



## Gratia A. Countryman and Family Papers.

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These memoirs were composed by Theophilus Russell Countryman, son of Levi Nelson Countryman and Alta Chamberlain Countryman, during the years 1935-1942, being completed/when he was a man of 85 years in their present state.

He had a phenomenal memory...used to enjoy quoting statistics from the World Almanac and when we looked up the facts for verification, he was invariably correct, so I am convinced that the facts and figures in these memoirs are absolutely accurate!

As we found these memoirs the story is not complete. I do not believe that any material has been misplaced or lost. It is my recollection that he came upon a satchel full of letters from his wife and mother and Aunt Lizzie. There had been considerable conflict between these women and the revival of the old emotions seemed to disrupt his will to write. If any more of this manuscript is ever found, as I sincerely wish could be the case, it will be preserved and forwarded to be united with the manuscript herein.

Personally I know very little of his mature life, except that he was a mining engineer of considerable ability. He worked on the first railroad built across the Andes, and spent many years in So. America. He also worked in Cripple Creek, Colorado--in the gold mines' surveys, and on a drainage project which made the continuance of gold mining possible. He was the engineer for the old stone bridge across the Mississippi, I believe the one which Great Northern trains cross immediately before coming into the Minneapolis station.

As an older man he lived alternately with his sisters, Lana Countryman Conger (my mother) in Ontario, California and Gratia Countryman, in Minneapolis. When Aunt Gratia came to Duluth to live with me, Uncle Theo went to the Walker Home and died there, at about age 92.

All of this is subject to correction and addition by his children, Russell Countryman of Oakland, California; Alta Countryman Blackburn, Los Angeles; and Ralph Countryman, deceased.

Constance Conger Buffington  
Constance Conger Buffington.

April 15, 1966



Memories July 1935

Memoirs of T. R. Countryman

Well, here I am a broken down retired mining and civil engineer, <sup>85</sup>~~77~~ years of age, and not much good for any kind of work. My sister Gratia has suggested that I write my memoirs, or perhaps Auto-biography would be the proper word. I have never kept a diary for very long and have no other record at hand. Must depend on my memory for everything I write. Am not a literary man. Have never written anything but engineering, mining & geological reports, and a few technical articles for technical journals. How shall I begin? Perhaps with a few lines about my ancestry & parentage. My paternal ancestor Conrad Countryman, came to America from Germany about 1720 and settled in New York near Albany. He was my father's great-grandfather. My father was born near LaFargeville St Lawrence County N. Y. July 11-1837. My mother's ancestors (Chamberlains) came (probably from England) about 1680 and settled in Connecticut.



My mother was born near Hamilton Ohio on Feb. 4 - 1833. I believe that all of my ancestors came to America during "Colonial" times.

My father + mother met and were married at Hartsville Indiana in March 1851 - Their oldest child (Amplias) was born there Oct. 1854. They came to Minnesota (then a territory) in the summer of 1855, and settled on a homestead of 80 acres, about 4 miles west of the town of Hastings, and there, in a little pioneers cabin, I was born June 11<sup>th</sup> 1857. I think that all of my father's brothers and sisters came to Minn. at about that same time or shortly after, and settled near each other. It was called the Spring Lake township Dakota county. The town of "Mininger" on the Miss. river was about 2 miles to the north.

I think ~~the~~ <sup>24 years</sup> years after I was born father built a larger and more comfortable house on his land and that is the first house I remember. It was a 1½ story frame with 3 rooms below and 1 large room up stairs. Also a "lean to" kitchen + woodshed used in the summer time. → finished in Apr. 1859 ←



It would be considered a very modest home at the present time, but we were quite comfortable. We lived there until we moved to the town of Hastings in 1866.

And now as to my very earliest recollections, as to those <sup>persons</sup> who disappeared or passed away during my childhood days. I have a very dim recollection of my uncle Royal (mother's oldest brother) who died <sup>Sept. 26 - 1860</sup> ~~in~~ 1860. I have a very distinct recollection of my grandfather (my father's father) Daniel Countryman. He lived with his sons + daughters families during the last few years of his life and I know he was with us for several months one time, <sup>and visited us often</sup>. I think he died in 1863. I remember going to his funeral at Aunt Lanas home. Of course I remember many other persons of those days that I frequently saw during following years. The summer of 1861 was a very exciting one in that neighborhood. The civil war had broken out and many of the young men had enlisted. Before going to the front they would usually call on their relatives, friends + sweethearts. I can remember that many of them came to our home that summer + the following year, to say good by.



My Uncle Octavius enlisted in the latter part of 1862 + before going south to join his regiment he came home on a short furlough. He had on his blue uniform with shiny brass buttons all over it, also a gun with a bayonet. What an exciting spectacle to a small boy. No wonder I remember it. And I frequently saw soldiers in full uniform during the following <sup>years</sup>. It was a patriotic locality, + most of the able bodied young men enlisted before the war was over. My older brother and I were together almost constantly. We slept together played together, got into mischief together, + frequently got licked together. The nearest neighbor (with children) was Hugh Moore who lived about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile away. We sometimes went there + played with Milton + Caroline Moore. Uncle Peter + Uncle Henry lived more than a mile away, by the road, but we frequently went to visit them especially in the summer time. Always barefooted for 4 or 5 months of the year. Had numerous cousins of about our own age. Other near neighbors with children were Tom Fitches Reuben Knapps and Sam Truax. Uncle Dan Truax



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Aunt Lana, Aunt Martha + Uncle John were the nearest neighbors about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile away. We were frequently sent there on errands, taking a short cut across Uncle Daus pasture where he kept his cows and a flock of sheep. There was a belligerent old ram in that flock of sheep, and we always kept our eyes open and gave him a wide berth. My Aunt Lizzie (mother's younger sister) was a member of our family as long back as I can remember, and I think she came to Minn. with father + mother. She helped mother constantly with the housework and the care of us youngsters. She loved us and was kind <sup>to</sup> us even if she did frequently scold us. She always seemed to me more like an older sister than an Aunt.

By the time I was old enough to know anything about it, father had his 80. acres all under cultivation. Had broken up the original sod with a yoke of oxen. I remember them well, Big strong slow moving animals named Buck + Bright. Of course <sup>he</sup> had considerable help. Uncle John, his oldest



brother spent about half his time with us. He was ruptured & unable to do any very hard work, but could plow, drive reaper, work in the garden and do chores. Another man, John Long, worked for father, much of his time during 2 or 3 years before the war. I can just remember him. He enlisted in the 1<sup>st</sup> Minn. regiment & served with it until the battle of Gettysburg, where he had a leg shot off.

Father finally bought a team of horses <sup>Mar. 1862</sup> large gentle sound animals called Tom & Jerry. My brother & I, soon learned to ride them, bareback of course. We had 2 or 3 cows that grazed on the open prairie across the road & it was one of our jobs to hunt them up & drive them home at night. We also kept several pigs & lots of chickens. Always had a good garden, & in the fall father would nearly fill up the cellar under the house with potatoes, turnips, beets, onions, cabbage etc, and generally a small barrel of sauerkraut. We always had plenty of good substantial food. Mother was a good cook and seldom spoiled anything.



I can recollect many incidents of those days but can't give exact date. I began going to <sup>my first</sup> school one summer. I think in 1863. The school house was away up on the St Paul road nearly 2 miles from where we lived. Miss Morrow was the teacher, fairly well educated for those days. A slender, angular woman about 30. "Boarded" around" with her pupils families, generally a week or two at each place. She was an irascible quick tempered teacher and believed in corporal punishment. I had learned the alphabet and a few simple words of one syllable, and carried a little old tattered primer, which had <sup>served</sup> my brother before me. My only book. No "Lindergartens" in those days. There must have been 30 to 40 children in that school several of them no older than I. About a doz families were represented.

That same summer a little brother was born in our family. He was named Melville. A bright healthy baby - deeply loved by all of us. The following winter (1863-64,) father taught school a few months in the little old church near Uncle Daws house. Aunty and I both



went, sometimes wading in snow nearly up to our necks. In places the snow had drifted along the fences as high as the fence, and packed so hard we could walk on it. On Saturdays father and Uncle John would go down to the Miss. river "bottoms", and chop down trees for firewood. The "bottoms" were covered with heavy hardwood timber of all kinds, and the nearby farmers would cut & haul out their years fuel supply in the winter time.

One day, in summer of 1864. I think) Orlando Chamberlain and his entire family came to see us. He was mother's cousin and lived on a farm about 6 miles to the south near Vermillion river. Father had met him in Hastings a short time before & discovered the relation. He told them something, surprising about our grandfather Chamberlain. The two families became quite intimate and visited each other often. I went to school again for a short time in the summer of 1864 but don't remember any very important event. We had some Sunday school picnics & patriotic gatherings and picnics, especially when any soldiers came home on furlough. The



progress of the war, was one of the chief topics of conversation whenever people met. Hardly a family in the neighborhood but what had a near relative at the front. Uncle Dan would go to town every day to get the mail & the news; and my brother and I would go to his home about the time he returned to get our mail & papers. That is, I would go if mother would let me, for I knew it was likely that Aunt Lana had some cookies to distribute.

In the fall of 1864 or early in 1865, Father and Uncle Peter enlisted, at the same time, I can't remember just when they left, but they were assigned to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Minn. infantry then in Gen. Sherman's Army, and joined their regiment somewhere in North Carolina just before the end of the war. I don't remember when father returned but it was shortly after the end of the war. Uncle John had lived with us most of the time while father was away.

