

This is the fourth installment of excerpts from the Memoires of Nannie E. Howe (Annie Estella Howe). To refresh your memory from the first & second installment, the memoirs were written by Nannie Estelle Howe Best in approximately the 1910-1920 time frame and chronicle her early days in Plymouth starting in about 1855. She attended the University of Minnesota and became a teacher. It is our understanding that she moved to North Dakota to teach where she met Thomas Best, a local sheriff, and they were married. One of their daughters married an Erickson and had a daughter who they named Estelle. Estelle was never married, lived in Portland, Oregon and was a Librarian.

The following is from Volume II & III as written by Nannie where she recalls

Enlisting

Father still thought it his duty to go to war or enlist.

One day he went over to Parkers to find out if Dan, Alf. And Israel had enlisted. They called my father a “Black Republican” but they were called “Copper Heads” and did not seem to know it. They said some insulting things like they guessed he would let his girl’s marry “niggers” he liked’em so well!

When father came home he said he had not seen a Parker but Jim, who was too old to be in the draft. They had fled to Canada to escape the draft! Father said it was disgraceful. He was ashamed of them.

There was another call for volunteers and that tie Father enlisted. He joined the 11th regiment and went to “Camp Miller” near Fort Snelling to drill. He was Orderly Sergeant. They were not ordered South for a long time. We used to go down and visit them. That, to me was more exciting than anything that had happened in my young life. The white tents – the soldiers drilling in new uniforms and the music of the band, all filled me with rapture. I was glad there was a was only – if the Negroes were found, there would be no more stories like “Uncle Tom’s Cabin”, I thought sadly.

We went to see “Little Crow” and other Indians in confinement at Fort Snelling. They had captured them by this time.

There was a man wandering around Camp Miller that was crazy. He was always hunting for his folks they said.

There was a song or poem that was sung t that time – I cannot remember it all now but we children used to sing it (although mother never liked to hear it) called Minnehaha!

Minne ha ha!

Minnehaha laughing water!
Cease the laughter now for aye,
Savage hands are red with slaughter of the innocent to day.
XXXX
Have they killed my Hans and Otto?
Did they find them in the corn?
Go and tell the cruel monster, not to kill my eldest born.
“O! My daughter! Jennie Darling
Worse than death, My Jennie’s fate!

Nelson, as our troops were leaving, turned and closed the garden gate.

As if that could help! Now the house was all burned down. His wife killed and scalped before his eyes – his boys – who tried to hide in the tall corn – were hunted out and massacred and his daughter carried away a prisoner.

And mother said “O girls don’t sing that I can’t bear it”. I suppose we sant it because every one was singing it but when I thought about it, I concluded not to sing it ever again.

There are people who never blamed the Indians for the terrible massacre. They say we came and drove them out of their rightful home, America. There are others that say it was the “Survival of the Fittest.” That God knew we were the fittest!

I wanted to go to the man and comfort him but when I saw how fierce he looked, I kept away. I remember I tried to write a story, afterward of a home desolated by the Indians – I called it “The Escape of Arthur and Lottie.”

It was about their hiding in the tall corn and journeying to Minneapolis in the dark night to escape the savages. I pictured them ragged and dirty and foot sore coming into Minneapolis half-starved as their only food was beans and turnips and carrots which they found in the deserted fields. I felt so sorry for them, myself that I had them meet their parents in Minneapolis.

Mother said, “why Nan you had the Indians kill their parents in the first place and now you have the meet them in Minneapolis.” So, I changed it and let them stay killed.

Miss Campbell

The winter Miss Campbell taught our school was a happy one for me. We organized a literary society and had fine meetings all winter. Miss Campbell was our poet. Father read Shakespeare. We all wrote some. Mother surprised me by her stories. The Parkers said she must have copied them out of books and mother said with a laugh, “That that was a compliment.” My sister, Laura, wrote poems also and once got \$50.00 for a prize poem. “Call water,” she wrote “Beautiful Orra”, that I thought was a gem and afterward she got paid for her poems.

Then came the winter that Augustus Gow came to our house. Father brought him home from Minneapolis. He had

come from New York to see the west and got out of money and out of work. Father met him and brought him home.

My sister, Gertie, was married to Mr. Gow after he had been with us two years, but the story belongs to another volume that I have written so I will not put it in here.

My First School

About that time the school superintendent visited our school. Gertie, my sister, was our teacher at the time. When Mr. Pribble came in to the schoolroom, I was at the blackboard demonstrating an example in arithmetic.

Mr. P. asked me some questions and had me read and write. Then he asked when our school term ended.

“next week,” answered Gertie.

