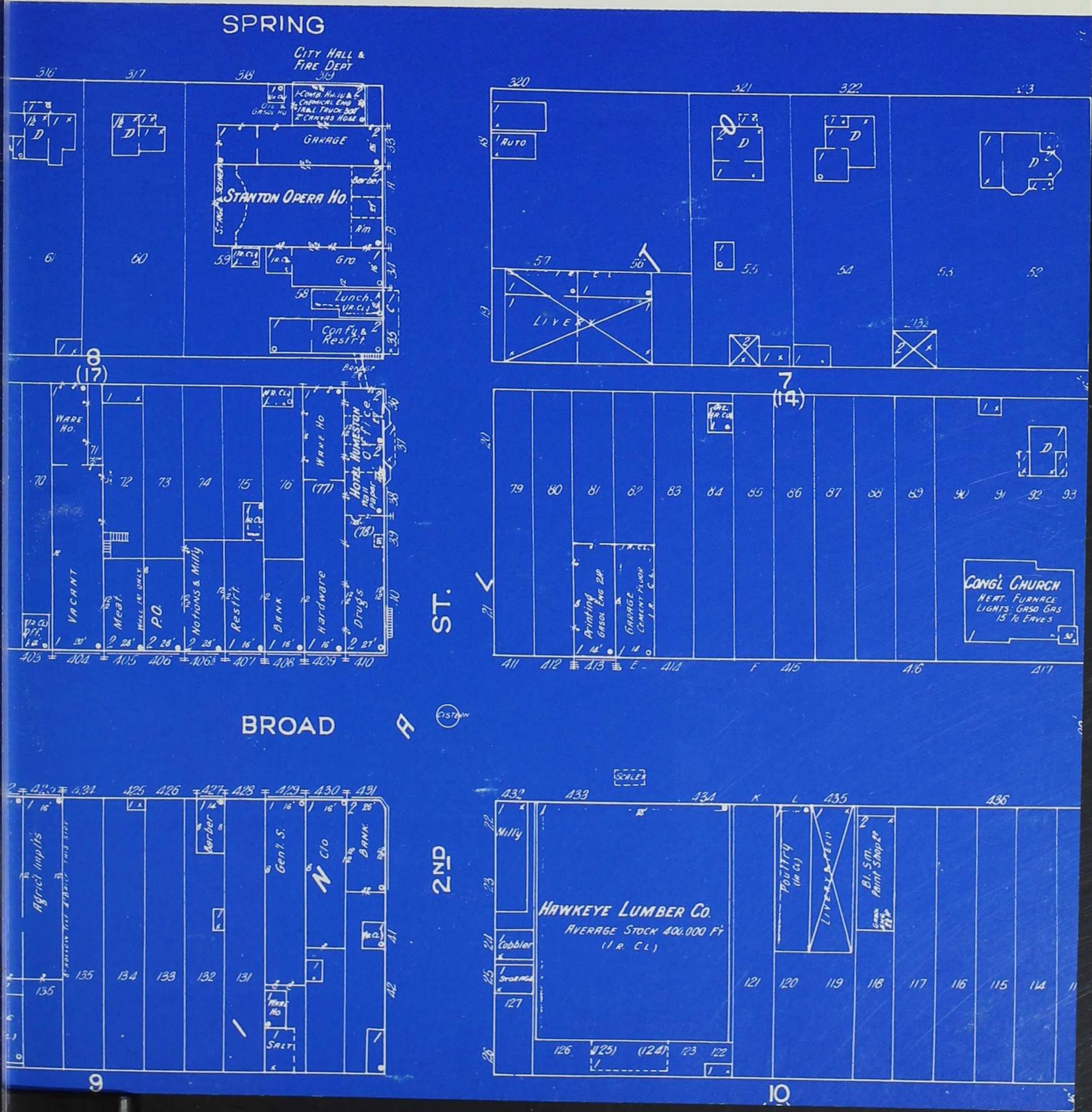


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PALIMPSEST

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Mary K. Fredericksen, Editor

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Cover: A map of downtown Humeston, Iowa, in 1913. Humeston was the hometown of Wilma Barker Lewis, the author of the first article in this issue of the Palimpsest. It was upon her marriage to Walter Lewis that she left Humeston to begin a new life in the “house on the hill.” (SHSI)



The Meaning of the Palimpsest

In early times a palimpsest was a parchment or other material from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete, and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the record of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

Two Iowa Women

In an article published in the *Annals of Iowa* in October 1884, Dr. Jennie McCowen, of Davenport, Iowa, analyzing the Iowa census of 1880, found that over 80,000 Iowa women were working somewhere outside the cozy confines of their homes. She found women employed (or at least enumerated in the census as employed) as boilermakers, miners, pork-packers, blacksmiths, commercial travelers, stenographers, librarians, and teachers, as well as physicians, pharmacists, and lawyers. I have mentioned only a small portion of the job classifications cited in her article, but I have done so to offer evidence of the changing status of women in this state as early as the 1880s.

In Iowa, as elsewhere in the United States, the 1880s and 1890s were decades in which the impact of urbanization and industrialization upon women in society was being most seriously felt. As machinery limited the traditional "fireside employments" of women, it was, as Dr. McCowen pointed out, "inevitable that women would adapt themselves to the changed circumstances, and . . . seek some outside occupation by which they might not only support themselves, but, also, if need be, provide for the necessities and comforts of those depending upon them."

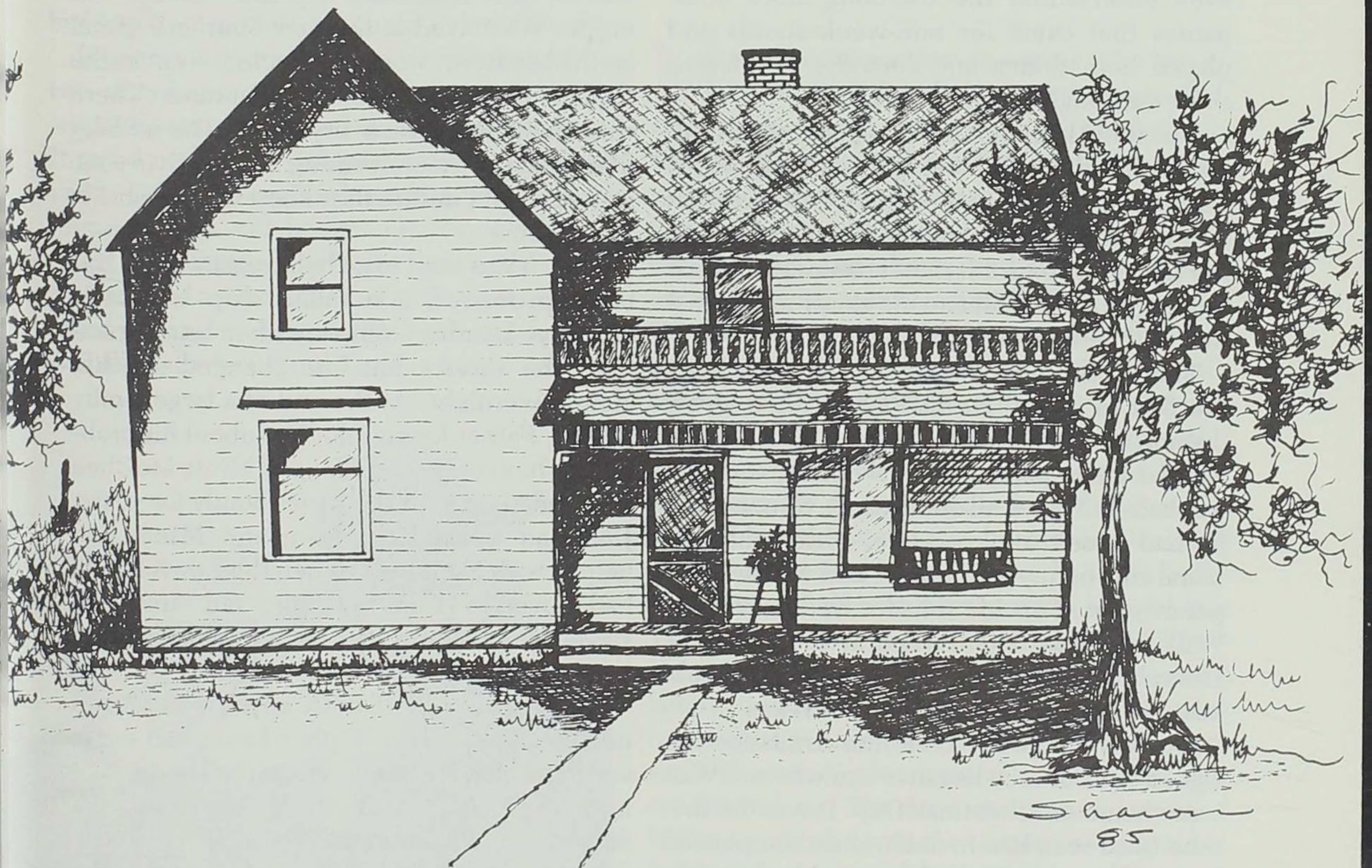
All too often, in considering the place of women in early twentieth-century society, historians have been too much taken with the heady and very important issues of woman suffrage and prohibition. Those issues were indeed noisy ones upon which gallons of impassioned ink were spilt. But continued emphasis on such problems has tended to draw attention from the place of women in society and from the career opportunities open to them at that time. Urbanization continued well into the twentieth century and the movement of young people, women and men alike, to the cities was a continuing phenomenon. As industrialization continued apace, even further changes occurred in the home, the marketplace, and the industrial workplace which altered the terms of life for Iowa women.

The complexity of the scene in the second decade of the twentieth century is apparent in the lives partially documented in the two articles appearing in this issue of the *Palimpsest*. Mrs. Wilma Lewis, early in her life, made the decision to move from city to country, a career choice which cannot have been that uncommon in a still basically agricultural society. Miss Margaret D. Paul, on the other hand, after pursuing a high school and college education, went on to further academic work in elocution and then made a decision to become a professional speaker or elocutionist on the Chautauqua circuit. Subsequently, she put her experience to good use in a career in education in Gary, Indiana.

All too often when we reflect on the days of our grandparents' youth, we are tempted to think of women as either homemakers or teachers. We should remind ourselves occasionally that all women in the first decades of the twentieth century were not homemakers or teachers. We need to remind ourselves also that those who were homemakers or teachers had often become so in very determined fashion. Perhaps we should remember that the determination of women to live a life of their choice is an age-old trait in Iowa as elsewhere in this republic. It was certainly in evidence in the lives of Mrs. Wilma Lewis and Miss Margaret D. Paul.—*Editor*

The House on the Hill

by Wilma Lewis



"The House on the Hill" is dedicated to Walt. Without him there would have been no love, no house on the hill — no article.

It was January 7, 1919, and I had been in bed for hours, too excited to sleep. Alone in my room, I kept living over the previous five years. I thought of how Walter and I had met in 1914 at the beginning of our senior year in high school. And how we had gone to ball games,

school parties, dances, and how on Sunday evenings he had walked me home from church.

Walt's father owned a two-hundred acre farm north of town, but his mother was an invalid, and they had moved to Humeston to be closer to her doctor. Mr. Lewis had taken a position at the Humeston State Bank. He hoped that Walt would return to the farm where he had been born and raised after his high school graduation, but Walt had made friends with the manager of the Hawkeye Lumber Company and wanted to become a lumberman. When Mr. Sterrett at the lum-

beryard had offered Walt a job, Mr. Lewis had consented.

