
THE WILDERS OF NORTH CHINA
Volume III of the Wilder-Stanley Saga

PROLOGUE:

TWO PIONEER CHILDHOODS

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Editor's Preface

Both George and Gertrude Wilder left us brief descriptions of their early years – “Random Jottings” and “Stories from Memories of My Life” – which we have included as a Prologue to “The Wilders in China.”

Gertrude Wilder’s “Random Jottings” was transcribed by her namesake – Gertrude Menzi Dottle – in 1959, two years before her death at age 92. This brief memoir takes us from her birth in Tientsin in 1870 to the Wilders’ expulsion by the Japanese from Peking along with other “enemy nationals” for internment in the “Civilian Assembly Center” at Weih sien, in Shantung province. We have included in this Prologue only the first chapters of “Random Jottings,” up to George Wilder’s arrival in China. The complete memoir appears in its proper chronological place toward the end of The Wilder-Stanley Saga.

George Wilder began his “Stories from Memories of My Life,” which he intended to expand into a full-length memoir, some time after his 1945 visit to the site of his family’s old homestead in Huron, South Dakota. In it, he tells us that he planned to write a brief chapter about his ancestors, to be followed by a chapter about his childhood in Ohio and one describing frontier life on the Dakota prairie. He also planned at a later time to write about “things of significance and interest connected with my life in China.” His “Stories” includes the first and third chapters of his planned life story, but his death in 1946 at age 75 deprived us of his other memories, both of his early childhood and of his later life in China.

In addition to George Wilder’s “Stories,” the Prologue includes his “Reminiscences of a Yankton Student,” an address he gave at the Annual Meeting of the Congregational Conference of South Dakota as part of Yankton College’s Founder’s Day celebrations in 1945.

Donald Menzi, October 2003

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RANDOM JOTTINGS

By Gertrude Stanley Wilder

**A memoir based on an oral history recorded and typewritten
by the Wilders' granddaughter, Gertrude Menzi Dottle**

March 1959

RANDOM JOTTINGS

By Gertrude Stanley Wilder

As I begin this story, and before I mention myself, I must write at least a paragraph about my parents.

My father's home was Stanleyville, near Marietta, Ohio. He was brought up on a farm but spent his college years in Marietta, and from there went to Lane Seminary, Cincinnati, for his theological studies. It was while there that he met my mother, Ursula Johnson, whose home was in Cincinnati, and persuaded her to go with him to North China as missionaries under the American Board. My mother used to say that "Some people were born great and some were born in Ohio." My parents were born in Ohio and they were great.

The voyage to China was a long one, as it took them nearly six months to round the Horn and cross the Pacific, but they finally reached Tientsien, where they were welcomed by Dr. Blodget - the first American Missionary in North China - and by Mr. and Mrs. Lees of the English Congregational Church.

They made their home at first in a small courtyard inside the walled city of Tientsien, but in a year or two, for health reasons, they joined the group of English missionaries near the British concession.

Mother loved flowers. In the summer our garden was always in full bloom and in the winter our glazed-in porch was filled with ferns and many kinds of flowering plants.

It was to Mother that missionaries from the interior on their way home on furlough came to have their clothes remodeled and their old hats re-trimmed. One such hat was a hopeless mess, but instead of discarding it immediately, Mother somehow got it too near the lighted candle during the ripping process and it went up in flames. Immediately, one of her own old hats was refurbished with satisfactory results. Lucius Porter, then a young lad, seems to have played a part in that hat burning.

When the editor of the Missionary Herald asked for suggestions that would add value to the magazine, Mother thought of suggesting a fashion supplement!

Father was just as fond of trees as Mother was of flowering plants. He tried for several years to raise buckeyes - the Ohio State tree - but never succeeded because of the dry, cold winters. On his first furlough, Father took a "quickie" dental course and for years he was the only one north of Shanghai who could pull teeth and fill cavities. With the very crude implements of that day he was a mixed blessing to many people, Chinese and foreign.

Growing Up in Tientsin

I was born in 1870, missing the Tientsin Massacre by only six months. That was an anti-foreign, localized affair, the natural result of hatred and suspicion engendered by the Opium War. Superstition was also a factor, for it was a time of drought and famine, and the lack of rain was said to be due to the presence of foreigners. The small group of foreigners living in the walled city were all killed and that night it poured! The plan was to over-run the larger foreign community living about two miles from the city the next day, but the rain made the dirt roads impassable and swift action by the government put a stop to the trouble. It was a harrowing experience while it lasted --- almost forgotten now.

Father was on a country tour in Shantung at the time, but rumors flew and he at once started back to Tientsin in spite of the protests of the carter, who was thoroughly scared. By the time he reached home all was over but the "Massacre" must have been a subject of conversation for some years, for when I was quite young my mother heard me telling a caller that I stood on the back steps holding tight to my mother while we watched the flames from the burning Catholic Church. She had difficulty convincing me that I was not there. The "Massacre" was in June and I was born the following December.

Of the six children, two died when very young; the first baby girl from smallpox and Jessie, the little sister three years younger than I, from typhus fever. That was a terrible famine year. Destitute people fled from the country to the cities where they hoped for relief. Mat sheds were put up for them in open spaces outside the city wall, where they lived in hunger, misery and filth for several months. The small groups of missionaries did what they could with limited means, going among the people to distribute food. Jessie was undoubtedly a famine casualty, for no one knew then that lice were carriers of typhus, hence no special precautions were taken. She was a beautiful child.

As a result of Father's trips to the famine district to distribute relief, a delegation from one of the larger villages came some months later to inquire why it was that perfect strangers and foreigners had come to their help. They offered their village temple for use and asked that some one might be sent to preach and to teach. That is how our first mission work began in Pan Chuang¹, where the Smiths, the Porters and the Wycoff sisters were stationed and worked for years.

Four of us children grew up together. As I look back it seems to me that our childhood years were fairly normal and happy, although we had few playmates.

¹ Pangzhuang.

One of my earliest recollections is that of my father reading out loud to us after supper, while Mother sewed and we all sat around the dining room table listening. The book was In Darkest Africa by Henry M. Stanley, which in fact made me feel quite important since our name was Stanley, too.

We always had family prayers directly after supper and I remember wishing that my father wouldn't pray so long. Much later I realized that his prayers were beautiful in their sincerity and expression. But they did seem awfully long to a little girl.

There was no school, so my early education was the "on again, off again" kind, for our home was the way-station for most of the arriving and departing missionaries. Sometimes they would stay with us for only a few days, sometimes for weeks, and during those times, lessons had to take a secondary place. My other was the teacher, of course. There were compensations, however, for we met many people whom we would have never seen otherwise, some of them notables like Hudson Taylor, world famous founder of the China Inland Mission. One notable who lived in our compound and was a member of our mission was Dr. Arthur H. Smith.² He was an omnivorous reader, a brilliant writer and speaker, whose stories and jokes were just as good in Chinese as they were in English. Uncle Ming, as we called him, always had time for us children whenever we might drop in to ask him for a poem or a story. I remember one Sunday when we trailed over to the Smith house for a poem. "Well," said Uncle Ming, "This is the Sabbath day so it will have to be a religious poem." That was quite all right with us, so this is what we got:

"A partially converted mule,
Attended once a Sunday School.
But Satan lingered in his heels,
And so the school dispersed with squeals."

We children, a few years later, published a paper, "The Family Friend." It was printed with aniline ink on a gelatin pad - a messy job - and came out once a month. Uncle Ming was our star contributor, and his poems, stories and letters to the editors explain in part the popularity of our modest sheet.

Some unconnected incidents pop into mind.

One day I lost a small, treasured thimble in the grass and weeds, so I tested the power of prayer. Fortunately, I found the thimble, but not until I had done some intensive hunting.

² Among Arthur H. Smith's books that are still available in used book dealers and on the Internet are: *Proverbs and Common Sayings from the Chinese* (1886), *Chinese Characteristics* (1894, re-printed in 2003), *Village Life in China, a Study in Sociology* (1899), *The Uplift of China* (1907) and *China in Convulsion*, a two-volume history of the Boxer Rebellion (1901).

I well remember the ghastly appearance of the sun and sky when the Krakatao volcano "blew its top" and my questioning as to whether or not the world was coming to an end. It looked ominous, but I don't remember being frightened by the awesome spectacle or by the thought of sudden translation.

Our next door neighbors were English Congregationalists and warm friends. Their daughter, Laura, was my dearest playmate and we had good times together, although we occasionally had language difficulties. For instance, she said that he was John the Baptist while I insisted that he was John the Baptist. One day Father brought a new cow, the only way in which we could get milk and a process that had to be repeated as soon as the cow went dry. This special cow seemed unfriendly to say the least. When we girls went to the shed to look at her and she began to shake her head and paw the ground, I said to Laura, "Don't go any nearer, she's mad," whereupon Laura ran home to tell her parents that the Stanley's cow was crazy. It wasn't long before the whole Lees family came over to see how a demented cow behaved. To me, "mad" meant "cross."

When I was quite young, our old Chinese amah told me that I had made a mistake in being born a girl; that having two girls already my parents had not wanted me at all. They wanted a boy. Instead of going to my mother about it, I tested her affection by falling down where she could see me and hurting myself just enough to cry out and produce a few crocodile tears. Mother sympathized with me enough to put my mind almost at rest and then I told her what old Chao-ma had said. Her assurance the Chao-ma was all wrong and that I was loved just as much as if I had been a boy settled the matter once and for all, leaving no scars on my small heart as far as I know. When my brother, Charles, eventually arrived, there was great rejoicing among the Chinese, to whose way of thinking a boy-less family is quite incomplete.

When we were nine or ten years old it occurred to Laura and me that we ought to be doing some good, so we decided to start a little school for the benefit of our cooks' children. Father had a store room cleared out and we gave it a good cleaning. No benches were necessary for there was a k'ang (brick platform bed) that answered every purpose. We started with six pupils and our course of study was to memorize the Lord's Prayer and to learn to read the three character catechism. Our school lasted for only two weeks for, much to our confusion, we always got muddled when about half way through the prayer and we found that our pupils could outstrip us when it came to learning new characters. We were poor teachers whose small charges gradually melted away. Thus ended our do-good venture.

I always liked to watch Mother pack the food box when Father went on his country tours. This was a large, shallow box with compartments lined with tin, into which went home-made bread, butter (from France), sugar (from England), condensed milk (from America) and always dozens of doughnuts and other things.

These country trips sometimes lasted two or three months and they meant a great deal of rough going for my father. On the long trips the food box was necessary because Father couldn't stand a steady diet of Chinese food.

Every winter there were one or two foreign gun-boats stationed at Tientsin for the protection of the legations in Peking. There were two United State gun-boats that took their turns guarding the legations - the Monocasy and the Palos.³

Photo # NH 65784 USS Monocasy and SMS Wolf in winter quarters at Tientsin, China, 1894-95



Source: U.S. Naval Historical Center: www.history.navy.mil/photos

When I was quite small, my parent became interested in two midshipmen who were serving their apprenticeship on the Monocasy. One of them came to our house a great deal during that winter. After the river was open again and the boat returned to the United States, he and Mother exchanged letters for several years. I remember pictures of him, his wife and little daughter in our family album.

