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I Told the Truth

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ILLUSTRATION BY NORETTA WILLIAMS

I TOLD THE TRUTH

-by Inez S. Whitney

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Red Rock School — Grades 1-4, 1924-1925; Teacher — Inez Schneider

Editor's note: The formal preparation of teachers has become much more intense, as this article reminds us.

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It was the spring of 1924. I was seventeen and finishing my first year at Southwestern State Teachers College in Weatherford, Oklahoma, twenty miles from my parents' farm.

I was home for the weekend. Mama said, "Your papa has been asking around, and he wants to take you to apply for a school tomorrow."

Papa said, "I think your best chance is at Red Rock. Henry Hays is a friend of mine and he's chairman of the schoolboard. Neither teacher is coming back and he said to bring you down to see him."

Red Rock was in the country only seven miles away. It was near the little town of Indianapolis, and we passed it every time we went from Custer to Clinton. I could remember the first school. It was one room made out of red rock dug up from the countryside. Now there was a neat two-room frame building painted white. It even had a belfrey with a big school bell.

According to Oklahoma law, a high-school graduate could teach after passing an examination but had to be eighteen, and when I graduated I was only sixteen.

It was hard times and though it cost very little to send me to Southwestern, it had been difficult for my parents to find the money and I really needed to get a job.

We got up early the next morning. I was excited but a little apprehensive. Mama looked me over with a critical eye and then picked out a dress she thought would be suitable.

"You look so young," she sighed. "You need to look older or you'll never get the job. I know," and she brought out her only hat. It had a deep crown.

She pulled it down on my head as far as it would go. "This hat comes well below your ears. Maybe Henry Hays won't notice your hair is bobbed."

Bobbed hair was a new fashion, and most

people looked on it with disfavor. Nice girls just didn't do it, but Mama had insisted that mine be bobbed the summer before.

Papa objected and had been quite upset. "I like her long curls, and her pretty red hair reminds me of Maw's. It's the very same color. I wish you wouldn't do it."

Mama looked at him with disgust. "Her hair is so long and thick and it takes forever to dry. In the summer it is so hot." She picked up her shears and whacked it off.

When I was ready, Papa cranked up the Model T and away we went. We were soon at the Hays farm. Mr. Hays was in the yard.

"Hello! Hello! Get out and come in, Edd. How are you, young lady?"

We met his wife and their two little children. "Now let's see. So you think you want to be a teacher, do you?" He asked more questions. What kind of grades had I made in high school and how was I doing this year at Southwestern and did I think I could keep order. Then he added, "Can you play the organ?"

"Yes," I answered. We had had an organ before Papa bought the piano.

"Good. We want a teacher that can play the organ for programs like at Christmas and the last day of school."

When we were ready to leave, he said, "I'll let your dad know about the job after I talk to the other two members."

The first thing Mama said when they came after me the next weekend was, "Henry Hays called. He wants you to come and sign a contract tomorrow."

Papa took me the next morning.

Mr. Hays smiled as he handed me the contract. "Sign this if you want the job. Eighty-five dollars a month for eight months. Oh, by the way, how old are you? The other members wanted to know."

I was taken aback. Everything had gone so well. What answer could I give him? I didn't want to tell him I was just seventeen. I thought a minute and then I said, "I'll be eighteen when school starts."

And I was. School started September eighth on my eighteenth birthday.