

Bliss Students ATTESTED, Not Protested, To Save College



BELOVED AND ADMIRER—Mrs. Marjorie Remick was recognized as one of the country's leading shorthand teachers. She served first as Principal, then President of Bliss College. Now she is enjoying a pleasant retirement with her husband, Ernest Remick, at their homes in Florida and at Taylor Pond.

By EDITH LABBIE

We live in an age when many of our traditional concepts about students, teachers and schools have been completely altered. Many students demand rights instead of rewards. Some campuses are inhabited by arrogant vandals instead of eager scholars.

The very next time someone relates a dirge about campus destruction tell him this true story of a college that was rescued by the optimistic, idealistic faith of its students.

This is the story of Bliss College, the school that reversed its destiny.

Established in 1897

It all began when three brothers came to Lewiston in 1897 and established another Bliss Business College and School of Shorthand to form another link in their chain of similar institutions that stretched from Michigan to the Atlantic Coast.

They pledged to make the Lewiston school "A first class endeavor in every respect and a credit to the community."

These men, Fred H., Frank L. and Charles A. Bliss, were leaders in the field of business education. They previously had devised the Bliss System of Practical Business Training, written their own textbooks, and set up their own publishing company. It was customary for them to set up these business colleges in various large cities and then, when they were well established, they would sell them to a local manager who would continue to use their publications. But destiny had other plans for the college in Lewiston.

Bliss Charm

Before chronicling the milestones of Bliss College, let me tell you about Mr. and Mrs. O. D. Bliss themselves.

The school had been operating only three months when its Principal, Frank L. Bliss died. His 17 year old son, Oleg D. Bliss, was suddenly thrust into the Principalship.

Time and again when I have interviewed people who knew O.D. and Katherine Bliss, the mention of their names would bring happy smiles of fond remembrance. Man or woman, the response was the same. "They were such nice people!"

As I pored over the family and college scrapbooks I discovered that they both enjoyed life to the utmost. They were socially active, they loved music and they never missed a chance to serve their community. Yet they were not sanctimonious do-gooders. Their impish sense of humor saved many a dull meeting from the blight of boredom.

"O.D." never believed in prodding his students onward and upward. He had a way of Mr. and Mrs. William O. Bliss enticing them up the next step Montfort of Lisbon Falls. Her

father was a Superintendent of the Pelepet Paper Co. She, her sister, and two brothers grew up in a handsome house in the center of town.

"Kitty" had a sweet soprano voice and often sang at many of the social functions in her area. Many Lisbon Falls students were fortunate enough to have had her for their music teacher.

In June of 1901 she became the bride of Oleg Dewey Bliss, in her father's ancestral home at East Durham. Her sister played the wedding march. The bride couple exchanged vows standing beneath a bower of ferns from which was suspended a horseshoe pendant of pansies and pinks. After the ceremony they left for Conneaut, Ohio, to spend summer with his family.

Before returning to Lewiston, in time for the fall opening of Bliss Business College, the young couple stopped off in Buffalo, N.Y. to visit the Pan-American Exposition. Imagine the bridegroom's pride when he saw the blue ribbon attached to the display of the Bliss System of Practical Business Training!

The system must have been worthy of the award for more than 500 school systems subscribed to it.

