



Article by  
Mary Theodora Noss

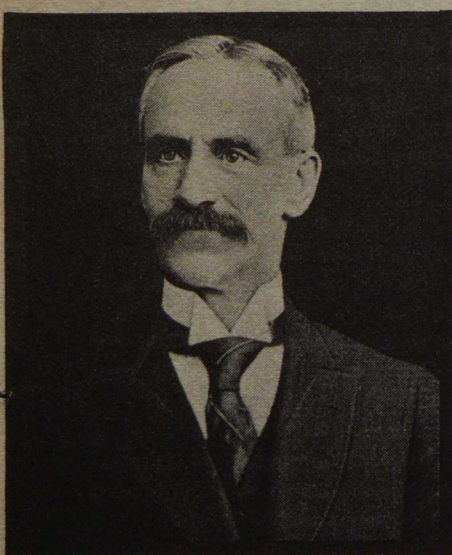
Dr. Noss retired after forty-seven years of teaching French at California Normal and Ohio University.

She now resides at 76 Elmwood Place, Athens, Ohio, 45701.

# memories of old main

A young man, Theodore B. Noss, came to California in 1879 to teach Latin and Psychology at a school called "South Western State Normal School." Professor G.P. Beard had asked him to leave Shippensburg and join the faculty at the Normal School. The following year he became vice principal.

Dr. Noss was quick to notice Mary Graham who was his most attentive and interested Latin student in the class of '81. She remained to teach in the area and they married two years later. That same year he was named principal.



Dr. Theodore B. Noss

These two wonderful people became my parents in 1886 and my brother, Theodore, was born ten years later. Our home was in the south wing of "Old Main" until we moved into the new principal's residence, attached to the building, three years later. This is the home of today's president, Dr. George Roadman, and Mrs. Roadman.

Omitting three years in Europe and four years at Wellesley College, I have twenty-one years of happy memories under the roof of "Old Main".

I was told I went to school as soon as I could talk and was the object of great observation and tests in the Child Study classes. Somewhat later I would march imaginary school children up and down the corridor of "Old Main", clapping my hands to keep them in step until we arrived in the living room, my classroom. My imaginary students were then seated and taught I don't know what. (You see, I had pedagogy in my blood from both sides of the family.) If anyone came in and sat down on top of Lizzie or Charley, my favorite imaginary pupils, that was a catastrophe.

In those early days, it was a lot of fun to stand in the doorway of South Boys' Dormitory across from our residence and, with arms outstretched, prevent any boy from going to class until he had tossed me up in the air.

Before I was of school age, the largest room in "Old Main" was used for the Model School. My mother and Mrs. Chubb, wife of the professor of English, were among the teachers.

By the time I was ready for first grade, Science Hall, the building nearest the river, had been built and the eight grades of the Model School were moved to the first and second floors of that building, while the sciences occupied the basement. The large room vacated in the center of "Old Main" became the Library, the domain of Miss Anna Shutterly. Later, four classrooms were added to the rear; two were entered from the library and two above from the Chapel.

The campus, at the beginning of the

century, was bordered by the railroad, College Avenue, Third Street and, on the rear, by the janitor's home, the heating plant, the Gymnasium, and the ball field.



Studying in the Main Hall Library

There were six of us children who lived on the campus at this time: Hugh and Helen Meese, children of the Vice-Principal; Margaret Craven, daughter of the Business Manager; Marguerite Scott, daughter of the Matron; Karl Keffer, son of the professor of Music; and myself. What good times we had together, especially during vacations when the whole of "Old Main," the dormitories, and all of the campus were our playground.

Our spirit of adventure led us to crawl under the buildings and through the windows, but hide-and-seek was our

favorite game. When we found a dead bird, we had a funeral with all the accoutrements. Our cemetery was in a clump of bushes near the North Tower.

Close to this tower, we operated a millinery store for dolls. I'm sure I wasn't a leader in this enterprise.

More along my line were the dramatic performances to which our parents were invited to buy tickets for a couple of pennies. I remember especially a scene from "Alice in Wonderland" in which Helen Meese played the difficult role of the dormouse sleeping throughout the scene while the Mad Hatter conversed with Alice.

Behind the boys' dormitory, there was an artificial pond where we paddled

around in a large flat-bottomed boat in the summer and ice skated in the winter. Inside the high fence that surrounded the campus, there was a cinder path where we rode our bicycles. There was no dearth of amusements for the "College kids," as we called ourselves.

My first schooling was in Berlin, Germany, where my father and Dr. Chubb studied at the University. Since women were not admitted there, mother and Mrs. Chubb had a tutor, and I was sent to a Höhere Töchter Schule where I tried to learn Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, and, hardest of all, Knitting! My mother told the teacher that she didn't care to have me struggle with the knitting, but wanted me to learn German. The teacher replied "If she neglects knitting, what will she do when she reaches the old age of 70!"

