

A Home in the Heartland

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ISBN 978-1-257-82834-0

In Loving Memory of My Parents, Orville and Viola

With Gratitude for my Grandfather, Caleb Bergman,
Who taught me to honor the Past

The author wishes to express additional thanks to
The Hon. Floyd Vrtiska

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Chapter 1 **Ghosts**

My husband and I wanted to sleep one last time at the farm house, before it was emptied of furniture and possessions. The Nebraska farm had such sweet memories for me: the home where I grew up, the beauty of the yard, with its tall pine trees, mulberry tree, and lilac bushes; the ever blowing prairie wind, and the big, broad cloudless sky.

Our house was always full, and there were stories that Dad told me about our ancestors: great-great grandfather Eber Howe, Aunt Myrta, Uncles Tom and Herbert, (Dad's brothers), from when they were boys. There were paintings by Aunt Alice, tales about the neighbors, the Mortons, Woods and Vrtiskas, the Pepoons, cousins Philip and Gerald. There was an old sepia photograph of the Allen family hanging on the wall, who were married when they were forty years old and lived to raise five children and celebrate their golden wedding anniversary. According to my Dad, when their children were young, the Allens looked more like grandparents than parents. Relatives came to visit and stay for a few days, and we never lacked for spontaneous and planned visits from our neighbors.

I was the fourth generation to live on the farm my father inherited. Even though I was an only child, I was surrounded by the ever-present reminders of my ancestors: papers, books, letters and diaries written in the 1800's; Grandpa's old platform rocker; the oak library cabinet with the glass doors; the walnut secretary; a Civil War sword; glass doorknobs; kerosene lamps; ladies' ornate, hand-painted silk fans; pictures and paintings of my father's ancestors displayed in gilded oak frames; old-fashioned curling irons; bloomers, old porcelain dolls; dishes, books and furniture that literally filled the house, attic and basement.

The front room, the parlor, still had the well-worn oriental carpet. The dining room, two downstairs bedrooms, and kitchen had linoleum covered floors. In the dining room, there was wood wainscoting painted blue; the top two-thirds of the wall was wall-papered by my mother and her friends, carrying out Mom's favorite color scheme, pink and blue. The kitchen cabinets were painted blue, the walls pink.

The upstairs rooms, aside from mine, were left as the members of Dad's family decorated them: browns, yellow, mauve or natural wood bookcases, worn oriental rugs, and thin, gauze curtains. My room, of course, was pink and blue. One upstairs bedroom, (there were four), had been transformed into a play room for me. A special item, which I played with all during my childhood, was an old wooden desk with a drop leaf writing surface. It was made of walnut, had uneven glass doors, and lots of ink stains in places where the bottles of ink and old fashioned pens were used. I used to play doctor, nurse, and teacher at this desk, and it withstood all my activities, plus those of my friends and cousins. Many years later, it turns out that this desk, which now stands in my living room, is worth a good deal of money. It has certainly withstood the test of time.

Along with the furnishings, books, papers and mementos, there were the ghosts. Dad would laugh at the preposterous notion of phantoms, and Mom would tut-tut that my imagination was running away with me, and at my age!

Maybe Dad and Mom didn't believe in ghosts, but others in our family certainly did. My father's aunt, Myrta, was a spiritualist; the Ouija board which was kept by our family had been well-used by the time I was born. According to family stories, Aunt Myrta frequently conducted séances and contacted the spirit world. Belief in communication with the deceased, living in the "summer land," was shared by Myrta's father and grandfather.

A letter from my Dad's brother, a Ph.D. in biology, written in 1973, informed the family that ghosts were present during his childhood: he was born in 1895. "I slept in the northeast room downstairs. Father and Mother often sat up a little longer in the living room... I would sometimes hear Father coming back in [after using the outhouse]: steps on the brick walk, then on the wooden porch, and then the door opening. One summer, I think it was only one summer, I began hearing steps with no door being opened; three steps on the bricks, one on the porch, then nothing. After a short time this would be repeated with the same sequence. I was badly scared, much too scared to get up, look out the window, to see what I could see.... Many years later I thought that the obvious thing to have done was to have called to Father and Mother about it, but I think I was too scared and ashamed to do so... I might have come out

better if I had talked to Father or Grandfather... since they believed they had been in contact with spirits, and father said he would like to meet a ghost.”

A young neighbor girl, who helped with the housework for my grandmother, sometimes had to stay overnight if the weather was inclement, and had to sleep in an upstairs northeast bedroom. Although the room was comfortable, she dreaded spending the night. The noises, tapping sounds, scratching on the windows went on all night. She always slept with a kerosene lamp brightly burning, that is, if she ever fell asleep! After a few such overnight experiences, she refused to stay in the house after dark. She insisted on going home after cleaning, regardless of the inclement weather--- and Nebraska has very cold winters!

In fact, I was always afraid of *something*, when, at night, I had to run upstairs to my bedroom through the darkened stairwell. The noises, the shadows, the three dark and empty bedrooms, the bookcase-lined hall, gave the eerie feeling of a presence. I was safe, if I got to my room, and slammed the door shut. But getting there was quite an ordeal. One stairwell light switch was at the bottom of the stairs, the other was across the hall from my bedroom. How to get from here to there was a major production: run upstairs in the dark, or run across the hall and up and down the stair landing to turn off the lights. Complicating it all was the fact that I was ashamed to ask my parents to flip off the switch. After all, there are no such things as ghosts!

My mother told the story about a young nephew from Lincoln who used to come to visit us on the farm. One Sunday evening the nephew decided he didn't want to go to evening church with Mom and Dad. Instead he decided to stay at the farmhouse. Although it was bright and sunny when they left, thanks to the long twilights in Eastern Nebraska, by the time Mom and Dad got home it was completely dark. When they drove into the driveway they saw that the house was completely lit up; every electric light in the house was turned on. They tried to get into the house, (in those days no one ever locked their houses unless they were going away for a really long trip, and farmers never had time to take really long trips!), but both the front door and back doors were locked tight. They knocked and knocked, and finally saw a dining room curtain flicker and a pre-teen boy cautiously looking out. When he saw who it was he joyously opened the door, hugged my parents, and told him how afraid he was. The noises, the wind, the

strange sounds were more than he could take. My parents tried not to laugh, but believe me, when I heard about it I understood perfectly!

We still have a recorded tape that Dad made some time in the 70's telling us more about the farm history, and which may be pertinent to the experiences my cousin and I had on the farm. "Grandfather, (Orville Duane), planted two groves of maple trees in our yard...In 1913 when things got dry the maple trees died so we cut them all out. But the orchard was very large so we needed a lot of help. [Grandmother's brother-in-law] Harry Boone worked for Grandfather so he built Harry a two-story house to live in. I don't remember any plaster inside, but it was tidy outside...While they were living there they had a son die and he was buried north of their house...When we were younger we used to decorate the grave on decoration day, (Memorial Day), but that is stopped now and we've farmed over the site. I imagine his body is still there. I could take you to the spot, (approximately), where he was buried."

Dad did point out the place where the Boone child was buried, but I only have the vaguest idea now of where it was. And, yes, the soil over the grave has been farmed during much of Dad's lifetime, and continues today.

As time went on, farm life proved increasingly difficult for Mom and Dad. By the early 1960's, it was almost impossible to make a living from a small family farm. My parents had neither the physical or financial resources to compete in the new era of big time corporate farming. So they decided to move to a nearby town and rent the cropland to another farmer. This meant that the house and barns would be torn down, rather than abandoned, so the land could be tilled.

My husband and I decided that since the house was to be demolished we would sleep one last time there. A real getaway, and a lovely way to say goodbye to our old four-generation farmhouse. This would be our final goodbye. The electricity had been turned off, there was no refrigerator, but there were tables, chairs, an old bed, a working bathroom, and screens on the doors and windows for a breeze.

In some ways, the house looked the same as it always did. The black walnut drop leaf kitchen table, with its sagging leaves, the spindly oak chairs with their caned seats, some worse for the wear; the old kitchen cabinets, and some specially crafted cupboards, built by Mom's father, a carpenter; the "modern" kerosene four burner stove

and oven; the large oak dining room table with the mahogany chairs great-Aunt Hazel Bergman gave us after her divorce; the overstuffed, sagging chaise longue; the old upright piano; leather trunks and steamer trunks; papers and old documents; large framed photos of family.

I went from room to room, examining things, seeing what would have to be saved, and what would have to be sold or discarded. I looked in the storage room where we kept the “junk;” there were old music magazines, clothes from bygone years, memorabilia from the Civil War and World War I. I perused the old photograph albums with their sepia pictures, old letters, diaries and magazines; my mother, who lived through the Depression, had a firm belief that nothing, but nothing, should be discarded. There were antique Christmas decorations, chamber pots, kerosene lamps, and furniture that had outlived its purpose but was still too good to be thrown out. There were old baby clothes from the previous century, in addition to my own, and an old, non-collapsible baby buggy. I found an old metal train set, an old hand-operated photo viewer, several bedsteads, some paintings done by an aunt, and numerous organdy dresses. It was overwhelming. The past lived on in that old house, the house of my childhood.

My husband suggested a walk, and after a time we sat on the front porch steps. Gazing to the west, we could see a church steeple, some four miles away. Before that, we'd stood on the fence near the barn and looked south, where we could just see the town water tower, about six miles from the house. There were no high rises, no mammoth bridges, no high mountains or deep valleys; just flat plains, interspersed with rolling hills. This corner of southeast Nebraska was just a thousand feet above sea level. The quiet and sense of solitude was absolute.

Finally, it got dark, and the mosquitoes and chiggers were biting. We went inside, and got ready for bed. My folks had left a kerosene lantern for us, but it was such a hassle to light that we gave up and used flashlights instead. We relaxed, worlds away from our busy lives, our careers, and the responsibilities of caring for two active little boys. We looked forward to a refreshing night sleep.

Unlike old times, when there were neighbors nearby, now the closest person to the farm lived over two miles away. Our night would be uninterrupted by any noise: no cars on the dirt road, no barking dogs, no trains, telephones, or unexpected visitors.

Even though I was grown, and was no longer afraid of ghosts--- I didn't believe in them--- I was reluctant to sleep upstairs in my old room. Since our only light was a kerosene lantern which we were unable to keep on, and a flashlight, it wasn't difficult to persuade my husband to sleep downstairs. The bedroom there, where four generations of my family had been born and died, was perfectly comfortable.

We got ready for bed, made sure the windows were open and a gentle breeze could cool us, and turned off the flashlight. Usually I fall asleep immediately, but it took my husband longer to nod off. That night, though, I couldn't sleep. I heard a tapping sound. What on earth was it? Was there a burglar? I tossed and turned, but couldn't help but listen for the strange noise. I could tell from my husband's breathing that he wasn't asleep, either.

"What is that noise?" I whispered. "Do you hear that tapping?"

"Yes, I do," he groaned. "I don't know what it is, but I better get up and take a look."

He checked the windows, doors, and the entire downstairs. He didn't go upstairs, though, and I didn't encourage him to. Even though my husband hadn't grown up with the "ghost" on the farm, he was content to leave the upstairs alone, and he crawled back into bed with me. We both giggled.

"Aren't we silly?" I said, and snuggled down to a good night's sleep.

I dozed off, but woke up suddenly. So did my husband: we heard a loud cracking noise. My husband grabbed the flashlight, and shone it against the window, where the sound seemed to come from. There was nothing, no one there. I don't know what we expected to see, really.

"Just the wind," my husband said, though he didn't sound convinced. The night was perfectly calm, after all. He turned off the flashlight, and we both drew close to each other. I put a pillow over my head, not wanting to wake up again.

Crack! There was the noise again. Neither of us moved, but laid perfectly still, hoping that it would go away, whatever it was. There was no way either of us was

going to get up again, even to use the bathroom or get a glass of water. We weren't getting out of bed until the sun came up.

Both of us were exhausted by this time, and we eventually drifted into a fitful sleep. Our slumber didn't last: we heard the sound of someone walking upstairs. We were both completely awake, and terrified. There was no phone, no electricity, and we were miles away from any other living person. Was there a trespasser, an intruder upstairs? Maybe some squatter had been living in the house, and had run upstairs when they saw us coming inside.

Maybe it was the ghost that the family friend always feared, the ghost I'd been scared of as a girl. Was there a supernatural presence in the house, wandering through the empty rooms? Was the ghost waiting for us, or looking for someone who had died long ago? Did the ghost miss human companionship, and did he or she feel sad the house was empty? Was it the presence of one of my ancestors, unable or unwilling to leave the house they had loved?

Finally, the sun rose, and both my husband and I were exceedingly grateful. The night had been torturous. We both looked and felt like we had a hangover, with bloodshot eyes, pale faces, and a slightly shocked look. We gobbled down the breakfast we'd brought, packed our things, made the bed, and loaded up the car.

We decided to wait a little before we drove back to town, and my parents' home. We didn't want to wake them up. So we walked around outside a little, and everything looked normal in the bright daylight. By that time, the entire experience seemed ridiculous. We could hear tractors in the fields, and an occasional freight train. We could see the church steeple. There was neither hide nor hair of any ghost. But never, ever, would we spend another night in that house.

Finally we left the farm and went back to town. Mom asked us if we had a good time, and we tried to smile, assuring her that it had been wonderful, a pleasant way to remember the past, and have a lovely memory. In the cold, hard light of day, it seemed totally preposterous. We couldn't have been frightened of a ghost--- there were no such things! Nothing, no one had been there. It had just been the wind, a tree branch, maybe a bird or insect hitting the window.

I am writing this almost fifty years after it happened, but I can still remember the experience like it was yesterday. I vividly remember how it felt. My husband and I kept the Ouija board for a while, but finally sold it. I don't know if that was the right thing to do; now I wonder if we should have kept it. If there had been a ghost, would it have wanted to communicate with us?

The farm house in Nebraska is no longer there. The basement and foundation remained for a while, but now even they have been removed. The land is all being cultivated. I visited the place when the foundation was still there. I had the strange, uncomfortable feeling that "they" were not happy. I was filled with sadness, and felt the sadness of some other presence, too, that missed the house and wanted to live there forever.

Now most of the antiques and documents are with me and my children. I am compelled to write the story of my ancestors, and that farm. It must be told, and I have chosen to do so. I will tell you their words, and their story. "They" will communicate, and how "they" choose to do so remains to be seen.

Chapter 2 **Bold Beginning**

“Look with favor upon a bold beginning” Virgil, Ib. l. 40

The bold beginning for the Howe family came when they left England and arrived in Northeastern America. But when did they arrive? Did they or did they not arrive on the *Mayflower*? Howe family descendants failed to resolve that question. My dad’s brother Tom leaned toward the arrival date of 1623. Uncle Tom spent countless hours doing research in historical centers and libraries, and had correspondence with the English branch of our family. His father, Edmund, my grandfather, favored the *Mayflower*. No *Mayflower* connection has been established, though. It seems our earliest ancestors, Roger and Sarah Conant, arrived on the *Ship Ann* in 1623. The Conants built the first house in Salem in 1626. Roger and Sarah Conant’s great-granddaughter, Eunice Conant, married Samuel Howe, at Mansfield, Connecticut, in 1754. We are definitively linked to this Samuel Howe.

There are many famous Howes in the history of America. There were two brothers, both generals, William and George, who led the British during the American Revolution. In 1846, Elias Howe invented the sewing machine. And who could forget Julia Ward Howe, who wrote “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” and started Mother’s Day as a pacifist holiday? But my father always said if any Howe was famous, rich or successful, we were not related to them. My father, uncle and grandfather had the benefit of interviewing my great-grandfather about the genealogy: my great-grandfather, Orville Duane Howe lived till 1917.

The Howe name lives on in England, and we still have distant relatives there. A cousin of mine stayed with them for the coronation of Elizabeth II in 1953. She was hoping to find that the English branch of the Howe family was refined, educated and wealthy. This was not the case. On both sides of the Atlantic, great wealth has eluded the Howes to whom we are related. In fact, if I remember right, the words my cousin used to describe our British relatives were “poor, of no account.” Worse still, some of our British relatives who have some Italian ancestry, served in the navy during World

War II. They seem to have been Mussolini sympathizers, and fled to Brazil when the war was over. Additionally, the fact that we also have Italian and French ancestry is disturbing to family members who insist we Howes are strictly English.

The forebear of our branch of the Howe name in this country seems to be John Howe. The country of John Howe's birth isn't known, but he got married in Sudbury, Massachusetts, in 1639. In 1642, he was elected town Selectman. There was an Elizabeth Howe hung as a witch. Elizabeth was a widow, and she was accused of witchcraft by her brother-in-law, John Howe. "Howe" was not an uncommon surname in colonial America, and many Howes had the same given names as our ancestors, making genealogy difficult. We don't know for sure if the John Howe who accused Elizabeth of witchcraft was our John Howe.

On September 17, 1760, Samuel William Howe, my great-great-great-grandfather, was born, probably in Connecticut. Of his early days, the *Western Reserve* tells us that Samuel "lost his father at an early age and was tenderly and thoughtfully reared by his stepfather." The *Western Reserve*, edited by Harriet Upton, was published in Chicago in 1910. This three-volume encyclopedia, as well as *Autobiography and Recollections of a Pioneer* by Eber D. Howe, have provided valuable information about the Howe family during the late 1700's and early 1800's.

Immigrants from England, and the Howe family was no exception, were not leaving England because of political concerns. Religious freedom and economic advancement seem to be primary motivators. It's impossible to know the religious convictions of my ancestors; by the time of my great-great grandfather, Eber Howe, in the early nineteenth century, the Howes were no longer religious in any conventional sense.

Northeastern America was still ruled by the Crown in the days before the Revolutionary War in 1776, and, for the most part, most English immigrants had no intention of changing their allegiance.

Although nothing is recorded about Samuel William Howe's childhood, he entered medical school in 1779. Much has been written about the tumultuous political times during this same period. Most notably, the Revolutionary War against England was being fought, and subsequently won, by the colonists in 1783. The Declaration of

Independence was written and signed. And the leaders of our newly formed country wrote the Constitution and established on 7/4/1776 the thirteen-colony United States of America.

Not all the colonists supported this war, however, and the Howe family, with close ties to England, was probably not an exception. There is no mention of Samuel's step-father joining the Revolutionary War efforts, whereas Samuel's son, Eber, thought it significant to mention in his *Autobiography* that his own wife was a descendant of a Revolutionary War soldier. Eber Howe was a writer and journalist, and his *Autobiography and Recollections of a Pioneer Printer, Together with Sketches of the War of 1812 on the Niagara Frontier* (Ohio, 1878) is another invaluable resource in my family's history. If Samuel's family was contented with the Crown, that was not the case with Samuel.

The next recorded event in Samuel's life is his enrollment at Dartmouth, in 1779, for the purpose of studying medicine. The family has tried, unsuccessfully, to verify Samuel's attendance at Dartmouth. It could be that records kept in the 1780's may have been haphazardly collected, or perhaps Samuel's training was like that of many in his era. "As late as 1800, neither in New England nor elsewhere...did there exist effective measures to regulate medical education and practice...Prospective...doctors did not need to attend college, enroll in hospital lectures, possess an M.D. degree, or even serve an apprenticeship...Of the 1,370 doctors practicing in Massachusetts between 1700 and 1794,...at least...36.6 percent had served apprenticeships" (see R. Numbers, *Medicine in the New World*: Knoxville, 1987).

Sometime during Samuel's school career, he made a momentous decision: he signed on as a ship surgeon on an American privateer. Why did he leave Dartmouth and embark on this uncertain course? Perhaps on a whim, perhaps because of a growing sense of patriotism, or perhaps Samuel was simply tired of school and wanted adventure, especially with the possibility of economic gain. How best to achieve these goals? Samuel opted for opportunity and action, no matter the potential ramifications of his decision.

This privateer, an armed private vessel commissioned to cruise against the commercial or war vessels of the enemy was probably assigned to patrol the shores of the East Coast. It started out well for Samuel, but then the “fun” began. Unfortunately, “when the ship was out of the harbor it headed across the Atlantic, direct for the English Channel (Upton p.966).” We’ll never know why the Captain changed his course; perhaps he had grandiose goals for the privateer and thought that he could capture an enemy ship, even though his ship subsequently “proved to be entirely unseaworthy.” The situation was exacerbated by the fact that the Captain himself was described as “an incompetent and intoxicated captain” (Upton p. 966).

As a result of this worst-case scenario, the voyage of 40 days to the Irish coast was mostly occupied by the hands in bailing out the rotten hull. “In that locality they fortunately found themselves along a British man-of-war, and surrendered after the firing of one shot” (Upton p. 966).

Samuel was definitely getting a lot more adventure than he had anticipated. “After being removed... to the British boat, the American crew joyfully saw the dishonored craft disappear beneath the ocean waves, the ship not being worth the trouble of towing into port. The Americans were taken to Dublin as prisoners of war, and there Samuel was detailed to the medical department of the city prison, which was filled with sick and maimed victims of the war. By bribing a prison keeper named Craft, he finally escaped from Dublin prison with two other physicians, and reached the coast of France. From there, he walked 300 miles to Havre, where he shipped for Boston as a hand before the mast (Upton p. 966).” As Ireland is separated from France by the Atlantic and the English Channel, the 300-mile “walk” surely must have included some nautical miles. We’ll never know exactly how Samuel got there. The ending to this particular segment of Samuel’s story came when prison keeper Craft came to America, many years later, and had a joyful reunion with Samuel, who was by now a recognized medical doctor.

Samuel’s son, Eber, made no mention of his father’s prison escape in his *Autobiography*. Instead, Eber gives the following account: “They were carried into the city of Cork as prisoners of war, where they were kept till the close of hostilities, about two years and a half. My father, however, was permitted to go into the country, where

he was treated kindly by the Irish peasantry, subsisting chiefly on goat's milk and oatmeal" (Howe p.1).

In 1906, genealogist Herbert Wheeler, working at the Lewis Institute in Chicago, researched the Howe family. In his unpublished "blueprint," he notes the length of time Samuel was held prisoner: "After nearly three years, Howe and two other doctors, bribed Craft, an Irishman, keeper of the Prison--- and escaped to France."

Regardless of whether he escaped or was released, Samuel decided that attending university was infinitely preferable to privateering. When he returned to America, Samuel re-entered the University, probably Dartmouth, and completed his medical studies.

According to my uncle, Thomas Howe, Ph.D., in a letter to my father, there is a record of Samuel being commissioned as a surgeon during the War of 1812. Our family has assumed that Samuel was recognized as a doctor by 1785. This is the date that is inscribed on a substantial iron mortar that has been passed from one generation of the Howe family to the next. This treasure was used as a doorstep on the farm.

Around 1785, Samuel married Miss Mabel Dudley, probably a descendant of a Revolutionary soldier, although this fact has not been verified. What is known about Mabel is that she was born in Middletown, Connecticut on December, 5, 1763, the daughter of Asahel Dudley and Betsey Hatch. The family has no picture of Samuel Howe, but there is a likeness of Mabel Dudley Howe. While Mabel was no doubt a loving wife and mother, she wasn't a great beauty.

During the period from 1779 to approximately 1785, Samuel attended university, spent two and one-half years in prison, found time to court and marry a wife, re-entered a medical training school and became recognized as a medical doctor. Quite a feat in only five years!

The next record we have of Samuel's life takes place in 1798. By this time he had five children, with one more to come. Wheeler lists their names and birthdates, when available: William; Eunice; Laura, b. 11/6/1788; Harriet, b. 1796; Eber, b. 6/9/1798; and Asahel, 5/27/1800 (Wheeler 1906).

Published accounts tell us that Samuel and his family, like many others, were on the move, searching, no doubt, for betterment, whether for personal, professional or

economic opportunity. Regarding the medical profession, Ronald Numbers tells us in his book *Medicine in the New World*, “Because medicine was rarely a full-time endeavor...doctors, like other settlers, moved...in search of clientele, land, and security” (Numbers p. 112).

In the three-volume, 1910 edition of *The Western Reserve*, we are told that Samuel practiced medicine successively in Clifton Park and Ovid, New York. In 1811 Samuel and his family settled in Canada, near Queenstown, eight miles from Niagara Falls.

During the years between 1785 and 1811, the world of the Howes and all the colonists was soon to change, thanks to the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. The Purchase more than doubled the western domain of the United States. By 1806, Lewis and Clark had explored the territory and brought back a favorable report regarding the possibilities of trade and the wealth of resources available in the territory.

The nation’s reactions to the purchase, however, were mixed and frequently based on perceived economic interests. As a New Englander, Samuel’s sentiments were probably similar to most in his region. He had no intention of moving to a “wild” area when he could remain in the cultured environs of the northeast region. His livelihood was not dependent on farming, fur-trading or ranching, so the West had no appeal to him. He was now a doctor, having finished his medical training, and needed to live where there was sufficient population to support a medical practice.

Events in Europe, however, were having a direct effect on the colonists, including the Howe family. After the French Revolution in 1798, Britain had been engaged in an all-out war with Napoleonic France for world supremacy. Although European war efforts were not aimed at the United States, they had a direct effect on our country. United State trade routes were severely disrupted, as ships sailing for the Continent were frequently captured and confiscated. Restraints were placed on trade routes between the French West Indies and France. Furthermore, England began stopping American vessels and searching them for British seamen deserting the Royal Navy. All matters came to a head when the American frigate *Chesapeake* was stopped and searched off the Virginia Capes in 1807. Protests from the United States were refused by the British and mocked by the French. One of the direct causes of the War

of 1812 was the impressment of sailors found on American vessels. Ironically, this practice ended the day the war began, but because communication was slow, the American government didn't receive the news till hostilities had already started.

In 1811, the entire Howe family crossed the Niagara River and moved to Queenstown, in what is now Canada. Living in Canada and under the rule of the British crown seemed preferable for many Americans, especially New Englanders and those who still had doubts about the wisdom of breaking away from England. The Howe family seemed comfortable with their move to Canada, and prospered, in spite of the fact that Eber, no doubt reflecting his father Samuel's sentiments, refers to the king as the "old imbecile tyrant...George III" (Howe p.4).

Regarding political allegiances both in the nation and also among his own family members, Eber, in his *Autobiography*, says, "At this time there were many disloyal people scattered through the country [Canada], who had quite recently emigrated from the other side, and had not fully made up their minds to fight" (p.4). Although Eber calls these expatriates disloyal in his 1878 *Autobiography*, he has the perspective of hindsight. In reality, during 1811 his family and the expatriates living in Canada were taking the "neutral" position regarding the skirmishes between England and the United States.

Although the British were more concerned with the war in Europe than they were to the hostilities in the United States, at least at the outset of the War of 1812, they needed money to finance their campaign. By this time in his career, Samuel had also acquired considerable property, gold coin and good securities. Wheeler states that Samuel "had accumulated large possessions: having 200 head of cattle, horses, 500 acres of the finest land, a beautiful English mansion, an iron box filled with gold coin, and good securities worth \$60,000" (Upton p.966).

Given the fact that England was scrambling every way to get money, it decided to use its power to commandeer resources from people living under its rule and authority, especially those who had accumulated considerable wealth. Accordingly, at the outset of the War of 1812, Samuel was "summoned to appear before the royal authorities of the dominion and declare himself for the king of England, on pain of

banishment and confiscation of all his goods and property...and given one hour to decide” (Upton p. 966).

That did it, as far as the Howe family was concerned. They had not come this far, worked so hard, and made so much progress to have it all disappear in a moment. Although he may have been politically neutral in this conflict and philosophically committed to saving life rather than destroying it, Samuel was no longer ambivalent about his political leanings. According to the *Western Reserve*, Samuel’s decision was almost immediate, “within a minute [he] declared for the Stars and Stripes and commenced to prepare for immediate departure” (p. 966). Wheeler describes what happens after the summons as follows: “Breakfast was on the table – Indians everywhere; but he damned the King and declared for the States.”