³ The Monocasy, a side-wheeler, was first launched in 1881.

More than fifty years afterwards when we were living in Peking, the Secretary of the United States legation called me up to say that Admiral K_____ was in Peking and that the first question he asked was whether anyone by the name of Stanley was still in North China. He went on to quote Admiral K_____ as saying that had it not been for Mrs. Stanley, he would have never risen to his present rank. It was access to our home and especially her influence that had saved him from the pitfalls of life in port that had entrapped some of his shipmates. Mr. Tenney brought the admiral and his charming daughter to our house for tea that afternoon and we had a delightful time remembering things of long ago. Once more he said, "I owe everything I am to Mrs. Stanley" – a beautiful tribute that must have made my mother feel happy.

Off to School in Oberlin, Ohio

In 1884, Mother, with three children, went to the United States to put us into regular schools. (My oldest sister, Mary, had been in America for four years and had completed high school.) The trip was a long one for we stopped at many ports along the way to deliver our cargo, which was tea, and to replenish our fuel, which was soft coal. Because a case of cholera developed on the ship no one was allowed to go on shore at any of the ports, not even we four who were the only passengers, so no sightseeing could be done at the interesting places where we stopped. We skirted the China coast, rounded Malaya and India, passed through the Red Sea, the Suez Canal, the Mediterranean, the Straits of Gibraltar, crossed the Atlantic and finally landed in New York without having set foot on dry land. The ship's steward had laid in a stock of provisions including some live sheep and chickens (there was no cold storage) but things began to give out and toward the end there was no butter, sugar or condensed milk. Hot cereal doesn't taste as it should with molasses instead of milk and sugar. It was a really hard trip but it was easy on the Board financially.

From New York we went to Marietta where we encountered more water - the flood of 1884, one of the worst in history. From my uncle's home we went by rowboat to a hotel that was on higher ground. The next morning we stepped from the hall stairway into another rowboat, which took us to still higher ground and to the home of the Congregational minister, where we stayed until the water subsided and we were able to start for Oberlin. The minister's home was one of the headquarters for relief and we helped as we could in the giving out of food and clothing. Then on to Oberlin where Mary entered the Conservatory of Music and Helen entered college.

With me, a great deal of foundation work was necessary, but eventually I was able to enter Oberlin College and to become a member of the Class of 1891, made famous by our classmate, Robert Millikan, and made notable by several other outstanding members. As I moved into Talcott Hall, my parents and small brother, Charles, were packing up to return to China. And the next year my two sisters followed them, Mary as a missionary and Helen, because of health reasons, leaving me along and quite forlorn.

To go back a little. In my freshman year, my father sent me a draft for \$20.00 gold. When I went to the bank the cashier handed me two or three bills, whereupon I looked at him solemnly and said "It says gold, doesn't it?" He looked at me queerly, took back the bills and handed me a twenty dollar gold piece, which I immediately took to the store next door, bought some thread and buttons, gave up my precious gold piece and got a fist full of change and bills. But I learned something.

That same year I wanted to send a photograph of myself to my parents for a Christmas gift, so I went to a photographer's studio. He was not there, the young clerk said, he had gone to Tiffin. When I told him that I'd wait he said again, "He's gone to Tiffin!" Then I assured him that I wasn't in a hurry and would look at the magazines until he returned. "But he's gone to Tiffin," the clerk said again, "and won't be back until tomorrow." Only then did I realize that his Tiffin (a nearby town) and my tiffin (lunch) were two different things.

My college days were happy, on the whole. Our rules were strict: in our rooms by 7:30; in bed by 10:00 o'clock; no walking with a young man unless both happened to be going in the same direction. We could be seen home from choir practice and there were occasional lectures, concerts and parties to which we could be beamed. The strange thing is that very few of us chafed under the restrictions or felt like rebelling. We had compulsory chapel five days in a week and we had to go to church once on Sunday! We had always been a singing family, so it was natural for me to join the First Church choir and the Musical Union at once, and I look back upon them as my happiest and most rewarding experiences in Oberlin. Another was the privilege of hearing Dr. James Brand preach twice every Sunday and feeling free to call at the Brand home whenever I wanted to, which was often.

There were two church services on Sunday and in addition, I attended a "Young Ladies' Meeting" in Sturgess Hall that came before the evening church service. The meetings were always conducted by our dean of women, Mrs. A.A.F. Johnston, and they were good. The singing was a *cappella* and since I had been commandeered to start and select the hymns, my attendance was necessary and was never a hardship. That bit of leadership boosted my morale.

A Year of Teaching, then Back to China

After graduating in 1891, two classmates and I went to Columbus, Ohio, to teach in an institution for mentally retarded children. There I taught for two years, trying with no training to do a job that was meant for specialists. Those were two drab years, though not particularly hard ones. I had the privilege of singing in the choir of Washington Gladden's church, for which I received fifty cents a Sunday and of hearing

him preach twice every Sunday. That was a great privilege, one that I would appreciate today more than I did then.

During my second year at Columbus, I began to think about going back to China and when Mrs. Sheffield, who was on furlough, wrote to me suggesting that I go back with her, I applied to the American Board and was accepted.

There was a theological controversy going on at the time, so the committee wrote me asking where I stood on the question of "second probation." I didn't know just how to answer, for I knew little about theology nor had I heard about the discussion. My answer was that I believed in the justice and mercy of God and was quite content to leave the matter in his hands. So with several others, including Abbie Chapin and Etta Williams, I sailed for China in August of 1893, having spent ten years in the United States - year filled with new experiences and perplexities, but on the whole, happy years.

We had a delightful trip across the Pacific Ocean and a royal welcome when we arrived in Tientsin. It was a joy to see my parents and sister again and to be back in China. My brother, Charles, went to the States that same summer, and we had a few days together in Lake Forest, where he entered the Lake Forest Academy.

I had forgotten most of my childhood Chinese, but my Pekinese teacher, with whom I spent five hours a day, helped me to more than recover it and started me on the road to learning the characters. I was soon reading the gospels easily and struggling with some of the simpler classics.

As soon as I was able to read a little, some teaching in the girls' school was assigned to me, in addition to which I led chapel occasionally and visited in homes. On one such occasion, when a group of women and I were sitting together on the k'ang, there came a loud thumping on the gate (the courtyards had high brick walls) and the women, frightened out of their wits, said, "Russian soldiers!" This particular winter it was the turn of the Russians to send gunboats to Tientsin.. Their crew kept the village women in constant fear. Too angry to be scared, I strode to the gate, drew the bar, opened the door and shouted "Chu pa!" (Get out!) to three Russian soldiers. They hadn't expected to see a foreign woman and they did get away in a hurry.

And so that year passed mostly in study with a few other activities.

My sister, Helen Ash, had died in childbirth the year before, so I never saw her again after we parted in Oberlin. She was very artistic, was a great reader and a wonderful letter writer. One of my treasures was a painting of hollyhocks out in the open that she had done. It was one of the many things that the Japanese appropriated in 1943.

My sister Mary and I lived together in what was called "The Ladies' House." It was only a few steps from the old home, where we had our meals with father and mother.

There were two schools in our compound, one for boys (Jefferson Academy) and one for girls (The Goodrich Girls' School), and a small chapel where church and other gatherings were held. From there, our work branched out into the country and the big city of Tientsin. My father and sister made many tours by mule cart to the villages where there were little groups of Christians, strengthening the church much as Paul did.

George Wilder

The year 1894 was marked by the Sino-Japanese War and the coming of George Wilder and his mother to China. The Empress Dowager had re-built the magnificent Summer Palace in the Western Hills with money that had been set aside to create and equip an army and navy. When war broke out, the navy was almost an unknown quantity and it was a tattered demoralized mob with neither uniforms nor arms that straggled down the Taku Road, past our front gate to the scene of battle. The Japanese won easily on land and sea and they also won many concessions when peace was concluded.

One little incident shows how indifferent many of the people were as to the fate of their country in contrast to the nationalism that swept the country a few years later. The day that we heard of the sinking of the Chinese flag ship by the Japanese, I rushed to the kitchen to tell our man-of-all-work. He merely looked at me blankly and said, "It wasn't my boat."

To go back to George Wilder. When I left Oberlin to start on my journey to China, Mr. Glenn, a white haired, Negro barber and a good friend of ours, called me into his shop as I passed by one day, saying that he would like to give me something. "What about a good shampoo?" So then and there I had my first professional shampoo. A year later, it came to pass that George Wilder stepped into Mr. Glenn's shop for a hair cut, and as he left, Mr. Glenn told him that he would be greatly pleased if after he (George) arrived in China he would ask a certain young lady named Stanley to change her name to Wilder. He did, after a while, and it worked!⁴

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⁴ The rest of this memoir is included in its proper chronological place in the last chapter of The Wilder-Stanley Saga.

STORIES FROM MEMORIES OF MY LIFE

By George D. Wilder

STORIES FROM MEMORIES OF MY LIFE

By George D. Wilder

Introduction

It is with real reluctance that I give up thoughts of research on ancient Chinese characters or constructive writing looking to the future in China, and turn to review the past in my own life. A recent trip to South Dakota, the beloved scene of my teen age years, has reminded me of the frontier now extinguished forever by the advancing civilization of the East. It constitutes a feature of our national life, replete with romance, adventure and even tragedy that ought to be of interest to children and grandchildren. I feel an urge to record some of the more common-place phases of pioneer life on the plains, which are often overlooked in news of the "wild and woolly West." I propose to devote a short chapter to my ancestors, another to my childhood and another to frontier life on the virgin prairies of Dakota. This is done from memory, as written materials for reference are mostly lacking. Later I hope to take up things of significance and interest connected with my life in China.

The reader need not be appalled at the prospect of finding here a complete biography of my life in detail. There has been too much of routine humdrum in it for that. Nor does the first chapter on "Ancestors" attempt a complete account of them, but rather to elucidate some family traditions, record the more prominent and add items of my own observation that might otherwise be unrecorded.

Chapter 1

Ancestors – Some of their Traits

The ancestors of the Wilder family have outstanding traits due to their being born pioneers and brought up on or near to the frontier of their time. Both men and women have been intelligent, well educated for their time, even when self- educated. The men have left stories of their personal courage, physical strength and prowess, constructive initiative, business keenness, and natural generosity. In the case of my mother's father Edward Durand, he was said to be generous to a fault, signing other men's notes to the injury of his own family in the end, yet greatly beloved in every community where he lived. Of his physical prowess the story is told of a drunken rascal coming into his hotel at Henrietta, Ohio, then on a big stage route. The man made himself very obnoxious to the guests in the house. Finally Grandpa Durand ordered him off the premises. The ruffian refused to go whereupon he found himself picked up by his collar and the seat of his pants and thrown over the fence. As Grandfather Durand was not a large man, everyone was surprised by this exhibition of strength.

