

## Roscoe, Sabra, and Hazel Abbott



Sabra Abbott 1916 | Roscoe Abbott 1913 (wedding picture) | Hazel Abbott 1913 (wedding picture)

Roscoe and Sabra were the children of Marcus Riley and Carrie Weldon Abbott. Both were born on the Abbott homestead, about four miles south of town.

Marcus Riley and his brother Othman were traveling to California in 1867 and had stopped at the ranch of their uncle Chauncey, near what is now Wood River. While they were there the government halted all overland migration west because of Indian hostilities. Othman decided to set up a law practice in Grand Island while Riley took his team and started work for the then building Union Pacific Railroad. In 1869 he went to California with his sister Luella, but returned to the Wood River area in 1872, taking up a homestead south of town.

In 1876 he married Carrie Weldon, the daughter of James and Jane Irving Weldon who also had a homestead south of Wood River. Sabra, their first child, was born in 1881, Roscoe following in 1885. They were very close friends and remained so throughout their lives. In much the same way the Wood River farm was always the home of their heart, no matter where they resided.

Sabra and Roscoe first attended school in District #63, which was established in 1879 on a corner of Riley's homestead, but they brought a lifelong love of books from home. Both Riley and Carrie had been school teachers and letters between Roscoe, Sabra, and their parents were full of references to books being read or recommended to each other. The same is true of the courtship letters of Roscoe and Hazel. They continued their education at Wood River high school, Sabra graduating in the seventh graduating class of 1897, giving the "Oration of Valedictory" on "Exercise". Roscoe graduated in 1904, giving the Valedictory on "Abraham Lincoln". They next attended Grand Island College, Sabra graduating in 1902.

Sabra went on to teach at Abbott, Shelton, was principal at Chadron, Fairbury, and Geneva before going on to Washington D.C. to study Library Science at the Carnegie Library from 1911 to 1913. She returned to Wood River in 1914 where she taught at Wood River High School, was principal for a time, and later became superintendent from 1924 to 1928 when she stopped her formal teaching. At that time she became librarian of the Wood River public library, continuing in that capacity, with a few brief interruptions, until 1965.

Sabra and her mother joined the Order of the Eastern Star in August 1902. Both held various offices, including Worthy Matron. In 1952, to her surprise, the chapter honored Sabra with "an emblematic pin and certificate of 50 year membership as recognition of achievement and honor justly merited." Twenty seven of those years were as a chapter officer, seventeen as secretary.

Perhaps Sabra's greatest distinction was her love of children, as evidenced by her choice of professions. In her years of teaching, Latin was the subject dearest to her heart, and she was able to make that "dead" language come alive to her students. Sabra was fondly remembered by her friends and students and her niece and nephew have often heard affectionate references to her years of teaching and library work.

Roscoe attended Grand Island College from 1904 to 1906, continued at the University of Nebraska, and graduated from there in 1910. He later did graduate work at the Universities of Nebraska, Colorado, Chicago, and Minnesota. In 1910 he returned to the Wood River farm and

on January first, 1913, married Hazel Gooden of Lincoln, Nebraska. They lived on the farm, where their daughter was born, until 1916 when Roscoe's health forced him to give up farming. He then returned to the University of Nebraska where he taught Chemistry until he retired in 1954 after thirty four years of service. Not willing to give up teaching, he then went to Nebraska Wesleyan University where he taught for another five years. He was then asked to return to the University of Nebraska where he taught a few more years before closing out his teaching career at Nebraska Wesleyan. This completed 54 years of service to his beloved students.

He was a member of the American Chemical Society; the American Interprofessional Institute, which honored him with a certificate for distinguished attainments and contribution; Sigma Xi Chemical and Scientific research Society; Alpha Chi Sigma chemical professional fraternity; the Eastern Star; the Sunflower Club of Nebraska Wesleyan; the First Baptist Church; received the Jordan medal from Lincoln Lodge #19; and was the eighth Life Member of the Nebraska Alumni Association. He was honored at a banquet by Nebraska Wesleyan for his many year of service and contributions and it was noted that "Your mark will remain on the entire science program for many years to come".

Until his death he maintained an active and very personal interest in his home farm and community. Throughout his years of teaching established an unusually close relationship with his students, being sincerely interested in them as individuals as well as pupils. Many wrote letters to him in later years thanking him for his help during their university days, and frequently stopping to visit him when they returned to Lincoln. He always prided himself on being able to call them all by name, even when they happened to meet many years later. Many of his students went on to other posts at other Universities, and he was always warmly welcomed wherever he visited.

He stressed that a person's life should be a useful one, and his life was a testament to that belief, as well as his conviction that a person's life should be a productive one.

Hazel Gooden Abbott was a native Nebraskan, born in Fullerton in 1889 of Albert Logan and Emma Fee Gooden. Her parents' occupation and travels took Hazel too many parts of the United States before she returned to Lincoln to finish high school. Attending the University of Nebraska as a pre medical student she met Roscoe, who was at that time an assistant in chemistry. Their courtship covered three years until their marriage on the first of January, 1913. Before their marriage Hazel taught for a year in the Manual Arts department at the University.

She was very active in many social and civic organizations including the following; PTA, president; DAR, delegate to the national convention; Red Cross, from which she received a Certificate of Honor; YWCA; First Baptist Church; Order of the Eastern Star in Wood River; Hellenic Chapter of Chatauqu; Hall in the Grove; Ceres Club; and Faculty Woman's Club. She was not only a member but an active worker and officer in these organizations.

Hazel and Roscoe enjoyed 65 happy years together and raised two children; Barbara Abbott Hyde and Albert Riley Abbott. Because of the close ties Roscoe and Sabra maintained with the farm and community, both Barbara and Albert remember many happy summers in Wood River with their Aunt Sabra and Grandmother Carrie.

Barbara attended the University of Nebraska as an architecture student and is a metallic sculptor. Albert attended the University of Nebraska medical school, took post doctorate training at the Mayo Clinic, and is a physician.



Sabra Abbott 1930 | Hazel and Roscoe Abbott 1960 | Hazel, Ward Maltman, Sabra, Rosco 1960  
(cousin – library)