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Reuben Dorland

According to family tradition, in 1656, only twenty years after the founding of the Dutch Colony on Long Island, the Dorland family had established itself in the "Village of Brooklyn", then called Breuckelen. The Dorlands were Quakers who had sought a haven of peace among the Dutch. During the same year Quakers began to come into the Puritan colonies to the north. The Massachusetts colonists proved inhospitable or outright hostile, but the intolerant Peter Stuyvesant was willing to let the newcomers worship according to their own inner light. Since Elias Dorland lived till 1692, he saw the population of Brooklyn increase and spread northward along the Hudson. Friends very early found homes in what is now Dutchess County, and thither in course of time some of the Dorlands went.

Reuben Dorland, the founder of Dorland Seminary in Salem, Iowa, was a direct descendant of Elias. When the family moved from the "Village of Brooklyn" upstate is not known, but, like many other Quaker pioneers, they seem to have had a desire to follow the frontier. Seburn, Reuben's father, was born about 1790 when the family was liv-

ing at or near Beekman, a pioneer Quaker settlement not far from Arthursburg in Dutchess County. His father's name has not been found. Another Dorland, Enoch, active in the Friends Meeting at Arthursburg, seems to have been an uncle. Jonathan Dorland, another active worker in the same meeting, was probably an uncle. The family gave to Quakerism several preachers. The Arthursburg meeting has long since been abandoned since many Friends felt the urge to "go west". In 1816, however, it flourished as a local Meeting. United with two or more nearby Meetings as a Preparative Meeting, it in turn became part of the Monthly Meeting at Poughkeepsie, twelve miles distant. The Quarterly Meeting was also held at Poughkeepsie, but for the Yearly Meeting they journeyed down the Hudson to New York.

Seburn Dorland met at one of these meetings Miss Sarah Carpenter, as zealous as he about the Quaker way of life. They were married and on July 18, 1816, their second child, Reuben, was born. It is not known whether Reuben's parents were living at Beekman or Arthursburg at this time, but his birthplace was in the vicinity of these two flourishing Quaker settlements.

Reuben's early education was limited, as the time and environment did not offer much in the

way of "schooling". He is said, however, to have been a precocious boy, and at all times to have "embraced every available opportunity for study". When a small boy, he attended a school taught by his elder sister, Lydia. Following the earliest teachings of George Fox and William Penn, these New York Friends early sought to educate their children and made every sacrifice to that end. The school taught by Lydia Dorland was probably a subscription school. Later Reuben attended Nine Partners Boarding School, located at Millbrook, a school which earned much fame in its day.

The Nine Partners Boarding School had been established by the New York Yearly Meeting of Friends in 1796. It was situated in Dutchess County about one mile from what is now the village of Millbrook in the town of Washington. Recent investigation has unearthed a single catalogue of the school for the year 1844 and in that year Reuben Dorland was listed as one of the teachers. How long he had been teaching can not be ascertained. This was his last year in New York, since he came to Iowa in 1845. The Nine Partners School is still in existence but its name has been changed to Oakwood School. In 1858 it was moved to Union Springs, New York, and called Oakwood Seminary. In 1920 it was re-located about four miles south of Poughkeepsie.

As a boy at home, Reuben, the second in a family of eight children, "always saw the humorous side of a situation, keeping his brothers and sisters constantly alert to parry his jokes". He seems from all accounts to have been the flower of the family. In their early years the children grew to have a horror of slavery as a social condition inconsistent with the religion of the New Testament. They also grew up with a sense of personal responsibility to the Indians. The Quaker settlements on the frontier kept peace between the Indians and the colonists. The Arthursburg Meeting was later known as the Oswego Monthly Meeting, perhaps to emphasize its interest in the Indians by that name. Later, in Iowa, Reuben Dorland made full use of these humanitarian ideals learned as a boy back in Dutchess County.

