

# THE PALIMPSEST

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## Girlhood in Waterloo

Lou Henry and Herbert Hoover were both born in Iowa in 1874 within one hundred miles of each other—she in Waterloo and he in West Branch. They were destined not to meet, however, until they met at Leland Stanford Junior University (Stanford University) in Palo Alto, California. There is a distinguished lineage of sturdy pioneers and many outstanding people in both family trees.

Lou's father, Charles Delano Henry, was born and reared in Wooster, Ohio, where he married Florence Weed. Charles came from a pioneer family, his grandfather, William Henry, having been born in 1776. William Henry was married in a Quaker ceremony to Abigail Hunt. The Henry ancestors came from North Ireland and Scotland and the Hunts from Pennsylvania. Their son, William Henry, Jr., and his wife, Mary Dwire, had three sons—Charles Delano, William D., and Addis M. Grandfather William Henry helped make the original surveys of the town of Wooster, Ohio, in 1807, the men being interrupted several

times by hostile Indians. William Henry, Jr., was a member of the General Assembly in the State of Ohio.

Florence Weed's grandparents, Joshua and Jennie Weed, had one son, Phineas, who was born in Wooster in 1823. As a young man Phineas moved to Shell Rock, Iowa, where he married Mary, the daughter of Dr. John Scobey. Their children were Janey, Wallace and Florence. Phineas returned to Wooster and conducted a livery business on East Liberty Street until the Civil War. During the war he purchased horses for the government.

As a little boy, Charles Henry and his brother went with their father to celebrate the arrival of the first railway train to Wooster amidst great excitement and the shooting of the town's cannon. Charles remembered his father as a member of the State Legislature, six feet tall, weighing 225 pounds, smooth-shaven, dignified in carriage, a kindly man who wore a black suit, long Prince Albert coat, and always a high silk hat.

The Henry family lived in a five-bedroom, two-story white house that had no trimming but a roof of handmade oak shingles. It was set in a yard full of flowers and shrubs. The front door opened out directly on the street while the back yard had a stable and buggy house near the alley, all enclosed behind a board fence.

Charles started to Miss Henderson's private

school at age five. He rode horseback a great deal until roads were improved enough to drive a buggy. Florence, the daughter of Phineas Weed, was a student in the Grove Female Institute (later Miss Pope's School in Wooster). The Weed and Henry families were friends. Charles, who was tall and broad-shouldered, loved out-of-door living and frequently went hunting and fishing. He served for a time in the Northern army during the Civil War.

When Charles returned from the army to Wooster, he told Phineas Weed, his father's friend, that he was determined to become a banker. After his father's death in 1868, when Charles was twenty-three years old, he and his widowed mother moved to Waterloo, Iowa. His heart remained in Wooster, however, for in five years he returned to marry Phineas' daughter, Florence Weed, on June 17, 1873.

By 1874, Charles Henry was engaged as a bookkeeper for the First National Bank in Waterloo, the county seat of Black Hawk County. Located in a rich agricultural region, Waterloo proved an excellent place in which to grow. As a result, Charles Henry took an active interest in both business and civic affairs.

Charles Henry took great pride in the town of Waterloo, in his own home, and in his beautiful young wife. In short, he had everything a man could wish for—except a son. He eagerly awaited

the birth of his first child and confidently hoped it would be a boy. But fate decreed otherwise. March 29, 1874, was a cold stormy day, but all was snug and warm in the spare bedroom of the Logan house where Florence Henry gave birth to her daughter—Lou.

The little newcomer was welcomed by both parents and, if in his heart Charles was momentarily disappointed, he did not show it outwardly. It was not long before his gay, active daughter had wrapped herself around his heart completely and Charles could not imagine giving her up for a boy. Whenever possible, Charles Henry took little Lou with him, no matter where he went.

By the time she was five years old Lou was allowed to go fishing with her father on the Cedar River. On these occasions Lou bravely learned how to tie penny-apiece fishhooks at intervals along a butcher string, while her father cut willow poles for them. Angleworms for bait completed their equipment except for a sturdy jackknife used to clean their catch before going home to the immaculate kitchen of Mrs. Henry.

