End of an Era:  
De Smet High School  
Class of 1912

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"The senior class of the high school and their instructors met at the home of Mr. and Mrs. A. N. Waters on Friday night last in honor of the birthday of Miss Edith Mitchell, a member of the class," the De Smet News reported in its issue of 8 March 1912. "A most delightful evening was spent and the occasion will long be remembered by all. An elaborate lunch was served at midnight."¹ For days in advance, the students had anticipated their get-together. Movies had not yet become regular fare in De Smet, a town on the Chicago and North Western Railroad that had 1,063 people during the 1910 census. Now and then, a film played at the opera house, but it would be several months before the town's first movie theatre—the Cozy—opened.² Parties and informal gatherings in people's homes constituted most of the social swirl for high-school students in De Smet. In coming years, as movies and sports grew in popularity and the automobile proliferated, dating gradually began to replace group activities. The class of 1912 was a transitional one, standing at the end of one era and the beginning of another.

The Alfred N. Waters home on Second Street was the most elegant in town. The invitations had said to come at eight.³ The fancy table

settings and costly furniture provided nice backdrops for a photograph. What were the nine class members and their teachers thinking about as they posed around the dining-room table and in the living room? Their stiff postures, formal attire, and slicked-down hair reflected how well they had learned the lessons of proper decorum for such occasions. Most came from families of modest means, some barely able to keep their heads above water, with one or two from the community elite. In Kingsbury County as elsewhere in South Dakota, students who lived in town had a definite advantage over
their rural counterparts in obtaining an education. About half of the “townies” who had graduated from eighth grade in De Smet in 1908 had gone on to four years of high school, but only one of the farm children had. On this first Friday in March 1912, the nine remaining students had only twelve weeks left until graduation. Then they would be certified high school graduates, an honor that

4. Kingsbury County Public Schools Commencement Program, 24 June 1908, in School-Girl Days, p. 19; De Smet High Commencement Announcement, ibid., p. 41.
would distinguish them from the vast majority of their fellow South Dakotans.

Sitting around the Waterses’ dining-room table, the students arranged themselves alternately boy-girl, boy-girl along with their teachers (who were not so far removed themselves from girlhood and boyhood). The pictures taken that evening are available to us because one class member, Evelyn Keating, pasted them, along with other mementoes, in a class book published by Reilly and Britton Company of Chicago. Keating (seated at far right in the photograph) was the only “country kid” in the class. Since her family’s farm was only a couple of miles south of De Smet, she had been able to walk into town to go through all twelve grades with the others. She was a year older than most of them. Starting out in first grade, she had been so small that after walking in from the country she would be tired and fall asleep at school, leading her teacher to suggest that her parents hold her out a year. (Most of the class were born in 1894, the year Laura Ingalls and her husband Almanzo Wilder moved from their farm north of town to one near Mansfield, Missouri). Keating, whose classmates called her “the brain,” ended up as valedictorian.5

Sitting to her right was Harry (“Hans”) Warner, the class president. He was one of seven children of William E. and Harriett Warner, who had come to De Smet as children during the Great Dakota Boom of the early 1880s. William Warner and his parents had arrived from Alto, Michigan, in the spring of 1880, just as the town was getting started, and had settled on a homestead north of town. They experienced the hard winter of 1880-1881, which Laura Ingalls Wilder, whose family had arrived several months earlier, would make famous in her novel, The Long Winter. Harriett Warner’s family, the Morrisons, came from Osceola, Ohio, and homesteaded on a quarter-section near the Warner’s three years later. Most of the early townspeople and settlers were Yankees—part of a stream of migration surging across the northern states after the Civil War. They were soon joined by a flood of northern European immigrants, mainly from Scandinavia and Germany. William Warner quit farming in 1898 and moved into De Smet, engaging in carpentry, threshing, and odd jobs before landing a job as a rural mail carrier, retiring twenty-one years later.6

Aubrey Sherwood (seated to Evelyn Keating’s left) was the son of Elgetha and Carter P. Sherwood, publisher and editor of one of the

