

Crowder, Dr. David L. Oral History Project

# Artell Chapman-Experiences at the Ricks College Library

By Artell Chapman

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## Box 1 Folder 23

Oral Interview conducted by Larry Ostler

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Brigham Young University- Idaho

Larry Ostler: What years were you with the school, Bro. Chapman?

Artell Chapman: I started in the fall of 1935. Of course I retired in 1974. I was away for two years during the war.

LO: What years were they?

AC: They were 1943 to '45.

LO: The years you were at Ricks College, especially the early years, what did you teach-what areas were you in?

AC: Oh, I was primarily in engineering and have always been chemistry, of course. For many years I was the Chemistry Department. Chemistry is my main field, although when I first came here I was teaching engineering, math classes, calculus, surveying, mechanics, engineering problems, engineering dynamics...

LO: Just about everything?

AC: Chemical engineering was my training and of course in that you get a lot of engineering subjects. They had an Engineering Department in those days-not many students- four or five students but we had some very outstanding students. The architect of the Manwaring center, Harold Collard, was one of our engineering students; Dick Davis that built the Life Science Building and the old Library was one of our engineering students.

LO: In the early days, especially in the 30's, when you first came did you have much to do with the library-was it used much-did you assign student there?

AC: Oh, some, yes. The engineering students were pretty well tied up. They were pretty well self-contained. Yes, they had heavy loads, 19 hours of credit-not a lot of library work. Nothing like your humanities and fine arts and others.

LO: Do you have any impressions of those early years especially if the library played a very important role or whether it was just a study hall.

AC: It was pretty much a study hall. Those early years it occupied the upper floor of the Spori Building. It was housed up there. My first year the librarian was Lucy Lloyd.

LO: I came across her name.

AC: Then the next year, that would be 1937-38, Edith Rich came in as the librarian.

LO: Where was Edith from?

AC: Well, she was originally from over in the Bear Lake country. Then when she left here she went to the University of Utah and was the Engineering librarian down there. She was down there for many years. She was here last year for our Homecoming. They had this class, 1937-38-39 class, had their reunion last fall. They had eighty of their people around here- husbands and wives-they had a wonderful time.

LO: Do you recall if Edith or the woman before her was particularly active or sort of passive toward the school?

AC: Edith Rich was a very active person. Lucy Lloyd was an elderly, I imagine she was up in her eighties when she was librarian here. Edith was a very active, young person at that time. She initiated a lot of library cataloging and things like that.

LO: So she was a lot more active than anyone else had been?

AC: Oh yes.

LO: I'm wondering too if during those years, focusing on the late thirties, the library was in the Spori, do you recall the collection as being adequate?

AC: Oh, it was very limited. It was pretty small. We were operating on the total budget for that year for the whole faculty of \$30,000 that we got from the Church. You're not going to do an awful lot after you pay the salaries. That 30,000 covered the whole staff salaries of that year.

LO: I read somewhere in some of my archival work that they went on drives to have people bring books in.

AC: Oh, that's right. A lot of books came in that way. I got several books up there that was donated then that was thrown out the window of that library when they moved. Do you want them back?

LO: Well, if they are that old we might be interested just for historical purposes.

AC: Yes, I have a whole set of Encyclopedia Britannicas that were thrown out that window and I gathered them up in a wheelbarrow.

LO: It would be interesting to look at that set. Some of the old Britannica sets are valuable-not all of them.

AC: I don't think this is among one of the more valuable sets- I think it is complete.

LO: One of the things that I am building a hypothesis about is whether or not the library had much effect on the school. Whether it had a real role to play in the school or whether it just sat over there in the Spori and students just sort of gravitated to it. I wonder what your perception is about that?

AC: Yes, it was “getting by” and was just the same as all the rest of the school getting by. For seven or eight years we were just barely existing. There was no money to expand the library or to put new books in. We just got along with what was available.

LO: The thirties were just tough years.

AC: I wouldn’t have any idea what their library budget was, maybe two or three hundred dollars.

LO: Well, do you remember when they solicited donations, people to give their books to the library?

AC: Oh yes, they encouraged people to give their books to the library and a lot of books came in. You can go through some of your old books and you can see where they were donated by different people.

LO: You said you spent some of your time up to the University of Idaho.

AC: Yes, I was there during the war-1943, 44, and 45

LO: Was the library at the University of Idaho much, much better than Ricks Library?

AC: Oh yes, I think so. They had a lot better collection. I didn’t spend a lot of time in the main library. We had a small science library and of course I was more interested in that during my teaching years and I was kept busy.

LO: Over the years that you were here, especially those thirties, was there just one librarian?

AC: Yes, there was just one librarian. They would have a few students help.

LO: Oh, you had some student help?

AC: We only had one secretary for the whole school and she was part-time. You people now have no idea the background of the college.

LO: As you are aware, we are coming close to the centennial year of the history of the school, and there has been some talk about this. President Hafen has been talking about a centennial history. One of the reasons I am doing this work is for some graduate work., plus I plan to give it to the committee when I am done so it might help in the writing of the history, assuming that the school writes a history of the school. I hope they do. We need to know how the school struggled during those beginning years.