In 1845 the family began to feel the call of the frontier again. In the meantime, on June 2, 1841, Reuben had married Mary Bedell, also of good Quaker stock. She was born October 29, 1821, and died April 3, 1884. Before they left for Iowa, a son, Edwin H., was born on March 31, 1842. They had four other children: Seburn P., Alfred R., Melissa Jane, and Mary Elizabeth. Alfred was killed in a tornado when he was twelve years old.

In 1845 Reuben Dorland with his family, his

two brothers, their wives and children, and his elder sister, Lydia, set out for Iowa. Lydia in the meantime had married a man by the name of Brice. The company traveled up the Hudson to Albany, went by way of the Erie Canal to Buffalo, thence crossed to the Ohio and completed their journey on the Mississippi River. At last they reached Fort Madison, twenty-eight miles from the Friends colony at Salem.

Salem, founded ten years before, was in need of an academy. The Friends Church had been organized in 1838 and had opened subscription schools. By 1842 there were 304 children receiving some education. The church building, "a double hewed log house each room 22 feet square," at the south edge of town, was used as a schoolhouse.

When Reuben reached Salem in 1845 he saw at once the "need of higher education to prepare teachers for this new country". At once he set about organizing a "Seminary course" in the log church. This move had "the approval and support" of the membership of the church which in 1845 numbered "some 200 although not all located near Salem". Later, Dorland built "at his own expense a stone house 40 x 60 feet with two rooms in the basement at the north-east of town". The new school prospered, and as families moved

farther from Salem, they sent their children back to Dorland's Seminary. By 1852 the roster included 335 students. At this early day, he had a much more advanced idea of religious education than the average church leader of the time. He organized a Normal Bible Class in the church school during the regular hour for teaching. At the end of six months he held examinations and recommended certain persons as teachers.

As a teacher and counsellor he was immensely popular. He wrote marriage certificates for his pupils, and "they were greatly prized" because he had written them. "He was described by those who knew him personally as a Christian Gentleman in all the contacts of life". He was assisted in his work by Philip Strahl and others, but the task proved too great for his health and in 1851 he heard again the call of the frontier.

In addition to his school work Dorland had spent much time and energy on the problem of slavery. He had early in life adopted the abolitionist's point of view; this conviction he had brought from Dutchess County to Salem, and from it he never swerved. Soon after his arrival in Salem he advocated mass meetings to acquaint the people with what he considered the great sin against humanity. According to an old record his name is on a subscription list for money to get an

anti-slavery supporter to talk at a big mass meeting.

Another story of his activity is vividly remembered by the oldest settlers. On the occasion when the fugitive slaves were seized near Salem in 1848, Reuben Dorland joined the crowd around the Lewelling house. In the midst of the excitement, when violence seemed imminent, he stood up on a pile of boards and proposed that the dispute should be settled by a justice of the peace. If the negroes proved to be slaves, their claimants should be allowed to take them. To this solution of the problem both the Quakers and Missourians agreed. But the slave catchers were foiled.

In his endeavor to establish societies to agitate for the abolition of the slave traffic, Dorland followed the example of the influential Quaker, Benjamin Lundy. When Dorland was twelve years of age, Lundy as a "public friend" traveled through New York and New England lecturing at all Quaker meetings and wherever else he could get a hearing. Dorland certainly heard him. Later Lundy published pamphlets and newspapers enlisting William L. Garrison and John Greenleaf Whittier as his aids. After 1839 Lundy made his home in Illinois. Possibly Dorland's desire to come west was inspired by Lundy.

In the meantime Salem as well as the rest of

Iowa had been following with interest the Mexican War. When peace was concluded on February 2, 1848, many pioneers began to think of California. Already Dana's *Two Years Before the Mast* had aroused interest in the Spanish territory which still had the romance of adventure about it. Dana's popular narrative, based on fact and published in 1840, appealed to the Friends. Dana, too, was interested in the slavery question and "took the right side". Then, too, a fortnight before the treaty of peace at Guadalupe Hidalgo, gold had been discovered in California. Reuben Dorland began to think of California.

