



June 2018

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

Harriet Emma Le Clere (Booth)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/grcc>

Recommended Citation

Le Clere (Booth), Harriet Emma, "Typescript of Harriet Emma (Booth) Le Clere's Remembrances of Father (Edmund Booth Deaf Pioneer and California Gold Miner)" (2018). *Gold Rush Life*. 46.
<https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/grcc/46>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Western Americana at Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Gold Rush Life by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact mgibney@pacific.edu.

HARRIET EMMA (BOOTH) LE CLERE'S REMEMBRANCES OF FATHER (EDMUND BOOTH)

My earliest distinct recollection of my childhood days is going with mother to the new house being built on Main^e St. That was in 1851. The carpenters were at work and planks had been laid so we could go through into the studded 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 was crying because father was so far away in California. I asked her why she did not write him to come 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, threw her arms 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 evening I found father and mother sitting before the table on which was stacked two piles of twenty dollar gold pieces. I thought we were millionaires and was quite incredulous when both asserted it was not much. The great event--next to father's coming home occurred about a year afterwards on a July day. Early in the morning of that day "Aunty" came to our house and told me I was to spend the day at her home, the Waverly Hotel, for they were going to have blackberry pie. (Note by T.E. Booth: Hattie is mistaken about the Waverly House. That was run by Crockwells, I think. Uncle Ford built, and carried on, the Wapsipinicon House in 1850. Several years later he sold to a man by ~~the name~~ by the name of Morse--who also borrowed \$500 from Uncle Henry at 10% and I found the unpaid and unsecured notes among his papers after his death in 1888. Uncle Ford, about 1852 or 3 put up and occupied a two-story house near the foot of the big hill across the river--left hand side of

(2)

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 Hannah Ford, sister to father, and could talk with her fingers, an important consideration on this occasion). I was always 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 small 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 care for 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. There was quite a little stretch of deep sand between our homes--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 Main^e 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 same school with Tom. In wintry, snowy weather Tom took me to school on his sled. Can we ever forget that long hill where we had such 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 fritters. 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. Lamson, Mr. Sherman, Mrs Ercanbrack, Mr. Hammond, Mary George (cousin) and 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 change 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 lived 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 and place for himself, but even as it was, his able and unblemished record was known far beyond the bounds of the state. His conversational powers 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 told us the awful news, his face was white and stern. 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. It seemed sometimes that his whole being was afire. His indignation or anger against those who were opposing 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 threathening letters came to him she was much worried. Father enjoyed them. After receiving these warnings, when he met a democrat or "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 Grant or a Sherman or a Sheridan. For years every night after father had read the papers, he would tell mother the news and would generally discuss it at length. I was always an interested "listener in," and my opinions concerning public matters were naturally formed according to father's views. I have noticed since that I am 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 them father's bibles. He was thoroughly familiar with these authors, together with Shakespeare, Campbell and others. He could readily turn 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

it, but after I went to bed, Gray's Elogy came back to me," and he repeated several verses. I think he could probably have repeated the whole but gave only enough to show he remembered. The Atlantic Monthly was his favorite magazine. Every year I renew the Atlantic Monthly for my son Frank's birthday and for Walter's Christmas. I like to think that my boys have it in their homes as father had it in his.

Mother had the mechanical ability of the Walworths and could not understand father's almost total lack of it. If mother had been a man and had her hearing, I am sure she would have been a partner in the Walworth Manufacturing Company. Mother was of a social nature. She enjoyed people. She was cut off by her infirmity from that intercourse with people which her nature craved. As I grew older I realize and understand better her isolation. If only I could have understood when she was with us, I could have and would have done more to make her life brighter and more cheery. Father always seemed sufficient unto himself. Not until mother passed away did he, or we, realize how much she was to him or how dependent on her he was. His loneliness and sorrow were pathetic. I cannot think of it even now without tears.

It was a great event in those early days when uncle Clark--mother's brother--came to see us. He was so genial and jolly, and moreover always brought us each some nice and appropriate present. We did not have many unnecessary luxuries in those days, so uncle Clark's generosity was fully appreciated, and still more in helping Tom when he was at Meriden, N. H., Academy. I never knew uncle James until I went to Meriden and Mt. Holyoke. I think I spent three summer vacations in his home. He used sometimes to invite me to ride with him behind his fast trotter. We ran a race once with a train between Newtonville and Newton Center. We came in "neck and neck" but it nearly took my breath away. Cousin Arthur, who was in Yale, was always home also for vacation. Nearly every day (Sunday excepted) we had long rides behind "Old Bill." We had most delightful times and I became quite familiar with the wonderful country surrounding Boston. We formed a friendship which remained unbroken during his life.

When I was in Mt. Holyoke, mother came east to spend the summer. We visited aunt Carrie Fiske in Newburyport, then she and Minnie Fiske accompanied us to Boston and Newtonville to visit the brothers. While visiting in uncle James' home, he and family went away for a few days. Aunt Carrie, cousin Ella Walworth, Minnie Fiske, mother and I, with the servants, were left to keep house. One evening, after a very pleasant day, we heard a knock on the door opening into the back hall. Supposing it to be the maid come for instructions, aunt Carrie stepped to the door and opened it. To our great astonishment and consternation, a quite disreputable

(5)

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 Lenox Collegiate Institute, Hopkinton, Iowa, where I taught five years. I was married in September, 1875, to George F. LeClere, a Presbyterian preacher. After 13 years in the ministry, having lived in Wisconsin, South Dakota, and Iowa, we went onto a ranch in Hardeman Co., northwestern Texas, Mt. 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 morning 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 systematized so that each one knew 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 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

(6)

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. We lived fourteen years in Hardeman County, then moved further north to the "Dalhart country," Dallam Co. It was while 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 Dallam County, our oldest son Edmund bought out the Dallam 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 clinics, Mental, Hygiene, Dental and Cancer Control. He has a staff of sixteen helpers. His wife, a social worker, 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.

Walter, 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 sinuses of the head. The polypi were removed, but the infection

(7)

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 Thierry. 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 12, 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 Aug. 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.