That summer (1865) mother made a visit to her old home & relatives in Ohio & Indiana and while she was gone, my little brother Melville died after a short



illness. Poor mother was grief stricken when she heard it and returned home at once. We had not considered him in danger until a few days before he died. Miss Morris lived with <sup>us</sup> most of that summer. Father was very busy with the farm work that summer + fall. Crops were good + prices were high for nearly all agricultural products. Wheat sold in Hastings at \$2.00 per bushel. It seems father had made and saved enough money to buy another 50. acres of good land about 2 miles south of his home. This land he rented to another farmer. My Uncle Octavius came home some time that summer or fall and lived with us several weeks. He had been in the army about 3 years, and during the first part of 1865 had been in a hospital in St. Louis. We all went to a circus in Hastings that fall, the first show I ever saw. Father made many trips to Hastings that fall, hauling his grain to market. He would sometimes let Andy and I go with him to our great delight. Went to school again that winter in the little old church at the cross roads. Graduated from the primer to the first reader.



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And now I come to an important event in my early life. We move from the farm to the town of Hastings to live, sometime in the spring of 1866, about May I think. The boys were delighted at the outlook. We rented a comfortable little frame house at the corner of 7<sup>th</sup> + Vermillion Sts., a good location with good neighbors. I think father sold his team, farming machinery and implements to the man who rented his farm. But we took one good cow to town, and she furnished us with milk and butter for several years. I ought to know, because most of the time I had to feed and milk her. When we had got settled us boys proceeded to get acquainted with the neighbors children. In fact they came around to investigate the new neighbor. Many questions were asked and answered and lots of information voluntarily offered. We soon learned all about each others families. I was somewhat disturbed to learn that nearly all the other boys had sisters, and I soon began to think I was an unlucky kid, not to have any at all. In fact I got to enquiring around home, what the reason we



couldn't have a sister. I had an idea then that they could go out and buy one somewhere just like anything else. I don't remember clearly just what father did that summer. He was away frequently for several days at a time and I think he was helping his brothers thru haying & harvesting. Hastings was quite a thriving town at that time and had I think a larger population than at any time since. It was a great river shipping point. There were no railways in the state then <sup>and</sup> river steamboats ~~were~~ the only transportation. Farmers from all over Dakota county & some adjacent counties, hauled their grain & produce to Hastings & bought their supplies there. I can remember seeing long lines of teams and wagons loaded with wheat, coming down Vermillion St. and 5<sup>th</sup> St., going to the elevators and warehouses at the levee. Hastings had one of the best steamboat landings on the upper Miss. Deep water right up <sup>to</sup> the shore line and a natural rock levee.

I began going to school that fall, in a large frame building on 5<sup>th</sup> St. near Vermillion. I think they



had just begun to get the public schools organized in a way. We didn't hear anything about grades then. You were "in a certain" Reader. The 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup>. The reader you were in decided your standing. I was in the 1<sup>st</sup> reader, could write an awful scrawl, and do a few simple sums in Arithmetic. That was the extent of my education. Mr Babcock was principal & Miss Louise Pringle was my first teacher. She had a houseful of pupils and there was a great deal of turmoil & confusion. I can still remember the names of most of my first class mates. They were numerous. I don't think I learned much that year except some outdoor games. My brother went to the same school, but was in a higher class.

And now I must mention another important occurrence. On Thanksgiving day Nov. 29-1866, a little baby sister arrived. I was informed that old Doc. Phorne had brought her, but I had begun to mistrust such tales. Anyway I was greatly pleased and lost no time in spreading the information among the neighboring youngsters. Dear old grandma Van Kleeck was there, and she and Aunt



Lizzie were very busy. I think Aunt Lana also came a day or two later, and soon many of the neighbor ladies called. Father at once selected "Gratia" as the proper name for that baby since she had arrived on Thanksgiving day. And that dear little baby sister has been a great blessing to her family and friend & fellow citizens ever since.

The following Christmas we had a Christmas-tree at the Methodist church for the Sunday school. It was the first I had ever seen. Of course father had joined the Methodist church when we moved to town and always made us boys go to Sunday school. I don't remember any incident of importance that winter. We had sleds & skates, and used to slide down the long hill on Vermillion St. from 8<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup>.

Father had sold one of his 80 acre farms in the spring of 1867 and bought some lots in Hastings at the Cor of 6<sup>th</sup> and Pine Sts. In the suburbs. He built a small cottage or cabin at the back and we moved into it about May 1<sup>st</sup> & planted a garden. Shortly after he began the construction of a home, on the same lots, where we lived for about 10 years thereafter. It was 2 story



frame house, with parlor, living room, bedroom, dining room, kitchen + pantry below and 3 bed rooms up stairs. there was also a woodshed + porch. I can remember it so well, I could make a correct sketch of it now. There was a large cellar under the house also a cistern with a pump in the kitchen. A short distance back of the house we had a well sunk through the soil + gravel and drilled down into solid rock about 50 ft. more. It furnished an abundant supply of good water and some of our near neighbors came there for their drinking water. a small stable of 2 stalls was built adjoining the cabin, which was afterwards used as a granary + store room. We had a good garden, a small flock of chickens and with our cow, managed to supply a large part of our food necessities.

That fall (1867) we began going to school at the large brick school at 9<sup>th</sup> + Ramsey Sts. The same building that has been used ever since for Hastings public schools. My Teacher there was Miss Hattie Langdon and I was in the 2<sup>nd</sup> reader grade. Had also, arithmetic, spelling + "jography". Had acquired a slate + pencil + copy book.



I can remember the names of most of my classmates. There was Louie Follett, Frank Rogers, Charlie Reed, Fred Churchill, Louie Lyon, Vince Meloy, Chas Rathbone, Clarence White, Oady Smith, Caribel Smith, Mary Turnbull, Fanny Canning, Hattie Tyrell, Emma Ames, <sup>Minnie Silver</sup> and several others whose names I can't recall now.

Prof. Babcock was still Supt. I think. There were several ~~other~~ lady teachers in the different rooms of the same building. It seems to me I made better progress in my education from that time on -

That fall, father began working in a mens clothing store on 2nd St, for a man named Sam Frank, a Jew. He was <sup>with</sup> him until the next summer. It was about this time they began the construction of the "Hastings & Dakota railroad to run westerly thru Farmington to Waukato, thence up the Minnesota river valley to Dakota. We frequently went down to the lower part of town to see them working on it. They brought the steel rails a locomotive and some flat cars up the river on steam boats. When the track had been laid to



Farmington, the next summer, we went out there on a Sunday school picnic, Had rough board seats, <sup>nailed</sup> on the flat cars. My first ride on a Ry. train. -

The summer of 1868 father made a trip back to his old home in New York, where some of his half-sisters and their families were still living. He had not been there since leaving about 20 years before. When he returned, he brought his half sister, Aunt Polly House, and her daughter, <sup>Paddie</sup> with him. - They were given the little cottage back of our house to live in. That summer my cousin Albert Duax, Aunt Lana's only son, built a home on the lot adjoining ours facing north on 5<sup>th</sup> St. He had been married about 2 years before to Miss Nellie Rice and they <sup>had</sup> a baby girl, Winnie, about Gratia's age. They were our nearest neighbors for several years.

That fall (1868) there was a presidential election, and great political excitement, "Stump" speakers, brass bands, torch-light parades. Lots of fun for the small boy. It was Grant + Colfax Republican, Vs. Seymour + Blair. Democrat candidates. Nearly every boy had



a button on his coat with the name of his candidate on it. His politics, of course, - were the same as Dad's and there were lots of disputes & even fights over it.

About the first of 1869, I think, father began working for Jake Thompson, who had a large grocery store on Vermillion St near 2<sup>nd</sup>. It seems to me he worked there for 2 or 3 years. I can't remember positively.

In 1869 - a Mr Cassius S. Campbell was engaged as Supt. of Public Schools & principal of the High School. He was a graduate of Dartmouth College and no doubt a very capable man. He received the fine salary of \$100. - per month. Considered big pay in those days. He re-organized the schools and established grades of some kind. I was in the 4<sup>th</sup> reader, I think then, and I also began grammar, history & mental arithmetic. Miss Mary Langdon was my teacher for about 2 years. That summer <sup>1869</sup> my uncle Octavus came up from St Louis on a visit. He was then running a brass foundry in partnership with a Mr Gregg. He had a tract of 160 acres of land on lake "Osakis" near Sauk Center where he went hunting & fishing.



