

# Nelson C. Hawks

# Remembrance

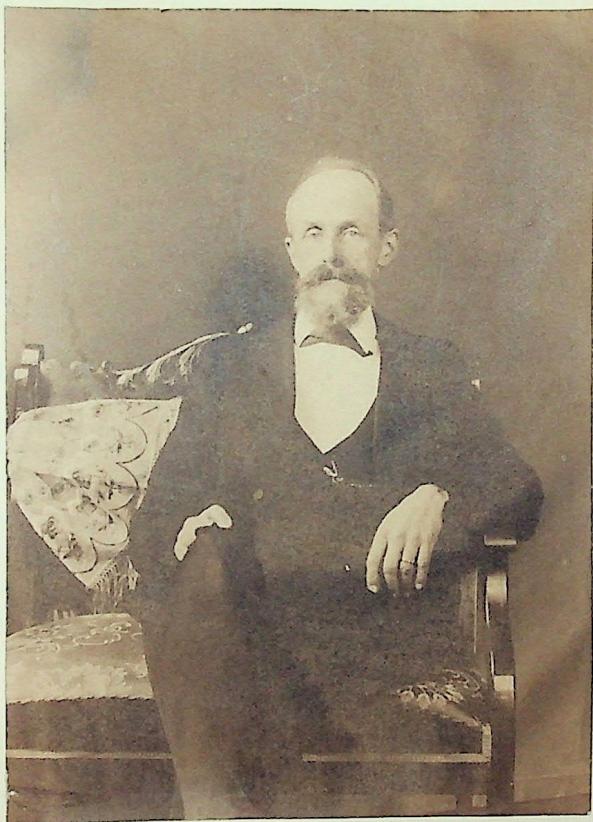
## Part One

Before Delafield

LENS AND PEN

PICTURES OF HOME

1896



My father, Nelson Page Hawks, was born in Manlius, Onondaga Co., N.Y. March 18, 1803. His father was a poor man, and father left home at an early age, to shift for himself. He was apprenticed to learn the cabinet makers trade, and was a good mechanic. When he grew up he went into general merchandise with Mr. Dunn. He also ran a line of stages from Penn Yan to Geneva. Whether before or after, I do not remember, afterwards he went to Binghamton, where he met Mother.

Father and Mother were married Feb. 24, 1830, and went to Elmira, where they kept a hotel, and where my sister Permelia was born, 1832.

My brother Ami was born at Binghamton 1834.

Father was the inventor of the first shingle-making machine in 1836. I have the old patent deed, on parchment, signed by Andrew Jackson, President. It also bears the signatures of Benjamin F. Butler, Sec. of State, and John Forsythe, Com. of Patents.

This patent was sold to Mr. Rathbone of Albany, N.Y. for \$4000.

At this time many families of the New England States, New York and Pennsylvania were emigrating westward, to Wisconsin, Illinois and Michigan. Wisconsin was a territory, and very wild and new. A few boats ran on the great lakes from Buffalo to Chicago, but there were no railroads.

Deciding to "go west," and determining on the "Rock River country" as his future home, father fitted up for the journey with a splendid team of matched horses and strong wagon, and in the early spring of 1837 started from Binghamton. Permelia was 5 years old, and Ami 3. If I am not mistaken, Uncle Barney Chambers and Aunt Martha, mother's sister, also accompanied them.

The journey was along the southern borders of Lakes Erie & Michigan, passing through Ohio and Indiana, to Chicago, and from there through Southern Wisconsin to Jefferson County, and ending at Atchalan.

Father had shipped all his goods from Buffalo to Chicago by boat. He had ordered them sent to Milwaukee, but learned that the roads were bad from Milwaukee through "the Rock River woods," or in fact there were no roads; so the goods were landed at Chicago.

An old memorandum says: The emigrants went by wagon to Buffalo, and from there by boat to Detroit, where they again resumed wagon travel, their horses and wagons having been shipped on same boat.

At Carlisle Hill, in Indiana, they stopped three weeks, being

genuinely offered the free use of the home of the Carlises, who were obliged to go away.

Here father traded his horses for a yoke of oxen and three cows, and continued the journey. In Chicago they waited three weeks for their goods to arrive by boat. Then again they journeyed northward to their new home on the Crawfish River, a tributary of the Rock in now Jefferson Co. Wis.

The Government had offered 160 acres of land to every settler, and father had selected this spot, which happened to be right where the Winnebago Indians were encamped, as the headquarters of the tribe, the "village" containing about 300 Indians at the time.

I have heard Mother tell how frightened she was when she saw her new home - no house had to sleep in wagon till log house was built. The Indians were friendly, and continued so during the whole two years stay there.