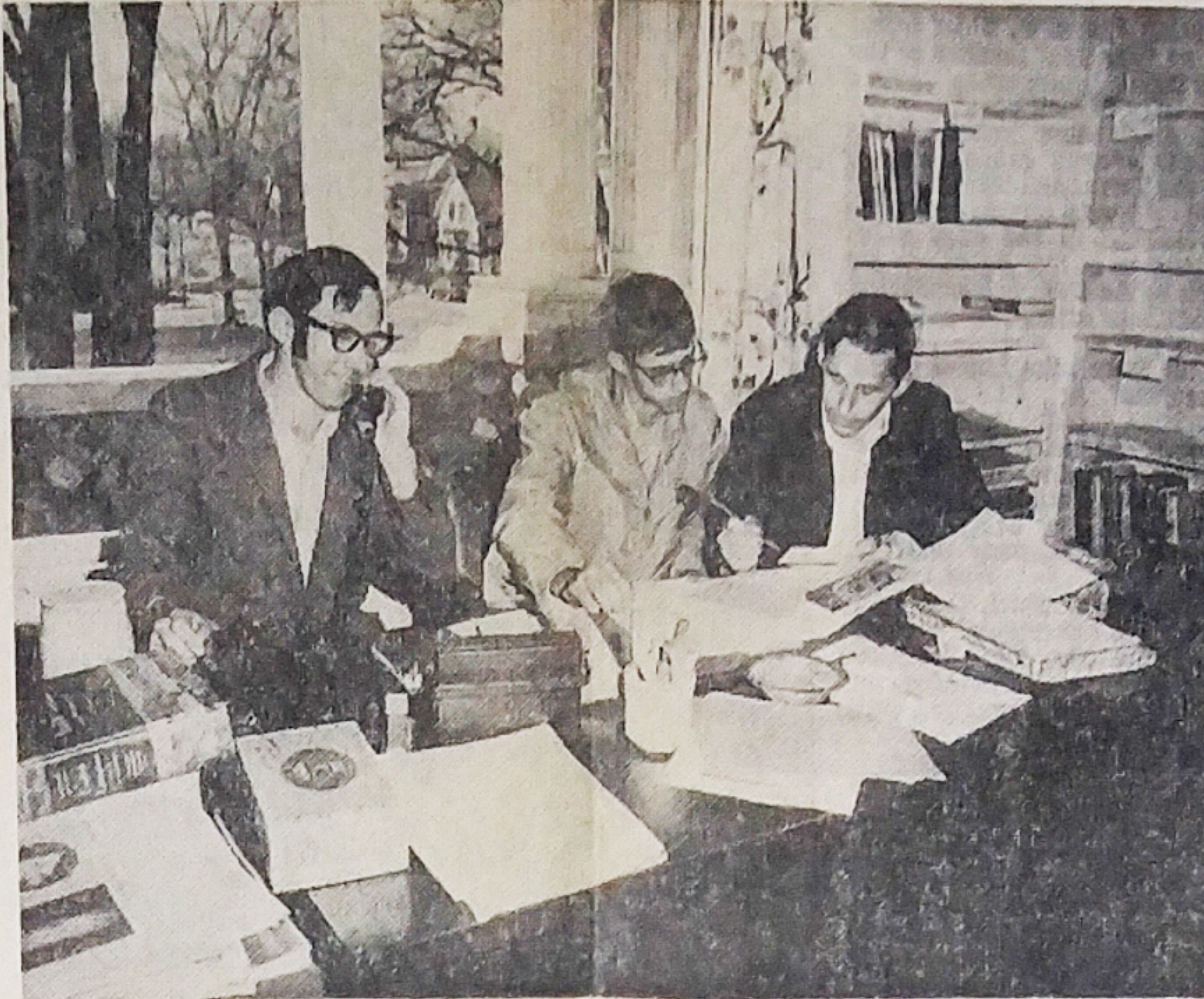
Twin City Leaders

Within a few years the Bliss home, at 123 Pine St., Lewiston, was a center of social activities. Their hospitality seemed to be limitless and a family scrapbook is filled with many accounts of their social activities.

Mrs. Bliss continued her musical interest by singing in both the Pine Street Congregational Church and the Universalist Church in Lewiston. Her husband shared her interest and they appeared in many of the local musical productions.

Their son, Addison Montfort Bliss, inherited their talent. While attending school he played the saxophone and mandolin in many functions. His untimely death, while still a young man, was a sad blow to his parents who had hoped that he would be able to continue the Bliss dynasty in business education.

O.D. Bliss was a round man who seemed to bounce from one



Staff Photo by Fletcher

STUDENTS PLAN CAMPAIGN—Three of the Bliss College students who went to work to save their school last spring. Seated in one of the College's offices are, l to r: Gary Duarte, Gerry Pelletier and Leonard Schaff. Their work to keep their college open was not in vain.

Fair and was one of our early business training classes at a sometimes made efficient sport car enthusiasts. In 1906, Bliss sponsored college in Lynn, accountants. Therefore, if a his good friend, Arthur Gray Mass, at the time. His uncle, college was to face the Staples, noted editor of the Fred H. Bliss, who had been conditions in which it exists, it

Lewiston Evening Journal, managing the family's must become as fluid as the described an exciting race publishing business, came East world about it. Today virtually every private

primitive roads Mr. Bliss made for a while and taught whereas community colleges, automobile history by winning commercial subjects. Later he springing up like mushrooms, established the largest Bliss are tax supported. Another time the Bliss Business College in Ohio at After serious and careful consideration it was decided to relocate in an area that would be more suitable to the needs of a college that would be making a transition from a curriculum

Bliss car carried three Mr. Fowler was a n a m e d based upon purely business He had been an instructor in the Junior the Bliss Business College in Columbus, Ohio, before holding a similar position in Lewiston. He had been a treasurer and clerk of this school and was highly esteemed. The answer to their dilemma After his death he was

Busy Lady

Scrapbooks reveal a great deal about their owners and Mrs. Bliss had a mighty full volume. From it I learned that the Rose-Mary Candies were "home made with great care by Katherine M. Bliss. They were good and pure."