I think it was that summer <sup>1869</sup> that such vast numbers of wild pigeons flew over going in a northerly direction. Vast flocks, one after another, at short intervals, all day long came flying over at perhaps 400 or 500 ft. high. Extending as far as one could see in each direction. I have never seen anything like it since. One night a flock settled down just west & north of town. So many on some of the trees that small limbs broke under the weight. Hundreds of them were killed next day & nearly every one in town had pigeon pie. Wild pigeons flew over in large numbers for several years but nothing like that summer. In the summer of 1869, I worked for Orlando Chamberlain a few weeks. Was paid 50 ¢ per day and board. Hoed corn and potatoes & raked hay. It was the first work I had ever done for wages, and when I was paid, I felt rich. I had never before had any money in my possession except a few coppers & 3 cent nickel. Was awful homesick before I got back home. Went back to school



again that fall in the same room with same teacher, and continued about the same studies as near as I can remember. Now I disliked grammar but was fond of history and geography, + most other subjects. Our sports in the summer and fall were base ball, marbles, "High Spy", "Hop Scotch", and "Run-Run-Pullaway". Some of the larger boys played foot ball. There were also numerous foot races, wrestling matches, and occasional fights. We sometimes slipped <sup>away</sup> at the afternoon recess, and went down to Lake Rebecca or the Miss. river in swimming -

We would also frequently go down to the levee to see a steamboat come in. We could nearly always hear their whistle for Prescott (3 miles below) and knew they would probably arrive at Hastings within a half hour or perhaps an hour. When they came to land nearly every boy in town who could <sup>be</sup> was there. No railways as yet built, but the "Hastings + Dakota" although I think they had begun grading the Chicago-Milwaukee + St Paul Ry.



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That fall I think, it became my particular job to milk, feed and look after the Cow. We only had one, but she supplied the family with all the milk & butter we needed. I remember that at night's milking I would get 8 to 10 quarts. Not so much mornings. I believe I milked that cow for the next 4 or 5 years except when away from home.

In the summer she would graze all day on the open prairie west of town, but would nearly always come home at night for the nice feed of bran-mash, she knew would be ready for her. I remember a good many little incidents but am not positive about the dates. I think it was that summer I had quite a painful accident. I was trying to walk along the edge of the top board of the fence, barefooted, when I lost my balance & jumped off into the grass at one side. One foot landed right on top of an iron tooth garden rake lying there. One of the nails went right thru my foot between the big toe & the next one. Father had a hard pull to jerk it out. Mother washed it out



and bandaged it & within a week it was well.

I remember another painful accident of my boyhood, but can't recall the date. My brother & I were playing Indian. He was a Sioux & I was a Chippewa. We had small board shields, and used old broom-stick handles for spears. We were all "toggied out" with red rooster feathers & some red chalk paint & were making some lusty "warwhoops" in the back-yard. We would throw the spears at each other & usually dodge them, or fend them off with our shields. But once as I was stooping over to pick <sup>up</sup> my spear, he threw his stick at me with unusual accuracy & force. The end of it struck me square on the left temple & I was "down & out," knocked senseless. Old Mrs. Storrs had just come to our well for a bucket of water & saw it all. She dropped her bucket & picked me up & carried me into the house. Poor Mother & Lizzie were nearly scared into fits. A lump formed on my temple as big as a walnut. Amby was sent "full speed" to the store to tell father and get



a doctor. But after a few applications of cold water, I came to, with only a bad headache.

I think it was in the winter of 1869-70, they began building the Q. M. & St. P. Ry. bridge across the Miss. river at Hastings. The boys would frequently go down there to watch them work. The river was frozen over, as usual, so hard, that heavily loaded teams could cross on the ice. They cut great holes thru the ice, where the piers were to be, and then drove great oak piles down to the solid rock all over the hole and as thick as they could place them. A novel & interesting sight for us. That bridge is still in use and has probably carried thousands of trains across the Miss.

And now in the spring of 1870 another very important event happened. On April 7, the whole family was gladdened by the arrival of another baby sister. Great excitement in the family and among the neighbors. "Grandma" Van Kleeck was there, also old Dr. Thorne, and small boys had to keep out of the way. By this time I had learned something more about the



origine of baby sisters. Our precious baby was at once named after our dear old Aunt Lana, fathers oldest sister. I was now the proud possessor of two little sisters and announced that fact to all my schoolmates. We had acquired a commodious baby buggy and it frequently became my job to take one or both of them out riding when mother was busy with housework. I was usually quite willing to do it, except when I had an urgent invitation from my particular chum, Louie Pollett, to go fishing.

When school was out that spring, I went out again to Orlando Chamberlain's farm (about 7 miles from town) and worked a few weeks at haying and hoeing corn. I also tried to do some plowing but made a poor job of it.

I wasn't quite strong enough to handle the heavy plow at the time. Some time that summer (I think about August) we heard from Uncle Oe (St Louis) that my grandfather (mother's father) Alward Clark Chamberlain was coming to visit us or live with us. It seems he had quarreled with his 3<sup>rd</sup> wife at Hartsville



Indiana, and had gone to St Louis to live with my Uncle Octavus. My uncle was then living with his wife's family (the Greggs) in a crowded part of the city, and grandfather who had never lived in a city, thought he ought to become intimately acquainted with all his neighbors, just as he had in a small village.

He made himself such a nuisance to the family and their friends, they had to get rid of him. So my uncle put him on a steamboat and paid his fare to Hastings to live with us. I heard father, mother and Aunt Lizzie discussing the subject and talking about his past life, and I soon discovered that he wouldn't be cordially welcome, but they would try to put up with him if possible. He was expected to arrive on a Sunday morning some time between 7 a.m. and noon. You could never tell, within several hours, when a steamboat would arrive. I was surprised to find that I had been selected to go down to the steamboat landing to meet him. None of the others wanted to go. So I went down to the levee and waited there 2 or 3 hours for



that old side wheel steamboat (the Kennedy) to come in. Grandfather was one of the few passengers who got off. I had never seen him, but I had heard some descriptions of him and knew he was an old man.

As soon as he stepped off the gang plank he looked over the small crowd a moment and then asked in a loud voice, "Does any one here know where Levi H. Countryman lives". I announced that I was his grandson and he grabbed my hand and said, "God Bless you my boy". He was dressed in the style of the "fifties". High, wide collared shirt, with big black necktie tied in a bow knot, long "swallow tailed" coat and high plug hat. Clean shaven, with gray long hair. Quite erect and active for a man of his age (77), but always carried a cane. After arranging with an express wagon to bring out his trunk, we took his big old carpet bag and walked out home. He was quite vociferous in his greetings to all, but I noticed that none of them seemed overjoyed to meet him. Well, he lived with us for the next few years and so I got to know him pretty



1870

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well, and I think he liked me the best of anyone in the family. He was the only one of my grandparents that I knew much about. I never saw either one of my grandmothers. So I write more fully about him.

I had overheard enough talk about him to know that his past record was rather disreputable in some ways, but there was no discount on his natural intelligence and ability. He could preach a sermon, try a lawsuit, teach school, or write a newspaper editorial. He had lots of assurance or plain "nerve".

He soon joined the Baptist church and was admitted <sup>to the bar</sup> to practice law in Dakota county. I think that inside of 6 months he was acquainted with more of the Hastings people than any one else in our family.

He was a veteran of the war of 1812 and received a pension of \$12.00 per month. Just compare that with the pensions paid later to the old civil war veterans of \$70.- per month. He had been wounded or injured in some way in his left shin bone and it had never healed. Had some large running sores on it and he



1870

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was obliged to dress it and bandage <sup>it</sup> nearly every day. I would sometimes help him, but it smelled so rank I could hardly bear it. Mother had to make him go out in the woodshed to do it. He had frequent arguments & quarrels with mother and Aunt Lizzie and I know they both heartily disliked him. He used tobacco moderately but I don't think he ever drank intoxicating liquor. He had 2 children by his 3<sup>rd</sup> wife, Harlem and Mary, but I never saw either of them. I don't think he had any income or financial resources outside of his pension. But enough about my grandfather. The poor old man died in 1878 at the age of 85 years, and not greatly mourned by his sons and daughters. -

And now about myself again. I think it was this summer (1870) that I first learned to swim. That is to swim for any considerable distance. We went swimming in Lake "Rebecca" an old channel or slough of the Mill and quite deep in places. We could only wade out about 25 ft. when the water would be up to my shoulders. After much practice and many



1870

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attempts, I was able to swim across the lake, a distance of about 100 yards. And now my "Big Fish" story, a true one. One Sat. that fall Ampy, George Turnbull and I went up to "Spring" lake fishing as we had frequently done before. We had caught quite a number of small fish from the shore and mill bridge, when we borrowed a boat from the Miller, "McCarle", and rowed up to a wider part of the lake and began fishing with a trolling spoon hook. George Turnbull was rowing I was steering and Ampy was trolling. Suddenly there was a terrific jerk on his line that nearly pulled the pole out of his hands. He and George Turnbull struggled for some 10 or 15 minutes to pull that fish out of the water and get him into the boat where Ampy had to sit down on him to keep him from flopping out. It was a beautiful pickerel nearly 4 ft. long. We trussed him up with a pole + rope + started home with him, taking turns carrying it. At Austin Knapp's house we stopped and weighed it. A little over 12 lbs. The biggest fish we had ever caught.



Returned to school at the usual time this fall. Miss Mary Langdon teacher & Cassius Campbell prin. Think I was still in the 4<sup>th</sup> reader and also had arithmetic, grammar, geography, history and of course spelling & writing. Every Fri. afternoon we had to "Speak a Piece" or read a Composition, on the teachers platform before the rest of the school. That was something I never liked.