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5. Interview with Bert Stewart (son of Evelyn Keating Stewart), 2 Apr. 1986, De Smet, S.Dak.
The pages of Evelyn Keating's class book contained a myriad of details about the De Smet High School class of 1912.

town's two weekly newspapers, the *De Smet News*. The Sherwoods, one of De Smet's "first families" both literally and figuratively, had also arrived within a couple of years of the town's founding. Carter Sherwood, a Wisconsin farm boy who had worked as a printer for several years on the Madison *Wisconsin State Journal*, had arrived in De Smet in 1882. He teamed up with Mark Brown the following year to run the *De Smet Leader* and later bought Brown out when ill health forced the latter to quit the business. In 1891, Sherwood combined his paper with the *Kingsbury County News*, adopting the name *De Smet News*. His wife, the former Elgetha Masters, had taught in several schools in Minnesota and Dakota Territory before taking a job in De Smet. After marrying in 1888, she transferred her energies from the classroom to the Women's Study Club, the Baptist and Congregational churches, piano teaching, and volunteer coaching for debate and speech at the high school. 

To Aubrey Sherwood's left in the picture sat Florence Andrews, whose father ran a men's clothing store on Main Street (maps might label it Calumet Avenue, but nearly everyone called it Main Street). Clockwise around the table sat Clarence Dunning, whose classmates kiddingly referred to him as "Dummy." His mother had remarried a man named Leach, and sometimes people called him Clarence Dunning, other times Clarence Leach. Seated next to him was Beatrice Hale, the English teacher and principal. She also taught German. Peeking around Dunning was Zelma Glessner, whose father ran a dray line.8

Nat Stimson, next to Glessner, was a son of the depot agent, Henry Y. Stimson. His father had taken over the depot in 1912, and the family had briefly occupied the second-story living quarters that Laura Ingalls Wilder wrote about in *Little Town on the Prairie*. On Easter Sunday 1905, a fire leveled the building, and the family moved into a house in town while a new, single-story structure went up in place of the original depot.9 Next around the table was Bertha Jones, the Latin and history teacher, who was in her first year at De Smet, and next to her sat Court Krumvieda. He had been five years old when he came to De Smet from Iowa with his parents, a sister, and a brother. After working for a time in the flour mill, Krumvieda's father, Lewis, started a plumbing and well business that he ran until 1945.10

Edith Mitchell, sitting next to Krumvieda, would be the only girl in the class to go on to college. Alfred N. and Maude Waters, a childless and wealthy couple, would make that possible. Mitchell's own family, who lived in a house north of the railroad tracks, had gone through some difficult times, and the Waterses had taken her in to live with them. Alfred Waters had himself grown up in the home of an uncle, Judge Alfred W. Newman of the Wisconsin Supreme Court, after his mother died when he was only a few weeks old. He had arrived in De Smet at the age of twenty-four during the summer of 1880, fresh out of law school. During the early days, lawyers tended to involve themselves as much in the business of land as in the law, and Waters reaped a small fortune from shrewd land investments, eventually becoming one of the largest land-

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holders in the county. Over the years, the "Judge," as people referred to him, helped introduce gas lighting, city water, sewers, and other civic projects into De Smet.  

For these nine members of the class of 1912, three standard curricula were available at De Smet High School: the classical course, designed to prepare students "for college especially and the professions of law, medicine, and theology"; the scientific course, to ready students for technical schools and "the problems of practical life"; and the teachers course, to qualify students (mainly girls) to teach elementary school without having to attend normal school. The courses were heavily academic in orientation, with English, math, science, and foreign languages dominating. Not for several years would vocational, agricultural, and home economics courses be introduced. Latin still held sway in 1912. Six of the nine strug-

11. Ibid., 2 Sept. 1927; interview with Stimson; interview with Alvilda Sorensen, 11 Aug. 1986, Brookings, S.Dak. Sorensen grew up in De Smet and graduated from the high school in 1916. She knew the Waters family and several members of the class of 1912.
gled with Vergil under Bertha Jones’s tutelage, and Latin and Locke E. (“Prof.”) Lunn’s chemistry class received the most attention in the “Stunts and Jokes” section of Evelyn Keating’s class book:

Miss Jones: Aubrey, what English word do we get from “alumnus”?
Aubrey: Aluminum.

