



ALBERT A. BENEDICT AND ABBIE ANNA MOTT  
From a daguerreotype taken June 22, 1860,  
a few days before their marriage.

# ANNALS OF IOWA

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THIRD SERIES

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## MY EARLY DAYS IN IOWA

BY ABBIE MOTT BENEDICT

### PINEDALE FARM

Casey, Iowa, March 6, 1929.

Edgar R. Harlan,  
Curator of the Historical Department of Iowa,  
Des Moines, Iowa.

Honored Sir:

My brother, Frederick E. Benedict of Oak Park, Ill., has edited and prepared duplicate copies of a typewritten pamphlet entitled "My Early Days in Iowa" written by our pioneer mother, Mrs. Abbie A. Benedict, for her children. He has very kindly offered to present an extra copy to the Historical Department of Iowa, providing I would arrange for its acceptance there. The account deals with her early childhood life in Maine (1844); the family emigration to Iowa (1855); life in the Quaker settlement at Springwater, Winnesheik County, Iowa, until 1869, when they came to western Iowa by ox team and took a homestead in Clay County; the first few years in a sod shanty with blizzards and prairie fires to contend with; and such subsequent events and emigrations leading up until 1895.

We feel that the account is so typical of the unrecorded experiences of thousands of Iowa pioneer families that the more or less personal and family matters dealt with might well be overlooked in the graphic presentation of the vast drama.

If a work of this kind would be acceptable to the Historical Department of Iowa, please give the matter your attention and notify me with whatever personal instructions you might deem necessary.

Very truly yours,

WILBER G. BENEDICT.

## HISTORICAL, MEMORIAL AND ART DEPARTMENT OF IOWA

EDGAR R. HARLAN, CURATOR

Des Moines, April 10, 1929.

Mr. Wilber G. Benedict,  
Casey, Iowa.

Dear Mr. Benedict:

Your letter of March 6 has remained unanswered since I have been overwhelmed with duties connected with the General Assembly.

I wish to say that we surely desire the pamphlet written by your mother, Mrs. Abbie A. Benedict. It is not a month since we had a visit from Carl Sandberg, the writer on Lincoln subjects, who examined many of the materials we have resembling this story of your mother's, and who said to us that such materials had in them more help to the literary man than all the biographies of our governors and presidents. Individually, I have a passion to see and feel the experiences of just such people as your mother. So please send the pamphlet at your early convenience.

Sincerely yours,

E. R. HARLAN.

## PINEDALE FARM

Casey, Iowa, April 15, 1929.

Mr. F. E. Benedict,  
820 S. Kenilworth Ave.,  
Oak Park, Ill.

Enclosed you will find Mr. Edgar R. Harlan's response to my letter of March 6 extending your generous offer of a copy of our mother's booklet "My Early Days in Iowa" to the Historical Department of Iowa. This certainly opens the way for its acceptance there, which was the part you wanted me to look after. I could say that I have not only heard Mr. Harlan speak over the radio as well as from the platform, but I have met him personally, and if he has one hobby more than another it is interest in things relating to early Iowa history.

Best regards, your brother,

WILBER G. BENEDICT.

My great grandfather, whose name I do not remember, was a sailor, who retired from the sea and moved back from the coast to where land was cheaper, and settled down near Temple Mills, Maine. This must have been late in the eighteenth century, shortly after the Revolution.

My grandfather, Adam Mott, married Rachel Davis, and lived

on a farm three miles north of East Wilton, and six miles west of Farmington, Maine. Their children were:

Mary Mott.....	Married ——— Wing
Jacob Mott.....	Married (widow with two children)
Joseph Mott (my father).....	Married Anna Alma Bean (my mother)
Patience Mott.....	Married Frederick Swan

My grandfather, Adam Mott, was a very large, fat man weighing over three hundred pounds. He was called "The biggest Whig in Maine." He did no manual labor, not even hitching up his horse or bringing in his wood. He had a horse and light wagon and went to town nearly every day.

Mary Mott married a man by the name of ——— Wing, and had gone away with him to live. Jacob Mott lived with us sometimes, but a year or so before we left Maine he married a widow who had two children, and lived at Phillips, to the north of us. Patience Mott married Frederick Swan and lived about fifteen miles to the southeast, at New Sharon, Maine. I think they had ten children. They used to come to "preparative meetings" at the Quaker meeting house one quarter of a mile northwest of Grandfather's house, and were always entertained at Mother's.

My maternal grandfather was James Bean, who had married Hannah Roberts, at Gilmantown, Belknap County, New Hampshire, and lived there for many years. He was a farmer, and well educated, and taught school much of the time. All the Bean children were born at Gilmantown, New Hampshire. Their names were:

Joel Bean.....	Married Louise Thompson
Eunice Bean.....	Married Enoch Hardy
Anna Alma Bean (my mother).....	Married Joseph Mott (my father)
Abigail Bean.....	Married Alfred Kelly
Lydia Ann Bean.....	Did not marry
Louis Bean.....	Married Azariah Gifford
James Robert Bean.....	Married (?)
Hannah Bean.....	Married Henry D. Earl
Lucretia Bean.....	Married Thomas Truman

The Bean family were inclined to be tall and slight in build. They were of an intellectual type of mind and well educated. Uncle Joel Bean was a good mechanic and had worked at build-



ing mills. I remember that mother had a cheese press that he had made. It was in the old work kitchen where cheese was made in the summer time. Eunice Bean and Abigail Bean were married when I was a girl and were living not far away. Lydia Ann Bean never married, but lived at home and did sewing for the family. Uncle James R. Bean went to California in 1849 during the gold excitement, but he returned just before we started for Iowa, in 1855. My grandfather, James Bean, moved from Gilmantown, New Hampshire, to a farm one mile east of East Wilton, Franklin County, Maine, where they lived in a large double house painted yellow. At the time the Bean family moved to Maine the neighbors thought "there was a remarkably fine bunch of daughters."

It was here that my father married my mother and at first lived on his father's farm. Their children were:

Rachel Mott.....	Married Edwin Benedict
Abigail Mott.....	Died in infancy
Abbie Anna Mott (author).....	Married Albert Aden Benedict
James Mott.....	Married Bertha Christian <sup>1</sup>
Lucy Ellen Mott.....	Died at Springwater
Clement Mott.....	Married May Rooney

I think my father and mother lived at Grandfather Mott's when my sister, Rachel Mott, was born in May, 1839. She was named after Grandmother Rachel Davis Mott. I do not know where the little sister, Abigail, was born on January 12, 1843. The little one was smothered in bed when a few weeks old. I used to wonder where I would have been if she had lived. Father seemed to take more care of me on account of her loss, and I was always following him around.

My father had taken an orphan boy to raise named George W. Russell. His time was out about 1853, as he reached the age of twenty-one years shortly before we left for Iowa. Probably about 1843 my father and mother moved to East Wilton and lived in a small cottage just east of the large yellow house of Grandfather Bean's. It was here in this small cottage that I was born on January 11, 1844.

When I was a baby my father moved back to Adam Mott's to

<sup>1</sup>Present head of "Mott & Co.," Decorah, Iowa.

run his father's farm. This was three miles north of East Wilton and two and a half miles south of Temple Mills, where we got our mail and had corn and wheat ground. We did marketing of cheese, butter, etc. and most of our buying of goods at Farmington, a much larger town six miles to the east of us. It was here at this house of Grandfather Mott's that I spent my girlhood days before my folks moved to Iowa in 1855.

Whether I can remember anything (of the life in Maine) satisfactorily or not, I am doubtful. You cannot expect very much from a girl only ten years old. I was taught to knit when I was five years old, and my first lessons in sewing were at Grandmother's knee. She died when I was about three years old. I remember one winter while living at Grandfather Mott's farm that we rode to school about one and one-fourth miles away in a one-horse sleigh, and then turned the horse around and he would go directly home. I think there were four children who rode to school, Rachel, James, George Russell (the adopted brother) and I.