My father and mother owned the old opera house in Humeston and ran movies four nights a week. My mother and I had sold tickets and even entertained the traveling stock companies that came for one-week stands and played both drama and comedy, a different show each night.

One thing happened to change Walt's world; his mother died after a long illness. After this, Mr. Lewis, Walt, and Nellie, his sister, moved into a boarding and rooming house. Though the Lewis trio soon felt right at home, losing his mother brought Walt and me closer together. I was glad he needed me.

Then had come the war and Walt was among the first to enlist. He had given me a lovely diamond engagement ring for my birthday and we had made plans for our wedding. But the war had shot down all our dreams. So one night he had kissed me good-bye, kissed the diamond ring on my cold finger, and walked temporarily out of my life. I had stayed busy while Walt was away and worked at the James R. Humphrey Creamery after their regular bookkeeper was drafted for military service.

On November 11, 1918, the Armistice was signed and our men began to come home. Walt came home on Christmas Day. It was the first time I had seen him in uniform and he seemed bigger than ever. He had grown older but soon his arms were around me and the loneliness just melted away. And thus on January 7, 1919, I was alone in my room with my wedding suit: a soft gray wool with a sable collar; a rose georgette blouse my mother had made, with a deep yoke of rose and cream-colored tatting made by my grandmother. I even had high gray laced shoes and a small white hat. My suitcase was packed; I was ready for the honeymoon.

The following day, January 8, 1919, I stood beside Walter Lewis in his brand new army uniform before our pastor, with my mother, dad, Father Lewis, and Nellie as our wit-

nesses. We took vows to love, honor, and obey until death did us part; a gold wedding ring was placed on my finger, and I became Mrs. Walter C. Lewis.

Our honeymoon was spent in Chicago. It was my first long train trip and Chicago was magic. We stayed at the new Southern Hotel on the lakefront, went sightseeing, went to the theater, and ate at famous restaurants. There were men in uniform everywhere. The soldiers from overseas were coming home! Everyone smiled at us. I'm sure they knew we were bride and groom.

Then it was time to go home again. Walt had been promised a managership with the Hawkeye Lumber Company when he returned from the service but fate changed our life almost overnight. At the end of a large family dinner, Father Lewis told Walt about his problems. They concerned Jiles and Minta McGhee who had been with the Lewis family for years. Jiles had worked the farm and Minta had helped with the house. When the Lewis family had moved to Humeston, Jiles and Minta had stayed at the farm as caretakers. They had become part of the family.

Now Jiles was ill with appendicitis and needed an operation. Father Lewis had made arrangements for him to enter the Centerville hospital for surgery. But who would run the farm during his absence? There seemed only one logical solution. Walt had been born and raised on those two hundred acres and could manage nicely. Minta could stay and run the house and teach me how to be a farmer's wife. When Jiles was back on the job, we could go to the lumberyard as planned.

One week later Father Lewis drove to the depot where Jiles was put on the train to Centerville. Then he drove over to my house and turned the team and buggy over to Walt. We were then on our way. We drove along the snow-covered road, all tucked in with a big fur robe. On either side of the road were fields of dried cornstalks drooping in the snow. Then

came brown plowed fields that would soon show the green of winter wheat. Pete and Ben, the big horses, knew they were on the way home. Walt and I were content there in the buggy racing through the snow. I was twenty-two years old and Walt was just twenty-four, but together we felt we could lick the world.

It was six miles to the farm. It was a big white two-story house with a wide front porch on the west side and a screened-in porch on the east. It stood on a small hill with a sweeping front yard, a family orchard on the north, surrounded by a tall hedge. On the south and down the hill stood the horse barn with a lean-to shed, and a windmill. Just to the east of these stood a bigger red barn with a silo attached. It was all really beautiful! The big house and the

red barn with roofs covered with snow were just like pictures on Christmas cards! This truly was "The House on the Hill." It would be my home for awhile.

* * *

Minta was there to welcome us. She was a short, plump, red-cheeked woman, with iron gray hair and a pleasant smile. She had no children of her own, but had cared for Walt since he was a baby. He was very special to her. We were ushered into a huge kitchen with a high ceiling, four doors, and three windows curtained with snowy white ruffled tiebacks. Off the kitchen was a big pantry with shelves from floor to ceiling on one side, a window, and a shiny DeLaval separator for milk. In the far corner was a tall old-fashioned cupboard with shelves covered with bright paper that held rows of pretty dishes. Across from this stood a worktable holding a water bucket and a sink, with a roller towel beside it. On the north wall was a long shelf with a gray ruffle around it. This was the clock shelf and it held an old Seth Thomas clock, two brightly shining kerosene lamps, and a box of matches. A huge wood-burning range, complete with a water reservoir and high warming oven, stood between the two south windows. The floor was pine and scrubbed to a pure white. In the center was a big old-fashioned square table covered with a gay oilcloth. Several chairs were nearby, and a rocking chair was in one corner.

It was an ideal family room where children could learn to read and write by the light of the big kerosene lamp sitting in the middle of the table. The front room opened off the kitchen with a bedroom on the side. Stairs leading to the upstairs bedrooms separated the kitchen from the bedroom. Minta led the way upstairs to the three bedrooms, a big west room, a small northeast room, and a south one. Off the south room there was a bathroom with a huge bathtub that had claw feet, and a large gal-



Walter and Wilma Lewis on their wedding day, 8 January 1919. (courtesy the author)

vanized tank on a high platform to hold the cistern water pumped from outside. There were no other modern conveniences.

Minta led us back down the hall to the big west room which was to be our room. It was large with three windows, long lace curtains, and a bright rag carpet on the floor. My eyes were drawn to the bed in the corner, however. It was the largest feather bed I had ever seen. I wondered if I would need a box to climb into it. It was piled high with quilts made of large wool blocks and covered with a blue-and-white woven spread. Along one wall stood a beautiful walnut chest of drawers with a mirror above it. In another corner was a big square trunk. It really was a lovely room. I'd learn to climb into that feather bed. It really did look inviting.

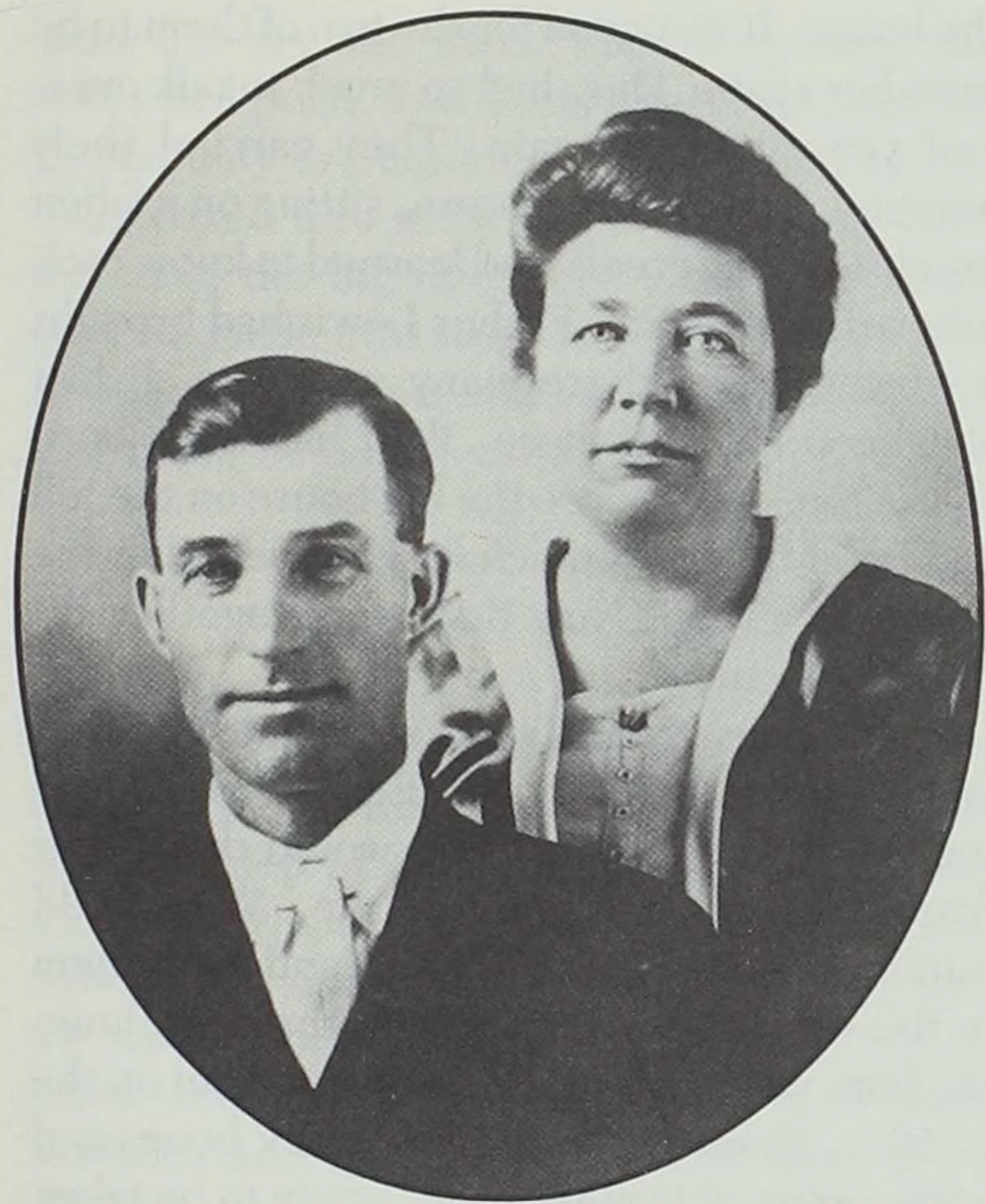
When the alarm went off the next morning I cautiously opened my eyes. It was still dark outside, but Walt had lit the kerosene lamp and was already dressed. I wondered what he was doing up at 5:00 in the morning, as my world didn't begin until 8:00 at home. However, I soon learned that a farm day began before daylight. There were cows to milk and horses to feed before breakfast. That was the reason for the big breakfast already on the table; the men had already done a half-day's work. There were slices of home-cured ham, eggs, fried potatoes and oatmeal, homemade bread, jelly, and great pitchers of thick cream. A large pot of coffee was boiling on the wood range. My breakfast at home had consisted of grapefruit, toast, and black coffee. I wondered what I would do with all this food!

After breakfast I asked Minta what I could do to help. I wanted to do my share of the work. She smiled at me and told me I could wash the dishes. I got down the big tin dishpan, filled it with hot water from the reservoir, got out the homemade soap, and went to work. Minta ran the DeLaval separator and took care of the milk and cream. When the dishes were washed, dried, and put away in the cupboard, the tea towel was rinsed and hung up. I was now ready

for another job. This time Minta told me I could wash the separator. It looked quite complicated to me. It had two compartments beneath the huge steel bowl that held the fresh milk, and several round metal cups. When you cranked the separator these cups spun round and round, the cream pouring out from the top compartment and the skimmed milk from the lower one. The cream was put into tall stone jars while the milk was put into two-gallon crocks and placed in the cave. I finally got the thing apart, ready to wash. I got my dishpan full of water again, reached for the bar of soap, and went to work. That's where I made my first big mistake. Minta informed me that each piece must be rinsed in clear cold water first! If washed first in hot soapy water, the milk would form a brown varnish that would have to be scraped off. I sure had learned my first big farm lesson the hard way.