Clarence (in Chem. Lab., reading): “Put in T. T. and heat.” Say, Prof., what is T. T. and where’ll I find it?
Prof. (dryly): Test Tube!

Prof. (in chemistry): Evelyn, what is {so and so}?
Evelyn: I don’t know.
Prof.: Evelyn (another question)
Evelyn: (Previous answer)
Prof.: Evelyn, did you study this lesson?
Evelyn: I read it over once.
Prof.: Well, once should be sufficient,—I wish some people could retain anything.\textsuperscript{13}

De Smet itself, like its senior class, stood unknowingly on the brink of a new era. In 1912, the town still retained many of the characteristics of an “island community,” which, according to historian Robert Wiebe, had dominated American society after the Civil War. Local affairs and concerns overshadowed events in distant urban areas. People felt remote from cities, comfortable within the cocoons they spun around themselves. Agriculture constituted the lifeblood of the community as people’s activities moved to the rhythms of seasonal agricultural processes. Citizens could easily assume that what happened in far-off cities and factories bore little relevance for them. The isolation that characterized little towns like De Smet in 1912, however, would soon recede as the national culture began to bear down upon the local. Political progressivism peaked nationally in 1912, and in South Dakota, progressives such as Coe I. Crawford and Peter Norbeck dominated the Republican party. In 1913, De Smet itself adopted a progressive reform—the commission form of city government.\textsuperscript{14} Whether anyone in De Smet heard about or understood the import of Sigmund Freud’s American visit in 1912 is hard to tell, but in April the sinking of the Titanic seemed to capture everyone’s attention. “The all absorbing topic the past week was the terrible disaster at sea,” the De Smet News observed, filling nine inside columns with news of the event.\textsuperscript{15} Within several weeks, peo-

\textsuperscript{13} “Stunts & Jokes,” School-Girl Days, pp. 71-72.
\textsuperscript{15} De Smet News, 26 Apr. 1912.
ple were able to buy sheet music for "The Wreck of the Titanic" at the music store on Main Street.  

While new communication technologies were transporting the world into the homes of De Smetites, increasingly affordable automobiles were allowing them to escape the confines of the community. Much more than the railroad, the automobile expanded people's horizons. Roads would remain primitive for another decade—impassable in winter, dust-clouded in summer—but intimations of the future were already appearing by 1912. Road "locaters" bounced through town and indicated that De Smet was going to be on the route of a new highway from Chicago to Yellowstone Park—the Chicago to Black Hills and Yellowstone Park Trail, popularly known as the "Black and Yellow Trail." Black and yellow stripes were painted on telephone poles the next couple of years to mark the trail for travelers. By 1923, it was graded and graveled, and three years later it was designated Federal Highway 14.  

More than anything else, the First World War signaled the modernization of small towns like De Smet. A new brick high-school building, equipped with the all-important gymnasium, went up in 1922. New courses accompanied expanding enrollments about that time,

16. Ibid., 17 May 1912.  
17. Ibid., 15, 22 Mar., 7 June, 12 July 1912, 16 May 1913, 23 Apr. 1926.
The Alfred N. Waters home provided the backdrop for this photograph, reminiscent of a family portrait, of the close-knit class of 1912 and their teachers.

and pep rallies reflected an increasing emphasis on athletics. Debate and other extracurricular activities began to take up more of the students' time as well. From the perspective of the 1920s, the activities of the class of 1912 would have appeared rather dull. The De Smet News pondered the thought in 1922: "The question is being raised by many people whether the young folks these days are not gadding too much to affairs of one kind or another. Too much basketball, parties, club meetings, gymnasium practice, social evenings of one sort or another. It is very evident that the young people of today do not spend the long dreary evenings at home as they did years ago."