Then he asked me if I would take a summer school? I was delighted to have a chance to teach. He gave me a certificate and told me about the school in Baker’s District near Golden Valley.

Mother fixed up my clothes and got me a little trunk and father took me down to the district and got me a boarding place. It was at Mr. Becker’s house. Mr. Becker was German. His wife could speak no English.

After father left, I grew suddenly homesick. It was Sunday afternoon. Mr. and Mrs. Becker talked to each other in German. The children all stood around watching me. I wanted to run after father and beg him to take me home, but I knew that would not do – that I must stay and teach the school no matter how homesick I was. There were two rooms downstairs and two rooms upstairs. The living room down stairs was very clean, but no carpet on and very little furniture. The kitchen and dining room were in one – but more cheerful than the front room, with the big cupboard, the table or a wardrobe that I found later held their Sunday clothes and there were pretty plants on the windowsills.

Our supper was good, excellent bread and soup with “noodles and coffee”. Brat or chicken and applesauce in an immense bowl. But I was homesick. If I hadn’t expected to stay all summer, I might not have been so lonely.

Mr. and Mrs. Becker talked in German to each other again. Then Mr. Becker said, “Now you want to go home – to? Well I sing for you.” And he sang. He had a very good voice, yes, a splendid voice and I did enjoy his singing. Then he said we all must leave home sometime – not se? And the first we want our families but must be strong and then we find it better further on. “Now you sing to me a song”. But I could not. I said, “No, you sing again. You have a fine voice. I like to hear you sing”.

He looked pleased and said, “Yes, I have a fine voice all right.”

At bedtime Mrs. Becker took me upstairs. The first room had a bed in it piled high with bedclothes and at one side was another low bed that I presume belonged to the boys. Everything looked neat. She took me into the next room. There was a rag carpet in this room and a bed as high as the other one with a pretty bright patchwork quilt and snowy pillows with crochet on the pillows but no bureau or wash stand. One window and one chair. She showed me a footstool by the bed I suppose it was to kneel on to say my prayers. And that night I did say my prayers sincerely and asked God to bless my dear folks. My trunk was brought up and there was no closet for my dresses so I left them in the trunk.

The next day I taught school till 6 o’clock as I had no watch and there was no clock in the schoolhouse. I was simply afraid to let school out too early.

On going to my boarding house, I found that supper was just ready. Mr. Becker laughed at me and said I need not teach so long. “You let out the children at 4 o’clock,” he said, and after that he lent me his big watch.

Friday night I was almost wild with joy for I meant to go home.

Mr. Becker said, yes, it was all right that I was young and could walk four miles but to come Sunday “by night” so to be there, sure, on Monday morning. He let one of the boys go with me to the main traveled road, so I would not get lost. I was very happy to be home for awhile and Mr. Becker and his wife stopped for me Sunday evening as they had been visiting a German family in our neighborhood by the name of Earnest. So I got back to my school.

I told mother how queer it was to be under a feather bed and she thought it was not such a queer custom for such a cold country as ours in wintertime but she did not see how it was needed in summer.

The feather bed was very light, as if it were made from down of feathers and toward morning very welcome when (my window open) it grew chilly. And that was a puzzle to Mr. and Mrs. Becker for me to want to sleep with my window open!

I walked home every Friday night all summer. It was that summer I learned how dear my home was, how deep my love for father, mother and the children.

When I drew my money at the end of school and could be free to go home, I was very glad to know I had overcome my homesick feelings. And mother advised me how to lay out my cash to the best advantage. She helped me make some pretty clothes and said to keep some of the money for emergencies. I was quite proud of my slippers and my hat with the blue flowers in it.

Walks to Minneapolis

I remember when mother and I walked to town (to Minneapolis).

We girls used to ride horseback to the post office, three miles, to Mrs. Clay's. Mr. Clay was in the Army. The Parker men were in Canada it was said to avoid being drafted and Mr. Tolman had been killed in the battle of Bull's Run. We had not heard from father for a long time. Mother was very anxious so one day she said I could go to Minneapolis with her. She wanted to go to see Sam Gale and find out if father was killed.

The last letter she had, father said they heard the bombardment – the guns. I think of the battle of Antetum and might be ordered to the front.

Our horse was gone – we could not find him. We tried to borrow and could not. Our neighbor who could have loaned us a horse would not. They even told mother that father was dead for sure and the nearest neighbor advised her to sell them the farm!

"I won't do any such thing,! Said mother. "How do you know he is dead?"

"You should known, already, that men get dead in a battle," they said in contempt of her faith that he was alive. "You must sell that land if not now, soon, anyway yet."

"Well, I won't sell to you, even if I do sell" she said.