Obviously the British did not get the result they’d planned, which happened to both sides during the War of 1812. They were in danger of losing an ally and, more importantly, his fortune. The *Western Reserve* continues: “No sooner were his intentions known to the Indian allies of the British who were hovering outside the house than they secretly bored holes in the bottom of the scow which was to be used to convey the doctor, his family and valuables across the Niagara River to New York. His wife and daughter, Harriet, had packed the best bedding, silver and box of gold, and after loading the goods and family on the scow started on his perilous trip. Not far from shore the scow sank, the passengers barely escaping through the assistance of a British officer who was affianced to the doctor’s daughter” (p.966). Wheeler adds that Harriet’s fiancée “was later killed at Lundy’s lane.”

Samuel did not fear for his personal safety. Evidently his ties to at least some of the “enemy” were quite strong, given the fact that a British officer helped the Howe family escape. Samuel “returned to his residence, intending to throw his strong box into the river, but found his house in flames. Seizing a feather bed from the pile of household goods not yet consumed, he tied it to his horse Kate to protect her from the expected shower of bullets which he knew would greet him when the British discovered his attempted escape. Nor was his expectation amiss, as in his dash for the upper ferry he was obliged to pass through a storm of bullets which riddled the bed and put out one

of his good horse's eyes; and in crossing the ferry, where he was met by his sons, one of the latter (William) had his hat pierced by a ball" (Howe p.6).

Even if the account has been embellished by a zealous family member, the fact is that the Howe family did leave Canada, never to return. And in spite of what the previous account implies, some of their belongings, and, probably, their fortune, came with them. They appeared to be financially comfortable throughout the remainder of Samuel's career. Still, the subject of lost treasure was often discussed around my family's dinner table on the farm. Did Samuel's gold sink to the bottom of the Niagara River? Could we send a diver to the river and find the treasure?

After their hasty departure from Canada, Samuel and his family moved to Lewiston, New York, where they resided until December 18, 1813. This hiatus was not to last. The British, with their Indian allies, crossed the Niagara River and planned to invade key targets in the United States: Fort Niagara, Buffalo and Washington. Eber tells the story of their pursuit in his autobiography, "The Indians...arrived at the village of Lewiston about sunrise, where they found most of the people in their beds...The Indians let out a war-whoop, but, [began spending so much time plundering the village that]...they were so long detained at a few of the first dwellings that a large share of the people got well under way before pursuit commenced" (Howe p. 9).

Over frozen ground that was covered with a light snow, the town's inhabitants fled on the one road that went east. "By this time the road was getting pretty well filled up with men, women, and children, horses, oxen, carts, wagons, sleds...." The fugitive cavalcade was "Five miles in length, resembling somewhat the serpentine movements of a huge black snake---rendered more distinctly visible by the snow on the ground" (Howe p. 9). According to Eber, (Howe, p.10), the Howe family finally escaped and made the trip of fifteen miles to Batavia. Wheeler describes the episode a little more succinctly: "When the British took that place, [Lewistown], Dec. 18, 1813, the Howes again escaped-on a sled drawn by oxen to Batavia, N.Y."

Meanwhile, a Mr. Phillips, who later became Eber's son-in-law, also resided in Canada, and had sworn his allegiance to his Majesty while residing there. Phillips was subsequently captured by the Native Americans, who planned to execute him as revenge for some of the braves that had been killed. In the nick of time he was rescued

by British soldiers. Somehow the chief ascertained that Phillips was a shoemaker, and he was made the shoemaker for the entire tribe. The chief tried to get a permanent shoemaker for the tribe by marrying off Phillips to a squaw, perhaps his own daughter. Phillips somehow contacted his wife, and begged her to arrange a trade. She did, and Phillips was finally released to his wife and children in exchange for five gallons of whiskey and ten pounds of tobacco. Talk about the balance of trade!

In May, 1814, Samuel joined the war movement, which was by now at his doorstep, once again. Samuel, along with his sons, Eber, age sixteen, and younger brother Asahel, enlisted in the Swift and Dobbins regiment. Samuel was assigned to care for approximately fifty wounded British soldiers and Eber was assigned as a regimental cook.

Fortunately for both sides, the Treaty of Ghent, signed in August, 1814, brought an end to the war of 1812; a peace without victory for either side. The years between 1760, when Samuel was born, and 1814, when the Treaty of Ghent was signed, were bold beginnings, both for our nation, and also for the Samuel Howe family. A new nation had been born with the creation of the United States of America in 1776. Samuel Howe boldly declared for the Stars and Stripes.

At age 54, Samuel closed this chapter of his adventurous life. Samuel may not have been ready for more adventures, but his teenage son certainly was, as we will see in the next chapter. The westward movement, at least according to the perspective of the New Englander, was soon to begin for both Samuel and also his son, Eber.

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Chapter 3 **Go West, Young Man**

“Go west, young man, and grow up with the country.” Horace Greeley, quoting John Soule

The Howe family moved to Ohio in 1817, where, according to the *Western Reserve*, Samuel “successfully practiced his profession” (p. 967). Wheeler tells us that, “In 1817 he [Samuel] went to Cleveland, O., and about 1820 to Painesville, O. – where he practiced his profession until his death in 1838.” The entire Howe family, including Samuel’s son, Eber, moved West with Samuel.

In his *Autobiography*, Eber acknowledges the “modern-day” definition of the western frontier as contrasted to what it was in 1818. “I put in practice the advice of Horace Greeley—although not uttered till forty years afterwards—‘young man, go west’ ...In those times [Cleveland] was considered pretty near ‘the west,’ if not the ‘jumping off place’” (Howe p. 2).

As a matter of fact, in 1803, when Eber was just five years old, Ohio became the first state to be carved out of the Northwest Territory. Eber’s remarks about Ohio were not off the mark.

Published documents trace many of the earliest Howe family locations. These include Dartmouth, Connecticut; Clifton Park, N.Y.; Ovid, N.Y.; Canada, near Queenstown; Lewistown, New York; and Batavia, New York. These moves were occasioned by a variety of events, including political, economic, and personal safety. In New York, the Howe family had the uncanny ability to move to wherever the next battle in the War of 1812 was to be fought. Since the war was fought primarily along the Niagara frontier, they risked battle no matter where they relocated.

While the Howe family moved together, Eber, in his autobiography, makes it seem as if he braved the frontier entirely by himself, although he moved with his parents.

Eber Howe was my great-great grandfather, and although he never lived at the farmhouse I grew up in, he visited it. Eber’s presence was always felt on the farm.

There were several pictures of him and his mother in my grandfather's bedroom. Eber was a writer and journalist, and his chatty *Autobiography* brings him to life. If his writing was self-aggrandizing, and it surely was, he was following in the footsteps of his role model, Benjamin Franklin, this country's preeminent autobiographer. Eber tells us that from an early age, he "boldly made my first step towards becoming a Ben. Franklin" (Howe p. 19). Franklin died in 1790, just eight years before Eber was born. Eber writes, "I read the life of Benjamin Franklin, and learned how and by what means he had wrought his way from a candle maker to be the greatest philosopher of his age, by the most rigid economy and perseverance and the little light acquired in a printing office" (Howe p. 19).

Like Franklin, Eber strives to impress readers with his intelligence and hard work. Eber makes it seem as if he was somehow, miraculously self-spawned. While education was not compulsory at that time, Eber tells us how lacking his education was. Eber attended a "dilapidated log school-house" in central New York. "The benches [were] made of slabs...with writing tables made of a single board, fastened to the logs of the house... [They were] put through a course of 'sprouts,' and education" (Howe p. 2). The sprouts were fashioned from trees for use by the "master" [teacher] for administering discipline as needed by "each unlucky urchin."

Of his teachers, Eber said that "intemperance was not considered an insurmountable qualification for a good teacher. I well remember one old fellow...who ...would frequently get 'half seas over,' vomit upon the floor, and take a 'quiet snooze' in the school room."

Regardless of the quality of his teachers, Eber recalls some memorable events during his schooling. In June, 1806, "teacher and children emerge to see the great eclipse of the sun. Since then I have seen many solar eclipses, but never any so brilliant."

Judging by the curriculum he describes, Eber's school, probably typical of country schools during that era, was poor. "I never saw a map of any kind, and, I presume, a 'blackboard' was never seen in a school-room for thirty years after....Webster's First Spelling Book was the [only book we had]. It must be spelled through and read through every three months, year after year."

Eber continues, “All the geography that I now recollect ever being used in school was a common reading book with questions and answers, giving the latitude and longitude of every place on the globe” (Howe p. 2).

While Eber’s story is self-promoting, and leaves out details, such as the fact that he moved with his parents rather than entirely on his own, the *Autobiography* deserves to be read on its own terms. Eber reached the age of seventeen, and thought it time to strike out on his own. Or as he says, “when all those just germinating [sic] into manhood must begin to cast around in order to light upon some occupation which appears most suitable to their physical and mental capacities” (Howe p. 19). Eber speaks of beginning his career with just “two shillings in my pocket” (Howe p.19). Of course, since his parents were wealthy, Eber did not go hungry.

Eber’s account of his career is charming. He left Batavia, New York, and traveled forty miles away to Buffalo. As he strolled the street he saw a sign which read “Printing Office.” He went in to the building and discovered it was the publishing place of the Buffalo *Gazette*. With some trepidation he applied for a job, and was elated when he was hired as an apprentice, believing that “it required something far above the common race of mortals to become a printer” (Howe p.19). He signed an agreement to stay with the company as an apprentice for four years.

Eber was assigned the job of printer, along “with another boy of about my age” (Howe p. 20). At that time it took two days to print enough copies for circulation of approximately one thousand, although Eber acknowledges that the “same amount of work in these days is done in two hours,” with a different and more “modern” type of printing press. The paper changed names several times, and by the time Eber penned his *Autobiography* (1878) it was called the Buffalo *Commercial Advertiser*. In the course of his brief career at the *Gazette* Eber assisted with the printing of start-up papers in neighboring communities.

In 1818, when Eber was 20, he had worked at the *Gazette* for approximately three years. There was a change in ownership, and he was “released” from his apprenticeship; we would call it laid-off. Fortunately for Eber, he had gained additional experience by assisting in putting into operation the first newspaper in Erie,

Pennsylvania, the *Erie Gazette*. It was on this project that he worked with a Mr. Willes, which, as we shall see, was a fruitful contact.

Meanwhile, after Eber left his job in Buffalo, he spent the winter in Fredonia, a city down the coast of Lake Erie, and close to Erie, Pennsylvania. During this time, his father Samuel moved the family to Cleveland, Ohio, a village of approximately 200 residents.

And so it was, that in April of 1818, Eber consolidated his possessions, consisting of “a horse, saddle, bridle, a valise, and \$25.00 in cash,” which was considerably more than the “two shillings in my pocket” that he referred to earlier, and headed toward Cleveland, Ohio. The distance of thirty-four miles took four days on “tolerable good roads,” although on the first day he had to travel through a snowstorm (Howe p. 21).

When Eber arrived in Cleveland, along with his parents, he found the city already had a newspaper, the *Cleveland Register*. But, according to Eber, “the printers [were] of [such] poor type that the impressions were nearly illegible” (Howe p. 22). From Eber’s perspective, there was a need, and he was just the man to fill it! Furthermore, the population of the Western Reserve region, in which Cleveland was located, was fairly sizable, with a population of 56,747 residents. Clearly, this region could support a legible, modern newspaper such as Eber intended to publish.

In June, 1819, when he was 21 years of age, Eber issued proposals for publishing a paper that he planned to call the *Cleveland Herald*. His reason for issuing this proposal was that he lacked capital, and he hoped that some wealthy benefactor would provide the start-up funds necessary for publishing a newspaper. Summer passed, with no results.

Without prospects of funding, Eber traveled to see his old friend, Mr. Willes, of the *Erie Gazette*, and offered him a partnership opportunity: Mr. Willes would provide the printer; Eber would be the editor-in-chief and publicist. “After due consultation and deliberation he [Mr. Willes] agreed to remove his press and type to Cleveland...” The *Cleveland Herald* became a reality: “on the 19th of October, 1819, without a single subscriber, the first number of the *Cleveland Herald* was issued” (Howe p. 23).

According to Uncle Tom, in a letter to my father, Eber was said to have been the first to leave out the ‘a’ in Cleveland--- he thought the word was too long. The city was named for Moses Cleaveland. According to other sources, a certain newspaper editor to whom I am related misspelled the name sometime in 1831. Eber would have bristled at this explanation; he would say the change in spelling was not due to an error, but a plan!

In the *Autobiography* Eber carefully distinguishes between the two spellings. When the newspaper was in the “proposal” stage, seeking capital and talking with Mr. Willes in 1819, it was spelled Cleaveland. But in October 1819, when the paper was first printed, it was spelled without the extra “a.” Although we may never know the exact story, we do know with certainty that both the newspaper and the city came to be known as Cleveland, rather than Cleaveland.

The first issue of the *Herald* contained a strong anti-slavery article by Benjamin Rush, which “if it had appeared twenty years later in those columns, would almost have produced a bonfire of its press and types” (Howe, 24-25). In his *Autobiography*, written when he was nearly 80 years of age, Eber expresses profound sorrow that in 1820 he had compromised his principles and accepted two advertisements for the return of runaway slaves. “I find that we were woefully[sic] led astray by the prevailing sentiments of nearly the whole civilized and uncivilized portions of the community...there was no wrong in, but rather a duty, to lend our aid in returning fugitive slaves to their pretended owners” (Howe p. 25).

Abolition was a cause that would become increasingly important for the Howes. Eber notes in his *Autobiography* that “The first anti-slavery paper published in the United States was in Baltimore, in 1831, by Benj. Lundy (Howe p. 47). Eber continues, “In the beginning of the year 1835 the anti-slavery societies had been so far organized and increased in strengths and talents as to open up an offensive and aggressive war upon the upholders of the institution” (p. 47).

Thanks to hard work and perseverance, the paper soon had a circulation of 300 subscribers. Eber delivered the papers on horseback from Cleveland to Painesville, a distance of 30 miles. Eber said he also “frequently carried a tin horn to notify the yeomanry of the arrival of the latest news, which was generally forty days [late] from

Europe and ten days [late] from New York” (Howe p. 24). “Weekly the editor ... ‘rushed’ ...60 papers in his saddle bag, door to door.... For this fast delivery he charged 50 cents a year above the annual \$2 subscription.”

Collecting these charges, however, “was another matter. Coin was scarce, corn the more usual medium, frequently transformed into whiskey.” (Howe p.24). The editor often found himself with a barrel of whiskey in his little print shop on lower Superior Street.

Unfortunately, for Eber and the future of the *Cleveland Herald*, their “debts, due and outstanding, were found to be about \$1,000, scattered in small sums all over the Western Reserve” (Howe p.26). With some wry humor, Eber comments that “Printers can form a pretty accurate estimate of the amount that was actually realized in its collection...” And he draws two zeroes at the end of that sentence (Howe p.26).

And so it was, that in 1821, and after two years publishing the *Herald* in partnership with Mr. Willes, Eber ended his connection with the paper by mutual consent.

During this period of his life, Eber became close friends with another early immigrant to Cleveland, architect Jonathan Goldsmith. Goldsmith recalls “On that long ago day when the youthful journalist dismounted at Goldsmith’s farm, editor and horse, on the road many hours, were mud-spattered and weary. Goldsmith urged Howe to stop for rest and food...Discouraged with his Cleveland paper, Howe unburdened himself..., ‘I have more and better paying subscribers right here in Painesville,’ the editor blurted out. ‘Well, then, why not move here and start a paper?’ countered Goldsmith. ‘We need one and this place is going to go way ahead of Cleveland.’” (Grace Goulder, “Ohio Scenes and Citizens” *Painesville Telegraph*, 1967).

By July, 1822, Eber had heeded the advice given to him by his good friend Jonathan Goldsmith and moved to Painesville, Ohio. Using the knowledge he had gained working in newspapers at Buffalo and Fredonia, New York; Erie, Pennsylvania; and in establishing the *Cleveland Herald*, Eber decided that he was ready to become the sole proprietor of a newspaper.

Eber describes this move as one which “marked a new era in my career of life, and I entered into it with alacrity, high hopes and a buoyant spirit” (Howe p. 26).

And so it was, that in spite of “many difficulties and trials,” Eber established the Painesville *Telegraph* on July 16, 1822 (Howe p. 26). “He had set up his Washington hand press and brought out the first issue of his four-page *Telegraph*. The Goldsmith name headed the subscriber list even after Jonathan’s death in 1847. [His wife] Abigail kept the place until her death 40 years later” (Goulder, *Painesville Telegraph*, 1967 ?).

According to recollections of Eber’s son, Orville Duane, remembered by my uncle, Painesville and Cleveland had approximately the same population in those days, and were only 30 miles apart. Eber believed, however, that Painesville had a better future, e.g. potential for future growth, than Cleveland, because Painesville had a better natural harbor. Eber also noted that the Erie Canal was almost finished, “To that gigantic work of internal communication with the outer world the State of Ohio and all the vast country bordering on the chain of great lakes was early indebted for their start in wealth and greatness” (Howe p. 26).

First impressions are not always correct, however, as Cleveland eventually outdistanced Painesville in terms of population and commercial activity. In answer to “why” this occurred, my uncle said that the Cuyahoga River at Cleveland was much larger than the Grand River at Painesville, and the topography of the land surrounding Cleveland was more suited to the building of wharves. Canals were more easily built on the Cuyahoga, and, of course, with the building of canals commercial interests were well served. In addition to the political maneuverings common to any era, Cleveland had distinct topographical advantages.

In a letter, Eber recalls that the *Telegraph* was started with five advertisements and about 150 subscribers. The Painesville, Ohio *Gazette* newspaper describes Eber’s circulation policies and practice: “When the first 60 copies came off the hand-cranked press he saddled his horse and delivered his paper personally” (Painesville, Ohio, *Gazette*, 2/2001, p. 22). According to this same news article we learn that “In the early days the paper had 150 subscribers and began with five advertisements across a four-column sheet.”

Regarding the competition and frequency of distribution, the *Gazette* tells us that “It was the fourth paper to be published in the Western Reserve...it was a weekly until 1892 when it became a daily.”

One of Eber's hand-operated presses was carried with the Howe family when his son, Orville Duane, moved to Nebraska. A manual printing press was used to print a work of poetry written by Eber's daughter-in-law in 1903. According to recollections by Orville David Howe, (Eber's grandson, my father), he and his brothers played with a hand-operated printing press when they were little boys. Dad's hair was very light, a "towhead." His older brother, Thomas, decided that Dad's hair would make an ideal slate for printing, and he proceeded with his first, and last, printing experiment. When their mother saw the black goeey mess all over Dad's head, she was quite unhappy. Dad's reward was that he had his head washed with awful-smelling kerosene. We don't know how Thomas was punished, but suffice it to say the printing press was not used by the Howe children for hair-printing again!

In 1823, one year after he established *The Telegraph*, another big event occurred in Eber's life. "I was married to the one of my choice after a courtship of six years...Sophia Hull, [the daughter]... of a soldier in the Revolutionary war." As an aside, we must interject that the house Sophia lived is still standing. According to a great-great niece, Barbara Hull, Warren Hull was "an American Revolutionary War soldier who came to the Buffalo, New York area around 1804. He and his wife Polly built a limestone house in the Federal Style. It is the only standing substantial stone house in our area and an attempt to restore it is underway" (unpublished letter to author, 7/27/2003).

According to the *Portrait and Biographical Album, Johnson and Pawnee Counties, Nebraska*, published in Chicago in 1889, Eber married Sophia in June, 1822, rather than 1823, as recalled by Eber, "after a courtship of six years...[Sophia was from] Clarence, N.Y. Her father was from Berkshire County, Mass., a soldier of the Revolutionary War, and settled on the Holland Purchase in 1806. She was one of a family of twelve children, nine daughters and three sons. A woman of perseverance, industry and economy, she was likewise kind and benevolent toward all in her sphere. Her unusually excellent health remained almost entirely unimpaired until about six months before her decease, which was occasioned by a cancerous tumor in the stomach. Mrs. Howe was one of the first to join with her husband in the anti-slavery movement, working equally with him to assist the fugitives from bondage" (p.501).

Eber writes glowingly of his wife, Sophia. In his *Autobiography* he states that his 43 year marriage to his wife was one of “connubial felicity” and the financial success he attained was largely attributed to Sophia’s “perseverance, industry and economy” (Howe p.30).

Not only was Sophia instrumental in promoting the economic success of her family, she was also committed to the welfare of others. In his *Autobiography* he states, “Her first sympathies were called out in 1825-6, in behalf of the Greeks in their struggle for independence...[who] were then under the Turkish yoke” (Howe p.30). The Turkish rule of Greece began with the Ottoman Turks during the 1300’s, but began to wane during the 1700’s. The Greek War of Independence began in 1821, but it was not until 1829 that Greece became independent.

Sophia was also “one of the first to join in the anti-slavery movement...[and] kept a station on what the slaveholders called the ‘underground railroad.’” When it came to protecting her “fugitives from bondage,” Sophia believed she had the perfect defense: “a kettle of water was kept boiling all day in order to give their pursuers a *warm* reception should they make their appearance” (Howe p.31). Fortunately, the anti-slave sentiments of the majority of residents living in the Western Reserve resulted in the fact that the slaveholders “most generally lost the track and were obliged to return without their prey” (Howe p.31).

In a letter written to the *Painesville Telegraph*, February 2, 1887, Mary E. Howe, Eber’s daughter-in-law, writes: “My father kept a station on the underground railroad, and a black mother with her little children had taken refuge there. How I remember the wondering interest we children all took in the affair; how the fugitives remained hidden away in an upper chamber, the poor mother scarcely daring to even have them approach this window, until one dark night a coal wagon was driven as quietly as possible to the door, the slave mother and her children were safely transferred to its deep seclusion and driven to Fairport where the good steamer Rochester, whose captain was known to be tried and true and not a human blood-hound, carried them over the blue waters of Lake Erie to the dominion of the British Lion, where alone at that time the hunted fugitive could rest in safety.”

According to Tom Howe, my uncle, and included in his biographical sketches of the Howe family, “after moving out of Painesville to where he [Eber] had his woolen factory his house became a well-known station on the Underground Railroad where slaves were kept until they were transported to Canada by steamer, the captain and owner of which was also in the Underground Railroad. Some [escaped] slaves worked for him [Eber] for wages for a while. I remember my grandfather, Orville Duane Howe telling me about one who stayed over two years, or until the Fugitive Slave Law was passed. He then thought he had better go on to Canada lest he get them into trouble.” (unpublished letter to author by Thomas Howe, Ph.D., 1972).

In 1835, Eber’s connection with the *Telegraph* ceased, and the paper went into the hand of a younger brother, Asahel Howe” (Howe p. 47). At this time, Eber moved to Concord, where he went into the woolen business with his son-in-law, Franklin Rogers. Eber devoted himself to Abolition, and his home sheltered so many fugitive slaves it came to be called “Nigger’s [sic] Hollow.” These were heady times in Abolition, and Eber catalogs some of the dangerous things that happened to journalists and others who supported the cause of anti-slavery.

“James G. Birney...after emancipating his slaves in the South, came to Cincinnati and started an anti-slavery paper; but in a few weeks his press and type were taken by a mob and thrown into the river...

Rev. Elijah P. Lovejoy, at Alton, Ill., had his press and type thrown into the Mississippi, and after procuring another was shot dead while defending his property from the mob.

Cassius M. Clay had the press and type of an anti-slavery paper burnt in the streets of Lexington, Kentucky.

In Charleston, S.C., the United States Mails were seized and rifled of newspapers supposed to contain anything against slavery and burned in the streets. This lawless act of violence was justified by the Postmaster General (Amos Kendall) and the President (Gen. Jackson)” (Howe. p. 48). Given this formidable list of violence against journalists, Eber did well to get out of the newspaper business.

In a hand-written biography of Eber Howe we are told that the woolen business was located “in the big hollow on Big Creek in Concord. In this Hollow he had a

station on the Underground Railroad harboring and employing many runaway slaves. He avowed himself an abolitionist and allied himself with the Liberty Party until it was merged into the Free Soil Party and later the Republican Party.”

Eber and other Abolitionists hoped the cause of anti-slavery would have a political leader, and there would be a non-violent solution to the terrible institution. “In 1848 a new anti-slavery party was formed... with Martin Van Buren and Charles Francis Adams, at the head of the ticket” (Howe p. 49). Van Buren was a disappointing choice for many; Eber’s son, Orville, believed that nominating Van Buren was a colossal mistake. Van Buren sought to contain slavery, and even when nominated as head of the Free Soil Party said he would veto any bill that abolished slavery completely.

Eber blamed politicians for the continuation of slavery, both Democrats and Whigs. To America’s great shame, neither political party opposed slavery during the first half of the 19th century. Eber doesn’t mention which party he is affiliated with. He railed against the supporters of slavery, writing “the Whigs succeeded by the election of General Taylor...who died the next year, substantially leaving the power of the general government still in the hands of the South, under the guidance of Mr. Fillmore, the Vice-President, who was a northern pro-slavery Whig” (Howe p. 49).

Eber continues that soon after this, “the Whig party went into oblivion and a new organization was formed by a combination of the whole anti-slavery element of the country, and denominated the Republican party” (Howe p. 49). The Republican nominee, Gen. John C. Fremont “was defeated by James Buchanan--- whose administration was the weakest and more disastrous to the best interest of the nation than any which had preceded it, being wholly given over to the control of the slave power, and culminating in the war of rebellion” (Howe p. 49).

Eber supported many causes in his newspaper: canals, temperance, Henry Clay for president, and printed speeches of Daniel Webster. In a letter dated May 9, 1972, and written by the manager of *The Telegraph*, James I. Bumgardner, to me, Eber’s great-great granddaughter, he said: “You may be interested to know that *The Telegraph* this year is celebrating its 150th year and it all started with your great-great-grandfather,

Eber D. Howe, as you know. He was the founder of this paper. Eber Howe was an abolitionist and this topic was discussed in his first edition July 16, 1822.”

Eber was firmly convinced that Henry Clay would be the best choice for president. Although “Mr. Adams [John Adams] had the advantage of being the great statesman, and a man of impeachable moral character...Mr. Clay had the ...reputation of being the greatest orator...in the country, a western man and a decided friend of western interests” (Howe p. 32). Eber campaigned tirelessly for Clay in the *Telegraph*. His campaign bore fruit, and “Mr. Clay carried the State of Ohio by 718 votes over General Jackson---leaving Mr. Adams far behind” (Howe p.33). In reality, Clay received the fewest votes of any of the other candidates, and John Quincy Adams was ultimately elected as the 6th president of the United States. Eber became a personal friend of Clay’s, and his son, Edmund, wrote Clay a letter from Oberlin College.

According to the *Painesville Gazette*, “Early copies of *The Painesville Telegraph* recorded historic events of the community such as the establishment of Lake Erie College, Lake County Memorial Hospital and the events of the public education system. It featured a society page and marine news along with church functions. Any item of news that affected the community could be found in its pages. Howe retired after 14 years of serving as editor-publisher and sold it to his brother Asahel for \$600 (*Gazette*, Painesville, Ohio, 2/2001). Eber continued its publication until January 1835 and then sold it to his brother Asahel for \$600. The *Gazette* informs us that, “Asabel” (the brother’s correct name was Asahel), sold the paper in January, 1838, to a Mr. Edward Jacques.

During the thirteen years he was proprietor and editor of *The Telegraph*, Eber recounts the following events which appeared as news stories:

- First murder in the county, February 1, 1823; hanging of the culprit, May 15th, 1823.
- The owner of a distillery found a wildcat had inhabited the business; the owner defended his “territory” and after a fierce battle killed the wildcat.
- First fire in Painesville, November 26, 1823, destroyed two stores and a dwelling house, amounting to about \$10,000.

- Counterfeit money ring discovered in Painesville, 1827. The group tried to “start a mint for the purpose of coining money from lead, zinc, copper and nickel.” Although 13 perpetrators were arrested only two were sent to jail. Furthermore, during the trial, “the jury brought in a verdict of not guilty, on the ground that the coin was so badly executed that no one would be deceived.”
- First use of the word “bogus.” When the apparatus used for making the counterfeit money was discovered, “someone called it a ‘Bogus’...It was the next week printed in the *Telegraph*, and from that day to this has ever been freely used and applied to express the idea of base or counterfeit money, and falsehood or deceit of all kinds.”