One evening when Walt and I were enjoying a game of caroms and Minta was doing her mending, there was a dreadful racket in the front yard. There were loud voices and shot-guns were fired. Our neighbors had come to charivari us, to welcome the bride and groom. The community was mostly Swedish people. The young people had attended the same country school with Walt and were noisy and friendly. I liked them all very much. Minta welcomed the crowd into the kitchen, overshoes and all, where she served everyone with doughnuts and great mugs of coffee. Now I knew why Minta had made so many doughnuts the day before. It was a wonderful feeling to be welcomed into the community. What difference did it make that the snow melted off overshoes onto the floor? Tomorrow we would scrub the white pine floor, wash the coffee mugs, and put things back in order.

When tomorrow came the temperature — which had been below zero — had changed. Soft white snowflakes were falling and every tree and shrub was ridged with white. Roofs were piled high and looked like big marsh-



Jiles and Minta McGee who worked on the Lewis farm. (courtesy the author)

mallows. We kept the kitchen range and the living room round the oak heater piled high with wood and were snug and warm. The next morning the sun shone and again our world was like a giant Christmas card. Now paths had to be cleared to the horse barn, chicken house, outhouse, well, and the big east barn.

I could help shovel the snow. It was light and fluffy and we soon had all the paths cleared. I helped with the chores, too. I fed the chickens while Walt gave them fresh feed and warm fresh water. Next came the horses: Pete and Ben, the sorrel team; and Prince and Dimple, the big dapple-gray pair. They were fed corn and oats and led to the watering trough and then bedded down with fresh straw. I gathered dry wood for the kitchen range and trudged back up the hill to the house. There was milking to be done and supper to get. It had cer-

tainly been a full day for me.

In the corner of the kitchen was a wall telephone of polished wood, a big box-like affair. Since there was no electricity, it ran on batteries encased below the bells and receiver. There were eleven telephones on that one line, and each had its own ring. Ours was a long, a short, and a long. The Andersons' just down the road was a long and two shorts; the Johnsons', three short rings. A favorite pastime of the women was to listen in on the conversations. We had no daily newspaper, so the farmers depended on the telephone for all the news. There were all the important happenings in the neighborhood; a new baby, a quilting bee, and occasionally a wedding. When a man needed the phone he would yell, "Get off the line, I want to call the Veterinarian." And you could hear the receivers click as the women got off the line.

It seemed to me that living on a farm was like living on a merry-go-round. We scarcely finished one project when two more appeared. There was the butchering to be done, and trees to be cut down in the forty-acre timber pasture, sawed into stove lengths, and hauled to the house. At times I felt very confused.

Then one night I slipped out of the house and curled up on the back steps. South of me were the lights of home; to the west, the little town of Leroy; and to the north, the lights of Derby. They twinkled against the night sky and I sat in the dark, alone, crying my heart out. That's where Walt found me. He knelt down in front of me, pulled my head against his shoulder, and with his arms tight around me, asked, "Wilma, don't you want to live with me?" I only cried that much harder as I answered, "Of course I do, but I can't stay here." He pulled me closer to him and I dried my tears. I was being a baby, not a helpmate. I vowed to forget the past and begin all over again. Walt kissed me and we walked into the great house, up the stairs to our room with the big feather bed.

Jiles had never been sick in his life, but he

had a deep-seated fear of cancer. So he had demanded a complete exploratory surgery. It had taken a much longer incision than a simple appendectomy, and that caused a much longer recuperation time. On his return, he seemed tired and not at all interested in the farm. He wasn't even interested in moving about to gain his strength. We were all quite concerned. Everyone seemed on edge and unsettled.

That is when I made my second mistake. We had churning to be done one morning and Minta asked me to get out the old barrel churn, rinse it with hot water, and fill it with sour cream. The barrel hung on a wooden support with a long handle on the side. You turned the barrel over and over very slowly making the cream splash from end to end until globs of butter formed, then you opened the churn, worked the globs of yellow butter into a lump with a wooden butter paddle, and lifted it out into a bowl. Then you washed it with water and the wooden paddle until all the water was out and it was ready for the butter mold.

I remembered each step, but forgot one very important thing. In my hurry I turned the barrel too fast; the cream couldn't splash and it just stayed in the center. The end result was no butter. Minta's temper surfaced and she turned to me and said, "Wilma, I give up! You will never learn!"

Then my temper flared and I answered with some heat. "I came out of an office where I was efficient and capable. You wouldn't have fit in there any better than I do here." Then I calmly finished the churning, emptied the buttermilk into tall stone jars, carried them to the cave, and considered the incident closed.

Father Lewis was spending more time with us at the farm. He had a small northeast bedroom furnished with his own things, so he could come and go as he pleased. He knew he was always welcome. He and Walt worked in the timber together, carefully choosing the trees to be cut down, trimmed, and sawed into lengths ready to be hauled to the woodpile near

the house. It was good for the two of them to be together again. They had so much to talk over, and years to live again. They carried their lunches, ate them in the sun, sitting on a fallen log close to the creek, and learned to know each other all over again. Father Lewis had brought his bride, Etta, there many years ago. It had also been his birthplace. Walt had been born there, too, long before the big house on the hill had been built. So much had happened in the years since then. Now they were together sitting in the sun.

In the house Minta and I were getting ready for the big butchering day. Early in the morning Frank and Mollie Lowe would drive over from across the field to help. We would butcher two hogs that morning and hang them in the shed to cool out. When that was done, the hogs would be cut down and laid out on the trestles. Hams and shoulders, back bones and tenderloins all would be cut, ready to be taken to the kitchen. There, the women's work really began. The hams and shoulders would be trimmed of all excess fat. This would be laid aside for the big lard kettle. The hams and shoulders would be rolled in a mixture of salt, brown sugar, and cayenne pepper, then wrapped in heavy brown paper, ready to cure. These would be hung over the bathtub to drip and cure. No more baths in the tub until they were ready to store away. There was sausage to be made from the pieces of meat cut from the hams and shoulders, ground in a hand sausage grinder, seasoned with salt, pepper, and sage, and made into patties. These were fried, then put in glass jars, and stored in the cave. They would make good eating next summer.

Then it was time to render lard. All the extra fat was cut into small cubes and piled up in pans. The men got out the huge black iron kettle and a wood fire was built under it. Minta and I carried out the fat cubes and they were slowly dropped into the hot kettle and the liquid fat soon started to boil. The cubes were cooked until, when pressed with a fork, they

came out dry and hard. Then they were put into a lard press, and the hot lard siphoned off, so that only dry cracklings were left. The lard was poured into great stone jars, ready to be stored in the big cave. The cracklings would later be made into soap. Minta also knew how to make headcheese and pickled pigs' feet, but that could be done another day.

* * *

January slipped by and soon it was February. Every day brought the usual round of farm chores. The sun thawed the snow and the roads became deep in mud. Going to town became an all-day trip, so we seldom made it. Our rural mail carrier came with a horse and buggy and we looked forward to letters, papers, magazines, and spring sales catalogues from Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Ward. Best of all were the spring catalogues from Earl E. May and the Henry Field Seed Company, with their pages of bulbs, trees, shrubs, and gaily colored flowers. I spent long evenings deciding what I wanted for spring planting.

In March, Jiles and Minta decided to go back to their old home in the White Breast country, north and east of us. When they were packed and ready to leave, neighbors came with teams and wagons to help them move. Everyone loved them. Jiles and Minta would be missed by everyone. Now the house really was cold and bare.

But Walt and I made a list of the furniture we would need for downstairs. Early the next morning we drove to Humeston to shop. We chose everything in oak with good grain and lustre. The next day the Andersons, our neighbors to the north, came with teams and wagons to help Walt bring all our new furniture home. It was unloaded and rugs were laid and furniture put in place before the Andersons went home. There was a bright rug on the living room floor, a leather-covered six-foot davenport that made into a bed, and two bright oak

rocking chairs. Mother and Dad had given me my piano and mahogany music cabinet. The living room was really lovely now.

The bedroom rug was a soft blue, the bedstead oak with springs and mattress. No more feather bed here! In one corner was a big oak dresser with a big mirror above it. In another corner stood a tall chest of drawers. My cedar chest filled with linens completed the bedroom.

But the kitchen was my pride and joy. We chose blue-and-white linoleum for the floor, a big round oak table, and six matching chairs. An oak buffet had two small drawers, one for the silverware and one for my linen napkins. Below the drawers were two shelves, one for tablecloths and one for my special embroidered tea towels. The clock shelf was still on the north wall. The old Seth Thomas clock, the kerosene lamps, and the matches were still in their respective places. Mother had bought a new Singer sewing machine and had given me her old one, a treadle Domestic she had used to make my baby clothes. This would stand under the south window, where I would soon be making blue-and-white checked gingham curtains for my kitchen.

There was a big shining Monarch range with a high warming oven and the usual hot water reservoir. Walt had moved the cream separator to the screened-in back porch. In its place stood a three-burner oilstove with an oven; no more meals in a hot kitchen. Mealtime in the summer would be far more comfortable.

We soon had the linoleum on the floor, both rugs down, and the furniture all in place. It was really very beautiful. Now it was really our home. Walt and Father Lewis could go back to their chores. I would be busy making curtains for each new room.

Father Lewis gave us our first automobile as a housewarming gift. It was a shiny black touring car with black side curtains that could be buttoned down in case of rain. Now our trips to town would be easier. We could even drive to Leroy in the evenings for groceries. Humeston

was a little farther away so we could drive there for Saturday night band concerts, spend Sunday with Mother and Dad, and still get home to do the chores.

There was a great deal to do in March. There were logs to be cut and hauled to the wood lot, and the sheep to be driven from the lower pasture. The expectant ewes would be placed in the orchard north of the house, the older ones in the east lot.

One night I wakened Walt, sitting upright, coughing and choking. I couldn't get my breath, and when I did, it was an agonizing wheeze. Walt put cold cloths on my throat and my feet in hot water, but still I choked. At daylight he telephoned my mother, who told him to wrap me in a blanket, put me in the car, and bring me to her.

When we arrived Mother took one look at me and said, "Asthma. And I know just what to do; my father had it all his life. I'll take care of her, Walt. You go back home; she'll be all right." I'm not sure what remedy she used, but in a few days I was good as new and ready to go back home. It was years later that I found out that I was allergic to sheep and wool.

Lambing time was over and mothers and baby lambs were moved to the east lot and the older ewes were moved across the road to our new pasture. Walt and I had been given a puppy, a gift from old friends on a farm miles south of us. She was a collie, a beautiful all-white puppy with soft brown eyes. She had royal blood and we named her Princess, and she lived up to her name. She was most intelligent, eager to learn, and responded well to orders. She loved to work with the cattle, but sheep were her favorites. She took special care with lambs, seeming to know they were only babies. Soon she became known as the best sheep dog in the country. She obeyed Walt implicitly, but she adored me. She was really my dog, and followed me whenever she wasn't working for Walt.

The day Walt and Father Lewis decided to

move the old ewes across the road to another pasture arrived gray and very cloudy. The ground was already wet and soggy, the road in puddles. It would be a rush to get the ewes settled before the weather broke. The sheep were restless and huddled together as though they sensed the coming storm. Then the storm began, with cold driving rain and thunder and lightning. The sheep were wet and cold and bolted back again and again. Walt and Father Lewis were cold and wet to the skin. Princess became confused and frightened, and refused to obey Father Lewis. Suddenly he lost his temper. He was so proud of her and now she had failed him. He picked her up by one hind leg and threw her into the mud. She wasn't hurt, so she scrambled up and, with drooping tail and ears, headed straight for home and me.

