

Patrick Hough

A vivid portrait of one of Vancouver's pioneer teachers, Patrick (Paddy) Hough, was written by, E. Sinclair, himself a teacher in the Vancouver School District in the early part of this century. Mr. Sinclair's article was printed in the February, 1948 issue of the Washington Education Journal, a publication of the Washington Educational Association. His article, with minor modification for the insertion of specific dates and other historical data, is reprinted below. The name of Paddy Hough (pronounced "Howk") is perpetuated in the name of one of Vancouver district's 19 elementary schools.

An eighth grade girl looked out of the window and uttered one word, "Paddy!" The military discipline of "eyes front" was disrupted. As the teacher, I was annoyed. This was irregular, a sort of strike. A boy sitting in front opened the door and in walked an old man. Holding out his lone hand and smiling an unforgettable smile, he said, "My last name is Hough, but they all call me Paddy."

You remember James Whitcomb Riley's "Raggedy, Raggedy Man?" Under the stub of his left arm Mr. Hough carried an old straw hat with torn brim. His trousers were ragged and the right knee showed some stitches in black that indicated a subterranean patch. His shoes were very coarse and very old. He had no collar and no necktie. His face was covered with a bushy beard. His eyes were as blue as the Lakes of Killarney and his smile was as sweet as that worn by the sweetest cover girl you ever saw.

"Oh, teacher, let Paddy take our history class!" It came as a spontaneous burst from the whole class. "Yes, do! Please!"

Paddy was willing, in fact apparently very happy about it. So I stepped aside and told him that he was the officer of the deck. Thunderous applause from the class and a million dollar smile from Paddy.

The lesson was the Monroe Doctrine. The reader will recall the European background: The spread of the doctrines of Patrick Henry, Tom Paine and Jefferson as enunciated in our Declaration of Independence was frightening the crowned heads and their flunkies in Europe. So they had formed what they called the "Holy Alliance" to eradicate these very dangerous thoughts from the face of the earth and particularly to stop the revolutions in South America.

Now stamping out ideas has been quite a failure in history. You don't stamp them out. You stamp them in - and they have a wonderful way of growing underground and gaining friends above ground. These new and, to the czar of Russia, very dangerous ideas about the building of a free and democratic world just had to be stopped, not only in Europe but also in South America, where liberty bells were ringing with a new and very successful enthusiasm.

President Monroe had his secretary of state, John Quincy Adams, notify the "Holy Alliance" and all concerned that (1) we would not interfere in the affairs of Europe, and (2) that any interference by any European power in the affairs of the New World would be considered an unfriendly act.

Within one minute after Mr. Hough took charge of that class it was plain that here was a master teacher. The rather lethargic class was a boiling cauldron of mental activity. Everyone wanted to talk. Each had something worthwhile to say. Any pupil that showed signs of relaxing was sent to the encyclopedia or to get another text to look up something connected with this great and flowing thing called the Monroe

Doctrine. Like a great orchestra leader, Paddy kept every instrument playing every second. With thought-provoking anecdote and judicious praise for a good piece of work on the part of any pupil, he kept everybody on his toes. Monroe and Adams were saying the things that barefoot men had died for in the snows of Valley Forge. They were great Americans, and this kind of teaching was making other great Americans, thinking Americans.

At the end of the period it was unanimously decided that there was much more to learn about this terrific subject. There was San Martin and Bolivar and L'Ouverture and, later on in history, but tied in with this, the great Mexican patriot Juarez and the stupid Maximilian. All were sorry that the time was up. But another great story was on the boards for the morrow. That was the way a great teacher set minds on fire.

Little by little during the next six years I got the story of this truly wonderful old man. Patrick (Paddy) Hough was born in Ireland on St. Patrick's Day, 1846. When the Franco-Prussian War broke out in 1870, he was teaching a school on the banks of the River Shannon, famed in song and story. He immediately went to Paris as a news writer, but stirred by the horror of the battlefield, he volunteered as a first-aid worker and stretcher bearer.