Sometime this fall there was a Methodist Sunday School excursion by steamboat up the St Croix river to Taylors Falls, I think the whole family went and we had a large crowd on the boat. I had never been so far away from Hastings before. Dont remember anything else of importance. Think it was this fall that Uncle Dan sold his farm moved to Hastings, built him a nice home in the western outskirts of town, where he, Aunt Lana, Martha & Uncle John lived the rest of their lives. Albert Truax still lived next door to us and Aunt Polly & daughter in the cabin back of our house. I believe My Aunt Lizzie



began working this winter as a seamstress for a dress-maker by name of Mrs. Cy. Martin. She still lived with us. At sometime in Jan. or Feb. I caught a very severe cold, was threatened with pneumonia and had to stay out of school fully 2 weeks. It was my first serious sickness but I did not have a doctor. They gave me home treatments, and I fully recovered. I think it was sometime this winter that a young man by the name of "Robert Carpenter" from Canada began paying attentions to my Aunt Lizzie. He came to visit us frequently especially evenings. He was a jolly, good natured, sociable young man and us boys liked him. I don't think he had any particular business or occupation but was said <sup>to be</sup> quite well off. Father for some reason, did not like him and I think he finally requested him to stay away.

Father had bought 4 large lots on 5<sup>th</sup> St about one block from our home. They made about an acre in area and early that spring we planted it largely to potatoes and sweet corn. The work of planting and



hoeing it kept me busy a large part of the summer. I don't think I worked at harvesting that summer, at least not very long.

About the middle of June my Uncle Oe. came up from St Louis with his brother-in-law Lem. Gregg, <sup>a young man, about 20 yrs.</sup> and staid with us until about Aug. 1. One day my uncle took me up to St Paul on a C. M. & St. P. train and we spent the whole day up there. It was my first ride on a regular passenger train, and my first visit to St Paul, the largest city I had ever seen. It had about 20000 population then. I will remember the 4<sup>th</sup> of July of that year. The "Fourth" was the great national patriotic, summer holiday. There were very few other holidays between New Years and Thanksgiving and so everybody celebrated the "Fourth" with the greatest enthusiasm. I will attempt a short description of the celebration of that year as it was typical of several I can remember. Grounds were selected in a grove on the hill just south of town, a speakers platform was erected with chairs and table. In front of it a



Large number of rough board seats or benches were placed capable of seating probably fully a thousand. Speakers for the day had been selected and some distinguished citizen appointed to read the Declaration of Independence. Also a Marshall of the day with several assistants usually mounted.

All thru the grove numerous private booths had been erected to dispense lunches, drinks, fire crackers etc.

A race track laid out for all kind of horse and other races. These preparations all made some 2 or 3 days before the 4<sup>th</sup>. On this 4<sup>th</sup> Col. C. Powell Adams, better known as Doc Adams, was "Marshall of the Day". He had been an officer in the 1<sup>st</sup> Minn. regiment and had been distinguished in the Battle of Gettysburg. He was dressed in a colonel's uniform, mounted on a spirited horse and was a very conspicuous figure in the celebration. Early on the morning of the 4<sup>th</sup> Cannon boomed, bells rang, fire works exploded, and every known method of making a lot of noise was used. The small boy thoroughly enjoyed himself,



providing he had an adequate supply of fire crackers.

About 9 A.M. the great parade began forming down in the center of town. Preceded by a brass band and led by the "Marshall of the Day" & asst., it started up Vermillion St. Old soldiers, many in their old army uniforms, marched behind the band, followed by city and county officials, fraternal orders and citizens some in buggies, some on foot. They all arrived at the "grounds" by about 10 A.M. I have no doubt that fully half the population of the town was there. Our English-born citizens (and they were numerous in H.—) took an active part & seemed to enjoy it as much as any one. Many farmers and their families from the surrounding <sup>country</sup> had come in their lumber wagons with baskets of food for lunch. Some of them had come the night before and camped on the grounds. I think most of our "Spring Lake" relatives & friends were there, babies and all. The proceedings began, first a prayer was offered by some preacher followed by the reading of the Declaration of Independence. I think, but am not



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positive, that on this 4<sup>th</sup> it was read by Mr Columbus Stebbins, the proprietor, publisher and editor of "The Hastings Gazette" our Weekly Newspaper. After the reading of the Declaration, the band played several popular patriotic tunes and the whole crowd sang the "Star Spangled Banner". There were also a few songs by special selected singers and soloists, and then began the patriotic orations. Oh yes, there was also an "Orator of the Day" who made the principal speech. I don't remember positively who it was this time. It may have been Ignatius Donnelly. I remember <sup>he</sup> spoke on the 4<sup>th</sup>. He was followed by several other speakers, I remember Col. Higgins, Lawyer Van Slyke, Gen Le Due & some others. When the orations were finished it was probably 1 P.M. and every one made a rush for the lunch counters or their family baskets. Perhaps a few went home to dinner.

In the afternoon the sports began. There was horse racing, foot racing, ball games, wrestling matches and some athletic contests. (No bathing beauty contests) There was always catching the greased pig and



climbing the greased pole. A perfectly smooth, well greased pole about 6 ins. diam. and 20. ft high was planted firmly in the ground. A one dollar bill was fastened at the top. The boy who could climb that pole got the dollar. It took a dozen or more boys to get all <sup>the</sup> grease wiped off, and even then it was a hard climb, but strange to say, some boy finally got it. Catching the greased pig also furnished an opportunity for lots of boys to get dirty. The boy who could catch him and hold him owned the pig.

There were usually 2 or 3 dancing platforms with string bands or a violin. The festivities kept up until dark and then the public fire works were exhibited. Before night there many drunks, several quarrels and a few fights. On this particular 4<sup>th</sup> I was engaged in business. A few days before, Ben Gregg had suggested that we fix up a "booth" and sell drinks etc, so he and Aunty & I got a permit to have a booth on the grounds. We fixed up a rough board counter under a tree, as near cen. of grounds as we



could get, with a few empty boxes for seats. We got an empty vinegar barrel from a grocer washed it out filled it with well water, and hauled it up to the booth. Bought a box of lemons and about 20 lbs of sugar, arranged with a wise man for a supply of cracked ice, and made nearly a barrel of lemonade. We borrowed about a doz. glasses from mother, and had an old wooden tub of water to rinse them. We also had some candy, peanuts + fire crackers to sell. Well we sold all that lemonade at 5¢ per glass and it was good, rich, cold lemonade. But when we come to check up receipts + expenses there wasn't much profit, less than a dollar apiece for each. But we had lots of fun.

Just after the 4<sup>th</sup> uncle Oo went up to Osakis and spent about 2 weeks fishing + hunting with Hugh Moore.

About Aug. 1<sup>st</sup> he and Len Gregg and Anipy started for St. Louis on a steamboat. Anipy was gone for several months.

I can't remember just when returned but I think it was about Christmas. That fall father began working in a clothing store on Vermillion St near 2<sup>nd</sup> for a man



by the name of Frank. I think he worked for him a year or more. Instead of returning to school that term I began working in a grocery store for a Mr. J. M. Browning on Vermillion St. near 5<sup>th</sup>. He had been in the business several years in Hastings and was a man of about 60 years. I was his only clerk and got a salary of \$15.-per month, mostly in groceries for the family. I had to deliver orders all around town in a one-horse light wagon & take care of the horse too. There were no "package" goods then except some canned stuff. Everything came in bulk, in barrels, boxes, bags etc. Orders had to <sup>be</sup> dug out of a bin or box, carefully weighed with iron counter weights and wrapped up with sheets of brown paper and tied. No paper bags. Along in October one day we heard the news that Chicago was burning. A tremendous fire. The news became worse and in a day or two more we heard the entire city business & all had been burned up. All the Hastings merchants were greatly excited. They bought most of their supplies in Chicago.



Many had sent in orders for their winter stocks, that now could not be supplied. Mr Browning had, a few days before, ordered a large quantity of groceries from there. They had to transfer their orders to other cities, to St Paul, St Louis and Milwaukee - I think it caused some increase in the prices of goods in Hastings. That was the most disastrous city fire that had ever happened in the U.S. -

Hastings was still a very busy & prosperous little town. Dakota county had been settling up rapidly, & farmers for many miles around hauled their grain & products there. On most days <sup>in the fall</sup> one could see long strings of farmers wagons, usually loaded with wheat, coming down Vermillion and 5<sup>th</sup> streets, going to the elevators and warehouses near the river. We also had one of the largest flour mills in the state owned by Stephen Gardner, at the Vermillion falls. Gardner was known as the wealthiest man in Dakota county. About this time a new court house was completed in Hastings, said to have cost about \$100,000. - I thought it was a very



imposing structure.

I worked for Mr Browning until about Christmas, almost 5 months. When I came to settle I don't think there was over \$20.- coming to me. The rest had been paid in groceries. I think I invested \$5.- in a sled for coasting. It was made by a Mr Baldwin in Estergreens wagon factory, and a good stout one. Coasting and skating were our chief winter amusements even when it was 20° below zero.

Began going to school again after New Years and managed to catch up with my class. I think it was this winter I got my first and only licking by Prof. Campbell. He was a strong believer in corporal punishment, to which I was absolutely opposed. All the other teachers were ladies and they sent their bad boys into Mr. Campbell for correction. Somebody threw a "spitball" (wet paper wad) that struck Miss Langdon in the back of her neck. She whirled around, saw me laughing and demanded, "me to tell her 'who did that.'" I told her I knew but wouldn't tell. She instantly ordered me to leave the room and go to Mr. Campbell's room. I went in to his room



and found him in a very <sup>bad</sup> humor. He grabbed me by the collar and demanded to know why I had been sent in. I told him I couldn't think why. "Come down to <sup>the</sup> basement with me and I will try to refresh your memory". So we went down there and he gave <sup>me</sup> about a doz. cracks on the palm of my hand with a hard flat ruler, but he didn't find out what he was licking me for.

