

**JESSIE OLIVE
THATCHER
BOST
1875-1963**



**LIFETIME
OF
TRAIL
BLAZING**

When Oklahoma A&M College (later Oklahoma State University) opened its doors in 1891, Jessie Thatcher, who was born in December 1875 in Guthrie Center, Iowa and recently moved with her family to Stillwater, was among the students.

Because of the equal ratio of men and women, everyone took agricultural and chemistry classes, tended crops, and cared for livestock on the college farm. They also participated in military drill, though women weren't allowed to carry weapons.

The females established the Sigma Literary Society, when excluded from the male-only Webster Literary Society. Thatcher missed graduating in the first class, when she lost a year due to typhoid fever. After hearing a commencement speech entitled *Man, the Master*, Thatcher later responded with her own speech *Who Rules the World*. "They say that man is mighty, he governs land and sea; but the hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world."

Jessie Thatcher became the first female graduate in 1897. Her graduation address was entitled *The Dawning of the Twentieth Century*. "Look back fifty years and from the dim twilight of the tallow candle, we now stand in the brilliant electric light. We travel in elegant cars, sleep in luxurious beds, dine better than the kings of old. Our railroads carry us all over this great country."

"The progress has come from the persist efforts of enthusiastic, radical individuals with ideas in their brains and courage in their hearts to make them practical. Education is the one all-important thing, paramount to everything else; as the soil, however rich it may be, cannot be productive without culture, so the mind without cultivation can never produce much good fruit."

After graduation, Thatcher taught at Stillwater public schools earning \$40 monthly, and married OAMC classmate Henry Bost in 1902. They moved to Alva in 1908, where she ran the parent-teacher association, while taking time off to raise her children. After her husband died in 1933, Jessie taught two years in Alva and the next 20 years in Cleveland.

At her 1946 retirement, OSU President Henry Bennett called her Oklahoma's first woman of education. "I like to think of her as a symbol of all that womanhood, womanly institutions and womanly courage have brought to our civilization."

It was a lifetime of trailblazing. Thatcher was the first president of the Alumni Association and the Half-Century Club. After leading the successful fight to preserve Old Central, OSU named its first women's dormitory in her honor in 1925.

Her papers at the Edmon Low Library are a vital source of OAMC history. "She kept notebooks, class drawings, even botanical specimens – in good condition. They reflect her college experience, and provide a remembrance of the student perspective of life in the earliest days," said David Peters, head of OSU's Archives department.

Thatcher never missed an OSU reunion until her death in February 1963 at age 88. She was later inducted into the Oklahoma Women's Hall of Fame, Oklahoma Higher Education and OSU Alumni Halls of Fame.