When the sheep were finally moved and in



Wilma and the lambs. (courtesy the author)

the new pasture, the two men came home, exhausted, wet, and muddy. I was on my knees in the kitchen with Princess in a washtub of warm water, washing the mud out of her long silky hair. Princess was licking my hands and I was crying my heart out. Father Lewis was truly sorry, and I understood and accepted his apology. But Princess never did. After that incident, when she worked with Walt and Father Lewis came near, she lifted her head, waved her white-plumed tail, and headed for the house and me. It hurt Father Lewis deeply. He truly loved that dog, but Princess never forgot.

April arrived and we were on that merry-go-round again. There was wheat to be drilled into the rich black soil, oats to be sowed, and then would come corn planting time. In between times, Walt built me a brooder house and I ordered five hundred day-old chicks from the Henry Field Seed Company. Then there was the big garden to be plowed and planted. It was all a race against time.

In May, Walt's sister came to spend the summer with us. I enjoyed her; she was the sister I never had. She was quite grown up, a junior in high school. She had spent her vacations on the farm with Jiles and Minta since she was eight years old. She knew all about farm life and was a great help to me, besides being good company. With Nellie now with us, Father Lewis spent more time with us. He took over the vegetable garden. We ordered seeds of all kinds from Henry Field, who carried hundreds of different things. Our seed potatoes were all stored in the cave. We got them out and cut them in pieces so that each piece would have an eye that would grow a potato vine. I could hardly wait to see long rows of green sprouts bursting through the rich black loam.

Nellie helped me with the housework and chores and taught me how to care for those five hundred baby chicks. The months rushed by and soon it was August. The corn was tall with

big ears weighting down the stalks; the oats and wheat were golden. Mother Nature was at her best.

August drifted into September and it was time for Nellie to go back to school. It had been such a happy summer for us. Father Lewis would be going back to town, too, only coming to the farm for weekends. Walt and I would be alone.

Next would come the threshing of oats. The neighbors had formed a ring for threshing and had a company machine. They moved onto each farm until the work was done. The oats that had been shocked in the field were loaded onto big hayracks, then the oat shocks were pitched into the big machine, near the house. The straw would be blown out into a big stack to be used for bedding down the stock during the winter. Walt made a trip to town for coal to run the machine. Any leftover coal would be used for the kitchen range. Mamie and Ernina Anderson, our neighbors, would help me cook for the twenty-four men who would come to help.

The machine rolled into our driveway early one morning with its three-man engineering crew. It was my day to have the threshers. I had planned to have fried chicken and all that went with it, several vegetables from the garden, and pickles and milk from the cave. There would also be tapioca cream pudding, two kinds of pie, and a big cake. I had been warned that the men would be starved by noon. I had been up since 4:30 and everything was under control.

But I hadn't thought about the neighbors. They all came to help Walt's new wife with her first threshing crew. Everyone pitched in and helped. After all, they had been doing this for years. We all visited while we worked. Finally, dinner was over, the dishes washed, and the kitchen in order. Tired neighbors climbed into their wagons and headed for home. I was dead tired, but very happy. This had been another lesson in farming. I had enjoyed my neighbors

and was grateful for their help. I would welcome a nice warm bath, then the bed and sleep. Walt would finish the chores and be ready to rest, too. Tomorrow would be another threshing day and we two would go and help our neighbors just like they had helped us.

Almost before the threshing was over, it was time to pick the apples. The trees were heavy with Red Jonathans and Golden Maiden Blush. They would be stored for winter in big barrels along one side of the cave, along with the bins of potatoes. Nellie and I had canned fruit and vegetables and the shining quart jars stood on shelves on the opposite side. There was still room for jars of cream, milk, and the fresh butter. With our cured meat, lard, and sacks of flour and sugar, no one would go hungry.

Walt scrubbed and aired the cave and the barrels were all in place. Ladders were carried to the orchard and leaned against the tree trunks, and we were ready to pick apples. I was a little doubtful about my ladder but I watched Walt climb to the top rung, balance his bucket, and reach for the topmost bough. I had no interest in doing that. I'd settle for the low branches and feel safe. Already the rungs of the ladder hurt my feet and my arms were scratched by the branches. I stayed with it until Walt said it was time to do the chores and get supper. I was stiff and sore and my feet hurt as I staggered into the house, got supper, and fell into bed. I wondered if I would ever enjoy apples again.

When morning came I gingerly put my feet to the floor. I was just one big ache. Walt was very sympathetic, then said, "Oh, you'll get used to it." I knew better. I was sure I couldn't get through another day of apple picking. But I could, and I did. Father Lewis came out to help and the barrels in the cave were soon full of apples. They would really be good in the winter. I had soon forgotten my aches and pains.

September came along and was ablaze with color, brilliant reds, yellows, and soft browns.

It was too nice for me to stay indoors. Walt always took salt to the cattle in the timber pasture on Sunday mornings. The tall trees, the lush green grass, and the creek running through it made it an ideal place until the snow came. One morning Walt insisted that I ride over to the pasture with him. Riding horses was not my cup of tea, but he assured me that Pet was gentle and slow and I would learn to enjoy her. He would ride Shorty, Nellie's sorrel pony. Shorty was a little harder to handle, but Walt could manage him quite well.

So the horses were saddled. Walt put my left foot into the stirrup and I heaved myself into the saddle. The ground seemed so far away. Pet seemed to get taller by the minute. Walt showed me how to hold the reins and I was as ready as I would ever be. Walt swung himself into the saddle and we were on our way. Pet ambled along beside Shorty and I relaxed. This might be fun after a few more lessons. We slowly made our way to the timber pasture, salted the cattle, and headed back toward home. It was only a little more than a mile away, along a soft dirt road that ran west for three-quarters of a mile, then turned south to the farm. Shorty and Walt had fallen a little behind Pet and me. Nellie and Walt had made this trip together many times and, traditionally, when they turned the corner they raced to the gate. As we turned the corner Pet thought the race was on and headed for home. I froze and sat in the saddle like a clothespin on a line. Walt yelled at me, "Hang on, Wilma. She'll stop at the gate." There wasn't much else I could do. I grabbed the saddle horn with both hands and held on for dear life. Sure enough, Pet stopped at the gate. She had won the race and I had just gone along for the ride. I rolled off and tottered up toward the house. Walt assured me that I had done quite well and would do much better the next time. Next time? Perhaps there would be a next time. I doubted it. But there were many next times and I learned to love the days Walt and I rode

together.

October came and more glorious fall days. Dusk came early to Iowa. The cattle were brought up from the south pasture and put into the feedlot, where they were fed corn. They would be shipped to Chicago; corn-fed cattle brought top prices. Each afternoon about 4:00 we put on our heavy coats and stocking caps, and grabbed our cotton flannel gloves so we could feed the cattle in long wooden bunks. A wagonful of corn stood close by. Walt shoveled



*Wilma and her mother, Olive Barker, in 1924.
(courtesy the author)*

it into the bunks and it was my job to break the ears into three pieces by hitting them on the bunks. When the cattle heard the sound they jostled and crowded each other for first place. When the gates were opened they raced over for their evening meal. Walt and I would lean on the fence and dream about the price they would bring.

October turned into November and still the days were sunny, though cold. Now was the

time to husk corn. Stalks in the fields were heavy with golden ears. The wagons were fitted with high right sides, called bangboards. The men wore husking mittens with a metal peg on one hand to pull down and remove the ears of corn from the stalks. Then the ears were thrown up against the bangboards, and they fell into the wagons. Men who could husk one hundred bushels of corn a day were in great demand. They were strong, young men, with large hands and thick wrists. Walt had long, slender fingers and small wrists and he never tried for a record. His wrists would be swollen after a day of husking and pained him so he couldn't sleep. His hands grew chapped and sore, his body ached, and he was miserable. We bought husking mittens by the dozen. They grew wet with the frost and were worn out in one day.

During husking season we got up long before daylight so Walt could do the chores and get to the cornfield as soon as daylight came. My days were long and I was lonely. Walt drove in with his first load about 11:00, had lunch and coffee, and hurried back to the field. November days were short and there were chores to do before dark. I wanted to go along in the afternoon and finally Walt consented. I bundled up, then he gave me a pair of mittens and a husking peg, and I was on my own. He could husk two rows of corn at a time. I could manage only one. I was next to the wagon so I wouldn't miss when I tossed the ears toward it. At first, I thought I could never learn to shuck the husk down and snap the ear. Finally, I learned the rhythm and really enjoyed it. Walt threw his ears over my head and I learned to dodge to keep from getting hit. In late afternoon we climbed on our loaded wagon and headed for home, Walt to unload the corn and do the chores, while I got our supper. Then two very tired people fell into bed.

The days grew colder, but there was very little snow and we had only a few rows of corn left standing. We were hoping for clear

weather until they were done. Then suddenly it was Thanksgiving. That was the day my family attended services at the Methodist Church and then the Ladies' Aid served an old-fashioned turkey dinner, including the traditional pumpkin pie. Dad, Mother, and I had attended for years. We knew everyone who would be there. It was a time for visiting friends. I had our clothes ready. It was planned that Walt and I would drive to town, join Dad and Mother, Father Lewis and Nellie, and have a wonderful day.

Suddenly all plans were changed. Father Lewis telephoned to tell us that heavy snow was forecast for Thursday. He said that he and Nellie had a four-day vacation, so they would be out early Thursday morning and that he would help Walt finish husking the corn before the predicted snow arrived. But what about me? What about my plans for Thanksgiving Day in town? Walt explained that all the corn must be out before the snow fell or it would have to stay in the field until spring. This was the way it had to be done and I unwillingly agreed. Of course, I knew that he was right; I was being selfish.

Thanksgiving morning came and I dressed a big fat hen. We would have roast chicken and sage dressing. There were plenty of vegetables in the cave. I would bake two apple pies to serve with thick cream. We would need one for supper. What I really wanted to do was cry and feel sorry for myself. But there wasn't time to indulge in self-pity. Father Lewis and Nellie arrived and the men hurried to the field. Nellie and I had much to talk about. It was her senior year in school and we talked about her plans for college the following year. It really turned out to be a pleasant day. Everyone enjoyed the roast chicken and apple pie at noon. Then the men hurried back to the field as snow clouds appeared in the west. The weather had changed for the worse.

The men had almost finished the field when the first snowflakes drifted down. But those

lazy first snowflakes soon became almost a blizzard. The men hurried to the barn, leaving the wagon to be unloaded the next day. Father Lewis wanted to get back to Humeston before the snow drifted on the roads. I wrapped the chicken and an apple pie in oiled paper, kissed Nellie good-bye, and they were on their way.

When they were gone, Walt started to tell me why this all had to be, but I needed no explanation. I could understand why. Soon the snow would cover the cornfield until late spring. I had done some growing up in the previous twenty-four hours.

Soon I began to wonder where the year had gone. It was almost time for Christmas. Dad and Mother had always made so much of Christmas, with holly wreaths in every window, a big cardboard Santa Claus in the west window to welcome guests, and a gaily decorated tree with a shining angel on the topmost branch. That angel had been on my first Christmas tree. It couldn't be Christmas without that. Dad loved to buy gifts and smuggle them into the house and hide them under his bed. I never peeked at them. That would have spoiled all his fun.

Mother used her very best linen tablecloth and embroidered napkins, all the cut glass and French Haviland china, with a centerpiece of holly and red candles in a low-cut glass bowl. There was always turkey and dressing, fluffy mashed potatoes, yams covered with butter and brown sugar, scalloped corn, relishes, and the traditional mince pie. Mother always made her own mincemeat from Grandmother's recipe, and there was none better.

