



Florence Danforth-Boyle Class of 2022

Florence Danforth graduated from Oroville High School (OHS) in 1910. As no yearbook is available from that year, we only know from articles in the *Oroville Mercury-Register* that she played in school duets and quartets, but do not know what instrument. It is also documented by a photo that during 1908-09, she was a member of the school basketball team that won a championship. There were nine girls on the team coached by Miss Leila Boynton.

Upon graduation from OHS, Florence became a charter member of the Gold of Ophir Parlor #190 of the Native Daughters of the Golden West (NDGW). This was to become a lifelong interest for her, and by age 26, had held offices in the Oroville Parlor and had been district deputy grand president. She went on to become grand president and traveled throughout the state and placed historical markers on the San Francisco Golden Gate and Bay Bridges.

As for her work life, in 1912, she went to work in the Butte County Clerk's Office. In 1915, she was promoted to Chief Deputy and compiled the Great Register and mailed out ballots for Butte County elections. She was elected Butte County Recorder in 1918, when Bert Baldwin resigned and supported Miss Danforth for the office. She was elected just seven years after women attained the right to vote. She served one four-year term as Butte County Recorder, ending her only term in 1922.

During her time in office, Florence married Frank Boyle in 1920, and in 1927 daughter Betty was born. This time also saw her develop a keen interest in distance walking and was known as "Hikin Danny." "She won nationwide attention in May 1918 when she and Dorothy Hoskins, a Canadian hiker, who was then in Oroville, walked thirty-one miles in seven hours and twenty-four minutes. Another walk saw her hike to Las Plumas and back, thirty-two miles round trip. She was declared champion long distance walker of the state and was also a good sportsman, "handling the rifle, shotgun and fishing tackle as well as her male companions." Her husband shared her outdoor interests.

After serving in public office, Florence devoted her life to community service, one of her proudest accomplishments being the founder of the Pioneer Museum on Montgomery Street in Oroville. The opening of the museum fulfilled her lifelong dream to create a facility dedicated to preserving the memories of the Pioneers who first settled in California and the Butte County area.

A separate committee of members of the Native Sons and Native Daughters organization was created to handle the fundraising, design the building and collect artifacts for the displays. Florence was the secretary of the committee from its inception until her death. The museum was formally dedicated as The Pioneer Relics House on May 12, 1932. It was located on the site of Oroville's first sawmill. It was later renamed the Butte County Pioneer Memorial Museum.

Florence was also a noted author, writing a column Old Days in Butte, published between 1941-1943, by the *Mercury-Register*. The columns were compiled into a book with an index by the Association for Northern California Historical Research in 2006. She also published two books, *It Was Told to Me*, a novel with historical background on the Old Suspension Bridge at Bidwell Bar, and *A Breath of the "Days of 49"*.

From 1938 to 1953, Florence also did radio broadcasts from stations in Oroville and Chico, dedicated to promoting local history.

In large part, Florence was responsible for the preservation of Butte County history through her efforts with the NDGW and other organizations. She began as a child when she accompanied her father on his visits to record stories of the areas' early pioneers.

Florence Danforth Boyle died on April 26, 1978 "after a lifetime of service to the community." (*Oroville Mercury-Register*, 1978).