Within my memory there was a famous bridge over the Vermillion River that Eduard Durand built with the timbers of three oaks, trees which had all grown in the natural form of an arch. He cut them into nine great timbers for the trusses of the bridge. His fondness for bridge building beguiled him to the great Mississippi at the town of De Soto, Wisconsin. His early death there put an end to his dream of bridging the Father of Waters, ten years before J.B. Eads won the distinction of putting the first bridge across it.

Grandpa Durand seems to have initiated all the important trades in the town and to have built the first house and a hotel. After being county auditor for some years in Elyria, county surveyor, postmaster and Justice of the Peace in Henrietta, he started a blacksmith forge, a steam saw-mill and an ashery. The only fuel used in all the region was wood and the trees had to be cut and burned out-of-doors in order to clear and plant the soil. So wood ashes, rich in potash, were one of the most abundant products of the country round about and the ashery he started was a big and important business until the land was cleared and coal took the place of wood as fuel.

My father's father, William Smith Wilder, like Eduard Durand, was keen at business, but less educated and versatile. He, too, was a born pioneer, having come from St. Albans, Vermont with his father, to settle at Verona, N.Y. when five years old, in 1813. Then in 1835 he came by covered wagon with his bride, to the highlands of Geauga County, Ohio, where he did well as a farmer. He too, was noted for his strength. I remember to have often seen a huge, heavy iron crowbar bent definitely, and referred to as a relic of William S. Wilder's strength. At a house-raising for a neighbor, an accident threw the weight of heavy timbers on him alone, and he bent the bar with his lifting. He was a great driver of workmen, sometimes having three hired men and cultivating the Draper farm, three miles southeast, and a place we called Africa, a mile south, in addition to his own farm. He himself had worked as hired man for one farmer for six years at \$11 and \$13 per month plus board for himself and horse.

He had \$1,000 at the end of the period, probably partly gained in horse trading, of which he was fond. He was also fond of sheep and specialized in raising them after the war when high prices for wool enriched him so much that he did a considerable loan business in the community. He gave his son Theodore \$1,000 at the end of his college course, thus making it possible for him to take a theological course.

There are less glorious stories of two Wilders of our line, father and son and both named Nathaniel, born 1655 and 1675 respectively. One killed an Indian and was sentenced to be hung, and one "rode the bull." According to the Wilder book the riding the bull was on this wise. Nathaniel lived at Lancaster, Massachusetts. He married at Leominster but bought a large tract of land at Persham, Mass., both enterprises requiring much horseback travel. Once at an inn, when he went to feed his horse, he was attacked by a bull. He dodged the bull's charge, leaped on his back and rode him around the barnyard with whip and spur until the animal was conquered. The situation on the bull was what the Chinese call, "riding a tiger," the difficulty being to dismount.

It was his father, also Nathaniel, who was sentenced to be hung. He and one Daniel Hoar had treacherously killed an Indian who had surrendered. Another Indian accused them of the crime and the judge sentenced them both to be hung. On a petition from the people of the town they were pardoned, but fined ten pounds sterling each, half of which went to the Indian who had prosecuted them. Our ancestor escaped the gallows but was killed in an Indian attack in 1794 when 49 years old, and three years later his brother was also killed by Indians.

My Parents

My father, Theodore Wilder, died in 1879 when I was only 20 months old. During the first year after he graduated from Oberlin College, 1865-1866, he wrote and published the "History of Company C." This Company of Oberlin College students was sent out by Oberlin College in April, 1861, in response to Lincoln's call for 75,000 volunteers. The total roll, first for three months enlistment and then extending to three years, was 179. "The company marched 2,400 miles and traveled by rail and steamer 4,800 miles. It encamped 194 times. Thirty-one men lost their lives by battle, seven by disease and one was drowned,' according to the summary in the history. In his Preface the author says, "There has been no design on his part to entertain the public with a detailed and verbose account of patriotic deeds and severe hardships, above what many others may have endured who have taken a part in the War of the Rebellion.... As the value of such a work as this depends entirely upon its accuracy, great pains have been taken to avoid all mistakes." The History devotes a paragraph to personal summary for each officer and private under the title "The Record." Under the name, "Theodore Wilder" we have as follows:

"Maintained his place in the ranks until the close of his service; present in the battles of Winchester, Port Republic and Cedar Mountain; in the latter arrangement received an undesirable gun shot, which had the virtue of causing his discharge, Oct. 20, 1862; graduated in the class of 1865."

The modest understatement in phrases like, "maintained his place," "present in battles," "an undesirable gunshot," is noticeable. The "undesirable gunshot" was an ounce leaden ball that lodged over the kidney, was never extracted and, gradually working down into the kidney, caused a diabetic complaint and death on March 8, 1871, nearly nine years later. A decade or more after his death the government recognized it as reason for granting a pension to his widow for life and to his son until 16 yrs of age, later on making it retro-active. I believe it was eight dollars a month for my mother and two for me.

The eye witness account of the battle of Cedar Mountain contains the following:

"There was no time for delay. Gen. Jackson was already on the banks of the Rapidan. The corps of General Banks was urged forward to meet him. It reached Culpepper on the morning of the 8th of August. The artillery firing in the direction of Cedar Mountain indicated that work was near at hand. Cedar Mountain is a conical peak, eight miles southeast of Culpepper village, upon the sides and at the base of which the rebel army was arranged in line of battle. The sound of rifles from skirmishing parties sent out in various directions signified that there was a large force of rebels in the woods very near at hand.... Men on each side were concealed in every ravine and thicket of bushes. Gen Geary's brigade was brought out into the west end of a large cultivated farm, a mile long and three fourth of a mile wide and hemmed in by woods on every side.

At 4:00 P.M. this brigade was ordered forward directly to the middle of the field in two lines of battle. Twice it halted behind eminences to avoid raking artillery fire. The bullets of the rebel sharpshooters were annoying, but produced no disorder in the ranks, save when a man fell now and then to rise no more. What solemnity was on every countenance! What resolution in every heart as the men heard the spitting of the bullets and saw fifty rods in front of them a long column of rebels coolly standing at parade rest, waiting to receive them.

A few rods farther and the order was given on both sides to fire, to be followed by a roar of musketry and a scene of carnage that beggars description.

At this point the writer of this sketch had the honor of establishing his right to a discharge. He bade adieux to the company, wishing them good luck, and was escorted to the rear by the faithful Trembly. This little band of soldiers from Ohio soon found themselves hemmed in by hosts of rebels, who rose on every side. To stand was impossible; to run was not thought of. Therefore they were to take the only alternative, to fall."

Only four of Company C had come through unhurt. Seventy-five percent of the Seventh Ohio Regiment were killed or wounded. It was a severe defeat. The wounded were put in hospital at Alexandria, from which place my father was finally discharged. The rocker in which I am writing this is the one in which his brave mother brought him from Washington by rail, to the old homestead at Chester. During convalescence on the farm he studied his geometry while watching the sheep or sunning himself in a corner of the rail fence. As he gained strength he taught his nine year old brother, William David, how to shoot and hunt, and Uncle Will became my ideal of a sportsman. In less than a year of this life he recovered and in 1863 was able to enter Oberlin as a sophomore without loss of standing.

Graduating from College in 1865 he took both his degrees, M.A. and B.D., at Oberlin in 1868 and then accepted the position of Professor of Greek and of Mathematics at Ripon, Wis. He was active there in establishing the Y.M.C.A., a new thing, in which a student named Cross assisted – father of Rowland M. Cross, our dear neighbor in Peiping and T'unghsien, China, for years.

My father's extended lecture on Free Trade and another on Fairchild's "Moral Science," which I read out on the Dakota prairies, has greatly helped clarify my whole philosophy of life. I greatly regret that I have never been able to present this Moral Science clearly and wholly to my children and grandchildren, as it provides a ground for the most satisfactory solution of all moral questions that I have ever found.

Theodore Wilder had little encouragement for going to college from his father until the last year, when he received from him \$1,000, a large and generous gift for a farmer of those days. He had supported himself by farm work and teaching school. His mother, Sarah Clinton Adams Wilder, gave him all needed moral support and encouragement to struggle for his education for the ministry. Her middle name indicates her relationship of cousin to Dewitt Clinton, Governor of New York State and pioneer in the great Erie Canal project. Her father, Gideon Adams, a farmer near Verona, N.Y. was also a builder of locks on the canal and lived in Penn Yan one winter superintending the work. His home correspondence that winter showed that he placed more dependence upon his daughter Sarah for the management of the farm in his absence than he did upon his eldest son. She consulted with her father as to buying 400 sheep and also the land upon which to pasture them, and put the deal through successfully. This was in 1830 when she was still in her teens. Like her father, she was a strong supporter of the church. They were so strongly against slavery that they were put out of the pro-slavery Verona Presbyterian church and they remained churchless and bitter for some years until, because of the persuasion of friends, they joined the Congregational church.

We of later generations, who have sought higher education as a matter of course and secured it, owe much to the church and to the family tradition fostered by our ancestors. It has been due to the men and women of this sort that the church has maintained education and led the government in developing the educational system we enjoy.

Frances Ellen Durand and her two sisters, Ella and Eunice, all graduates of Oberlin and Ripon, composed the entire faculty of Geauga Seminary from 1871 to 1874. This was a slightly three story building capping a tree covered hill at Chester Cross Roads, housing a coeducational institution that competed in a small way with Oberlin. The children of these three women, plus Celia Day Durand, in the Durand, Wilder and Lyman families, all owe a great debt to the broad-minded, liberal views of their mothers. These mothers taught their children the plain essential facts of Geology, Astronomy and biological evolution, just as they taught them to their high school students as they were gradually revealed by scientists. The later generations in these families owe to these

women the immeasurable relief from the strain of having to adjust our ethical and religious use of the Bible as taught in Sunday School, to the gradually-emerging discoveries of science. They taught us that the writers of the Bible did not claim to teach ultimate facts of the universe but rather to teach morals and religion to peoples of certain stages in history and their legitimate teaching comes to us through that historical evolution, so that we need discard neither science nor religion.

I have met two of the more distinguished members of our family whom we should not forget, an eclectic doctor, Alexander Wilder⁵ and a professional humorist and entertainer, Marshall P. Wilder.⁶ Alexander Wilder owed fame largely to his having been Assistant Editor of the N.Y. Evening Post with Horace Greeley, and having introduced the mathematical methods of predicting the outcome of an election when the first reports came in, sometimes days before all counties could be heard from. It was a sort of forerunner of the Gallup Poll. I called on him at his home in Newark, N.J. one afternoon in 1904 or 1905, and was cordially received. He discoursed on Wilder traits, a subject of interest on which he had written philosophically. He emphasized the truth that the Wilders seldom sought first place or leadership but were apt to be lieutenants, and were found faithful, cooperative and efficient in second places, and able to take command in emergencies. His rooms were full of books and his own printed writings were numerous.