A noted needlewoman, Mrs. Bliss won many blue ribbons at the Maine State Fair. She was chairman of the Women's Literary Union's Arts and Crafts Department and conducted a needlecraft class at the clubhouse. In 1931 she was in charge of the Art and Needlework Department at the State Fair.

Her gracious charm served her well while she was President of the Enterprise Chapter of the Daughters of 1812, the Twin City Parliamentary Club and the Women's Literary Union.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Bliss spent many long hours during our first World War helping to raise funds for patriotic purposes. Mr. Bliss served on a Council appointed by Governor Milliken to raise funds for the American Red Cross. Mrs. Bliss was the Lewiston chairman of the Fourth Liberty Loan drive.

These, then, were the good people who helped a steady stream of young people learn how to better themselves in the business world.

An Institution Is Born

After an organizational period, the doors to the newly established Bliss Business College and School of Shorthand opened in January of 1898. Young people of Central Maine were simply entranced by the novel system of training offered. This was a school that plunged each student into business—like transactions. He was allowed to carry on his own business, using a mythical sum as his financial backing. He wrote his own business correspondence, sought loans, and attended to banking matters. Simulated conditions of actual business situations enabled the student to cope with problems when he encountered them in real life. As he progressed through his courses, a student could see for himself the opportunities and pitfalls that face business management. This was such a radical departure from the traditional blackboard-lecture type of teaching, that the Bliss brothers had to write their own textbooks.

Some of the other courses offered the charter members of the student body were penmanship, rapid calculation, commercial law, spelling and shorthand. Many of these topics are still taught in the Business Management and Secretarial Divisions of the current curriculum. Tuition for the first year was \$80 for either the business or the shorthand course or \$100 for a combination of both. Those students and faculty members who were hard put to find convenient parking spaces. It also became increasingly difficult to find a room was available with home makers who were interested in boarding students.

Double Tragedy Then too, it was increasingly The ink was hardly dry on evident that the clear cut that first enrollment list when demarkation line between the the Lewiston College's, business and professional President Frank L. Bliss, died, education was actually an there was still a another

His son, O. D. Bliss, was only 17 artificial barrier. Bookkeepers can become poets and artists who held full time jobs, but margin.

lived too far away to be able to attend classes in the evening. With these people in mind, the Bliss College Correspondence Department was developed. For \$40, a student received complete instructions in Gregg shorthand, a FREE typewriter of his own with instructions for operating it, plus a month's free attendance at the college in order to increase dictation and typing speeds. Once the student attained a suitable competence the typewriter company that had furnished the machines promised to procure employment for all the graduates.

This typewriter was no toy. It was a standard machine. The deal was made possible because of the wholesale purchases made by the chain of Bliss Colleges.

Normal Training Course

In 1940 the Normal Training Course was established. It was designed to provide teachers to the rapidly increasing number of business education departments that were being introduced into high schools.

At first the graduates of this department could begin teaching right away. As teaching requirements were standardized at a higher level the Normal Training students transferred to Teacher Training College or the University of Maine where they fulfilled their remaining requirements for a Bachelor of Science in Commercial Education.

The Bliss prospectus for this period included such subjects as biology, English literature, composition, grammar, personality improvement, music appreciation, economics, history, medical and legal secretarial training as well as the standard commercial subjects.

"After Mr. Bliss"

O. D. Bliss was "Mr. President" for such a long period of time that people wondered what would happen to the school after his death. He was succeeded by Mr. Roscoe Haines who was well qualified to sit in the President's chair. He had been an instructor in the Bliss Business College in Columbus, Ohio, before holding a similar position in Lewiston. He had been a treasurer and clerk of this school and was highly esteemed. After his death he was



WILLIAM TELL CLUB—O. D. Bliss was a great "mixer" and had many friends in all walks of life. He was a staunch member of the famous William Tell Club, a highly selective group of sportsmen that included membership of prominent men all over the country who did their best to get to Maine whenever the founders, right here in Lewiston-Auburn, planned a trip. Often they traveled in their own private parlor car. This picture of what well could be called the "core" of the William Tell Club was taken on a fishing trip to Round Pond, Maine, in 1929. Seen here, l to r, are: O. D. Bliss of Bliss College; Arthur Gray Staples, the late famous editor-author of the Evening Journal who was known to his legion of readers simply as "A.G.S."; Alfred Sweeney of Auburn, Supt. of the A. & K. Street Railway; Phil Pottle, industrialist, and prominent in civic affairs; Walter Hastings of Lawrence, Mass.; Frederick Ford, former City Manager of Auburn; and David Farr, of Lawrence, Mass.

double blow and settled down to becoming more firmly established in our community.