When school was out that spring I went out to Orlando's Chamberlains and worked for him nearly all summer at various kinds of farm work, hoeing, raking hay, driving reaper and shocking wheat bundles. I think Andy worked that vacation in a little drug store on Vermillion St. near 2<sup>nd</sup>. My uncle Oe came up again that summer for a short visit and as usual went up to Orak's fishing. Grandfather Chamberlain was still living with us and Aunt Lizzie was working for a dressmaker. Orlando paid me for my summers work with a fine black colt 3 years old named "Barney". He had been broken to ride or drive and I was very proud of him. Left him at Orlando's farm until late that fall. And now I come to a well



These memoirs were composed by Theophilus Russell Countryman, son of Levi Nelson Countryman and Alta Chamberlain Countryman, during the years 1935-1942, being completed/when he was a man of 85 years.

He had a phenomenal memory...used to enjoy quoting statistics from the World Almanac and when we looked up the facts for verification, he was invariably correct, so I am convinced that the facts and figures in these memoirs are absolutely accurate!

As we found these memoirs the story is not complete. I do not believe that any material has been misplaced or lost. It is my recollection that he came upon a satchel full of letters from his wife and mother and Aunt Lizzie. There had been considerable conflict between these women and the revival of the old emotions seemed to disrupt his will to write. If any more of this manuscript is ever found, as I sincerely wish could be the case, it will be preserved and forwarded to be united with the manuscript herein.

Personally I knew very little of his mature life, except that he was a mining engineer of considerable ability. He worked on the first railroad built across the Andes, and spent many years in So. America. He also worked in Cripple Creek, Colorado—in the gold mines' surveys, and on a drainage project which made the continuance of gold mining possible. He was the engineer for the old stone bridge across the Mississippi, I believe the one which Great Northern trains cross immediately before coming into the Minneapolis station.

As an older man he lived alternately with his sisters, Lana Countryman Conger (my mother) in Ontario, California and Gratia Countryman, in Minneapolis. When Aunt Gratia came to Duluth to live with me, Uncle Theo went to the Walker Home and died there, at about age 92.

All of this is subject to correction and addition by his children, Russell Countryman of Oakland, California; Alta Countryman Blackburn, Los Angeles; and Ralph Countryman, deceased.

Constance Conger Buffington. April 15, 1966  
2502 E. Superior St., Duluth, Minn.



## MEMOIRS OF T.R. COUNTRYMAN

Well, here I am, a broken down retired mining and civil engineer, 85 years of age, and not much good for any kind of work. My sister Gratia has suggested that I write my memoirs, or perhaps auto-biography would be the proper word. I have never kept a diary for very long and have no other records at hand. Must depend on my memory for everything I write. Am not a literary man. Have never written anything, but engineering, mining, and geological reports, and a few technical articles for technical journals.

How shall I begin? Perhaps with a few lines about my ancestry and parentage. My paternal ancestor, Conrad Countryman, came to America from Germany about 1720 and settled in New York near Albany. He was my father's great-grandfather. My father was born near LaFargeville, St. Lawrence County, New York, July 11, 1832. My mother's ancestors (Chamberlains) came probably from England, about 1680 and settled in Connecticut. My mother was born near Hamilton, Ohio, on Feb. 4, 1833. I believe that all my ancestors came to America during "Colonial" times.

My father and mother met and were married at Hartsville, Indiana in March 1851. Their oldest child (Asplias) was born there Oct. 1854. They came to Minnesota (then a territory) in the summer of 1855, and settled on a homestead of 80 acres, about 4 miles west of the town of Hastings, and there in a little pioneer's cabin, I was born June 11, 1857. I think that all of my father's brothers and sisters came to Minnesota at about that same time or shortly after, and settled near each other. It was called the Spring Lake township, Dakota county. The town of "Minninger" on the Mississippi River was about 2 miles to the north.

I think two years after I was born father built a larger and more comfortable house on his land and that is the first home I remember. It was a 1½ story frame with three rooms below and 1 large room upstairs, and was finished in April 1859. Also a lean to kitchen and woodshed used in the summertime. It would be considered a very modest home at the present time, but we were quite comfortable. We lived



there until we moved to the town of Hastings in 1866.

And now as to my very earliest recollections. As to those persons who disappeared, or passed away during my childhood days. I have a very dim recollection of my uncle Royal (Chamberlain, mother's oldest brother) who died Sept. 26, 1860. I have a very distinct recollection of my grandfather (my father's father), Daniel Countryman. He lived with his sons and daughters' families during the last few years of his life and I know he was with us for several months one time and visited us often. I think he died in 1863. I remember going to his funeral at Aunt Lana's home. Of course, I remember many other persons of those days that I frequently saw during following years.

The summer of 1861 was a very exciting one in that neighborhood. The civil war had broken out and many of the young men had enlisted. Before going to the front they would usually call on their relatives, friends and sweethearts. I can remember that many of them came to our home that summer and the following year, to say good-by.

My uncle Octavus enlisted in the latter part of 1862 and before going south to join his regiment he came home on a short furlough. He had on his blue uniform with shiny brass buttons all over it, also a gun with a bayonet. What an exciting spectacle to a small boy. No wonder I remember it. And I frequently saw soldiers in full uniform during the following years. It was a patriotic locality, and most of the able bodied young men enlisted before the war was over. My older brother and I were together almost constantly. We slept together, played together, got into mischief together, and frequently got licked together. The nearest neighbor with children was Hugh Moore who lived about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile away. We sometimes went there and played with Milton and Caroline Moore. Uncle Peter and Uncle Henry lived more than a mile away, by the road, but we frequently went to visit them especially in the summertime. Always barefooted for 4 or 5 months of the year.

Had numerous cousins of about our own age. Other near neighbors with children were Tom Fitches, Reuben Knapps, and Sam Truax. Uncle Dan Truax, Aunt Lana, Aunt Martha, and Uncle John were the nearest neighbors about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile away. We were frequently sent there on errands, taking a short cut across Uncle Dan's pasture



where he kept his cows and a flock of sheep. There was a belligerent old ran in that flock of sheep, and we always kept our eyes open and gave him a wide berth. My Aunt Lizzie (mother's younger sister) was a member of our family as long back as I can remember, and I think she came to Minnesota with father and mother. She <sup>constantly</sup> helped ~~with~~ mother/with the housework and the care of us youngsters. She loved us and was kind to us even if she did frequently scold us. She always seemed to me more like an older sister than an aunt.

By the time I was old enough to know anything about it, father had his 80 acres all under cultivation. Had broken up the original sod with a yoke of oxen. I remember them well. Big strong slow moving animals named Buck and Bright. Of course, he had considerable help. Uncle John, his oldest brother, spent about half his time with us. He was ruptured and unable to do any very hard work, but could plow, drive reaper, work in the garden and do chores. Another man, John Long, worked for father, much of his time during 2 or 3 years before the war. I can just remember him. He enlisted in the 1st Minn. regiment and served with it until the battle of Gettysburg, where he had a leg shot off.

Father finally bought a team of horses March 1862, large, gentle, sorrel animals called Tom and Jerry. My brother and I, soon learned to ride them, bareback, of course. We had 2 or 3 cows that grazed on the open prairie across the road and it was one of our jobs to hunt them up and drive them home at night. We also kept several pigs and lots of chickens. Always had a good garden, and in the fall father would nearly fill up the cellar under the house with potatoes, turnips, beets, onions, cabbage, etc. and generally a small barrel of sauerkraut. We always had plenty of good substantial food. Mother was a good cook and seldom spoiled anything.

I can recollect many incidents of those days, but can't give exact dates. I began going to my first school one summer. I think in 1863. The school house was away up on the St. Paul road nearly 2 miles from where we lived. Miss Morrow was the teacher, fairly well educated for those days. A slender, angular woman about 30..."boarded around" with her pupils families, generally a week or two at each place. She was an



irascible, quick-tempered teacher and believed in corporal punishment. I had learned the alphabet and a few simple words of one syllable, and carried a little old tattered primer, which had served my brother before me, my only book. No kindergartens in those days. There must have been 30 to 40 children in that school, several of them no older than I. About a doz. families were represented.

That same summer a little brother was born in our family. He was named Melville. A bright, healthy baby deeply loved by all of us. The following winter (1863-64) father taught school, a few months in the little old church near Uncle Dan's house. Amy and I both went, sometimes wading in snow nearly up to our necks. In places the snow had drifted along the fences as high as the fence, and packed so hard we could walk on it. On Saturdays father and Uncle John would go down to the Miss. River "bottoms," and chop down trees for firewood. The "bottoms" were covered with heavy hardwood timber of all kinds, and the nearby farmers would cut and haul out their years supply in the winter time.

One day in summer of 1864, I think, Orlando Chamberlain and his entire family came to see us. He was mother's cousin and lived on a farm about 6 miles to the south near Vermillion River. Father had met him in Hastings a short time before and discovered the relation. He told them something surprising about our grandfather Chamberlain. The two families became quite intimate and visited each other often.

I went to school again for a short time in the summer of 1864, but don't remember any very important events. We had some Sunday school picnics and patriotic gatherings and picnics, especially when any soldiers came home on furlough. The progress of the war, was one of the chief topics of conversation whenever people met. Hardly a family in the neighborhood, but what had a near relative at the front. Uncle Dan would go to town every day to get the mail and the news, and my brother and I would go to his home about the time he returned to get our mail and papers. That is, I would go if mother would let me, for I knew it was likely that Aunt Lana had some cookies to distribute.