Uncle Jacob Mott killed a fox with a club one time when going across lots through a stretch of woods to meeting. He brought it home, and did not attend meeting that day. All farm work was done with oxen. I remember going with father and George Russell to gather maple sap in a barrel every spring. They boiled it down in the big round vat set beside the big chimney in the old work kitchen. They used large iron kettles for the last boiling, making maple cakes; stirred sugar and molasses to supply the two families for a year. They also salted a barrel of pork and made a barrel of soft soap with lye made from home (wood) ashes. Dipping tallow candles to last a year was another big job. I think a little beeswax was added to make them harder. Honey and beeswax were salable products, and father had many hives of bees. The candle wicking was bought. Mother spun woolen yarn for knitting hose, and all were knit by hand in those days.

There were mountains not far away. Old Saddle Back Mountain was many miles away to the northwest, but we could see it if the atmosphere was right. Old Blue, our mountain, was near by, only six miles to the west of us. Here we went every

year to gather blueberries. There was also a lake, Webb's Pond, to the south of Old Blue where we used to go to fish and to get sand for scouring tables and floors with, using soft soap. I remember of going to the mountains to gather blueberries with my folks once, and leaving our horse and wagon at the foot and climbing up the steep slope hunting for the best patches. Mother dried a lot for winter use.

Prohibition and antislavery were the leading topics of the times among the Quakers in those days. The *Friends' Review* was read by nearly every one and the *Maine Farmer* was published at Augusta, the capital. Aunt Lucretia Bean, who was a teacher at Fall River, Massachusetts, brought home a book written by Harriet Beecher Stowe, and read it to us by the fireplace. It was *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Some claim it was the cause of the Civil War. I have heard that Harriet Beecher Stowe and her husband had lived in Kentucky. He was a preacher the same as was Henry Ward Beecher.

Monthly and quarterly meetings were held at Vasselborn, Winthrop or Hallowell alternately. It was some thirty to forty miles, and Father and Mother went when possible. I went once with Mother, wearing a dress with low neck and short sleeves. A two-horse rig was never seen on the roads unless hitched to the stage coach. There were bricks on the stove at the meeting-house in the winter time and each woman took one to warm her feet when taking her seat.

Any of the Bean family coming four miles to meeting always took dinner with us. There were two meetings in the week, "First day" and "Fifth day." Mother would have the big brick oven hot with brown bread, beans and Indian pudding, or a big kettle of boiled dinner, pork and all kinds of vegetables. Mince pie and doughnuts in the winter time were kept ready to warm any minute. I wonder that mother lived as long as she did with the hard work she had to do in Maine. She had spells of asthma after she was fourteen years old.

Sometime during our stay at Grandfather's house his daughter, Mary Mott Wing, and her family came and lived in a room of the chamber. How long, I do not know, but she died in that room of cancer. As there was a short turn in the stairway the



coffin was lowered from a window. Likely I was four or five years old at the time, but it is one of the things that I always remembered. Grandmother Rachel Davis Mott died about 1848, when I was about three years old, and Grandfather Adam Mott married a second wife whose name I do not remember. They lived by themselves in one front room, and had one of the south bedrooms for a guest room, passing through our kitchen to get to it.

Grandfather Adam Mott had borrowed money from his son-in-law, Frederick Swan, to pay some debts with, and had deeded his farm over to his daughter, Patience Mott Swan, retaining a life lease. Therefore, there was no incentive for my father to remain in Maine. My mother did no more cooking for Grandfather after his second marriage. His second wife was not highly regarded by our family, as she was not a Friend (i. e. a Quaker) and was considered lower class in every way. Neither was Grandfather Adam Mott a Friend, as he had been disowned for some irregularity of conduct. Many things got on the nerves of my mother during the latter part of our stay at Grandfather's and she wanted a home of her own.

Grandfather Bean had had a stroke of "numb palsey" so he and Grandmother Bean had sold their farm near East Wilton, Maine (the large yellow house), and had gone to live with his daughter, Aunt Abigail Kelly, at Rochester, New Hampshire. Here he died in 1854.

In 1853, when the Iowa fever struck the Bean and Hardy families, my father and mother planned on going west with them. My father sold his forty head of sheep and cattle and got ready to start. Just before they were expected to start my sister, Rachel Mott, was taken sick with the measles while attending an antislavery convention at the East Wilton church. My father caught the measles from her, as he had never had the disease. Before he recovered the Joel Bean and Enoch Hardy families had left for Iowa, in the spring of 1854, leaving Father behind. So his Iowa trip was postponed. After Sister Rachel recovered she went to Providence, Rhode Island, to Friends' Boarding School, where some of the Beans had attended years before. Who she went with I do not know. It may have been one of the Swans.



The Joel Bean and Enoch Hardy families left Maine for Iowa probably in May, 1854. Enoch Hardy had signed the pledge and had kept it about a year, but on his way to Iowa he began drinking again and was "left behind." Uncle Joel Bean cared for Aunt Eunice and her children till Uncle Enoch got over his spree. They finally arrived at Muscatine, Iowa, and settled there. During the summer of 1854 the cholera came raging northwards along the Mississippi River following the steamboats, which were having boom times. First Uncle Joel Bean's wife died of the cholera, then Uncle Enoch Hardy. This news scared the folks back east.

The Kellys at Rochester, New Hampshire, talked that if we would wait another year they would go to Iowa with us, and as Mother wanted to visit her mother, Hannah Roberts Bean, and several of her uncles, our folks decided to go to Rochester, New Hampshire, and live awhile there before going to Iowa. We left Farmington, Maine, May 10, 1854, taking the stage at West Wilton for Livermore Falls, where the stage connected with the railroad at the time.

While at Rochester, New Hampshire, we lived in a rented house. Father worked awhile in a sawmill at Gonic, where there was a Friends' meetinghouse that stood near the railroad track. We used to walk down the track to go to meeting, as it was a half mile nearer that way than by the regular road. Grandmother Bean did our cooking part of the time. Mother bound blankets there some weeks. Aunt Lydia Bean worked in a woolen factory at Rochester. I attended school.

Our folks saw an article in the *Friends' Review*<sup>2</sup> describing a Friends' settlement in Iowa at Hesper and Springwater, north of Decorah in Winneshiek County. They decided to go there, as land could be bought from the government at \$1.25 per acre. In May, 1855, my father, Joseph Mott, left Rochester, New Hampshire, for that part of Iowa, to be followed in the fall by the rest of the family. In Iowa while waiting for his family my father worked in the sawmill at Springwater for Ansel Rogers. It was the old style, "up-and-down" style, of saw used then. He also got some land six miles north of Springwater.

<sup>2</sup>See *Friends' Review*, 1855, Vol. VIII, Page 455, March 3, 1855. See also *The Quakers of Iowa*, by Louis Thomas Jones, Iowa State Historical Society, 1914.

I am sure that Grandfather Adam Mott came to Rochester to see us folks once while my father was in Iowa looking for a location. Uncle James R. Bean had also returned from California from the gold seeker's trip, and was visiting his mother at Rochester and seeking a wife. As he wanted to see Iowa, he piloted my mother and her children to their future home in Iowa.

We left Rochester, New Hampshire, in October, 1855, when I was eleven years old. We went by railroad, going to Boston, where I saw Boston Bay, the nearest I ever came to seeing the Atlantic Ocean. On our way we saw Niagara Falls, crossing the suspension bridge into Canada. While we were riding through Canada we saw many Negroes and their huts along the right of way. These were ex-slaves from the Southern States who had escaped into Canada via the celebrated Underground Railroad. I was sea sick some of the time from riding so far on the cars, and had to lie down. This may account for my mind not registering more of the details of this trip. We must have gone through Detroit and Chicago, but I have no recollection of it.

We arrived at Dunleith, Illinois, on the Mississippi River just opposite to Dubuque, Iowa. This was the end of the railroad in 1855. We then went by steamboat to Lansing, which was the market town of northeastern Iowa in those days. From thence we went overland by stage coach to Decorah. This town was booming and every place was full of immigrants. The New Winneshiek Hotel had just been built, but not quite finished. Every room was full, every bed occupied, and many sleeping on the floor. We spent that night sleeping on the floor of the New Winneshiek. The next day we went on to Springwater by a livery team, where we arrived in October, 1855.

