



~ **Part 35** ~
Reflections on a Common Theme
Educators

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CLOUD COUNTY

A Master Teacher from Glasco

by Joan Nothern

The award could not be more humble. A narrow wooden frame, 6 x 6 inches, displays four U. S. 4-cent stamps recognizing Higher Education. A tiny bronze strip is attached to the frame: MASTER TEACHER 1964. Pasted to the reverse side is a brief dedication:

On November 14, 1962 the United States Post Office Department issued this special stamp pointing to the role higher education has played in the cultural and industrial development in the United States. This stamp commemorating higher education was part of the centennial observance of the law creating land grant colleges.

We are using this stamp to honor the teachers who have made so important a contribution to higher education within the public schools of Kansas. The scope and quality of higher education which this stamp represents could not have been attained without the foundation of quality teaching in the public schools provided by you, the Master Teacher.

Above this history, a 2-inch strip of masking tape has "Awarded to Lillie Studt in 1964" hand printed in ink.

Emporia State Teachers College (now Emporia State University) is the "We" using the stamps to honor 1964 Master Teachers in Kansas. Emporia State Teachers College established the Kansas Master Teacher awards in 1954. The awards continue to be presented annually to teachers who serve the profession long and well and who represent outstanding qualities of earnest and conscientious teachers.

Lillie Elisabeth Studt was born August 5, 1897. She began teaching in country schools near Glasco and Delphos in 1918, at age 21. After 13 years in these communities she took a position at the Kansas State School for the Blind in Kansas City, Kansas. She taught there for 33 years, until 1964 when she retired at age 67.

Lillie Studt returned to Glasco with a unique typewriter that printed in braille. This allowed her to correspond with former students and also gave local friends some insight into the lifetime dedication of this Master Teacher. Lillie Studt died December 4, 1995, at the age of 98.

MITCHELL COUNTY

Bob Severance, Teacher at Simpson High School and Beloit Vo-Tech School

by Barbara Axtell

Lifetime Mitchell County resident Bob Severance was a leader in safety after becoming the Vocational Agriculture instructor at Simpson High School in 1951.

He received a Bachelor of Science degree from Kansas State University and was the FFA advisor, vocational agriculture instructor, and taught biology at Simpson High School.

Under his instruction, the Simpson FFA Chapter won the District FFA Foundation Award in 1957, 1959, and 1960. His chapter also received the State First Place FFA Foundation Award in 1961 and 1963.

On April 28, 1963, the Simpson FFA Chapter, under Severance's leadership, received the Award of Merit at the 36th Annual Convention of the Future Farmers of America in Kansas City. School was dismissed that day and most of the community attended the ceremony.

An award was also presented to Severance by the National Congress for Farm Safety for the citation of meritorious service to safety in his outstanding work in rural accident prevention at the Annual Farm Bureau-Vocational Agriculture Teachers Safety Banquet. He was the first vocational agricultural teacher in Kansas to receive this award.

In 1962 the vocational-technical movement began which allowed vocational-technical schools to be formed. Severance was the first staff member to be hired at the Beloit Vo-Tech and the third director.

Regarding the hiring, Severance said, "Dean Haddock came to Simpson (where I was teaching vocational agriculture) with a contract. I signed it in the Vo-Ag Room. He was going from there to Jamestown to get John Lackey to sign as carpentry teacher."

Dean Haddock was the farm representative for Guaranty State Bank and was involved in the formation of the school in Beloit. There were four schools, including two in the North Central and Northwest part of Kansas, that were called Type II schools, which was made up of participating Unified School Districts, that were not restricted to recruiting students in just their districts.

Each district was assessed a mill levy for the share of their participation. High school students were admitted free to the classes at Beloit and also at Hays, when USD 489 became a participating district.

At the very start of the school in Beloit, elementary school districts as well as high school districts were represented on the governing board. The technical schools were funded with taxes from the school districts plus a substantial amount of federal and state educational money.

Severance said, "We started bold and brave that first year. I recall that school started on September 1, 1964, with no local money until the first of November. We had eight people on the staff at that time that were on salary with no funds available, so Clarence Hubbard, President of Guaranty Bank, took money out of his personal savings account to make the first payrolls because the tax receipts did not come in until the first of November."

The first director for the North Central Kansas school was Ron Wilson from El Dorado who had Butler Community College ties. Instructors were Jim Clawson—Heavy Equipment, Eldon Kadel—Business, John Lackey—Carpentry, Don Mangles—Auto Mechanics, Earl Baugher—Agriculture, and Bob Severance. Norma Simmons (Thompson) was the clerk of the board, office manager, treasurer—she did everything, Severance said.

In the beginning, agriculture classes were held at Beloit High School, the business program at the former Southwestern Bell Telephone Building (north of the post office), auto mechanics in the east one-half of the Beloit Street & Alley building. The west one-half of the building was the welding shop taught one-half time by Severance and John Lackey until the 2nd semester.

At that time the school determined they needed someone on the road for promotional work. Bob Severance was selected for the position, so he was still one-half-time agriculture teacher but was relieved of his welding responsibilities.

During Severance's tenure as Director, he said, "An overriding theme was to teach students quality performance—don't just get by—and you will have no problem getting jobs. That's what it is all about.

"We had some stigmas to overcome. The adage was—if you can't cut college you can still go to tech college," he said, "however 80% of the jobs do not require a college degree." The school also tried to impress on women to get a saleable skill to help with single-parent families who cannot make it on minimum wage to raise a family.

Dr. Bob Severance retired from the North Central Kansas Technical College in 1992 and still remains active in the community. He is a lifeguard at the North Central Kansas Wellness Center, member of Beloit Rotary Club, Chautauqua Isle of Lights Committee, Mitchell County Convention and Tourism, North Central Flint Hills Agency on Aging, Solomon Valley Economic Development, and the Solomon Valley Foundation. He also helps with the Friendship Meals at the Beloit United Methodist Church where he is a member and serves as a certified lay speaker.

ROOKS COUNTY

Francis Mahoney, Stockton

by Roger Hrabe

Ask anyone in Rooks County about long-time educators and people who had a profound influence on the education system in the county and the name Mahoney will probably come up. Francis Mahoney was an educator in Stockton, while his brother, Robert (Bob), was an educator down the road in Plainville.

Francis Mahoney grew up in the Bunker Hill, Kansas, area and graduated from Bunker Hill High School. He received bachelor's and master's degrees from Fort Hays State University (Fort Hays Kansas State College at the time) in the early 1950s before heading out for his first teaching position in Herndon, Kansas.

Francis taught shop and social studies in Herndon before accepting a position as Grade School Principal, and 7th and 8th grade teacher/coach in Paradise, Kansas. Francis remained in Paradise from 1955 to 1963. In 1963 Francis moved to the community in which he would spend the rest of his career in education—Stockton. He has remained in Stockton where he is active in the community.

Mahoney started out as Grade School Principal, and that is the position he held for 35 years, from 1963-1998. He then served as Superintendent of Schools for one year, 1998-1999, before he retired from education.

Francis has also been involved in the community. He has been an active member of the local Rotary Club, KOOD community advisory board, Rooks County Historical Museum board of directors, Stockton Senior Center board of directors, Knights of Columbus, Church Council, and St. Thomas Cemetery board.