The chief, Osuchka, was very sick from bilious fever, when father came, and given up to die by his attendants, who were having a grand pow-wow of mourning. Father went right into his wigwam, and understood at once what was needed, as he knew something of medicine. So he administered a heroic dose of calomel, in the form of the old time "blue pill," and the result was a rapid recovery of the old fellow, who was prompt in expressing his gratitude, and calling the tribe together, he told them of what E stockara had done for him; that he was a great medicine man, and his friend. He owed his life to his new white neighbor, whose safety he should always guarantee. Therefore, he said, my command to you, every one, is, that his family be protected, and supplied with game, fish, honey and maple sugar. This command was faithfully observed, and I have heard my father say that these Indians were the best neighbors he ever had; and that an Indian's word was always good. The chief Osuchka, his son Cecinkata, and their

"side" Ochunkata spent nearly every evening at the log cabin, playing checkers, which game father taught them. They were so fond of this that they would play as long as allowed, taking no note of time, when father would tell them to "puckachee," which meant ramose. The old chief became a very proficient player, and my father, who excelled at the game, was occasionally beaten, to the great delight of his red neighbors.

But one unpleasant incident occurred during the two years. A niece of father's, who had come west and was visiting at our house, had taken the eye of a young brave, who came to father, with a proposition to buy her for his squaw. To his inquiry of "how swap?" father jokingly replied "three pony loads of fur." The Indian disappeared, and father forgot all about it. Not so Mr. Indian, who returned in about three weeks, dressed up in a fine new buckskin suit and fancy head dress, leading his three ponies, loaded so heavily with mink, muskrat and other skins that the ponies were almost hidden. I have heard mother tell how funny these ponies looked, with the skin packs reaching to the ground. On demanding his bride father, who had acquired the language fairly well from the chief, explained that he was only joking, and that white people did not sell their young girls.

There was trouble at once. The young brutes trotted his ponies away, and in about an hour came back with about 40 young men armed with bows and arrows, and painted for war. A fierce altercation took place, and the young scamps made an awful uproar. Mother sent the children out through the back door across the field to alarm the two new white neighbors, while father stood off the Indians. The chief, his son and his aide were away, but a courier must have notified them, for the three men came running to father's rescue, just as the hot-headed youths began discharging arrows at father. Old Caesar, our Newfoundland dog, held first jumped for the leader of the boys, dragging

him to the ground, when the chief and party came up. With a roar they knocked the besiegers right and left, and drove them off. Then folding his arms and looking at father he demanded to know the cause of the disturbance. On explaining the matter, father was sternly informed that he had made a great mistake, which must never be repeated. That an Indian doesn't understand jokes of that kind, and would never forgive one. The young lover certainly never did, for he would always pass by silent and sour.

The principal trading posts at that time were Milwaukee, where honest old Solomon Duncan held forth, Green Bay, Fort Atkinson, and I think Prairie du Chien. Father also traded with the Winnebagoes, and accepted buffalo robes, otter, mink, fox, musk rat and deer skins in exchange for calico, groceries &c. Beads and trinkets were in good demand, and common brown sugar exchanged even weight for maple sugar. These Indians were clever at basket and bead work, and their hand tanned buckskin was beautifully soft and of rich color.

Just before <sup>he left his farm and trading post to go to Milwaukee</sup> the squaws made and presented to my father a full dress suit of the finest buckskin, including head dress and moccasins, all stitched beautifully and ornamented with bead work. During the progress of the work, the women would come down to measure and fit, and they would have lots of fun over it. They wished it kept a secret until finished, so they could take father with a squad of Indians, and visit some of the new white settlers, to see if he could be passed off as an Indian. This was at last carried out, and successfully, to the great enjoyment of all the red people.

I cannot remember this buckskin dress, but I recollect the money purse also presented at the time. This was of buckskin, in shape of a turtle, with a slit in the neck for coin. I can remember the German silver circular ornaments worn by the Indians, and the belts of bead work, that survived the early days, and were kept in the old bureau for years.

All Indians are fond of "fire water," and our friends therefore were no exception, and sex made no difference. I have heard Mother tell how they would strike the trail for Fort Atkinson, solely for whisky, because father would not sell it to them. Some traders would regulate the law; for the Indians would come home happy and full.

Mother says the squaws would sometimes get loaded, get into a row, toss their papooses into the nearest bushes, and pitch into each other good and hearty, often with knives. Strange to say, the babies never uttered a note. The chief's "court" were generally on hand to break up these affairs, which they considered disgraceful.

The name "Ei-stockera," given to my father by Osuckka, means Doctor, or big medicine. Sometimes they would hail him from across a field by putting their hands to their mouths, and yell: E-stock! for short. They were great borrowers of tools, but never failed to return them when promised. The axe was in great demand, for cutting down bee trees, and they were very fond of wild honey.

Prairie chickens were very plentiful, and Father could shoot them from the door of his cabin. The rivers abounded in fish, pickerel, bass, perch, sunfish, catfish, suckers &c. Deer were plenty, and the Rock River Country was certainly a happy home for the Winnebagos.