Grandfather Wilder and Durand and Great Grandfather Porter were all born pioneers. William Wilder and his wife, Sarah Clinton Adams, moved from Verona, N.Y. in 1835 to the Western Reserve, in Ohio, settling on a farm in the highlands of Geauga County. One of my earliest recollections is being parked by my school-teaching mother on Grandmother Wilder's farm during the commencement rush before summer vacation at Geauga Seminary. This farm sloped from the east branch of the Chagrin River, back through rich meadow into the hills between two small creeks. These hills were partly covered with timber, but were mainly of value for pasture and for a sugar bush of 2,000 hard maples, some of them whiskered with the bark of centuries and dating back to the forest primeval. These meadows, with orchards planted by Johnny Appleseed, the sheep and cow pastures, the mysterious forest over-arching the creek, where shiners

⁵ Books either written or edited by this "eclectic doctor" that are still available through used book dealers include the following titles: *New Platonism and Alchemy*; *The Symbolic Language of Ancient Art and Mythology*; and *Ancient Symbol Worship: Influence of Phallic Ideas in the Religions of Antiquity*.

⁶ Marshall Pinckney Wilder (1859 – 1914) was a hunchbacked humorist and lecturer who overcame his handicap with his brilliance and quick wit. Wilder was the author of *The Sunny Side of the Street* (Funk and Wagnals, 1905) and is reportedly the one who first said, "Fate handed me a lemon—but I have made lemonade of it." The story is told of Otto Kahn, the New York banker, who was walking in the street with Marshall P. Wilder. On Fifth Avenue, Kahn points to a magnificent building. "Marshall," he says, "you see that church? That's the church I belong to. Did you know I once was a Jew?" "Yes, Otto," replies Wilder, "and I was once a hunchback."

could be caught by the boy fisherman, were the most attractive spots in the world to me, as a boy of four, as a college student and later, as a missionary on furlough. The influence of this farm on the small boy as a visitor to his grandma Wilder, and later as hired help for his Uncle Will was most benign.

Chapter 2

George Wilder died before he could write his planned chapter about his earliest memories growing up in Ohio and Michigan. We have included this blank space as a reminder of his intention to do so.

Chapter 3

Pioneering on the Dakota Frontier

The mass movement of population from the old Eastern States to the western frontier reached its height in the three decades 1870 to 1900 and finally filled up practically all the free land and extinguished the picturesque frontier. It left all the virgin land to settlers or absentee land speculators and sprinkled it with cities and towns. This development has an interesting parallel in a still greater migration that we have seen from Northeast China into Manchuria. It occurred mainly in three decades, from 1894 to 1924.

This so-called wild and woolly West where my early teens were spent was in the central part of South Dakota, east of the Missouri River and near the town of Huron. These treeless prairies of the Midwest are now a land of settlers on small farms, with fields and fences after the pattern of the farms in the East, whence the settlers came. We never saw Indians, though there were reservations around the edges of our area, a hundred miles away. We seldom saw cowboys herding their cattle for barbed wire fences and railroads had already come in. But this tamer, level region of the prairie was not without its scenes of adventure. Its settlers had the same love of constructive effort and homemaking as those who won the forest regions from the Indians, or ranged the broken country farther west. These milder regions had their high test of endurance, romance and even tragedy, in blizzards, prairie fires, whirlwinds, grasshoppers and later in dust storms.

The methodical plans of our government to people this fertile land with small dirt farmers and the efforts of politicians and speculators to profit by large scale land frauds are also of interest. The first essential task of the government was the surveying of the country into townships, each six miles square. These were marked off into sections of one square mile and these again into quarter sections of 160 acres each. These sections were all plainly marked, so when a land-seeker could find one corner mark, or mound, he had the date for finding the other boundaries of the piece of land in which he was interested, and could report to the land office just where his land lay. According to law an adult citizen was allowed to file on only one quarter section for a homestead. He must then build a house and break up at least five acres (or was it ten?) of the virgin prairie sod and keep it cultivated during that time. When the time was up he must prove to the land office that he had done so and then he would receive his deed for the land from the Secretary of the Interior in Washington. A person could also take up a "tree claim" or a preemption claim by paying \$200 for a quarter section after six month's residence on it, but I shall not go into all those details.

The government offered free land as fast as it could be surveyed. Railroads offered low rates for excursions of land seekers and for household goods and farm stock. The intensity and eagerness of the competition to get free or cheap government land on the frontier is vividly revealed in the story of our related families -- the Lyman's,

Durands and Wilders. Uncle Ernest, (Mr. E.C. Lyman) was the first to go in 1880, and was followed within a year and a half by Uncle Cyrus Durand and his family, and by my mother and me, age 11.⁷

According to a Chinese saying, the essentials for life are, "clothing, food, and dwelling." Uncle Ernest's house had been built less than a year before so that when we got there we were fortunate in having shelter from the elements while our dwelling places, planned to last for at least five years, were being built.

The site selected for the Wilder house was the top of a slight knoll, the highest spot in our three-family settlement. Our first problem was how to dig a cellar with no tools and no men to be hired, and as usual on these knolls, with a few half-buried boulders too heavy for me or my mother to handle. But it happened that a gang of surveyors made up mainly of recent graduates from the Romeo, Michigan high school (where my mother had taught), and managed by a fellow townsman, was camping near the railway station waiting for their tools to arrive to go on with government surveys of free homestead land farther west. Uncle Cyrus knew them well, and went to see if he could hire a few men for a few days to dig our cellar. They were in government employ and could not be hired, but the whole gang volunteered to bring picks, spades and shovels and do the whole job in a day free of charge. This they did one sunny August day, with no charge to us but a grand dinner served in the open air and set up on improvised saw horses and clean pine boards. Our "piece de resistance" was lemonade made with genuine lemons, irrespective of cost. A jolly Irish paddy, a real worker, returned the next day to put finishing touches on the corners and grade the dirt that had been thrown out. By another piece of good luck my mother had hired a journeyman carpenter to give us a few days. He set the sills, cut the roof timbers for a one-story house 18 by 20 feet with three rooms, closets and a 7 by 12 ft. lean-to kitchen, showed my two Uncles how it went together and then left them to do the work. Uncle Cyrus, a neighbor, and I did all the shingling, while the inside was lathed mostly by my mother and me and plastered by a mason just before things froze up.

Next to sod houses this type of building was supposed to be the best protection from blizzards and temperatures 40 below zero, but even so the frost on the windows became almost half an inch thick and shut out all view of the outdoors for some months. One morning when the tall, hard coal base-burner went out in the night we woke to eight degrees below in the house with the bedclothes all around our faces covered with hoar frost.

My mother and I moved to the new house in the late autumn and by that time the lure of the West had fastened upon Uncle Cyrus and he decided to bring his family of

⁷ George Wilder's father, Theodore Smith Wilder, had died in 1871 from the delayed effects of a musket-ball wound received in 1862 at the Battle of Cedar Mountain. George was then only 20 months old.

four boys, two to twelve years of age, his wife and his drug business out from Romeo and establish residence on the land adjoining ours. So we five boys enjoyed the crowding and the winter sports with two other boys nearby at the Lyman's until the next Spring when Uncle Cyrus built his famous grout house of cobble stones embedded in cement. The cobble stones were half buried in the prairie's sod and had to be pried out with a pick. It was light work that we boys could do and we enjoyed taking the team in the big Studebaker wagon to gather up the stones that had already been pried out. It was a race to keep the masons supplied with the right sized stones.

Having shelter for himself, the pioneer had to think of his chickens, horses and cows. We already had a shack large enough for a box stall for Dolly, our horse, an oat bin, hay mow, and buggy. My own provision for chickens, turkeys, etc. gives you an insight into the construction of the famous sod shanty. The breaking plow cut and sod into continuous strips three or four inches thick and about a foot wide, and laid it root-side up. These strips of sod lay side by side all ready to be cut with an axe into two foot lengths to be used like bricks, as the Chinese use their *t'u p'i*, or sun-dried bricks. I took the sod from our firebreak to build my hen house, somewhat damaging our garden for the next year or two. By the time I had the walls a foot or two high I had stripped off all the sod to such a distance that carrying the sod slowed up the work too much and I had to borrow old Dan and the stone boat to haul it. Then I could not chop it up fast enough, so Uncle Ernest came to the rescue and the walls were soon completed. The roof was made with a few "two by fours" covered with willow brush and coarse prairie grass, and a small window and a door completed the shanty. A few settlers lived in similar sod shanties until they could build more substantial houses.

So we were provided with housing, and the next imperative want was convenient water. The Sunday morning after our arrival my uncle took me to the spring by the river a quarter of a mile away. There he had sunk a half-barrel into the springy ground and the water continually flowed over the rim a few feet into the river, leaving a rusty yellow channel, for it was a chalybeate spring, charged with iron. After standing a day or two the iron precipitated and the water was clear and tasteless. It was the only water safe for drinking and many a trip I made to get it during the years we lived there. For bath and laundry we had our rain water barrel outside our kitchen door and at the approach of a shower the first duty was to assemble the tubs and dishpans and boards to lead the water into them from the eaves to catch every drop. In the winter we sometimes melted snow in the wash boiler on the kitchen stove, but better than snow were blocks of ice hauled in the big two-horse wagon and stacked on the shady side of the house to be melted as needed. As winter progressed and the ice became three or four feet thick we would gather broken chunks discarded by the town gang when they cut ice to store for summer use. To water the horses and cows in winter we usually drove them down to the river every day. It was almost a half-day job to chop a hole through four feet of ice with an axe. It had to be a basin as big as a wash tub or it would freeze solid at night. On this basin an inch or two of ice would form every night to be chopped out each morning, and in two or three weeks the ice chips and frozen slush around the hole

would pile up so high that the animals could not reach the water and a new hole would have to be dug. We were lucky to be less than a mile from the river.

So much for water. The next most pressing need was food – enough to last until the next harvest. Uncle Ernest Lyman was one of the fortunate few who had come with a carload not only of building materials, but with cows, pigs, poultry and a barrel of flour. His next year saw him well established, with growing crops of wheat, oats, corn and potatoes. He had hired a man, Charles Miner, the first settler in the county, to break the required amount of sod on our land and the next Spring he planted for us three acres of army beans, one acre of potatoes and another of tomatoes and other vegetables. We arrived in time to harvest them and they provided food, clothing, etc. for our Durand and Wilder families all that winter of 1881 and 1882. The produce all sold for the same price of three dollars a bushel but we saw no money, as our transactions were all done on a barter basis.

The first crop ready for market was tomatoes, and they were fine. We used them more as fruit than as vegetables, with cream and sugar, as there was no other fruit. A Michigan friend sent us a barrel of apples from Romeo, which was all the fruit we tasted for several years. When killing frosts came in October we hung our tomato vines in the sod barn, warmed by animal heat, where they continued to ripen until Christmas.

