Nelson C. Hawks Remembrance

Part Two

The Delafield Home

Steamboating on the Mississippi lasted about a year, when Father sold his boat to a Hungarian named Haraszthy, the father of Arpad Haraszthy 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 Fountain 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 inflamation 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 I had no use of my lower limbs, but hitched around in a little chair.

Result of all these drawbacks, including dropsy 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 regained 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.

A frame two story building was soon added, and connected on the North by a little passage way, Southern style.

My sister Frances Helen was born in this new building July 5, 1844. I am told that she "came in a thunder storm."

All early history of Wisconsin will tell you that every house was a hotel, practically, to the limit of its capacity for taking care of the travelers. And as emigration from the East set in strongly at that time, and our house being now enlarged, it became known as Hawks's Tavern, and was very popular, the service being so much better than others. In fact hundreds had to be turned away for lack of sleeping room.

About 1846 Father began building "The Delafield House", a three story building with about 20 rooms, besides a large 2-story annex, containing kitchen and pantry below and servants rooms above. An immense business was done from the start. Emigration was like a tidal wave, and the new hotel could not handle all. The house was packed always, and the overflow had to camp by the roadside. People were glad to sleep on the floor, in the halls and in the barn. Speaking of barns, Father was obliged to build two more of them, one being 50×100, and containing 20 stalls in the main part, with large hay loft, and storage and grainery on the north wing, the south wing being a drive-way for carriages.

I can remember those lively days, the jolly teamsters and their songs. Some had been sailors, and others boatmen on the Ohio and Mississippi. Lead ore was hauled by wagons across the state, from Mineral Point to Milwaukee, and our place being a day's journey from Milwaukee, and noted for "good grub and good beds" these teamsters were always with us. I can remember the old hickory whipstocks with braided buckskin lashes

Stages came daily, the real old article, as you see it in the pictures. And the old-time stage driver, just as Mark Twain describes him, was a great man, with lots on his mind. I can sometimes hear the rumble of the heavy wheels, the sound of his horn as he crested the hill near the village, and the crack of his long whip. One old fellow, "Hod" Stimpson, came to live with us after he left driving, got married, and lived in one of Father's houses at

the mill. His wife, in due time, presented him with a pair of twins. I will mention here, that three pairs of twins were born in that same house, the other two pairs belonging to the respective families of two of our millers.

From this circumstance, or rather the three or six circumstances, our flouring mills were named the "Twin Mills," which name they bear to this day.

I forgot to mention the death of little Sarah, my Indian girl nurse, in 1843. In her eleventh year. We were very fond of her, as she was of a happy and cheerful disposition, and her loss was sorely felt. She was buried in the Nashotah Mission burial ground, and was the first burial there. She was called Sarah Macomber. Her death was from scarlet fever.

Early Memories.

I will mention our household pets, which were Old Caesar, the Newfoundland dog, who hated Indians, and would growl when they were coming a hundred yards away; two fox squirrels, that played with me like kittens; and 40 wild geese that we raised.

Old Caesar was bitten by a rattlesnake, and had to be shot. The squirrels did not take kindly to the new house, and after lingering around the old log house awhile, they left for the woods.

The wild geese would wander off to the rivers and lakes, but would return to be fed. Some of them were shot by settlers who mistook them for wild game. A few mated with domestic geese. As time went on, we counted fewer at each succeeding feed time, and finally they all disappeared. No doubt it was a case of the call of the wild.

An anecdote of the squirrels: The night Frances was born, Mrs. Hill was in attendance. (Your grandmother, boys.) In passing through the dark passage way that connected the new frame addition to the old log house, one of the squirrels jumped from some high place down onto Mother Hill's shoulder. The yell that the good woman discharged scared the whole community. The passage was dark, and no doubt Mrs. Hill imagined she was attacked by Indians.

Another: A mason named Chester Daly (Chet, we called him) lost his apron. A long time after, it was found, made into a nest by the squirrels.

In later years, after leaving the log house, I had a raccoon for a pet. I must have been 7 years old, and I trained that coon to do many cute things. I mild point my finger at him, and he mild cover his eyes with his paws, as though ashamed. I mild put him in a little bed, and he would play sick; and I mild doctor him. This coon mild follow me around, and purr like a cat. I mild catch minnows out of the river - Bark River - which flows through the village, putting them alive in a wash basin. It was amusing to watch Mr. Coon feel around in the basin, and bring out his fish and eat it.