Von Moltke and Bismarck had a secret weapon, the needle gun. This was simply a breech loading rifle that could fire four times as many shots as the French could fire with their old muzzle loaders. The German field guns were also double effective. The French lost every battle and were in constant retreat. In this hell the Irish school teacher carried on, helping friend and foe as best he could.

Then one day it happened. A spent shell came bounding across the field toward the stretcher on which lay a wounded man. Paddy kicked it to save his patient and it exploded. His left thigh was ripped open, his jaw was shattered, and his throat was torn open so that the windpipe was exposed. Worse yet, his left arm was blown off between the wrist and the elbow.

While recovering, he thought things over. He had taken the side of the French because he thought the *opera bouffe* Emperor Napoleon stood for the liberty sung of in the wonderful song the French soldiers sang, the matchless "Marseillaise." It became clear to him that this nephew of the old Napoleon was no friend of democracy and that between him and the German emperor there was no choice. They were both enemies of freedom.

He was fed up with Europe, and, when he had hobbled home to his Irish father's cottage, he asked for some money to get to America. They scraped up \$400. Hough immigrated to Canada that same year, 1870.

Still the school teacher, Hough went to New Westminster in British Columbia where, with the help of some men, boys and girls, he built a log schoolhouse. New Westminster was a poor community and he had only three pupils. Since it was a parochial school he had to live off the fees paid by his pupils. He lived frugally and built up, through his matchless teaching power, a great school a big two-story brick building with hundreds of pupils.

But he was not satisfied. A dream had been born in his Irish head, a dream that some day he would become a citizen of the great country that had produced the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, the immortal Jefferson and the heroically tempestuous old John Brown.

So, after 13 years in Canada, Hough gave up his fine school and, with all his belongings in a little Irish trunk, moved to Seattle. A one-armed man and a foreigner, he walked the streets of Seattle looking for a job, but no one was interested in him. He had no certificate to teach in the new public schools that were popping up on the "seven hills" of Seattle. But at last, in 1883, he was offered a job as head of Holy Angels College, a parochial school in Vancouver, Washington. Soon after his arrival in Vancouver he realized his dream of becoming an American citizen. Hough made a great name for himself. Not only did he teach all day, but he opened a night school in which he got students ready to pass the examination for teaching in the public schools.

For years he had been gaining an educational orientation away from things that were European, with its class cleavages and its sectarian contradictions. He saw that the parochial school, in which he had so successfully taught, served only a segment of the population. In this new land there were hundreds of religious sects. If there was to be universal educational, each sect would have to have its own system from kindergarten through college, each more or less at war with every other system.

Hough saw that in the America of his adoption there had been pioneered a school system that owed its primary loyalty to the Republic and served the children of all the people without regard to race, color or creed. Thereupon, he left parochial schools forever and took over principalship of Vancouver's Columbian public school in 1891. For eight years he made an enviable record as the grade school principal, then in 1899 he was elected principal of the high school housed in Central School where he out-did his former record, turning out students who were to become outstanding citizens.

Some of his pupils later recalled how Paddy, standing at the door at assembly time, would beat a marching rhythm for them by slapping a ruler on a book held under his stub of a left arm. It was "right, left, right!" just as he had seen them do in Von Moltke's army.

The students also told this one on Paddy. The rule was to sing "America" every morning. The pianist knew that the teacher was tone deaf, probably from his wound, so one morning, when Paddy began singing, as usual a little off key, she played an Irish jig. Forty pairs of feet went shimmying to the lively tune, but the Irishman himself still sang on of the beloved "rocks and rills." He used to tell this story himself with glee. He loved those kids.

The classroom was heated with a wood stove, and one day he asked a boy sitting near it to put some wood on the fire. The youth said rather impudently. "I am not the janitor." Everyone held his breath as Paddy walked slowly down to the stove and built a fine fire. "You are right," he said and went quietly on with his work. No anger, no scolding, as usual with most teachers. This was no ordinary teacher. His dignity could wait. That night the boy came to his teacher in tears and said how sorry he was.

