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Typescript of Harriet Emma (Booth) Le Clere's Remembrances of Father (Edmund Booth Deaf Pioneer and California Gold Miner)

Harriet Emma Le Clere (Booth)

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HARriet Emma (Booth) Le Claire's Reminiscences of Father (Edmund Booth)

My earliest distinct recollection of my childhood days is going with mother to the new house being built on Maine St. That was in 1851. The carpenters were at work and planks had been laid so we could go through into the studied partitioned rooms. But the great attraction which so strongly impressed the occasion on my memory was that in the hole that was to be the cellar a large snake was crawling round and round, evidently trying to find a way of escape. Naturally I was fascinated and watched the phenomenon while mother talked business with the carpenters. Long years after I told this incident to father. He turned to mother for confirmation. She smilingly nodded assent. Father was deaf but could talk and mother was deaf and dumb.

One day after we had moved into the new house I found mother crying and of course I asked the cause. She replied she "crying him to home. She replied she had but it had been no use. We can now imagine and understand, at least in part, the days of anxiety and fear and the loneliness mother must have suffered in those long five years.

Later on I was told father was coming home but I don't seem to have realized what it meant. One day when mother was frying doughnuts I saw a man pass the east window of the kitchen. You may be sure mother saw him too, she dropped everything, ran out the door, pulled her and around his neck and kissed him. Naturally I was properly shocked and even the information that it was father failed to satisfy me entirely that such conduct was proper. For a long time after father's return I was always at his heels. One long time after father's return I was always at his heels. One day at her home, the Waverly House. That was run by Crockwells, I think. Uncle Ford, about 1853 or 3 put up and occupied a two-story house near the foot of the big hill across the river—left hand side of the road going south. First story logs and second sawed lumber. Perhaps in 1854 he built another frame residence on South Garnavillo and that is where they were living when you were born. So you better say, after "home," on South Garnavillo Street. "Aunty" was Aunt Emma Ford, sister to father, and could talk with her fingers, an important consideration on this occasion. I was very happy when I could go to Aunty's and started off joyously. Along in the late afternoon "Aunty" returned, told me I was to go home and that I had a little baby brother. I didn't understand it at all but hurried home, was met by some neighborhood children who repeated the wonderful, unbelievable news. You may be sure I did not linger long but hurried on, and on my arrival I was shown a very wonderful little baby. I was very, very happy. I had been rather a lonely little girl. Tom was so much older, thirteen and I eight, he had his chores, his books, hunting and fishing, etc., and hadn't much time for his little sister, so the baby was welcomed with a happy heart. Soon the small baby grew to be quite a playfellow and companion.

The Dimmitts, who lived about a half mile west from us, also had a little girl about my age and a baby about the age of ours, so when the babies were old enough we used to carry them together, which I suspect was a great relief to our mothers. One day Hilda would bring her baby brother in a little wagon to our house and the next day I took my baby brother in a like little wagon to her house. Therefore was a little stretch of deep sand between our houses—in front of Carr Hall's—and we helped each other pull the wagons through.

I think I first attended school in the little white church on Maine Street, "down town"—the Congregational Church. Tom went to school in the Crockwell house on the hill in 1857. It was supposed to be too far for me to walk. For some reason I was not happy in the first school, so was transferred to the second on Maine Street. In wintry, snowy weather Tom took me to school on his sled. Can we ever forget that long hill where we had much great times sliding down who minded taking the sled up the hill when it was such glorious fun going down? Then occasionally Mrs Crockwell would give us a treat, hot doughnuts or apple titters. How good they tasted when we were out in the cold with cold fingers and toes.