My father was the builder of the first steamboat that ever navigated the Rock River. In 1839 he removed to Milwaukee, where he took the management of the old American House. In 1840, he built and kept the Fountain House, at the junction of West Water and Second Streets. Here was my birth-place, August 21st, 1840. I was introduced into this vale of tears by a distinguished gentleman, Dr. E. B. Wolcott, afterwards Surgeon General of the U. S. (during the Civil war).

About this time Father began building his steamboat on the Rock River, or rather at Aztalan on the Crawfish, which is near the Rock. All the material had to be transported by wagon through the woods, which was a great undertaking, as there were no roads built, and the mechanics and men were guided the whole 50 miles by "blazed" trees and trails. When the boat was completed I was a year old, and Old Black Tom, the cook, held me in his arms at the launching of this historic water craft. My mother is my authority for this, so I suppose father and mother left the hotel in care of a manager, to go back to the old farm, to see the boat launched.

It was at this time the Indians were notified that they must have to leave their old home and be sent to a reservation in Minnesota. The old chief begged pitiously to be left, and had a childlike faith in my father's influence at Washington, to have the order rescinded, that his tribe might be allowed to remain on their old hunting ground.

Steamboating on the Mississippi lasted about a year, when Father sold his boat to a Hungarian named Haraphy, the father of Arpad Haraphy late a wine maker in S. Francisco, whose acquaintance I made after I came to California.

I was a very delicate specimen of humanity, and Dr. Wolcott said my life tenure would be short unless my parents took me away from the harsh climate of the lake. So Father sold the Fontaine House, and removed to Delafield, 25 miles West, where he bought 320 acres of land from Mr. Pearmain. Little Sarah, the Oneida Indian girl, 10 years old, presented to my mother by Mrs. Miller, wife of Judge Miller of the U. S. Court, was my nurse.

When I was about five years old I was taken with inflammation of the eyes, and became entirely blind for a year. My recovery was slow, and I have never regained my sight fully.

Then I was attacked with rheumatism, and for another year had no use of my lower limbs, but hitched around in a little chair.

Result of all these drawbacks, including dropsey on the brain at birth, which I failed to mention, it is not surprising that I have never been a strong vigorous man.

Father suffered from sunstroke, and became nearly blind, at the same time I was blind. So poor Mother had a hard time of it. Father never required his sight, except to a slight degree. But he managed his business well, calling capable men to his aid.

It was 1842 when we came to Delafield, to live in a log house. This house was built by Pearmain, and was like most every other log house of its size in those days. The main building was about 20 x 30, with a huge stone fireplace at the South end. The logs were dressed roughly on the inside. I cannot remember the floor, but think it was of boards; but I can remember the immense fire place, with its flat stone hearth. Lime stone is plentiful in that section, and large flat stones were easy to get. Auger holes were bored in the logs, and board shelves supported thereon. There was a "lean-to" kitchen on the West, nearly as large as the main room, and also built of logs.

Over the main part there was a loft, reached by a stairway, built of boards in good style, and enclosed. Under this stairway was a "cubby-hole," as Mother called it. Really a clothes closet.

The entrance to the house was at the center on the East side, and the stairs went up at the left as you enter.

And here I will record a pretty incident, which occurred some months after the departure of the boat down the river.

The navigation of the Rock river proved a costly experiment, as the river was full of snags, and after considerable damage to the boat during its passage down, including sinking it once, it finally reached the Mississippi. It never again returned up the Rock, but made regular trips from Lake Pepin in the North to the Red River of the South, my father as Captain and owner, Col. Thayer as Mate. Old Tom, a trained and educated colored man was cook.

Coming up the Mississippi on one of the trips, when opposite Rock Island, father was sitting on deck, and noticed a band of about 100 Indians, in bright new blankets, on the west bank. They waved a blanket on a pole as a signal for the boat to land. Father ordered the pilot to run in, and put out two gang planks, which was done. As soon as father recognized the Indians as a party of his old friends the Winnebagoes, he ordered the steward to roll up a barrel of whiskey on deck, and smash the top in, and get cups ready for a reception.

One by one the Indians came up one plank, shook hands with father and saluted him, receiving a drink of whiskey and passing on down the other plank to the shore. They showed the greatest joy to meet their old friend Estockara once more, and father said afterwards that he enjoyed this testimonial of their good will, and that it was one of the pleasantest incidents of his life.

This band of Winnebagoes was one of many on their way to the Reservation in Minnesota.

A curious circumstance was the recognition by these Indians of father's name on the whul house, "N. P. Hawks," being the name of the boat, and although they cannot read, yet they identified it as the same <sup>as</sup> that painted on his wagon box when he first came among them. It was, to them, simply Estockara's mark, and they had become familiar with the letters in the same.

I remember a few Winnebago words, and their meaning.

Woscopala, bread	Sinnahena, cold	nishi-shin, good
Tunda wood	Thoongra, dog	covin-nishi-shin, bad
Sidip. sleep	Puckachee, go!	Shara, venison
Squibee drunk	Neppo pony	Bearhoo food day
	Na-poo dead	Shu-ne-a-wa money

She mokeman, whitman  
nishi-nobbe - Indian