

Darlene saved her typewriter during county ASCS battle

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By Sandy Bond



Darlene Moak was an employee of the Campbell County Agricultural Stabilization Conservation Office in Mound City when area residents organized an effort to block the move of the office to Herreid.

Darlene Moak, as an employee of the Campbell County Agricultural Stabilization Conservation Office in Mound City, was there during the infamous struggle to keep the Campbell County ASCS Office in Mound City in 1961 and '62.

When movers hired by the government tried to move the desks as well as the files, employees and Mound City farmers wives resisted by sitting on desks in the ASCS office, she said.

"I had an old manual Royal typewriter," she said, "I didn't sit on my desk because I was pregnant at the time. I did take my typewriter and hide it in the side compartment of my desk. It was the only typewriter that didn't get moved to Herreid."

The daughter of Oscar W. and Dacotah Emma Prasek, Darlene was born July 2, 1935, at Herreid.

After graduating from Glenham High School in 1953, she began a career at the Agricultural and Stabilization Office, which was located at the Campbell County ASCS in the county seat in Mound City. Darlene married Herb Moak in 1956, shortly after he returned from seeing action in the Korean Conflict.

The old ASCS building was located north of what used to be the grocery store on Main Street in Mound City. Owned by O.H. Noste, it had housed the office since the farm programs began in the 1930s.

Mound City, was settled in 1884, but in 1901, the railroad came through the county. Instead of running through the town, it ran eight miles north which led to the founding of the town of Herreid. Herreid quickly grew around the railroad stop and prospered while Mound City began to slip away. Over the course of many years, the businesses located in Mound City began to relocate to Herreid. Pretty soon the two towns began squabbling over the location of the county courthouse.

In the mid-1950s, the Department of Agriculture condemned the old building, declaring that it was a fire hazard and poorly heated and ventilated. Back then, farmers and the then-elected three-man county ASCS committee, all Republicans, didn't agree that the building was substandard, and nothing was done.

It all came to a head when Orville Freeman, then Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, came into the office and a new state committee composed of Democrats took over. They believed that the office should be replaced. In June 1961, the state somehow bypassed the county committee and asked for bids on a new office. A bid from Herreid was deemed to be the only one that met specifications and the county committee accepted and signed a contract.

Soon members of the county committee protested that the state committee had misled them into signing the contract. Although the building of a new ASCS office was already underway in Herreid, population 767, the people of Mound City, population 144, banded together, formed a development corporation and started building a new ASCS building on Highway 83.

The state committee remained unwavering and continued to honor the Herreid contract. A local moving company, Hardcastle Transfer of Moberge, was hired to move the office equipment and records out of Mound City. But on two occasions Mound City residents sounded the alarm by several means including fire alarm, rifle shots and telephone. As many as 500 Mound City area farmers and their wives raced into the town of Mound City and blocked movers and eventually ran the movers and the state committees out of town.

Mound City forces sealed the building by hiding the front door keys, welding the door joints to the building shut and barricading the front of the building with sandbags.

The Justice Department issued an ultimatum that federal marshals would be sent in to get the records. Because the records were held in hostage, more than \$300,000 in soil bank and other payments to county farmers were delayed. Farmers were definitely hurting and emotions were running high on both sides of the issue.

Still, Mound city proponents refused to surrender on principle, feeling that the town of Herreid had already taken so much from them.

Because some of the attempts to move the records had not been successful, for a time some of the records were located in Mound City and some in Herreid.

But in the end and despite great odds, the proponents of keeping the ASCS office in Mound City won.

Darlene had "retired" for approximately five years to become the primary caregiver of their boys, Ladean, Loren, and Larue. When she returned to full-time work, she worked at the ASCS office in Selby. She retired from the agency in 1996.