As stated before, when he first arrived in Iowa, and before his family came, my father got a quarter section of prairie land six miles north of Springwater. However, Ansel Rogers persuaded him to get nearer "town" and helped him to trade this land for one hundred and sixty acres located on Canoe Creek three-quarters of a mile west of the sawmill, also twenty acres more of timber land on the south side of Canoe Creek. It was on this land at the intersection of five roads<sup>3</sup> on the north side of Canoe

<sup>3</sup>Near the southeast corner of Section 23, Canoe Township, and about six miles northeast from Decorah.

Creek near a small pond that my father built his house after we came in October, 1855. He used green lumber just as it came from the sawmill. There was frost on the wall behind the bed in the kitchen all winter until next spring. It was years before he had shingles split and shaved to cover the roof. For nearly five years we used a ladder to climb to the chamber above.

Father made some long four-legged stools. Then he laid some boards on the two stools for bedsteads. We had three of those beds. Mother made a good supply of bedding, blankets and a number of feather beds. We tacked up a sheet behind the kitchen bed and hung sheets in front for curtains, and hung a valance all around underneath the bed. My father bought a small cookstove and several chairs from Aaron Street to furnish his new house, as about this time Aaron Street and his family sold out and went down the Mississippi River to Louisiana to chop wood for supplying the steamboats with fuel. His daughter, Mary Street, got so she could chop a cord of wood per day. They soon returned to Springwater, however.

Before we came to Iowa Ezra King had married Eunice Street, a daughter of Aaron Street, and was living in a log house he had built near a spring on the side of a hill about a quarter of a mile to the northeast of where my father built his house. I stayed some at Ezra King's to tend baby in the fall of 1855 before we got into our new home. Many years later, on account of my mother's health not being good on the low ground near Canoe Creek, my father moved into the old house built by Ezra King on the south side of the hill. Here he lived for many years with his second wife and daughter Annis. Here he died. The site of the old Ezra King log house is the present home (1922) of my half-sister, Annis Mott Ellingson, the sole survivor of Springwater still living in the vicinity. The little Quaker community of Springwater of early days has now entirely disappeared from the map.

As a small girl I got much happiness out of the twenty acres of woods belonging to my father on the south side of Canoe Creek. Here I gathered flowers, gooseberries, plums and wild crab apples. It was also in this woods that my father got out saw logs and sold the timber in Decorah. Our old desk, still in



my possession, is made of cherry lumber that my father sold Charles Goltz, a cabinetmaker in Decorah in early days. We bought the desk in 1875 at the time we moved from Bluffton to the Blackmarr house on Mechanic Street in Decorah.

The old community of Springwater largely centered around the sawmill of early days. This had been built on Canoe Creek by Beard & Cutler in 1850 or 1852. Ansel Rogers, who first lived in Hesper, later bought the Springwater sawmill and moved his family there. In 1855, the year we came to Iowa, he built a gristmill on the west side of the dam. My mother helped to make the gauze bolt for sifting the flour after she came in October. Ansel Rogers was a leader among the Quakers who were settled in and around Springwater, and his home, a short distance south-east of the mill, was a center of activity in these early days. Friends' meeting was held in the front room of their log house. We went to meetings there twice a week, and to Sunday school on Sunday.

Ansel Rogers' first wife had died in Michigan before he came to Iowa, leaving four sons, Silas, Nathan, Daniel, and Alonzo, all grown up in 1855, when my folks came to Iowa. Ansel Rogers married Cynthia Benedict Grissel, a widow whose husband had died in Ohio, leaving her with a daughter, Lydia Ann Grissel. Nathan Rogers had been sent away to Friends' Boarding School, Richmond, Indiana, that first winter (1855-56) in an attempt to break up a match between him and Lydia Ann Grissel, but the attempt was not successful and they were married in "Quaker style" in the front room of Ansel Rogers' house. Ansel Rogers always had a crowd of workmen to cook for, and my sister, Rachel Mott, worked for them some time.

On August 31, 1856, Albert Aden Benedict arrived in Springwater. He came by team with his brother-in-law, Lorenzo D. Blackmarr, who had married his sister, Ann E. Benedict, in Ohio. They brought their daughter, Rose Blackmarr, with them. Another man with a second team came with them. Henry N. Chapel had married Matilda Benedict in Ohio and they also came to Iowa to live, and went on a farm north of Hesper.

In the spring of 1857 Lorenzo Blackmarr bought the gristmill at Springwater and some land near by, and he and Albert

Benedict ran the mill. In the fall of 1857 Blackmarr rented the gristmill to Aaron Street, who had returned from Louisiana. Blackmarr then went back to Ohio on a visit.

In 1857 my brother, Clement Mott, was born at Springwater.

In February, 1858, the Springwater gristmill burned down, and when Blackmarr came back from Ohio he traded the lot and house to Henry Chappel for the land half a mile north of Hesper and went there to live. Chappel moved his family to Springwater. At the same time Blackmarr sold forty acres of land to Albert A. Benedict, who later bought ten acres more on the west of Ansel Rogers at \$9.00 per acre. This land extended somewhat over the creek into the timber to the south of the creek.

In 1858 Aunt Lucretia Bean came to Iowa to live. She was a well educated woman, and taught school for some years in Iowa. In 1859 Russell Tabor, assisted by Albert Benedict, built a steam gristmill in Hesper. After this Albert Benedict was engaged in carpenter work and milling, but I do not know where. He lived with his sister, Ann Blackmarr, at Hesper, where he also attended school. The first time I ever saw him was one time when he came down from Lorenzo Blackmarr's at Hesper to visit with his sister, Cynthia Rogers, at Springwater, where we were attending meetings held in Ansel Rogers' house. I remember of going with a bobsled load of "unattached" young people to a school exhibition half a mile east of Hesper. I do not know if Albert Benedict was in this crowd of young people or not. This may have been the winter before he came to Iowa. George Holoway was the teacher there then.

George Holoway had been a schoolmate of my uncle, James R. Bean, back in Providence, Rhode Island. He came to Iowa about the time James R. Bean went to California, in 1849. At the time James R. Bean brought my mother and her family to Iowa he went over to see George Holoway who then lived on a farm about two miles west of Hesper. I feel sure that it was this Holoway farm that was bought in after years by Hamlin Garland's father when they settled near Hesper, as it is so realistically told in Hamlin Garland's book, *A Son of the Middle Border*. This Holoway place was about half way between Hesper and George Benedict's place on Looking Glass Prairie. We

used to go by there whenever we went out to Uncle George's to visit.

In 1859 I attended school for six weeks at Hesper, where I boarded at Lorenzo Blackmarr's. I stayed there and went to school with their daughter, Rose Blackmarr, for company. George Holoway was the teacher. When Albert Benedict came home to Blackmarr's to go to school I returned to my home in Springwater.

The first Quaker Meetinghouse in Springwater was built about 1859 or 1860 on the north side of Canoe Creek on the north side of the road about half a mile northwest of the mill and about the same distance east of my father's house. My aunt, Lucretia Bean, taught school here for a while. I went to school to her. It was a tuition school. She was not teaching here, however, when the church burned down in 1862.

I shall not attempt to go into many details regarding community life in Springwater. That has been told so well by Mr. Edgar Odson and printed in the *Decorah Republican* in August, 1909.<sup>4</sup>

I remember there was lots of singing in the homes of those early days, although there was no singing in "meeting." There was no choir. My mother was one of the best singers in Springwater. My father did not sing any, but he loved to hear my mother. She sang hymns mostly. Many antislavery songs were sung at social gatherings. Charlie Gordon was one of the leaders in this. He also had a geography class which I attended.