Frozen potatoes could not be sold, although we did have to eat some ourselves. We did our best to get them all dug before the ground froze, and stored in the bottom of our too-shallow cellars where we watched the frost line crawl lower and lower. We put tubs of water in the cellar and lighted kerosene lamps to keep it warm until a day would come warm enough to take the potatoes to market without freezing on the way. And so we managed to market the surplus over what we had to eat or save for seed.

Our three acres of beans were pulled up by the roots in the fall and stacked in a conical pile nearly as high as our one-story house. When the beans were dry the stalks and all were beaten out in the wagon box with an improvised flail, after which the beans and refuse that settled in the bottom of the wagon were screened out by throwing them up in the air with a shovel, as the Chinese do, for the breeze to blow the chaff away. Threshed this way the price was low but the store keeper offered three dollars for hand-picked beans, so we stored up bags of the wind-screened rubbish to wait until we could pick them over. We boys will never forget those evenings when the big dining table was cleared, a bushel of beans was heaped in the center and six of us, each with one dish for good beans and one for culls, sorted while someone read out loud from Dickens or some other interesting author. We could do nearly two bushels of beans in an evening and the next day could go to town for something we needed.

We nursed our strawberry plants for two or three years and they produced splendid leaves and blossoms but never a berry. We learned too late that all of our plants were one sex and there were none of the opposite sex in the region. But we did have success the second year with two crops that brought joy to our hearts. These

were potatoes and flax, both paying crops. So we had enough to eat from our land from the start, though we were never wholly dependent upon it, having some other resources in mother's savings from school teaching, etc. After the first year the land was gradually subdued to regular crops of corn, wheat, oats and potatoes after the fashion of our home states. The cultivated parts were rented out for planting, the grassy parts for pasture and finally we sold for \$50 an acre the land that had cost us only \$1.25.

Travel was another problem. The "prairie schooner" had about disappeared but the average farmer had to have his lumber wagon, with a spring seat for three at the front end. In the winter we put straw in the wagon box to keep our feet warm but on a long ride even with buffalo robe, blankets and a hot water jug, we boys would arrive just ready to cry from nearly frozen feet.

The second year we were more independent in our journeying for we had a barn and mother bought a horse and buggy for trips to town. The horse, Dolly, was a light bay, and the very first day we found that she was an eager racer. Cousin Harry Durand and I wanted to go to town to buy saddles. He rode the black horse, Kit, and mounted from the wagon box. I had just got "belly over" on the new horse when she heard his horse's hoof beats coming up from behind and dashed off at full speed with me still wriggling to get on. When I finally got seated no amount of sawing on her bits or pulling her head around to my knee slackened her pace in the least. She was bound to race until there were no more hoof beats to be heard.

Many people had no saddle or used a horse only for short errands. The wagon or buckboard was the regular vehicle for travel.

There was one railway running from east to west, which gave us a sense of security, but these trains that kept us in touch with home in the East were at the same time sources of a great danger that might drive us away homeless. We had to be constantly on our guard against prairie fires. In the dry grass seasons, which included most of the year, our horizon at night was like a string of beads made of stars where the settlers were burning off their lands to plow or making fire breaks around their houses, barns and stacks. It was only when fire could run through high grass with a tail wind that it became dangerous and liable to get out of control. Then the leaping flames shining on billowing smoke seemed to reach half way to the zenith, and where twenty or thirty feet of grass burned at once there was no possibility of men or animals running through it or jumping over it.

The railroads were supposed to keep their section hands busy burning off both sides of the tracks and we never knew the rolling tumble weeds to jump the river or the tracks, so since we were in an angle formed by the river and the railroad tracks, we felt fairly safe. But one day a puffing freight train blew out cinders a few miles east of us and a stiff south east wind sent the fire straight toward our stacks, houses and barns. I first learned the fight was on when Uncle Cyrus and his boys drove up to our front door as we were eating our noon meal shouting, "Come quick with a pail and a gunny sack to

fight fire." On the wagon they had half a barrel of water. A drive of a mile or two over the prairie brought us to the line of the fire and aroused the fear of the horses. We wet our bags in the barrel and beat out a line of fire so that they could cross to the black, burned ground in safety and follow us with the water barrel as we started to beat out the four miles of fire. Once in awhile the wind and smoke got the better of us but we stuck to it until at midnight the last flame went out and the world seemed to be one mass of blackness. The white horse was the only thing to guide us to our homes, which were now safer than they had ever been before.

The average book or magazine story represents blizzards as almost daily affairs compelling every farmer to have a rope strung from house to barn as a guide, all winter long. During the nine years we were in Dakota, there were only two undeniable blizzards in which lives were lost and only two or three cyclones. The cyclone cellar was not much more common than the blizzard rope.

I was out in both of the blizzards - 1883 and 1888. In the winter of 1883 I was attending grammar school in town, going to and from town on my little black pony, taking my lunch and staying from 9 A.M. until 4 P.M. as a rule. One morning when I set out a wet snow was falling, though it was a warm day. As I neared town I noticed beyond it a high, white wall on the horizon and a cold wind springing up that seemed to dry the slush and send it swirling around the corners of the house. I stabled the pony, blanketing him and giving him hay for the day, and then when I opened the stable door the schoolhouse across the road was invisible, due to flying snow. I found it, however, knowing its direction. Our teacher would not allow out-of-town children to go home unless someone came for them. A friend who lived near the railroad track and half a mile south of us came for his son and he and I mounted the pony while Mr. Reed followed behind in his long wolf-skin coat. When the full force of the wind struck us we were blown off the horse into the drifts and preferred to walk for warmth. When we came to the place where my road branched off we thought the northwest wind on my cheek would give me the direction and it certainly did give it to the pony. I mounted him and he set off on a run with nose pointed straight for his barn, paying no attention to the road under his feet, and in no time he scuttled into the open barn door, sweeping me off his back. We had no rope-guide from barn to house but it was a distance of only twenty yards and knowing the direction I made it all right, much to my mother's relief. That night there were 153 deaths of farmers and school children, caught out all night with a temperature of 20 degrees below zero. The next morning when it cleared off Uncle Ernest saw a man staggering around in his field, blinded and suffocating from the ice in his beard, which had gathered there as he walked all night long trying to keep from freezing to death.

Tornadoes, incorrectly called cyclones, come in the summer. They look like water spouts, which they are when over water, or like huge elephants' trunks let down from the clouds to the earth. One sunny day in August when a gang of men were thrashing Uncle Cyrus' oats, we stopped at about four P.M. to watch what seemed like black smoke springing from the prairie just beyond a ranch half a mile away across the river

bottom. It seemed to be threatening the ranch with fire, though there were no flames. We soon saw that it was wind, which gathered like smoke over the distant buildings. The huge 400-foot long, two-story barn looked immovable, backed into the bluff as it was for protection. But the big, drab elephant's trunk kept growing more and more mighty, stretching up to join with the one forming in the clouds above. Then they united and rolled the black smoke ball which bounced harmlessly over the group of houses and landed square on the barn. The huge structure simply crumpled up. The two ends came together and flew into a thousand pieces of boards and timber and dissolved into the dust cloud, leaving only the stone basement. For days the scattered debris was picked up on a stretch a quarter of a mile wide. We ran as fast as we could to get out of its track, noticing just as we started that the funnel appeared to be fifteen or twenty feet in diameter and that in the middle of it was a white tube, or thread, probably made by the water it had sucked up when passing over the river bed.

Chapter 4

The Tragic End of Pioneer Life (1887)

Our six years of our life on the virgin Dakota prairie at Huron and came to a tragic climax in the summer of 1887 when a man who had set up a fraudulent claim to land that Uncle Cyrus had filed on for his sisters, shot the two sisters, a son of one of them, and a neighbor, in cold blood. Two months later my uncle Cyrus Durand, who was like a father to me, died followed exactly a month later by the painful death of my sweet Grandma Smith.

The murder tragedy came about in this way. When Uncle Ernest discovered that John Cameron would not resist in court a contest to any of the forty-odd quarter sections of land that he had fraudulently claimed, he searched out three adjoining quarter-sections near the mouth of Shue (or Shoe) Creek and adjacent to the home of the friendly trapper, Jack Kouf. He filed claims to them on behalf of his three sisters, Mrs. Flora Shaw and Alice and Ada Lyman. The three of them built around the junction corner of the three quarter-sections and in 1882 took up permanent residence upon them. Mrs. Shaw and her son Corwin, about 16, lived in another house close by. The men appointed in 1880 to effect a county organization in Beadle County were Simon Neilson (also known as Sam Nelson), Dr. Eli K. Walton, and Charles Miner, the first settler in the county. John Cameron had filed with fictitious names on over forty quarter-sections in the county and they must have known of it sooner or later. The first named – Neilson – made claim to the same contested quarter-section as that on which Mrs. Shaw had settled, and built a house on the west side of it, she being on the east side a half-mile away. They both lived there for five years, during which the case was tried in the courts. Neilson made the legal mistake of offering to transfer his claim to the Shaws for \$150, whereas his claim was no better than theirs and he had nothing to sell.

The case was finally appealed to the Secretary of the Interior, Richard Olney, the highest authority in land cases. While both sides waited all winter for the decision to be handed down, Neilson kept making threats to his pals that he would leave the land "only in a coffin," and that so long as he lived the other side would "never plow a foot of the ground." A hired man who lived with Neilson that winter said he bolstered up his courage with daily potions of alcohol and constantly deteriorated in character. Finally the decision came down in favor of the Lyman-Shaw side just in time for the Spring plowing. On a Saturday, June 5th, they went out to plow. Neilson came over with a gun and threatened to shoot if they put plow into ground. They withdrew, my uncle riding his horse nine miles to town to get the advice of the court. The judge advised him to take a neighbor as witness and try it again, bringing the witness if opposed a second time. The sheriff afterwards said he felt all day (Sunday) that he should go out and disarm the man, but he did not.

So early Monday morning Uncle Ernest took his son Ranney, age 7, and his team the eight miles to Shue Creek, getting a neighbor, Mr. Kelsey, as witness. Alice Lyman, Corwin Shaw and his mother all went to the field. Neilson, on the watch, came across with a Winchester and a revolver. He evidently wanted to get Mr. Lyman first, and circled around at 200 yards range to get a shot, but in vain, because my Uncle maneuvered his team to keep the horses between him and the shooter. Once the rifle jammed and Uncle Ernest ran out from behind the horses with a whiffletree⁸ for a weapon, but Neilson pulled his revolver and Uncle Ernest had to get behind his horses again. At some point either before or after the shooting began Neilson talked with Alice. She turned, waved to Uncle Ernest and started away home, whereupon Neilson shot her in the back. The son, Corwin, ran toward the house to get his own gun but was shot down, and the neighbor present as witness was severely wounded, and lay quiet to deceive Neilson, who finished off the two women with his knife and went home, where he was shot twice through the head with the Winchester 44 rifle, either as a case of suicide or more probably killed by his wife. When Neilson left the field, Uncle Ernest put Mr. Kelsey on his horse to take him home, but his pain was so great that not far from his house he had to be put down on the grass. A doctor was sent for but the man died from internal hemorrhage at 5:10 P.M.