By the year 1828, “the *Telegraph* had been enlarged and placed upon a pretty foundation” (Howe p. 36). Although Eber did not relate the exact circulation, by this time the newspaper had survived two libel suits, and a competitor which folded. The stately Howe home was designed by Jonathan Goldsmith; its architecture dates the unique doors back to the Western Reserve era. The home is still standing. A great-granddaughter of Eber subsequently donated his secretary desk of cherry wood to the local historical society. It is not known what became of the other furnishings belonging to the Eber Howe family.

Not only was his business prospering, but Eber was blessed with a growing family. In addition to the fatherless nephew they cared for, James Howe Kelly, Eber and Sophia had six children of their own, although three died in infancy. The children living to adulthood included the following: Minerva, born in 1827, Edmund, born 1829, and Orville, my great-grandfather, born 9/1/1831. Minerva married Franklin Rogers, who ran the woolen mill along with Eber. Edmund and Orville both attended Oberlin College, an Abolitionist university, and one of the first to admit African American students along with white.

Edmund showed great promise as a writer, following his father’s footsteps. Tragically, Edmund died in 1849, at the age of 19, probably of malaria. Orville eventually moved to southeast Nebraska, and Eber, when he grew old, resided with his daughter Minerva.

Family lore has it that both Orville and Edmund worked in their father’s woolen mill, and put in grueling ten hour days. In addition to helping fugitive slaves, the cloth

mill enabled both sons to attend private high school and college. Orville, my great-grandfather, built the farmhouse in Nebraska I grew up in.

According to the *Western Reserve*, Edmund was a “young man of remarkable ability and promise” (Upton p. 968). Edmund and Orville’s student days are documented in letters and diaries. In Edmund’s diary, lovingly brought by his brother Orville to the farm in Nebraska, there are two locks of his dark brown hair. No photograph of Edmund survives. Selected quotes from Edmund’s letters home, as well as his essays, give insight into the life and times of the mid-19th century. His school writings show an increasing disillusionment with the promise of America; how can the country be a moral beacon when it tolerates slavery? His last letters home are written from the Cleveland Water Cure, where he received what we would consider today medical torture. Doctors of that time did not know about germs, and Edmund was subjected to a series of hot and cold plunges. Edmund’s medical treatment gives insight into the barbaric treatment his grandfather, Dr. Samuel Howe, must have used.

Minerva, the one daughter who lived into adulthood, was married in 1844 to Franklin Rogers when she was just 17. She had her first child two years later, and four more after that. According to the *Western Reserve*, all five children lived. All the children resided in Ohio. Minerva and her husband had a 40 year marriage; she was widowed in 1884. On the farm, we had a picture of Minerva and her son, Fred Howe Rogers. The photo of Minerva was taken in her later years; on the back of the picture someone has written “taken when the subject was completely blind.” The *Western Reserve*, written in 1910, describes Minerva as a “bright lady of strong memory, fully alive to current happenings, whether in her own community or in the world at large, and presents a striking example of physical and mental vitality--- albeit she is in her eighty-third year and the great-grandmother of three, and the grandmother of twelve (ten living).”

□□ There was one difference between Eber and his wife Sophia, which Eber doesn’t mention. Eber, like many in his day, was a committed anti-Mormon. He grew up in western New York, not far from Palmyra, where Joseph Smith lived. His wife, Sophia, and his wife’s mother, were, at least for a time, Mormon. No doubt there were some interesting conversations in the Howe home.

It's not clear how long Sophia remained Mormon; some have suggested she became disenchanted after the scandal of the Kirtland savings and loan, when many followers lost money. One of Eber's books was an expose of the Mormon religion: *Mormonism Unveiled* (sic) was published in 1832.

Much of the research Eber published concerning Mormonism is available online at www.solomonspalding.com. Some of Eber's convictions were recorded by A.B. Deming, who wrote a biography of Eber, which has been out of print for many years, as has *Mormonism Unveiled*. The latter book can be purchased as a photocopy from an anti-Mormon organization in Salt Lake City. Many of Eber's beliefs about Mormonism, specifically his assertion that the Book of Mormon comes from an unpublished novel by Solomon Spalding, have been disproved by subsequent research. Nonetheless, Eber's research was meticulous, and his first-hand interviews are indispensable in the understanding of early Mormonism. Eber met "Prophet Jo Smith when he first came to Painesville, with two horses and sled" (from A.B. Deming's biography, from the special collections of the Spalding Studies Library). Eber had much to say about Mr. Smith's account of finding the Mormon Bible (Howe. p.44).

Eber met many of the founders of Mormonism when it was introduced in Kirtland, a town that was located "nine miles South West of Painesville...In the fall of 1830." Eber gave a detailed account of the Mormon group in Kirtland, the progress they made in gaining converts, and the increases accruing from financial transactions. In fact, according to Eber's biographer, "In 1834 as the Mormons were gathering in Kirtland and some of his own family were becoming interested, he entered into an investigation of their origin" (A.B. Deming). Family members included his wife Sophia, Sophia's mother, and Eber's sister, Harriet Howe.

In his book and in letters collected (some of which can be found on the previously mentioned website), Eber gives accounts of his meetings with Doctor Philastus Hurlburt, "who had been a Mormon preacher," and was now refuting Mormonism. Eber also goes into great length about the writing of *Manuscript Found*, by Solomon Spaulding. This book was written as a historical romance "endeavoring to show that the American Indians are descendants of the Jews, or the lost tribes" (*Mormonism Unveiled* p. 279). Eber contended that parts of this book were included in

Book of Mormon, and, therefore, justified his position that the book should not be considered sacred. Eber supported this argument by similar quotes from Spaulding's brother John, and John's wife Martha.

The Mormon movement quickly caught on: "They formed a church of some eight or ten members...and [eventually] made their appearance here [in Ohio]. The next year or two a large number of converts had been made." So much so, that in the city of Kirtland, "they commenced buying and making bargains for all the lands in the vicinity...Their numbers constantly increased, so that they absorbed all the business of the township. They began to make their boasts that in a short time they would control all the county offices and elect a member of Congress from their own ranks" (Howe p. 45).

Sadly, due process of law was not followed by non-Mormons, however, and "The night before the removal of the property it was all burned to the ground, and the prophet and many of his apostles fled to parts unknown." The Mormons fled westward, and eventually settled in a community "Called Nauvoo, on the east bank of the Mississippi" (Howe. p.45). Nauvoo, Illinois is now recognized as a historical site of the early Mormon movement, as is Kirtland, Ohio. "At Nauvoo they took up quite large quantities of the public lands, and soon laid out quite an extensive city... (and erected) a most splendid tabernacle, and a hotel to be kept by the Smith family" (Howe p. 45).

Residents of Nauvoo opposed the Mormon leaders. So much so that it "finally culminated in the imprisonment of Joseph and Hiram Smith...with an assurance of personal protection." The last promise was not to be fulfilled. "During the night the jail was broken into by an armed mob and the prisoners both fell pierced with bullets" (Howe p. 47). Vigilantism was evidently not just the purview of the Wild West; it was definitely alive and well in the Established East! The only additional comment Eber makes in his *Autobiography* is that Brigham Young "Was chosen prophet and head of the church, and preparations were made for a general stampede of the saints towards the Rocky Mountains." Even though his autobiography was written approximately 30 years after this "general stampede," it must be noted that Eber lost little of his journalistic rancor toward the Mormons. Closing this section on Mormonism, Eber adds that "At

about this juncture ...the revelations began to appear, authorizing and establishing the doctrine of polygamy” (Howe p. 46).

If his rhetorical anti-Mormonism was undiminished, his verbal discourse was tempered, no doubt out of respect for his wife’s memory and his sister’s financial involvement in Mormonism. In an 1884 interview with Eber, A.B. Deming reports “Mr. Howe was a man of superior mind and intelligence and universally respected by those who knew him. He would converse with the utmost freedom on all subjects but Mormonism.” Deming continued that Eber “became guarded in his expressions and refused to talk on the subject. He told me his sister Harriet was a Mormon and stock in the ledger of Jo Smith’s bank stands in her name. Mrs. Howe was originally a Baptist and followed Rigdon (whom she greatly admired) into Disciple doctrine and [then] Mormonism. Mr. Howe, [Eber], said that after prophet Jo Smith’s back-house scrape, she lost confidence in him and in Mormonism” (from solomonspalding.com). The kindest thing to be said about the Kirtland banking scandal was that the bank failed; some believe Smith’s actions were criminal.

Along with Mormonism, another movement Eber had a lifelong antipathy to was freemasonry, fraternal lodges. According to Baigent and Leigh, in *The Temple and the Lodge*, (New York: Arcade, 1989) “In its present form, Freemasonry dates specifically from the seventeenth century” (p. 149). These same authors go on to say that “There is no question that Freemasonry contributed something to the structures and machinery of the new American government ” (Baigent and Leigh p. 258). They add “Washington himself was master of the Alexandria Lodge No. 22, Virginia” (p. 261). In his *Autobiography*, Eber says that according to “the Professors of Harvard and Andover, there was no record of the origin of the Masonic order prior to 1717” (Howe p. 43).

However, by 1821, the number of masons residing in the country made an impact on politics. Eber notes that “Millard Fillmore, who was afterwards President of the United States, made his debut as a politician in the anti-Masonic party” (Howe p. 43). According to Baigent and Leigh, three of the guiding lights behind the American constitution, “took their Freemasonry extremely seriously....Washington, Franklin, Randolph” (p. 260).

Emotions on the subject of fraternal lodges ran high in the 1830's. Americans then, as now, love conspiracy theories, and freemasons were there to play the villain. Reportedly, a Mr. Morgan planned to expose the secrets of Freemasonry in a book. This scheme, when realized, resulted in Mr. Morgan's kidnapping and murder. Although the perpetrators were never identified for certain, it was presumed that Mr. Morgan's death was caused by Freemasons who did not want the secrets of their order revealed.

The public was outraged by the murder, and a vigilante mentality took hold. Accordingly, the anti-Mason movement grew rapidly, and by the mid-1830's, Eber noted that "The fruits of the war were the renunciation of about one thousand Masons, and the closing of all the Lodges, except in some of the cities, for about fifteen years" (Howe p.43). He goes on to state, "It was during this period of suspension that Odd Fellowship was organized and appeared on the surface as a sort of substitute for the 'lost cause.'"

Although Eber campaigned fervently against the Freemason movement, his son Orville Duane eventually became a lodge member (although not a Freemason). Orville's obituary tells us that "For many years he was a member of the Independent Order of Good Templars, and through this order as well as through political action, he sought to overcome the evils of intemperance" (Table Rock *Argus*, 1917).

Eber ends his *Autobiography* with a summary of his life. "I have resided in Painesville and its immediate vicinity for fifty-six years; have been engaged most of that time in the printing business and the manufacture of woolen goods; am the father of six children, two only of which survive, the eldest fifty and the younger forty-six years; gave seven grand-children and seven great-grandchildren" (Howe p. 59).

Any discussion of Eber must include his religious beliefs. Eber relates that "Up to the age of 40 years... I was governed in my opinions on that subject by education." He then decided to investigate the subject for himself, and after spending time as a "skeptic," he became caught up in a new movement which was revolutionizing religion in the 1830's, spiritualism. Eber wrote: "In this I believed, and still believe, and why? Simply because *I could not help it*" (Howe p. 54).

To bolster his cause, Eber lists some well-known adherents of spiritualism: “the Duke of Wellington, Queen Victoria, Abraham Lincoln... and many Senators and Members of Congress” (Howe p. 59).

The founders of American spiritualism lived in Western New York State: the Fox Sisters and Andrew Jackson Davis. The Fox Sisters claimed they could communicate with the spirit of a man who was murdered in their home. Andrew Jackson Davis communicated with spirits, as well, and produced numerous books which he claimed were dictated from the other side. Eber concludes the *Autobiography* with his creed, which he acknowledges is nearly the same as Andrew Jackson Davis:

“1. I believe in one absolutely perfect God—both father and mother... 3. I believe that man, spiritually is part of the spirit of God. 4. I believe that every person is rewarded for goodness and punished for evilness, both in this world and in the next. 5. I believe in the universal triumph of truth, justice and love. 6. I believe in the principles of eternal progression and development.... 13. I do not promise to believe tomorrow exactly what I believe to-day, and I do not believe to-day exactly what I believed yesterday, for I expect to make, as I have made, some honest progress within twenty four hours” (Howe p. 56).

My great-grandfather, Orville Duane, Eber’s son, residing on the farm in Nebraska, received news of his father’s death in a post card sent by his sister, Minerva, dated November 11, 1885.

“Our dear Father has finally[sic] gone to meet the dear ones on the other side he passed peacefully and quietly away last evening, twenty minutes 9. I cannot wish him back, he has had a hard struggle to live for this last six months, but he has not suffered much pain, and I am thankful for it, we do not expect he would go as soon but he lost his appetite, and that was all that kept him up when that was gone his strength went too. The funeral will be Friday and I wish you were not so far away but you could not come. I hope you and Mary will write something for the paper next week. Yours, Sister Minerva.”

Sources

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Chapter 4 Orville at Oberlin

Orville Duane Howe, 1831-1917, Eber's sole surviving son, was my great-grandfather. He was born in Painesville, Ohio, and passed away in Table Rock, Nebraska, on the family farm where I grew up. My father, named Orville David in his grandfather's honor, told many stories about Orville Duane Howe. He bought the family farm in 1869, and moved his growing family there in 1871, when the railroad was finished. He built the house where I grew up in 1872. But I am getting ahead of the story.

The years between 1844 and 1848 were good years for Eber and his family. Eber had been married to the "one of my choice," Sophia Hull, for 21 years; he had launched two successful newspapers; he had sold his latest newspaper venture, the *Painesville Telegraph* for a handsome sum; his daughter, Minerva, had married for love and, perhaps, the family business, as her spouse Franklin Rogers was Eber's partner in the woolen mill, and had been since the partnership began in 1839. Furthermore, Eber's two sons were enrolled in a well-respected college, Oberlin. They might not have been happy, but they were definitely enrolled.

Orville writes in a letter to his parents, dated 12/11/1847, "Oberlin is a curious place...Not even the overwrought anticipation of fancy...could half portray the dullness, monotony and philosophy of such a place" (Orville's complete diary entries can be found in *Fighting For the Cause, Writing for the Cause*, San Diego, Lulu 2010. For the purposes of this chapter I have regularized the spelling). From a visual perspective Orville comments that "It is literally hemmed in with woods, with scarcely one solitary opening to convey to the...spectator its connection with the rest of the inhabited world. There is not a hill to be seen." He goes on to contrast this one-sided dimension to the beauty of the "Bank (of the river) and other scenery of the Hollow" (Howe's Hollow, also called Drake's or Nigger's Hollow, where the Howe family lived in Concord, near Painesville).

At the know-it-all age of 16, Orville believed that he was well qualified to offer this assessment of the intellectual environment of Oberlin College: "I am certain that no

very noted facts can originate from here.” Perhaps from Orville’s perspective “boring” scenery directly contributes to mental dullness.

Orville notes that, at least in 1847, “There are, perhaps, about 300 students here, of all grades, and colors” (12/11/1847). To be fair, these were the first impressions Orville had, as he was evidently a new student. And we have no other letters from Orville during this period of his life, although some of his later writings and a diary have been retained in the family archives and the Nebraska Historical Society.

Nevertheless, Orville continues his letter to his parents with criticism of Oberlin’s unenthusiastic condemnation of slavery. “As regards Anti-slavery here, I think it must be in rather a latent state. Of the seven prayers a day we have heard there has been but one in which the most distant allusion was made to the wickedness of the southern taskmasters and Christian oppressors” (12/11/1847). He goes on to say that during the “Three sermons last Sunday...those that heard anything relating to abolition, had better ears than I.”

Furthermore, Orville goes on, there is certainly a need for anti-slavery teaching and preaching. “There are a great many students here in attendance at the other schools who are perfect negro haters.” Since “The Oberlin Church”...is ...situated in the center of the city...it is said to be capable of holding about 5,000 persons and being the only one in the city.” Orville hoped that they would hear the message of racial tolerance during one of the Sunday sermons.

But for the most part, Orville says, “Most of the citizens seem to treat them [African Americans] with equal respect, and upon an exact level with the whites.” Even so, Orville is not happy and lists the following indictments:

- “This is, certainly, the most uncongenial community I was ever or ever wish to be in. Everyone seems to be pursuing his own business, not knowing or caring for the rest of the world.”
- “This is a miserable place to learn refinement.”
- “As regards the school, I do not like it as well, as I did the school last winter, neither do I think our teachers so well qualified as Mr. Cowles.”
- “Neither do I like our boarding place as well.”

And last, but certainly not least: “Our expenses are much greater than we anticipated.” Orville goes into great detail about the costs, and the changes that he and Edmund made in trying to reduce expenses, but still concluded that “Our expenses cannot be much short of \$20.00 a quarter.” The primary expenditures were food, room, candles and washing (12/11/1847).

At this point Orville interrupts his letter saying that the “Church bell is ringing, I must defer concluding my letter till after church. You will see by the Laws which we sent you that it requires about half of our time to attend church.”

Evidently attendance at church did little to improve Orville’s outlook: “In the Institution, Mathematics receive but little attention, and much to Edmund’s chagrin surveying is not taught at all, nor scarcely anything that is of account.” Orville closes his letter with this stinging remark: “Indeed, it is a perfect “Priest-Factory.”

On December 29, 1847, Orville began keeping a diary and kept it more or less continually until sometime in the 1850’s (although some of the entries are dated prior to 12/29/47). His father, Eber, advised him to do this to combat homesickness. Many of his later entries are written in shorthand, using the Pittman method of Phonography shorthand, invented in the 1830’s. It was not until 1888 that the more commonly used Gregg shorthand was introduced. These entries have not been transcribed. The ink is faded and Phonography is very subjective. Pittman taught his students to write words phonetically, as they heard them. Fortunately, the majority of his recordings are written in standard English. In some places, Orville writes words phonetically using the alphabet.

The first entry is entitled “Extract,” and was written December 5, 1847. In it Orville notes that on December 1, 1847, they left their “Beloved home and Hollow for the anticipated scenes of the west.” Their departure was in “dark and gloomy” weather, and they had to change carriages. Finally, “After making a three days job of it, we found ourselves in Oberlin...a city famous for its [word not legible] and glorious appearance at this time of year.”

In the next entry, 12/16/1847, Orville recounts all the glories of home: “When we think of home and all the pleasant hours we have spent, it seems as if some ever watchful angel had an eye upon us continually favoring us with all things that would

tend to increase our enjoyment.” Contrasting this with his present surroundings, Orville laments, “All is dark and gloomy. As for friends, they are very few.” But still, Orville looks forward to the day “When all, again will be bland and cheerful. Time with his giant strides is marching on....What station in life we shall next be called to accept, is improbable to comprehend.”

By 12/29/1847, Orville notes that they had been in school for four weeks, and one-third of the term was over. By then, Orville is adjusting to his surroundings and is determined to achieve some rather ambitious educational plans. Plus, it seems that a visit with the family over the holidays may have energized him. “Last night we received a letter from home in which our father advised us to keep a journal, and consequently we did.” Regarding his educational plans, Orville writes, “We intend to make a great effort to enter college next commencement....if I am able to graduate when I am twenty-one I shall consider myself amply rewarded.” Orville goes on to note that to achieve this goal he “Shall have but very little time to spend at home...” Where did his homesickness go? And finally, he acknowledges that not all is work, work, work, “We having had some excellent sleighing this past week.”

There are no journal entries from 12/16 to 12/29/1847, so we will assume that Orville was home in Concord, visiting with family. On January 2, 1848, he reminisces about the last day he was home, before coming to Oberlin, “Since five weeks ago today, we spent our last Sunday in Concord.”

Although the Howe family expected that a college founded by the Presbyterian Church would have its fair share of religious observances, Orville is definitely not pleased. “Today, being Thursday, we have, as usual, been obliged to attend ‘Thursday Lecture.’ This regulation is, I suppose, [fixed?] upon the supposition that there is not religion enough in their sermons Sunday, to last the whole week...This is among what I call the other ‘Tyranical Laws [sic].’”

Orville also dismisses Oberlin’s stand on Abolition, “For which they are so noted...to be in rather a latent state.” Although he acknowledges that when faced with it, [the issue of slavery], they will “Come to, they do not dodge it. But the trouble is, they do not come to it” (1/2/1848).

January 1, 1848 is a time of remembrance for Orville; but he does not approach the New Year as a day of good cheer! “Well may we look back upon the past years, and view the many hours that we have spent uselessly...How many enter this year, with ardent hopes, and fervent anticipation, who are now laid low in the dust, or their hopes blasted...only, perhaps, to behold the same bitter disappointments.” Still, all is not lost, as far as Orville is concerned, and he takes seemingly justifiable pride in the accomplishments of teachers from the Painesville area.

“Yesterday we attended the formation of ‘The Lorraine Teachers Institute,’ and I had abundant reason to be proud of my own County.” Orville refers to a report “That was their [there] recital by teachers from [three] different parts of the County, in regard to common schools. This County, [Oberlin], is, indeed, far behind ours. Even teachers have been known to be refused there, and succeed here in getting a certificate. They have not the men here that we have. Common Schools here are but little thought of, and good teachers are very scarce, I am inclined to think from the account we heard yesterday.”

On January 2nd Orville recalls his feelings from five weeks ago, when they were at home in Concord. “We were in ardent anticipation of different scenes at this great fountain of knowledge, and improvement.” However, he goes on, “Things here are vastly different...the people here seem to place all their hopes and reliance upon attending church, it is very seldom that sufficient regard to slave-holding and man-stealing” is paid.

In a hastily written entry on Tuesday, January 3, 1848, Orville expresses doubts about his educational future and goals. “We have just returned from recitation...I am almost inclined to give up the idea of entering college next fall, as I do not think it is possible.” Still, Orville is not willing to give up, “If it be true that ‘labor conquereth all things,’ then I think we have just cause of encouragement.” Furthermore, Orville notes that their debate team is receiving greater recognition, “Which time will, in his rapid march appreciate to some end, either for good or evil.”

Orville did not write in his journal for a few days, the next entry dated Saturday, January 8, 1848. He tells of a Homeopathy Lecture which he attended the previous

evening, and, at least privately, greeted the professor's comments with skepticism. "Their motto is '*Similia similibus curantes.*'" (Like cures like).

Furthermore, Orville says, "They proclaim that they are capable to contend with all species of disease, without ever stopping to experiment, having already tried the efficacy of their pills upon well persons." Additionally, Orville comments, "He told us [a] story, which was well calculated to impress upon the credulity of many." Orville did not accept the homeopathic philosophy!

On Sunday, January 9, 1848, Orville attended church and heard about a cause that he could believe in: the Mendi mission project. The speaker was a Mr. George Thoripsing, an individual who had been "Imprisoned in Missouri for the benevolent object of assisting the escape of fugitives to go to that country [Sierra Leone] as a missionary."

According to a sermon by Rev. Boris, Kirkland Congregational Church, Kirkland, Washington (www.kccucc.org/sermons), "Africans taken as slaves were transported under inhuman conditions, packed into slave ships with no room to move, held shackled and without fresh air or proper sanitation. In July 1839 after being taken to Cuba on a Portuguese slaver, 53 captured Africans from what is now Sierra Leone boarded the schooner La Amistad...to be taken to the other side of the island. Three days later after having been told by crew members that they were to be killed and eaten, the Africans...rebelled, killing the captain and cook and forcing the crew to sail back toward Africa. But, at night the Cubans sailed northwest. After 63 days, the Coast Guard boarded the ship and forced it ashore in New Haven, CT. There abolitionists created the Mendi Committee to free the Africans....In November 1841 the 35 surviving Mendians, with five missionaries and teachers, sailed home, to start a mission at Kaw Mendi."

According to a "Downtown Oberlin Walking Tour of Civil War Monuments", www.oberlin.edu/external, page 6, a Mr. James Steele was one of Oberlin [College's] 'Lane Rebels' who came to Oberlin after leaving the Lane Seminary due to his anti-slavery convictions....Steele sailed in 1841 along with two others and their wives and founded the Mendi Mission."

After giving these positive comments about the morning sermon, Orville changes gears, and begins complaining about the cold, in barely legible handwriting, saying that “It is almost impossible to get our room warm, on the account for the many cracks in our rooms and the [unstableness] of this house.” The last three lines of this log are written in shorthand. Orville does not seem enamored of Homeopathy in general, judging by Edmund’s letter to him, touting the merits of Homeopathy, 12/24/1847, and he is not happy with the living quarters Dr. Jennings provides.

In addition to being a homeopath, Jennings was a Grahamite, a follower of Rev. Sylvester Graham. Graham believed that eating meat or any animal products, including butter, inflamed the passions, and was to be avoided. Graham advocated strict vegetarianism and frequent bathing. Edmund, who Orville shared the room with, liked the Grahamite diet, though it might have contributed to his susceptibility to malaria. Toward the end of his brief life, Edmund had to eat meat to gain weight and keep his strength.

It’s not known if Orville remained a vegetarian his entire life. Only one of Orville’s descendants became a vegetarian; the decision of this individual to become a vegetarian seemed less based on health merits than on a desire to avoid the slaughter of animals. Still, whether vegetarianism was practiced for either health or ethical reason, the tradition lived on in the Howe family.

One wonders if the distressing living conditions, especially the cold, did not contribute to Edmund’s illness, which became apparent by October 2, 1848. We do not know the exact cause of Edmund’s death. Edmund was diagnosed with a “bilious” condition, which could be either typhoid or malaria. We know that he became ill in autumn, which was when malaria was usually contracted. In the mid-19th century, malaria regularly swept through Ohio, decimating whole towns.

Church and school are Orville’s primary concerns. Writing on Sunday, January 16th, 1848, Orville speaks positively about church, “We had an excellent sermon this afternoon by the president.” School is a different matter, “Latin is very hard, and it is said that Greek is still harder. How I shall succeed in that, I am at a loss to say. Indeed, I do not think that it is worthwhile to attempt it; as almost everyone that has pursued it think that it cost more to acquire it than it is worth.” On a positive note, Orville is

greatly enjoying the weather, “Not a cloud to be seen, and the sun pouring its effulgent rays upon us, with all the beauty of a beautiful summer day.” Orville’s simple appreciation of nature is sweet, and puts him in the Romantic tradition of the early 19th century.

Still basking in the unseasonably pleasant weather, Orville goes on to note in his 1/20/1848 entry that although he and his friends are “Enjoying the charms of this place” this privilege is not universally enjoyed. He cites two causes: illness (in a previous entry he mentioned the “afflictions” of “Henry’s family”), and “bloody wars.” Death was ever-present in the mid-19th century; germs and microbes had yet to be discovered, and basic hygiene wasn’t practiced. There were no food safety laws, and most towns lacked sewage systems.

Orville refers to the inhabitants of “The island of Haty [Haiti]” specifically, where a lecturer told them about the “Awful condition, and depravity of that [blighted]...people, resulting in a great measure, from the numerous bloody wars in which they have been engaged.” Haiti, like the United States, had declared independence from its imperial founder. Haitians were disappointed that the Americans did not offer support, though their revolution was based on the American model.

On February 1, 1848, Orville receives a letter received from “Father, stating that Clarinda Ford is no more.” Clarinda was “A young lady in the bloom of life and short of all her hopes.” In spite of his sadness, Orville finds comfort in the fact that “We hope that she is now enjoying a much more happy sphere, where the blessed are at rest, and in the presence of countless millions of her own kindred spirits.” Immortality must have been a great comfort with death always close at hand.

Orville seems happier on Sunday, January 23, 1848. “We here again enjoyed the great privilege of which the great mass of mankind are deprived.” Although, Orville goes on to say, “There are curious doctrines...which are taught in Oberlin.” He concludes that although there are “Some good things taught here...we must take the good with the bad, perhaps it is as near right here as any where.”