Early in the spring of 1860 Albert Benedict built a house on his land at Springwater. He got out saw logs from the timber south of Canoe Creek. He intended this to be the finest house in Springwater. This house stood on the south side of the road and was between my father's house on the west and the old Quaker meetinghouse on the east.<sup>5</sup>

The prospective marriage of Albert Aden Benedict and Abbie Anna Mott was announced at a monthly meeting at Hesper. A committee was appointed to see that the rules of the Society of Friends were properly observed. I do not remember who was on that committee. There was no license law in those days, and the

<sup>4</sup>See appendix.

<sup>5</sup>This house is still standing (1929) and used as a dwelling.



only record that was kept was that kept by the church.<sup>6</sup> Albert Aden Benedict and I were married in Quaker style on Wednesday, July 4, 1860, in the old Friends' Meetinghouse at Springwater. It was new then. Ours was the third wedding to take place in it. My wedding dress was of white calico with a purple figure in it. The hoop skirt was fashionable in those days and I probably wore one.<sup>7</sup>

Albert was dressed in a dark coat, white linen pantaloons and black boots. He wore the large kerchief tie that was the vogue at that time. I have an old daguerreotype of us both which was taken only a few days before our marriage. I was only sixteen years old and Albert about twenty-five. Albert and I stood up together on the first step of the raised platform, and each in turn repeated the words that had been adopted by the Society of Friends for the solemnization ceremony. This had been committed to memory previous to the wedding. After this ceremony was over the witnesses who were present signed our certificate of marriage and the committee later made their report at the next monthly meeting at Hesper. Our marriage certificate is framed and hangs on my wall as I write.

Following is the wording of the certificate:

WHEREAS, Albert A. Benedict of Canoe Township, in the County of Winneshiek, in the State of Iowa, son of Aden S. Benedict of Perue, Morrow County, State of Ohio, and Sarah his wife (the former deceased), and Abbie A. Mott, daughter of Joseph Mott, of Canoe Township, in the County of Winneshiek, in the State of Iowa, and Alma his wife, having declared their intentions of marriage with each other before a monthly meeting of the religious society of Friends, held at Hesper in the County of Winneshiek, in the State of Iowa, their said proposals of marriage were allowed by said meeting.

These are to certify whom it may concern: that for the full accomplishment of their said intentions, this the Fourth day of the Seventh month, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty, they, the said Albert A. Benedict and Abbie A. Mott appeared in a public meeting of the said people held at Springwater; and the said Albert A. Benedict taking the said Abbie A. Mott by the hand, declared

<sup>6</sup>Mrs. Benedict is mistaken in part. From the organization of the state marriage licenses were required, but exceptions were made to members of denominations having, as such, any particular mode of entering the marriage relation. However, they were required, after marriage, to make a report of it to the clerk of the court.—Editor.

<sup>7</sup>An old daguerreotype taken at this time shows plainly that she did.

that he took her, the said Abbie A. Mott, to be his wife, promising, with divine assistance, to be unto her a loving and faithful husband, until death should separate them; and then the said Abbie A. Mott did in like manner declare that she took him, the said Albert A. Benedict, to be her husband, promising, with divine assistance, to be unto him a loving and faithful wife until death should separate them.

And moreover, they, the said Albert A. Benedict and Abbie A. Mott, she, according to the custom of marriage adopting the name of her husband, did as a further confirmation thereof, then and there to these presents set their names.

Albert A. Benedict  
Abbie A. Benedict

And we, whose names are also hereunto subscribed, being present at the solemnization of the said marriage, have, as witnesses thereto set our hands the day and year above written.

[Witnesses.]

My sister, Rachel Mott, who had attended school at Providence, Rhode Island, was sixteen when we came to Iowa. She got a position teaching school south of Looking Glass Prairie and boarded around at the homes of the pupils. George Benedict's boys went to this school and she became acquainted with Edwin Benedict. They were determined to get married before we did. Edwin Benedict and Rachel Mott were married July first, 1860 (the Sunday before we were) by Justice of Peace Tilden, west of Springwater. This was quite a surprise. They went to live on a homestead in Freeborn County, Minnesota. They came back to spend the winter of 1860-61 with their parents in Iowa. Edwin hauled wood and lumber to Decorah to keep busy.

One time Albert Benedict and James Mott went to visit Ed Benedict and wife at the home in Minnesota. There was but one room in their house, and when Uncle Ed wanted to change his clothes he took them in the evening and retired "out of doors" to do it. Forever after the boys referred to "out of doors" as "Uncle Ed's bedroom." Calico curtains were sometimes expensive and very toney for pioneers, so "outside" was like Prof. Breckenridge's corn meal and mush that he furnished his pupils—"Good, wholesome and *very clean*"—quite an inducement for young Norwegians to come to attend his school from the country.

I shall not take the time to describe the exciting political cam-

paign of 1860 that resulted in the election of Abraham Lincoln and the breaking out of the terrible Civil War in 1861. The sequel will show also that I had many 'little things' to think about during those years.

On Tuesday, October 15, 1861, Oscar Clinton Benedict, our first child, was born at Springwater in the new house that Albert had built for us. Our first move to Decorah (for one week) was the week Oscar was a year old (1862). We lived on Broadway just west of Lander's large brick residence. Harvey Benedict came from Ohio and took Albert's place in the Stone mill at Decorah, so we moved back to Springwater to run the Springwater mill.

In February, 1862, Mr. Epley opened the door during meeting saying that his nephew, George Epley, was found dead in the snow on the road from the Tilden schoolhouse where he was teaching. He had evidently died of heart trouble on his way to his uncle's at the Springwater mill. His uncle had started horseback to carry him clean clothes Sunday morning, when he found him where he had sat down and died the day before.

Sometime during the next month (March, 1862) the Quaker Meetinghouse at Springwater burned down. We had been at Mother's with the baby (Oscar) till the evening, and about ten we were awakened by a bright light from the east and all was ablaze. The building was being used as a school and a school-boy had put ashes in a nail keg and left it in the entry. Nathan Rogers was the teacher at the time. A public school building was put up soon after some distance to the north where Friends held meeting until the new Meetinghouse was built at Springwater the following year (1863) by Harvey Benedict. The new Meetinghouse was built across the road to the east and north of the old Ezra King house afterwards occupied by my father. A cemetery was laid out adjoining.

Early in 1863 Harvey Benedict and family went to Ohio to dispose of some land, and when they returned to Iowa Sarah Hole (Sarah Gidley Benedict Hole) came with them. She was the mother of Harvey and Albert Benedict. Sarah Hole had lost her first husband, Aden S. Benedict, about 1842 and had married again to Jonah Hole, a Quaker preacher, who had been



killed in 1862 by his being thrown from a buggy. Harvey Benedict's brother, Asa Benedict, and Susan Benedict, an adopted daughter of Harvey and Lovina Benedict, also came with them. Asa Benedict went to live with his brother-in-law, Henry Chappel. Harvey Benedict must have built the new Meetinghouse after he came back from Ohio.

On Sunday, September 6, 1863, Allard Eugene Benedict was born at Springwater. Susan Benedict was working for me at the time. Isaac Gidley bought the Springwater mill and also the land and house on the west of the creek that Henry Chappel had owned. Uncle Isaac was a brother of Sarah Hole. Albert Benedict ran the mill on shares for one year (1864).

In December, 1864, we moved to Bluffton where Albert worked in the mill there for Lyman Morse. We lived there until the following spring. On Tuesday, February 14, 1865 (Valentine Day), Florence Anne Benedict was born. She was my little valentine. In March, 1865, when Florence was three weeks old, we drove from Bluffton to Springwater in a sleigh to visit my folks. The following week Lorenzo and Ann Blackmar came down from Hesper and took home their daughter, Rose Blackmarr, who had been helping me when Florence was born.

Soon came the big flood and ice run on the river [Upper Iowa River]. It surrounded the Morse house where we lived in the north addition. We grabbed the babies, Oscar, Allard and Florence, and a loaf of bread and went up the stairs through the log part of the house where Philip and Hannah Morse lived, tearing away the sheet she had tacked over the stair door. The floor of the lean-to which we occupied was a step lower down than the log part of the house. When the water had wet about half way across our carpet it floated a big cake of ice into the yard about a rod from our door. That proved to be the high point of the flood, however, and it soon passed on.