A pet of my infancy was a cat, which I named "Bildy" - I am sure I dont know where I got the name. Children invent names, and I must have been very guilty of this charge when I called my toddy (brandy and sugar) "dobbazoo." It was "doctor's order," as a tonic probably, when I was a weak little two-year old."

Sister Fannie had a green parrot, "Lora," about 1854, that Father bought from a lady in Waterville. This parrot could talk, laugh and sing, but couldnt whistle. Lora kept the neighborhood entertained and imitated every new noise. One of her best imitations was of a child with whooping cough.

The Old Mill.

Among the sweetest memories of my boyhood days are those of the old mill, situated 3/4 of a mile west of Delafield. It might be more correct to say Mills, as there was a saw mill attached to the flouring mill. An immense dam about 400 ft in length gave a splendid water power of eleven feet head. There were three "runs" of French Burr millstones in the flouring mill, and as the business was both "custom" and manufacture, they were kept busy. The building was three-story, the top floor being used for storing loose wheat in the busy custom season, until the winter slack-up enabled the mill to grind for the Milwaukee market.

Father kept plenty of horses, and his men would "team it" into Milwaukee with loads of Twin Mills flour, in barrels, usually; the sack trade being mostly local. I used to ride to town with the men on some of these trips, after I was 16 years old.

How pleasant are the recollections of the old mill and its surroundings! The mill pond was full of fish, and so was the

there on Summer days, sometimes alone, but oftener with other boys. The girls were fond of this little island, too, and it was the scene of many a picnic.

This lake abounds in fish, and some very large pickerel have been taken from it. One I remember was speared by "Tod" Plumley, Father's hired man, and weighed 25¼ lbs. There were plenty of bass and perch. The bass were the large striped kind, and the largest weighed about 6 or 7 lbs. The "rock bass," as we called them, were really a rock cod, and averaged about 1 lb. The perch were the long yellow bellies with black stripes around their bodies, and were a pretty fish. Of the small fish were sun-fish, "pumpkinseeds," "bullheads, or catfish, minnows and "shiners," which latter were shaped like sardines, and covered with silver scales. They have disappeared of late years; no doubt exterminated by the fishermen who raided for bait.

Maple Island, in the Lower Nemakin, below our Mills, was another pretty spot, and derived its name fairly, as it was very densely covered with sugar maples, some quite large. I have had my experience here in sugar making, my companions in the camp being George Lowerre and Walter Stickles. This sugar making was in March usually, and we would cross the lake on the ice. It closed when the buds started, and the ice in the lakes began to melt and break.

Nashotah.

This is the name of the Episcopal Mission, about a mile North and a little West from Delafield, which was founded in 1844. Bishop Jackson Kemper lived about half way. The first clergymen of this early mission were Dr. Hobart, Dr. James Lloyd Breck and Dr. Wm. Adams. Dr. A. D. Lobe came in the Early '50s. This became a great theological seminary, and at one time contained over 60 Students. The situation is beautiful, being on the High banks of the Upper Nashotah.

About ¼ of a mile South of the main buildings is a brick school house, now known as the old Castle. Here I went to school for the first time in 1848. The teachers were students from Nashotah. Here was the first sun dial I ever saw.

river below, and many a day I idled around with my fish line and spear, listening to the water falling from the waste-weir, and to the "tick-tack" of the spindles or "persuaders" in the hoppers. It was a music that many a miller has pleasantly told of in history and fiction, and books of this kind are always welcome to me, as they picture the days of my boyhood.

Brother Ammi and I once bought a canoe from an Indian, and we used this canoe on many a trip from the village to the mill and back. Ammi undertook to sail it once, but it was a failure, and after a good ducking we abandoned mind as a motor and resumed the paddle.

Half a mile west of our mills are the two Nemahbin lakes, connecting with each other by a stream about 300 feet in length. Over this stream is a bridge, connecting the road to Summit and Oconomowoc with Delafield.

In grading the dam the workmen found many large chunks of native copper in the gravel pit, which was across the main road in a line with the dam. Some of these were as large as a man's hand, and were of clear solid copper.