Oleg Dewey Bliss proved that he had inherited the family's sense of business acumen. Recently it had been used as the Knights of Columbus hall. Tiled floors, beautiful fireplaces and large airy rooms create a gracious atmosphere in keeping with the trend to eliminate the traditional austere decor that is vanishing from business schools and establishments.

Curriculum and Classes Now let us glance through the curriculums offered several generations of Bliss College students and note the changes made during its nearly three centuries of existence.

When the first roster of students reported for class they discovered they could tailor their curriculum according to their personal needs. In an age when women were just beginning to be admitted to the staff of workers in business world, it is significant to note that the very first Bliss College class was composed of 17 girls and eight boys.

It didn't take local businessmen long to discover that a valuable pool of trained office workers would mean greater efficiency. Graduates were employed almost before they untied the ribbons from their diplomas.

As the years went by, changes in courses reflected the requirements of the times. The evening courses were particularly well attended. The school published a brochure describing the advantages of attending such classes. Prospective students were assured that they would be taught separately at their desks thus "avoiding" the embarrassment of reciting before the entire school.

But Mr. Bliss realized that there was still a another contingent of possible students who held full time jobs, but margin.



WELL REMEMBERED—Roscoe C. Haines, a native of Ohio, became the Principal of Bliss Business College in 1907. He came here after serving as an educator for the Bliss Business College of Columbus, Ohio. He married the former Marjorie LeBroque who was a graduate of Bliss College and a member of the faculty. Upon the death of O. D. Bliss he became President of Bliss College.

Administration Building of the college.

I will remember her from my own Bliss College days. Always beautifully groomed, she busily attended to her numerous duties and kept things running smoothly. It was a joy to take shorthand dictation from her because her diction was clear and precise. Years of experience had trained her to gauge her speed so that the students would become increasingly proficient without feeling overwhelmed by the pressure. Little wonder that she has been recognized as one of the nation's leading shorthand teachers

lower rate. Community Colleges function in a similar manner. Credits earned are transferable to the four year colleges, but tax money supports them. Another advantage to these college is that high school graduates who are somewhat uncertain about charting their life's work may attend a Junior or Community College and can decide which aptitudes to develop when they transfer to the Junior Class of a four-year institution. The Junior College tuition is based to meet the average financial capabilities of Maine families.

Gifts and fund drives supply the major part of traditional four-year college expenses while the tuition only supplements them. In direct contrast Bliss College depends upon its tuition money for over 90 per cent of its operating costs. It was a miracle that they have still kept their tuition to a minimum.

Bliss College always has been a community oriented college. In addition to serving the students of Central Maine it has always been ready to serve the community.

Countless times it has supplied clerical help for charitable purposes. It has sponsored courses for small business managers, a community lecture series and provided personnel to help eliminate bottlenecks in local business concerns.

In 1967 Bliss College was accepted as a provisional member of the American Association of Junior Colleges and during that same year it was granted the right to award the Degree of Associate in Science. The college now provides both transfer and terminal programs.

Two years ago the curriculum was arranged to provide the Degree of Associate in Science in three different fields: the Division of Arts and Sciences, the Division of Business Administration, and the Division of Secretarial Sciences. Their prospectus states that "The objectives of the general education offerings are primarily to enhance the student's knowledge by making him more sensitive to the world in which he lives, to improve his understanding of his fellow man, and to prepare him to assume the responsibilities of citizenship in his community, nation and world."