A week goes by with no entry from Orville. On Saturday, 1/29, 1848, he has plenty to say about his new cause of ire: fashion. “I have been...thinking of the great extent to which fashionable dress is carried, among the Christian part of this

community. It is a notable fact, that many of our churches are made places of public exhibition of fashion...and [yet] the day ...is considered too holy for any instruction except that of narrow minded and ...the [standardized] orthodox doctrine.” Did Orville feel self-conscious about his appearance and dress? By this time, his father owned the cloth mill. Edmund, in his letters home, expresses gratitude when he receives new garments. Before clothing was produced in factories, new outfits were no doubt dearer, and more appreciated.

On Sunday 1/30/1848, Orville sighs with relief that he has been at Oberlin for nine weeks, with only two left in the term. Although Orville is not sure that he has “Spent the quarter as we ought” he is proud of the fact that “Still we have the consciousness of having done that which is not morally wrong.” Would his parents agree with that logic?

His parents were apparently not impressed that the boys had, at least, not done anything morally wrong. Orville ends the letter with: “We have about concluded to go home at the close of this term, from the same letter which we received this morning.” It appears from these comments, and those we shall read later on that the decision was being made for Orville, and not by Orville, and would involve leaving the school at Oberlin. He was 16, and we don’t know what his grades were. It seems like Orville was not suited for the humanities-type education that his brother Edmund preferred.

On Thursday, February 3, 1848, Orville expresses regret, “While we look back upon the past three months, we can see the misspent time which we should have otherwise employed.” However, Orville takes consolation in the fact that “This is somewhat the case with us, as well as all others.” Once again, Orville vows to improve and to “Press forward with a renewed determination.”

Then, Orville gives the meaning of life: “Our lives are precious. There is much to be done in this world, both for ourselves and all mankind. That we are placed here to enjoy happiness, I think cannot be doubted. The question then, very naturally arises, what is the method to secure this end.... It seems the solution of this, is the great object of our creation.”

On February 6th, 1848, from Oberlin, Orville writes, “What can be more interesting, or offers more pleasure than the study of man. And what is more necessary

than the fulfilling of the command ‘Know thyself’. What an infinite amount of pleasure is this going to the very bottom of our very nature.” He speaks of the philosopher’s observation of the effects of “A great primary cause,” but then goes on to add that “The causes themselves, have been entirely hidden from their powerful research.” Orville stresses the importance of these studies, at least in his view, “But it is certainly very pleasing to the [advocates] of this [philosophy] ...to see it beginning to be so generously studied.” Orville closes this little discourse with three lines of Pittman shorthand. What could possibly be the need for secrecy about this topic, I know not! Orville continues, “As this term is about closed...tomorrow [we]...start for home...that ‘loved spot.’” At the end of the entry Orville writes in pencil, “Left Oberlin Friday, February 11, 1848 for home.”

The next entry is from Austinburg, Ohio, on February 24, 1848. Orville’s “letter from home” on February 1, 1848, had announced the changes that would soon take place. What were the reasons?

Austinburg is located in Ashtabula County, and had a population of 405 in 1850. It had at least two academies at the time, the Kinsman Academy and the Grand River Institute. Orville attended the Grand River Institute. The Grand River Institute was founded in 1831, when it was called the Ashtabula County Institute of Science and Industry. According to the archives of the Grand River Institute, Orville Duane Howe attended the school in 1848.

Perhaps Edmund’s health had become a factor in the family decision-making process. The last letter that Edmund wrote from Oberlin was written January 27, 1848. There follows a long hiatus, and the next letter was dated October 2, 1848, from Black Rock. We’re not sure why Edmund changed schools and went to Black Rock, (which later became part of Buffalo, New York). He does say, however, that “My health, I think keeps steadily improving...” He also speaks of Aunt Lewis, and another relative, James Parson Hull. So perhaps his move was occasioned by both health and also family reasons, as well as schooling. Edmund also says, “I think on the whole they have a very good school here.”

On the other hand, the family may have felt that Orville was not applying himself to his studies as he ought, and even Orville acknowledged that fact in his

journal entries. Whatever the reason, Orville was moving on to a new chapter. And as we shall note from Orville's subsequent entries, moving to a new area wasn't Orville's first choice, especially as he went alone, and not with his beloved brother Edmund.

Orville writes, "After many successive changes, I at last find myself in Austinburg, among strangers, in a strange land, and almost without money." This remains the chief complaint of students even today, 150 years later! He evidently had a physical injury when he was home, for Orville writes, "But on account of the soreness of my hand I cannot write any more at present" (2/1/1848).

He writes on Sunday, February 27th, "How different are the circumstances which surround me from those of other days! But still, [although] ...separated from all that I hold dear on earth, and deprived of the comfort of real friends I hope the time may come when I may at least have one friend to cheer me."

On February 28, 1848, Orville, not surprisingly, complains about the school in Austinburg. "We used to think the rules at Oberlin were rather severe, but what then are we to think [of] this Institution...the number of students is very small, compared with...Oberlin. They do not think of [teaching]...subjects which they are so awful squeamish of here." But to show his adaptability, Orville resigns himself to this fate: "Among Romans, do as do...or...among hogs, do as hogs do." He complains about "The injurious effects of the boarding house. This living is truly despicable. Here we pay a dollar a week, and all we realize is the consciousness of [injuring ourselves]."

Orville is unhappy. On February 29 he writes, "Although it is a week today since I left home it seems as though it had been an age. My mind has run considerably today upon [the] injurious effect of so many different modes of teaching. If a person once commences his studies at any place, it is greatly for his interest to stay there, rather than to seek another. The things here are much different from what they were at Oberlin." Then Orville goes on to add some comments which hold more questions than answers, at least to us. "It will probably be some time before I can undo what I have already done."

On March 2, 1848, Orville writes, "I have just returned from my second day's work. I have about made up my mind that I shall not work for much besides exercise. For to do much else is not very easily accomplished by me. Yesterday after I returned I

was greatly exhausted.” What kind of physical work was Orville doing? And why? Was he still taking classes?

Orville bemoans the changes that have taken place. “One year ago, and how different! From the circle of friends which hung around my father. I am now widely separated and my lot cast among strangers, to try my fortune in an ungrateful and repulsive world.” Orville is only 16 years of age, and has led a sheltered life up to this point.

On Friday, March 10, 1848, Orville once again longs for home, or, at least, different surroundings. “While separated from home, that dearest spot on earth, how sweet is the remembrance of past scenes. Confined within the walls of a dusty room, where naught but solitude seemingly ever entered, this idea is particularly true....Disease seems to have rested his unwelcome hand upon me, for the disrespect of some of nature's immutable and just laws.” What, exactly, was Orville talking about? It seems possible he was suffering some digestive upset or stomach problems, which he may have attributed to the eating of meat when he was at his parents' home.

Orville complained of some physical distress in his March 12, 1848, entry as well as on March 13, “At the time when physical debility is pressing hard upon me!” But most of his entry is about friendship, or the lack thereof. “It certainly seems to me as if I had not a single friend on earth...Truly, we are in a world of care and trouble. That this is not in accordance with nature *modus operandi* I think there can be no doubt.” What is the use of having a home if we can not enjoy it? He answers this question with one line of Pittman shorthand.

The next entry, March 19, 1848, is written from Concord, at his parents' home. “How different are the circumstances by which I am surrounded, compared with those one week ago.” But, although his physical situation seems to be much improved, “Even though now [I am] placed where I enjoy the full pleasure and benefit, yet perhaps this alone might cause me to regret the causes which thus affected the present situation of affairs.” This might be a reference to Edmund's declining health, and the various treatments he had to endure. Orville goes on to note that “Today is Sunday; and I anticipate such an one as I have not spent for many months.” Perhaps he is spending it with family, but at least it will be different than the previous Sundays at Oberlin and

Austinburg. In conclusion, Orville writes, “Whether things are for the better or worse, I yet know not.”

On Sunday, March 26, 1848, Orville talks about the “Excitement about ... the... Vegetable diet.” He acknowledges that its proponents are “Rather small in numbers,” but still, there are “Some smart discussions.” Orville writes that “It is rather an uphill business, to contend with the people [that] are perfect slaves to their appetite. Why is it that people will sacrifice their lives and their happiness, for the enjoyment of momentary pleasures? They know little of the pleasures of enjoyment of health ...that naturally follows the course of the truly self-denying.” And finally, Orville argues, “How many there are who sacrifice their lives in this way...and then an All Wise and Just Goodness is accused of destroying the work of his own hands.”

Orville sings the joys of the return of spring on April 9, 1848. “This is a morning worth enjoying. All nature seems to be rejoicing the triumphant return of spring, and is clothing itself in her living green, emblematical of her triumph over strife with the chilling blasts of winter.” Our future is destined, says Orville, “And as the king of summer rises in his glorious course, to throw his blessed rays upon a benighted...world all the other parts of this great and wonderful portion of an All Wise Being’s works, proclaim...that we are destined for a much more noble end than this world can afford. This then, being the case, how important it is that our minds should rise higher.”

On Sunday, May 7, 1848, Orville espouses the joys of country, versus city living. “Again, the sun has thrown its refulgent rays over the landscape, and we are again permitted to behold, and enjoy the serenity and tranquility of a May day morning.Who would be pent up in the confined atmosphere of the city, subject to all the immoral tendencies which it throws around its high strung occupants? Here, all is refining and ennobling...Who is insensible to the beauties of the country? Who can say, ‘I have no pleasure in it.’”

When Orville resides in Concord he writes in his logs only on Sundays. Perhaps this means that he is busy attending classes through the week, but no mention is made of his daily activities.

On Sunday, May 28, 1848, Orville wrote, “Today is the day for the funeral services of that beloved and amiable girl whose death is noticed.... And thus, while we pay a last tribute to the memory of the departed, may we not forget that we must soon follow her.” If Orville is occasionally melodramatic, and he is, we must remember that he was an adolescent when he penned his diary, and death was ever-present.

Departing from his usual pattern of writing only on Sundays, Orville’s next entry is on Monday, May 29, 1848. “What a chilling and cheerless world is this! Here all is contention and turmoil.”

In his May 7, 1848 entry, Orville expresses strong political comments, a trait shared by most members of the Howe family, whatever generation. He does not give us details, it probably has to do with slavery. For instance, “There has been considerable excitement within a few days, in consequence of certain unusual precedings [sic] about town. Upon the floor of Congress there has been probably the fiercest broils within a few days which have ever occurred. Those sacred walls have been witness to the most disgraceful scene, which could inflame its participators. All these grow out of the infamous cause, which a portion of our Hons. consider their duty to justify and defend.” Orville closes with his “infamous” four and one-half lines of shorthand.

Orville’s next entry is two pages long, and is written on June 11, 1848. He is concerned by the political climate of the country. He asks “Why are the professed lights of the world bowed down to the bloody shrine of slavery and war?” And, on June 18th, 1848, Orville writes, “This is a time of much excitement among the poor distracted politicians. They are truly in a dilemma. They are determined to neither choose liberty nor slavery. They seemed determined to not unite upon our own noble State nor stand the shackles which their own convention has imposed upon them... Yesterday the disappointed Whigs attempted to make a bolt, and passed some strong sentiments amid the rowdyism of the slavocrats [sic] but they were completely baffled.”

Orville writes again on July 2, 1848, from Concord, and is struck by the significance of the events of July in our country. He anticipates the Buffalo Convention of the Free Soil Party, a new anti-slavery third party. “Thus, we again find ourselves approaching the greatest days in the history of our country.” In addition, there are congressional deliberations of the Mexican War, which was unpopular. “There are no

days to us, fraught with more important results than those of July. In that month, were declared sentiments to the world of the maintenance of which cost blood of many dearly beloved brothers and husbands to flow, all of whose lives were as precious as ours. Then commenced the work of destruction. And thousands were sent unprepared into another world. Many a despairing shriek and agonizing groan was sent to the throne of mercy as the men of blood sent their cold lead through each others' brains and run their accursed bayonets through the bowels of their brothers, the children of the same common father, who said Love one another." Orville's father, Eber, had seen first hand the senseless destruction of the War of 1812, and communicated his anti-war sentiments to his family.

On August 8, 1848, Orville is writing from Kirtland. Eber and Sophia Howe had decided that their son, Orville, would make a good teacher. He was sent to the Western Reserve Teachers' Seminary, according to records, from 1848 to 1850. "So after another change, I find myself, upon the eve of so great a day as I believe the 9th of August is to be; quite comfortably situated in this place, left to my own fate, to look after my own bread and cheese—all but the cheese my prospect is now, I think rather different from what they have been. Whether better, or worse, is the question. I now find myself alone, contrary to all my expectation and desires. This is rather discouraging, truly, but 'Labor *omnea vincet*.'"

Orville continues: "How much anxiety is now hanging over the minds of every friend of this country! The two succeeding days, are probably to be productive of no little good. The slave power will receive a blow from which it will recoil in vain. The friends of freedom are now on the road by thousands... But what will yet be done, is uncertain." And "it is in the power of that convention to strike the death blow to [that]...institution which traffics in the bodies and souls of many, and is cemented with the blood and tears of our oppressed brethren."

On Wednesday morning, August 9th, Orville writes again. "Today will probably witness an assembling little inferior to that of 1776. It is hopeful that it will make the powers of slavery quake and tremble" and "I can still look with great interest to the proceedings of the present Buffalo convention."

Orville writes again from Kirtland, Friday evening, August 11th, 1848. “The die is cast! That great convention in which was absorbed the sentence and essence of almost the entire north, has pursued a cause disgraceful to her profession and destructive to the cause. All hopes of union is now at an end. No genuine liberty loving man can give his assistance to the promotion of such a man to the presidency as Van Buren, who has spent his whole life in bowing down to the altar of slavery.” Van Buren, as Orville notes, promised to veto any bill that would outlaw slavery outright. The hopes of many Abolitionists were dashed with Van Buren’s selection as candidate.

On Sunday, August 21, 1848, Orville writes, “Today, I find myself I hardly know how, but suffering in consequence of some ...infringement of nature’s immutable laws. Politics again seems to becoming the prevailing topic of this day. Neither is this place, as lovely and retired as it may seem, entirely excluded from all agitation. Last night we were entertained until ten o’clock by a speech from a ‘barnburner’ upon the subject of Cass.” The “Barnburners” were a radical faction of the Democrats that opposed both slavery and the financial power and political influence of corporations.

On Monday evening, August 28, 1848 Orville writes, “Every thing in this world seems to go wrong end first.” And then “what is the use of having a home if we are always to be separated from it?”

Orville writes in his diary on Friday evening, September 1st 1848 his seventeenth birthday. “While I thus witness the return of this, to me, important day, many are the ideas which come... to the mind. This is the most important day to me of my existence. With it commenced my existence, and 17 years ago today I for the first time breathed the air of heaven. I have spent 17 years, the happiest of my days, upon this earth. What will I be in 17 years to come? Solemn and uncertain question.”

By September, science studies seemed to have distracted Orville from his homesickness. On Thursday, September 7th, 1848, he writes: “Among all sciences, that of Geology is not among the least interesting.... We see great furrows diversifying the earth, and it is but natural to enquire their cause. The most approved opinion is, that they were dug by immense bodies of ice, many years ago, dragging over the land through the water which there is no doubt covered a great portion of the land. It is a well known fact that red limestone constitutes the main part of the rock formation in

this state. Such as granite, is not found... It is supposed that they drifted from the shore of Canadia [sic], when those tremendous icebergs which has so diversified our land. There is every reason to believe the world has existed for innumerable years.”

Orville has much to say on this topic, and continues his journal entry for two more pages. “There is, also, every reason to believe that the world, below this comparatively thin crust, is one living mass of fire. Observation has been made in a certain mine in England, and it was found that at the distance of 75 feet (I think) below the surface, the thermometers stood at the same temperature at all seasons of the year.” And, “at the distance of 48 miles below the surface, there is a degree of heat of 7000 degrees, which no known substance can endure. It has been calculated, therefore, that the radiant heat from the earth, will effect the temperature 1/17 of a degree.”

Furthermore, the “coal in the earth, is believed to be the result of decayed vegetable matter. It is calculated that the mines of England are yet capable of supplying the demand 2000 years. And also, there is as much in Penn. as in England.”

Orville revels in his scientific knowledge. His diary consists of cocktail party-type chat on geology. “It is thought the earth once revolved upon a different axis, so that the parts now so far removed from the torrid zone, were once affected with the same powerful degree. There have been many animal remains found in the earth. The skeleton of a fish was discovered which was 40 or 50 feet long. Also that of an animal three times as large as an Elephant. A skeleton of an elephant was once found in the ice at Kamshatka—which had 17 lbs. of hair.”

Orville writes again on January 30, 1849. By this time, he had lost his brother Edmund, who had succumbed to illness on January 11, 1849. Orville may be referring to his brother’s death in the first phrase of the following sentence. “While contemplating, and suffering under the miseries of this world of trouble, what can have a more soothing and pacifying tendency than the investigation of the natural sciences.”

Orville writes on Saturday, February 10. “The 1st of February has again arrived. One year ago how different were the circumstances which surrounded us! Then preparing to return from that spot most dear...to us, from a winter spent among strangers, and oppressed by all the cares of the students, together with many anxieties concerning the afflictions of our then distant and ever dear friends. That day, we were

preparing for leaving that field of labor and, as we enjoy a short season among our 'native hills' ere we returned again to the old walls of T.H. [The Hollow]. But now, what a sad review of all our expectations and hopes."

On Sunday, February 11, Orville writes, "This day, one year ago can never be forgotten. What tongue can tell all the feelings of pleasure which coursed through us as we drove from that old mansion in Oberlin, to pay the long anticipated visit to our parental home! The weather was severe, and the journey seemed long and tedious. But the thought of again meeting around the familiar fireside those who were so constantly the subject of our thoughts and conversation, inspired us with renewed vigor." He ends this section with a brief notation in shorthand.

From Painesville, on Friday, March 2, 1849, he wrote "This year seems fraught with many peculiarities... But then how different was my situation." Sadness weighs heavy on Orville even through the springtime. In May, 1849, Orville writes: "May has again returned, and with it all the bewitching loveliness which so characterizes this month. But when we look among us for those whom we were accustomed to associate, and whose presence upon the bright sunny day of May, used to render the happy hours still more cheerful. We look in vain. We look to the home of the dead, the receptacle of all living, and that we mark the recently disturbed earth, the newly erected mound, and....above we see upon the carved marble, the names of those who we only loved and reminding us of the ultimate change which is to come over all things, and the uncertainty of the present, the unmistakable approach of death!"

Back at the Teachers' Seminary in Kirtland, Orville writes on May 10, 1849, "as we pass through this world we can but notice the many and glaring imperfections which pervade all every department of society. Many seem to suppose that they are placed here for no other purpose than to enjoy the fleeting moments as they pass. But how vain and foolish a thought!"

The tone of Orville's diary took a sad turn after his brother, Edmund's, death. He complains less, but he demonstrates depression. Still, Orville's parents chose well for him by sending him to teaching school: Orville was a lifelong educator and taught school throughout his entire career. Orville graduated from university some time in the

early 1850's, from Hobart College, where he studied agriculture, another subject which would be of lifelong interest to him.

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Chapter 5 **Orville and Mary Ann**

Perhaps the ghosts that troubled me at the farm house included Orville Duane Howe. If Orville was one of the phantoms, then his spirit was benevolent. But he wanted me to remember, and he, too, wanted to reflect on the happy times he had in the century old house and idyllic farm grounds. As we saw in his diary entries, Orville appreciated the beauty of nature. He was smart and sensitive, angered by injustice.

Orville bought our farm from Alexander Allen who received the 160 acre farm as a homesteader in 1862. The land was on the prairie, with a branch of the Nemaha River running through it. The original farmhouse was a dugout with sod walls, located near this branch, or “crick” as Nebraskans like to call their small little creeks. When I was a child this original sod house was used for storage; we called it the cellar. Wood for construction was in short supply on the prairie, and had to be shipped up the Missouri River before the railroad came through.

In 1871 the house I grew up in was begun; by 1872 the large two story house was mostly completed. Originally the upstairs was unfinished, and was completely open. The residents of Bunker Hill, the area near Table Rock, Nebraska, who were mostly relatives of Orville’s second wife, Mary Pepoon, used the large upstairs loft as a meeting room. The Grange met there, as did the Independent Order of the Good Templars, a temperance lodge.

By the time I was born the upstairs had been finished. It consisted of four bedrooms, and a large hall with bookcases and books placed in the perimeter surrounding the stairs. Downstairs consisted of a “front” room, dining room, kitchen/eating area, two bedrooms and a pantry. In Orville’s day a separate building, which later became the milk house, had a wooden stove and cooking area that was located in close proximity to the kitchen/eating area.

But once again, I am getting ahead---back to Orville’s story, in his own words. What brought Orville from Ohio to Nebraska? Why and when did he leave the comfortable surroundings and support provided by Eber and Sophia?

As is typical of all of Eber Howe's descendants, Orville was fascinated with the written word; he liked to read and he liked to write. He was also well-educated. Yet in each school he attended Orville chafed under the "tyrannical laws" that were imposed upon him and his fellow students. On the one hand, Orville longed for the comforts of home. On the other, and this feeling was dominant, Orville sought to be completely in charge of his own destiny.

Orville's diary continues in a second volume that was written from 1849, starting in September, to September 2, 1852. Unfortunately for his readers 155 years later, approximately 40 entries were written in the infamous and much-faded Pittman shorthand that I've not been able to translate and/or interpret. The *Johnson and Pawnee Counties, Nebraska, Portrait and Biographical Album*, 1889, tells us that "After leaving the district schools he studied at both Oberlin and Hobart Colleges, completing his education in the latter" (p. 499). Orville finished his college education at Hobart College in Geneva, New York.

What we do know about Orville regarding schooling, love and marriage is recorded in two historical volumes we have previously seen, *Johnson and Pawnee Counties, Nebraska, Portrait and Biographical Album* and the *Western Reserve*, both of which we've cited before. These biographies should be fairly accurate, as Orville was living at the time of their publication and no doubt furnished much of the information both volumes contained. In addition, since he lived to the mature age of 86, my father and his brothers had recollections of their grandfather. My own father, Orville David, was named in his honor. Some of these anecdotes were written in letters the brothers sent to each other.

According to the Nebraska history, "Upon leaving his native State [Ohio] he followed the profession of a teacher in Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin...He taught a brief season at Mentor ...[and] Jefferson, in Ashtabula County, Ohio, in Warren Ill., Sherman, Tex., and Shellsburg, Wis. In the latter he conducted a private school three years. Mr. Howe was previously married in Battle Creek to Mary A. Fenton, who was a relative of Lieut. Gov. Fenton. William Matthew Fenton served in 1848 and was reelected in 1850 and 1851 (www.famousamericans.net). She lived six years after their marriage and died without children" (p. 499).

A letter from Dad's brother Tom states that Orville "was in Texas 1858-1860, where he had gone in the hope that a warmer climate would benefit his wife, although it did not. He returned in 1860, since he saw that trouble was ahead in Texas; he rode a horse north through Indian Territory (Oklahoma) to the Missouri, from where he returned to Ohio by boat. He later taught in Illinois and Wisconsin."

We have a diary and scrapbook that was dedicated to Mrs. Mary A. Howe. As the dedication was written entirely in the Pittman shorthand, it seems likely that the book was presented by Orville to his bride, Mary Ann. We're not sure when Orville presented it to Mary; was it given shortly after their marriage, or did Orville give it to Mary when she was facing declining health?

When I was cleaning out the drawers of ancient dresser, I came across a genealogy of the Fenton family. They are an old New England family, like the Howes and Pepoons. I don't know who composed the document, or why we have it. Was it part of my family's desperate quest to see if we have a link to the Mayflower? Impossible to say.

The album includes newspaper clippings, primarily obituaries, from the 1850's and poems. It also contains poems, some of which have the authors identified, and others apparently composed by Mary Ann (several sheets of paper show poems in composition). Titles of the beautifully scripted writing reflect a preoccupation with death, either because untimely death was so often a fact of life in those days or because of Mary Ann's lengthy illness, possibly tuberculosis: "Lines to a departed Wife," "The Emigrant's Burial," "Mary's Grave," "The Sunset Hour," "My Husband's Tomb," "Ode to an Infant," "The Dying Wife," "Forget Me Not," "My Mother's Death," and on and on in this vein.

Immediately after the dedication, Mary Ann records this poem, called simply "Stanzas" by Puella:

That when life's weary race is run
"I have one wish, and only one;
Some Angel may be standing by
To bear my spirit to the sky...
There I may make a home for thee

When thou at last shall follow me.”

There were also poems and/or writings that reflect the realities often faced in adjusting to married life. Judging from the fact that Orville’s second wife also complained about the less-than-perfect Orville, and not nearly as tactfully as Mary Ann did, it would seem that living with Orville did present some challenges. Of course, Orville’s father was not exactly what you call easy-going, so we can’t say that Eber was a role model for peace and harmony in any kind of relationship. And, of course, the survivor, especially in those frontier days, no doubt came with a few rough edges. Whatever the situation, it seems likely that Mary Ann was feeling the pain, or taking the brunt, of some less than ideal moments in her married life.

“Angry words! Oh, let them never
From thy tongue forbidden slip;
May the heart’s best impulse ever
Check them ere they soil the lips.”

Mary doesn’t identify the author of the poem, nor are we sure if she intended them more for herself or for her husband. Consider the next poem:

“Nay speak no ill; a kindly word
Can never leave a sting behind;....
For life is but a passing day,
No lips may tell how brief its span;
Then, oh! The little time we stay
Let’s speak of all the best we can”.

Mary Ann doesn’t give the name of the poet who penned those lines.

“Forgive and forget! Why the world would be lonely
The garden a wilderness left to deform
If the flowers but remembered the chilling winds only
And the fields gave no verdure for fear of the storm!...
And the best of us all require something concealing
Some heart that with smiles can forget and forgive!...
Oh, how could our spirits e’er hope for the skies
If Heaven refused to ‘Forgive and Forget’”.

And then “Mutual Forbearance” by Cowper:

“The kindest and the happiest pair
Will find occasion to forbear,
And something every day they live,
To pity and perhaps forgive.”

In a section Mary Ann entitles “My Clip Basket,” she records a combination of Ann Landers and Heloise-type advice. Pithy little statements regarding behaviors that should be espoused in married life. A few of these are included.

“Rules
When you consent, consent cordially
When you refuse, refuse finally
When you punish, punish good-naturedly
Commend often: never scold.”

Another selection Mary Ann includes, she prefaces with the following comment: “Was there ever a more beautiful poem of a Mother’s unselfish devotion? The original is in French, and the translation literal!

Oh! God! She faintly said upon her dying bed;
If I have followed the Divine behest,
As my entire reward grant this request;
Make me the Guardian Angel of my babes when dead.”

And the following aphorisms: “Always prepare your table neatly, whether you have company or not.” “Amen to this,” Mary Ann adds. “Thou canst not spend thy time better than in learning how to spend it well.” “Endeavor to have a comely grace in holding thy peace, and a lively force in speaking.” “The prettiest lining for a bonnet is a smiling face.” “If you would be loved as a companion, avoid unnecessary criticism upon those with whom you live.”

Mary Ann also includes a section in her book called “Miscellaneous Penographs.” Two of these are: “It has been said that the three sweetest words in the English language are happenings, home and heaven. About these cling the most touching associations, and with them are connected the sublimest aspirations.” “There

is nothing so true that the damps of error have not warped it; nothing so false that a sparkle of truth is not in it.”

Mary Ann liked to look on the bright side of life; treasuring friends, homely values, and faith in oneself and in God. She expresses her philosophy of life in some of the following selections.

“The True Riches

Health and the simplest fare. If thou hast these
Accompanied with one single steadfast friend
A conscience which thou dost not fear to bare
To the great Teacher’s eye...
Thou art an emperor
Bearing thy crown ever with thee; go thy way,
And thank thy God, who hast bestowed on thee
The gold which monarchy covet, but in vain.”

Mary Ann gives no author’s name.

In “Life is Real,” by H.W. Longfellow, Mary Ann finds the perfect mantra for her own sense of optimism, and the American “can do” philosophy. No doubt she thought much of Longfellow’s words as she entered into married life, and ultimately faced the challenges of declining health.