As soon as the roads got settled in early April (1865) Henry Chappel came and moved us from Bluffton to Springwater, where we lived only one month. In April I went to see Uncle Henry D. Earle, who was very low. It was while I was here that I heard of the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln (April 14, 1865). Uncle Henry Earle died April 19, 1865, and was the

first to be laid away in the new cemetery by the new Meeting-house. I heard of Hannah Roberts Bean (my grandmother) and Sarah Hole (Albert Benedict's mother) walking near the grave, and in a year or two they were both lying near. Grandmother Hannah Roberts Bean died in October, 1865, and my mother, Anna Alma Mott, about six weeks afterwards, December 19, 1866. Sarah Hole and Henry Chappel's eldest daughter died not long after. My sister, Lucy Ellen Mott, died in October, 1868, of typhoid fever. Aunt Eunice Bean Hardy came to Springwater at the time Grandmother Bean was ill, but arrived too late to see her. Aunt Eunice died soon after, in February, 1869. It seemed as though the funerals came very frequently during this time.

In May, 1865, we rented the Stone mill at Decorah for one year. Then we made our second move to Decorah. We lived in a one-story, three-room cottage between the Ammon-Scott machine shop and the Dayton store. This house was torn down when the Tremont Hotel burned a year or two afterwards.

It was in 1865 that we bought the old Singer sewing machine from a young man by the name of Mr. A. Bradish, who was agent for it at that time. Bradish had been to California during the gold rush in 1849 and had injured his leg, and in fact was lame all his later life.

During the summer of 1865 Albert was taken sick and we moved back to Springwater. When he got better, in October, he got a team of colts and drove back and forth between Springwater and Decorah twice a week and boarded himself at the mill office, and I lived alone in Springwater with the children until the contract for the mill was up in April, 1866. We lived in Springwater and Albert ran the mill until 1869.

In the summer of 1868 Lindley Chase, John Chase and Albert Benedict took a three weeks' land seeking trip in a covered wagon, driving a team of mules. They drove in central and southwestern Iowa looking for the "Promised Land." Some places, especially one camping spot near where the town of Panora, Guthrie County, now stands, the mosquitoes nearly ate them up. The story goes that Lindley Chase started to mow some slough grass for the mules, but the mosquitoes came out so

thick he had to drop his scythe and run for the camp, and never went back after his scythe, and for all they ever knew it may be lying there yet. When they got back to Fort Des Moines they took a free ride to Oskaloosa on the new railroad, riding on the construction train. They attended the Friends' Yearly Meeting there and saw the new Meetinghouse.

In the month of May, 1869, we sold our home of sixty acres in Springwater, and in August drove overland to Clay County, Iowa, where Joseph Brownell and John Chase had located on homesteads. My brother, James Mott, went with us. We drove a covered wagon and a team of oxen called "Bootlegs" and "Tom." This was a trip that will always be remembered by our children, Oscar, Allard and Florence, although at one time it got so monotonous that little Allard teased his father to "drive where there was not so much grass and more sandhill cranes." At one of our camping places our oxen ate up our box of dried herrings during the night.

On account of every other section of the land being assigned to the railroad a man could homestead only eighty acres, so Joseph Brownell let us have half of his quarter section. Brother James Mott took his homestead to the north of us about half way between our place and the Spencer post office. The description of our homestead was east one-half of the northeast one-fourth of section twelve, township ninety-five, range thirty-seven west of the fifth principal meridian [Lincoln Township]. Our Clay County homestead was located about six miles south of Spencer Post Office and a mile northeast of Annieville Post Office and about five miles west of the big bend in the Little Sioux River.

When we arrived at our homestead Albert and James set off one of the covered wagon boxes on the ground and used the running gear of the wagon and the oxen to haul native lumber up from Sioux Rapids, about twelve miles to the south of us, to build the framework of our sod shanty, in which we spent the following winter. The wagon box with its cover was left on the ground all winter and was used as a store room. It was in here that the "half-of-beef" was frozen and kept that first winter that formed one of the elements of "sod house soup."

Our sod shanty was built fourteen feet by twenty feet square



with about seven foot eaves. It stood east and west. A heavy post was set in the ground at each end with a fork at the top into which a heavy ridge pole was placed. Posts were set at each corner and along the sides. The sides and ends were then boarded up. There was but one door and that was at the east end near the south side. There was one window in the east end and one in the middle of the south side.

Then with a prairie sod breaking plow strips of the virgin prairie sod were turned over around the building spot. This served a double purpose. The strips of sod were cut into lengths about two and a half feet long and carried to the new building, where they were laid up like brick around the outside, forming a thick wall. The roof was thatched over with long coarse slough hay. The hay was then completely covered over with a layer of sod to hold the hay thatching in place. The hay that hung down at the eaves was trimmed off even with the edge of the sod. Those who failed to do this suffered in the prairie fires that followed.

Albert made a box which extended up through the roof and on the top of this he nailed a large milk pan with a hole cut in it for the stovepipe to stick up through. This was done to keep the hay thatching away from the stovepipe and made a fairly waterproof job. The sod house had a board floor, a very unusual thing for sod houses in those early days. A hole was dug in the ground below the floor near the stove and fitted with a trap door in the floor. Here potatoes were kept during the winter, an important element that went into the famous "sod house soup." A short partition was built in the west end of the room. Our bed was on the south side of this partition, while brother James had his bed on the north side. Oscar slept with his uncle James, while the two smaller children, Allard and Florence, slept in a trundle bed that slid underneath "Uncle Jim's" bed when not in use during the day. Above the partition and over the beds was built a platform where a year's supply of flour was stored, which was bought and ground at Estherville.

Our sod house was built on a slight knoll, the ground sloping away to the north, south and west, while it was quite level away toward the east, with the Little Sioux River in the distance. Off

to the westward was a big swale or slough of bog land. A barn was built just to the southwest of the house and a haystack was placed just northwest of the barn to help protect it from the winter storms. Around the entire place were the fire guards. The fire guard consisted of two strips of plowing in the shape of a square, one outside of the other a safe distance away. The grass between these two strips of plowing was kept burned off at all times whenever there was any danger of a prairie fire. It was in this desolate, wind swept prairie sod house that we lived during the fall and winter of 1869-70.

The men folks hired a man who had a mower to cut hay, and after the hay was stacked, the sod house and barns built and the fire guards plowed around them, Albert and James drove to Estherville, twenty-five miles away, to buy wheat. They had it ground into flour there for the winter. Albert tended the mill one night to grind it. While at Estherville they visited Henry Chappel who was now on a homestead near Estherville. Merrit Chappel, their son, was working in the mill and Cynthia Chappel, their daughter, was teaching school. While the men folks were gone to Estherville and I was alone with the three children, a Mr. Grant set fire to the prairie grass, which burned a streak east to the river a mile north of us. The wind changed in the night, which made a "head fire" of the whole strip. I saw the fire coming right toward us, a red hot glare a mile or two long, a most alarming sight. Without waiting to admire the beauty of the scene I took a kettle of live coals to the northwest corner of the fire guards to start a back fire, but hardly got it started before the main prairie fire came with a roar and passed by on both sides. It burned fiercely, following the tall dry grass of the slough towards Brownell's, but it did us no damage. Some years later Henry Chappel's sod house in Estherville was burned by just such a prairie fire that got into the hay in the roof.

The following spring, on March 14, 1870, we had a feathery snow coming straight down with no wind blowing. About eleven A. M. a blinding blizzard came from the northwest which lasted for two days and nights, or until about three P. M. on the 16th. It is almost impossible to describe the desolateness and bitter cold, with the howling wind and blinding snow, of a blizzard of

early days. Modern young people never will be able to realize the terrifying aspect of such storms. I will not attempt it. A taste of such a storm is described by Hamlin Garland in *A Son of the Middle Border*, page 310.