While many teachers of that generation, myself included, used the strap or some other means of punishment, it was a rare exception in Paddy's school. He was an instinctive psychologist. He knew the human heart and how to reach it through sincere love and deep affection for each pupil.

In 1908, the end of the school year, Hough felt old age coming on and, over the protests of everyone, resigned. The high school annual the next year was dedicated to him. It contained his picture and this tribute written by the students:

To Patrick Hough, our old professor, whose sympathetic advice and Christian example have been to us an inspiration to live higher and nobler lives, this is affectionately dedicated.

He couldn't stay out of education, however. He became deputy superintendent of Clark County schools and remained in that position for several years. Later he ran for county superintendent but was defeated. He never could say a thing against anyone, so during the campaign he praised his opponents unstintingly. It is just possible too, that the fact that he was born a Catholic had a lot to do with his defeat. After his experience he was drafted many times by Charles W. Shumway, superintendent of the Vancouver School District, as a substitute teacher, and during the first world war he acted as principal of a grade school a year or so.

In addition to his love for children, this man had a deep and abiding love for learning. Trained in schools that were either antagonistic to or entirely ignorant of the intellectual renaissance that shook Europe and the whole world in the middle of the last century through the biological, sociological and anthropological discoveries of Darwin, Huxley, Tyndal and the scientists of Heidelberg, Berlin and Vienna. Paddy Hough began to see what he had missed.

To go back to school at his age was out of the question, so he bought a 20-volume encyclopedia and faithfully studied every page. More, he mastered all of it. Then he gave the set to the school library and kept on buying scientific books as long as he lived. He realized that algebra, geometry, trigonometry and Latin, with a little Shakespeare thrown into a mixture of history and sectarian propaganda, were not enough in the modern world.

He kept his eyes open in his daily walks. Native flowers and grasses attracted him. The scientific progress of agriculture, geological formations, the crater lake at Battle Ground, the glacial boulders in the pasture fields were springboards for thrilling stories when he was called upon to substitute in some upper grade.

He watched men loading gravel in a pit near Orchards. The sand was sticking to their shovels like mud. He wrapped some of it in his handkerchief and studied it. He found that it was rich in magnetite, a strongly magnetic iron oxide. In the same pit he found stones covered with scars. They were barnacle left by creatures that could only have lived in salt water. Hence, he learned that the sea once covered Orchards and Vancouver. How the children would thrill to that one!

At the age of 79, Hough's mind was still plastic, and he was still a playful "kid" in many ways. To him life was just one great and wonderful adventure with never-ending discoveries, new combinations, new conclusions.

But not all new things suited him. He had little faith in our IQ tests as developed up to 1925. He felt that they favored children from bookish families and blighted the other children by calling them morons. To him it was a cruel outrage. He also felt that intelligence was not solely a human attribute but was shared by ants, bees and even down to the lowest type of sentient life. Even certain plants showed a kind of

selective intelligence, he announced. Nor did he accept the new measuring tests that we had started using after the first world war. He called them false-true, multi-choice guessing contests, and he stuck to his essay type of examination.

He had no patience for teachers who hated to mark papers. He told a Clark County institute just a few months before he died that marking papers was just as interesting as reading a good novel, that each paper was a window into the child's mind. Mistakes in capitalization, punctuation, spelling, paragraphing, and errors as to facts were checked and a grade was put on the paper.

Also a record was kept of all important things that the pupil had missed. Say the pupil got a grade of 80 percent. It was now the pupil's job to get out his book, dictionaries, the encyclopedia or whatever he could find, and dig out what he had missed. He had also to correct every misspelled word and rewrite every poorly constructed paragraph. He knew that a bad account on the teacher's book had to be set to right. Bluffing would not work with Paddy and the pupil knew it. He had to get down to business. When, after several tries, he was correct, his mark was raised 10 percent by way of encouragement.