Father Lewis and Nellie would be there, too. That was our family. Walt and I finished the chores early, piled all our gifts into that shiny black Ford, and were soon on our way to Humeston and home. The day was cold and crisp, with only a light snow on the ground, so the roads were good. Mother and Dad were all ready for us, the table sparkling, as usual. Dad had piled all the gifts under the big tree with

my shining angel on top. It was just as though I had never been away. Father Lewis and Nellie came later with gifts for everyone. Dad distributed them and we all exclaimed over our gaily wrapped packages: "It was just what we wanted!"

The wrappings and ribbons were gathered up, the room was back in order, and Mom's dinner was served. Everything was delicious, as Mom's meals always were. We enjoyed every mouthful and were almost too full for the mince pie. When dinner was over, the dishes were washed and put away, and then we ladies chose an easy chair to relax in and visit. We talked about other Christmastimes and made plans for next year. When it was time to say

good-bye, Walt and I gathered up our Christmas gifts, climbed into the car, and drove back to the farm. It was dusk and Christmas lights sparkled everywhere. The sky was a deep blue, all spangled with bright stars. It had been a perfect day. I kept thinking of the Twenty-third Psalm: "My cup runneth over." I had never been so happy in my life.

On New Year's Eve we were invited to the Andersons', our Swedish neighbors just down the road. Chris and Elizabeth had been born in Sweden, married young, and come to America. They had seven children, all grown. Oscar and Albert were married and lived on farms of their own. Next was Mamie, a practical nurse who assisted our country doctor and cared for moth-



From left to right (back row): Al Barker, Wilma's father; Seman Lewis, Walt's father; Chris Anderson, a neighbor; Wilma Lewis; and Mamie Anderson. From left to right (front row): Walter Lewis; Nellie Lewis, Walter's sister; Carlton Lewis, Walter and Wilma's son; and Lisson Anderson. (courtesy the author)

ers and newborn babies. Then came Willie, Fred, and Victor, big blonde Swedes, always pleasant and willing to help wherever needed. On snowy bad days, the three would stop at our house to visit and drink thick black coffee and eat cookies. They always made a bright spot in my day. The last of the seven was golden-haired Ernina, just Nellie's age. They would all be home for New Year's Day. The Anderson home was large enough to accommodate the big family with a great long table in the dining room, big enough to seat the whole family.

There was plenty of snow then, but the roads were clear and soon the jingle of sleigh bells announced the arrival of Oscar and Albert with their families. All the women went to the kitchen to dish up the dinner. There was roast pork and chicken, four kinds of vegetables, lingonberries (berries that were much like our cranberries), pickled herring cut into squares, two kinds of cake, fruit, and two kinds of pie. The table simply groaned with food. Chris sat at the head of the table with Elizabeth at his left. Walt and I were seated at his right. The rest of the family chose their own places. Chris raised his fork in one hand, his knife in the other, and said, "We might as well commence." And commence we did. Big dishes covered the table and soon plates were loaded. I wondered how we could eat all that food, but eat it we did, every crumb, and were stuffed but content. Things were cleared away and we all went into the big parlor with its glowing round oak stove, while in one corner stood an old-fashioned organ with high mirrored back. Mamie played quite well and we all gathered round and sang old familiar songs.

Soon it was time to go home to do our chores, so good-byes were said and the sleigh bells jingled as Oscar and Albert drove down the road. Walt and I thanked the Andersons for a Happy New Year and wished them many more, bundled into our coats, fastened our overshoes, and walked up the road to our House on the Hill. Again, my cup runneth

over. Walt and I were facing our New Year together.

The year brought the same farm merry-go-round again. The two carloads of cattle would be readied for shipping to Chicago. Walt would ride the freight train with them to see that they were watered and fed. Then would come the buyers and the bidding. We were hoping for high prices. After that, time would be spent in the timber cutting wood for next year; the sheep would be brought in from the south field and divided into two groups, the old ones to be brought to a small fenced pasture to be sheared, the ewes that were to lamb would be placed near the farm. But it was a good merry-go-round with breaks for the Fourth of July, or a carnival, and, of course, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Variations, both good and bad, lay ahead for Walt and me, but our first year in the House on the Hill was an unforgettably happy one.

* * *

Walt and Wilma Lewis spent seven years in the House on the Hill before the opportunity presented itself for Walt to return to his planned career as a lumberman. The farm years had been years of great happiness for them and had included the birth of their son, Carlton. The farm years had been years of mixed economic fortunes for them, however, and had become increasingly difficult by the mid-1920s. In 1926 Walt was offered the managership of the Hawkeye Lumber Company's Lenox lumberyard. As Wilma remembered: "And somehow I knew my dreams would come true again. I had married a lumberman who became a farmer. Now he would go back to the beginning again. . . . We were two happy people. All our dreams were going to come true." □



(courtesy the author)

“Miss Paul” Hits the Glittering Chautauqua Trail

by Elaine Carol Main

Can all the glitter of a Michael Jackson concert and the excitement of a Fourth of July fireworks display and the fervor of a religious revival meeting be thrown together into one event? Ask any Iowan who remembers Chautauqua, and the answer is an enthusiastic “Yes!”

Chautauqua circuits once made Iowa summers memorable. Chautauqua performers

traveled from tent to tent throughout Iowa and brought live entertainment to towns, large and small. There were lecturers on all types of topics, musical groups, vocalists, and acting groups.

Chautauqua was a booking service for flesh-and-blood entertainers and educators. The entertainers were not only booked into small towns by Chautauqua organizers, they were delivered in package deals. Generally, a community paid in advance for a three- to seven-

day cycle of performers. Then the booking agents would send elaborate publicity and promotional materials — banners, posters, broadsides — in advance of the arrival of the entertainers. Finally, the tent would arrive. Within its confines, small-town Americans quickly forgot that they were perched on slab benches or folding chairs borrowed from a local funeral parlor. They sat enthralled as the performances began and their world was broadened by the lecturers, musicians, vocalists, and — most important for one young woman from Springville, Iowa — dramatic readers.

That young woman was Margaret D. Paul, and she was awed by the way that dramatic readers hypnotized audiences. She saw how a good Chautauqua reader could take the words of a book, add voice fluctuations and pauses and gestures, and create a gripping story that carried an audience wherever the reader wished.

There was power in dramatic reading.

That power which could be created by interpreting the printed word appealed to Margaret. She was a short, slight person, but she knew that when she “recited” she had power. She could make an audience laugh or cry, and could show them far places even she had never visited.

* * *

Margaret had always been fascinated by the power of drama. Ten years younger than the other children in the family, Margaret had amused herself through a lot of empty time as a youngster and had spent countless hours in front of a mirror “play acting,” reciting, and delivering speeches.

In addition to a natural dramatic ability, she had an unusual amount of gumption and ini-



The Springville Methodist Church's Bethany Circle baseball team of 1904. Margaret Paul is third from the right in the back row. (courtesy the author)



The Class of 1904 — Springville High School. Margaret Paul is on the extreme right in the second row. (courtesy the author)

tiative. She had been the one who had made an unassisted triple play when the members of the Springville Methodist Church's Bethany Circle challenged the Presbyterian women to a baseball game. Margaret had also written the twenty-one stanzas of her high school class poem that complained about their unjust treatment by the school board. "If these are the happiest days of our lives, then life is a battle and pleasures few," she concluded.

Margaret took as much elocution training as Cornell College in Mount Vernon, Iowa, offered, and obtained a certificate from its School of Oratory in 1908. The certificate qualified her to share her recitation and dra-

matic reading talents with young people, and Margaret taught in Linn County (Iowa) school systems, such as Springville District No. 4, the Independent District of Prairie Valley, and Marion School Township.

Using skills honed at Cornell, she began presenting programs of readings. By the summer of 1907 Margaret had acquired enough glowing endorsements from satisfied audiences to warrant printing an advertising folder. "Testimonials" came from Iowa churches in Central City, Marion, Mt. Vernon, Traer, Viola, and her hometown — Springville. The advertising folder touted her ability as a reader, impersonator, and elocutionist and

listed forty possible readings, including "The Parson's Butterfly." A second brochure, dated 1908, contained endorsements from Iowa towns even farther afield. A third advertising brochure contained reference to the Iowa Lyceum and Chautauqua Bureau of Ottumwa. The booking and management arrangement must have been successful because a fourth advertising brochure included endorsements from audiences in a four-state region — Iowa, Kansas, North Dakota, and South Dakota. She now offered impersonations and readings in humor, pathos and dialect, musical recitations, and sacred recitals.

Meanwhile, summer Chautauqua performers were playing to full tents in small towns across the country. Iowa, always proud of its interest in education and "betterment," was a fertile field for the Chautauqua circuits. Indeed, it was a Cedar Rapids man, Keith Vawter, who had founded a top booking agency. One of his headliners and highest-paid performers was Leland Powers, a man who entranced audiences with his recitations and readings. Powers commanded a fee of \$200 a night.

Margaret was probably in at least one audience that applauded the Bostonian after a program of "monacting." Powers, already popular and in great demand for his oral reading performances, was unique through monacting. It was an invention which would have intrigued Margaret. In monacting, Powers singly ("mono-") took all parts in a dramatic play ("-acting"). Monacting was better than watching a stage full of actors, according to one Powers admirer:

I can see him now — a distinguished, scholarly gentleman in evening clothes, who by a simple change of voice and manner portrayed all the characters in Sheridan's Rivals so distinctly that they have lived in my memory these many years, above any stage characterization with

Readings

1 Spreading the News	22 Jane Jones
2 The Slow Race	23 Mother Sez
3 The Angel and the Shepherds	24 Our Hired Girl
4 The Resurrection	25 The Elf Child
5 The Soldier of the Empire	26 The Shave Store
6 The Legend Beautiful	27 When the World Busts Through
7 The Worker in Stone	28 The Elopement
8 The Going of the White Swan	29 A Fragile Parting
9 Judia	30 Auf Wieder Sehen
10 Our Folks	31 Aux Itallens
11 The Artist's Secret	32 Lecture by One of the Sex
12 Hagar	33 Sweet Girl Graduate
13 A Record of Bad Luck	34 Studying for the Contest
14 A Telephone Romance	35 A Day of Precious Penalties
15 Keeping a Seat at the Benefit	36 A Model Story
16 The Minister's Call	37 Minty Malviny
17 The Lie	38 The Cushville Hop
18 The Three Stages	39 Anzelyny
19 A Love'y Scene	40 Money Musk
20 The Usual Way	41 Just be Glad
21 Scart o' Dyin'	42 The Farson's Butterfly

Miss Paul's program of readings as it appeared in an advertising folder of 1907. (courtesy the author)

costume and make-up.

At a time when churches disapproved of dramatic plays and considered the theatre evil, Powers had invented a way of making the works of playwrights — even Shakespeare — widely popular again. His skill at character acting was labeled "inimitable genius," and he was called one of the very few real artists in the field. Margaret's educated but conservative parents frowned upon the theatre, but they endorsed the benefits of Chautauqua and included Powers' monacting among the benefits.

Powers had ten years' experience giving

public readings and lecturing at famous Boston private speech schools when he began his own school, the Leland Powers School of the Spoken Word. It was located in the New Century Building at 177 Huntington Avenue, in downtown Boston. The site was also close to his alma mater, Boston University School of Oratory, and two private schools that offered speech, Emerson College and Curry College.

To hone her recitation skills even further, Margaret decided to risk her savings on a year of study at the Leland Powers School of the Spoken Word. Not only was she applying to a school with a strange-sounding name but one

which was so far from Iowa that it was hardly known in the Midwest. Margaret hadn't been outside of Iowa, much less to the East Coast, yet that cultural center, Boston, sounded like the Promised Land.

* * *

Margaret was accepted at Powers' school in 1913, and that was no mean feat. The school was selective and expected students to show talent and progress.