For the class of 1912, however, the year had been full. While the national high-school culture was evolving into something different,

becoming more formal, more organized, more differentiated, and more impersonal, the class of 1912 remained tight, like a family, each student and each teacher in close contact with each other every day. This classroom camaraderie carried over into other areas. In extracurricular activities, there were not always enough students for organized events, so teachers often participated. The high school joined the state oratorical association in 1909, but debate and oratory did not enlist many at this early date. The basketball team (boys) scheduled a few games haphazardly in the opera house, where Court Krumvieda played forward and Clarence Dunning was the center. No regular league or conference yet existed. Prof. Lunn tried to organize a football team, but games were not scheduled with other schools, and the boys just played among themselves, with Aubrey Sherwood playing tackle. In the fall of 1913, Lunn finally got a team going, and the following year track was started as well. Whatever the sport, the boys pretty much coached themselves during these years. To travel to other towns for baseball games, players relied on volunteers to drive them in automobiles, or they took the train.

In baseball, the traditional small-town sport, De Smet High School lined up several games with nearby schools during the spring of 1912. Clarence Dunning starred on the mound, striking out ten batters in one game and sixteen in another against neighboring Lake Preston, eight miles down the railroad to the east. Dunning was big and rugged. "He could just throw a baseball through a board," Nat Stimson, who played first base, remembered. With so few boys on the team, Prof. Lunn was pressed into action, tying the score of one game with a two-base hit. Townspeople continued to direct their interest more at the town team than at the high-school team. Until more boys attended high school, town teams had a much larger pool of talent to draw upon.

Locke Lunn's heroics on the baseball diamond provided one example of the fuzzy line that existed between teachers and students.
For one thing, De Smet's three teachers were all young, not that far removed from high school themselves. It made perfect sense to draft the professor into service to play a role in the senior-class play, for example, or to include them all in social activities. While the class of 1912 thus felt close to their teachers, they also accorded their instructors more respect and deference than students would in later years. For the teachers, remaining both friend and disciplinarian could be a taxing challenge. Not everyone was able to manage it. Lunn's predecessor as superintendent, A. B. Rich, had relied heavily upon boxing students' ears to assert his authority. He quit teaching after the 1910-1911 school year and took a job selling textbooks for several years before returning to teaching in Iowa.24

Compared to Rich, Locke Lunn was a prince in students' eyes. Just twenty-three years old when he took over as superintendent in the fall of 1911, he had already been principal for three years at Earlham, Iowa, and Valley Junction, South Dakota. He remained in De Smet for four years, leaving town after his wife died during childbirth. He was an excellent teacher and popular with the students. Their admiration and respect for him made keeping order easy. After going on for graduate studies at the universities of California and Minnesota, he returned to teaching in Heron Lake, Minnesota, where he died tragically of a heart attack at the age of thirty-six.25

At a time before sports and extracurricular activities fully engaged their energies, students looked forward eagerly to the parties and get-togethers that were scheduled every month or so during the school year. In late September, the juniors and seniors staged a "weenie roast" for the incoming freshmen at a grove outside of town. The first senior party of the year took place on Halloween at Florence Andrews's home, which was appropriately decorated with jack-o-lanterns, bats, black cats, witches, and pumpkins. When it came Clarence Dunning's turn to pin the witch on the broomstick, the others slyly moved the sheet to the other side of the room in order to trip him up.26 After the party, Evelyn Keating jotted in her class book, "Glorious time. Spread."27

At Thanksgiving time, the party was at the Stimsons, where Nat Stimson mystified his classmates with magic tricks, followed by a "very amusing" game about words beginning with "can." Clarence Dunning won the door prize, a large box of chocolates that he gen-

24. Ibid., 28 Aug. 1925; interview with Stimson.
25. Interview with Stimson; De Smet News, 20 June, 4, 18 July 1924.
erously shared with the others, while Aubrey Sherwood took home the booby prize, a small toy. Nat Stimson teamed up with his father to regale them with a “very entertaining story,” and Miss Hale read a selection about “that article of torture,—the collar,” after which they all sat down to a banquet. As usual, the decorations featured the class colors; under each plate was a small pennant with the number “12” on it, hand-crafted in Yale blue and white.  