“Tell me not in mournful numbers
Life is but an empty dream;
For the soul is dead that slumbers,
And things are not what they seem
Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal,
Dust thou art, to dust returneth,
Was not written of the soul.”

On a lighter note, Mary Ann writes this commentary about a poem she has included called “A Country Cottage.” “The following is a pretty peep of a country cottage. The praiseworthy certainty of the last line making a homely but not inapt termination.”

“The stream ripples bright by my cottage;
The sunshine is bright in the stream...
My milk pail stands bright in the corner;
My tins are all bright on the shelf;
And the white supper cloth on the table
Is clean---for I washed it myself!”

Mary Ann closes the selection saying, “’Tis fair to suppose the one that composed the above was without doubt a good house keeper.”

In “Homes,” no author given, Mary Ann affirms her love of hearth and home. Perhaps she expresses longing for home, and her desire to keep close to her “roots,” as well as a reminder that the newlyweds’ home should be of utmost importance. “There is one bright enchanting spot, where love and beauty flow,
Which oft the glorious grace of God, hath made a heaven below...
O keep that gem, plighted ones, nor from that spot depart—
That spot is ‘Home’---delightful ‘Home’---that gem the Faithful Heart”.

Faith in God was important to Mary Ann, as can be seen in the following excerpts:

“How sweetly falls
From lips divine the blessed word forgive!
Forgiveness! ‘Tis the attribute of God,
The sound that opens Heavens, [renews?] again
On earth, lost Eden’s faded bloom, and flings
Hope’s halogen halo on the waste of life”.

And:

“With silent awe I hail the sacred morn,
Which slowly wakes while all the fields are still.
A soothing calm on every breeze is borne...
The hovering [rack] of clouds forgets to move;
So smiled the day when the first morn arose”.

In her album, Mary Ann remembers those who have passed on, or from whom she is separated by distance.

“To My Brother Henry
I think of thee while far away
And often wish that thou wert near;
No grief then on my heart should prey...”

Several poems are written about a mother’s death. One is taken from a Hannibal, Missouri newspaper; a second one is entitled “My Mother’s Grave!” and written in Sherman, Grayson County, Texas, May 17, 1859. Following the poem title is the inscription:

“The following is the effusion of a mere youth
Yet the tender lines display the true poetic feeling.”

From the fact that one of her last recorded poems was written in Jefferson, Ohio, March 19th, 1861, two months before she died, it would appear that the references to a mother’s death applied to her own mother.

One of the most poignant poems she recorded was “Written by my Friend, H. Brayton Nichols, from the state of N.Y., Chautauqua Co; Was one of the unfortunate ones, that perished on the Steamer Pennsylvania, that was burned on the Miss, in June 1858 ---- Aged 29 years.” Mary Ann encloses an undated clipping about the burning of the Steamer Col. Crossman, near New Madrid, Missouri. Of the 150 persons on board from 20 to 50 lives were lost. Information on this particular tragedy can be found in the archives of the New York *Times*. Fires on steamers were not uncommon occurrences. Between 1831 and 1934 there were five major steamship disasters caused by fire, with nearly 5,000 people killed. A search on Google provides records of additional steam ship fires causing major loss of life during this same period.

When Mary Ann and Orville had been married for only two years, she penned these lines, “Written in the schoolroom,” Sherman Texas, 1858.

“While seated in my large arm chair
In school room number one
With pleasure view the faces fair
While swift the moments run
O.D. is seated in his chair of state
With fine and commanding looks

The scholars well know what is their fate
If they do not mind their books....
But O.D. does not always keep
His eyes on students wild
But oft he slyly takes a peek
To see his wife so mild”.

One poem was “Written after witnessing the death scene of a friend, L.R.”, from Sherman Grayson County Texas, September 18th 1858. Mary Ann was probably the author.

“Dear as thou wert, and justly dear,
We would not weep for thee...
O, who that saw thy parting hour
Could wish thee back again...
Thy passing spirit gently fled,
Sustained by grace divine;
O may such grace on us be shed,
And make our end like thine”.

Sadly, the cheerful, and much-in-love Mary Ann became ill, and she obviously realized that this was an illness from which she would not recover. Poems she included were “The Dying Wife,” and “Lines to a Departed Wife.” Mary Ann and Orville left their home in Sherman, Texas, and moved to Ohio, where Orville’s family lived, and Mary Ann’s sister was located. In spite of her illness, Mary Ann counts her blessings.

“Home’s not merely four square walls,
Though with pictures hung and gilded;
Home is where Affection calls---
Filled with shrines the Heart has builded...
Home is where there’s one to love---
Home is where there’s one to love us....”

“I Miss thee so” is undated, but interspersed between two poems, “To My Husband,” and “Where is Home.” The handwriting seems slightly different than Mary Ann’s, but perhaps only because a different pen and ink were used. Although the

content would seem like it would be written by Orville, after Mary Ann's death, it could also be written by Mary Ann, mourning her own death.

“I miss thee so in our cottage home,
When the daylight cares are o'er
As I set and watch the stars come out
Where we've often sat before;
And I listen in vain for thy welcome step.
Alas! It will come no more”.

Mary Ann seems to be reconciled to death, and finds consolation in thinking of her Mother, who preceded her.

“I know I shall see her,
And know her there,
By the gentle love-smile
She used to wear.
I'm coming Mother, dear,
Coming above;
Where life is all gladness,
And joy and love.”

On March 22nd, 1861, Mary Ann chose this selection to include in her book.

“To My Husband:
I would be with thee
To share thy joy and gladness
To listen to thy voice of glee.
To chase away thy bosom's sadness,
By heart-felt sympathy,
To stay thee in thy sorrow,
To bid thee trust in God and me,
Ever to hope a brighter morrow,
With light thy destiny....

I would be with thee

As the days decline...

To clasp thy hand in mine....”

Mary Ann writes about events of March 18th and 19th, 1861.

“This day Sister brought my new lamp, which I find far superior to any other light. Coal Oil seems quite the rage. This evening the two Miss Hoskin’s, Miss Holdridge, Miss Chafee, and Mrs. Jones called.

Saturday, March 18th, I went over to our friend, Mr. Jones. They carried me over in a rocking chair, and it did not seem to tire me any; how thankful I was to once again get out and breathe the fresh air, after being confined to the house and my bed for seven long months. That I may continue to improve is my most earnest wish.”

On May 10, 1861, Jefferson Ohio, we have the following entry, written by Orville Duane Howe, (ODH).

“My Mary died tonight, at half past ten o’clock and I again am left alone in this cold friendless world without one sympathizing friend to share my troubles or my joys. We were married Nov. 10, 1855 at Bedford, Michigan. I have ever found her a true and earnest friend, who was ever ready and anxious to share my cares and to alleviate my troubles. She has gone to the land of spirits, and her gentle loving soul will hold communion sweet with the loved ones gone before who were waiting her approach with outstretched arms on the blissful shores of Eternity’s vast ocean. There ‘ere long I shall rejoin her and again we shall live in the sunshine of each other’s love, swallowed by time’s weary cares and the troubles of mortals.”

There is no obituary included in the book, but only this brief newspaper clipping: “Died, In Jefferson, Ohio, May 20, 1861, Mary Ann Howe, wife of O. D. Howe, and daughter of R.F. Fenton, of Jamestown, N.Y., aged 26.”

The book contains the words of the sorrowful song “Sung at Mary Ann’s funeral by the Minister.” Excerpts include the following:

“I know that I am dying, love, the dew is on my brow,
The hectic flush is on my cheek, so thin and sunken now.
There is a trembling at my heart, that whispers of decay
And the light within mine eye, beloved, is fading fast away...”

Orville may have taken comfort from his belief in spiritualism, a philosophy he learned from his father, Eber. In 1916, at the age of 85, Orville wrote: “As the years thicken about me, my soul sits lighter and lighter on its earthly throne.... In a very short period of time, I shall say ‘goodbye, body--- go and make the grass green, and the spring flowers bloom’--- and then I shall go on, and upward to form the innumerable hosts that people the spaces of infinity.”

Chapter 6 **The Howes and the Pepoons**

The period between 1861-1865 threatened the unity of our country, as North and South were bitterly divided over the slavery issue. According to my uncle, Thomas Howe, his grandfather Orville enlisted in the military for “90 days but the time was out before he (and many others) were called” (unpublished letter). Although Orville had been living in Texas, his foray into the war efforts was on the Union side, having been raised in a family that strongly supported abolition.

Orville had two reasons for leaving Texas: his wife, Mary Ann, was dying, and he was living in a Confederate state. According to Thomas Howe’s letter, Orville Duane decided not to reenlist but, “to go back to teaching and to marry again.” Orville married a second time in December of 1861; more about that later. The North drafted all able-bodied men in 1863; the only way out was to pay around \$300.00. Orville had been married for two years by this year. Since Mary Ann died in May, 1861, and he remarried in December of the same year, Orville didn’t serve long, if at all.

By the time the Civil War started, Orville was 30 years old, not the prime time for enlisting, especially as a boot soldier. Still, others who fought and were drafted were older; most soldiers were between 18 and 39, the average age being 25 (see www.historynet.com/who-was-the-common-soldier-of-americas-civil-war.htm). Also, the Howes did have a history of pacifism: fighting in the War of 1812 convinced Eber of the folly of war. Orville vehemently opposed the Mexican War of 1848.

Explaining Orville’s decision not to fight, my uncle explains: “Grandfather...was in Shullsburg, Michigan, in 1863. At that time when the apportioned number of soldiers was given out some men whose terms of enlistment was over said they would reenlist if they were given a bounty.... Anyway, most of the men of age to be subject [to the reenlistment] ...contributed \$300 each to the bounty fund; they felt they were really doing their country a service, since the veterans would be much better soldiers than new recruits.”

Meanwhile, Orville had re-connected with his Ohio roots, especially those with whom he had been friends when living in Painesville. One family, especially, stands out: the Pepoons, and one Pepoon in particular, Mary Elizabeth. Mary Elizabeth Pepoon would become Orville's second wife.

Who were the Pepoons, and how were they connected to the Howe family in Painesville? Both families were staunch abolitionists. In his *Autobiography*, Eber discusses Theodore Weld, a noted abolitionist, who was giving a series of lectures in Painesville, but soon faced fierce opposition to his message. Mr. Weld was staying in the home of Silas Pepoon. The Pepoon family was so close to Weld, one of their sons was named Theodore Weld Pepoon, nicknamed T.W. The Howes and Pepoons were committed abolitionists, and used their homes as a "station" in the Underground Railroad.

Mary Elizabeth Pepoon, Orville's second wife, gives her own account of the meeting where Weld spoke. Writing for the Painesville *Telegraph*, in December 1890, she says:

"My parents, the late Deacon Silas Pepoon and wife, had taken me with them to attend Mr. Weld's meeting... and though only four years old, every incident of the affair remains fixed in my mind.... Before Mr. Weld had fairly commenced, the noisy crowd came and drove us out, and we went over to the little school house.... The mob [of pro-slavery supporters] soon broke a pane of glass in the uncovered window, and... various missiles began to fly in through the opening. This drove the audience to the back part of the room.... I slipped away and went down the aisle toward the window. At that moment an egg came flying through, and hit me fairly on my bare arm, the shell breaking, and most of the contents remaining where it struck. I ran back to my mother.... It was soon decided to give up the attempt to hold a meeting.... The mob crowded around still uttering threats and curses, and suddenly close by my side, but towering far above me, was the big boy who had thrown the egg. In a moment I stooped down, picked up as large a stone as my little hands could grasp, and holding it as high as possible, let it fall upon one of his bare feet. He jumped and screamed... but evidently never thought of suspecting the little blue eyed girl, with muslin dress... so innocently holding her mother's hand.... I sometimes wonder if I am not the only

person now living who was actually egged in the anti-slavery cause in those early times..." (*Telegraph* 12-29-1890). From age four on, Mary Elizabeth Pepoon Howe was not a woman to be trifled with.

Painesville, Ohio, was ideally situated for helping fugitive slaves. It was near the shore of Lake Erie, just miles from the port town of Fairport. Abolitionists would hide runaways till a sympathetic steamship captain could be found, and then the escaped slaves could be taken to safety in Canada. Mary Pepoon Howe's brother, Joseph Pepoon, described how the process worked:

"Fairport was one of the lake stations on the Underground Railway. Our house was a station on that road. We used to have Negroes come to our house and stay until a boat would come to Fairport that would take them across to Canada. Only certain boats would take them, so sometimes they would be there for some time waiting for the right boat.

We used to burn charcoal.... The charcoal was very light, and we used to have very high wagon boxes. We would put the Negroes in those wagons which were so high that if we met anyone they couldn't see them, and it was always at night, anyway.... I remember once when we feared the Negro-catchers might come, Mother gave them [the escaped slaves] a boiler full of hot water and a dipper and said if anyone tried to break in to scald them with it. Fortunately, no one came" ("Personal Recollections of Joseph Benedict Pepoon," 1914, reprinted in Saylor, p. 175).

According to a history of the Pepoon family, "*The Family of Pepoon*," by Silas Pepoon, 1867, with *Genealogy* from records compiled by Mrs. Jessie Campbell West and Mrs. Mary E. Pepoon Howe, and *Notes* by Dr. Herman S. Pepoon and Elsie Pepoon in 1914, the Pepoon family was "One whose history for forty-six years was identified with that of Painesville. Silas Pepoon, with his parents---Captain Joseph Pepoon and Mrs. Eunice Pepoon, his three brothers and one sister---removed to this place [Painesville] from Hebron, Conn., in 1804" (pg. 5). Captain Joseph Pepoon was a soldier in the Revolutionary War.

The origins of the Pepoon family were in France. The name is from the French "Pepin." It was originally a given name, but adopted as a family name by the descendants of Pepin, who was king of Aquitania, grandson of Charlemagne. Members

of the family came to this country in the 17th century to escape religious persecution. They were Huguenots, French Protestants, forced to flee when the Edict of Nantes was revoked. They went first to Corsica, and then briefly to Holland, where the spelling was changed from Pepin to Pepoon. “The following is the first reference to our branch of the family: ‘Jacques Pepin’ sent to Massachusetts by his father, who is an elder in the Protestant church in Rochelle, France, petitions for and obtains leave to settle here” (Mass. Archives, 5 A.7. See also 41 N.E. Gen’l Reg., pg. 81). “Joseph [Pepoon, our ancestor] was the youngest son of the Jacques Pepin mentioned above” (from the records of Colchester, Conn.).

From the book, *History of the Pepoon Family*, we learn “two brothers and a sister came to America via Holland from Corsica,...settling, (traditionally), in Acadia, when by 1700 they were to be found in Massachusetts....The first definitely known possessor of the name was Silas Pepoon, who was born about 1710, and who married an English woman by the name of Nancy Day. (Note---Ann Foot Day, at Hebron, Conn., October 1, 1747). ...Captain Joseph Pepoon... [offspring of Silas and Ann]...was elected Captain of a company of Hebron Minute-men during the Revolutionary times....While living in Connecticut, Joseph, by industry and economy, supported his family and added yearly to his property so that every few years he would buy more land, having after his marriage an excellent helpmate to assist, so that by 1800 he had a large farm. In the early spring of 1802 he sold part of the farm for cash and went to Painesville, then Trumbull Co., of Ohio....where he bought 500 acres of land of a Judge Walworth for \$2000.00 cash down (May 15, 1902, p. 1).

In the spring of 1850, Mr. Silas Pepoon moved his family to Warren, Jo Daviess Co., Illinois. There he and his sons fought anew the anti-slavery battle in that region, given over at that time to Pro-slavery Democracy, but which is now, like the Western Reserve, a stronghold of Liberty. His five sons were all in the Union Army, and the youngest- Oren-a noble boy-gave his life to his country” (*History of the Pepoon Family* p. 6). According to family lore, the Pepoon family was forced to leave Ohio for their own safety. In 1850, Congress had passed a harsh “Fugitive Slave Act,” which stiffened penalties for those who helped runaways escape. The Pepoons were less economically privileged than the Howes. The law often spares the rich the punishment

it doles out on the middle class or poor. Still, the Pepoons were an illustrious family, with all five sons fighting on the Union side in the Civil War. The youngest, Oren, gave his life in that conflict.

And with that move, the stage is set for a new chapter in Orville Duane Howe's life. According to my uncle, "Apparently he [Orville] had kept in some general contact with the Pepoons, and knew where my grandmother, Mary Elizabeth Pepoon, was. So he [Orville Duane] went to Illinois where she was teaching; I believe it was at Mt. Carroll, south of Warren.... Anyway, she was teaching; somebody came and told her that a man wanted to see her who said his name was Orville Howe. She was so excited she could hardly function, but she went to see him, finding that it was the one she thought it was. That apparently was the first time he knew that she had never received his present I mentioned before."

In a previous letter, which is not available, Thomas related the story that Orville had made tentative overtures to Mary Elizabeth Pepoon, in the form of a gift. According to the family, Orville sent Mary a watch, which she never acknowledged. Feeling that he was rebuffed in his relationship, having not received a response, Orville sought romance elsewhere, and subsequently married Mary Ann Fenton. Evidently Orville had summoned more courage by this time, plus, he noted, Mary Elizabeth Pepoon had remained unmarried. Perhaps there was still hope for him! When they met anew, he asked Mary about the watch, and she told him she never received it.

"Grandfather [Orville Duane] got a job teaching, I think in Warren because they were living there when Father was born September 24, 1862. I inferred that my grandmother kept on teaching until Christmas vacation; they were married then anyway" (Thomas's letter). By the time they were married, (December 20, 1861), both Orville, (born September 1, 1831), and Mary Elizabeth, (born June 26, 1831), were 30 years of age.

Uncle Tom wrote, "After the war, I do not remember whether it was in 1865 or 1866 but I think the former, he decided to stop teaching for a while and went to Painesville, raising small fruits. He stayed there until 1869. Grandmother was glad to be there and hoped they would stay there because she was near Cousin Julia...His mother, the wife of Eber D. Howe, died during this time in 1866."

During the period between 1855 and the time she married Orville, Mary Elizabeth Pepon was keeping a diary of her own. We also have some letters that were sent to Mary from friends and relatives. Mary Elizabeth Pepon Howe was a poet, journalist, and staunch campaigner for women's right.

Studying the letters written to someone can give us insight into that person's character. One of the earliest letters written to Mary, still in the family's possession, was written September 3, 1847, sent from a school chum, Harriett Vernon. The letter was written on one large piece of paper (21 by 16 inches), addressed to "My own sweet Mary." Her teenage friend identifies Mary as "the companion of her school hours the ever warm and trusting friend of her heart and the solace of her many weary moments." Harriet bemoans the fact she has broken her promise: "Well do I know that I have broken it...that 8 weeks instead of three (the time have allotted for my writing to you) have slipped away." And, of course, Harriett asks "to be freely forgiven for my long delay." She quotes poetry from an unnamed source regarding their friendship:

"I mind me of the happy hours
We passed in friendship's holy tie...
Yet like the flowers, those happy days
Leave incense on my memory yet."

Health issues were never far from anyone's mind during those times. "We hear it is quite sickly in Painesville...Mr. William's boy came for [Dr.] Charles Livingston last Saturday evening in great haste...announcing to us the very critical state in which he left his Father." Later on Harriett said that they had heard "from a man who came through Painesville that... [Mr. Williams] is dead." She then adds that "We expect to hear from Mrs. Williams before long."

Harriett reminisces about her sister, "A few days more and a year will have elapsed since the lovely sister of mine was snatched away by the cold hand of death and consigned to the silent tomb." Although Harriett worries about her own future, and mortality no doubt, she adds that she would not gaze into "the hidden future" even if it were "open to me this moment I could not...gaze into its unsearchable mysteries."

Harriett goes on to say that she and her sister Elisabeth, along with her father and mother will be taking a three-week trip to visit friends in Pennsylvania. After she

returns, she will “commence attending school here at home. Mr. Roberts our minister is to be our teacher. I suppose my studies will be of course Latin and Greek.” Harriett wonders about Mary’s school plans. She asks if Mary is “going to school this winter. What will you study, Is Mr. Cowles going to teach and Mr. Putnam too.”

Finally, Harriett concludes that “And now dear Mary ah! I feel jealous when I think of some most fortunate swain addressing you by that title... not jealous of the gentleman...but of you. I don’t know why I should be either...I suppose it’s because I’m afraid he’ll claim all your affections.” Single girls then, as now, know how friendships can be sacrificed after marriage. In her own diary, on April 4, 1855, Mary notes with gratitude that a friend’s “marriage has not diminished her affection for her friends. I believe that of course ‘that nearer and dearer one’ possesses the largest share of her heart, but think little nooks are left, yet, for her old schoolmates to inhabit” (Saylor p. 131).

A cousin, Mary Nash, writes Mary Pepon from “New Canaan, March 24, 1848.” Again, health is the primary news: “Mother and I am well Julia has been sick this winter she is not able to work much now it is sickly here for this time of year there has been a number of deaths in a short time....” She specifically lists individuals that they both know, and comments on their state of health, or, in some cases, their death. Mary Nash acknowledges the fact that Mary Pepon’s family is moving to Wisconsin, and asks her friend to write so that they can continue their friendship.

Mary Pepon Howe had a lifelong love of poetry. In 1902, the year before her death, Mary’s family published *Early Poems*, (Table Rock, Nebraska: E.D. Howe). This collection of poetry was written by Mary during the years 1841-1846, when she was 10 to 15 years old. The book was published using one of Eber’s presses the family brought from Ohio. While the poetry is good, it is not excellent. Still, when you consider how young she was when she penned these verses, they are remarkable.

Just as noteworthy are the topics Mary chose to write about. She wrote two poems that portrayed Native Americans in a sympathetic light: “The Indian Tribes” and “Tamaroo” are paeans expressing regret for what was done to indigenous peoples. “The Indian Tribes” begins: “We have driven them forth from their native home” and ends “O treacherous and dark has the white man been/ To that noble race and brave...”

(Howe. p. 14). "Tamaroo" is about an Indian woman who kills herself rather than be attacked by white soldiers.

Mary also portrays African Americans in a favorable way. Again, white Europeans are depicted as the villains. The escaped slave "Through the sheltering leaves the North Star peered" makes his way to freedom using "freedom's pilot star" (Howe p. 43). The poet wants to "cheer him on to the land of freedom," by which she no doubt means Canada, and not just the northern U.S. She insists, contrary to some abolitionists, that though the man's "brow was dark," "God's image shone there." Mary makes it clear in this same poem that the whites are the "tyrant vile" (p.43).

My father used to tell how Orville, Mary's husband, was once questioned whether or not he believed blacks "had souls." It is hard to imagine that this was once a topic of debate! Orville sat silent for a few moments, and then, in a non-confrontational way, asked, "Well, if a man is half-white and half-black, does he have only half a soul?"

In these "early" poems, as in the poetry of her maturity, politics has a prominent role. In the poem "1844," Mary describes a real or imagined trip "south," where she sees "slaves there were toiling in sorrow and pain" (Howe p. 31). She questions how America could be "Champion of Freedom" when she sees "sixty negroes... toiling in grief and despair." She urges the reader not to vote for Henry Clay, close friend of the Howes, because Clay "on the enslaved ones his galling chain" binds (p. 32). She urges votes for "our Birney, for freedom and right" so that "from North to the south our whole land will be free." James Birney was the candidate of the Abolitionist Liberty Party. Needless to say, he did not win the election of 1844---James K. Polk did. According to the *Portrait and Biographical Album of Johnson and Pawnee Counties, Nebraska*, Mary's father "was one of the few who in 1840 voted for James G. Birney for President and afterward sustained what was then known as the 'Liberty Party'" (p. 500). The Liberty Party eventually merged with the Free Soil Party, which in turn merged with the newly formed Republican Party.

Mary writes about the Cincinnati Convention, in a poem by that title. The Cincinnati Convention of 1856 was where the nation's Democratic convention was held. This convention nominated James Buchanan, and if Mary was truly hoping that "our land" would be "redeemed and the slave" set free, as she says in the final line, then

she wasn't a keen observer of the Democratic Party in the early 19th century. She does note that "Freedom's light/ Is nearly extinguished by slavery's might" (p. 33).

In this first collection of Mary's poems, she includes conventional poems such as "The Rainbow," "The Charms of Nature;" poems about "The Ocean," "The American Eagle's Song," and one rather interesting one called "Going to California," where she lampoons the mercenary desires of the gold miners. One such prospective miner was her brother Joseph, who, in 1860, set out for California and ended up in Oregon. The Pepoon siblings were extremely close, and after the Civil War, the surviving Pepoon brothers and sisters, along with their spouses, set out for southeast Nebraska. Those who had fought in the war were able to get homesteads. Orville and Mary, my great-grandparents, purchased a farm there in Bunker Hill, a little utopian community near Table Rock. Even George Pepoon, a brother who stayed behind in Illinois, eventually joined his siblings in Nebraska. There were so many Pepoons in Bunker Hill, Nebraska, that the school was known colloquially as the "Pepoon School," rather than Bunker Hill School House.

There was, however, a Pepoon sibling who never moved to Nebraska. Silas Pepoon got his start in the military in the Oregon 1st Cavalry, along with his brother Joseph and brother-in-law, Eli Boone. Silas Pepoon rose through the ranks of the military, and when the Civil War was over, he joined the 10th Cavalry as an officer. The 10th was staffed primarily of freed African-American slaves, and its mandate was to fight native peoples. We have a picture of Silas in his uniform, and it wasn't until recently that I heard what happened to him. I received an e-mail from a Pepoon cousin who currently serves in the military. My cousin was a historian, and did some research on Silas. Silas Pepoon, Mary's brother, fought alongside Custer in the Battle of Washita. Silas contracted malaria, and committed suicide at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, in 1874.

Back to Mary's poetry, her lifelong work. Later in her career, she composed lines "On the death of my soldier brother Oren at Jacksonport Ark., Dec 1st 1863." Mary writes:

"O brother, our dear young soldier
So loving so brave and true,

I see thy fair locks flowing
I see thine eyes of blue.

O come, dear heart, to cheer me
As when I saw thee last
In the glow of thy strength and beauty
In the pride of thy purpose fast...

But he marched away with the heroes
Our country's flag to save
And the scenes of the far off Southland
Are heaped on his lonely grave.

So through all the years that are coming
We shall wait and long in vain
No more shall we hear his greeting
Nor his bright face see again."

Death was never far off in the 19th century. In *Early Poems*, Mary pens no fewer than 11 poems on the subject, most addressed to specific people she has lost, including one to her brother Charles, who died at three months of age. She published poems on metaphysical topics as well, including one called "Meeting of the Spirits." It's unclear to what extent Mary shared her husband Orville's belief in spiritualism.

Mary never lost her interest in politics. After the Civil War, she turned her attentions to women's rights and temperance. By "temperance," Mary didn't mean abstinence. In her recipes, Mary includes instructions to "serve with a rich wine sauce." Rather, for Mary, temperance meant abstaining from hard liquor as a beverage. The farm she and my great-grandfather built, and where I grew up, was called Orchard Grove Farm. Orville learned about "orcharding," as he called it, from Mary's family. It's possible hard cider was made and consumed on the farm, though my own parents never drank any kind of alcohol. Of course, by that time, the temperance movement had merged with the Prohibition movement.

The women's movement was of great interest to my great-grandmother. Mary wrote a poem, which was published in the *Table Rock Argus*, "For Elizabeth Cady Stanton's 70th Birthday." Mary lauds Stanton for hearing "the moans of women/ By the law made desolate." Furthermore, Stanton has long been one to "toil and plan/ To make her sisters equal/ In rights to their brother-man." Mary understands that this is a "battle."

In another poem published by the *Argus*, in 1886, Mary celebrates "Our Sixth Anniversary of the Women's Club." In that poem, she hearkens back to the biblical past where "Adam and Eve" lived in bliss. "Equal they were in rights, nor sought to sway" the other to their point of view. Still, the poem ends disappointingly for women readers of the 21st century. She writes "Man searches through the realms of earth and sky/ For jewels rare... /And mansions builds for her.../ Where she may dwell secure from every storm." Apparently woman's role is merely as man's helpmate, the one who "His children nurtures, and his peace defends." It hardly seems enlightened by today's standards.