Lou learned to ride horseback on her Grandfather Scobey's farm at Shell Rock. When she was six she was lifted on to a big farm horse for a bareback ride in the open fields. She loved it and begged to return often for more. As she grew taller, she learned to ride easily, securely, and gracefully behind the high pommel of a western

saddle. She very early exhibited a love for and great skill in handling horses. By the time she was ten, she had mastered the sidesaddle, then rather mandatory for girls.

Lou Henry first rode in saddles with her father. She would sit sideways with a foot resting in the sash which her father had taken from around his waist and looped over the saddle horn for her support. He would then mount the apron of the saddle behind her, his feet stuck into the stirrups and his arm holding the reins, passed over her shoulder to steady her, and often he would place his hat on her head. Her father encouraged her riding and later taught Lou to master the wiry western broncos, which she was allowed to ride astride like a boy, on their long trips into the country.

Saturdays, in the fall, Lou went tramping through the woods with her father gathering hazelnuts. He showed her the right place to catch rabbits and how to cunningly hide their wooden cracker box trap in the bushes.

As a little girl, Lou Henry paid scant attention to her dolls, always preferring a game of ball, or any form of play that took her out-of-doors. The corner lot of their block on Fifth Street was a playground for the children of the neighborhood. Lou was the youngest child and her favorite game was hide-and-seek, in and out of all those neighborhood yards with the Chamberlain girls,

the Alfords, and others. Her special friend in pre-school days was Joe Rickert, who sensed Lou's alertness to sympathize with anyone in misfortune, and particularly after Joe received a spanking from his father. Lou and Joe liked to play anti-over, throwing the ball over the porch roof to be caught without seeing the thrower.

She went camping with her father at the tender age of six, sleeping on a canvas spread on the grass. She loved the pioneer stories told her by her Grandmother Henry and when she went on outings with her father they talked about pioneer qualities of courage and resourcefulness. Her outdoor experience stood her in good stead when she reached maturity.

But deep as was her love of outdoor life, Lou enjoyed domestic interests, too, and this tug of war in her nature continued all her life. Florence Henry, secretly worried about her daughter's eager preference for boyish activities, resolved to teach her feminine graces and skills. Sewing was high on the list.

On her eighth birthday, March 29, 1882, Lou had spent three hours under her mother's careful guidance, sewing on a new dress. She turned anxiously to her mother, "Is my dress all right? May I put it on now?" Mrs. Henry examined the small plaid garment carefully. "Yes," she replied with a smile, "you have turned a good hem and you may wear the dress to show your father."

With the dress over her arm, Lou ran eagerly upstairs to her room. As she passed the window on the landing, her eye was caught by a red kite snared in the branches just outside. Dropping the dress, she threw open the window. At the foot of the tree stood a small neighbor boy staring up disconsolately. His face brightened at the sight of Lou. "Can you get it loose?" he called.

Lou never hesitated. "I'll try," she answered, and leaned out precariously. She stretched as far as she could, but the kite stayed just out of reach. She stretched farther, and might have tumbled out had not the wind blown a branch within her reach. Lou caught it and pulled until the kite was in her hand.

"There!" she called triumphantly, as she set it free. "There's your kite." For just a moment, as she watched her grateful little friend run off with the tugging kite, Lou was tempted to leave the new dress where it lay and slip outdoors to play. It was a glorious day for kite flying, tree climbing, and all the other tomboy activities she loved. But then she thought of the tiny stitches she had so painstakingly put into that hem. Domesticity won. She caught up the dress and ran into her room.

Dressed in her new plaid dress, Lou waited impatiently for her father to come home. When she saw him coming she ran to meet him. "Look, Papa, this is my new dress. I helped Mama make it too."

"What a clever little girl," he said as he gath-

ered her into his arms. He carried her into the house and deposited her, laughing, in the middle of the floor. He turned to kiss his wife and then took his accustomed place in front of the pot-bellied stove with his hands behind his back and his feet apart. Lou, who liked to imitate her father in every way possible, stood beside him, with hands behind her back and her feet apart.