Since the school had begun, ten years earlier, enrollment had been limited to eighty-four students, divided into six sections. Originally, Powers and his wife, Carol Hoyt Powers, had taught all the classes. Later, graduates were employed to teach additional sections, and Margaret was instructed by six different teachers.

Students worked hard. During her year at Powers' school, Margaret sent weekly letters to her mother, Anna Ford (Mrs. George) Paul, who lived on a farm ten miles northeast of Cedar Rapids, outside Springville, Iowa. Margaret reported that classes lasted from 8:50 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. five days a week. Saturdays were class days until noon, but Mondays were free. Students "have something different every hour every day of the week," she wrote. "They certainly give us a great deal to do."

The school year began in October. From that time until Margaret completed her work in April, the pace increased. In January she believed that more work had been "piled on" than during the previous term. A considerable amount of work was assigned for vacation periods as well. She took books along with her on a visit to relatives over winter term break and spent a considerable amount of time memorizing and writing two papers. Students had to attend classes "right up to the last minute," even during examination week at the end of April.

Powers' unique philosophy of speech educa-

Margaret D. Paul



Reader, Elocutionist Impersonator

Under Management of
Iowa Lyceum and Chautauqua Bureau
OTTUMWA, - IOWA

The cover of a brochure put out by the Iowa Lyceum and Chautauqua Bureau. (courtesy the author)

tion aimed at three lofty goals: "stimulating the cause of the material presented, developing the organic means of presentation, and [developing a] better knowledge of the right modes of execution." To be responsive to literary material, he encouraged students to free their voices and bodies from habits.

Powers was a forerunner of progressive education and believed students learned by doing and discovery. He also believed that a good voice was latent in every individual. His voice training simply helped students free their voices through clear articulation, the elimination of bad habits, the easing of tension, and the developing of flexible pitch, rate, volume, and vocal quality. Teachers demonstrated gestures and positions and good vocal production, but mostly the students learned by doing and discovering.

To become good platform readers or interpreters, the students were instructed to step into the literature they read and attempt to "embody the spirit and essence of the literature." Teachers asked questions to help the students concentrate on the material, analyze it, and determine the author's purpose. It was a big order.

Performances were valuable learning tools. Teachers gave recitals, demonstrating what the students were practicing. The students were cautioned to be original in their work, however, and not mimic what they saw. In addition, students were expected to "appear" once a month, but Margaret reported the schedule often wasn't that frequent. These recitals were sometimes in front of small groups, sometimes before the whole school. The year ended with a week of graduation recitals which everyone attended.

Margaret had a fan in Mrs. Powers. The school's co-founder praised Margaret's January performance. In February, Mrs. Powers requested that Margaret perform a pantomime so the whole student body could see it.

The school offered unusual social events for

Press and Personal Comments

RUSSEL, KANS.

Miss Paul renders her selections, not only for their entertaining qualities, but for their purity and refinement, as well as that deep educating influence which creeps in through smiles and tears and makes humanity broader, happier and better.

—Russel Reformer.



The Lost Word

MOBRIDGE, S. D.

We were especially pleased with Miss Paul's rendering of Van Dyke's "The Lost Word," a selection from "Ben Hur," and Scotch dialect pieces. We hope to have the pleasure of welcoming her again in Mobridge.

H. G. BOOTH,

Pastor Congregational Church.

IPSWICH, S. D.

Her manner is pleasing and natural, and her work full of force and appreciation.

EARLE V. PIERCE,

Pastor First Baptist Church.

DEWITT, IOWA

Her supreme charm is in her naturalness. Her voice is a contralto, mellow and flexible. She throws herself wholly into her subject with the result of objectivity, that grand desideratum in a public speaker.

Wm. GARDINER, Pastor Congregational Church.

MT. VERNON, IOWA

In the interpretation of gay and lightly sentimental moods, Miss Paul proved herself a mistress.

She was especially successful in reading to music in the last selection—From the *Cornellian* (Cornell College Weekly.)



Money Musk

Endorsements from Miss Paul's audiences in three states as they appeared in yet another advertising brochure. (courtesy the author)

its students. A costume party held in January featured a trained hippopotamus, trick mule, snake charmer, strong woman, tightrope walkers, bareback rider, Siamese twins, minstrel show, dwarf dance, and the mysterious Dip of Death. "It cost less than a formal party," Margaret concluded.

The annual senior party was held just a month later, on Valentine's Day. Sponsored by the junior class, it was an event similar to the previous month's successful party. Drawing on a circus theme, the party featured one big show ring, sideshows, and two fortune-tellers. Circus stands served refreshments of sandwiches, wienies, ice cream cones, lemonade, popcorn,

and peanuts. Margaret served on the arrangements committee, although a bout with mumps kept her from participating in some of the planning.

* * *

Today, Boston's Prudential Center dominates Huntington Avenue. In 1913, however, Huntington Avenue was the "Quartier Latin," a red-blooded world of student life with a Bohemian atmosphere. Powers' school was one of many educational institutions located nearby. Along the avenue were the public library, art museum, symphony, opera, and recital and lecture halls. As one observer described the avenue, "Every second portal is ready to swing inward to the explorer for truth — theology or theosophy, medicine or melody, religion or relaxation."

Many students lived along Huntington, and at 196, Suite 4, roomed Margaret and another Powers' student, Miss Lenore Riehman. Coincidentally, Miss Riehman was also from Iowa — the small town of Grand Mound, only fifty-five miles east of Margaret's home. The two were a good match.

Their suite was actually a room and bath. "It is upstairs, of course," Margaret noted. "Everything is, here." It was a spacious front room with bay window, and contained a large fireplace with mantle and mirror, two single beds that converted into "sanitary couches covered with couch covers," a chiffonier, library table, morris chair, baby grand piano, mission rocker, and armchair. The bathroom offered "hot and cold water all the time."

The women had laundry privileges in the building's kitchen. "There are three big sinks or marble tubs," Margaret wrote. "Above each are hot and cold water faucets. Then there is a drain in each, so all one has to do is to wash; there is no carrying water at all. We use Miss Mellish (landlady)'s washboard, of course. We also use her irons on a gas range like Aunt Jen's."

Wet laundry could be hung outdoors, where "we are no more exposed than you are when you hang them on the porch," she assured her mother. During March their house was "done over" — walls papered, rugs sent to the cleaner, and floors varnished. The results pleased the women, although the work took longer than they had been led to expect. They put up with the disorder and mess in exchange for reduced rent.

Even the regular rent was reasonable at \$3.50 per person per week, and the location of their house was ideal. It was only a block from Powers' school and five blocks from the Boston Students' Union, where they could get splendid meals — breakfast and dinner — for \$3.00 per week. The women made their own lunches, enjoying Boston's delicatessens, which were unlike food shops around Springfield. "That's what Aunt Jen had in Chicago, you know, where you can get anything you want in the eating line," Margaret explained.

Mail was delivered four times a day, and sometimes the tube in the wall brought the announcement of a parcel post delivery: "Package here; please come down and sign for Miss Paul." The packages were usually from home, and Margaret would use the food inside to repay others' hospitality. Often the packages contained "Rocks," those substantial Iowa cookies that shipped and stored well. The other temptations in these packages were nuts, and they provided a ready excuse for candy-making. Miss Riehman had a chafing dish. Margaret furnished the nuts, and Miss Riehman purchased sugar (at five cents a pound) and chocolate, and together they made fudge.

Sunday always included dinner at the Student Union, preceded by church at one of Boston's many edifices. Just two blocks from their room was the mammoth mother church of the new Christian Science denomination. "It is the largest in the world and cost over \$2 million," Margaret reported. Chimes from the church were beautiful and often ordered their

day, sometimes playing for as long as a half hour.

During the year, Margaret visited Phillips Brooks' Episcopal church, the Baptist church of "famous Dr. (Orrin Philip) Gifford" in Brookline, a Brookline Methodist church, and a Jewish synagogue. She also worshipped in Widow Lettis Bedgood's 1724 pew in the Old North Church, famous for its lantern signal to Paul Revere. However, she was regular enough in attending one Sunday School class that she presented a recitation at their fund-raising program. The class netted \$25 from the project and presented Margaret with a bouquet of thirty red and white carnations.

* * *

To a young woman from Iowa, the Boston area offered much in the way of sightseeing, and the city was a cultural treasure chest. Margaret sampled much of what the 1913-14 season offered. She attended a theatrical production of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*. She was in the closing night's audience of the moving picture *Les Miserables* after its three-month run. In January two dozen people from the school attended a performance by Ethel Barrymore, and in February Margaret heard the Shakespearean performer, Sir J. Forbes Robertson, whom she labeled "the greatest English actor," and Lady Robertson, who played opposite her husband. She went to the symphony and attended library lectures.

Suffrage for women was an issue that generated a great deal of heated discussion in 1913. In October, even as the members of the Iowa Equal Suffrage Association held their annual meeting and urged support for an amendment to the state's constitution that would allow woman's suffrage, Margaret attended a suffrage meeting in Boston. Three speakers she heard were: the Rev. Samuel Crothers, a Cambridge Unitarian pastor who would author *Meditations on Votes for Women* the following

year; Belle Case LaFollette, an editor, writer, and suffrage activist, who was the first woman law graduate of the University of Wisconsin; and Mrs. Emmeline Pankhurst, the dramatic and controversial English suffragette.

On May 3, 1914, Margaret joined a suffrage parade. "I don't know if anything will be thrown at us or not, but we will risk it," she wrote. Such fears were not groundless. The previous year, forty persons were hospitalized when five thousand women marched in Washington, D.C., and there were reports of angry, jeering men slapping the demonstrators, spitting at them, and poking at them with lighted cigars. Fortunately, the Boston parade was a great nonviolent success, "and I'm glad I went."

Society life in Boston revolved around afternoon tea. It was more than a coffee break; it was a Boston institution. Margaret's first Boston tea was an Iowa affair, a reunion of twenty Cornell College alumni in Winchester, eight miles from the city. That meant a ten-cent, hour-and-a-half ride by public cars and subways with changes in Cambridge and Arlington. The event was formal, and guests stood and ate — with gloves and hats on. "They served tea or cocoa with sandwiches, cake, and salted nuts, and you could have all you wanted of each," she noted.

There was much to see in Boston — Bunker Hill Monument with its 994 steps, Navy Yard, the USS *Constitution* or "Old Ironsides," the State Capitol Building, Paul Revere's House, and Old North Church and its cemetery. She copied down the messages from one of its gravestones:

*As You are now,
So once was I;
As I am now,
You soon will be,
So think on death
And follow me.*

She reported that someone had written beneath in chalk:

*To follow you,
I'm not content,
Unless I know first
Where you went.*

* * *

Margaret could afford only one year of study at the Leland Powers School of the Spoken Word, and she felt that much was a luxury. The year in Boston had been great fun. It was a "pleasant year of spending. I hate to think of earning and hoarding again."

She was now ready for the summer Chautauqua circuits, but during the remainder of the year she planned to teach. Halfway through the Boston year her lifetime teaching certificate had arrived from Des Moines. That was helpful because her previous teaching stints at Springville, Prairie Valley, and Marion had required annual and semiannual approvals. She commented on the receipt of her lifetime teaching certificate in the following manner: "This fact will be of interest to no one, however, unless I should decide to apply for some school, so you need not publish it." She did apply for positions. By April Margaret had filed three applications for the following school year.

Epworth Seminary seemed interested in her application. It was an institution with a Protestant history (Methodist and Presbyterian), established in 1857. The community of Epworth was located thirteen miles west of Dubuque, Iowa.