Mary wrote newspaper columns for both the *Table Rock Argus* and the *Painesville Telegraph*. These columns are charming, and provide insight into life on the prairie during the 19th century. For the *Table Rock* newspaper, on January 1, 1888, she describes Christmas at her brother's home. "At T.W. Pepoon's home there was a Christmas dinner, and in the evening, a tree, loaded with many useful and beautiful presents. As usual there was a fine taste displayed in literature by those who selected books as presents. I noticed two copies of Whittier, one of Swinburne's poems...Bleak House... and other works."

Also, for the same paper in 1888, she writes of a "Woman's Suffrage Convention, recently held in Pawnee City... [it] reminded me very much of the old-time anti-slavery meetings, and the earnest men and women they brought together." Mary adds, "What a horrible thing it was then considered for a woman to speak in public."

Mary writes of homey things: a county fair, traveling "venders," and horses with lockjaw. She reminds us, also in 1888, how the wounds of Civil War have not completely healed. "We read with pleasure that in Pawnee City Mr. Little declined to

run as assessor against a crippled Union soldier. In Table Rock an ex-rebel captain ran against a crippled Union soldier and was elected. Comment is unnecessary.”

All her life, Mary wrote poetry, and in her later years she penned essays and newspaper articles. One thing she didn't do was to keep a regular diary; if she did, it has been lost. In the years 1855-1857, she made only five brief diary entries. Her diary entries are as chatty and charming as her newspaper columns. She writes about books she has read, and the endless, agonizing work of getting her poetry published. Mary notes, in reference to her own writing: “I honestly think worse lines have appeared in the columns of newspapers” (Saylor p. 131). In her diary entries, she notes friends who die; she had a letter from her mother “containing the news of little Carrie Tisdell's death” (Saylor p.130). She writes about the weather, and an April Fool's Day prank played upon her.

From Mary's writing, the picture of a likeable, smart, and hard-working woman appears. Of course, Mary was my great-grandmother, and I may well be prejudiced. I have to say I like her, and wish I had met her. I barely knew my own grandmother, Mary Howe's daughter-in-law, also named Mary, nicknamed Mamie. Mamie died when I was two years old.

Orville and his second wife, Mary Pepoon Howe, bought the farm and built the house I grew up in. They seemed ever-present, even though they both passed away many years before I was born. If their spirits remained in the place, I could hardly fault them. Orville and Mary seemed devoted to their family. After the Civil War, all but two of Mary's siblings came to southeast Nebraska. There was her brother Joseph and his wife, Bess; sister Eunice and her British-born husband, Eli Boone, and Mary's beloved brother, Theodore Weld Pepoon, T.W., and his wife Susan.

Mary was closest to T.W., and when he was forced to leave the area for economic reasons, Mary took it hard. Her niece, Elsie Pepoon Sutton writes that after T.W. moved away, Mary was devastated. In addition, in 1888, Mary's horse was spooked, and she was gravely injured. According to her own account, Mary “had both arms broken, and was badly bruised and injured besides.” The riding accident, along with her brother's move, took a toll on her, and she died in 1903, at the age of 72. Her husband, Orville, survived her by over a decade, passing away in 1917. Dear Mary and

Orville, I hope you know that the legacy of Orchard Grove Farm lives on, these many, many years later.

Sources

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Chapter 7 **Orchard Grove Farm**

For countless centuries, indigenous people roamed the green, rolling hills of what would be called “Nebraska.” These first nations followed the bison, whom they hunted for meat and clothing. At some point in the distant past, the practice of cultivating corn made its way up from Central America, and some Lakota nations took up farming as well as hunting. In historic times, native peoples from the north, the Winnebago, made their way south along the Missouri River. These people, the Otoe-Missouria, settled near the place where I grew up, Orchard Grove Farm, in southeast Nebraska. The county has been mistakenly named Pawnee County; it was believed by the early European settlers that Pawnee City, the county seat, had once been a Pawnee village. The European settlers no doubt lumped all Native Americans together: it was not the Pawnee, but the peaceful Otoe who lived and farmed there.

French settlers explored the Great Plains, and made contact with the Otoe. This meeting of two great cultures had disastrous consequences for the first Americans: they were decimated by European illnesses. By the early 1800’s, when Lewis and Clark encountered the Otoe, half of their number had succumbed to smallpox, measles and influenza, diseases to which they had no immunity. In the 1830’s, the U.S. government declared that the Great Plains would always belong to native peoples, and they could live where they always had unmolested. That changed with the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. The U.S. reversed its policy, and settlers began pouring, slowly at first, into Nebraska.

The trickle of European settlers became a steady stream after passage of the Homestead Act of 1862. Sadly, the fate of the Otoe and so many other nations was sealed by this time. In 1864, southern Nebraska was the site of a great Indian War. The Oregon Trail went through the state, and there were skirmishes between the indigenous nations and the Europeans. Though the number of casualties was relatively small, Native Americans were all but exterminated. The Otoe were forced to move to Indian Country, Oklahoma. The Otoe nation is located in that state to this day; it was not until

1964 that these former residents of Nebraska received compensation from the U.S. government for the land they lost.

My father, Orville David, was interested in the Otoe, and fascinated by their culture and monuments. In August of 1949, Dad wrote the Nebraska Historical Society concerning details of a 1936 archaeological excavation in the area. The nearest town to Orchard Grove Farm is Table Rock, where an Indian monument once stood. Dad was told about “two house sites... excavated near Table Rock.” The people who lived there “were a farming people who raised considerable corn and also depended upon hunting for their subsistence. Their houses were rectangular pit houses with the roofs of sod and brush supported by a framework of poles.... They appear to have been peaceful farmers who occupied the area prior to white contact” (unpublished letter from Marvin F. Kivett, Assistant Museum Director, Nebraska State Historical Society, to Orville Howe, 18 August 1949).

The “table rock” for which the town was named was long gone by the time I was born. According to my father, who never saw the rock himself, its presence was described by early surveyors of the region. In his notes he writes: “the Rock consisted of a base which is still standing. On top were three legs resting on the central pillar and on top of the legs was a flat rock. Some of the people mentioned “crawling through the legs and even standing upright there. In historic times this was the location of the Otoe Indians.” Furthermore, European settlers noted with bloodlust that “from the shape of them they might have been a sacrificial altar. However again I never heard of the Otoes or any other Indians north of Mexico using [human] sacrifice in their religion.” Still, Dad notes that settlers thrilled themselves with “the story of an Indian maiden being sacrificed on it and her lover going on the warpath. In the resulting battle all the braves were killed and the weeping of the squaws caused Weeping Water Creek.”

Dad doesn't give a date to these notes he typed, or even why he wrote them. He loved doing research. He noted that the rock was covered with pictographs, and that the flat part of the rock was “destroyed by lightning in 1870. Nearby was another odd rock shaped like a mushroom. After Table Rock fell some folks began to suppose it was the original rock.” The mushroom rock was demolished by the farmer on whose land it stood, so that he could have additional ground for planting.

We must bid a sad farewell to the Otoe, the original farmers of Orchard Grove Farm. After the Civil War, my great-grandmother's brother, Joseph Pepoon, and his wife, their sister, Eunice, who was married to Eli Boone, and another friend who had been injured in the war, set out for Nebraska. That was in the winter of 1867, a strange time of year to travel from Illinois, across Iowa, and to Nebraska. They trudged through snow, ice and mud; they needed to get to their new land in time to plant the crops. They arrived March 7, 1867, just a week after Nebraska became a state.

Nebraska is a land of few trees other than evergreen and cottonwood. Neither is ideal for building houses, and early settlers built homes of sod, like the Otoe had. Joseph Pepoon and Eunice Pepoon Boone were optimistic about farming: they planted corn and watermelon. In fact, Joseph and Eunice were so happy in their little corner of southeast Nebraska, they wrote their brother Theodore, T.W., and sister, Mary Pepoon Howe, encouraging them to come West. In 1869, T.W. Pepoon, along with his wife, Susan, bought land in Nebraska, and moved there. Mary Pepoon Howe and her husband, Orville, bought the farm of Alexander Allen, an original homesteader. The Allen homestead was, like all homesteads, 160 acres, and included a sod house near a branch of the Nemaha. Orville and Mary paid \$1,200.00, for the farm, about \$7.50 per acre.

Orville was teaching during these years. He moved from place to place, and had returned to Ohio, where he studied fruit trees. Unlike T.W. and Susan who relocated immediately to Nebraska, Orville and Mary waited till the railroad was finished. Travel by wagon wasn't comfortable. Besides, by this time, Orville and Mary had two children. Edmund, their son, was born in 1862, and their daughter, Myrta, was born in 1869. Travel with a newborn would have been very difficult.

In 1871, the track was finished, and the railroad brought the Howe family with their two youngsters to southeast Nebraska. They began life on what had been the Allen homestead. The family first lived in a sod house, which still stood when I was a girl. It was by the creek, or "crick," and we used it for storage, referring to it as the "cellar." Needless to say, Mary didn't want to stay in the dugout, and the couple immediately began construction of a fine, two story house, with oak and other

hardwood floated down the Missouri River. Orville began planting fruit trees, and thus Orchard Grove Farm began.

My grandfather, Edmund, and his sister, Myrta, lived and died in the house I later lived in when I was a girl. The house changed little from 1871 to the years of my childhood. After my father was born, the summer kitchen was attached to the main house. Mom tried to change the interior color scheme from brown and gold to pink and blue, but much of the furniture was the same. In 1936, the Rural Electrification Act brought electricity to the farmhouse. Many of the smaller pieces of furniture, little three drawer dressers we call “commodes,” rocking chairs, and an iron bedstead are in my house or the homes of my sons.

Both Edmund, Orville and Mary’s son, my grandfather, and Myrta kept diaries during those early years on the farm. The diaries were in the storage room when I was growing up, and fortunately Dad brought the diaries with them when they moved to town. Edmund’s diary was for the year 1876, when he was 14 years old. He kept careful records of the weather. Both Edmund and his son Orville, my dad, were county meteorologists. Each of my grandfather’s entries begins with the day’s temperatures, morning, noon and night, and the weather. January 1, 1876, for instance, brought “rain and hail. Thermometer 30 degrees at noon.” On most days, he added a single line with the day’s activities. On January 5, the day’s temperatures were 26 in the morning, 35 at noon, and 36 at night. Edmund adds: “Went to Table Rock lodge at night.” Presumably the lodge was the Independent Order of the Good Templars, a temperance society.

From Edmund’s diary we learn that the family socialized almost every evening. The Pepon brothers and sisters all lived in close proximity, and visited each other daily. In addition, the Howes and Pepoons were members of the Grange, a progressive farming lodge. The National Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry was a fraternal lodge formed after the Civil War that promoted better techniques of farming. One noteworthy thing in his diary is the frustration Edmund exhibits towards a certain group of carpenters, who, by 1876, still had not finished the upstairs. It stayed as a large loft for years before finally being completed. The family used the large, unfinished upstairs as

a meeting place for the Grange and the IOGT, the Independent Order of the Good Templars.

Edmund's entries are devoid of emotion, so different from his father Orville's diaries at the same age. The single line of daily events is pithy. He notes when his father or mother was ill--- a frequent occurrence. Edmund himself was ill from September 19 through the end of the month: his mother kept the temperature and weather log during that time. Later on, Edmund published a newspaper, and it's only in his political writing that Edmund seems to have had passion.

Myrta, Orville and Mary's daughter, kept a diary during her childhood, beginning when she was eight years old, in 1877. Here are some of the things she wrote about:

"September 2, 1877. Today we washed. Papa [Orville] went to Pawnee City. I have got the whooping cough very bad. Hattie has gone away, she went last Saturday. It is a very pleasant day.

Thursday, September 6th, 1877. We have got four little kittens that were born last night. Papa and Eddie have been hauling hay all day. They are building a schoolhouse in our district and the men are boarding here. I have been playing cards all day.

Friday Sept. 7th. Eddie and I have been playing checkers. Mamma is washing dishes. I have been wiping them. Eddie and Papa are hauling hay again today, they have just come up with a load now. I have just been playing on the organ. Little while ago I picked grapes.

Saturday Sep. 8th. Sadie Cooper is over here today. Eddie is playing on the organ. Sadie has sprained her hand. Papa has gone to mill. This forenoon Eddie and I went up to the schoolhouse... Papa came home from the mill, so we came home with him.

Sep. 13. Tonight I stayed at Uncle Eli's. Gertie and I and Bertie slept [sic] together. This morning it rained. It rained all day some. Today Aunt Eunice canned peaches. Aunt Eunice and Gertie and Uncle Eli pared them while Harry and I cut them up.

Mamma came home today, she brought lots of peaches from Salem. Mamma brought me some prize candy and the prize to it. It was a black breast pin.

Sep. 15. Today Papa went to mill and I went with him. I helped Papa shell corn down to the mill. Cousin Kate's folks have found a swarm of bees and they have got a hive and some honey.

Sunday Sep. 16. Today Papa and I went to camp meeting. Mamma went as far as Aunt Eunice's, Aunt Bess was at Aunt Eunice's. When Papa and I were coming home we stayed at Cousin Kate's and got supper, we had some honey. At the camp meeting I saw Mary Allen [daughter of the man from whom they bought the farm].

Sep. 17th. Today Eddie washed, Mamma canned peaches, she canned nine cans full. We have got Mr. Cooper's little kittens which they gave us to keep during camp meeting time.

Sep. 19th. Today Papa, Mamma and I went to the fair at Pawnee City, it was a very nice fair and there were a great deal of fruit and flowers. There was a horse swing there. I did not swing, it cost ten cents a box. I had a very nice time. There was an organ in the hall. I wore my white dress.

Oct. 3. Mamma is sick. Papa went away Monday and has not yet returned. Today Eddie churned. I have been reading. It is a very cold day and there is a very hard wind from the north west. We expect Papa home today. This morning it rained it keeps raining ever little while now. Eddie has gone after corn.

Nov. 30. Today Mamma and Eddie and I and Mary Allen who was here yesterday to our Thanksgiving dinner and stayed all night, all went over to Aunt Bessie's. Cousin Kate was there. I had a very nice time. Mary did not come home with us tonight. Yesterday Aunt Eunice's folks and Aunt Bessie's folks and Cousin Kate's folks were here. I had a very nice time yesterday playing with Gertie and Elsie and Eddie and

Harry. Today I played with Elsie and Aunt Bessie and Georgie. Tonight Mamma is knitting and Eddie and Papa are reading... Last Wednesday we papered our kitchen.

Dec. 6th. Today is my birthday. I am nine years old. I got a birthday present. It is a beautiful little pen-knife with a white handle.

Dec. 7th. Charley Allen is picking corn here today. Papa is going to kill a pig this afternoon. Aunt Eunice's folks came over here today.

Dec. 12th. Today I went to school and while I was there a man came along. He came there in the afternoon and stayed all the rest of the afternoon. He wanted to see Papa about selling some books to the district. He came home with Papa tonight and is going to stay all night. He has gone with Papa over to Uncle Eli's.

Dec. 13th. Today Papa was sick so Eddie taught in the forenoon and in the afternoon there wasn't any school so all the rest of the scholars stayed there and played. We played a great many games and had a great deal of fun. Cousin Kate's folks were over to our house and when I came home Willie Palmer came home with me and stayed at our house until Cousin Kate went home and then he went home with them.

Dec. 15th. Today we washed. After we got through washing Eddie went to town and got lots of things besides lots of mail. He got a new lamp chimney and lamp burner.

Dec. 16th. Today we went to Mr. Robinson's. I had a very nice time playing with little Mary. I saw Mary's playthings. There were some little tin dishes and some blocks. Besides these things she had a beautiful wax doll with blue eyes and real hair which was of a golden color. It was done up in braids and was very pretty. The doll had some beautiful beads around her neck and it had earrings on. It has red cheeks and a little redbud of a mouth and if you lay it down it will shut its eyes and open then when you stand it up it will open them again. It is a beautiful doll. When we got back from Mr. Robinson's Eddie and I went over to Mr. Coopers.

April 17th, 1878. Today it rained. Mrs. Rounds washed for us. Nothing in particular happened. Mrs. Rounds and Dr. Rounds and Horace who is their nephew are living in our chambers, and Mrs. Rounds works for us.

Thursday August 7th. Papa is sick, he has been sick for about one week, today he is better. Mamma is sick also. Sarah Cooper rode Dick [the pony] home and got back in time to get supper, she has begun to work here 4 days, she washed Tuesday and ironed Wednesday. Mrs. and Mr. Butterfield were here today. We have got some little kittens. It has been very hot today. The thermometer was 98.

Feb. 19th. This morning Mr. Cooper came over here. I stayed home from school today. Mamma is better today. She sat up.

March 14th 1880. This morning Eddie and I went over to Uncle Joe's, horseback, and they told us that Aunt Eunice had a little baby boy, so we went over and saw it. He is very pretty. They have named him Arthur Eugene. Harry went over to our house and told the folks about the baby so they came over there although they had been intending to go to Dr. Round's. Tonight the folks came home in the buggy and I came home alone on Dick. Charlie Kemire, a German boy, is working here. Aunt Bessie has a baby girl born two weeks ago tomorrow. They named her Mabel. It has been very cold today. The thermometer was 8 below zero this morning.

Thursday July 1. It is actually the middle of summer. July opened on a warm day, the thermometer was 84 at noon. It was warm for this year but quite cool compared with what it generally is. We have had a cool summer so far, the thermometer has not been above 90 I think. Eddie is sick. The "fourth" is on Sunday this year so they are going to celebrate the third. We anticipate grand times, we are going to Table Rock.

July 3rd. The "fourth" has come and gone. We had a very grand time. The different precincts in the county sent delegations to Table Rock, there was a prize of ten dollars

given for the best. Sheridan and Pawnee were the principle ones, they were both splendid. The ladies representing the original thirteen states were very pretty, they were most of them dressed in white. Those of Pawnee were seated all together in a kind of platform on a wagon, they had red caps on their heads with the names of the different states on them. The Sheridan girls had scarves passing from one shoulder to the under side of the other arm with the names of the states on them and they rode on horses. The goddesses of Liberty of both delegations were very beautiful. The Sheridan delegation had three girls representing Faith, Hope, and Charity. They both had brass bands to make music. The Sheridan's won the prize. George Porter read the Declaration of Independence, Capt. Humphrey delivered the oration. On the grounds there were stands and swings. There was a very large crowd, we estimated about two thousand five hundred persons."

For Myrta, as for her mother Mary, keeping a diary wasn't a long term commitment. After these few entries, Myrta's diary abruptly ends. Still, her writing, the thoughts and ideas of a little girl, give us insight to life during the early days of Orchard Grove Farm. Reading these entries is like reading *Little House on the Prairie*--except that it is true. Myrta's sweet, childish diary gives us a slice of life. Sickness is ever-present. Family is all-important, and Myrta is clearly delighted when she gets to visit her Pepon aunts, uncles, and cousins. Birth is always significant and longed for, whether it is the arrival of a child or a baby kitten.

Another thing that we see from Myrta's brief diary was the constant activity, the guests, relatives and boarders on the farm. This tradition carried into my own childhood: the farm always welcomed guests. Once people came, they didn't leave quickly. Relatives spent years with us.

Education was very much on the Howes' mind; Orville and his son, Edmund, both served as teachers in the Bunker Hill school. Orville was superintendent, as well. Orville and Edmund were both surveyors, as was my father. In fact, my great-grandfather, Orville, laid out most of the roads in Pawnee County. He was elected county surveyor. The Pepoons were involved in education and politics, as well. Joseph and his brother T.W. served as state senators.

Edmund and Myrta attended university in Lincoln. While this wasn't unusual for a young man in the late 19th century, it was uncommon for a young woman. Edmund graduated in 1887 from the University of Nebraska with a degree in engineering. We don't know exactly what year or years Myrta studied music at the University of Nebraska; she didn't receive a degree. Edmund met his wife, my grandmother, while he was at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln.

Mary Frances Viggers, my grandmother, called "Mamie" by the folks on the farm, was born in Maiden Newton, England. Mamie was four years younger than her husband; she was born in 1866. Edmund and Mamie were wed in 1896. Although born in England, Mamie's mother, Mary Selena Shorto, was Italian. I don't know exactly when Grandmother Mamie came to this country, but when she arrived her siblings came with her, settling in the Midwest.

Because Mamie and her siblings all lived in this country, they decided to send for their mother, Mary Selena, when their father died. Mary Selena did not like America, and she was uncomfortable with the rough edges she found in Nebraska. According to family stories, she complained frequently, finding the people to be veritable "barbarians." Mary Selena thought Nebraska was utterly lacking in culture, and bemoaned the civilized life she had been forced to leave behind because of her meddling children.

Mamie and her siblings finally had enough. They pooled their resources, and bought their mother a one-way passage back to her beloved England. They weren't sure how she would cope without them, but they didn't want her to be miserable in Nebraska.

Exactly one year later, almost to the day, that Mary Selena Shorto went back to England, she re-appeared on her son's doorstep in Nebraska. One can only imagine what he thought when he saw her, and the questions he must have had. She offered no explanation. She never complained about Nebraska again, nor did she offer any details about the year she had spent back in merry old England.

Unlike Edmund, Myrta never married. She was a piano teacher, and medium. Like her father Orville, she was a spiritualist. She had a large Ouija board, and gave

psychic readings for those who consulted her. Myrta believed she was in contact with the souls of the departed.

Myrta was interested in the women's movement, like her mother. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony lectured at the Table Rock Opera House, one of the few such structures still standing today. It was completed in 1893, and is a beautiful Victorian structure, its façade made of red bricks. According to town records, Myrta herself utilized the Table Rock Opera House as the venue for her students' music recitals. Today the Opera House is part of the Historical Society in Table Rock. There were always a large number of Czechs in southeast Nebraska, and when the town population declined, the Opera House was purchased by the Czech lodge.

While writing a journal never held too much interest for her, Myrta did try writing a novel when she was young, around 11 or 12. It is the unfinished story of girl schoolteacher. Later in life, when Myrta became interested in metaphysics, she wrote meditations. In 1904, the year she passed away, she published an article in a devotional magazine from Unity. At that time, Unity was still loosely connected with Mary Baker Eddy. Myrta's article, available from the Unity archives online, shows the influence of Christian Science.

Myrta writes about the importance of overcoming "all belief in materiality." She urges the reader not to fill the mind "with the wrong kind of thoughts." She implores people to disregard the body and its urges. "The reason you go to sleep in the silence is that you believe too strongly in physical weariness. You must treat yourself against this bodily belief; say: 'I am Spirit, and Spirit is not weary or tired... therefore *I am not tired*'" ("Matthew XXII," Interpretation by Myrta Howe, Unity archives online, pages 9-10).

I have not been able to verify if Mary Baker Eddy herself came to lecture at the Table Rock Opera House. Perhaps Myrta became attracted to the philosophy by reading. Myrta endeavored to live by these beliefs, and sadly, it may have contributed to her early death. In 1904, the year after her mother, Mary Pepon Howe died, Myrta became ill. Her father and brother wanted to call a doctor, but Myrta asked them not to. Medicine wasn't advanced in the early years of the 20th century, but the doctor might

have been able to help her. The family respected Myrta's convictions, and, at the age of 35, after a brief illness, Myrta passed away.

Myrta lived most of her life on Orchard Grove Farm. The house was full during the late 19th and early 20th century. Myrta, her parents, Orville and Mary, and Myrta's brother, Edmund, along with his wife, Mamie, and their children, all lived in the house. They needed every one of the six bedrooms in those years.

Edmund and Mamie had four children: Helen, who died in 1897 when she was three days old, Thomas, Orville, and Herbert. Orville, my dad, named for his grandfather, was a New Year, new century baby: he was born just after midnight January 1, 1901.

While Myrta was having séances and writing devotional literature, her brother, Edmund, my grandfather, was active in politics. The Pepoons had been members of the Abolitionist Liberty Party, and Orville had been a member of the Free Soil Party, which later merged with the newly formed Republican Party. Edmund scandalized the community when he left the Republican Party for the People's Party. As Cousin Elsie noted, Mary and Orville were Republican partisans.

The years between 1890-1894 were years of financial depression in America. The causes of the crisis were manifold, and are beyond the scope of this book. Farming has always been difficult, but these years were especially hard. Examining the tax records of Orchard Grove Farm from the period, I can't help but note the loans and mortgages taken out against it. The farm could have been lost during these difficult years. Farming was never easy: in Pawnee County there were floods, prairie fires, and late season hail. There were grasshopper invasions. In 1894, my great-grandmother's favorite brother, T.W., and his family were forced to leave Bunker Hill, and made their way to Arkansas. According to Cousin Elsie, their departure caused grief in Mary that she never recovered from.

The People's Party, the Populists, formed in 1892. The party platform, judged from today's lights, seems sensible. Still, its goals are probably as unrealistic now as then. They call for the direct election of all candidates, abolition of the Electoral College, and direct election of senators, which didn't happen till 1913. Populists

wanted an end to the gold standard, and called for the government to stop all subsidies to corporations. In addition, they called for women's pay to equal men's.

My grandfather, Edmund, began publishing a People's Party newspaper in Table Rock in 1892, the *Censor*. Only one copy of this paper remains in the family's possession today, dated September 10, 1892, though the paper was published for several years. Most articles appear to have been written by Grandfather Edmund. His participation in leftist, progressive politics scandalized some residents of Table Rock, and a few refused to do business with him.

From these years, as well, we have boxes of radical pamphlets, and a worker's songbook ominously titled "Armageddon!" This latter book is a collection of anthems by the "world's workers," and was published in Lincoln, Nebraska in 1894. Songs urge people to "Fight the cause of labor!" among other things. My ancestors were not meek, and believed they were engaged in the good fight. They were not alone in their beliefs; southeast Nebraska was a hotbed of progressive politics in the late 19th century.

In 1894, Edmund shocked some residents of Table Rock by wearing a "Coxey" button. Coxey was a flamboyant populist who organized a protest march in Washington, D.C. Some members of the Table Rock business community boycotted Edmund, and as payback, he published their names in his newspaper, the *Censor*. Edmund's mother, Mary, was angered by the slights of the businessmen, and she wrote a satirical poem for the Table Rock *Argus* lampooning the dozen or so people who stopped doing business with Edmund. I doubt that they relished the publicity.

The Populist Party itself did not last, any more than the Liberty or Free Soil Party had. The Populist Party did influence policy, ultimately, and Edmund turned his attentions to another third party, the Workers, or Socialists. In the early 1930's, Grandfather Edmund was an officer of that party while living in Lincoln.

Not all of my family's associations involved politics. "All work and no play" was not the motto of anyone in farming communities, wherever they were in Nebraska. In addition to the temperance lodge and the Grange, there were always informal gatherings of friends and relatives to play cards, quilt, attend a wedding, or eat good food.

In 1918, when the "Great War" was almost over, the Bunker Hill War Savings Society of Table Rock was formed. The group, by consent of its membership, was

affiliated with the National War Savings Committee. All the members signed the “Pledge for Thrift Service.” My uncle, Thomas, served in World War I, towards the end of the conflict. He was born in 1899, and wasn’t old enough to be drafted till 1917.

Meetings were held on the last Friday of each month, and were held in the Bunker Hill School House. Fourteen families and eleven individuals were present, all named in the minutes. My grandfather, Edmund, was elected president.

Glancing through the minutes, one goes back in time. By its second meeting, the following month, there was a total of \$2,933.25 invested in War Savings Stamps. Badges were distributed to all members, and five new members were added. The program consisted of several recitations, including “Old Kaiser Bill will get his Fill,” “War and line Fences,” and “The Jolly Soldiers.” There was a monologue, “Entertaining Big Sister’s Beau,” and a pantomime, “How a Bunker Hill Girl Entertains her Beau.” There were addresses given by “a town Banker, two ministers, and a newspaper editor.” At the conclusion, a trio presented “Just Break the News to Mother,” and a tableau, “The U.S. Brings Freedom to the World,” which was presented by “five young people.”