While Ernest Lyman went for neighbors (there were none within a half mile) and a doctor, he remembered his son Ranney left at the house and he nearly exhausted his horse hastening back, lest the murderer should find him. Ranney tells me his story in a letter of Oct. 12 1945.

"I had been wakened at 4.00 A.M. the morning of June 7 to go to Shue Creek with father. I was left at the house when they went to the field to

⁸ Whiffletree: "a crossbar, pivoted at the middle, to which the traces of a harness are fastened for pulling a cart, carriage, plow, etc."

plow, a quarter of a mile away. I did not understand what was going on but I was frightened enough to go and hide in the chicken house.

Father got back to the house, after going to Kelsey's and to several other neighbors, just as the Glodry family drove up. Father left me in their care while he rode the ten miles to Huron on a fresh horse.

Later I remember Mr. McCaslin, the Presbyterian minister, was out there and helped me get a drink of water at the well. Later still, Dana⁹ appeared and I drove back to Huron with him and probably was taken to your house for the night.

I wonder if you attended the Shaw funeral that was held in the Durand's stone house by the river. I was not there. I stayed with Grandma Smith at your house in Huron that day. She had not been told of the tragedy until your mother, my Aunt Fannie, was leaving to go to the funeral and I remember how shocked she was, and how she questioned me as to the details of the affair."

I was at Yankton just finishing the Academy course and so too far away to attend the funeral. The bodies were taken to the train from the Durand house for transport to Ohio in Uncle Ernest's care. He says that as his train slowly climbed the grade east of the river looking out to the north over our farms toward Shue Creek he saw one or more cyclone funnels like those described before. Later it was learned that the tornado passed close to the Neilson house exactly when the murderer's friends were there preparing for the burial of his body. The cyclone so terrified them that they all ran away, leaving the coffin and contents to the tender mercy of the elements.

Those who were murdered included my best friends, to visit at whose homes was my supreme delight. Corwin was an older companion in hunting and Ada Lyman was a fellow enthusiast in taxidermy, which we both were learning from books. At the time all I knew of the murders was from hearsay and they impressed me the less because I was absent from the funerals and, months later when I met the principal people involved I found them reticent about giving me the details. It is only now, after 59 years, that I have a connected account of the matter, as recorded above, and corrected by eyewitnesses.

Not long after learning of this tragedy, while still at Yankton, word came from Huron of the dangerous sickness from a strangulated hernia of Uncle Cyrus Durand, who for ten years had been to me as a good father. The expert surgeon of all Dakota Territory at the time was a Dr. Van Velsor of Yankton, 150 miles from Huron. When the

⁹ Cyrus' son, Edward Dana Durand. See his privately-published "Memoirs," (1954), for his own description of these events.

telegram came calling him to Huron to operate he was under the influence of liquor and my good Uncle had to die without the operation. This dereliction of Dr. Van Velsor, due to his self-acquired habit of intoxication, gave me a life-long conviction that no doctor has a right to ever allow himself to get into that condition of inefficiency, much less acquire the habit of doing so.

Uncle Cyrus' death was followed a month and a day later by that of my lovely Grandma Smith, who had moved from our former home in Huron to live with her daughter Ella B. Lyman at Moline, Illinois. In terrible torture from gangrene of the leg, she would exclaim, "What wrong have I done that I should suffer such awful punishment!"

My Mother and I having moved to Yankton, where she took a position on the faculty and where I was a freshman, we were unable to attend any of these funerals on account of difficulties of travel, so that these deaths impressed me only as leaving a great emptiness in my life. Entering College life at Yankton, an old settlement, was also an abandoning of the piquant experiences of pioneer life on the frontier.

* * * * *

A year before his death, George Wilder traveled to South Dakota to speak at Yangton College and visited his old pioneer homestead. The following excerpt from a letter to his wife, Gertrude, describes what he found there.

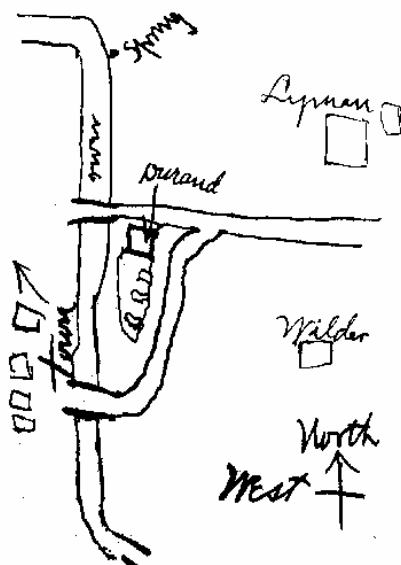
George D. Wilder

Huron, S.D.
May 14, 1945

Dear Gertrude,

. . . Yesterday morning I went for a stroll to our old house-cellar - on a knoll, which is the best around here for view - and then only did I get orientated on the slough where I shot my first teal on the wing, 150 yards east of our house and about the same west of our claim shanty, where we "resided" off and on for 2 1/2 years, the time required of a soldier's widow, deducting the 2 1/2 years of his service in the army from the five years required of others. From the knoll 400 yards N.W. I finally found the iron spring where we got all our drinking water about 10 feet from the river's brim. It is still discharging, now only two or three feet from the river and with no hole where one could dip up water in a pail or even a cup. The river is higher than I ever saw it.

In the left bend a hundred yards up river was a flock of six teal and two large ducks right in the cove where I once shot eight blue-winged teal at a shot and my retriever, Ring, first learned to retrieve wounded birds, biting them to death if too lively for him to bring them to me alive. Right at the spring was the spot where I shot the first duck she ever saw, and taught her to get it by throwing an empty cartridge just beyond it. Then a half mile up at Risdon's crossing she had caught up with a wing-tipped duck that could out-swim her, by going to the opposite shore, running up-stream past the duck and driving it back to where I could shoot it again.



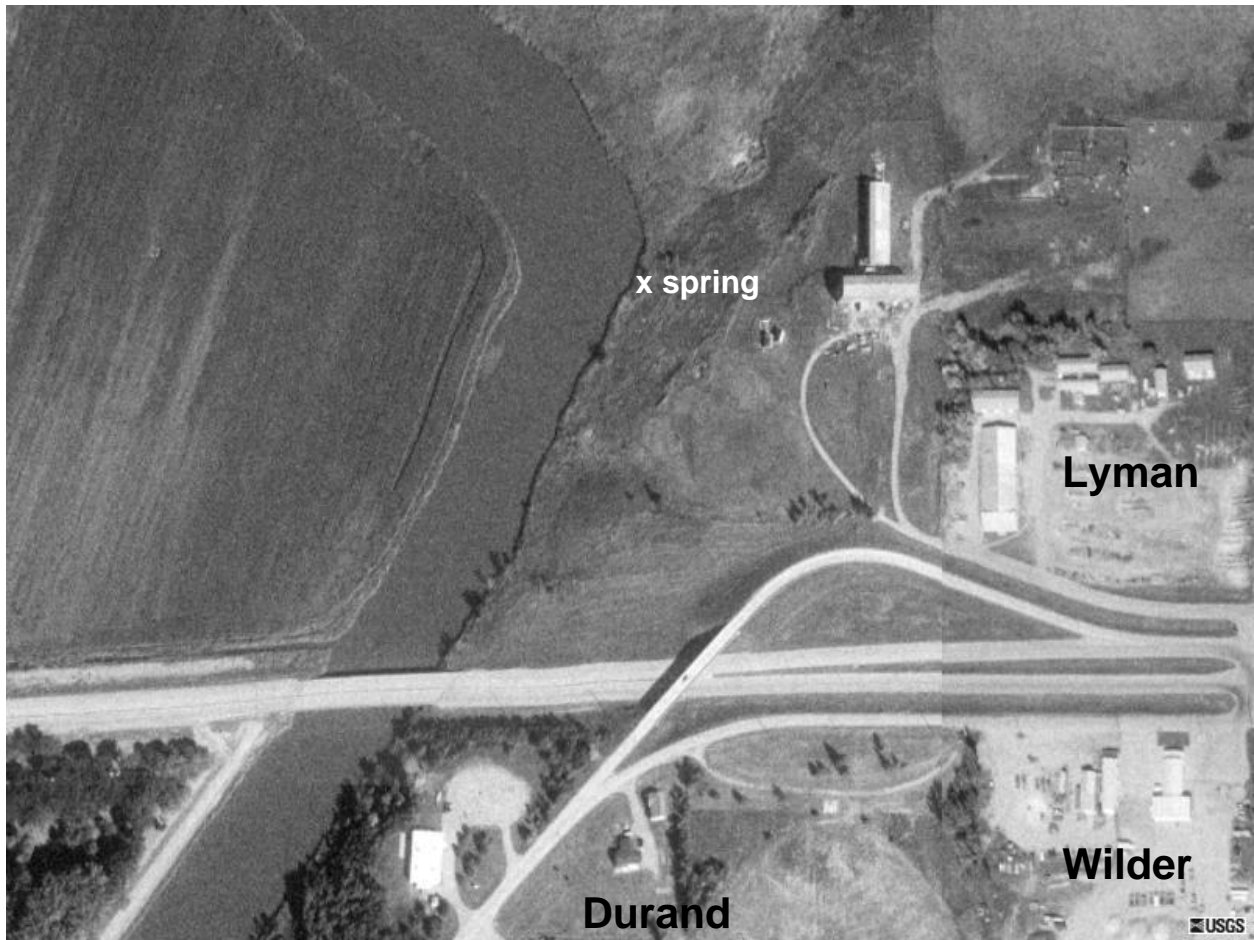
There were pheasants galore, robins, crow blackbirds, a cotton tail, starlings - none of which did I ever see in the early years.

At Uncle Cyrus Durand's grout house on the bluff of the river there is a shoe repairer's house and shop surrounded by a park, with big white shoes for a sign all around the edge where the autos pass on a fine curved cement road. The ravine north of the house is almost obliterated by another road down to the Third Street Bridge over the James River. . . .

LOCATION OF WILDER, LYMAN AND DURAND HOMESTEADS,
Huron South Dakota, 2003



**Aerial View of Wilder, Lyman and Durand Homesteads,
Huron S.D., 1990s**



Frances Durand Wilder had two sisters, Eunice and Lynella ("Ella"). The following biographical sketch of Eunice was written by her son, Ranny Lyman, in early January, 1952. He died on January 16, 1952. (DWM)

In Memory of Eunice Durand Lyman

Eunice Elizabeth Durand was born at Henrietta, Ohio, on Nov. 17, 1847, the daughter of Edward Durand, who was prominent as a business man and county official in Loraine County. In 1854 he moved his family to DeSoto Wisconsin, to establish a homestead on government land. A week after his arrival there he was stricken with cholera, and died before a house could be built. A number of the children were very sick with the disease. The mother's brother, Charles Porter, came from Iowa to the rescue of the family. He took them to another brother, who lived at Wooster, Ohio. The children were separated for a time, living with various relatives.