"Is \$50 a month plus room and board enough for next year?" Margaret asked her mother. "The Principal of Epworth Seminary said he thought they could give that."

Epworth had advantages. It was close to home. It had a seminary atmosphere. She could plan her own curriculum. And the principal was from Cornell College, her alma

mater, and had spoken favorably about her application.

Yet Margaret wrestled with the thought that she could get something better by waiting longer. She also knew she could earn more by moving further west or remaining in the East. She realized, however, that there were not many openings for teaching speech and drama, her specialties.

Powers' advice about her future carried weight. He flattered her by offering to hire her as a teacher or reader. He believed as a public teacher she should be earning \$700 or \$800, which was more than Epworth was offering, and on the side she could give recitals under a private manager.

She sent her parents a copy of the possible Epworth contract, cautioning them not to "say anything about it to anyone, for it's nobody's business." That was good advice. Although she hadn't expected the Epworth electors to vote on her application until May 1, she received their rejection before the end of April. Epworth Seminary could not hire an English teacher who had not earned a college diploma. Margaret's studies at Cornell College and the Leland Powers School of the Spoken Word proved insufficient.


That forced her into action.

"I have joined an agency, so I will get a position of some kind alright," she wrote.

In addition, several months earlier she had concluded a deal with Carl Burroughs, a classmate at Springville High School, to act as her summer manager. He had not undertaken such work before and was hesitant about the project. Yet Margaret believed his contacts would be better than she could do, for she disliked such arranging. Quite a number of people around her in Boston had private managers. She and Burroughs wrote a "business-like contract," and she sent a copy home. "But 'mum' is the word," she cautioned. "Don't mention this until we can see how well he can do." She believed the arrangement would be of no loss

CHAUTAUQUA


SPRINGVILLE JUNE 25-30



SIX BIG DAYS **TWELVE PROGRAMS**

JONES CHAUTAUQUA SYSTEM

THE WORLD'S GREATEST
CHAUTAUQUA SYSTEM



A program of the Jones Chautauqua System for a Miss Paul performance at home in June 1915. (courtesy the author)

to anyone. Moreover, if he could secure good dates for her, it would help his career also.

Meanwhile, her only performance was a reading for a church social in Dorchester, Iowa. For pay, Margaret received supper, carfare, flowers, and the experience — no money.

* * *

Epworth Seminary's offer was followed by an even better one from Lenox College, a similar small church-related school in Hopkinton, Iowa, thirty miles north of Springville. Lenox College offered three pluses: 1) Mar-

garet would be head of its Expression Department; 2) it was even closer to home than Epworth; and 3) she could be a student there, as well as a teacher, and earn a bachelor of arts degree. A degree in the field of public speaking had not existed at Cornell College. Since Margaret's lack of a degree had prevented her from obtaining the Epworth Seminary position, she was aware of its growing importance to teachers.

Margaret accepted the Lenox College position, earned her bachelor of arts degree in two years, and stayed on to teach a third year.

These were her Chautauqua years. For the two summers of 1914 and 1915, she accepted

P R O G R A M

FIRST DAY		Afternoon	
Entertainment.....			Streed Family Orchestra, assisted by Wilbert Maynard, Cornetist
		Evening	Streed Family and Wilbert Maynard
SECOND DAY		Afternoon	
FIRST PART	Music.....		Weaver-Young Company
SECOND PART	Crayon Lecture, "Dead Bear".....		Prof. G. E. Weaver
		Evening	
FIRST PART	Violin and Piano.....		Weaver-Young Company
SECOND PART	"Facts and Fun of the Crayon".....		Prof. G. E. Weaver
THIRD DAY		Afternoon	
FIRST PART	Piano Recital.....		Rose Clark Price
	Readings and Solos.....		Edna Bennett Smith
SECOND PART	Lecture.....		Prof. W. A. Price
		Evening	
FIRST PART	Music and Readings.....		Mrs. Price and Miss Smith
SECOND PART	Lecture.....		Prof. W. A. Price
FOURTH DAY		Afternoon	
FIRST PART	Concert.....		The Geary Girls Trio
SECOND PART	Readings.....		Margaret D. Paul
		Evening	
FIRST PART	Music.....		The Geary Girls Trio
SECOND PART	Monolog.....		Margaret D. Paul
FIFTH DAY		Afternoon	
FIRST PART	Song Recital with Piano.....		Ronayne-Sumner Company
SECOND PART	Lecture Entertainment.....		Rev. David V. Bush
		Evening	
FIRST PART	Musical Program.....		Ronayne-Sumner Company
SECOND PART	"Pikes Peak or Bust".....		Rev. David V. Bush
SIXTH DAY		Afternoon	
FIRST PART	Humorous Readings.....		Frances Josephine Manatt
	Piano Recital (American Program).....		Mabel Lillian Rusland
SECOND PART	Lecture.....		Edgar S. Kindley
		Evening	
FIRST PART	Humorous Readings.....		Frances Josephine Manatt
	Piano Recital (Scandinavian Program).....		Mabel Lillian Rusland
			"The Norwegian Peasant Girl"
SECOND PART	Lecture.....		Edgar S. Kindley

Season tickets can be purchased at special rates until noon of the opening day. No tickets will be sold at advance prices after noon of the opening day. Children under seven when accompanied by parent or guardian will be admitted free. Children over seven and under twelve will be admitted at reduced rates. All persons over twelve years of age will be required to purchase the regular adult ticket. The single admissions will vary in price according to the nature of the program. It means a great saving to purchase a season ticket in advance. Do not fail to take advantage of the reduced rates.

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the hectic pace of "tent talent" and fulfilled her dream of educating and entertaining through Chautauqua performances. She signed a contract with the Jones Chautauqua System of Perry, Iowa. It was a booking agency begun by C. Durant Jones, who had been a one-time Prohibition party candidate for governor of Iowa. He called his first shows "Temperance Assemblies." The Jones Chautauqua System boasted that it reached a million people in three hundred towns and was the world's greatest Chautauqua system. It booked small towns. For example, Margaret opened her second Chautauqua summer in Mabel, Min-

nesota, a tiny town on the northeast Iowa border.

Margaret's dramatic recitations were featured on the fourth day of a Chautauqua circuit that lasted six. During both afternoon and evening programs, she was the second half of the program, preceded by "The Geary Girls Trio." In the afternoon she gave a series of readings, in the evening a monologue, reminiscent of Leland Powers' popular concerts.

She gave quite a program, compiled from the works of Abraham Lincoln, James Whitcomb Riley, Mark Twain, and others. The titles of her dramatic sketches included "The Other

Wise Man," "Laddie," "Sister Esperance," and "The Lost Word." She drew from a list of musical numbers with titles such as "Money Musk," "Daddy," "The Tin Gee Gee," and "Aux Italiens."

Her readings, monologues, and impersonations were always entertaining. But that did not satisfy her. Margaret wanted to educate her audiences. She urged people to strive toward lofty goals, and she encouraged patriotism, continuous learning, and the betterment of humanity.

She was part of a six-day Chautauqua circuit. The six days did not offer name entertainment, but they did offer variety. The opening day was the "Streed Family Orchestra," with special numbers by cornetist Wilbert Maynard. The second day, Professor G. E. Weaver created crayon illustrations, one lecture telling the story of "Dead Bear" and the other offering crayon "facts and fun." Then followed lectures by Dr. Perkins S. Slocum, Professor W. A. Price, and the Rev. David V. Bush. Musical recitals were given by the "Weaver-Young Company," who specialized in violin and piano, pianist Rose Clark Price, the "Ronayne-Sumner Company," vocalists, and Mabel Lillian Rusland, a pianist with American and Scandinavian programs.

Margaret was in tent Chautauqua at a time when it flourished. Perhaps the most famous Chautauqua promoter was Keith Vawter from Cedar Rapids. He had just established his contract plan, which asked communities to provide financial guarantees. His new "tight booking" scheme depended upon a leapfrog installation of tents with sites arranged geographically. The talent traveled daily, following the leapfrog installation of tents. The Jones Chautauqua System, which booked Margaret, also followed this approach. It allowed them to move into what they claimed were "hundreds of towns that never held a Chautauqua until our system showed them how it could be done."

Margaret traveled six straight days, with only a day's break before starting the cycle again. In a twenty-four-hour period she gave both an afternoon and evening performance and then traveled to the next site, with little time for laundry or emergencies or recuperation. There were uncertain transportation schedules, country hotels, irregular meals, and unpredictable weather including torrid summer heat, rains, and windstorms. The result was exhaustion, and only the heady roar of applause carried performers from deadline to deadline.

* * *

After two summers on the Chautauqua circuit, Margaret made different summer plans. With her degree from Lenox College, she looked for more specialized teaching positions. In 1917 she became a speech and drama teacher at the high school in Whiting, Indiana, earning \$900 (which Powers believed she should have received three years earlier). Whiting was several hundred miles from home, so summer was the time to visit family, not swing the Chautauqua circuit. She combined visits with six weeks of summer study at the University of Iowa in 1918, and a similar six weeks of study at Northwestern University, in Evanston, Illinois, in 1919.

Her last teaching position was a long-term one. Beginning in 1919 and for the next twenty-five years she taught "expression," later speech and drama, at Emerson High School in Gary, Indiana. She liked the progressive atmosphere in the school system.

For Margaret it was the perfect teaching position — and an influential one — in a school system that valued speech education. At the heart of the Gary School System was its "Auditorium" program. Auditorium was a scheduled class period for every student, from the primary grades through high school. Each class put on major Auditorium assemblies once

or twice a semester.

When there was not a major presentation, two classes were scheduled for Auditorium together. The first half hour of Auditorium was devoted to music, the second half to speech. During this second half, one class received special help from an Auditorium training



Miss Margaret D. Paul. (courtesy the author)

teacher in an adjoining speech studio. Margaret was the training teacher for high school students, teaching the fundamentals of speech and helping students prepare Auditorium programs. These programs included current events topics, storytelling, speeches, debates,

dramatizations, pageants, open forum discussions, and explanations of scientific experiments.

Margaret began work toward a master's degree at the University of Iowa. She planned her thesis as a description of the manner in which education in the Gary School System revolved around speech and the Auditorium program. In her preliminary paper, she credited Auditorium as the school system's prime socializing and integrating force. Work on the degree was interrupted, however, by the death of the university professor directing her work.

Her students and colleagues praised her for what she added to the Gary School System during her years of teaching there. "No one will ever fill the place you had in the school," wrote Principal Everett Spaulding. "All of us feel that your years at Emerson High School contributed largely in making the school a fine place for the boys and girls of Gary."

Margaret's influence on her students was great, and she frequently received letters from former students describing her influence on their lives. A dozen years after her retirement, a letter from Kansas surprised her. It was from Don Starry, the son of a neighboring farmer in Springville, Iowa. Margaret had worked with Don when the boy was to present a piece at graduation. Now, forty-two years later, Don wrote, "There is no purpose to this letter other than to remind you that a lot of people, widely scattered over the nation, love you . . ."

Her influence was also recognized in Gary. "We appreciate . . . above all the splendid character which you have given to our city and our schools. We know of no one whose name is more frequently mentioned favorably, and young people under your influence in school and church groups are most appreciative of your life and your influence," wrote the pastor of Gary's First Presbyterian Church.

Leland Powers would have appreciated the way that Margaret announced her retirement. It was sudden, quiet, and dramatic. On the day before Christmas vacation in 1944 she ended

her teaching day as usual and then abruptly submitted a resignation that was effective immediately. When the students returned to classes in January, Miss Paul was no longer in Indiana. "Well, you certainly took us all by surprise," wrote Miss Hazel Harrison, the head of Margaret's department. "I can't tell you how shocked I was to read your card. . . . I guess you know that you can never be replaced." Yet Miss Harrison recognized the wisdom in quietly slipping out. "I'm glad you didn't tell us. . . . I think I will leave in the same way one of these days."