AC: Yes, those were lean years at Ricks.

LO: Just thinking back, especially the early years, in your own mind how important was the library? What kind of role did it have? The school was under tough times, all of those things being equal, did it play an important role-was it passive?

AC: Oh, there would be a few religious books on reserve and perhaps a few literature books and things like that on the reserve list, but as far as expansion is concerned I don't think there was any major expansion during those years.

LO: In the catalog it listed for about six years in a row that the library had a collection of about 7,500 books- it didn't change.

AC: That's right. Then Theron Atkinson came in as librarian after Edith left. He continued some of the cataloging initiated by Edith and then he thinned out a lot of books. We just didn't have any space. We only had so many shelves and if we got any new books we had to throw away some of the old ones. That's what happened when I took a couple of wheelbarrows full of them away. They just opened those windows and threw them out in the alley. My office was there and when I saw them coming out of the window I got several that I think quite of bit of. I got the History of Utah by Bancroft and a few books like that. But there was no room to expand.

LO: Yes, I know we are experiencing that.

AC: We only had those two old buildings, the Gym and the Spori. The Gym didn't have any classrooms in it. There was gym on the upper floor and the auditorium on the second floor. They made a Home Economics Department out of one of the dressing rooms. There was just no space. That was the time before the major remodeling took place after the war. The remodeling took place in about 1945-46.

LO: The library still stayed on the second floor of the Spori all through that period.

AC: Yes, that's right. They were still there until 1963, and so they had very limited space.

LO: So they were hurt by space as much as anything-they didn't have any space to put materials.

AC: the major part of the library also had to serve as a study hall. We divided the stacks and they were on the north side and the whole side of that big room was study hall. There were tables-no booths or anything like that.

LO: When did Theron Atkinson come?

AC: I can't tell you.

LO: Did he come after the war?

AC: I think Edith was here four or five years.

LO: Did Theron come before Eldon Hart?

AC: No, Eldon Hart followed Edith Rich and then after Eldon went in as sort of a general Vice President he moved out of the library and then Theron came in, so Eldon was only involved in the library a few years.

LO: That must have been in the late thirties or early forties.

AC: Edith came in the fall of 1936, and was here four or five years. That would take it up into the early forties. Eldon moved pretty well into administrative work after that. I think Atkinson must have started about 1940. he was librarian when I returned from Moscow.

LO: Well, that helps. I appreciate you taking the time to share this information with me. I'm really trying to determine whether or not Ricks had a comparable library for that time. If you looked around the country at two-year schools the size of Ricks College, I'm trying to find out how our library compared. I have a study here that has some figures and some quantitative things.

AC: I wouldn't have any statistical information like that at all.

LO: Well obviously we didn't compare well with the University of Idaho.

AC: No, that's right, because the University of Idaho was a land-grant college and they had access to all the government periodicals. They were four year school and graduate work. They were offering Master's degrees at that period of time so Ricks College wouldn't compare with the Southern Branch at that time. I don't know, there were a few other colleges, the Nazarene in Nampa and the College of Idaho in Caldwell, but I'm not familiar with those. They had better facilities at the Southern Branch and University of Idaho at that time.

LO: The Southern Branch at Pocatello?

AC: Yes, at Pocatello. The college at Pocatello started out as the Idaho Technical College, and then in the fall of 19227 they made that a branch of the University of Idaho and they called it the University of Idaho- Southern Branch. It was just a two-year institution at that time. It went along that way until the fifties and they changed it over to Idaho State University and expanded it to a four year program. Of course, Ricks was a four year school for about three or four years.

LO: Yes, we had a few graduates during that time

AC: Yes, they had a few graduates, Merle Fisher was one.

LO: Mack Shirley graduated during that time I think. Well, I guess that is all the questions I have, Artel.

AC: I'm sorry I can't help you out any more.

LO: Oh, you were saying just what I needed.

AC: Well, I would be more familiar with some of the other activities that I would with the library.

LO: You are one of my best sources and I needed to know your point of view.

AC: I'm one of the early ones.

LO: You are, you are the earliest one I know of.

AC: There is M.D. Morell, he was here but he is in poor health.

LO: That's what I understand.

AC: I was over to see him Saturday and had a nice visit. He hasn't been out now for several months.

LO: Is he well enough to be interviewed?

AC: Oh, yes, I think so, but you would have to go over there.

LO: When did he come Artell, 1932?

AC: He must have come about 1930. he is the oldest one left.

LO: His interview would be valuable. I should add him to my list.

AC: He could give you more information on the library because he was in closer contact. His office was just below the library. He was head of Education Department.

LO: He had a little closer interest.

AC: He was in charge of the teacher trainer program, you know, and they would have used the library a lot more. As far as the library he could help you more than I could as engineers don't pay much attention to the library.

LO: That's true

AC: I didn't use the library at the University too much. By the time you take nineteen hours of solid courses of math and engineering courses my time was pretty well taken.

LO: Well, the technical nature of your subject would make a difference too.

AC: I didn't start using the library very much until I got into graduate school. It was all I could do to keep up with the assignments.

LO: Well, I appreciate the time you have taken to come in.