In the fall of 1864, or early in 1865, Father and Uncle Peter enlisted at the same time. I can't remember just when they left, but they were assigned to the 2nd Minn. Infantry then in Gen. Sherman's Army, and joined their regiment somewhere in North Carolina just before the end of the war. I don't remember when father returned but it was shortly after the end of the war.

Uncle John had lived with us most of the time while father was away. That summer (1865) mother made a visit to her old home and relatives in Ohio and Indiana and while she was gone, my little brother Melville died after a short illness. Poor mother was grief stricken when she heard it and returned home at once. We had not considered him in danger until a few days before he died. Miss Morrow lived with us most of that summer.

Father was very busy with farm work that summer and fall. Crops were good and prices were high for nearly all agricultural products. Wheat sold in Hastings at \$2.00 a bushel. It seems father had made and saved enough money to buy another 80 acres of good land about 2 miles south of his home. This land he rented to another farmer. My Uncle Octavus came home some time that summer or fall and lived with us several weeks. He had been in the army about 3 years, and during the first part of 1865 had been in a hospital in St. Louis.

We all went to a circus in Hastings that fall, the first show I ever saw. Father made many trips to Hastings that fall, hauling his grain to market. He would sometimes let Ampy and I go with him to our great delight. Went to school again that winter in the little old church at the cross roads. Graduated from the primer to the first reader.

And now I come to an important event in my early life. We moved from the farm to the town of Hastings to live, sometime in the spring of 1866. About May, I think. Us boys were delighted at the outlook. We rented a comfortable little frame house at the corner of 7th and Vermillion Sts. A good location with good neighbors. I think father sold his team, farming machinery and implements to the man who rented his farm. But we took one good cow to town, and she furnished us with milk and butter for



several years. I ought to know, because most of the time I had to feed and milk her. When we had got settled us boys proceeded to get acquainted with the neighbor's children. Many questions were asked and answered and lots of information voluntarily offered. In fact, they came around to investigate the new neighbor. We soon learned all about each other's families. I was somewhat disturbed to learn that nearly all the other boys had sisters, and I soon began to think I was an unlucky kid, not to have any at all. In fact, I got to enquiring around home, what's the reason we couldn't have a sister? I had an idea then that they could go out and buy one somewhere just like anything else.

I don't remember clearly just what father did that summer. He was away frequently for several days at a time and I think he was helping his brothers thru haying and harvesting. Hastings was quite a thriving town at that time and had I think a larger population than at any time since. It was a great river shipping point. There were no railways in the state then and river steamboats were the only transportation. Farmers from all over Dakota county and some adjacent counties hauled their grain and produce to Hastings and bought their supplies there. I can remember seeing long lines of teams and wagons loaded with wheat, coming down Vermillion St. and 5th St., going to the elevators and warehouses at the levee. Hastings had one of the best steamboat landings on the upper Mississippi. Deep water right up to the shore line and a natural rock levee.

I began going to school that fall, in a large frame building on 5th St. near Vermillion. I think they had just begun to get the public schools organized in a way. We didn't hear anything about "grades" then. You were in a certain "reader." The 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, or 5th. The reader you were in decided your standing. I was in the 1st reader, could write an awful scrawl, and do a few simple sums in arithmetic. That was the extent of my education. Mr. Babcock was principal and Miss Louise Pringle was my first teacher. She had a houseful of pupils and there was a great deal of turmoil and confusion. I can still remember the names of most of my first class mates. They were numerous. I don't think I learned much that



year except some outdoor games. My brother went to the same school, but was in a higher class.

And now I must mention another important occurrence. On Thanksgiving day, Nov. 29, 1866, a little baby sister arrived. I was informed that old Doc Thorne had brought her, but I had begun to mistrust such tales. Anyway, I was greatly pleased and lost no time in spreading the information among the neighboring youngsters. Dear old grandma Van Kleek was there, and she and Aunt Lizzie were very busy. I think Aunt Lana also came a day or two later, and soon many of the neighbor ladies called. Father at once selected "Gratia" as the proper name for that baby since she had arrived on Thanksgiving day. And that dear little baby sister has been a great blessing to her family and friends and fellow citizens ever since.

The following Christmas we had a Christmas tree at the Methodist church for the Sunday school. It was the first I had ever seen. Of course, father had joined the Methodist church when we moved to town and always made us boys go to Sunday school. I don't remember any incident of importance that winter. We had sleds and skates, and used to slide down the long hill on Vermillion St. from 8th to 5th St.

Father had sold one of his 80 acre farms in the spring of 1867 and bought some lots in Hastings at the corner of 6th and Pine Sts...In the suburbs. He built a small cottage or cabin at the back and we moved into it about May 1st and planted a garden. Shortly after he began the construction of a home, on the same lots, where we lived for about 10 years thereafter. It was 2 story frame house, with parlor, living room, bedroom, dining room, kitchen and pantry below and 3 bedrooms upstairs. There was also a woodshed and porch. I can remember it so well, I could make a correct sketch of it now. There was a large cellar under the house; also a cistern with a pump in the kitchen. A short distance back of the house we had a well sunk through the soil and gravel and drilled down into solid rock about 50 ft. more. It furnished an abundant supply of good water and some of our near neighbors came there for their drinking water. A small stable of 2 stalls was built adjoining the



cabin, which was afterwards used as a granary and store room. We had a good garden, a small flock of chickens and with our cow, managed to supply a large part of our food necessities.

That fall (1867) we began going to school at the large brick school at 9th and Ramsey Sts. The same building that has been used ever since for Hastings public schools. My teacher there was Miss Hattie Langdon and I was in the 2nd reader grade. Had also arithmetic, spelling and "jography." Had acquired a slate and pencil and copy book. I can remember the names of most of my classmates. There was Louie Follett, Frank Rogers, Charlie Reed, Fred Churchill, Louie Lyon, Vince Meloy, Chas. Rathbone, Clarence White, Cady Smith, Claribel Smith, Mary Turnbull, Fanny Canning, Hattie Tyrell, Emma Ames, Minnie Silver and several others whose names I can't recall now.

Prof. Babcock was still Supt. I think. There were several lady teachers in the different rooms of the same building. It seems to me I made better progress in my education from that time on.

That fall father began working in a men's clothing store on 2nd St. for a man named Sam Frank, a Jew. He was with him until the next summer.

It was about this time they began the construction of the "Hastings and Dakota" railroad to run westerly thru Farmington to Mankato, thence up the Minnesota River valley to Dakota. We frequently went down to the lower part of town to see them working on it. They brought the steel rails, a locomotive, and some flat cars up the river on steamboats. When the track had been laid to Farmington, the next summer, we went out there on a Sunday school picnic. Had rough board seats nailed on the flat cars.; my first ride on a ry. train.

The summer of 1868 father made a trip back to his old home in New York, where some of his half-sisters and their families were still living. He had not been there since leaving about 20 years before. When he returned, he brought his half-sister, Aunt Polly House, and her daughter Addie with him. They were given the little cottage back of our house to live in.



That summer my cousin, Albert Truax, Ant Lana's only son, built a home on the lot adjoining ours facing north on 5th St. He had been married about 2 years before to Miss Nellie Rice and they had a baby girl, Winnie, about Gratia's age. They were our nearest neighbors for several years.

That fall (1868) there was a presidential election and great political excitement, "Stump" speakers, brass bands, torchlight parades. Lots of fun for the small boy. It was Grant and Colfax Republican vs. Seymour and Blair Democrat candidates. Nearly every boy had a button on his coat with the name of his candidate on it. His politics, of course, were the same as Dad's and there were lots of disputes and even fights over it.

About the first of 1869, I think, father began working for Jake Thompson, who had a large grocery store on Vermillion St. near 2nd. It seems to me he worked there for 2 or 3 years. I can't remember positively.

In 1869 a Mr. Cassius S. Campbell was engaged as Supt. of Publ Schools and principal of the high school. He was a graduate of Dartmouth College and no doubt a very capable man. He received the fine salary of \$100 per month., considered big pay in those days. He reorganized the schools and established grades of some kind. I was in the 4th reader, I think, then, and I also began grammar, history, and mental arithmetic. Miss Mary Langdon was my teacher for about 2 years. That summer (1869) my uncle Octavus came up from St. Louis on a visit.

He was then running a brass foundry in partnership with a Mr. Gregg. He had a tract of 160 acres of land on Lake Osakis near Sauk Center where he went hunting and fishing.

I think it was that summer 1869 that such vast numbers of wild pigeons flew over going in a northerly direction. Vast flocks, one after another, at short intervals, all day long came flying over at perhaps 400 or 500 ft. high, extending as far as one could see in each direction. I have never seen anything



like it since. One night a flock settled down just west and north of town. So many on some of the trees that small limbs broke under the weight. Hundreds of them were killed next day and nearly every one in town had pigeon pie. Wild pigeons flew over in large numbers for several years, but nothing like that summer.