"The objectives of the professional preparation program are to prepare the student for immediate employment after graduation and to offer the student the first two years of an education which will enable him to obtain his first two years of college at a much

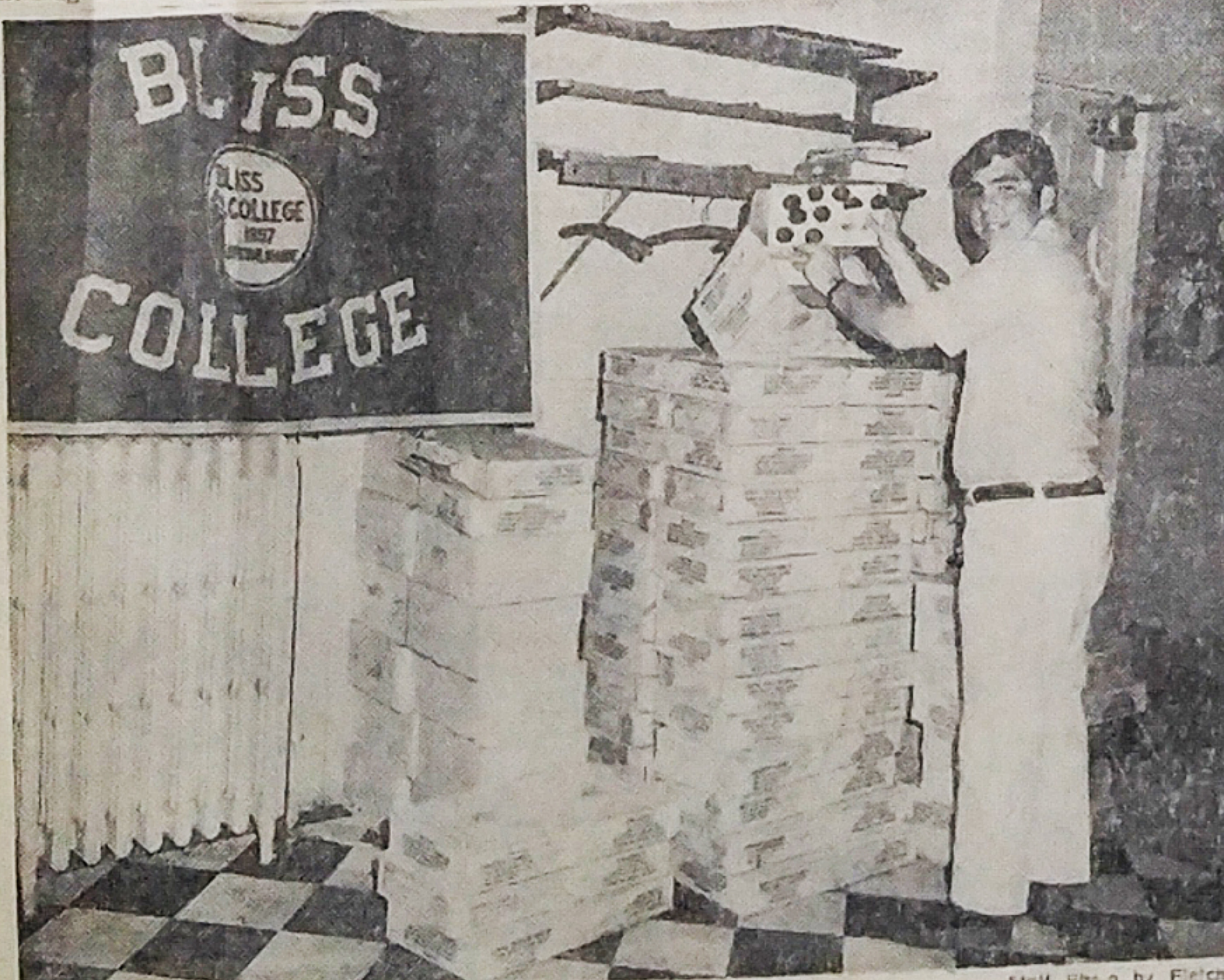
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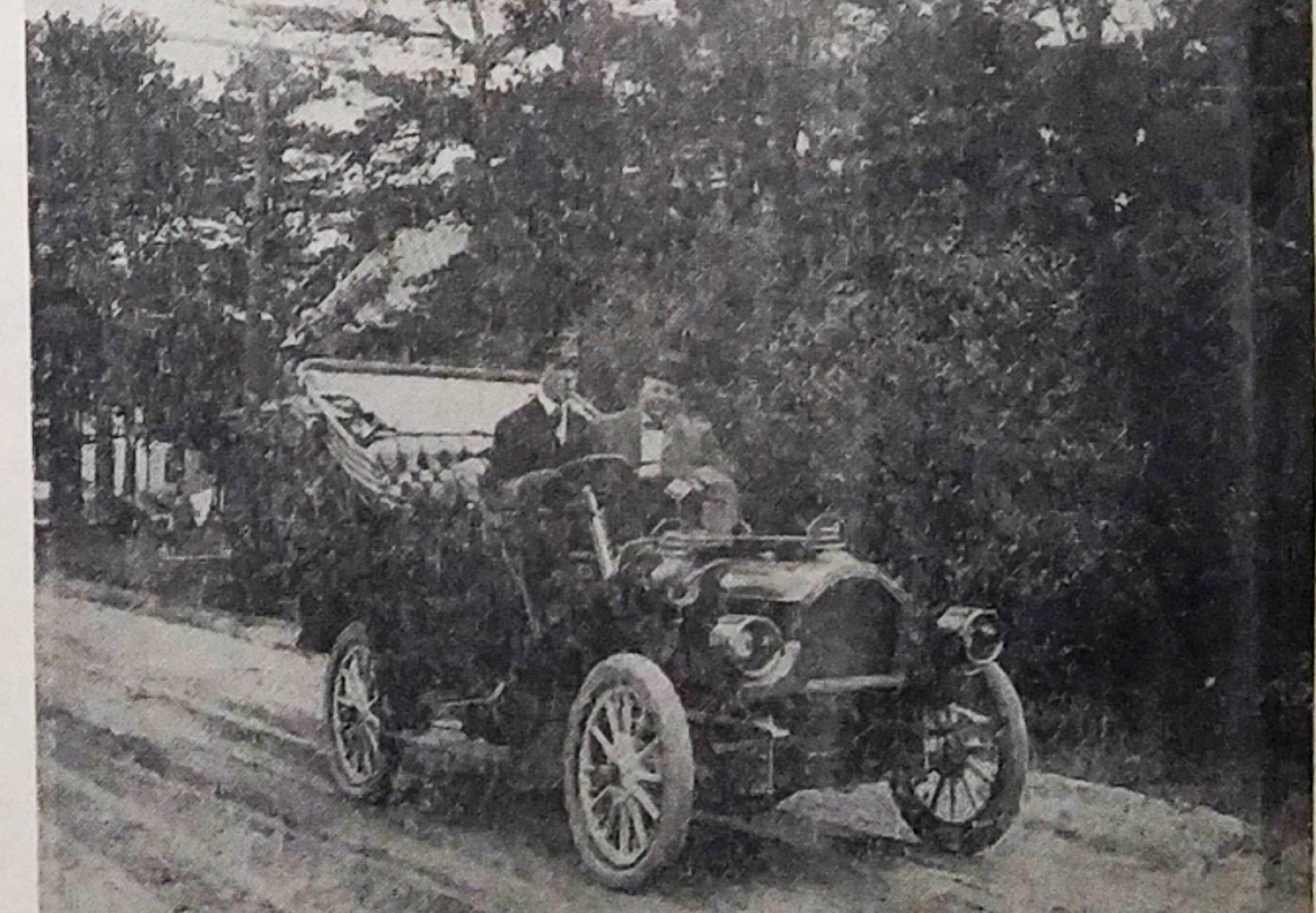
GRACIOUS LADY—Mrs. O. D. Bliss was the former Katherine Montfort of Lisbon Falls. A talented vocalist and an expert needlewoman, Mrs. Bliss was one of the Twin Cities' prominent women in civic, church, and social affairs.

while standing ready to give project to another. He exemplified the vital, alert business attitude advocated in his college by setting up the I was fortunate enough to have known Mrs. Bliss slightly. She was a true gentlewoman. first industrial cafeteria in the welfare of the young people enrolled in the courses was always important to her. Few of us realized at the time that she carried a heavy burden of a similar one was established in the personal sorrow as well as the aggravating infirmities of her Moore managed this many years.

Lisbon Falls Girl Mrs. Bliss was an active member of the Kora Temple Shrine, served on the Board of Directors of the Maine State



CAMPAIGN UNDERWAY—The students held car washes, dances, rummage sales, candy sales. Here student Harold Rosenthal, son of Mr. and Mrs. Marty V. Rosenthal, 46 Russell St., Lewiston, unpacks dozens and dozens of boxes of candy. Students that, worked tirelessly to keep their college open and won nationwide publicity as the college people who "attested" for their school.



PIONEER AUTOMOBILIST—"O.D." was one of Maine's first sports car fans. He is shown here seated beside an unidentified driver and note that the driving is done on the left side of the road. "O.D." made a couple of historic "runs", including a trip up the Goff Hill in Auburn, but probably his most famous stunt was racing the narrow gauge railroad engine between Kingfield and Farmington and—"O.D." won by a fine