A man about forty-five and a young fellow about sixteen and a boy of twelve had come over from Grant's to borrow our long sled which Albert and James had made from poles from the "back forty." They went after wood about five miles to the river, and all of them perished in the blizzard coming back. The boy was found next day after the blizzard, the older man in about four days, but the sixteen-year-old boy was not found until the following spring after the snow went off, some three weeks later. The older man had lived out in the mountains and must have tramped many miles in a circle before giving up. He was found east of the river, the tail of his coat only showing above the snow where he had fallen in a deep drift.

In 1870 Albert Benedict entered into partnership with a Garrett Marcellus who was located on the Little Sioux River near a bridge, to build a gristmill. They contracted for hewed timbers for the mill of Peter Moore and his father at Gillett Grove. Albert bought a lot and built a board house just west of the proposed mill site. There was a "bee" to haul the timbers from Gillett Grove. Albert went to Dubuque and bought the machinery for the mill and shipped it to Newell, which was the nearest railroad station at that time, and hauled it on wagons from there. Harvey Benedict came back with Albert to help install the machinery in the mill. During the summer I went back to the sod house and stayed the necessary time on it to prove up on the claim.

On Thanksgiving day, Thursday, November 31, 1870, while skating on the mill pond, Willie Marcellus broke through the ice and was drowned. The funeral was held in the mill building. He was an only son.

In 1871 Uncle Ed and Rachel Benedict sold their farm in Minnesota and moved to Ida County, Iowa. They came to see us while we were still at Spencer. It was on that visit that we first heard of the drowning of their little son, Ralph, just before they moved from Minnesota. He had seen the older children



playing in the edge of the lake and evidently had tried it himself. Rachel supposed he was away playing with the rest of the children, but when they came to look for him they could not find him until they saw his dress in the water. One of their children had lived only two weeks and another one was smothered in bed when only a few weeks old. Another son, Willis, was born on the Odebolt (river) soon after they settled on the "forty" to pasture cattle they had invested in only a few years ago. Willis married and went to Canada and died soon after. Sister Rachel's married life ended when she died August 3, 1872. She left four of her seven children.

The partnership with Marcellus was not a pleasant one, and so our share was sold out, and in October, 1871, we again returned to Decorah. We went by stage from Spencer to Algona, which was the end of the railroad at that time. On our arrival at Algona we heard of the big fire that burned Chicago, starting on October 9, 1871. Until the following spring we lived in Decorah in a brick house that stood to the west of the old Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad depot. This was in the southern part of the town. In the spring of 1872 Albert formed a partnership with his brother-in-law, the firm going under the name of Blackmarr & Benedict. They bought the Bluffton mill located at Bluffton, Winneshiek County. Here we moved in 1872 and lived in a house near the mill for about three years. Here the children, Oscar, Allard and Florence, went to school and formed their childhood impressions, being eleven, nine and seven years old respectively when we moved there. Bluffton and its picturesque scenery will always retain a place in their memory.

In 1874 Lorenzo Blackmarr died, and Charlie Meader, who had married his daughter, Rose Blackmarr, took over the mill and we moved back to Decorah. At Decorah we lived in a house directly across from Dr. Bullis. On account of this house being later sold to a Dr. Smith it was known in later years as the "Smith house." It was a white frame house only a short distance to the north of Dry Run Creek. It was here that Frederic Estey Benedict was born on Saturday, June 5, 1875, and Grace May Benedict was born Thursday, September 14, 1876. While we lived here we bought the Estey organ which I still have in

my home. It came about the same time as Fred, hence his middle name. The day Grace was born my brother, James Mott, started to attend the Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

In 1877 Albert formed a partnership with my brother, James Mott. The firm went under the name of "Benedict & Mott." They bought the stone flour mill southeast of Decorah known as the "Trout Run mill." My brother James Mott married Miss Bertha Christen, who was clerking in a dry goods store in Decorah, and they went to live in the little house on the hill just back of the mill. It was in this little house that Roy Mott was born and the twins, Walter and Wallie.

In the spring of 1878 we bought the property in Decorah on the west side of the Fair Grounds, where we built the "square house." We sold the house in the west part of Decorah to Dr. Smith, and while the square house was being built we lived in a frame house a block or two southwest of the public school building, which, on account of its peculiar color was afterward known to the family as the "pink house." On Thursday, October 10, 1878, Albert's brother, Harvey<sup>8</sup> Benedict, while shingling on the east side of the roof of the square house, fell off on to the rough ground and was killed. The square house was completed and we moved into it in December, 1878. While we were living in the square house the children, Oscar, Allard and Florence, went to school in the old public school in Decorah, walking over Pleasant Hill west of our place to get there. Before we moved away they attended Slack's Business College and Florence also went to Breckenridge's Institute. Oscar also worked in a creamery at Waukon as bookkeeper.

On Monday, November 7, 1881, Wilber Garfield Benedict was born at the square house. We had his photograph taken when he was about five months old, just before we moved away. July 19, 1880, my aunt, Lucretia Bean Truman, died of consumption in West Decorah. She was buried in Friends' Cemetery at Hesper. Early in 1882 the square house was traded in towards a farm on Trout Run Creek which was owned by an Englishman

<sup>8</sup>It might be of interest to some to know that it was Harvey Benedict's widow, Lavina Benedict, who afterwards founded the Benedict home at Des Moines, Iowa. See *Woman's Work for Women*, by Lavina Benedict.—W. G. B., 1929.

by the name of Tibbits. This farm was afterwards known as the Trout Run farm and was run in connection with the mill property. It was about a mile up the Trout Run Creek to the southwest. We moved here from the square house early in April, 1882. Trout Run farm was a most beautiful place nestling in a valley and surrounded on nearly all sides by high hills, some of them steep, precipitous limestone cliffs. The place was particularly marked by a long row of magnificent white pine trees that grew along the east bank of Trout Run Creek commencing nearly opposite the house and extending southward to the high bluff a half mile south of the house.

Living at the Trout Run farm was pleasant although it meant much hard work for all. Allard and Oscar helped run the farm and Florence helped me with the housework. Miss Sophia Halsey taught school at the Trout Run schoolhouse and boarded with us. Fred and Grace attended there. Florence also taught this school a term or two before we moved away. The big woods to the south and east of our house were full of prairie wolves and they made a great deal of music with their howling nights. Albert shot one or two and Oscar trapped several of them and got the bounty on their scalps. Oscar also purchased a new Remington rifle with which Oscar, Allard, and even Florence had a great deal of sport shooting at a target, and they made life miserable for all the gophers and woodchucks in the pasture across the creek to the west and along the bluffs.

Oscar, Allard and Florence were the "young folks" and had considerable company come out to see them from Decorah. They also used to drive in to Decorah in the evenings to attend gatherings there. The "Rink" at Decorah was one of the popular attractions, and several masquerades were on the program, in which they took part. These were the days of the famous Decorah Light Guards and the Decorah Drum Corps. Oscar and Allard joined the Decorah Light Guards, which was the crack company of the state militia, and they attended some of the encampments before we moved away. My brothers, James and Clement Mott, were both violin players and they would frequently come up to our house and have Florence play the accompaniment on the Estey organ.



In the summer of 1883 the Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Northern Railroad was built to Decorah. It ran diagonally across our farm from the southwest to the northeast and then turned across the creek and ran directly between the mill and the house of the mill property. In going between the house and the mill they had to blast out a deep cut in the solid limestone from twenty to thirty feet deep. This was a nerve-racking experience for the Motts who were living in the house at the time. One very large rock struck the east front of the house caving it in badly and breaking several windows. A small rock came down through the roof of the mill. Hardly a day went by but some damage was done by the blasting.

About six A. M. while it was still dark, on December 2, 1884, we were alarmed by a bright red glare in the sky down the valley to the northeast, and soon my brother Clem Mott came hurrying on horseback to let us know that the mill was on fire. Albert and the two boys, Oscar and Allard, hurried down to the mill to see if they could be of any help. There was nothing that could be done to save any part of it, and it burned down to the bottom, leaving only the four stone walls standing. It is presumed that sparks from the engine of an early freight train set the fire. An oil painting by Allard Benedict is hanging on my wall at Safeside, and is a very good picture of the old mill before it burned and before the railroad was built.

