

CEDARCROFT

By **Mary Margaret Moninger**

The following is a small section of a family history written by Mary M. Moninger in the early 1940s. Miss Moninger was born and raised in Iowa, attended Grinnell college from which she graduated in 1913, and taught school in Iowa for two years. In 1915, she went to the Island of Hainan, South China, as a missionary under the Presbyterian Board. Miss Moninger was the granddaughter of Demas and Mollie Ringland Moninger and Raymond and Maria Parks Kellogg; and the daughter of William and Mary Kellogg Moninger.

This history, entitled "Cedarcroft" after the name of the family farm home, typifies family life in Iowa in the late 1800s. It was prepared for Rosalee Jean, Margaret Joan, Dorothy Ellen and Mary Martha Gill and Marilyn Helen and Susannah Harlan Moninger, and is published by permission of Miss Louise Moninger and Mrs. Helen Moffatt, sisters of Mary Margaret Moninger.

Sections of this history will be published in future Annals.

1882 is known in Grinnell as "Cyclone Year." In June, when high school, academy and college graduating festivities were in full swing, the weather was hot and oppressive, sultry and sinister. It was Saturday, the 17th of June, at 8:45 when the big storm struck—the clock in Father's room stopped at that time and he kept it just that way for many years, as a souvenir, until my sister Dorothy played with it and turned the hands; then Father threw it away. The storm was a severe cyclone, sweeping the town in a parabolic path from the southwest to the southeast. The Kellogg home (that of the author's mother) was not in the direct path, but they knew there was unusual violence in the wind and the torrents of rain. The Moninger boys (the author's father, Will, and his twin broth-

er, John) were rooming at the Day house on Broad Street, two blocks north of the college. That house, as well as other college buildings, were in the direct path of the destructive fury that burst from the clouds. The boys and others in the Day house went to the cellar. Some time after the worst blast was over, Will felt his head was damp and stuck his fingers into a long scalp wound probably received when some falling board or timber struck him. A gold watch belonging to John was blown out of the house into a field. The watch had been in a case hanging above the bureau in the boys' upper room in the Day house. This watch was ploughed up two years later and restored to the family. Two students and 48 townspeople were killed in the storm. The bodies were laid out in the old schoolhouse, and Grandfather Kellogg helped to make the coffins. Offers of help to the stricken town came from all over the state; funds were raised for new college buildings and school reopened, as usual, in the fall.

The "class of 1886" was back that fall and began college work. My father and his twin brother were among them, looking just as much alike as usual. They purposely did not sit side-by-side, and when a professor looked directly at John and called on Will, the other would gravely arise across the room and recite. My mother, Minnie Kellogg, was also a member of the class, taking the Ladies' Course. Among the others enrolled were John Scott and his sister Lucy from Marion, Harry Norris from Grinnell, Leona Larabee, Lula Sherman, Emma Woolcott and Kybi Lummis.

Shortly after school started, the Moninger boys were calling at my Grandparents' house—Will to see mother and John to see Lucy Scott. Mother said that when she answered the ring of the doorbell that she never was sure which young man it was, John or Will, until the hat was off and she could see the part of the hair. One of the twins was lefthanded and the

other righthanded and they parted their hair on opposite sides. Doubtless many other amusing things occurred, but they were rarely mentioned in later years; except that once, in an unguarded moment, Father did say that when dates were assigned to be taken to some college function, he and John sometimes coached each other as to conversations on the way to the party and exchanged girls for the walk home.

My parents (Will and Minnie) were engaged before their courses at the college were completed. Fifty years afterwards, when I met an elderly lady whose girlhood home had been in Grinnell, I was asked, "Your father and mother were always lovers in their college days—did they remain so?" And I replied with perfect truth that they were lovers to the day of mother's death.

After college graduation, John took a teaching position at Fort Calhoun, Neb.; Will became a traveling salesman for the "header works," a Grinnell firm manufacturing a reaper that cut only the heads of ripened grain. Minnie began teaching in the grade school at Shenandoah, Iowa, and the year passed quickly.