On 3 February, Evelyn Keating celebrated her nineteenth birthday at the Alquist home (so people would not have to drive out to her family’s farm). Despite terrible weather, everyone except Zelma Glessner managed to attend. A week later, the sophomores treated the seniors to a progressive dinner at the annual sophomore-senior party. Proceeding from house to house, the group marched four abreast to prevent possible abduction by the juniors, who, if past experience was a guide, might have popped out of the bushes at any moment to capture them and spirit them away. The homes were decorated in both the senior and sophomore (orange and black)

28. Ibid., p. 62.
colors, and games like “Ducky Ducky Duck!” were played between courses.  

Edith Mitchell had her birthday party on the first of March, and an April Fool’s party at the Krumviedas followed a month later. “The senior class are sure having a round of pleasure coupled with their school work,” noted Carter Sherwood in the News, “and the teachers are enjoying it no less than the pupils.”  

For the next three weeks,

All nine members of the class of 1912, along with Prof. Lunn, had roles in the class play, performed before an appreciative audience in the De Smet Opera House. From left to right are Harry Warner, Florence Andrews, Court Krumvieda, Zelma Glessner, Clarence Dunning, Edith Mitchell, Nat Stimson, Evelyn Keating, Prof. Lunn, and Aubrey Sherwood.

excitement swirled around practice for the senior-class play, which was presented in the opera house on Friday, 19 April. Every class member (as well as Prof. Lunn and a junior-class boy) had a part in The Private Secretary, which was billed as a three-act farce-comedy.
Clarence Dunning played the featured role of Douglas Cattermole, who, in debt and planning to sow some wild oats, impersonated a private secretary. Nat Stimson, with a smaller part, was in charge, as usual, of the bookkeeping and ticket sales.\textsuperscript{31}

Prof. Lunn and Miss Hale had prepared the students well. The News enthusiastically observed that by the night of the performance “so at home were they on the stage that the audience could scarcely believe that not one of them had ever before appeared in public.” One of the largest audiences ever assembled in the opera house received their money’s worth (tickets cost twenty-five, thirty-five, and fifty cents) during the two-hour play. “It had been generally known that the class was drilling on a play,” the News observed, “but few were aware that it was anything more than a light affair such as classes usually put on.”\textsuperscript{32}

Basking in the glow of their triumph, the members of the class took their final tests and prepared for graduation. The exercises of the last week not only marked the glorious culmination of twelve years of endeavor for the graduating seniors but also provided diversion and entertainment for everyone in the community. Further, it gave townspeople an opportunity to reaffirm traditional values and reinforce social solidarity through ritual. After a class get-together at the home of Florence Andrews on the evening of Friday, 24 May, the official activities of commencement week began Sunday evening with a baccalaureate service at the opera house presided over by Rev. G. S. Keller of the Episcopal church of Huron. “The advice and encouragement given the graduates was most fitting,” the News commented.\textsuperscript{33}

Next evening, Monday, 27 May, the graduates gathered at the Sherwood home for a seven o’clock supper. Tuesday night, Clarence Dunning’s mother, Mrs. Leach, entertained them. Wednesday evening, graduation exercises took place in the opera house. The four girls carried bunches of white roses, their class flower. Above the stage hung a banner with the class motto—“Higher, Still Higher.” It was a sign of the times; 1912 was the first year the motto was in English rather than Latin. Other elements of change blended with tradition in the program. School-board members lent a sense of continuity; four of the five—W. S. Andrews, Frank Schaub, Charles L. Dawley, and William Warner (Harry’s father)—had lived in town since its founding year (president of the board Joseph O. Purinton, the coun-

\textsuperscript{31} Interview with Stimson; \textit{De Smet News}, 29 Mar., 19 Apr. 1912.  
\textsuperscript{32} \textit{De Smet News}, 26 Apr. 1912.  
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 31 May 1912.
ty register of deeds, had come later). These four had presided over the addition of the tenth grade in 1893, the eleventh in 1899, and the twelfth in 1908. By 1908, the inadequacy of the old school building, put up in 1885, had become obvious, and a new two-story wooden structure was added that summer. Meant to be only temporary, it remained in service as a school for thirty years. The class of 1912 had been the first to attend four years of high school in it.34