The burning of the mill brought on a crisis in our affairs. In the spring of 1885 the partnership of Benedict & Mott was dissolved and James Mott took over the Trout Run farm and moved his family onto it while we again moved back to Decorah to live while Albert found a new location. We lived in the Barthell house in the southwest part of town just across the alley west of the Clark Goddard and the Caldwell residences. In the spring of 1885 Albert made several land-seeking trips into Iowa, Missouri, and Kansas. Oscar accompanied him on one or two trips. After considerable search Albert bought the Stone farm, which consisted of some two hundred and forty odd acres situated on a rolling upland about two and a half miles northeast of the town of Atlantic, Cass County, Iowa. Here we were destined to live for nine years.

On Thursday, June 4, 1885, we moved to Atlantic. Oscar and Allard with the horses and household goods went in a carload via the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway. The rest of the family, Albert and I, Florence, Fred, Grace and Wilber, went by the Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Northern passenger train. Before taking the train we stopped at Gove's for our meals. Many of our friends came to see us off, among them my brother, James Mott, who had been with us on our Clay County trip and had now been a partner of Albert's for so many years. This was the last time I saw him.

We went via Cedar Rapids, West Liberty and Des Moines, arriving in Atlantic very early in the morning of June 5, 1885, the day Fred was ten years old. We lived for six weeks in a rented house in Atlantic about one block west of the Courthouse, while the men folks, Albert, Oscar, and Allard, cleared away the forest and built a house into which we moved as soon as the roof and siding were on. All hands, including the children, helped to lath the house after we moved in, and it was plastered soon after. We had bought an extra large size wood-burning heater, which was too large to go through any ordinary door, so we placed the stove on the floor as soon as it was laid, before the studding was up, and then built the house up around the stove. This stove kept us warm all the time we were there, and stood there winter and summer, and was one of the things we were obliged to leave in the house when we moved away.

After the forest was cleared away a magnificent view of the town of Atlantic was disclosed from our front lawn. For this reason this farm was known as the Atlantic View Farm, and this name was painted on the rudder vane of the Halliday windmill we bought of D. P. Hawes and erected a year or so later. We lived on the Atlantic View Farm for nine years, from 1885 to 1894, the longest time we ever lived in any one place, up to that time. In the first twenty years of our married life we had moved twenty-one times, and we felt that we could now settle down and make a home. We set out many orchard trees and grapevines and made a large garden south of the house.

Life on the Atlantic View Farm was a pretty hard struggle. We were under heavy obligations, having bought too big a farm

with too little money of our own. Albert felt that now the children were grown they could be of great help in creating an estate. Money was scarce in our little family and we did not have many luxuries. A large part of the woods and brush land had to be cleared off and this was done the following years. The wood was cut and sold in Atlantic, a stump puller was purchased, and the stumps pulled up and piled in the yard and helped to keep us warm, twice, once when cutting them up and again when they were burned. In the summer of 1885 Oscar married Miss Eva Couse at Decorah, and they came and lived with us until the renter's house became vacant the following year, then he moved there, where he lived all the rest of the time he worked on the farm. Here Flossie was born.

Wednesday, April 14, 1886, we witnessed what was known as Cass County and Audubon County cyclone. It was preceded by a terrific hail storm which stopped suddenly and it was followed by a ground fog which we noticed was traveling rapidly to the south. Going out on our front porch we first saw it coming towards us from the south in the form of a black, funnel-shaped cloud several miles distant. It gradually swung to the east and went directly through Grove City where we first saw the buildings, trees and wreckage flying through the air. The whole storm was in plain view of where we stood about two miles southeast of us on the opposite hill across the valley. It passed through the Troublesome Creek valley directly east of us tearing its way through the trees and demolishing houses, and disappeared to the northeast leaving a swath of destruction in its pathway that was marked for many years after.

On Wednesday, November 11, 1885, Florence was married to Joel David Hawes. The wedding took place in our new house on the Atlantic View Farm. Joe's father and mother came from Decorah for the wedding, and they all returned to Decorah together. Joe and Florence located on the Hawes farm, near Washington Prairie, fourteen miles east of Decorah. They lived here for several years and then moved to Decorah, where Joe entered the implement business there.

The Atlantic View Farm became quite a burden to us and also became associated with troublesome times, so it was decided,



as Albert expressed it, to "put a period" to everything and make a new start in a new place. So the farm was sold late in the fall of 1893 to be delivered the following spring. We stayed on the farm during the following winter and had a public sale the following spring, selling off everything except the household goods.



MRS. ABBIE MOTT BENEDICT

From a photograph taken about the time her story ends, 1895.

We moved to a rented house in Atlantic located two or three blocks west of the Courthouse, where we lived during the summer and winter of 1894 while Albert looked for a new location.

During the summer of 1894 Albert spent most of the time looking around for a farm. He was determined to take sufficient time to find a farm he liked and that he could handle without keeping his nose on the grindstone. Our family was now grown up, or nearly so, and in a few years our children would be leaving us to make homes of their own. It was, therefore, important that we have a good home, pleasantly located where we would

not be bothered with old associations, and which we could handle without such a burden as the last one had been. We had followed what Hamlin Garland calls "The Middle Border" long enough.

After a great deal of search Albert finally bought the Jones farm located in the northwestern part of Thompson Township in Guthrie County, Iowa. This farm consisted of about two hundred and forty acres and we bought it at such a rate that we could pay for the farm complete, and for the first time we were entirely free from debt. We were now so well situated that in honor of the event Albert in his characteristic way, named the farm "Safeside," feeling that we were now on the safe side of things in general.

We moved here from Atlantic early in the spring of 1895. Fred came home from Decorah in time to start putting in the oats on the north forty. During the summer of 1895 we built a new house on the site of the old one. Oscar came from Atlantic to help. Fred put in the crops that year and did most of the cultivation and harvesting while the house was being built.

After the new house was built we settled down to make our permanent home, so my "Early Days in Iowa" may be brought to a close. Let younger hands take up the story from here.

Safeside, Iowa.

Written 1921.

#### IN MEMORY OF SPRINGWATER<sup>9</sup>

Plain living (enforced) and high thinking was the order of the day in the early settlement. The years preceding had been a time of political unrest in the Old World and of intellectual ferment in the New, finding outlet in rebellions, Fourierism and Transcendentalism. Springwater did not escape the contagion, and so the younger set at once organized a literary society which met at stated intervals to read papers and discuss weighty matters. The society also published a paper, in long hand, which was probably the first publication issued in the county, *The Athenaeum Banner*. At any rate it antedated the *Decorah Republican* by several years. The writer never had the good fortune to see a copy of this journal and it is doubtful if one is now in existence.

The colony built a meetinghouse of boards sawed at the mill. For a number of years this served as a house of worship and as a schoolhouse.

<sup>9</sup>These paragraphs in memory of Springwater are parts of an appendix to Mrs. Benedict's booklet, the appendix having been made up of articles written by Edgar Odson and published in the *Decorah Republican*.—Editor.

In this building Joseph Brownell, one of the first, if not the first, young men to be married within its walls, taught several terms of private school, public schools not having yet come into existence. In this barn-like structure the Friends met every Sunday (First day) for religious worship, which consisted chiefly of silence and meditation—of the right sort. The elders occupied the high places during the meeting, that is, the two or three benches elevated some feet above the floor of the main body of the church and facing the audience. These dignitaries sat with hats on or off according to individual caprice. Sometimes hats were worn during the first half hour and then laid aside. The leader sat at the head on the rear bench, the benches being elevated one above the other in tiers, and when it was time to close the service he turned toward his neighbor and gravely shook his hand. This was the signal that meeting was over, eyes brightened, smiles appeared, especially among the younger members, a hum of voices replaced the silence, and everybody were ordinary humans once more. But these meetings were not always passed in silence. Members had the privilege of exhorting sinners and others whenever the spirit moved, and as the years passed the spirit seemed to move more and more frequently. There was of course no ordained minister. Midweek services were held, generally on Wednesdays, and the school was dismissed at eleven A. M. Pupils were expected to attend, but attendance was not compulsory. Music of any kind was tabooed. The sexes sat separated on opposite sides of the main room, which could be divided into two distinct compartments by a movable upper partition which was lowered onto a stationary lower partition fixed on the floor. The latter was about four feet high. During religious meetings the upper section was raised by means of ropes and pulleys, so that the whole congregation was in view. But when monthly meetings were held, meetings for the transaction of church business and for disciplining members who had been naughty, the sexes were rigidly separated by the partition and they could communicate with each other only by messenger. At times members were hauled over the coals for shortcomings, but not often. It was a pretty good community—and died young.