The third meeting was held in the “open air,” and there was a large crowd. The program consisted of various recitations, and, notably, a Red Cross Nurses’ Drill. Refreshments of ice cream and cupcakes were served, and \$14.00 was made selling ice cream.

There are minutes for the fourth and fifth meetings, and by the fifth there were almost 80 members. There were more recitations, and the assistant county agricultural agent had been scheduled to speak, but wasn’t able to attend “on account of the conditions of the roads.”

When the war ended, the group didn’t want to disband, so it became the Bunker Hill Community Club, or BHCC. Its objectives veered leftwards, thanks to the leadership of Edmund. Its motto became “Labor conquers all things.” Perhaps Mamie influenced the agenda, as well, since it had the following objectives: “Improve the social life of the Farmer’s wives and daughters” and “study the welfare of the child in the home, school, and community.”

After 1920, there are no more minutes, but there is a final tally of the members, still around 80. It's possible that after this time, the group became more social than goal oriented.

Three of Edmund and Mamie's children lived in to adulthood: Thomas, Orville, my father, and Herbert. When Dad got married, Edmund and Mamie moved to Lincoln to allow the newlyweds to have the house to themselves for a few years. They stayed with Mamie's sister, Nana. Mamie passed away in 1937, but Edmund lived till 1949. Like his father, Orville, who lived till 1917, and his grandfather, Eber, some of the Howe men lived in to their 80's.

Before considering my own father and friends, let us return for a moment to the peaceful Indians who had once lived on the land. Dad's cousin, Elsie, describes an encounter she had with an Indian when she was a little girl, around 1877.

"One day Mother was alone with us children, for father had gone somewhere... We saw a man coming up across the lawn and as he came nearer saw he was an Indian wrapped in a blanket. I do not know the time of year, but it was warm and the doors stood open. He asked for a drink of water, and when mother had given it to him asked if he might rest. Mother gave him a chair by the west door and sat down herself across the room by the east door and I stood behind her. He was an old man, eighty years old he told mother, a Pawnee who had come back from Oklahoma to visit the scenes of his earlier days. He was alone and on foot. Mother offered him food but he refused it saying he carried his own food. He spoke very slowly and brokenly, with long silences. Said he had hunted all over the prairies when a young man and had wanted to see it again before he died. Not much left as he knew it. He called me 'papoose' and said I must not be afraid. Though I was shy enough to stay behind my mother I was not afraid so know my mother was not. He stayed a long time--- two or three hours it seemed to me--- and when he left Mother gave him another drink, whether coffee or milk or water I do not know. He thanked her very gravely and said goodbye with great dignity. He made a deep impression on my mother and I presume my memory is mostly from hearing her talk of it, but I can still distinctly see him sitting across from us, and the way we watched him as he went slowly down across the lawn to the road... He left an impression of profound sadness with my mother which as I grew in understanding has

remained with me.... [The] visit was a remembering and a farewell” (Elsie Pepoon Sutton, “The Bunker Hill Neighborhood,” unpublished, 1939).

Chapter 8 **Neighbors, Friends, and School at Bunker Hill**

I grew up attending a small county school just under a mile from Orchard Grove Farm. Most of the time there were only four of us students attending.

The old wooden schoolhouse was situated on five acres of land, which was typical for country schools in Nebraska during that era. It was located about six miles from Table Rock in Pawnee County. Originally built for 25 students, the rural population dwindled, and the number of children enrolled in school did also. During some brief periods of the eight years I attended Bunker Hill there were eight students, and that was great fun for all of us.

Each county in Nebraska was organized into specific school districts, depending on population and natural geographical boundaries. Our district was #35, called Bunker Hill. Schools were built according to a standard plan: they were wood frame, with a steep roof, so the snow would easily fall off. There was a pot-bellied stove and chimney in the middle, and a cloak room and entry way on one side of the building for us to hang our winter coats on and deposit our boots. There was a platform for the teacher, an organ, and a large wooden desk; there was a blackboard that extended the entire length of the platform, a mounted frame with pull-down world and national maps, a globe, and bookcases for textbooks and fiction.

By the time I started school, attendance had dwindled considerably. To save heat during the school year, as well as cleaning and maintenance costs, the building was partitioned into two sections. The north section, entered by the cloak room on the west side, was filled with desks and school equipment. The south side was where we kept our lunch pails, heavy coats, sports equipment, and water pail with a dipper. There were also some enclosed cupboards which contained really old textbooks.

We had running water, all right; the students ran outside, went to the pump, primed it, and filled it with a bucket of fresh water. We brought it inside, put it on an old wooden shelf, and used the communal dipper every time we wanted a drink. Germs

weren't an issue in those days. We were more concerned with keeping warm, dry, or cool.

We all walked to school, and would try to get to school at least an hour before starting time, 9:00 a.m., so that we would have time to play. Then we would have a 15 minute recess morning and afternoon, an hour lunch period, and school was over at 4:00 p.m.

The curriculum consisted of reading, geography, history, arithmetic, penmanship, spelling, music and art. We were taught the Palmer method of penmanship, although I've never practiced what I was taught. I didn't excel at art; I still have some of my "art" work, which gives me pause. Music consisted of singing popular songs like "Shine on, Harvest Moon," and "When the Caissons go Rolling Along." For reading, our texts were old, so I mostly skimmed through them and read something else to fill in the extra time.

There was no kindergarten in country school. We had only grades one through eight. I started first grade when I was five, but was double promoted twice when I transferred to school in Lincoln, so I graduated from grade school when I was 12.

With five acres of land, a grove of trees at the end of the yard, and a large school house in the middle, we had lots of playground. We would play baseball, which was tricky with only four or five students. Sometimes we played hide and seek, fox and geese in the snow, and handy- handy- over. The last game consisted of the group being divided into two teams, with one team on each side of the school house. One team would throw the ball over the tall school house, with considerable effort, and then try to reach the other side before the receiving team caught the ball. We played various running games, and of course lots of make-believe.

One very special thing about recess was riding Johnny's pony. Johnny was one of the older students. He was kind and patient with us younger kids, and even better, he had a small, gentle Shetland pony that he frequently brought to our country school, tying it up under the shade tree during class time.

Johnny always seemed happy, and he cheerfully gave us pony rides during the noon lunch hour. He never complained about our requests, and was always gentle with us excited children. However, the pony began getting a permanent swayback, thanks to

all the riding, and Johnny could no longer give us pony rides. Johnny wasn't able to finish high school; he had to help his dad work on the farm.

I lost touch with Johnny and other friends when I moved away. I got married, and didn't often get back to Table Rock. My parents moved to Tecumseh in 1961, and visiting them didn't often entail a visit to my hometown. When my father passed away, I came home for the memorial service and traditional after-service luncheon. I visited with the guests and one middle-aged gentleman asked me, "Helen, don't you know who I am?" I had no idea. "I'm John, Johnny, who you went to school with."

We had a pleasant conversation, and I could see that Johnny was doing well. It confirmed what my parents had told me over the years: Johnny was a hard worker, and became prosperous enough to buy several farms and farm parcels for himself. For me, John epitomizes the American dream: work hard, work wisely, and prosperity will be yours.

One of the highlights of the school year was a visitor from the "outside." The County Superintendent visited each country school at least once a year. The Superintendent I remember the most was a dignified lady named Miss Clark. Female teachers, and especially superintendents, were always single. For one thing, it was considered unseemly for a teacher to be pregnant; when I began teaching myself in the early 1950's, I was not allowed to teach in public school when visibly pregnant. What would the People's Party have said about this rule?

Miss Clark was very gracious. She had a gentle, cultured voice, and always had a smile, seemingly interested in each student. She did not inspire fear and trembling; rather, she challenged us to exemplary behavior.

Unlike most country school teachers, Miss Clark was college educated. In those days there were teacher training colleges supported by the state, offering different options. Normal school training was less than a one year course of study; teacher training was a two year college course offering certification; and then there was the four year course which offered a Bachelor's degree. Bunker Hill teachers usually received minimum amounts of training, since teaching in a country school was the least desirable option for a career.

The county provided a mobile library. Everything stopped when the mobile library came to our school. We were allowed to spend a long time browsing in the library, and got to check out books for home reading. I loved the library's periodic visits.

During the years I attended Bunker Hill School I had three teachers. The first one was gentle, kind, and had a sense of humor. Unfortunately, she was in the beginning months of pregnancy, and fainted one day when she was standing on the platform. I started sprinkling water on her face, and she revived, sputtering, immediately after I started my first grade CPR. This teacher's name was Bernice, and her husband, Rudolph, became a member of my family.

Let me explain about Bernice, and tell you her story. We have to go back several generations. The Howe's neighbor, Joe, may have been born in America, but he went to the Czech Republic to choose a bride, because he didn't want to marry an American. Anna, his new bride, never spoke a word of English, although she did learn to understand it.

Joe and Anna lived on a farm to the southeast of us. Joe was a hard worker; he put in a pond, which we children used to try fishing in, and improved his farm through diligent efforts.

Anna kept an immaculate kitchen. When I visited, it was fun to sit on the wooden chairs at the kitchen table, look at all the pretty dishes in the cupboard, and have something good to eat.

Joe and Anna had two children, Rudolph and Emil. Both sons were gentle, hard-working and kind. Emil used to work for our family from time to time. I can still remember when Emil came to our house early in the morning. He'd come into my bedroom when I was a little girl, and carry me down to the kitchen when it was time to eat breakfast. My dad never carried me, so I thought it was great fun.

Rudolph married a local girl who was also Czech, Bernice. She was my first-grade teacher, the one who fainted when she was pregnant. I liked her very much. During Joe's lifetime, Rudy and Bernice lived in a house south of the family home, and rented a house and farm. When Joe died, Rudy and Bernice moved to the family home, and Anna lived with them.

Sadly, Bernice died suddenly when she was only about 40 years old. Other members of her family died of the same condition she had. She was a wonderful teacher, and I was sad when she passed away--- she was so young.

Rudy married again, and his second wife died. Sometime after her death, he and my widowed mother became re-acquainted. One thing led to another, and they married. They had a happy 10 year marriage, until Rudy passed away. So that is how Bernice's family eventually became linked to mine. Rudolph became my step-father.

During my childhood, which was sometimes lonely during the summer months, I had many good memories of playing with Vera, a niece of Joe and Anna. Vera was from the big city of Chicago, and regaled me with stories of city-life. Although I visited her sometimes at Joe and Anna's home, most of the time she came to see me, as I had toys, plenty of room to play, and a young, active mother who always had food ready for us. We also had a large lawn with a mulberry tree and swing, and a pine tree that was just right for climbing.

Vera and I kept in touch for many years, even after I went away to college, and got married. She and her husband visited my husband and me after we had started our careers. But times change, lives move in different paths, and we lost touch.

Imagine my surprise when one day, many years later, I received a Christmas card from Vera. We vowed to keep in contact this time, and have done so ever since. In fact, the crowning touch, in my estimation, was when I traveled to Florida, where Vera and her husband moved after retirement. I was able to spend an entire day with Vera. We had a grand time together, just like when we were girls.

Vera says that she still remembers my mother: unfailingly kind and gentle. My mother remembered her, too, and always had fond words to say about my friend Vera.

But back to my school years. My second teacher was a man, and we irritated each other. I took delight in annoying him, and he complied by becoming aggravated with me. The final one was my favorite, and she had the ability to motivate and challenge me. She was likeable, smart, and a pleasure to know.

Special programs were the highlight of the year. We had a Christmas presentation, and an end of the year picnic. Each of us played a vital role, and we all took our duties seriously. I remember one Christmas season when I became sick, I

insisted on presenting my part in the program. I got through the event, but was immediately visited by the doctor--- they made house calls in those days. It turned out I had bronchial pneumonia.

Spelling bees were great fun, and were county wide contests. We were excited, and got all dressed up for the big event. I studied a lot before the contests, and usually placed well, though I didn't win.

The last day of school was wonderful. We presented a program, which included special songs and memorized speeches, and then had a picnic. Of course all school events were attended by parents, relatives and friends, so, much to our delight, we were praised and adored by large groups of friends and family.

I can still remember the stillness of the school house. We were used to the quiet. Birds twittered in the pine tree grove; we could hear the distant putt-putt of a John Deere or Farmall tractor, or cows mooing in the pasture. But when we heard bells clanging and the unmistakable sound of horse hooves, everything came to a standstill. Our young teacher, having received only two years of post-high school "Normal School" training, quickly ran to the doors and locked them from the inside. We would all rush to the windows as soon as the doors were locked.

There it was: a gypsy caravan riding past our school house! The wagons were covered with a tan burlap cloth, like the covered wagons of old days. The driver was sitting on the wooden seat in front, holding the reins of the horses. Bells attached to the harness would tinkle. Men, women, and children would be scattered in various places on all the wagons; some of the men and children walked along side of the caravans.

The gypsies looked poorly dressed. They wore dark clothes, and the people themselves were darker than us. They looked different than most of the English, German and Czech people living in our area. Their women had long hair, as did some of the men. They wore long skirts, with brightly colored borders, silver jewelry, and colored necklaces.

Pans, boxes and trinkets could be seen everywhere. And color, noise and mystery surrounded each and every wagon until the caravan passed through our area.

Gypsies made a living by sharpening knives and scissors, or fixing pots and pans just like my grandfather from Lincoln did, by placing a washer in the hole on either side, and securing it with a rivet pounded as flat as possible. The pans we used in those days were often made from thin aluminum.

Gypsies also weeded gardens, mowed grass, chopped down trees and chopped wood. They took odd jobs whenever they could. Stories abounded about the gypsies: they swiped chickens, so the chicken coops were fastened tightly whenever the gypsies came through. We children were afraid that they might even steal us; so we stayed inside when the gypsies were around. According to scholars, the Roma are afraid that non-gypsies might steal their children, so mistrust occurs on both sides.

Our family rarely hired Roma, since grandpa repaired our pans; mom sharpened her own scissors, and dad or his father, my other grandfather, did all the wood chopping.

When I was a girl, socializing was very important to us. The Pepon relatives had all left Bunker Hill by the time I was born, so we no longer had relatives in the area. Our neighbors filled the role the family once had. Neighbors visited back and forth as much as possible, and if they couldn't get together for visits, they used the telephone "party" line to talk. In fact, sometimes there were three-way conversations going on, and there were always listening ears. On "party" lines, each family had a distinctive ring. Since these rings were made by the caller we had to be careful how we placed the call. Our phone had two long rings, some neighbors had two long rings with a short, and others had three short rings.

My mom was used to individual private lines in the city, where she was from, and soon realized that instead of being an aggravation, the party line phone system enabled people to visit easily. And more to the point, the ladies liked to visit. As importantly, farm wives, like their husbands, were always willing and able to help one another. It wasn't a duty to help your friends--- it was a privilege.

The Bunker Hill War Savings Society, and its successor club, were no longer in existence when Mom moved to the farm. So she decided to start her own club, with the purpose of working together and helping the hostess with some onerous task. Frequently it was darning socks, although it also included wallpapering, painting, and

mending. There would be a pot-luck lunch, and lot and lots of laughter and visiting. The farm ladies enthusiastically embraced the concept, and so the Bunker Hill Sunshine Club began. I have a picture of the club, which shows a dozen or so well-dressed young women.

The Bunker Hill Sunshine Club decided to elect a president, and Mom was chosen. They also elected a secretary, but I wasn't able to find out who the first one was. There were no minutes kept, but there were some records, mainly so they could remember whose turn it was to serve as hostess.

The club was an outstanding success, and met continuously, once a month, from the mid 1930's till after Mom and Dad moved to town in 1961. By that time, the farm population had dwindled, but ladies from Table Rock kept the Bunker Hill Sunshine Club going. Its purpose was always the same: help the hostess with some project.

Joe, Emma and their son Herman were our closest neighbors. Their farm was half-way between our place and the school house. Mom described Joe as "strict, and having a mind of his own."

Emma was a sweet, slightly stooped small lady, who wore her dark hair in a bun. She was unfailingly kind, spoke in a quiet voice, and always had a hint of a smile on her face. I can't imagine her raising her voice at anyone.

Herman, one of their children, lived with them. Herman had the distinction, in my mind, of using more profanity than seemed possible in every sentence he spoke. Although he was sometimes gruff, he was a good person. Herman did farming for my parents after they moved to town, and my mother said, "He was a good worker, did way above and beyond the call of duty." Herman stayed a bachelor, or, as my Mother said "he was too set in his ways to get married."

Joe, Emma and Herman lived on 80 acres of land, which they had difficulty supporting themselves on. The land wasn't very good, and had a creek running through it. It was also hilly. Joe never used a tractor to do his farming, but was one of the few, if not only, farmer who still plowed, planted and cultivated with horses.

Perhaps one way they supplemented their income was by the pens of rabbits they had caged in their yard. It took quite a few years for me to realize that these rabbits weren't simply cute little pets, but were indeed being fattened up for Sunday

dinner! Mom's parents raised rabbits also. Many meals featured tender, succulent "chicken," although Mother and her sisters sometimes wondered what happened to the rabbits that had been in the cages.

In spite of Herman's hard disposition, he once saved my life, or at least saved me from a good deal of pain and agony. One day I was walking to school and we had had a blizzard with lots of snow. Although the road itself was fairly passable, there were some drifts in the ditches along side of the road. I was intrigued with the potential adventure I could have playing in some really deep drifts, and so I moved to the side, and tread deeper and deeper into the drift. Suddenly I realized with horror that I was up to my arms in snow, and couldn't get out. I started yelling as loudly as I could. I still remember, with a shiver of fear, my pitiful "help, help, help!" I felt panic.

Soon after I started yelling Herman came along with a slight grin on his face, seeing my predicament, which wasn't as life-threatening as I'd imagined. Naturally he had to tease me about my dilemma, but at the same time he pulled me out of the drift in nothing flat, and sent me to his mother's to dry out. I hope I thanked him, and was so desperate I probably did.

Emma warmed me up in front of the old wood stove, and tried drying out my heavy, wool snow pants. She gave me a glass of milk.

Emma's house was always sparkling clean. She had what was unusual to me: a summer safe in the kitchen. This large wooden cabinet had doors with little tiny holes in it on the top half, and smaller doors, without the holes on the bottom. The cabinet, or summer safe, was used to store perishables, and yet keep the flies away. Emma kept large bowls of milk in the upper part, probably letting the milk get sour so that she could make sour cream. My parents always kept their perishables in either an ice box, or after electricity, in a refrigerator.

When Mom was ill, she sometimes went to Lincoln to be near a city doctor. There, she stayed with her parents. Sometimes I went with her and transferred to a city school, and other times I stayed with Dad on the farm, and went to my country school.

Dad could do everything to take care of me except my hair coiffing. Emma came to the rescue. Every morning before school, I would stop at Joe and Emma's

farm. Emma would patiently curl my hair, speak kindly to me, and offer me milk and cookies. It never hurt when Emma did it. Not only was she sweet, but she was gentle!

Joe, Emma, and Herman raised cows, as did most of the farmers of that era, and one of the calves had a pesky way of getting out and coming on to our land. As good neighbors we would catch it, secure it, and call Herman to come and get his wayward calf. It did get tiresome after awhile, and Mom said to Dad, "If that calf gets out any more we're going to butcher it!" I, of course, heard every word that Mother said, and when Herman came for his calf I repeated Mom's threat word for word. Although I was just a little girl, and everyone laughed, especially Mom, the good news was that we had no more problems with the calf. It stayed put from then on.

Herman inherited the farm when his parents died. He eventually got too old to farm, and moved to Beatrice. He left no will, so when he died the property was given to the county.

Rudolph and Mary lived on a farm that was directly south of ours, and across the road on the next section. They were of Czech descent, and were fluent in both Czech and English. When I heard our party line phone ring for someone else, I would pick up the phone and try to eavesdrop. But as soon as the speakers on the other line heard the phone go "click," they would switch from speaking English and start conversing in Czech. It used to frustrate me to no end!

The Czech folks in our community referred to themselves as "Bohemians." The western areas of the Czech Republic used to be called Bohemia and Moravia, so that was where the Czechs who referred to themselves as Bohemians came from. In the late 19th century, there were crop failures in Bohemia, as well as more or less constant war. The railroad put advertisements in Czech newspapers enticing settlers to come to Nebraska, according to the Nebraska Studies website.

Mom and Dad liked Rudolph and Mary, and they were good friends to my parents and to me. When we had one of those famous Nebraska blizzards, the rural mail carrier found our roads impassable. This also occurred when the spring thaws occurred, and our dirt roads would grab any truck or car that dared try to traverse it, and never let it go. At those times the mail carrier would leave our mail at Rudy and Mary's, and

Dad would walk cross country over our farm (approximately one mile each way) and get our mail from them once or twice a week.

Rudy was a kind man, friendly and pleasant. Mary was more serious. Mary was a hard worker; she raised a big garden, canned a lot, quilted, and, as all farm wives do, kept her house sparkling clean. Frankly, I don't know how she managed to it all, but looking back I remember shiny linoleum floors, freshly starched kitchen curtains, and living rooms without one speck of dust.

Every year on New Year's Eve we would have a party with Rudy and Mary. Rudy's birthday was December 31st, Dad's birthday was January 1. What a great New Year's Eve to celebrate! We had Mom's homemade angel food cake, and Rudy and Mary brought homemade ice cream. We had plenty of ice with which to make ice cream during those Nebraska winters!

After Rudy passed away, Mary moved to town. I sometimes stayed with Mary and slept on the wonderful featherbed, when the roads were too muddy or snowy for Dad to drive me to high school, in those days before there were school buses. It was from Mary that I learned to love and savor kolaczki, kolaches. Kolaches are a Czech/Polish delicacy made from sweet roll dough, formed into a donut shape, and filled in the center with poppy seed, prune, apricot or cottage cheese filling.

I also learned to appreciate another traditional Czech dish: sauerkraut and dumplings. I loved those dumplings, and even learned to like the sauerkraut. Mary was also fond of making milk toast, although I never learned to savor that menu item.

The flip side of Mary's wonderful featherbed was the presence of an outhouse. Although Mary lived in Table Rock, and had indoor plumbing, it was her belief that it was better to use the outhouse than flush the toilet. I did not share her belief!

Although the people living in the Czech Republic are typically Roman Catholic, the majority of Czech people living in our community did not belong to any church. Mary was no exception.

One time when I was staying with Mary during the bad days of winter, after she had moved to town, I asked her to attend church with me. She finally agreed, reluctantly, and we sat in the back row. At that time our Methodist church had a minister who did not believe in, or adhere to, the time-honored custom of the one hour

service. At 12:05, Mary was getting restless, at 12:10 she'd had all she could take. Mary got up out of her pew and walked out. That was the one and only time she ever attended church in Table Rock.

When they died, Rudy and Mary were buried in the Czech cemetery outside of town. Table Rock had one cemetery in town, where my family and many of the town people were buried. The cemetery is located on a hilly spot, with pine trees and flowers everywhere. Czechs wanted their own cemetery; land was available, and they, too, have a pine-shaded final resting place.

Roy and Millie lived down the hill from us. I loved to visit with Roy and Millie. Millie was Czech, but I'm not sure she spoke the language, and didn't seem to keep many Bohemian customs; most importantly, Millie didn't bake kolaches.

They were both very hard workers and did not seem to ever sit still. Millie had dark hair, always spoke with a firm cadence, and made authoritative pronouncements that always had me convinced. She kept her home spotless, and the farm grounds were kept equally neat by Roy. Everyone in our neighborhood spoke with high praise about Roy and Millie, noting what a fine job of farming they were doing.

During my late grade school years I decided that I really was a "lazy bum" and that I should be working or having to do chores like other farm kids did. My parents wouldn't let me work in "town" at the ice cream parlor as I really wanted to, but lined me up with a job at Roy and Millie's.

Unfortunately it had all the glamour and prestige of a dried- up prune, plus it was hard work, especially for an indoor kid like me. I got to hand-weed the corn crop! Yippee! I think my folks gave Millie and Roy the money to pay me; in fact, the two families cooked up the job to keep me happy.

The first day of the week I lasted about three hours in the hot sun; the second day two hours, the third day a weak two hours, the fourth one hour, and the fifth I was gone. I decided that home really wasn't so bad after all, and quit bugging my parents about working for someone else.

Mom and Dad used to play pinochle with Roy and Millie, but never ate meals with them. Farm families were too busy to do much back and forth meal entertaining. One time when my folks were visiting, Millie asked Mom if she would like a glass of

beer; they knew my Dad didn't drink alcoholic beverages. My Mom took a few sips, just to be polite, but after a few half-hearted tries Millie said, "Viola, you don't like it, do you," and took the glass away.

Millie and Roy lived near us about a year or two, and then moved closer to Table Rock. We kept in touch with them occasionally, and saw them sometimes if we went to town on open nights: Wednesday or Saturday.

Nick and Josephine lived on a nearby farm with their eight children, probably moving there around 1920. They were of German descent. My grandparents, Edmund and Mamie were long-time friends with the entire family. The children, especially, socialized frequently. One of my father's closest friends was their son, Ralph. In fact, Dad was a matchmaker: he introduced Ralph to Mom's sister, Marjorie, and before too long they fell in love and were married.

During the long winter evenings in Nebraska, and before television, people depended on each other for entertainment. One of the most interesting stories my mother tells is the time the roads were impassable, the phone lines were down, the weather was too cold and inclement to do anything outside, and the days and nights were becoming increasingly lonely and boring. She and Dad thought it would be fun if they could get together with Ralph and his brother George and have an evening of pinochle. But how to do it?

Where there's a will there's a way. My mother, young and determined, walked 2/3 of a mile to Nick and Josephine's home and invited Ralph and his brother for an evening of cards. Of course, she had to turn right around and walk home. Walking on a cold winter day in the sticky mud didn't stop anyone, of course, and later on that evening the brothers arrived at my parents' home, where they spent a delightful time playing bridge.

Near the end of her life, Grandmother Mamie developed cancer. During that sad time, one of Nick and Josie's daughters, Delphine, came to help Grandma. From then on she was a presence in our family, and helped even after my parents were married. I have fond memories of Delphine, and am grateful for the kindness she showed my grandmother and the whole family.

Southeast of us lived some other good friends of my family, Rudolph and Ida. Rudolph was a popular name among our Bohemian residents. Ida was from the Foale family, one of the first European settlers in Pawnee county. They moved to southeast Nebraska in the 1850's, long before it was a state, shortly after the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. That was the law that reversed the government policy, and said that instead of being the land of Native Americans, the West would become open to European settlers.

Rudolph, Ida's husband, like the other Rudy's in the neighborhood, was of Czech descent. He always had a smile on his face, was pleasant, and was quick to offer help whenever it was needed. Ida was more serious; she had a way with words, and was interested in the world around her. She always participated in worthwhile causes.

Ida's ancestor, Peter Foale, was born in England, and found himself in Nebraska territory in 1856. The *Portrait and Biographical Album of Johnson and Pawnee County, Nebraska*, devotes considerable ink to the man it calls "essentially self-made" (p. 456). While other settlers, including the Howes and Pepoons, struggled to make a living on 160 acres, by 1884 Mr. Foale owned 760 acres, and moved several times to increasingly larger homes, which the *Album* describes as a "fine estate." It notes that Mr. Foale was the "most extensive landowner of the county" (p. 455). In addition, Peter Foale was committed to education, and served as School Treasurer. The Howes and Pepoons shared the Foale family's interest in schooling. Our families have been friends for 150 years.

During World War I, Ida served as secretary of the War Savings Society, a fellow officer with my grandfather. Its purpose was to support the war effort by buying War Savings Stamps, with monies raised donated to the State War Savings organization. Ida became secretary of the Bunker Hill Community Club, the post-war incarnation of the War Savings Society.

Rudolph and Ida continued the farming tradition of the Foales. They built a two-story home, which is still occupied and sits proudly near the road, nestled in and among the trees. The family was ambitious, fair and honest in all their business dealings, and greatly valued education, providing notable support for the local school system. Some of their descendants are teachers to this day.