The teachers I remember best were Miss Bundy, at the Crockwell school, and Mr. Langdon, my cousin. Mr. Langdon. There comes back in memory the time when father was farming, I can see father and Tom yoking up the white oxen, hitching to the wagon and starting for their day's work, mother having in the meantime put up their lunch. Then came the great changes in our lives. Father bought the Eureka in 1858. There was to be no more farming, for which neither father or Tom was adapted. Young as I was I realized father had come into his own; he had found the work for
which he was naturally fitted. From the time of the purchase until the infirmity of old age, in 1895, made it necessary to lay aside all work he loved in and for the Eureka. I believe he was never happier than when working the power press till the midnight hour. Father was a natural and a gifted writer. Had he had the present day opportunities for training along those lines, he would have made a greater name for himself, but even as it was, his able voice was lost to the world. His conversations were remarkable. Judging from the past, he saw the future with the eye of a prophet. There was a light in his eye which seemed to pierce the future, and his whole face was expressive of the thoughts that burned within him. Never will I forget the day when word was flashed over the country that President Lincoln had been assassinated. When father entered the front door and took off his hat, his face was white. The lines about his mouth were set and his eye expressed both deep anger and sorrow. His voice was low and tense. How well I remember father during the civil war days. He seemed sometimes that his whole being was on one side, and sometimes with us. He was as willing or plotting against the government was strong and deep. His pen spared no one. He hated a "copperhead" with all his might, and they hated him. He could not be bluffed or intimidated. Mother shared father's feelings, but when threatening letters came to him she was much worried. Father enjoyed them. After receiving these warnings, when he met a democrat or a "copperhead" on the street, he would pull out one such letter, read it to him, then throw back his head and laugh. The man couldn't talk back, so father had it all his own way. Father demonstrated that "the pen is mightier than the sword." He did more for the Union than any one soldier excepting only a Grand O. H. of his fathers. For years every night after father had read the papers, he would tell mother the news and carefully discuss it at length. I was always an interested "listener in," and my opinions concerning public matters were naturally formed according to what I had noticed since that I was more interested in public affairs than the average woman, and I attribute it to my early training by father.

Every Monday morning there were three books that had to be returned to the bookcase: Byron, Scott, and Festus. I used to call then father's bibles. He was thoroughly familiar with these authors, together with Shakespeare, Campbell and others. He could readily take to the place where a quotation from any one of them was desired. The last time I visited father, we were sitting together one evening when I heard the curfew. I remarked to him that the curfew was ringing. "Curfew, curfew," he repeated, and seemed at a loss. I was surprised and tried to recall to his memory the curfew and its purpose. He said nothing more, but I could see that it was not quite clear in his mind. The next morning, when I went over from Tom's, where I was staying, he greeted me by saying, "I had not thought of the curfew for years, and when you mentioned it, I could not recall.."
looking man came slowly into the room. Aunt Carrie backed away as he advanced. "Who are you, and what do you want," she demanded. He deigned no reply, but continued to advance. In desperation aunt Carrie told him we had a savage dog on the place and she would have him brought in. We were all on our feet ready for any action that might be necessary. As I watched the stranger a suspicion entered my mind. Should I suggest it? The stranger evidently knew the situation and he might take advantage of the suggestion. But the situation became so tense I ventured saying it might be mother. Aunt Carrie caught at the straw and gave the stranger's hands a close scrutiny. It was sufficient. It was such a relief we nearly had hysterics. How mother laughed when we told her how frightened we had been. She had thought we understood from the first and were only carrying out the farce.

When I returned to Mt. Holyoke in the fall, mother went with me. She attracted considerable attention and I was proud of her. I hadn't much time to take her about, but we went to the top of Mt. Holyoke. Later I took her to some point on the railroad where we met Maria Ford, my cousin, with whom she returned home. I broke down in health and also came home in the spring of 1870, having been away just four years. In the fall I began teaching in the Catholic Institute, Hopkinton, Iowa, where I taught five years. I was married in September 1878 to George F. LeClere, a Presbyterian preacher. After 13 years in the ministry, having lived in Wisconsin, South Dakota, and Iowa, we went into a ranch in Hardeman Co. It was LeClere's health having failed. While waiting for Mr. LeClere to prepare us a home, the children and I spent a number of weeks with father and mother. Then, about four o'clock of a November afternoon in 1888, we took the stage to a town (Martelle) where we could take a train that would make better connections. The children ranged in age from twelve to two. We had everything arranged for each one to have his place and his part in every circumstance. Emily was a bright, laughing little girl, who delighted to wait on old ladies or any one needing a favor. She attracted much notice and was given many attentions. Frank was a jolly, good natured boy of five, but so large for his age he had had hard work to convince the conductor he was only five and not six years of age. When approaching the place where we were to make our last change, the conductor said to the passengers, "This is a fine family; we need more such families to settle Texas.