On the Moninger farm in Marshall County, June 30th of 1887, it was a hot summer day and it was haying time. John and his younger brothers, Frank, aged 18, and Harry, 14, went down to the river in the afternoon. John and Frank were in an old boat; Harry remained on the bank. Soon they decided to swim. When they tried to get back into the boat, it capsized, and, as they tried to help each other, they both went down into one of the deep trecherous holes of the muddy river bottom, to rise no more. Harry had to run home with the awful news. Grandmother had been resting, with her shoes off, after a busy day, and she ran all the way to the river across stubble fields, in her stocking feet. Hours later the bodies were re-

covered by Walter Hixson, the boys' close friend, and the sad preparations for burial were made.

Life was never the same for Grandmother. She wore black until the day of her death, relieved only in later years by white pinstripes in her silk "waists" and by grey or black and white percale and calico for her everyday dresses. In the big, lonely house, the parlor and sitting rooms were closed, and the piano remained untouched for many a long month—Uncle Frank had been unusually talented as a musician.

Father felt that he should remain near home so he accepted the principalship of the Hartland Academy, a two-room school several miles south of the Moninger home. A few years later he received his Master of Arts degree from Grinnell, and a five-dollar gold piece that Grandmother sent him at the time, with a little note saying that she could not bear to attend the exercises. These were carefully kept, to be given to Will's son, John, on his graduation from Coe College years later.

It was decided that my parents should be married in the winter after the drowning, as life was so lonely for all in the desolate home, and the day was set for Dec. 27, 1887. Will had a few days' vacation for the Christmas holiday and to attend a teachers' convention at Cedar Falls, and this was to be their wedding trip.

After the wedding trip, the young couple went to the farm to live, and Mother was soon teaching at the one-room school which the boys had attended. It was lonely for Mother on the farm, as no social gatherings could be held in the home because of Grandmother's grief; once Mother felt she could not stand it any longer so Father drove her to Albion to take the train home to Grinnell for a visit. Only a freight train was due at the time and when the conductor said he could not take a young woman passenger on the caboose, Father said Mother

was sick. When the conductor asked what she had, father answered, "homesickness, the worst kind of sickness there is," and mother went home on that freight.

Mother was a brave woman, and we children heard little of those lonely years except now and then references to stuffing the window frames with rags or knives when they rattled in the winter storms, or other similar trivial things. As to mother's bravery, I remember as a girl one summer when Aunt Lizzie and her children were visiting us on the farm; a hard thunderstorm came up one night with powerful gusts of wind. We were quite accustomed to such storms and never allowed to even go downstairs. Mother always said when we called, or were frightened, "Papa is watching and if it is dangerous, we'll call you." But that night Aunt Lizzie took her children downstairs and she, herself, lay crying on the sofa, begging to go down to the cellar, frightened almost into hysterics. I could not understand, and asked Mother why Aunt Lizzie felt that way. Mother said Aunt Lizzie had been afraid ever since the Grinnell cyclone. I said, "Aren't you afraid?"

She said, "I always am, but papa and I agreed that we'd never let you children become frightened at storms," and certainly none of us ever saw either Father or Mother show any signs of fear at a storm.

Father would go out and look at the clouds, come back and say, "Soon be over," or "We're not getting the full force of it," and that was all. I never remember going to the cellar or the cave because of a storm in all our years on the farm--but to be sure, a cyclone never came our way either.

When I was a small girl it was our regular custom to have Sunday dinner at Grandfather's house. The main dish was always chicken, and Dad was especially pleased when it was chicken and noodles. The egg and flour noodles were rolled wafer-thin in big round sheets and put on clean dishtowels spread over the warming oven's open doors, to dry; they were then sliced thin and poured into the bubbling broth, from which the boiled hen had been removed. The hen was stuffed with delectable dressing made from dry bread and seasoned just right, dredged with butter and flour, and put in the oven to roast to a golden brown.

I sat at Grandma Moninger's right hand, and had my special little white soup bowl with green sprays of leaves on the outer edge, and my special spoon with a pretty beaded edge. It was known as the "Henry Stone Spoon" because Henry Stone had given it to Grandmother; as a young man new in the West, he had lived at Grandfather's and he never forgot the kindness he had received. Neither did Mr. Frank Scott, in later years a successful lawyer in Cleveland, Ohio, who as a young man had lived in the Moninger home. Ernest Wood and later his younger brother Rufus also spent some time at the farm and they, too, had many happy memories of the place.

After Sunday dinners at Grandfather's we sat around in the sitting room and visited and sang hymns we chose mostly from the old Gospel Hymns or the Chapman-Alexander collections. Sunday was always a peaceful day, spent with the family.

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