carried my mother's alarm clock back and forth so we had correct time both at school and at home."

First graduation class at Port — 1913

PHOTO BY THE BIELEY BROTHERS OF SENTINEL PROPERTY OF RUBY LUCAS



Back Row (left to right) Bessie England, Ruby Leonard (salutatorian), Elmer Gold, Bob Lucas, Raymond Maddox, Mary Bowie, Lena England. Front Row (left to right) Les Armitage, Bess Harper, Will Percy, Lillie Harper (valedictorian), Ella Mae Tyner, Tom Lucas.

Next she taught grades one through four at Springcreek, also near Port. This was a larger school with two rooms downstairs and one room upstairs. A folding partition between the downstairs rooms could be opened for community affairs, school programs, and political meetings.

Miss Ruby continued, "My third school was called Pink. It was also a one-room school, but it was one of the last to annex with Port as Independence and Springcreek had done previously. I taught fewer students there, and they were all eager to learn. It was difficult to keep them busy and out of mischief, but they were enjoyable because they always did their school work quickly, accurately, and neatly."

With her own money, she bought WORLD BOOK encyclopedias and several volumes of WORLD BOOK STORIES FOR CHILDREN. These became the school's library when she gave the two sets to the district.

Miss Ruby added, "Each day we opened school with a Bible story. On the board I wrote questions about it requiring short answers. As someone answered the question, another wrote its answer on the board. Every student learned all the answers during the day after they studied their regular lessons. When parents visited school, they always asked to hear the Bible drill. Those children knew answers to more than 400 Biblical questions."

During high school and her early years of teaching, Miss Ruby's usual mode of transportation was Beauty, her trusted mare. In fact, the entire Leonard family treasured her. Long before they moved to Port, Beauty served them as both buggy horse and riding pony. As years passed, she grew old and feeble. It was a sad time for all when she died.

Miss Ruby could not bear the thought of replacing the beloved animal with another. Instead, she bought a used 1916 Model "T" with fancy wooden wheels and a wooden steering wheel. A car was a lavish investment in those days for a maiden school teacher, but even then some type of conveyance was a necessity.

Miss Ruby felt chic and modern as she chugged along the dusty roads. A brother-in-law taught her how to drive. "At least he told me that it was not proper to travel in the bar ditches," she quipped. "About all he ever told me was 'Keep 'er on the road, Sister!'"

Port, Oklahoma, School,

announces its

Commencement Exercises

Wednesday Evening, May Twenty-Eighth,

at the

Port School House.

Program

of Closing Exercises of
Port, Okla., School,WEDNESDAY, MAY 28, 1913,
8:30 P.M.

Music,	Port Band.
Invocation,	Rev. R. E. Smith.
Reading, (Selected)	Bessie Harper.
Music,	Port Band.
Oration, Geographical Unity,	Raymond Maddox.
Trio, Take Me Home, Leslie Armitage,	Bessie England and Ella Mae Tyner.
Music,	Port Band.
Oration, the Great American Nation,	Elmer Gold.
Class Prophecy,	Bessie England.
Music,	Port Band.
Presentation of Diplomas,	G. A. Coffey.
Music,	Port Band.
Commencement Address,	J. M. Terry.
Music,	Port Band.
Valedictory,	Lillian Harper.
Benediction,	Rev. W. H. Weatherby.

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"I could fold the top down convertible-style when the weather was nice. If it was cold or rainy, I raised the top and snapped the side curtains shut," she beamed.

"That car was such a bother during the winter," she explained. "The only way I could crank it by myself on cold mornings was by draining the oil and water and take both into the house at night to keep warm. Next morning I poured everything back in. When I got to school on bad days, I draped a heavy quilt over the hood. That kept the engine warm until time to go home."

During summer months when she was not teaching, Miss Ruby continued her own education at Southwestern Teacher's College in Weatherford.

"The only structures on the Hill then were the Old Science Building and a three-story frame administration building which burned. All the old records were destroyed in that fire," she recalled.

"Back in those days there were no dormitories. I stayed with family friends who lived at our boarding house in Port. One summer I stayed at Duvall Hotel and also

MEMORIES

worked there to help pay my lodging. I found that I preferred teaching to cleaning rooms."

When Miss Ruby attended her first term at summer school at Southwestern, she left her car at home. A relative or friend always met her at the depot in Canute on Friday and then took her back on Sunday afternoon to catch the Rock Island train.

Later she drove to Weatherford but stored the car in a garage during the week. She thought nothing of walking from town to the Hill.

"It was easier to walk than to crank that car. Besides, it was too hard on its engine to pull that steep hill," she joked.

However, she enjoyed driving it on weekends. Sometimes she returned to Port or visited with friends in other towns.

"Many Sunday afternoons found the college crowd

heading for a favorite resort area at Dripping Springs near Thomas. How we loved picnicking, swimming, and boating! I have heard that lovely little park has since been fenced off and closed to the public. By now it may have completely succumbed to Nature's forces."

One tangible symbol of Miss Ruby's school days has remained intact throughout ensuing years. A copper classroom handbell with its wooden handle, a family heirloom from her mother's boarding house at Port, has its special spot on her bedside table. That bell, like Miss Ruby's brown eyes and quick wit, glows brightly and speaks clearly of its happy times at Port with aspiring students and wise teachers.

Of that first graduation class of 1913, only Miss Ruby and one classmate remain to describe adventures of early-day scholars and teachers. Miss Ruby presently lives at her home in Elk City. ■

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR THE EXAMINATION OF APPLICANTS FOR COMMON SCHOOL DIPLOMAS — MAY 8th, and 9th, 1913 Second Day

READING.

1. Name three books that you have read in addition to your regular school books. Tell something about one of these and its author.
2. Give a brief biography of the author of "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow."
3. Describe the personal appearance of Ichabod Crane.
5. What is good reading? Explain fully.
6. What lesson is taught by "The Vision of Sir Launfal"?

PENMANSHIP.

1. Name the four movements used in writing.
2. What system of writing is recognized as a standard by most of our schools?
3. Describe correct position of body at desk, holding pen, etc.
4. Write a letter to some publishing house ordering a list of books for the library.
5. Make the small and capital letters.

AGRICULTURE.

Required by boys only.

1. Give the function of root and stem and leaves.
4. Tell minutely how to prepare ground for a crop of corn.
5. Explain all the purposes served by cultivation.
6. What are the most valuable crops in your commun-

ity? Why?

9. What is mulching? When and to what crops is it valuable?

GEOGRAPHY.

1. Name five large and five small countries of Europe and the capital of each.
3. What are the products of these islands? Name a city on each?
4. Locate the great cotton regions of the world. the wheat regions. The coffee regions.
7. Name the leading commercial nations of the world. Why do they lead?
9. What physical features influence the commerce of a country?

MUSIC.

(Answer Five.)

2. Place key signature and "do" in nine major keys.
3. How is a major scale constructed? "Build" the G and F major.
4. How many minor scales have we? Name two. What is a triad?
5. Write relative minor scale to C major.
8. Fill five measures in $\frac{3}{4}$ time using quarter, beat and half note, unequally divided beat, after beat note and quarter rest.

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PROPERTY OF RUBY LUCAS.

Miss Ruby's 1916 Model T

WESTVIEW