A moment later Mrs. Henry sniffed the air. "What is that?" she asked. Lou jumped and felt the back of her new skirt. "I've burned a hole in it," she wailed in dismay. Her mother comforted her and allowed her to use the family sewing machine to mend the dress and also to make a gingham sunbonnet to match. Following the current fashion, it had a wide, poke brim stiffened with interlining and a full soft crown gathered to the brim. There was a ruffle to protect her neck and tie strings that matched. Lou was proud of her new clothes and pleased that her mother allowed her to help make them.

A girlish looking, rather frail young woman, Florence Henry spent many sessions in her sitting room making Christmas presents for her family. She was expert with her needle and gave Lou many ideas for little gifts which they worked out together. Grandmother Henry was a stately woman who teasingly questioned the value of so much time spent in making Christmas "gewgaws." Lou frequently laughed over the busy hours she

and her mother spent assembling their numerous gifts, all gotten together with love and ingenuity and finished off in a rush just before Christmas.

Everything was simple and unpretentious about Lou Henry—even her name had no middle initial. She wore her hair bobbed because Florence Henry considered short hair sensible for little girls, even though it was not the height of fashion.

In those days, when "nice" girls were expected to be rather prim and sedate, a girl who liked outdoor sports was unusual and one who liked to climb was extraordinary. No wonder that Lou Henry was labeled a tomboy when she climbed up a tree at the school picnic and tied a long rope to a strong branch to provide a swing! On another occasion, a student on a stepladder wrote words at the top of the schoolroom blackboard. Then the ladder was removed but when the teacher arrived he demanded angrily that the writing be erased. Lou quickly mounted a chair, held in place on top of the teacher's desk, and erased the writing.

The father-daughter camping trips continued. Lou adored her father. She admired his easy way of handling horses, the deft motions of his hands as he built a campfire on a weekend outing, and she listened fascinated when he explained different kinds of rocks, trees, and flowers. She was unafraid of the dark and enjoyed watching those violent midwestern electric storms. She observed the lightning and thunderclouds with interest.

When they went tramping together and came to a fork in the way, Lou always chose the unknown path to see where it would lead and then returned with much to tell. One day she asked, "Why doesn't Mama like to go camping with us?"

"This rugged kind of living doesn't agree with her," explained Charles. "She wouldn't mind if she could go in a surrey and carry along a mattress to sleep on, but she really doesn't enjoy roughing it. We won't be camping so much now because pretty soon she is going to need you to help her take care of a new baby." This realization stirred all of Lou's maternal instincts and for the time being she became more her mother's girl while they discussed the coming of another child.

Lou helped her mother make baby clothes. She shaped a dozen flannel bands ten inches wide to be wrapped around the baby's abdomen. She helped to hem several crib blankets and was trusted to make flannel covers for the hot water bottles by herself. Lou watched Florence's skillful fingers fashion little woolen shirts with high necks and long sleeves and long petticoats supported from the shoulders. She learned from Grandmother Henry that Canton flannel and stockinet were both superior to linen as absorbents for diapers.

Lou looked forward eagerly to the coming of the new baby and wondered if it would be a boy or a girl.

Finally the great day arrived. Lou, awakened

by the commotion in her mother's room, tiptoed down the hall and eventually was admitted. She heard protesting wails and saw a wrinkled little red face through a small aperture in the blanket.

Fascinated by the newcomer, Lou loved learning how to take care of a baby and was a great help to her mother. But she continued her outdoor interests too and she thoroughly enjoyed her school. She was active in other school activities as well as sports. She especially enjoyed nature study and history books and took a lively interest in what she read, particularly in history.

If Lou had had a brother to be a companion to her father, her life might have been very different. Spending time with her father developed her ingenuity and courage but she was taught by her mother that the home is the cornerstone of civilization and she learned such feminine pursuits as housekeeping and baby care. Gentleness and grace developed naturally through her mother's example but her parents did not insist on her following the rigidly "feminine" pattern of that day. Instead, they encouraged her to develop her own interests, which, uncurbed, were very broad.

As a child, Lou had more than the average chance to initiate her own activities and carry out her own plans. However, the discipline in the Henry home was such that she never argued with her parents but accepted their decisions without quibbling.