

Obituaries

Phoebe Bloom Taylor, 103, of a Palouse pioneer family, wrote history and music

Phoebe Bloom Taylor, a writer and participant in music and history of southeastern Washington, died at 5:40 p.m. Thursday at Tri-State Convalescent Center at Clarkston at the age of 103.

Miss Taylor wrote numerous songs, and she enjoyed playing them as an accomplished pianist in recent years while residing at the convalescent center. Her home for many years had been at 1040 8th St., Clarkston.

She composed a fight song that was used at Washington State University for many years, and she wrote a history of her family's farm in the Pullman area and its hardships and pleasures.

Ironically, she was forced to retire from her career as a teacher in Grangeville in 1907 because of poor health. She had prepared for that field by being one of the first graduates of the old Lewiston State Normal School and by undergraduate studies at Washington State College (now university).

All health again slowed her down shortly before her 86th birthday, but she recovered sufficiently to be honored guest at the Women's Society of Christian Service of Clarkston. The first public presentation of one of her songs highlighted her birthday activities.

She was born Oct. 6, 1879, on a farm near the present site of Pullman, the daughter of Benjamin Franklin and Judith Taylor,

among the first settlers in that rolling country of the Palouse Prairie.

Her parents had given up an affluent home in the Midwest after hearing reports of "the glorious western country" then being developed as a "Garden of Eden."

Miss Taylor said in her history of the family: "In the spring of 1873, my parents in their covered wagon which was laden with provisions, some household equipment, a few farm tools and a box of chickens, left The Dalles, Ore., for the last lap of the journey started in 1870 from Iowa to Washington Territory."

She said her parents learned "by bitter experience" when their first garden was wiped out by frost after it had grown so well to the blossoming stage. She added:

"Father decided to try to cultivate the hills, the soil looked so good, but the neighbors scoffed. He went ahead and was the first person in this section to prove the productivity of these Palouse hills."

Her father, as a Civil War veteran, became commander of the Grand Army of the Republic post of Whitman County. And he divided his time between operating a farm, raising a family and getting logs from Moscow Moun-



Phoebe Bloom Taylor

tain to build a home for his wife and children.

Her history touched on the coming of electricity to Moscow in 1904 and telephone service along barbed wire fencing shortly after that, and she recalled the terrible forest fire of 1910 before "the science of fire fighting had been organized."

Through those years of hard work and hardship, Miss Bloom developed her talent in music, and she recorded mentally the interesting details of everyday life. But she didn't start composing music until 1934. Her first music was for a poem, "Take Not the Vision," written by a former Pullman friend, Bessie Pickett.

In 1964, she received a copyright and permission to publish another song, "Out In the Fields," which she had composed years earlier.

She finished compiling stories of her parents, grandparents and great-grandparents in a family history in 1970. Her writings are a virtual history of the Pullman area from the early 1870s to modern times.

She was long active in the Methodist Church and its women's organizations, and she was a member of the Songwriters Guild.

She never married, and her only survivors are two nieces and four nephews. They are Evelyn Tuggle of Lamont, Wash., Tryphena Taylor of Fairbanks, Alaska; Mark Taylor of Lewiston, Lester Taylor of Spokane, Everett Taylor of Kennewick, and Lee Robbins of Long Beach, Calif.

The funeral will be held at 11 a.m. Thursday at the Merchant Funeral Chapel with the Rev. Gordon Harrison officiating. Burial will be at Pullman Cemetery at 1:30 p.m. Memorials may be given to the Methodist Fellowship Hall Fund.

*Sister Frank L Taylor - Taught school
Grangeville area*