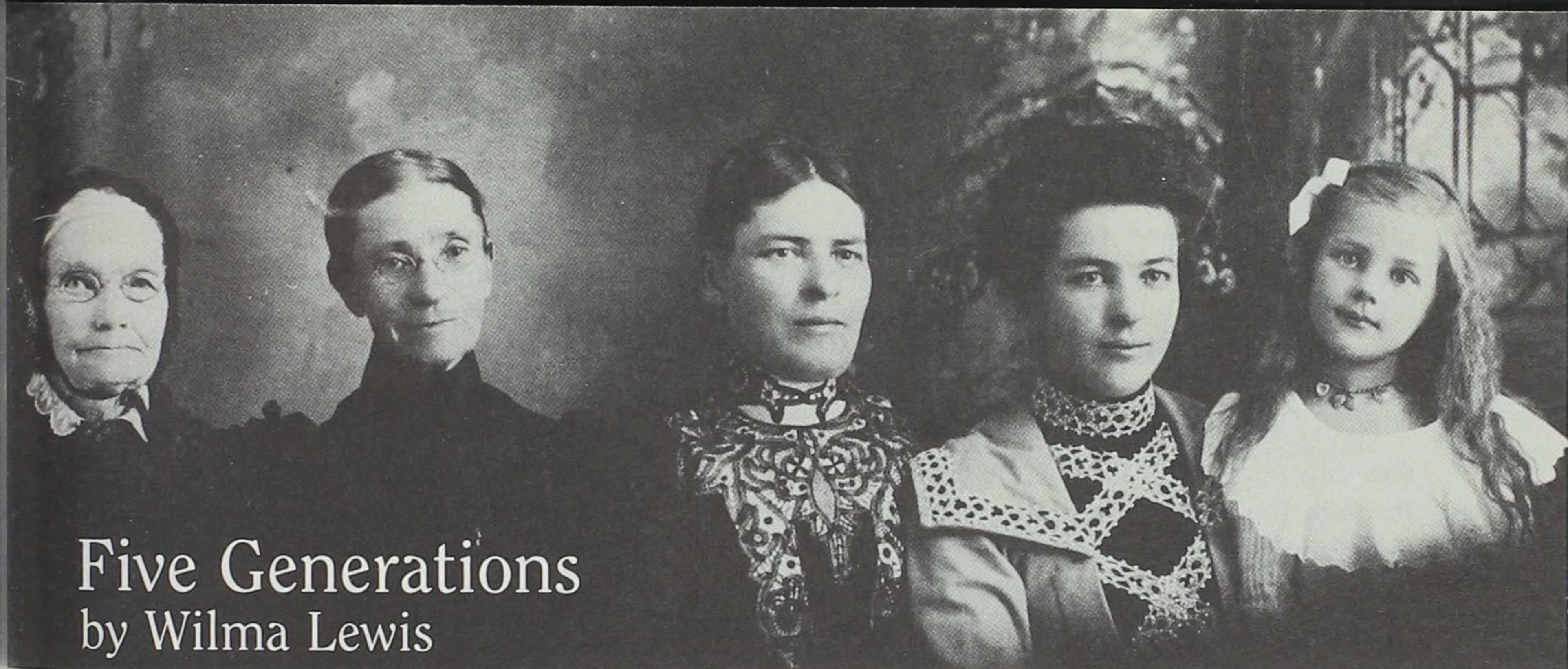
Margaret didn't know she had twenty-eight years of good living left. She used them well, caring for family members and finding new ways to use her skills in the changing world. She wrote twenty-eight historical sketches which the public heard her read on WMT radio in Cedar Rapids. The members of clubs and organizations in Marion, Iowa, heard her frequent program presentations.

Until her death at the age of eighty-five in 1972 she had the respect of all those with whom she came in contact. Don Starry gave evidence

of that fact in his letter to her sixteen years earlier. He had heard Margaret referred to as "Miss Paul" by a woman Margaret's senior. "In a community where the use of first names is more of a rule than an exception, I was struck by the use of the 'Miss' rather than Margaret," Starry wrote. "Again it showed me that you are held in such high regard and esteem by your own people that they instinctively honor you by a title rather than the familiarity of a name." Margaret was always "Miss Paul," the Iowa reflection of a Bostonian woman. □

Note on Sources

Margaret D. Paul was the great-aunt of Elaine Carol Main's husband. For information concerning Miss Paul's life and character, the author is grateful to Miss Paul's nieces, Genevieve Paul Ernst of Chesterton, Indiana, and Margaret Paul Main of Mena, Arkansas. Dick Power, dean of Northeast Broadcasting School in Boston, provided information about the Leland Powers School of the Spoken Word. Secondary source materials that proved valuable in the preparation of this article included: Henry P. Dowst, *Random Notes of Boston* (Boston: H. B. Humphrey Co., 1913); Harry P. Harrison, *Culture Under Canvas: The Story of Tent Chautauqua* (New York: Hastings House, 1958); Gay MacLaren, *Morally We Roll Along* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1938); and Karl R. Wallace, editor, *History of Speech Education in America* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1954).



Five Generations

by Wilma Lewis

Age is not measured by years — it is a state of mind. And I was remembering that as I looked at a picture on my desk. It is a photograph of five generations of women, taken in 1903. All lived in the small town of Humeston, Iowa, within three blocks of each other. All sat together in the family pew in the little white church close by.

In those days it was quite fashionable to have family pictures taken by a good photographer, either singly or in groups. The five-generation photograph was decided on with October 5, 1903, selected as the date of the sitting. Each woman was dressed in her Sunday best, with her hair carefully combed.

At the far right was the youngest of the five generations — a golden-haired girl of seven, named Wilma Barker. Her hair was long and straight with a ribbon bow on the right side. Her low-necked dress had a Big Bertha collar of embroidered muslin and she wore a chain necklace of tiny hearts around her neck. Her head was tilted as though she was wondering what it was all about.

To the left of Wilma was her mother, Ollie Barker, age thirty. She had skin as soft and creamy as satin, gray eyes, and long black hair that she wore piled high on her head in a pompadour. She was the most beautiful woman I had ever seen, and I desperately wanted to be like her. But only our eyes and

mouths were alike, the rest was my dad. She taught a Sunday School class, sang in the choir, and worked in Ladies' Aid. Her cream-colored and black waist had a high neck and wide lapels. The front was black velvet, trimmed with heavy ecru lace.

To the left of Ollie was her mother, Asalee Stone, age fifty, with hair parted primly in the middle, and with the same gray eyes as my mother. Her dress was of ivory taffeta that rustled when she walked. The neck was high and the entire front was white, covered by homemade black Battenberg lace. Asalee raised six children — Ollie, Bertha, Sylvia, Floyd, Roy, and Jennie. Grandmother Stone was an ambitious woman who had learned to be a nurse. She traveled all around the county, assisting our old country doctor, riding in a buggy, and often through mud and snow. She cared for mothers and new babies and helped wherever she could. Mother stayed at home and cared for the family. In her spare time after supper, Grandmother Stone made patchwork quilts. She hoped to complete one for each child.

To the left of Asalee was Great-grandmother Taylor, age eighty. She wore her hair pulled back into a tight little knot in back, wore steel-rimmed glasses, and a very pleasant smile. Her family included Etta, Paulina, Clara, Asalee, and one son, Sylvester. Two of the children had married and moved away from Iowa — Paulina to California, and Clara to Kansas — while two

of the children had remained in Humeston after their marriage — Asalee and Sylvester. That left Etta, an old maid who kept house for her mother and Great-great-grandmother Steele.

Great-great-grandmother Steele's house was big and filled with treasures collected through the years. The living room was large with long lace curtains at the windows and dark red drapes always drawn against the sun. The carpet was a dark brown with huge pink cabbage roses in it. Tall-backed horsehair chairs were there and an old-fashioned horsehair couch. I remember I always kept sliding off the couch when I tried to sit on it. Etta would give me a big seashell to hold to my ear so that I could hear the sound of the sea. Paulina had sent it to her mother from California, so it was very special. In the exact center of this room was a big walnut table. On it was the big family Bible, containing a complete account of births and deaths throughout the years. Tucked away between the pages were articles about family and friends. It had an ornate brass clasp on the front. It was never read. There were smaller Bibles for that. The family Bible was held in reverence by the whole family group.

Etta kept the house immaculate and was a wonderful cook. She made the best old-fashioned molasses cookies. Mother would take me to visit the grandmothers and I would sit on Great-great-grandmother Steele's horsehair chair. Great-grandmother Taylor would spread a fine linen napkin on my knees, and Etta would bring me a plate, hand-painted and fragile as an eggshell. On it were placed two molasses cookies, and there were no second helpings. Great-grandmother Taylor believed that two cookies were enough for a little girl. She never knew that I could have eaten at least six. I loved those visits to the big house and could hardly wait for the next time I would be all dressed up for another.

All this beauty belonged to Great-great-grandmother Steele, age ninety-eight, and the

fifth lady in the photograph. Born in 1805, she was the only daughter among six sons. She walked tall and straight, and carried a gold-headed cane. Her dress was a dull black alpaca with no trim except for a tiny white collar of fine linen. Her hair was snow white and, as in the photograph, she always wore a little black lace cap tied under her chin. She loved me and I adored her. She frequently sat in her old rocking chair placed by the window in the big old-fashioned kitchen, and watched Etta baking cookies and getting meals for the three of them.

* * *

Age is not a question of years — it is a state of mind. The five generations never thought of being old, they lived one day at a time, and never worried about tomorrow.

Great-great-grandmother Steele died at the age of ninety-nine and was still walking and wiping the dishes, then sitting gently rocking as she had done for so many years.

Great-grandmother Taylor died at the age of ninety-two and spent her time making lovely doilies out of plain string.

Grandmother Stone lived to be eighty-nine and made beautiful tatting. She fashioned her own designs, and could sell more than she could make. One year when they needed a wagon around the place, she had sold enough tatting to buy it. She said she was the only woman she knew who had ever tatted a wagon.

Ollie Barker lived to be eighty-seven, and spent her time crocheting gifts for her friends. Some were linen handkerchiefs with wide colored edges, some were hot dish mats all white with colored borders.

And what about the last member of the five generations of women in the photograph? And why do I remember so much about each woman? I am Wilma, that little girl with the long blonde hair. And now I am almost eighty-nine and I'm remembering all the yesterdays. □

CONTRIBUTORS

WILMA LEWIS was born in Iowa. Later, she and her family moved to Lancaster, California, in the Mojave Desert. For eleven years she had her own radio talk show, interviewing celebrities and others on KAVL, Lancaster. When she retired, she and her husband moved to Redding, California, to be closer to their son. She is at present a resident of the Shasta Convalescent Hospital in Redding. Although eighty-eight years of age, she spends much of her time in her wheelchair rolling down the halls visiting with friends or writing in the evenings. Describing herself, Wilma says, "I can remember all the things that happened long ago, but I can't

remember where I laid my glasses."

ELAINE CAROL MAIN is a free-lance writer from Waverly, Iowa, who serves as assistant director of the Public Information Office at Wartburg College. She holds a B.S. degree from Valparaiso University in Indiana and an M.S. from Oregon College of Education, Monmouth. This is her second article in the *Palimpsest*. The first, entitled "The Fraulein Chooses Backwoods Iowa," which appeared in November/December 1978, described the career of Wartburg College's first housemother.

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