Eunice worked her way through high school. In 1866, at the close of the Civil War, she volunteered, answering the call for teachers to teach the Negro freedmen of the South. She taught for a year at Macon, Georgia. She began her College course at Oberlin College, but took her last year at Ripon College, at Ripon, Wisconsin, where her sister and brother-in-law¹⁰ were professors of French and mathematics. She graduated in 1870.

In 1871 she joined her sister, Francis Durand Wilder, in conducting Geauga Seminary, in Geauga County, later to be joined by her sister Ella, a graduate of Oberlin Conservatory, as head of the seminary's department of music.

On June 17, 1876, Eunice Durand was married to Ernest C. Lyman of Mulberry Corners, Ohio. In Sept. 1876, the young couple visited the Philadelphia World's Fair, and moved on to Florida by steamer from New York. While in Key West they weathered a very severe hurricane. They spent two romantic years in Florida, on Biscayne Bay, near the present site of Miami.

They returned to Mulberry Corners, Ohio,

¹⁰ George Wilder's father, Theodore Smith Wilder.

where two sons were born to them; Lewellyn D. Lyman, and Ranney Y. Lyman. In April 1880 Ernest C. Lyman came to Dakota and filed on land within two miles of Huron, before the railroad arrived there. His family arrived in October, just before the great blizzard of 1880, which isolated Huron for six months.

The family lived on this Huron farm where three more sons -- Edward Oliver, Elmer Adams, and Everett Cyrus -- and a daughter, Marcia Emily, were born, until 1905. Eunice then moved with her husband to a homestead in Jones County, South Dakota, where four sons had also filed homesteads.

In 1910, Mrs. Lyman's heart condition became such that a lower altitude was prescribed for her, so the family moved to Florida, at Ruskin, where she regained her health, and lived until April 15, 1915.

She was a member of the Presbyterian church of Huron, where she was active in Missionary Society and Sunday School work. She maintained an intimate correspondence with her sister Frances D. Wilder, in the Mission field of Northern China.

She was a thorough student of the Bible, a fluent writer, a phenomenally accurate speller. In a spelling contest at Ruskin College, Florida, she spelled down the entire school, continuing to spell many minutes, until the director gave up.

Her bright spirit and saintly character were the admiration of her many friends.

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Source: South Dakota Dept. of Education and Cultural Affairs web-site: <http://discoverd.tie.net/continuing/resources/daughter/beadle/lyma.html>. The Pioneer Daughter's Collection of stories was made possible through the General Federation of Women's Clubs of South Dakota.

REMINISCENCES OF A YANKTON STUDENT

By George D. Wilder

An address given at the 75th Annual Meeting of the Congregational Conference of South Dakota, May 3-6, 1945, Yankton, on the College's Founders Day, May 4, 1945.

REMINISCENCES OF A YANKTON STUDENT

By George D. Wilder

A glance at the picture of Middle Hall on your program cover will show the belfry, where swings the bell that bears the words composed by Dr. Charles M. Sheldon, author of "In His Steps," to signify the mission of the College:

"At morn, at noon, at twilight dim,
My voice shall sound, the earth around,
Christ for the world, the world for him."

The second window to the right from the belfry on the upper floor belongs to the room, in what was then the Men's dormitory, called the "bull pens," which Prof. G. H. Durand, my cousin, and I occupied during our first term in Yankton Academy, in the fall of 1885. From that window we had our first view from above of the campus, the city, the Missouri River beyond, disappearing out into the wide world. I personally owe to two men more than any others the inexpressible privilege of having had a share in carrying out around the world the message indicated by the bell. The names of those two men, Yankton and all Dakota should not forget: Dr. Joseph Ward and John Taylor Shaw. We should remember their pushing for the statehood of Dakota Territory, their fight for temperance in the Constitution of the State, their founding of Yankton College, their raising of money and finding of students for it. Dr. Ward once wrote to Prof. Shaw of the "joy of discovery of boys and girls and making them into Christian heroes -- only a Christian College can do that." It is to the honor of these men that in spite of their grueling task of raising money for the faculty, they never forgot the equally important part of their task, the finding of the boys and girls on these prairies to make up a student body.

When the Yankton Church gave Dr. Ward six months leave in 1882 to seek money and students among the Dakota churches as well as going to the Eastern States, he did not visit Huron, where I lived, as there was no Congregational Church there. But my Mother met him at some other town and he discovered that she had plans for me to finish in the second High School class at Huron, then go to Oberlin for College and Yale for Seminary, a plan which she had the wisdom not to divulge to me. Later, probably in 1884, after the founding of our Huron Church, Dr. Ward visited our home and greatly impressed both my Mother and myself with the Yankton Academy idea. After that Professor Shaw, coming to preach in our pulpit, made it a point to call and confirm my will to go to Yankton. Then on my arrival in the fall of 1885, a stranger in Yankton, Dr. and Mrs. Ward made me at home in their house, as was their custom with new boys. Again when my Mother visited the College his home was thrown open to us for a few days. In a letter to his wife which she quoted to my Mother, he had argued against his wife's giving all her property to the College, including their house, for he said, "If we do that we shall have put an end to our power to give ourselves in

actual and effective service." This use of her house in service to humble students was their way of giving themselves.

This fine example of the Wards was conspicuously followed by Professor and Mrs. Shaw in their home. For two years I had a room in their own house, one year, 1887-88, with H. W. Jamison, well known later as Nestor in the South Dakota Association, and for another, previous year with J. Arthur Otis as roommate when the Shaws occupied the Sheldon house in 1886. We country boys enjoyed living in their home with classical music, reading aloud of good books on Sunday evenings, usually with the accompaniment of eats most delectable to our healthy appetites. This was settled practice and they rarely missed a Sunday. Time and space forbid a full appreciation of the unstinted giving of themselves by the early Yankton faculty and its wholesome impression on the character of many of the students.

Allow me to give just one more example of this personal contact with our teachers. It was when Prof. Shaw and I were representatives of our College at some sort of get-together at Dakota University in Mitchell. It was at the beginning of a campaign to get the prohibition of the liquor traffic into the proposed constitution of the new state. A most eloquent temperance orator, Sam Small of Georgia, had been engaged to stump the state. He had come a few days before the speaking campaign was to begin, in order to look the ground over. Professor Shaw found that he was to speak in the churches of the town on Sunday, so he took me with him to the first meeting when Sam Small occupied the 9:00 o'clock Sunday School hour in a crowded church. He confined himself to his own experience and Bible truth and so captivated us that we rushed over to get a seat at the church where he was to speak at 11:00 A.M. Twice more in the afternoon and again in the evening he made five long addresses that we heard, loath to miss a word. And we were but two in throngs of young and old. Long years afterward we agreed that this fellowship we had under Sam Small was one of the most uplifting spiritual experiences of a lifetime, and we placed him as one of the three greatest preachers we had ever heard.

Two other great preachers of permanent influence on Yankton students should be mentioned. For two years of my four at Yankton, we had as pastor in the church here Rev. Cephas F. Clapp, an earnest revivalist who had protracted meetings every winter. One student whom many of you knew in later life confided to me that he had taken one girl – the belle of the school, the governor's daughter – to the meeting every night, except Saturdays when there was none, for seven weeks. Most of the students attended and I think that Mr. Clapp preached every time. Prof. Shaw once told me of an incident in his theological student experience, not in Dakota, but near Andover, Mass. His opening prayer at the evening service included a sentence, "O Lord, Thou knowest the purpose for which we have gathered here." A loud whisper from a corner where the boys sat reached his ears "To go home with the girls." It taught him not to use that form of prayer again. I feel sure that while "to go home with

the girls" may have been a factor in the purposes of students attending revival services at Yankton, it was not the only one.

A tribute should also go to Dr. Dan F. Bradley, who was pastor for the last two years I was at Yankton and acting President some of the time, succeeding Dr. Ward. I still remember the sermon that aroused our social consciousness with the text, "Man, More Precious than Gold," and another on Missions, simply as a business enterprise, one of the greatest on earth.

Mr. Clapp used to finish his sermon preparation on Friday, went hunting wild geese, ducks or prairie chickens on Saturday and came fresh to his pulpit on Sunday. He said that if he forgot any of his sermon it probably was not worth remembering. Dr. Bradley, on the contrary, worked hard at his sermon until it was all delivered and then took Monday off for rest and recreation.

G. H. Durand, in his book "Joseph Ward of Dakota," give a full and accurate account of the grievous split among the supporters of Yankton College caused by the gross misunderstanding of the relation of the College to the so-called "Future Probation" controversy in the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. It almost ruined Andover Seminary and also Yankton College. We need not remind you of it any more than to mention the student's attitude and confirm the statement of the book on page 194-5:

"In the work of the college there had never been an attempt to teach a theology or exercise any sectarian influence on the students. No one was more astonished at the accusation brought against Dr. Ward than the students themselves. Many of them had never heard of such a thing as a future probation."

My mother, as treasurer of the W.B.M. of the Northwest, attended the meeting of the American Board at Des Moines, Iowa in 1886 when the "great debate" occurred as to the Prudential Committee's attitude refusing to send out a graduate of Andover seminary. On her return she could not explain it to me so that I could understand, but she expressed great grief at the way Dr. Ward, who had simply stood for freedom of thought and had never committed the College to that or any doctrine, yet was impeached as a corrupter of youth by former friends and even members of the College trustees. Before the end of the school year at the regular Sunday morning service in the Yankton church where the students attended, we had as guest preacher the father of one of our fellow students, Rev. Charles Seccombe, pastor at Springfield and member of the Board of Trustees of the College. He went into an exposition of the Future Probation or Universalist heresy which was all Greek to us. (I believe that none of the students had ever read or heard the technical terms that he used.) There was no instruction along that line either in or out of classes, nor do I remember its ever having been referred to in the morning chapel exercises. We students listened to the preacher in wonderment, until he vehemently declared that the President and

some of our faculty members were imbued with this heresy and were using this Christian College to spread theological error. When a few of us asked President Shaw what it was all about he told us of the book, "Progressive Orthodoxy," as the work of Andover Professors in which was expressed a hope – not a belief – that all non-Christians, infants and heathen who died without any chance to hear of Christ would be given another saving chance. The conservative members of the Prudential Committee had felt that this was a plunge into Universalism and would "cut the nerve of missions." So the Prudential Committee had voted not to return Robert Hume, an Andover graduate, to his field in India where he had been an outstanding success. The Des Moines meeting had to pass on that action.

It seems to me that the whole student body at Yankton sided with Dr. Ward. We were profoundly indignant that our teachers and president were charged with teaching us theological dogmas or speculations that we had never heard of before. While we could not prevent some atmosphere of coolness developing toward our schoolmate, the son of Father Seccombe, we were sorry for him and tried not to make things uncomfortable for him. But, as I remember, he left at the end of the school year, being a middler or senior in the Academy, and his leaving probably was because of this affair. There were a few others leaving at that time, and probably some were taken from school because of these heresy charges. Possibly some teachers left for the same reason but we students would not know their reasons or who they were. Certainly much financial support was lost.

