

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REFERENCE SERIES

LINK'S SCHOOL OF BUSINESS (Advertiser Column By Nancy DeHamer)

Number 725

1971

At the end of the nineteenth century many machines were patented that were designed to make office work easier and more efficient. The foremost among these was the typewriter, but calculators, check writers and perforators, and mimeograph machines were all being developed at this time. As use of these labor and timesaving machines became more widespread, it became necessary to train men and women to use them. For this reason business schools and colleges began springing up all over the country in the 1890's and early 1900's.

Boise's first schools of business were begun in the late 1890's. There were two operating in the Sonna Building in 1899.

One of these, the Boise Business and Shorthand College, was visited by a reporter for the Daily Capital News in January of 1899. He reported that the thirty-eight students--twenty-four in the business department and fourteen in shorthand and typing--were receiving a thorough education, and that the school was flourishing. The shorthand and typing students gave a demonstration of their speed. It was explained to the reporter that bookkeeping was taught with the Budget system which combined the theoretical with practical application. All in all, the reporter came away impressed with what he saw.

This school and another were both operating when Alva T. Link founded Link's Modern Business College in January of 1906. Link had only been in Boise a month when he started the school, but his previous experience in business and business colleges enabled him to succeed in his new venture. He advertised that the school "fit young men and women to succeed in life by giving them a practical knowledge of Shorthand, Typewriting, Bookkeeping and all branches of commercial education." During the next few years the college advertised courses in Bookkeeping, Business Practice, Arithmetic, Shorthand, Typing, Spelling, Letter Writing, Office Methods, and Penmanship. Day and night classes were offered, taught by competent teachers. By 1914 the school had an average enrollment of 250 day students and 40 night students, with five instructors. The two schools that had been in business when Link started his college had since quit.

In 1914 Link moved back to Portland but the school continued under other management. In 1918 Benjamin C. Beetham came to Boise from Portland and became principal of the school. In 1921

he became sole owner and continued as owner and manager until November of 1957. Under his leadership the school continued to grow. By 1933 the average yearly attendance was 650. When Beetham sold the school in 1957 it had trained 26,000 students since its beginning in 1906.

During the 1920's students at Link's Business College were active in many extracurricular activities. They participated in boys' and girls' basketball teams, an orchestra, and a forensic club. One of the photographs in the Idaho State Historical Society Collection shows the girls' basketball team in 1929. It would be nice to know their win-loss record!

Since its beginning in 1906, Link's School of Business has had several different locations in Boise. It was located for several years at 1015 Idaho Street. Its last location, before moving to its new quarters at 9th and Royal Avenue in 1970, was in the old First National Bank of Idaho Building at 801 Main Street. This building was occupied by the bank from 1902 to 1928. After this time it was used as an office building, housing an insurance company and union offices for many years. In 1956 it was vacated and remained vacant until occupied by Link's in 1959. A photo in the ISHS files shows this building in its earlier days. Today, it--unlike the school it once housed--is threatened with destruction, although it is one of Boise's more architecturally and historically significant buildings.

[The First National Bank building was torn down by Urban Renewal in 1974.]