

Spend 2013 looking at 1906 through Earl Hodson's eyes

By Rebekah Davis

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On a cold and rainy second day of the year, 1906, a Limestone County schoolteacher bent over his journal and started: "Here beginneth the 15th volume of my record as I record it."

What happened to the first 14 volumes of Earl Moses Hodson's journal, we don't know, but thanks to Hobson and some donor in the past who allowed the Limestone County Archives to copy his 1905-1907 journal, you can get a glimpse of what life was like for a 30-something bachelor schoolteacher in turn-of-the-century Limestone County.

That journal is the basis for a project the Limestone County Archives is undertaking for 2013: Sharing 1906 through Hodson's eyes, day by day on the Archives Facebook page at www.facebook.com/limestonecountyarchives. You don't have to have a Facebook account to be able to access our posts; just go to the above address. Although, if you are on Facebook, make sure to "Like" us!

Hodson's first 1906 entry tells of a New Year's snowfall that was quickly driven away by the rain. He also tells of the stress of returning to school after a busy Christmas break:

"Seventy-eight pupils were present to-day; the primary and intermediate pupils were restless; their constant moving and noisy feet unnerved me. For an hour or longer after close of school I could not wonder if it would be necessary for me in a few years to quit teaching for a twelve-month at least, and before I was hardly aware of it I was dreaming of farming in the most approved modern method!"

At various times in Hodson's journal, he speaks of himself in deprecating terms, even feeling sorry for his students because they don't have a better teacher than he. His modesty is ironic for a man who, at his death in 1934, was considered one of the best educators in Alabama.

Born on Dec. 13, 1873, near Spiceland, Ind., to Lindsey and Mary Hodson, Hodson and his family had moved by 1906 to a farm in the corner of New Cut and Parker roads. The oldest of six children, Hodson was the "old bachelor" teacher who lived at home the longest. He taught at Mt. Carmel Institute, a school near the present Clements High School.

Judging from his journal, Hodson had his heart broken by a "Miss Nellie T.," likely Nellie Thompson, a schoolteacher a few years his junior who lived nearby. He speaks of how she didn't return his affections, and in fact, the Archives records show she married a local farmer in mid-1907.

However, Hodson found love again, and on July 7, 1915, he married Annie Carmichael in Clay County. They moved to Lawrence County, where he was a school principal and then, beginning in 1919, the superintendent of education. Hodson's only son, Earl Jr., was born in 1919, when Hodson was 45.

According to Hodson's obituary in the Decatur Daily, Hodson was very successful in Lawrence County: "Mr. Hodson devoted the major part of his life to working in the interest of education and had taught successfully and effectively in other counties before going to Lawrence, where his efforts resulted in the Lawrence school system becoming one of the best in the state. In addition to his educational activities, Mr. Hodson was prominently identified with church and civic affairs. He was a writer of ability and served as Lawrence county correspondent for a number of Alabama daily newspapers."

In November of 1934, Hodson came down with pneumonia. He fought it a week before dying Nov. 21, 1934, just shy of his 61st birthday.

“The passing of Mr. Hodson caused profound regret not only in his home county but in others of this section as the effects of his constructive work over a period of years was widespread,” the Daily reported.

To learn more about Hodson and sneak a peek into his journal, make sure to check back on the Archives Facebook page each day. Or if you just can't wait, come to the Archives and read Hobson's journal for yourself!

About the Archives:

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