Pioneers by the thousand started for the new territory. Emigrants, unaccustomed to the Great Desert of the southwest, left the bones of men and animals along the trail. Some adventurers went the long distance around Cape Horn as portrayed by Dana, but for the majority that journey demanded too long a time. Others went by sea to the Isthmus of Panama, crossed it, and then continued by boat up the coast to California. Bayard Taylor's *Eldorado* told the story of his trip to California by this route. His vivid description of the journey and of California, and mention of the "Iowa Rangers", was published in 1850 and turned the eyes of many toward the Far West.

Among those who determined to go to Califor-

nia was Reuben Dorland, the principal of Dorland Seminary. In 1851, Reuben and his brother Henry together with Anselm Stanley and some others set out for the new Eldorado of California. Reuben Dorland went primarily on account of his health. He had done the work of several men since the founding of his Seminary in 1846. He knew that he must have a rest. Since he was too ill to try the overland route, after careful consideration, he chose the way described by Bayard Taylor. On the 15th of December the party set out. An entry from the diary of Anselm Stanley tells the tale:

"John H. Pickering and wife, John Smith wife and babe, Reuben Dorland, Henry Dorland, James Mace, and Anselm Stanley, left Salem 12-15-1851 for California, by way of New Orleans and Panama. Reuben Dorland died of Panama fever on board the Brig Orleans, 3-4-1852, and was buried in the Pacific Ocean, Latitude 15° 50' Longitude 103° west. The remainder of the party arrived in San Francisco 3-27-1852."

Thus came to an end the life of a true pioneer and a good teacher, Reuben Dorland, particularly notable for introducing teacher training and religious education into Henry County.

When Dorland left for California the school was at its height of usefulness. Fortunately a

record of the school at the time of his leaving has been preserved. The year "ending third month, 28th, 1851" shows the following totals: Summer term 89 pupils; winter term (when the older boys were no longer needed to work on the farms) 202; chemical students 31, making a total of 322. The following curriculum was also given: Reading, McGuffey's Readers and the Bible; Spelling, Webster; Grammar, Gould Brown; Composition, Parker's Progressive Exercises; Geography, Olney and Pelton's outline maps; History, Willard; Astronomy, Burritt and Blake; Mechanical Philosophy, Olmsted and Comstock; Chemistry, Comstock and Draper; Physiology, Cutter; Intellectual Philosophy, Isaac Watts; Moral Philosophy, Dymond; Mineralogy, J. L. Comstock; Botany, Lincoln; Use of Globes, Guy and Keith; Mercantile Correspondence, B. F. Foster; Elocution, Bronson; Arithmetic, J. Ray; Algebra, Day and Ray; Geometry, Playfair; Surveying, Gummere; Mensuration, Bonycastle; Bookkeeping, Preston.

For the same year the list of officers was as follows: Principal, Reuben Dorland; Assistants, Philip Strahl, Robert King, Ruth Holaday; Librarian, Alfred Bedell; Trustees, Lewis Taylor, D. W. Henderson, A. H. Pickering, Joseph D. Hoag, J. W. Hiatt, Thomas Siveter, Eleazer Andrews, and Peter Hobson.

The trustees depended almost entirely on Reuben Dorland and when he was obliged to leave, the school immediately declined. The Seminary was its founder's chief joy. For it he sacrificed his money, and his life. This, however, he did gladly and when he left for California he hoped to return to build a greater school.

Following the lead of Dorland many other residents of Salem moved to California. The Salem group formed the nucleus of an early Friends Meeting near Los Angeles. This colony in time came to be known as Whittier, recalling the interest the abolitionist poet had taken in Salem and its fight against slavery. There, too, a college grew up like the one back in Iowa. The college also received the name of Whittier. Salem, the first Quaker Meeting west of the Mississippi, thus became the mother not only of settlements in the Mississippi Valley but also of the first on the Pacific Coast. And the leadership of Reuben Dorland contributed to the character of both.

CHARLES ARTHUR HAWLEY