In the summer of 1869, I worked for Orlando Chamberlain a few weeks, was paid 50¢ per day and board. Hoed corn and potatoes and raked hay. It was the first work I had ever done for wages, and when I was paid, I felt rich. I had never before had any money in my possession except a few coppers and 3 cent nickels. Was awful homesick before I got back home. Went back to school again that fall in the same room with same teacher, and continued about the same studies as near as I can remember. Now I disliked grammar, but was fond of history and geography and most other subjects. Our sports in the summer and fall were baseball, marbles, "High Spy," hop scotch, and "Pum-Pum-Pullaway." Some of the larger boys played football. There were also numerous foot races, wrestly matches, and occasional fights. We sometimes slipped away at the afternoon recess, and went down to Lake Rebecca or the Mississippi river in swimming.

We would also frequently go down to the levee to see the steamboat come in. We could nearly always hear them whistle for Prescott (3 miles below) and knew they would probably arrive at Hastings within a half-hour or perhaps an hour. When they came to land nearly every boy in town who could be was there. No railways as yet built, but the "Hastings and Dakota" although I think they had begun grading the Chicago-Milwaukee and St. Paul Ry.

That fall, I think, it became my particular job to milk, feed and look after the cow. We only had one, but she supplied the family with all the milk and butter we needed. I remember that at nights milking I would get 8 to 10 quarts. Not so much mornings. I believe I milked that cow for the next 4 or 5 years except when away from home. In the summer she would graze all day on the open prairie west of town, but would nearly always come home at night for the nice



bran mash she knew would be ready for her.

I remember a good many little incidents but am not positive about the dates. I think it was that summer I had quite a painful accident. I was trying to walk along the edge of the top board of the fence, barefooted, when I lost my balance and jumped off into the grass at one side. One foot landed right on top of an iron tooth garden rake lying there. One of the nails were right thru my foot between the big toe and the next one. Father had a hard pull to jerk it out. Mother washed it out and bandaged it and within a week it was well.

I remember another painful accident of my boyhood, but can't recall the date. My brother and I were playing Indian. He was a Sioux and I was a Chippewa. We had small board shields, and used old broom stick handles for spears. We were all "togged out" with red rooster feathers and some red chalk paint and were making some lusty warwhoops in the back yard. We would throw the spears at each other and usually dodge them, or fend them off with our shields. But once as I was stooping over to pick up my spear, he threw his stick at me with unusual accuracy and force. The end of it struck me square on the left temple and I was "down and out," knocked senseless. Old Mrs. Storrs had just come to our well for a bucket of water and saw it all. She dropped her bucket and picked me up and carried me into the house. Poor Mother and Lizzie were nearly scared into fits. A lump formed on my temple as big as a walnut. Ampy was sent "full speed" to the store to tell father and get a doctor. But after a few applications of cold water, I came to, with only a bad headache.

I think it was in the winter of 1869-70 they began building the C.M. & St. P. Ry. bridge across the Mississippi river at Hastings. Us boys would frequently go down there to watch them work. The river was frozen over as usual, so hard that heavily loaded teams could cross on the ice. They cut great holes thru the ice where the piers were to be, and then drove great oak piles down to the solid rock all over the hole and as thick as they could place them. A novel and interesting sight for us. That bridge is still in use and has probably carried



thousands of trains across the Mississippi.

And now in the spring of 1870 another very important event happened. On April 7, the whole family was gladdened by the arrival of another baby sister. Great excitement in the family and among the neighbors. "Grandma" Van Kleeck was there, also old Dr. Thorne, and small boys had to keep out of the way. By this time I had learned something more about the origin of baby sisters. Our precious baby was at once named after our dear old Aunt Lana, father's oldest sister. I was now the proud possessor of two little sisters and announced that fact to all my schoolmates. We had acquired a commodious baby buggy and it frequently became my job to take one or both of them out riding when mother was busy with housework. I was usually quite willing to do it, except when I had an urgent invitation from my particular chum, Louie Follett, to go fishing.

When school was out that spring, I went out again to Orlando Chamberlain's farm (about 7 miles from town) and worked a few weeks at haying and hoeing corn. I also tried to do some plowing but made a poor job of it. I wasn't quite strong enough to handle the heavy plow at the turns.

Sometime that summer (I think about August) we heard from Uncle Oc (St. Louis) that my grandfather, mother's father, Allurad Clark Chamberlain, was coming to visit us or live with us. It seems he had quarrelled with his third wife at Hartsville, Indiana, and had gone to St. Louis to live with my Uncle Octavus. My uncle was then living with his wife's family (the Griggs) in a crowded part of the city, and grandfather who had never lived in a city thought he ought to become intimately acquainted with all his neighbors, just as he had in a small village. He made himself such a nuisance to the family and their friends, they had to get rid of him. So my Uncle put him on a steamboat and paid his fare to Hastings to live with us. I heard father, mother and Aunt Lizzie discussing the subject and talking about his past life, and I soon discovered that he wouldn't be cordially welcome, but they would try to put up with him if possible.

he was expected to arrive on a Sunday morning some time between 7 a.m. and



noon. You could never tell, within several hours, when a steamboat would arrive. I was surprised to find that I had been selected to go down to the steamboat landing to meet him. None of the others wanted to go. So I went down to the levee and waited there 2 or 3 hours for that old side wheel steamboat (the Kennedy) to come in. Grandfather was one of the few passengers who got off. I had never seen him, but I had heard some descriptions of him and knew he was an old man. As soon as he stepped off the gang plank he looked over the small crowd a moment and then asked in a loud voice, "Does any one here know where Levi N. Countryman lives?" I announced that I was his grandson and he grabbed my hand and said, "God bless you, my boy." He was dressed in the style of the "fifties."..high, wide-collared shirt with big black necktie tied in a bowknot; long swallow-tailed coat and high plug hat. Clean shaven with gray long hair. Quite erect and active for a man of his age, (77 years) but always carried a cane. After arranging with an express wagon to bring out his trunk, we took his big old carpet bag and walked out home. He was quite vociferous in his greetings to all, but I noticed that none of them seemed overjoyed to meet him.

Well, he lived with us for the next few years and so I got to know him pretty well, and I think he liked me the best of anyone in the family. He was the only one of my grandparents that I knew much about. I never saw either one of my grandmothers. So I write more fully about him. I had overheard enough talk about him to know that his past record was rather disreputable in some ways, but there was no discount on his natural intelligence and ability. He could preach a sermon, try a lawsuit, teach school, or write a newspaper editorial. He had lots of assurance or plan "nerve." He soo joined the Baptist church and was admitted to the bar to practice law in Dakota county. I think that inside of 6 months he was acquainted with more of the Hastings people than any one else in our family.

He was a veteran of the war of 1812 and received a pension of \$12.00 per month. Just compare that with the pensions paid later to the old Civil war veterans of \$70.00 per month. He had been wounded or injured in some way in



his left shin bone and it had never healed. Had some large running sores on it, and he was obliged to dress it and bandage it nearly every day. I would sometimes help him, but it smelled so rank I could hardly bear it. Mother had to make him go out in the woodshed to do it. He had frequent arguments and quarrels with mother and Aunt Lizzie and I know they both heartily disliked him. He used tobacco moderately, but I don't think he ever drank intoxicating liquor. He had 2 children by his 3rd wife, Harlen and Mary, but I never saw either of them. I don't think he had any income or financial resources outside of his pension. But enough about my grandfather. The poor old man died in 1878 at the age of 85 years, and not greatly mourned by his sons and daughters.

And now about myself again. I think it was this summer (1870) that I first learned to swim. That is to swim for any considerable distance. We went swimming in Lake Rebecca, an old channel or slough of the Mississippi, and quite deep in places. We could only wade out about 25 ft. when the water would be up to my shoulders. After much practice and many attempts, I was able to swim across the lake, a distance of about 100 yards. And now, my "Big Fish" story, a true one. One Saturday that fall Ampy, George Turnbull and I went up to Spring Lake fishing as we had frequently done before. We had caught quite a number of small fish from the shore and mill bridge, when we borrowed a boat from the Miller, McCarle, and rowed up to a wider part of the lake and began fishing with a trolling spoon hook. George Turnbull was rowing, I was steering, and Ampy was trolling. Suddenly there was a terrific jerk on his line that nearly pulled the pole out of his hands. He and George Turnbull struggled for some 10 or 15 minutes to pull that fish out of the water and get him into the boat where Ampy had to sit down on him to keep him from flopping out. It was a beautiful pickerel nearly 4 ft. long. We trussed him up with a pole and rope and started home with him, taking turns carrying it. At Austin Knapp's house we stopped and weighed it. A little over 12 lbs. The biggest fish we had ever caught.



Returned to school at the usual time this fall (1870). Miss Mary Langdon teacher and Cassius Campbell principal. Think I was still in the 4th reader and also had arithmetic, grammar, geography, history, and of course, spelling and writing. Every Friday afternoon we had to "speak a piece" or read a composition, on the teacher's platform before the rest of the school. That was something I never liked.

Some time this fall there was a Methodist Sunday school excursion by steamboat up the St. Croix river to Taylors Falls. I think the whole family went and we had a large crowd on the boat. I had never been so far away from Hastings before. Don't remember anything else of importance.

Think it was this fall that Uncle Dan sold his farm, moved to Hastings, built him a nice home in the western outskirts of town, where he, Aunt Lana, Martha and Uncle John lived the rest of their lives. Albert Truax still lived next door to us and Aunt Polly and daughter in the cabin back of our house.

I believe my Aunt Lizzie began working this winter as a seamstress for a dressmaker by name of Mrs. Cy. Martin. She still lived with us. At sometime in Jan. or Feb. I caught a very severe cold, was threatened with pneumonia, and had to stay out of school fully 2 weeks. It was my first serious sickness, but I did not have a doctor. They gave me home treatments, and I fully recovered.