Back in 1909, there had been time enough for each student (all four of them) to give an oration at graduation. In 1912, the spotlight shone on Evelyn Keating, the valedictorian, and, interestingly enough, on Clarence Dunning, who read a class poem he had composed. Keating’s oration, “Realities and Dreams,” filled twelve handwritten pages in her class book. Its literate style and well-developed ideas reflected well on the quality of education the students had received. Dominating the speech were two antinomies: the first was the conflict between dreams and aspirations on the one hand and the necessities confronted in everyday life on the other; the second featured the opposition between opportunities and the corresponding duties and obligations.35

The oration reflected how well the school system inculcated its students with basic values and beliefs in addition to more mundane lessons. Approaching grandiloquence, Keating declaimed: “Our responsibility is stupendous and what shall we do to fulfill His requirements of us? We owe it to our creator, our highest benefactor, to make the most of Life’s opportunities. . . . It is not what we get out of the world, but what we put into the world, that counts. ‘Where there is no vision, the people perish.’ We must see a vision of what is expected of us, and we must do it. Our dreams must not be mere dreams, they must have some foundation, whereby they may become realities.”36

No ceremonial occasion in De Smet was complete without music, and several musical numbers were fittingly rendered, including a violin solo by O. P. Williams, a local banker. Judge Charles S. Whiting, a local lawyer who later gained eminence on the state supreme court, drew lessons from his years of experience to offer encouragement and advice in the main address of the evening. The students had voted to use part of their play receipts for a gift to the school, a copy of *The Discuss Thrower*, which class president Harry Warner

presented. After Prof. Lunn spoke some brief words of farewell, the diplomas were presented, the benediction was said, and the students walked out into the night as certified graduates of De Smet High School. One last round of celebration remained—a three-day camp-out at a nearby lake, with the students as guests of the faculty.37

"There are great opportunities in this life," Evelyn Keating had said in her valedictory speech. "The way to advancement is open to all, the only condition being that we put ourselves to the task."38 Opportunities for the boys, however, exceeded those available to the girls, whom the culture of the time preordained to marry and raise families. Two of the young women of the class eventually settled in California after they married—Zelma Glessner and Edith Mitchell. Mitchell was the only girl to go on to college, starting out at South Dakota State College in Brookings and later transferring to the University of Minnesota. During the summer of 1912, she accompanied her benefactors, the Waterses, on a three-month automobile tour back to Alfred Waters's boyhood home in Durham, New York. Driving over roads that much of the way consisted of nothing more than dirt paths and stopping at nearly every town to obtain directions to the next one made the excursion quite an adventure. After marrying Randle Toland, Mitchell moved to Los Angeles.39

Florence Andrews married a man who had played baseball with Clarence Dunning. Sadly, she was the first of the classmates to die, a victim of a difficult pregnancy while she was in her early twenties. Evelyn Keating was the only girl to remain in the De Smet area. The class brain, she taught several country schools before marrying Bert Stewart in 1917. They raised a variety of crops and three sons on a farm near De Smet. She began teaching Sunday School at the age of fourteen and continued for sixty years. After her children were grown, she taught in several schools in and around De Smet, her services being especially in demand during the teacher crunch of World War II. Of the girls in the class, she lived the longest, dying in 1982 at the age of 88. The young women who taught the class of 1912 soon left the profession to marry. Bertha Jones, the Latin instructor, quit her job a year or two after the class graduated in order to marry a local druggist, Merle Sasse, and Beatrice Hale, the English teacher, also married a local man.40

39. Interviews with Stimson and Sherwood; De Smet News, 13 Sept., 8 Nov. 1912.
40. Interviews with Stimson and Sherwood; Poppen, De Smet: Yesterday and Today, pp. 73-75; interview with Stewart. The fact that there are few school records prior
Valedictorian Evelyn Keating inspired her classmates with her commencement oration "Realities and Dreams."

to 1918 available made researching the class of 1912 frustrating. Significant information about the class and its teachers (especially Hale and Jones) is hard to find.
Following graduation, Clarence Dunning continued one of his high-school activities for a time, playing on a Sioux Falls baseball team.