When we returned to the United States, I went through the eight grades of the Model School and then entered the Normal School where we had three classes: Juniors, Middlers, and Seniors.

I had Algebra with Dr. Smith, the Registrar, in the southeast room of the ground floor; Geometry, across the hall with Professor G.G. Hertzog, father of Walter. Next to this room was my father's office and across from it, the bookstore which was presided over by Louise Ward.

On the north side of "Old Main" were the English classrooms of Dr. Chubb and Professor Meese, and a coatroom. Upside, adjoining the Chapel on the north side, was the music studio where I spent many hours in violin and piano lessons with Professor Keffer, Mr. Kinsey, and Mr. Morse. I soon dropped the violin as the sounds I made got on my nerves.

Next to the music studio was Miss Acken's Speech classroom. We called it Elocution then.

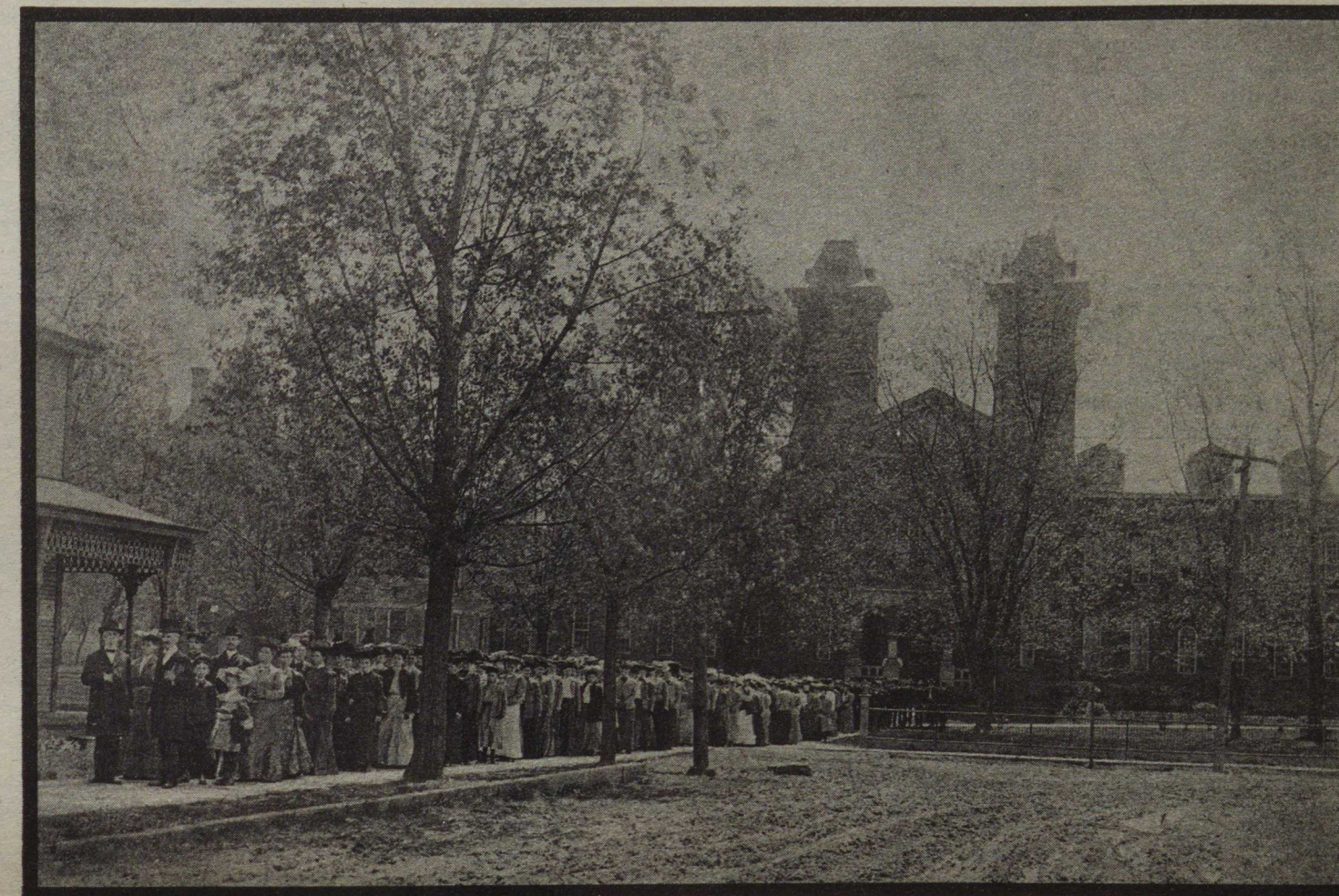
Back of the Chapel on the north, Professor Stocker and Dr. Jeffers taught Latin and Greek, and opposite, on the south side, were the classes in Modern Languages. Mrs. Hockenberry taught French and my mother taught German.