Mr. hale and Mr. Vanen of Golden Valley had helped mother that hard winter. They bought a new stove for us and had a bee to chop wood and now there was a big woodpile in our yard.

Mr. Hale had a son (Martin Hale) in the Army and his last little son, a babe six months old, he named Jonas, after father. He, Mr. Hale was too old, for the Army, but he helped the families, whose husbands and sons were in the Army.

Well as I was saying, mother got quite anxious and we started to walk to Minneapolis.

At noon we stopped at Mr. Hales home in Golden Valley – halfway to Minneapolis. We found Mr. H. had gone for the day and Mr. Vanen was away with his team.

Mrs. Hale wanted us to stay overnight and by the next day she said Mr. Hale would take us there, but mother was restless and so we went on. In Minneapolis at last we went to Mrs. Soleman's. She had gone to Minneapolis to live after Mr. Tollman was killed. She had money of her own, although now-a-days she would not be called rich, we called her rich.

It was a very nice looking house we called at but we almost went away before she came to the door.

"My servant has left me" she said. "So I have to come to the door myself. And it is just as well she left, she was so

wasteful." She led us not into the parlor but into the kitchen. Mother and I were very tired.

"You will be surprised" said mother, "when I tell you we walked here."

"Well! Was it urgent that you should?" Mrs. Tollman asked. And she did not ask to lay off our wraps.

After a half hours talk mother said, "I'm going to ask if I may stay overnight with you? I am very tired and so is Nanna." Mrs. Tollman hesitated. Then mother said, "I cannot really go a step further and I have brought a little basket of lunch".

"Alright you may stay," said Mrs. Tollman. "But it was a foolish thing to do. How could you walk that distance?"

She made some tea but put on mother's lunch.

After supper she made me stay on a braided mat with my little chair.

"May I have a book?" I asked. "If you will be very careful of it," she said.

Mother got up and took a book from the big bookcase in the parlor with great decision and gave it to me saying, "Nanie won't hurt the book." It was Ten Nights in a Bar Room.

"It was poor Charlie's book," said Mrs. Tollman in a mournful voice.

"O, then I won't take it!" I said.

"O take it", she said. "Only don't tear it!"

Now I was too much a lover of books to destroy them – but my pride was hurt just as if I were a little tiny girl!

At bedtime Mrs. Tollman took us to a small bedroom.

"This was the maids room but it is clean," she said. "The guest room is cold anyway. Do you mind Mrs. Howe?"

"O! It is all right! I am only too glad to rest," said mother. When she left us we undressed and got to bed.

Mother said to me, "I don't think we are welcome, Nan, but I am going to make believe we are."

The next morning we left Mrs. Tollman and after our business was done we started home, but Mr. Hale found us and took us home and when we got there we found a letter from our soldier.

Additional excerpts will be printed in future newsletters that provide a wonderful look back in time to the early days of Plymouth. Again, a great big thank you to Marla Watson of Portland, Oregon for sharing her "find" with us.



Current Officers

The following are the present officers:

President	Vern Petersen	763-559-2313
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Meetings

The monthly meetings are normally held on the 4th Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. in the Plymouth Historical Society Building, located at 3605 Fernbrook Lane North, Plymouth, MN.



New Accessions

The Plymouth Historical Society has received the following accessions:

Donated by Bill Coe:

- Article entitled "The Petrified Man of Bloomer" (thought to be Antoine Le Count the first settler at Medicine Lake).

Donated by Marvel Sandgren:

- 3 photo's of Mabel Reum

- Photo of Will Kreatz
- Photo of Chris Reum
- Graduation photo of Ron Kreatz
- Child's wooden Spelling Board with movable letters
- Laminated scroll of various obituary & probate notices of various Plymouth residents

Donated by Mary Beth Rausch

- Toy Glossy print of Tom & Annie Mc Gowan Family
- Glossy print of Ryan & Mc Gowan Family Reunion - 1900
- Glossy print of Thomas & Annie Mc Gowan & their family - 1900
- Framed photo of Thomas & Annie Mc Gowan & family in front of their home in Plymouth.
- Framed photo of James & Mary Ryan homestead in Plymouth abt. 1880-1890 with family members.
- Framed photo of Thomas & Annie Mc Gowan Farm - 1910 - with family members.

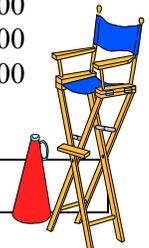
Mailing and Membership List



If you are not a member and want to sign up or if you have any questions, please call Alberta Casey, 763-559-9366.

The annual dues are:

Individual	\$7.50
Family	\$12.00
Individual Lifetime	\$100.00
Family Lifetime	\$150.00



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The following is the present Board of Directors:

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