Of Rudy and Ida's four children, I was closest to the twins, Lloyd and Floyd. The twins helped other farmers, including the Howe family. I remember one time when I was a little girl, Floyd made sure that I was safe from teasing and mischief from the farm hands we had, and brought me into the house where I could be "safe" with my parents.

In fact, all through my life, the twins, especially Floyd, have been there for me and my family. He has taken me and my husband to a Nebraska football game, visited my mother after she became widowed and living alone in Nebraska, and even visited my grandmother who lived in Lincoln.

Floyd was instrumental in establishing a historical museum in Table Rock, supported improvements in the town park, spearheaded the establishment of a war memorial, and made the entire community very proud by being elected as a state senator for two terms, until he retired.

Lloyd has continued to farm, and also helped the Howe family by assisting my father in surveying duties, and taking over the weather reporting service after Dad could no longer do it.

I remember being happy when the twins agreed to attend church with our family. We picked the boys up at their home, took them with us to the Methodist church, and they participated in many of the activities.

Rudy, the twins' older brother, was kind and sweet. The community was greatly saddened when he became ill with Hodgkin's disease, and died at an early age.

Floyd and Lloyd tell a story I have trouble believing it: their horse's visit to the house. When the twins were young and still living on the farm, they owned several horses, as did most farm families. In our case, we owned mules. But Floyd and Lloyd had this favorite horse, that in their eyes, could do no wrong.

One day they decided that it would be a good thing for the horse to visit their home. They sprinkled some water over the horse's hooves to clean them off, placed a halter and leash on him, and proceeded to move toward the front porch. The horse had to climb about four steps, up onto the front porch. The boys opened the front screen door, led him carefully through the living room, then the dining room, finally the kitchen, out onto the back porch, and carefully down six steps onto the ground.

And why? Just because!

One of the most memorable things about my school years happened one particular Halloween. We children knew there was a haunted house way back on a deserted farm. We begged our parents to let us go see it, and, to our surprise, one year our folks told us we were going there on Halloween.

This was going to be the “Big One.” At the ripe old ages of seven, eight, and nine, my best friends and I were finally going to visit a REAL haunted house on Halloween! We were so excited that we could hardly wait.

My parents and I drove to my friends’ house, where we met two schoolmates, Robert and Mary Ann. All seven of us packed into Mom and Dad’s almost new, shiny ’41 Ford. We three kids were laughing and clutching each others’ hands as we drove through the pasture with its spooky shadows reflected by the moon.

We came to a farm gate which was old and rusty, but my Dad finally got it opened. He drove our car on through, then carefully shut the gate so the cows wouldn’t get out. Dad got back behind the wheel, and we drove down, down, down the hill. We drove away from farm lights, even from the cows, farther and farther and farther. At last Dad parked the car.

“This is it, everyone out,” Dad said. The darkness was complete. There were funny smells from rotting pines in the creek bed; we heard the flapping wings of birds overhead, and crinkly, crisp leaves whispering to each other when the ever present prairie winds touched them. Should we turn back? We didn’t want to be alone. Supposing a wolf saw us—his beady black eyes shining, his teeth bared? Supposing a bat, flapping his nasty black wings, swooped down to us? We wanted to turn back, but we had to go on.

Dad smiled cheerily, and said, “I’ll go part way with you, you won’t have any trouble finding it.” We wished we felt as cheerful!

The large beam from his flashlight swooping out ahead of him was reassuring. The osage orange hedgerow was on one side of the path, a grove of walnut trees on the other. We heard the bubbling water from the spring-fed creek, nice everyday sights and sounds that we were used to. Almost as soon as we heard the water, we saw the house.

Dad gave us another one of his cheery smiles—he was almost laughing. “O.K. There it is. Have fun! I’ll wait for you in the car.”

Then he was gone. The full moon was out now, and bathed the old, two-story clapboard house with a ghostly, green light. A shutter was twisted off its hinge and banged with a menacing thud every time the wind blew. The house loomed larger and larger the closer we got to it. We were sick with fear. We grasped each others’ hands. We girls whispered that we wanted to go back.

My friend, Robert, looked pale and wan in the moonlight. He swallowed hard and said, “No, we’ve got to do it. We’re going in.”

We got to the door, which had no knob. It was slightly askew in its frame. No one would go in first, not even Robert. So we all squeezed through the doorway at once. Our legs were numb and heavy. Our throats were parched and taut. We stood transfixed by the awfulness of the moment. We breathed little shallow pants. We did not dare speak.

Then we heard a faint pounding upstairs. Something was up there! In spite of our fear, we involuntarily looked upward. We saw something bright and shining gleaming through the floorboards. It looked like monster eyes. We heard a howl.

We froze, and then an instant later we were transformed into a mass of blubbering hysteria. We screamed, fought to get out of the house first, ran, fell, picked ourselves up, and scrambled up the hill to reach our parents.

We shouted and cried as we ran, and soon were in our parents’ comforting arms. My friends’ folks had mysteriously appeared. For some reason, they didn’t spring into action when we told them about the horrible monster we saw. In fact, they seemed exceedingly calm.

And then I noticed that Dad wasn’t there.

“Where is he?”

“Oh, he just took a little walk, he’ll be back soon.”

We told them again about the awful THING we saw. “Aren’t you going to do something?” And then we saw Dad. He was coming toward us from a direction opposite from the house. I wondered where he had been. He had his brightly shining

flashlight with him. He looked like he had been running. Was he scared, too? But Dad had a strange little smile on his face. I had no idea why.

Chapter 9 **Dad Is With Me**

The thing about being Orville David Howe's daughter is that you also have Father Samuel, Father Eber, and Father Orville Duane close beside you. Dad didn't dwell on the past, but when he did, it was in the larger context of the fathers gone before us. The ghosts of ages past were benevolent. They were always there, making their presence known. We felt their love from the great beyond, or the "summer land", and we trusted in their help and guidance.

My father had a slight speech impediment. He would blurt out a group of words, stuttering and dropping some of the syllables in an effort to speak as fast as he thought. If he was really determined he would slow down, speak carefully and clearly, but then he didn't sound like Dad.

If communication with the dead was possible, communicating with the living was sometime difficult, especially for my father. He had a slight speech impediment. Dad would blurt out a group of words, stuttering and dropping some of the syllables in an effort to speak as fast as he thought. If he was really determined he would slow down, speak carefully and clearly, but then he didn't sound like Dad.

I was embarrassed by his difficulty speaking. Dad always tried to make me happy, and that meant taking me places, speaking to people, and, in general, acting differently from others.

Dad had a million sayings that live with the family still. Any time the phone would ring, he said, "Answer your phone!" If he called you, and you told him you were coming, he would be compelled to add, "So is Christmas!" Whenever family members quarreled, he said "Kiss and make up!"

Looking back at all the sayings of my father, I can only conclude he was sad, knowing he didn't fit in. He often said "I wasn't meant to live, Helen, and never should have been born." He was a centennial baby, born at just after midnight, January 1, 1901. When he was just three days old, he contracted pneumonia. Living in a drafty old Nebraska farmhouse, in the dead of winter, it's a wonder he survived. But he did

live, surviving pneumonia, surviving the Great Flu of 1918, and he told his daughter and grandchildren about it.

Dad often said “I never do anything right.” Usually he said this after something went wrong and Mom let him know it was his fault; a machine broke down because it was handled too roughly or hadn’t been maintained. But morning, noon and night Dad would tell Mom he loved her. He and my mother married after a brief six-month courtship, during which time they only saw each other twice. He was 12 years older than she was. Dad wrote her love letters, writing things like, “My beloved darling, I love you. I have told you before, but you may have forgotten it. If you have, let me repeat that I LOVE YOU!” Whenever Dad visited, he would say “I love Viola Bergman, I love her daughter, too. I love her daughter’s children, all of the blasted crew!”

I’ll never forget visiting Dad in the hospital when he was dying. I got to his room late at night. Mom was there with him. I bent down to kiss him, and said, “Hi, Dad, this is Helen. I’ve just flown in to see you.” He opened his eyes and turned his head toward me. He tried to speak, but it was no use. It sounded jumbled to us, and he knew it. He pressed my hand ever so slightly and tried to reach his arm toward me. I kissed him again, and didn’t care that my cheeks were hot and moist. All I’d wanted was to get there in time, and, thankfully, I had.

For 45 years our relationship had been a roller coaster as we talked, argued, criticized, complained, laughed, learned and nettled each other. Who was my father, and what was his relationship to Samuel, Eber, Orville Duane, and Edmund Howe?

He was the one, who, when I was four, took me to church on a decrepit old horse so that I could get a Sunday school pin for perfect attendance. A late spring thaw had left the roads muddy and impassable; our cars and tractor were of no use. Dad didn’t want to ride because he was afraid that Jenny might not be strong enough to hold him and walk a long distance. He led Jenny by the reins for the six miles to church, and then we turned around and walked the six miles back.

All I remember is that even though we left home at 8:00 a.m., we didn’t get to church till just before noon. The services were over by then, and the ladies in their ruffled hats were leaving the church. They crowded near us. When they heard our

story they exclaimed, “Why Orville, what a wonderful thing for you to do. Of course Helen will get her pin!”

Once, I was sick with measles and confined to bed. “Dad, tell me a story.” As soon as I said the words I was sorry, for I knew what he would say. “I’ll tell you a story about Jack ‘n’ Orey, and now my story’s begun....”

I cried out in frustration. “No, Dad, not about him! I’ve heard ‘Jack ‘n’ Orey’ millions of times!”

Dad was undeterred. He continued, “I’ll tell you another, about his brother, and now my story is done!”

Finally he began his “real” story and he proceeded to tell me about the time his brothers used his towhead as an opportunity to experiment with the printing press. By the time they were finished “my hair got black and sticky and was a mess.” Before long, Grandmother Mamie, their mother, found out what they were doing, and spoiled all the fun. Although the Howe family didn’t believe in spanking, or any kind of violence, Mrs. Howe made sure that their heads were thoroughly washed outside, in great big tubs of cold water. And then she hid the printing press in a place that was not accessible to little boys.

One thing that I miss most about my dad is that he knew the answer to any question you might ask, whether it be about astronomy, history, literature, or geography. Who was the 33rd president? What was the New Deal? How could Hitler get away with murder? Why did the Germans let him? Who were the Acadians in *Evangeline*? He spit the answers out fast and furiously. Much of the time it was hard to understand him. “Slow down, Dad, I can’t understand what you’re saying.” It was embarrassing. No other kid had a father who talked funny.

Dad was a self-educated man, and had read almost everything. Although he made his living by farming, he was not a typical farmer. Most farmers don’t review the history of England while doing spring plowing. But Dad did. His corn rows were crooked, and his tractor was always breaking down. He couldn’t straighten the rows or fix the tractor.

Dad didn’t go to college like his two brothers did. Both of them went to the university, and earned their doctorates. Because of Dad’s speech impediment,

Grandfather Edmund thought Dad wasn't smart, so Dad wound up with the family farm instead of a college education. Dad thought his father was fair, even though I bristled. How dare his parents denigrate my dad's ability? I knew my father was just as smart as his brothers, even though he had trouble talking. His brothers knew how smart Dad was, and I've read the letters they wrote him, asking for factual information, whether it was mathematical, scientific, or historical. In some ways, Dad was the family researcher. My cousins tell the story from a different angle. No one, it seemed, wanted to be stuck with the farm and care of parents Edmund and Mamie, so the brothers left home and married earlier.

Dad always seemed to be saying the wrong thing. After breakfast, we'd hear: "There was an old man of Cape Horn, who wished he had never been born;

So he sat on a chair, till he died of despair, that dolorous man of Cape Horn."

I hated Lear's *Nonsense Verses!*" Or Dad would quote poetry: "And yet, through the gloom and the light, the fate of a nation was riding that night."

Always literary, Dad named each generation of our registered Guernsey cows with a letter of the alphabet, starting with the letter "A." In the "L" generation, he named one steer "Lazarus." We fattened this steer up, had it butchered, and put all its steaks and ground beef in our freezer. One day Mom asked Dad to get some steaks out for lunch. Mom was not amused when Dad went to the freezer, opened it, and said, quoting the Bible, "Lazarus, come forth!"

"Oh, Orville," Mom would say with an exasperated sigh.

But that didn't stop Dad, and any time he had to get a steak out, he would use the same quote, "Lazarus, come forth!"

Dad liked to laugh, and found amusement in ordinary situations. He would try to tell jokes, but they weren't about sex, booze, or ethnic minorities. He didn't drink, smoke, or use bad language, and he certainly wasn't a racist. He loved to make literary allusions, and didn't care to discuss farming, which was the primary topic of conversation in Table Rock, our farming community. Even if Dad didn't have trouble speaking, the subject matter of his humorous stories wouldn't have seemed funny to those around him. But never one to have hurt feelings or nurse a grudge, Dad just kept

trying to entertain people and make them happy, according to his lights. People would often say how strange they found him, when they thought I couldn't hear.

Dad was the county surveyor, carrying on the tradition of his father and the grandfather for whom he was named. I used to hate it when Dad couldn't get anyone to help him besides me. He would ask me to assist him. "It will be fun, Helen. You really don't have to do anything, just hold the surveying line perfectly still till I have everything measured perfectly." I absolutely hated doing it. It was boring, and there was nothing to do till Dad got everything measured accurately. After all, he was the official county surveyor. I would stand on one foot, and then the other, counting the seconds till the job was done. I was incredulous when our oldest son would visit his grandparents, and beg to go surveying with his grandpa. Dad's genes obviously skipped me.

Dad was also the official weather observer for the Table Rock precinct, and kept that position till 1961. Dad faithfully retained the U.S. Department of Commerce Weather Bureau forms that he used to compile these records. Our family has retained weather booklets and sheets that range from 1935 to 1960. Older records, from 1893-1897 were given to the current weather observer. Dad received at least one letter from a supervising climatologist thanking him for the work he had done.

Our friend Elmo, now 80 years of age, told me about a surveying experience he had with Dad. It was Elmo's duty to drag the surveying chain and hold it perfectly still, while Dad used the surveying tripod. One farmer contested Dad's measurements, and said that he was off by two feet and four inches. Dad measured and re-measured and could not see that he had made a mistake. Finally he sat for awhile and thought about it. Eureka, he discovered the problem. As there were few landmarks in the field, Dad had previously placed a bottle on a tree branch and used that as a marker. Dad then realized that during the intervening years the branch had bent in such a way that it affected the original measurement. Dad and Elmo then proceeded to determine where the marker should be and measured the property to both the landowner's satisfaction and his own.

Sometimes, in the summer, after his evening chores were done and it had become dark, Dad would come into the house and excitedly call for me to come with him. We'd go outside, step off the front porch and into the yard. There we could see the

Northern Lights, not as brilliantly as in Alaska or Canada, but we could see them just the same. There were no street lights or jet planes overhead to detract from the view. The Nebraska skies were fog-free and not clouded by pollution or smog. The air was dry, the skies were clear, and we were awe-struck to see the sight. There were no words to express our amazement at seeing this wonder.

When I was growing up, I found my father's habits annoying. I sometimes had the lead in the high school play, and would have long speeches. It took me time to memorize the parts, but Dad would quote it back to me after hearing me practice just a few times. Here I had to work so hard to learn the part, and Dad could effortlessly recite all my lines, word for word. Of course, after I graduated from high school I realized what a feat that was. Dad's mind was incredibly sharp.

Could my father sing? Oh, he knew every church hymn by heart and he sang them loudly. Of course, he never managed to hit the right note, never once. He listened to me play the piano at my recitals, and cheerfully drove me to every musical contest and band competition that I entered. He did all this chauffeuring in the bright, dry spring days, when other farmers were putting in their crops. Dad's crops were sometimes hit or miss. But he never missed taking me to a concert. What joy or pleasure could he have had in listening to a high school band? It was his way of showing his love for me, but I didn't appreciate it at the time.

I went to grade school in a country school, less than a mile from our farm house. I was always a smart-mouth, and I loved to make wisecracks, which I thought were hilarious. I loved to give sarcastic commentary to the teacher's words or actions. Sometimes it got to be a too much for our teacher, Elmer, and he ordered me to go into the cloak room and stay there until he told me it was time to come out. I had no problem with that, it was what I deserved. My dad was on the school board. One particular time when I was banished to the cloak room, Elmer came and tried to get me out. He'd seen my father coming, and he was afraid. After I got home, I told Dad what happened, and he laughed, saying that I probably got what I deserved. And I did, no doubt.

Another time, I had a single teacher who was too friendly with a married school board member. She gave us an assignment, and disappeared into the cloakroom with

her “friend.” My dad happened to come by the school, and, of course, our teacher was not at her desk. He went into the cloakroom to find her. She didn’t teach there for long.

Dad was asked to be umpire at our farming town’s softball games. He served as umpire for one season, but wasn’t asked to serve again, probably because of his absolute sense of fairness and accuracy. Whenever he had to make a pronouncement, like, “you’re out!” he would quote extensively from the rule book, and give the audience a detailed description of why the batter was out, in strict accordance to the rules. That didn’t go over well with the baseball fans.

Once, Dad was driving his trusty tractor, and as he drove down the side of an embankment, the tractor tipped over on its side. He couldn’t right it by himself. Dad wasn’t hurt, luckily, but the tractor couldn’t be used. So he went to a neighbor, and asked him to help get the tractor up. The neighbor was glad to help: following the rules of rural communities, neighbors always helped neighbors. It happened mid-morning. Around mid-afternoon, Dad went to get the neighbor again, and explained that he had tipped the tractor over again. This time he’d done it on purpose, he assured the neighbor. Dad reasoned that the tractor shouldn’t have tipped the first time, and he performed a “scientific” experiment to prove it. Unfortunately, Dad wasn’t right, and the tractor tipped over the second time, as it had the first.

Dad was very determined. Although he used a tractor to do farm work, sometimes the fields were muddy and the tractor would get stuck. On those occasions he used one of the cantankerous old mules, Josh or Jenny. Jenny was particularly stubborn, and liked to have her own way. Dad was plowing a field near the railroad track; Jenny bolted for freedom. But she hadn’t reckoned on Dad’s stubbornness. Dad hung on to the reins for dear life, and was dragged through the field over rocks, mud, potholes, and old cornstalks. Jenny puffed and panted, racing all over the field, no doubt thinking dragging Dad was harder than dragging a plow. Dad, meanwhile, with torn overalls, bleeding arms, broken eyeglasses, and smashed hat, was still hanging on. Jenny wore out, and finally stopped. Dad shouted, “Ha! I told you--- you weren’t going to get away!”

As the years went by, farming changed. It was no longer possible for an individual to make a living on a small family farm. The era of big farming and agri-

business had come to the heartland. Families would create mini-cooperatives of 500 to a 1,000 or more acres, forming partnerships with siblings, relatives, and children. Dad had no siblings living in Nebraska, and only one child, a daughter, who was not going to be a farmer's wife--- nor did he want her to be. When Dad was 60, he and Mom moved to a nearby town and rented their land to a neighbor.

Mom became a home economics teacher, and then a special education teacher. Dad held a series of odd jobs. His first job in town was as a meter-reader. Naturally, he took his responsibilities seriously, and performed them with complete fairness. If he found a car parked for over two hours in the same spot, he'd mark the tire with white chalk, and he would ticket it if it wasn't moved promptly. Dad's job with the city ended when he tangled with the mayor. Dad followed his principles, and if he was supposed to give a ticket to the average citizen, it held true for the mayor, too. The mayor didn't agree, and Dad lost his job.

Thinking about my father, and life on the farm, I know now, as I think I did then, how much I loved the man. Other people didn't understand him, and he had no close friends. People would say, "Orville is a good man, the most honest man you could ever meet." Or, "he means well," or "Orville is very generous." All those things were true, but he wasn't really loved or appreciated by anyone except his family. Dad lived in his own world, a place that was out of step, out of touch with those living around him. He marched to the beat of his own drummer.

During my last visit to see him, he was gasping for breath. The doctor said he had a massive cerebral hemorrhage, and wouldn't live long. I cried, unashamed, beside him in the hospital room. He knew that he was dying. I think he knew how much I loved him, I hope he did. I surely knew how much he loved me. Dad tried to smile. He mumbled, and tried to write on a piece of paper, but it made no sense, it was jumbled. He squeezed my hand.

The night before he died, the nurse let me stretch out on a cot in his room. I dozed back to sleep after she came in to help him during a coughing spell. In my mind's eye, I saw Dad. I knew he had died, but he was in a bright and golden place. He was laughing there, and walking with a spring in his step. He was singing, and seemed so happy.

When I woke up, I wasn't sad; it wasn't a depressing image that I'd seen. It was comforting, because I knew that Dad was released. He would never be laughed at again. He would speak clearly. He would have the friends that he tried so hard to have and hadn't found during his life. His farm would be beautiful and perfect; the rows of corn would always be straight. He would be loved.

I love you Dad, and I miss you.

Chapter 10 **The Last Word**

Why did I write this book? Have the ghosts of the past compelled me to write this story for almost 50 years? I can't remember not wanting to tell the Howe story.

When my folks left the farm and moved to town, Grandpa Bergman made sure that my husband and I got the things we wanted. He knew that after we left, my parents would have an antique dealer come in and take the rest. Dennis and I didn't want any of the stuff. We thought it was all junk. Grandpa wouldn't have that. Although he was a kind and gentle man, he made sure that we rented a trailer, and loaded up the things he insisted on. We were unhappy loading up old furniture, books, papers and pictures. What would we do with those things? We knew that it would hurt Grandpa's feelings if we didn't take everything he suggested. My parents weren't urging us to take things, they didn't want them either.

We grumbled and groaned all the way home, hauling a trailer and having two young and rambunctious boys in the back seat. We wondered what on earth we would do with all the documents and furniture once we got back home.

After we arrived home and began unloading things, we saw that the furniture we had brought with us didn't look so bad. And then we started getting compliments from parishioners who commented on all the antiques. We told Grandpa Bergman how grateful we were that he "made" us take things from the farm. He was pleased, and eventually we learned that the furniture we brought was not only old, but valuable. What a pleasant surprise!

There were boxes of original documents, letters, diaries, pictures and memorabilia. What should we do with them?

A life-long friend, a descendant of Peter Foale, and a neighbor of our family, began urging me to write the Howe story. Floyd Vrtiska, a retired state senator, asked me how I was coming with the story every time I visited him and his wife in Nebraska. He often said, "You're lucky you have all this material, you really ought to write it up," or "My family didn't record their story like yours did, it needs to be told." Sometimes I

would receive a call from him asking how I was coming along. He occasionally sent me original documents or pictures that I didn't have.

So out of curiosity about what kind of people my ancestors were, I decided to begin the project. Over 10 years ago I began, writing drafts in my spare time, adding a little here and there as I read another letter or diary, and finally getting all the materials organized.

I had time to reflect on the Howe legacy and its gene pool. Have we changed? Do we have anyone in the last three generations that was as adventurous as Samuel Howe? He served on an American privateer and lived to tell the story.

We do have family members who lived extraordinary lives. Uncle Herbert, my dad's brother, received his Ph.D. in Mathematics, and was asked to accompany Admiral Byrd to Antarctica when he made his expedition during the winter of 1946-1947. We have letters from Uncle Herbert who tells us:

- Sunday, January 26 I went to the...first church service ever to be held on Antarctica
- Wed., Jan. 8 To-day, I set foot off the ship for the first time in over four weeks....to get on the ice to make magnetic observations...I had just started setting up instruments when 3 penguins came along and complained loudly. I understand they had followed us from the ship.
- The snow and sky are intensely brilliant, and sun-glasses must be worn, or snow-blindness results, causing permanent injury to the eyes.
- Friday, Feb.28: We crossed the Antarctic Circle, and I will never see the Frigid Zone again ---or so I say now.
- March 6, 1947...Who is in charge of this expedition?...Technical control is retained by the Chief of Naval Operations. Rear Admiral Richard E. Byrd (Retired) acting for the Chief of Naval Operations, has been designated as Officer-in-Chief of the project.

Eber Howe, Samuel's son was the founder of the Painesville *Telegraph*, writer and publisher of *Mormonism Unveiled* [sic], who, along with his wife, actively supported the Abolitionist cause. Although we don't have a newspaper founder among recent descendants, we do have many writers who have published books and articles.

My dad liked to write, and tried unsuccessfully to get his stories published. There are my Dad's letters to Mom, when they were courting. An October 14, 1932, letter

begins, “Beloved: I love you. I have told you that before but it should be said often in case you should begin to doubt it. Besides I like to say it. Therefore let me repeat that I love you.”

A letter written February 6, 1933, begins, “My darling sweetheart: I love my sweetheart and hope to marry her when she is ready. I don’t want to rush her, but it seems a long time to wait. Perhaps in after times she will wish we had waited longer. I love her.” Mom and Dad got married March 5, 1933, when Mom was 19 years of age and Dad was 32, so Dad’s letters were evidently persuasive. Their marriage of 47 years ended when Dad passed away at age 79, in 1980.

Eber’s son, Orville Duane, a teacher and educator, gentleman farmer, county surveyor, vegetarian (at least for some of his life), with a continuing interest in geology, has descendants who closely follow in his footsteps. His son Edmund was a teacher, farmer, county surveyor and intellectual. One grandson, Orville David, became a farmer; both Orville David and his father Edmund were county surveyors.

His two other grandsons, Tom and Herbert were professors and researchers, and Herbert was a lifelong vegetarian. Among his great-grandchildren at least 3 became teachers, one became a lawyer and one became a geology researcher. His great-great-grandchildren include at least one civil engineer and several teachers.

When it comes to politics and social action, there is little change, beginning with Eber, continuing to the present. Progressive in politics, advocating for the “underdog”, opposed to any kind of discrimination, tolerant of differences, supportive of non-violence, and standing up for individual or group rights are characteristics of the Howe family even today.

It is not always easy being a Howe. They support Abolitionist causes in the newspaper they operate and anger readers. They provide a station on the underground railroad. They disagree with teachers and professors about slavery and become *persona non grata*. They give the mayor a ticket out of principle, and lose jobs. They stand up for the rights of minorities, including the gay and lesbian community, and become admired by some and disliked by others.

Unspoken rules that most, if not all of the Howe family members live by include: 1) Always keep your word, 2) Live a moral life, 3) Get all the education you can, and 4)

Live life rationally, not emotionally. These are not get rich quick mottos, but hearken back to Eber Howe's creed, including, " I believe that every person is rewarded for goodness and punished for evilness...I believe in the universal triumph of truth, justice and love. I believe in the principles of eternal progression and development. ...I expect to make, as I have made, some honest progress within twenty-four hours."

The ghosts of the past are not frightening; they are the Howe ancestors who have given so much. Every time I visit Nebraska, my family and I spend time in the Table Rock Cemetery, where my parents, husband, grandparents, great-grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, friends, and a Civil War soldier are buried. The cemetery is filled with pine trees, peony plants and lush green grass. It is a peaceful place and a wonderful resting place for those who have entered the "summer land." Someone always puts flowers on the graves of my parents and the Civil War soldier before Memorial Day. We mourn those who have gone on before us and who have made such a big difference in our lives. They live on.

The ghosts of the past no longer scare me. I can never visit Orchard Grove Farm or the Table Rock Cemetery without shedding tears. This is where my life began, where I grew up, and where I saw the principles and values practiced by those who have gone before. I don't want life to change, I want to keep all those from my past who were so near and dear to me.

What is the answer? There is none, as far as I can tell. A poem, called "The Dead," written by my great-grandmother, Mary E. Pepon Howe gives me consolation.

"We think of them, the beautiful,
The fair, the young, the gay.
That clustered round our pathway here
For many a joyous day.
In dreams our fancy pictures them
As by our side once more,
And memory hoards each look and word
Within their golden store.

We look upon their vacant place

And think they must be there,
And wait to hear their coming step
Till memory brings despair:
With grief we wander through the haunts
Where they were wont to be,
And we cherish each memento
With love's fidelity.

The dead—their memory lingers long
Within the faithful heart,
And never from the soul bereaved
Their image can depart:
But we may hope to meet with them
When life with us is fled,
And join around our Father's throne
The beautiful—the dead.”

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