The Education courses were on the south side of the second floor. Miss Buckbee's History classes are among those that I remember best. Any graduate who studied under these teachers will agree with me that we had a very fine faculty. I would like to pay tribute to each one, including those of the Model School.

One member of my father's faculty, Miss Mabel Mountsier, is still living in Winter Park, Florida. She was in the class of 1887 at California and is now 103 years of age.

As I remember, a chapel service was held every morning after the first or second class hour. As a march was played, the students filed in from both doors in serpentine fashion until they reached their chairs which were in rows from front to back instead of crosswise. Members of the faculty took turns conducting the religious service.

After the service, music or something else of a secular nature followed. My father felt the need of a compact, inexpensive hymnal for chapel use, so he compiled one which included responsive readings and songs - a few in German and



Procession on way to church Sunday morning

French. The book was widely used in other schools and went through about twelve editions.

On Sunday mornings, the students and faculty assembled in the center of "Old Main" to go to church in a body. Father and Dr. Ehrenfeld led the procession and others followed two by two. Each dropped out of the procession at the church of his choice.

On Sunday evenings, there were literary programs given by faculty members in the library. They were instructive, delightful, and well attended, although attendance was optional.

After my graduation from California Normal, seventy years ago, my family moved to a house on Third Street, back of the campus, and I entered Wellesley for a five-year course with a major in piano.

Following my Sophomore year, the four of us had a profitable and happy year in Europe, mostly in Paris. Father was writing a book (which he never finished) entitled "Glimpses of Schools Abroad." He and mother visited museums and artists' studios; Theodore attended a boys' school and I took courses at the Sorbonne and continued my piano studies.

After my father's death and my graduation from Wellesley, I returned to California where I was offered a position in French, there being no opening in piano. I enjoyed the classes in French and continued to teach it for five years at "the Normal" and forty-two years at Ohio University. I never regretted that my minor became my vocation and my major, my avocation.

Following my brother Theodore's unexpected death in 1910, Mother and I moved back into "Old Main" occupying the apartment on the north side corresponding to the one in which we had formerly lived on the south side. Mother

continued teaching German and the History of Art and she was now Vice-Principal.

My French classes were very enjoyable because of the friendliness, response, and cooperation of the students. I remember pleasantly our French Club meetings, our French table in the Dixon Hall dining room, star-gazing with groups of students on clear nights (I taught Descriptive Astronomy one or two years), and our plays given in French in the Chapel or on the campus.

For Victor Hugo's HERNANI we had the audience move from one part of the campus to another, so that the stage for the different acts could be set in advance. We had a Round Robin letter that circulated among a group of the Cercle Francais graduates. There was also a graduate French Club of some Cercle Francais members who lived in or near California and wished to continue their French reading. We all read the same books and met occasionally for discussions.

I am greatly pleased, as my mother was, and my father would have been, to see the growth, the improvements and expansion of the College that have taken place under succeeding administrations.

Students of today could hardly imagine the primitive conditions that existed in the first decade. The students of that time carried the water for their wash bowls and for drinking from a pump at the rear of the South Dormitory. They had oil lamps and had to clean the chimneys and trim the wicks. We had no telephone until 1899 when we moved into the present residence of the president.

A few years later when a rare automobile passed, we stood on the curb to watch it and my father said "Some day I want to have one of those." Today you have beautiful buildings with fine equipment, all conveniences, and

beautiful interiors, as well as high educational standards.

Each visit that I have made to California since my days in "Old Main" has been delightful. The first time I found that the towers were not so high as formerly, that the hill across the river was much lower, and the distance from the College to the Methodist Church was shorter. One thing, however, was just the same. Can you guess what? Give up? The sound of the clock striking the hour in the South Tower. It has outlived many generations of students.

Mother and I greatly appreciated the cordiality of the Steeles when we came for the unveiling of her portrait, given by one of the early classes. A scholarship in her name was founded at that time. Dr. Steele's kindness in coming to Monongahela to speak at her funeral, I shall never forget.

During a later visit, through the kindness of Mrs. Merrell Holman and Dr. Wilbur Marisa, I had an opportunity to observe the excellent work going on in the classes of the Noss Demonstration School and in the French classes. Another unexpected pleasure, seeing several of my students and friends, was made possible by Bessie Ward Griffin, my former student.

Last year, I stopped in California with my cousin, Helen Hockenberry Whitehouse, who had also lived in "Old Main" when her parents were members of the faculty. Dr. and Mrs. Roadman gave us a very warm welcome and a wonderfully enjoyable visit.

In conclusion, I am very grateful to have been born under the roof of "Old Main". I could not have had finer parents nor could I have had a better, happier, or more interesting place to live during my youth. So I say thank you to California and to "Old Main" for all these wonderful memories.