The Springwater school in those days must have been the most advanced of any in the county, and in the spelling contests it always gave a good account of itself. Independent of the regular school a peculiar geography class flourished, conducted by Charles Gordon, at so much per head for the term. A set of large wall maps was used containing all of the geographical knowledge then extant, and pupils met on certain evenings of the week to chant in unison the lessons under consideration. The members of this class were mostly young men and women. It was a pretty good method of fixing geographical locations in the mind, and interesting because the world was new, and the pupils were interested in each other. Some of the elders looked askance at this class on account of the singing, not by any means too hilarious,



because they regarded music in any form as a snare devised by the adversary of man to entangle human souls. They thought it essential to salvation that all aspects of life should be drab colored. This view was, however, held by a minority of the congregation only, and was more or less a bone of contention. A school entertainment in the winter of 1857-58 perhaps produced a rift in the lute, which, while it did not widen sufficiently to produce discord that could be discerned by outsiders, it still impaired the harmony of the life there more or less. One of the features of this disrupting entertainment was music from an accordeon or concertina, or whatever the instrument was, and Miss Mary Gove was the performer. In the midst of one of her selections one of the elders sitting on the other side of the partition—the two rooms being thrown into one—placed his hands upon it and vaulted over with the agility of a boy who had been robbing an orchard, and rushing up to Miss Gove, seized her hands, exclaiming, "Does thee know that this is the house of God?" The entertainment ceased then and there and that elder did not enhance his popularity in the community by his zeal. He was one of the first to move away.

An interesting Sunday school was maintained for a number of years in which everybody, young and old, showed much interest and nearly every member of the community became an expert in Bible knowledge. In connection with this school a circulating library was maintained by individual contributions. This literature, as a matter of course, was highly flavored with Quakerism, but books were scarce and it served. The autobiography of John Woolman was one of the books. An intellectual-devotional diversion was a reading circle held on Sunday afternoon in summer and in the evening during winter. At these gatherings the members took turns in reading aloud recent books of an instructive nature, biographies, travels, etc., alternating with purely religious matter.

At a somewhat later period a peripatetic writing master drifted into Springwater and taught some terms of writing school. He was a good penman but a bad citizen, and subsequently married and deserted one of Decorah's fair daughters.

The sentiment in regard to music eventually changed to such an extent that a singing school was allowed in the schoolhouse conducted by James W. Mott, who had previously qualified by taking singing lessons in Decorah. A musical wave rolled over the community and in almost every home some instrument was undergoing torture at the hands of would-be musicians. But there were children who were compelled to take to the woods to practice, out of sight and hearing of their dissenting parents.

The *New York Tribune* was about the only secular paper read in Springwater. It was everybody's friend, philosopher and guide in worldly matters, and Horace Greeley was a prophet in that locality. The abolition sentiment was strong, and during the Lincoln-Douglas cam-

paign everyone became a Republican except David West, who was a Democrat and did not care who knew it.

The dress usually worn was the conventional Quaker drab, drab gown and bonnet for women, severely plain habiliments with broad-brimmed black hats for the men. The only color allowed the Quaker maidens was that which flowed in their cheeks, and bright eyes were their only ornaments, but these sufficed. At the time of the Bloomer outbreak that costume was occasionally seen on the Springwater hills, but not for long. One of the very first pioneers of the place, forgotten in the enumeration above, was a character known by the sobriquet of "Greasy Ole." He was a bachelor who lived by himself in a six by four shanty and wore a pair of leather breeches which were never changed or washed. He came to the locality so early that he shot a bear on what later became the Odson farm. One story about him was that being invited to dinner by some of his Quaker neighbors at one time, he showed he was not devoid of suitable manners by wiping his knife on his breeches before inserting it in the communal butter.

No one accumulated a swollen fortune there. No member of the colony disgraced himself by becoming a malefactor of great wealth. The best wheat in the United States was raised in those hills, but it was a slow and strenuous process to grub out the stunted oak shrubs and prepare the soil for the plow, and there was no home market for the grain. It had to be hauled to the Mississippi at McGregor or Lansing, and when the draft animals were oxen it required three or four days to make the trip. So most of the settlers became tired of the hard work and the meager results and by the end of the first decade the community was rapidly disintegrating. Death claimed some, but most were lured away by the greater opportunities elsewhere.

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#### SUPPLEMENTAL NOTE

At the request of the editor of the *ANNALS* Wilbur G. Benedict consented to add the following brief statement concerning his parents in order to complete the most interesting story.

During the latter years of the nineteenth and the first decade of the twentieth century my parents, along with thousands of other country people, had just passed through a long and severe financial depression. It had been a hard struggle with many a blasted hope. And, although they did not realize it at the time, they were already on the threshold of a remarkable period of expansion and prosperity. Farm land in Iowa and the Middle West was still cheap, although prices were beginning to advance. During this time there were two rules in general practice by farmers in this territory when they had reached or passed the age of active farm operations. One rule was to rent or sell the farm and move to the nearby town and live on the proceeds. This was along the line

of least resistance and the method usually followed. The other rule was to fix up the old place with modern conveniences as income permitted and spend the declining years in the only spot that seemed to them like home. This latter rule was the one my parents decided to follow.

Next after the new house came a windmill erected over a spring well with running water piped to the house. The distance from the farm to town, eight miles, was fully realized those first few years. This drawback was overcome, in part, in 1897 when the Postoffice Department established the Safeside Post Office at our home with my father, Albert A. Benedict, as postmaster.

With more prosperous times came the organization of the first farmers' telephone line known as the Safeside Telephone Co. It was a great innovation and linked up the isolated homes of our community with the rest of the world through a switchboard at Casey. Father and Mother learned to take life a little easier. They entered the social life of the community and during the summer months traveled considerable. With the boys to do the work and Father's wisdom to direct our efforts, Safeside became one of the attractive homes of Guthrie County. The Safeside Post Office was discontinued when Rural Route No. 2 was established out of Casey. This was even a greater convenience to the people of our neighborhood than the post office had been.

In the late spring of 1906 Father suffered a stroke from which he never fully recovered. He died August 16th of that year, surrounded by all the members of his family. He was laid to rest in the cemetery at old Dalmanutha. Since that time Mother has occupied the old home—stead from which she is loath to part.

Of late years during the winter months Mother has lived in the homes of her two younger children, but each time with the coming of spring she has preferred to stay at her old home where she best enjoys her birds and flowers in quiet seclusion. Out of a family of six children but three are living. Oscar and Grace rest beside the father at Dalmanutha, and Allard was laid away at Wentworth, South Dakota, two years ago. Mother was a great reader and has a fine array of good books, and with a liberal supply of papers and magazines at hand she has lived to enjoy many a day and hour that otherwise might have easily become a burden.

The farm buildings in which our family once took pride are yielding to the law of decay, and looked at from an economic standpoint it appears to be a needless waste; but sentiment also has a value not reckoned at the bank. Those of us who look after and care for Mother are determined she shall be allowed to enjoy her own home in her own way—it is her property and the fruit of her life of labor. This will be our course until a crisis compels us to make some other arrangements.

Mother is now eighty-six, and though memory fades and the sight grows dim, she lives on sustained by a faith and trust that is abiding.

Pinedale, June, 1930.



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