This was a measurement in two directions. The pupil was being measured and the teacher was measuring his own pedagogy. Jerry Reardon, who was for some time in Hough's classes and who became the owner and editor of the Clark County Sun, told me, "You just had to learn to do things right with Paddy. He had you under the microscope and in focus all the time."

Hough and his wife, Ann, lived in a very plain little house on a quiet street in Vancouver. On the morning of December 17, 1925, Paddy had gotten up earlier than his wife and built the morning fire. But things seemed unnaturally quiet, so Mrs. Hough got up to check. She found her husband slumped down in a chair dead, only three months short of his 80th birthday.

That day the heart of Vancouver stood still. When Herb Campbell, editor and owner of The Daily Columbian, met this writer he could not keep back the tears, and he asked me to help him write a piece in honor of the great teacher. Down the street, a few blocks away, was Jerry Reardon, editor of a rival paper. He, too, was too full of grief for words. Paddy had been his teacher, too. No matter where you went that day, there was genuine mourning for a great man, a great friend, a great American.

When the will was read, all could understand why throughout the years this wonderful old man had gone in threadbare clothes, why the old hat, the old shoes and the old umbrella – why he had never gone on pleasure trips and why he and his wife had lived meagerly in a very poor house.

The will stipulated that at his wife's death, all that remained of his estate was to go into building and financing an agriculture high school outside some incorporated city.

Note of Acknowledgement:

Much of the material in the above life-story was furnished by the following pupils of Mr. Hough or citizens of Vancouver: Judge Charles W. Hall; Mrs. Lillie Sugg Price; Miss Grace V. Stearns; Postmaster Ned Blyth; Carl Landerholm, research worker in the Vancouver Public Library; Herbert Campbell; Jerry Reardon and Charles W. Shumway. Shumway was superintendent of the Vancouver schools while Hough was employed there. The files of The Daily Columbian of Vancouver and The Oregonian of Portland, Oregon, were also consulted.

Editorial Update:

Patrick Hough had set forth in his last will and testament that the portion of estate remaining upon the death of his wife (which occurred on September 16, 1929) should be distributed as follows:

- 1) Five hundred dollars to his niece in Ireland;
- 2) Five hundred dollars to the director of St. Louis College located in New Westminster, British Columbia for the establishment and maintenance of a manual training center;
- 3) Five hundred dollars to the director of the boys department of Providence Academy in Vancouver to be spent in establishing and maintaining a manual training department;
- 4) All remaining assets to be used for the purpose of establishing an agricultural high school in Clark County. Hough envisioned the agricultural high school to be located on 80 to 100 acres of land to be purchased for instruction and experiments in general farming, dairying and horticulture. The school was to be open to all students above the sixth grade who were over the age of 12, and was to be free of cost except for dormitory and board expenses.

Three men, C. W. Shumway, James J. O'Keane and Hugh L. Parcel, were named to administer the estate as a board of directors. A vacancy in the board was to be filled by choice of the remaining members. In 1942, the purpose of the Hough trusteeship was modified by a Superior Court determination authorizing the board of directors to make annual contributions from the income of the estate to the Battle Ground School District for support of the Future Farmers of America and the Future Homemakers of America programs. The cumulative total of contributions, begun in 1942, exceeded \$56,000 by 1975. Through the years the board of directors has converted the assets of the Hough estate, most of which were in the form of property holdings, to stocks and bonds and deposits in savings and loan associations. The present value of the estate is estimated by the directors to be worth more than \$200,000. Positions on the board of directors have continued to be filled as stipulated, with Charles W. Hall replacing Hugh L. Parcel, F.M. Kettenring replacing C. W. Shumway and Ralph Olmstead replacing James J. O'Keane. The present board is composed of Olmstead, Ned Hall, who replaced his father Charles Hall and John C. Kettenring, who replaced his father, F. M. Kettenring. Although it was not feasible to carry out the original intent of the Hough will, the program of support for educational activities so highly valued by Hough is being realized and will continue as a fitting tribute to the vision and foresight of this outstanding Vancouver educator.