I think it was sometime this winter that a young man by the name of Robert Carpenter from Canada began paying attention to my Aunt Lizzie. He came to visit us frequently especially evenings. He was a jolly, good natured, sociable young man and us boys like him. I don't think he had any particular business or occupation but was said to be quite well off. Father, for some reason, did not like him and I think he finally requested him to stay away.

Father had bought 4 large lots on 5th St. about one block from our home. They made about an acre in area and early that spring we planted it largely to potatoes and sweet corn. The work of planting and hoeing it kept me busy a large part of the summer. I don't think I worked at harvesting that summer, at least not very long.



About the middle of June my Uncle Oc came up from St. Louis with his brother-in-law, Len Gregg, a young man about 20 yrs., and stayed with us until about Aug. 1. One day my uncle took me up to St. Paul on a C.M. & St. P. train, and we spent the whole day up there. It was my first ride on a regular passenger train, and my first visit to St. Paul, the largest city I had ever seen. It had about 20,000 population then.

I well remember the 4th of July of that year.(1871) The Fourth was the great national patriotic summer holiday. There were very few other holidays between New Years and Thanksgiving and so everybody celebrated the Fourth with the greatest enthusiasm. I will attempt a short description of the celebration of that year as it was typical of several I can remember.

Grounds were selected in a grove on the hill just south of town, a speakers' platform was erected with chairs and table. In front of it a large number of rough board seats or benches were placed capable of seating probably fully a thousand. Speakers for the day had been selected and some distinguished citizen appointed to read the Declaration of Independence. Also a marshall of the day with several assistants usually mounted. All thru the grove numerous private booths had been erected to dispense lunches, drinks, fire crackers, Etc.

A race track laid out for all kinds of horse and other races. These preparations all made some 2 or 3 days before the Fourth. On this Fourth, Col. C. Powell Adams, better known as Doc Adams, was Marshall of the Day. He had been an officer in the 1st Minn. regiment and had been distinguished in the Battle of Gettysburg. He was dressed in a colonel's uniform, mounted on a spirited horse and was a very conspicuous figure in the celebration. Early on the morning of the Fourth cannon boomed, bells rang, fire works exploded, and every known method of making a lot of noise was used. The small boy thoroughly enjoyed himself, providing he had an adequate supply of fire crackers.

About 9 a.m. the great parade began forming down in the center of town. Preceded by a brass band and led by the Marshall of the Day and ass'ts., it



started up Vermillion St. Old soldiers, many in their old army uniforms, marched behind the band, followed by city and county officials, fraternal orders and citizens, some in buggies, some on foot. They all arrived at the grounds by about 10 a.m. I have no doubt that fully half the population of the town was there. Our English-born citizens (and they were numerous in Hastings) took an active part and seemed to enjoy it as much as any one. Many farmers and their families from the surrounding country had come in their lumber wagons with baskets of food for lunch. Some of them had come the night before and camped on the grounds. I think most of our Spring Lake relatives and friends were there, babies and all.

The proceedings began. First a prayer was offered by some preacher, followed by the reading of the Declaration of Independence. I think, but am not positive, that on this Fourth it was read by Mr. Columbus Slobbins, the proprietor, publisher and editor of "The Hastings Gazette," our weekly newspaper. After the reading of the Declaration, the band played several popular patriotic tunes and the whole crowd sang The Star Spangled Banner. There were also a few songs by special selected singers and soloists, and then began the patriotic orations. Oh yes, there was also an orator of the day, who made the principal speech. I don't remember positively who it was this time. It may have been Ignatius Donnelly. I remember he spoke one Fourth. He was followed by several other speakers. I remember Col. Higgins, Lawyer Van Slyke, Gen. LeDuc and some others. When the orations were finished it was probably 1 p.m. and every one made a rush for the lunch counters or their family baskets. Perhaps a few went home to dinner.

In the afternoon the sports began. There was horse racing, foot racing, ball games, wrestling matches, and some athletic contests. (No bathing beauty contests) There was always catching the greased pig and climbing the greased pole. A perfectly smooth, well greased pole about 6 ins. diameter and 20 ft.



high was planted firmly in the ground. A one-dollar bill was fastened at the top. The boys who could climb that pole got the dollar. It took a dozen or more boys to get all the grease wiped off, and even then it was a hard climb, but strange to say, some boy finally got it. Catching the greased pig also furnished an opportunity for lots of boys to get dirty. The boy who could catch him and hold him owned the pig.

There were usually 2 or 3 dancing platforms with string bands or a violin. The festivities kept up until dark and then the public fire works were exhibited. Before night there were many drunks, several quarrels and a few fights. On this particular Fourth I was engaged in business. A few days before, Len Gregg had suggested that we fix up a booth and sell drinks, etc. so he and Ampy and I got a permit to have a booth on the grounds. We fixed up a rough board counter under a tree, as near the center of the grounds as we could get, with a few empty boxes for seats. We got an empty vinegar barrel from a grocer, washed it out, filled it with well water, and hauled it up to the booth. Bought a box of lemons and about 20 lbs. of sugar, arranged with an ice man for a supply of cracked ice and made nearly a barrel of lemonade. We borrowed about a doz. glasses from mother, and had an old wooden tub of water to rinse them. We also had some candy, peanuts, and fire crackers to sell. Well, we sold all that lemonade at 5¢ per glass and it was good, rich, cold lemonade. But when we came to check up receipts and expenses there wasn't much profit. Less than a dollar a piece for each. But we had lots of fun.

Just after the Fourth Uncle Oc went up to Osakis and spent about 2 weeks fishing and hunting with Hugh Moore. About Aug. 1st he and Len Gregg and Ampy started for St. Louis on a steamboat. Ampy was gone for several months. I can't remember just when he returned, but I think it was about Christmas.

That fall father began working in a clothing store on Vermillion St. near 2nd for a man by the name of Frank. I think he worked for him a year or more.



Instead of returning to school that term I began working in a grocery store for a Mr. J. M. Browning on Vermillion St. near 5th. He had been in the business several years in Hastings and was a man of about 60 years. I was his only clerk and got a salary of \$15 per month, mostly in groceries for the family. I had to deliver orders all around town in a one-horse light wagon and take care of the horse, too. There were no package goods then except some canned stuff. Everything came in bulk in barrels, boxes, bags, etc. Orders had to be dug out of a bin or box, carefully weighed with iron counter weights, and wrapped up with sheets of brown paper and tied. No paper bags!

Along in October one day we heard the news that Chicago was burning. A tremendous fire. The news became worse and in a day or two more we heard the entire city business and all had been burned up. All the Hastings merchants were greatly excited. They bought most of their supplies in Chicago. Many had sent in orders for their winter stocks that now could not be supplied. Mr. Browning had, a few days before, ordered a large quantity of groceries from there. They had to transfer their orders to other cities, to St. Paul, St. Louis, and Milwaukee. I think it caused some increase in the prices of goods in Hastings. That was the most disastrous city fire that had ever happened in the U.S.

Hastings was still a very busy and prosperous little town. Dakota county had been settling up rapidly and farmers for many miles around hauled their grain and products there. On most days in the fall one could see long strings of farmers' wagons, usually loaded with wheat, coming down Vermillion and 5th streets, going to the elevators and warehouses near the river. We also had one of the largest flour mills in the state owned by Stephen Gardner, at the Vermillion falls. Gardner was known as the wealthiest man in Dakota county.

About this time a new court house was completed in Hastings, said to have cost about \$100,000. I thought it was a very imposing structure.



I worked for Mr. Browning until about Christmas, almost 5 months. When I came to settle I don't think there was over \$20 coming to me. The rest had been paid in groceries. I think I invested \$5 in a sled for coasting. It was made by a Mr. Baldwin in Estergreen's wagon factory, and a good stout one. Coasting and skating were our chief winter amusements, even when it was 20° below zero.

Began going to school again after New Years and managed to catch up with my class. I think it was this winter I got my first and only licking by Prof. Campbell. He was a strong believer in corporal punishment, to which I was absolutely opposed. All the other teachers were ladies and they sent their bad boys into Mr. Campbell for correction. Somebody threw a "spitball" (wet paper wad) that struck Miss Langdon in the back of her neck. She whirled around, saw me laughing and demanded of me to tell her "Who did that?" I told her I knew but wouldn't tell. She instantly ordered me to leave the room and go to Mr. Campbell's room. I went in to his room and found him in a very bad humor. He grabbed me by the collar and demanded to know why I had been sent in. I told him I couldn't think why. "Come down to the basement with me and I will try to refresh your memory." So we went down there and he gave me about a doz. cracks on the palm of my hand with a hard flat ruler, but he didn't find out what he was licking me for!

When school was out that spring I went out to Orlando Chamberlain's and worked for him nearly all summer at various kinds of farm work, hoeing, raking hay, driving reaper and shocking wheat bundles. I think Ampy worked that vacation in a little drygstore on Vermillion St. near 2nd. My Uncle Oc came up again that summer for a short visit and as usual went up to Osakis fishing; Grandfather Camberlain was still living with us and Aunt Lizzie was working for a dressmaker. Orlando paid me for my summer's work with a fine black colt 3 years old named "Barney." He had been broken to ride or drive and I was very proud of him. Left him at Orlando's farm until late that fall.

(here the manuscript ends, seemingly unfinished.)