There were two houses for the millers, one at the North end of dam, or near it, and the other at the South, near the mills. A small storeroom was South of dam, by the roadside, near gravel bank. A stable and a few small sheds completed the buildings.

Nowhere in the world can be found a more beautiful country of lakes, rivers, hills, prairie and forest. In Waukesha County alone are 17 lakes, clustered so closely together that all can be seen on a clear day from the summit of Government Hill, about 1½ miles south of the village. Many, in fact most of these lakes are "chained" by Bark River, which runs through them. Their names are as follows: Pewaukee, the largest; Nagawicka, which is 3 miles long; Upper and Lower Nashotah; Upper and Lower Nemahbin; Oconomowoc; Okauchee; La Belle; North; Pine; Beaver; Silver; Crooked; and some smaller ones.

In Nagawicka Lake is a beautiful island, which is one of the "loved spots which my infancy knew." It was covered with trees and wild raspberries, and I have made many a happy voyage

Leaving my own record for the present, and resuming the items of Early Delafield history, I will mention the marriage of my oldest sister Cornelia to Dr. Johnson Sperry in 1850, (March 18).

The Plank Road from Watertown to Milwaukee was built in 1857. This was a result of a disagreement among the promoters of a Railroad between those places, which was to run through Delafield. The project was begun, and sections of roadbed were graded in many places. When the work was suspended another company got to work further north and rushed a plank road through to completion. This was a death stroke to poor Delafield, as far as a business town is concerned.

The travel being diverted away north, the hotel business languished, and my father at last took down the sign. A few travellers would come, however, and plead to stay at the old house, and father would not turn them away.

In the old busy days many a "show" came and gave its entertainment at our house. These were mostly legerdemain, ventriloquism, puppet shows, (such as Babes in the Woods,) acrobats, minstrels and parlor theatricals, concerts &.

Wheat was the principal grain product of this part of the State, though some rye, barley, oats, buckwheat and corn was raised. It is a fine country also for apples.

Wild plums abounded in the woods, some of them of fine variety. Those glorious woods were full of good things growing without the aid of man. Hazel nuts, hickory nuts, crab apples, wild cherries, mandrakes, blackberries, raspberries, strawberries, ground cherries, wild grapes, cranberries and huckleberries, the last two growing in the low places and marshes, are all to be found here, and it is not surprising that the Indians loved their country and were heartbroken to leave it. Father said it was most pitiful to hear the old Winnebago chief beg to remain. My sympathies will ever be for these people.

Some Early Delafield History.

Father was quite a factor in developing our little village. To encourage settlement, he platted "Hawks's Addition," and gave a deed of every alternate lot to the first who came and located there. And as he carried on his hotel, as well as a large farm and the flouring mills, his was a busy life. At one time he was postmaster, and once Justice of the Peace. In 1853, Dec. 23d, all his mills were burned, and a total loss, as the insurance had expired a few days before. Some 3000 bushels of fall wheat were destroyed. It was a hard blow to Father, but he was not a man to give up; and after a few days planning he began to rebuild, and in a few months the new mills were busy at work.

In 1855, March, I began going to the Parish School, on the hill North of the village, near the Church. I think the Church was built about 1851 or 1852. The school house a year or so after. From 1850 to 1855 I had attended the village "District School"

I will mention the old Sanders and McGuffey's Readers, Olney's and Mitchell's Geographies, Pinneo's Grammar, Ray's and Colburn's Arithmetics, and that dear old blue back Webster's Spelling Book, used in those days. I have my original Mitchell's Geography yet, with date March 1855 on fly leaf. At this writing it is 52 years old, and in good order. Keep that book, boys.

In Fall of 1856 I quit school, and went to Waukesha to learn printing. This was a great mistake, for I should have been kept at my studies for at least three years more. But I became simply insane for a printing office, and to become a printer. This must have developed from my attempts at engraving on blocks of wood with my knife, and the accidental possession of an old hand stamp and some old type. At any rate, Father was disgusted, and thinking to cure me of the disease, and under the advice of some neighbors, he sent me to Mr. A. J. Pratt at Waukesha, who owned and published the "Plaindealer," in whose family I boarded during my stay, which was one month, when, it being Christmas, I came home for the holidays. During Christmas week Mr. Pratt sold out, so I never went back.

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