The first letter I received from father after reaching Texas was a surprise. He wrote that the night following the day I left he could not sleep for thinking of the journey I was taking with the children. He said he went to bed, but got up again, dressed and sat up the rest of the night. I had expected mother to worry, but had not thought of father doing so. He was always so optimistic and philosophical and never wasted much time in worrying. So his failure to sleep gave me an insight into his nature I had never had before, and I loved him as I had never loved him before. He lived fourteen years in Hardeman County, then moved further north to the "Dalhart country," Dalhart, Tex. It was then living in Hardeman Co. that we lost our two oldest daughters. The first to go was Emily, a sweet, affectionate little girl of ten. Three years later our oldest daughter Laura followed. She was just eighteen, blooming into sweet and gracious womanhood. Giving evidence of more than unusual ability, a bright and promising future was before her.

While in Dalhart, our oldest son Edmund bought out the Dalhart Texan, and was publisher of that paper until his death, twelve years later. He left two little orphan girls, his wife having passed away six years before. He was a graduate of Iowa State College, Ames, Iowa. At his death he received remarkable tributes of respect and esteem from his townsmen and editorial brothers in North Texas.

Frank, the second son, graduated from Park College, Missouri. At this writing he is executive secretary of the Kansas City Tuberculosis Association. Under his management there have been added four oil wells. He has charge of the outpatients department of the county Hospital. They have one little girl, Barbara Harriet, seven years old. Herbert and Mary are graduates of Colorado College, Colorado. Herbert is now in government employ in Los Angeles. He figures the duties on imports. Mary is also a graduate of the College of Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons, Los Angeles. The laws of California require that students taking the Osteopathic course must also take the complete medical course. Every graduate is prepared, if he so chooses, to practice medicine and surgery. Dr. Mary is building up a good practice in Eagle Rock, a suburb of Los Angeles. She is also coming into prominence in her profession as a writer.

Salter, the youngest, after two years in Colorado College, entered Stanford University as a Junior in the fall of 1912. After one semester he was obliged to give up study on account of his eyes. For eight years he held to his purpose to finish his course in Stanford. He entered three times only to lose out on account of weak eyes due to polypi in his nose and infection in his sinus of the head. The polypi were removed, but the infection
was hard to clear up. He enlisted as cavalryman in the World War I in May, 1917, and in July, 1918, was sent across to France, reaching Bordeaux, July 17. August 5, he entrained for Chateau Theirry-August 7, spent first night in range of big guns. August 8, joined the 4th M. P. Co. of the 4th Division. Was in the Argonne drive from September 26 to October 20, 24 consecutive days. He was at the cross roads just behind the fighting lines directing traffic, shot and shell dropping all about him. After those strenuous days, he was given leave of absence for rest and was at Grenoble, in the French Alps, when the news of the armistice reached him. After the armistice he was in the Army of Occupation. July 13, 1919, he entrained for Brest via Belgium. Landed at Norfolk, Va., July 31. Discharged, August 13, 1919, San Francisco. At the present time, in company with another young man, he is carrying on one of the largest mushroom plants in the country at Santa Cruz, California. The plant is housed in an old time winery. He was married in August 1923. The two little orphan girls, Ruby and Margaret, Edmund's children, grown almost to young womanhood, are in high school and are living with us, their grandparents. They are a great pleasure and comfort in the home. We hope to spend the remainder of our days in beautiful Eagle Rock—"Homeland"—we residents love to call it. It is one of the garden spots of Southern California. It spreads out and upward over hills in every direction. From every point of view lovely scenery spreads out before the eye. We love our little city and are proud of it.