As for myself, I was ready to enter College as a freshman the next Fall. My Mother's plan to have me enter Oberlin had been given up and she herself showed her sympathy with the President and faculty in that she accepted the position of preceptress and teacher of German for two years. I was glad to stay on two years not only because I valued highly the grade of instruction that we were getting at Yankton from an exceptionally fine faculty, but also to show my sympathy for these men who had been so wrongfully accused and to avoid being classed as one of their enemies.

About seven years later she who became my wife was examined for commission by the Board as missionary to China. Though she had never studied at either Yankton or Andover she was asked her opinion of Future Probation, apparently as a routine question, and the following year, when I myself was examined, the Future Probation hypothesis was not mentioned, so far as I can recall, and I was glad to feel that the incident was closed as to Yankton, and was no longer an issue in the Board. I am glad of this opportunity to keep my own record straight, and to say that my leaving Yankton to take my last two years in college at Oberlin had nothing whatever to do with this matter.

While these features of the early days may be familiar or seem of little significance yet it seems worth while to remind ourselves occasionally of our past history.

* * * * *

Addendum: Prof. John Taylor Shaw and Early Athletics at Yankton

The foregoing pages were limited by the time allotted for an address on Founder's Day, May 4, 1945. We would add for the archives a few notes concerning Prof. Shaw and early athletics in the College. The editorial staff of the College paper and Prof. McMurtry, the leading historian of the College, having higher interests than athletics, the early historical material of the College fails to contain much that is of interest.

Tennis

Prof. Shaw introduced tennis to Yankton College by putting in a court on the next lot north of his house, which is No. 1010 Pine Street. (The court is now covered by the house of Mrs. Martha Cutts.) No student knew the game and none brought any gear, so Prof. Shaw provided all the equipment, inviting us students to play and acting as our coach. We had never seen it played before, though the Episcopal rector in 1888-89, probably Rev. Mr. Dougherty, was an English expert and found fair competition in one Yankton city man and a few younger sons of nobility gathered on the dude ranch over in Nebraska belonging to Mr. J. M. Pierce.

After we began to think we had some form Prof. Shaw asked for an educational match with them at the rectory. To us, when we came on their court, they looked like giants, their balls seemed like lead, and the net looked insurmountable. They politely allowed us a game or two and we returned to the college with greatly heightened ideals of the game. About 1900 occurred the first proper tennis match on the grounds of J. M. T. Pierce.

Football

These same young Englishmen came over from their ranch in the Fall and Spring of 1888-89 to teach us Rugby football, introducing some of the earlier modifications made in the eastern United States. In the Fall of 1889, on entering Oberlin as a Junior, I found the game being introduced and discovered that I was one of the three at Oberlin who had ever played the game before.

Boxing

Prof. Shaw also furnished a set of soft gloves for boxing and gave us who roomed at his house regular instruction in the art of self-defense as he had been taught by a famous pugilist at Brown University. He simply gave us the correct positions, blows, wards, counter blows and ducks in a set series so that we could go through the exercises without any one getting hurt, and we used them as routine exercises before retiring nightly. We never really boxed for points until we staged a Field Day between the highbrow Yankton College Literary Society and the junior competitor, the Philomatheans, when boxing was made a feature along with track and baseball. The Senior society was represented by Edward Gray and the Philomatheans by myself. There was to be no slugging, only sparring for points, a mere touch counting a point. Prof. Shaw and George Nash were referee and umpire. As the latter belonged to my society and Prof. Shaw was its faculty advisor, the selection hardly seemed to be fair and impartial. No heat of temper whatever was developed, but Gray nervously let loose a couple of blows, each of which give me such a bloody nose that time had to be called to mop up. In some way I hardly understood they awarded the match to me on points.

Prof. Shaw said that the sight of my blood made him repent of ever having taught any boxing and I do not know that he ever did again. While in a long life, sometimes among outlaws, I never had any occasion to strike anyone with my fist, and the only two times when I have needed to ward off a blow were dark nights on the street in New Haven, Conn., yet it has always given me a sense of security to be conscious that I knew what to do if attacked with club or fists, and I felt that this was worth more of my blood even than it actually cost.

Baseball

One of my classmates was a handsome man of magnificent physique, high in his studies, a fine speaker and a tower of strength at second base and at the bat on the ball team. Unfortunately when a boy his father had taught him to drink hard liquor, and about once a term he would go on a spree among the saloons.

So far from drink being common among students in those days, the student mentioned above is the only one at Yankton College whom I ever knew to drink intoxicating liquor, though two or three others may have been implicated. The faculty discipline was excellent and he was finally suspended for a term. By order of the faculty he was not to be allowed to play in any game out of town if he was found to have been drinking. Our rival ball teams at Vermillion State University, Gayville, and Aten, Neb., considered it sound tactics to get our star player drunk before the game. We who knew him could tell by the shine of his eye as soon as he had had one drink, before any drunken actions betrayed it to the crowd.

Once when we went to Vermillion thirsting to avenge the defeat they had given us in our first game, one of their players managed to get our star second

baseman behind the backstop for just one drink. Though we knew he had had it, yet because it was not noticeable in his actions we cracked the rule and let him play. He played a grand game and we won 16 to 2. Our guilty consciences, however, prevented any jubilation and I, as Captain, had a bad half-hour trying to explain it to my best friend of a lifetime, John Taylor Shaw. His verbal castigation was thorough. In such cases he would invite the disciplinee to a comfortable half-reclining position in a low steamer chair, while he towered above at this desk. The very position seemed to disarm one of all excuses and to promote honest confession. Jay Morris, formerly known as "The Kid," used to say, he would "flunk to any one in the world but Johnny T." and I have never been acquainted with a more effective disciplinarian.

One of the most thrilling games of baseball that I have been in or seen in a period of 55 years ought to be in the records but it is a story in itself too long for this paper. We were trying again to wipe out a previous first defeat by the Aten, Nebraska team. It turned out to be a grueling 11 inning 5-to-5 tie, called on account of darkness after repeated fillings of bases with no one out and retiring of the side without a score. This time our star second baseman was made so thoroughly drunk that the rule was enforced and he was benched for the game, too drunk to know that he was out of it until the game was over and he wanted to know why he was never called to bat. In a rage he was restrained with difficulty from attacking the captain with a ball club. But during the long hour's ride on the Missouri River ferry after dark, the liquor wore off and he came to an oyster supper in town with the rest of us. His final victory over the craving for liquor was revealed in the report years after that in the Salvation Army he had found his only salvation from drink to be in active work to help other drinkers.

More than once during his college years, however, word was brought to Prof. Shaw, the disciplinarian, late at night and he would go out on the disagreeable duty of making the round of the saloon haunts to persuade him to come home. This kind of activity, together with his well known opposition to the liquor traffic and his part in the campaign to put prohibition into the new State constitution, aroused much feeling against him among the baser elements of the city.

At this time, autumn of 1887, Prof. Shaw was building a house on the hill, now 1010 Pine Street. He had hired carpenters from out of town on contract, which further antagonized labor elements. One dark night, when the house was roofed and sheathed in, standing solitary with the old chalkstone as one of the few houses north of the tracks, the house was burned to the ground, with all the workmen's tools. Suspicion of having committed this arson pointed to some of his enemies in town. Fortunately the house had been insured, a local contractor was engaged, and it was rebuilt so that later in the year Mrs. Shaw and child returned from their visit in the east and my roommate and I enjoyed sharing a room in it for the next two years.

Pending the completion of the house Prof. Shaw and I had shared a room at the home of Mrs. Gross, near the church. On the night of the fire we had gone to our room and lighted the big round-wick Rochester burner kerosene lamp, just as the fire alarm sounded. Without stopping to turn down the lamp we rushed out into the street to see if it was our house, and sure enough, it was. We could do nothing but watch it burn and after midnight returned to our room only to find that misfortunes never come singly. For four hours that Rochester burner had been creeping up and pouring out volumes of kerosene smoke until the room was so murky that we could scarcely see the flame across the room, and every exposed surface was black with the oily soot. It took another hour or two to clear out the room so that we could sleep, and when we awoke the clean pillows were streaked with the trail of soot particles drawn into our nostrils. In all that night of calamity Prof. Shaw uttered not a word of impatience.

The sequel to the burning of the house was an act of violence in reprisal, carried out by five or six of the Professor's over-zealous students. Fortunately there is no evidence that any one in Yankton besides those students ever knew of the escapade. It was an absolutely unique and extreme case in the history of Yankton's town and gown hostility.

During a few months following the burning we were convinced without much evidence that the burners were from the saloon and red-light district. So one dark night my roommate H. W. Jamison and I, with three or four others whose names I do not recall but probably including G. W. Nash and one or two Williamsons, loaded ourselves with fist-size rocks and betook ourselves to "the front," or First Street. At the first red light we came to near Douglas Ave., we delivered a volley of rocks at the front door at about ten feet range. One stone crashed through the transom and knocked the high-hung lamp down to the floor, evidently breaking it so that the oil flames mounted up to the ceiling at once. This being more serious than we had planned, we took to our heels. The noise of a second-story window being raised and a revolver shot appreciably quickened our speed. Jamison and I ran side by side, and I remember the dim sense of safety in having his six feet four of brawn between me and the pistol. Not being at all acquainted with the geography of the yard and the night being black, we both crashed simultaneously into a high board fence. Our impact broke off one fence post so that the fence leaned away at about a 45 degree angle, with us stretched out on it knocked breathless. However we managed to back off, rounded the end of the fence to safety and quietly returned to our rooms. That was the last we have ever heard of the fracas, and this is the first record I have known ever to be made of it. This incident is by no means typical of the times. It is unique, but understandable though unjustifiable.

Prof. John Taylor Shaw was a most gifted letter writer and he used his talent to good effect. In long summer vacations some of us students were sure of one or two friendly and inspiring letters. His steamer letter to me when I sailed for China contained 34 pages of his fine clear penmanship, and two or three

letters a year after that was the rule. I was not the only student with whom he corresponded until he could no longer use his typewriter, even with one finger. Pres. Francis J. Hutchins, of Berea College can confirm these statements, from his own experience.

His letters were well worthy of publication from the point of view of literary value, and some of my schoolmates have urged that I should edit them. Alas, they have been regretfully disposed of in the exigencies of several wars. But they leave a most fragrant memory of a model Christian gentleman who left his impress on many generations of students in both Yankton and Oberlin.

* * * * *

Postscript: The Ironic End of Yankton College¹¹

“One of the institutional staples of Yankton had always been [Yankton College](#), which was founded in 1881 and was the oldest private college in Dakota. However, the college was struggling financially by the 1970s and, in 1984, it closed its doors after 103 years. It was a sad end to the old college, but it also offered a new beginning for Yankton. The federal government purchased the property and opened the [Yankton Federal Prison Camp](#) in 1988. In the process, the campus was renovated and the facility has become an important employer in the local economy.”

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