Three of the five boys in the class of 1912 left town to make a living. Clarence Dunning was paid to pitch for a Sioux Falls baseball team for a while, but where he went after that is unknown. Court Krumvieda taught a session or two of country school in Whitewood Township southeast of town before taking a job in Deer Lodge, Montana. After serving in the army during World War I, he followed a successful career in the grain-merchandising business in Denver.41

The member of the class who went the furthest professionally and geographically was Harry Warner. After completing the agricultural course at South Dakota State College in Brookings, he received a fellowship for graduate study at Iowa State College. For nine years, he was associated with the agricultural experiment station and extension service there, with time out to serve as an officer in the balloon division of the United States Air Service during World War I. While at Iowa State in 1923, he oversaw production of Pay Dirt, the first complete film ever produced at the college. By the end of the twenties, he was doing editorial and public relations work for the National Fertilizer Association in Washington, D. C., writing articles, preparing publications, even writing and producing another movie.

In 1931, while working for the Barrett Company in New York City, he and his wife received publicity for participating in an experiment with television, something he saw little future in. Meanwhile, he kept in touch with family and friends in De Smet, visiting home several times and sending poems to Aubrey Sherwood, who printed some of them in the News. Nostalgia shone through in “The Home Town Paper,” the first stanza of which read,

I see the “Journal” every day, sometimes the “Bee” and “Sun”
And scan the “Tribune” headlines when my day’s work is done.
As evening comes, once every week, I’d rather sit and muse,
And “eat it up,” nor miss a word of good old Home Town News.

At only thirty-eight years of age, he died in 1932, the second member of the class to do so.

The two boys who stayed in town were also the longest-lived members of the class. Actually, Nat Stimson followed a round-about path to return home. After working in a hardware store on Main Street for several months after graduation, he took a job in the depot and worked there with his father until the latter retired as depot agent in 1932. Since Nat Stimson did not have enough seniority to take over his father’s job in De Smet, he was forced to take agent jobs in Broadland, Lake Preston, and Highmore before returning to De Smet in 1948, staying on there until the station closed in 1969. By that time, at age 75, he was the oldest agent on the Dakota Central branch of the Chicago and North Western. Outliving both of his wives, he raised a daughter and a son, a bomber pilot who was lost in action in the Pacific in 1944. Stimson’s memory remained sharp as he aged, and his grasp of financial concerns made it is easy to understand why his classmates relied upon him to take care of its money matters. He died on 9 November 1988 at the De Smet Good Samaritan Center and was buried in the De Smet Cemetery.

After graduating in 1912, Aubrey Sherwood taught in a couple of country schools to help earn money for college and went on to graduate from South Dakota State College in 1917 with a degree in agronomy. He taught school briefly in Hallock, Minnesota, and then worked several months as a field agent for the United States Bureau of Entomology. During World War I, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps and took flight training, but his tenure was cut short when

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43. Ibid., 22 Dec. 1922.
the flu epidemic grounded him. Afterwards, he returned home and went into the family newspaper business, taking it over completely when his father died in 1929. By the time he finally sold out in 1977, father and son had published the newspaper for ninety-three years. Aubrey Sherwood took special pride in publicizing the novels of former De Smetite Laura Ingalls Wilder and in helping persuade nationally famous illustrator and artist Harvey Dunn, who grew up on a farm near Manchester, ten miles west of De Smet, to donate many of his prairie paintings to South Dakota State College in Brookings, where they are now housed in the South Dakota Art Museum. His wife, the former Laura Engebretson, met him while teaching at De Smet High School after attending the University of South Dakota. Sherwood died in De Smet on 19 December 1987, at the age of ninety-three, and was buried at the De Smet Cemetery.46

The De Smet High School class of 1912 was not particularly unusual. Its very typicality makes it interesting. The saving habits of its valedictorian, who kept a class book; the special attention given it by the local newspaper editor, whose son was a member of the class; and the longevity of two of its students, whose memories could be tapped, make it possible to describe a transitional stage in American secondary education. Though the members of the class only dimly realized it at the time, they stood on the threshold of a new era. The old traditional, close-knit little group of scholars would soon give way to larger, more heterogeneous collections of students whose goals in attending school were less well defined. What was hardly visible at the time stands out in stark relief from the perspective of eight decades.

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