PEORIA PUBLIC LIBRARY

Preface

This book consists of a number of stories told by Minerva Parker Nichols (Gaga) to her grandchildren in 1944. The stories are about her early childhood in Peoria, Fulton, and McLean Counties, Illinois. They are recollections of her preschool years from about 1864 to 1868. The stories were told to us almost 80 years after the events took place.

Recently, while conducting research on my Illinois ancestors, I have been amazed at how much of what Gaga told us was true. She was off on times and numbers, but very much on target about peoples' names, about places, and events.

This book is given to the Peoria Public Library, hoping it will be of interest in providing a glimpse of how a young Civil War widow (Amanda Doane Parker), her two daughters, and her sisters lived during the war.

At the end of the stories a short biography is included, along with some pictures of people in the story and pictures of Minerva as she grew older. The little girl in these stories grew up to be the first woman in the solo practice of architecture in America.

Given to the library in 1997 by Doane Fischer, one of Minerva's grandchildren.

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"THE BADDEST DAY"
AND
OTHER FAVORITE STORIES

Minerva Parker Nichols

AS TOLD IN GA-GA'S OWN WORDS ABOUT 1944 AND RE-CORDED IN SHORT-HAND BY FRANCES D. NICHOLS WHO DID THE ILLUSTRATIONS.

ALBUM OF PHOTOGRAPHIC ORIGINALS GIVEN TO F.D.N. BY NYE WINIFRED GRIFFITHS WHO SPENT THE SUMMER WITH US AND INSPIRED "GA-GA" IN HER TELLING OF STORIES AND RECOLLECTIONS BY HER APPRECIA-TIVE LISTENING AND HUMOROUS REMINDERS

GA-GA SAW SOME OF THE ILLUSTRA-TIONS DONE IN THE LATE '40s. OTHERS WERE DONE RECENTLY. SHE WISHED YOU GRANDCHILDREN TO ENJOY THE STORIES WITH YOUR CHILDREN AND KNOW ABOUT HER EARLY BEGINNINGS ABOUT 1865

FDN.

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THE BADDEST DAY

"Ga Ga, tell us the story about your Baddest Day!" urged the three children, Martha, John and Joan. It was during a summer when they were visiting Ga Ga in Westport, Connecticut. They were having supper at the round mahogany table set with the old china cow pitcher of milk and with the white latticed porcelain fruit dish in the center. They looked eagerly at Ga Ga who laughed as she spoke and waved her hand beginning with words that conjured up the sturdy black-haired, black-eyed little girl she used to be back in 1865. They had seen pictures of her in her full-skirted dress of dark wool and the white cotton pantalettes. One was taken with her mother, Amanda Doane Parker and her little sister, Addie. They lived in a small town in Illinois. Her father had died in the Civil War and her grandfather, Seth Doane, had a big farm nearby in the country. They could see her as that little girl of long ago as she began their favorite story.

"I remember one day most out of all the others because I was bad all that day! No matter what I did, I fell deeper and deeper into trouble.

The day started dull and rainy outside the small house in Peoria where we lived. My sister, Addie, was sleeping late after an uneasy night and Mother asked me to play quietly as she busied herself with the sewing which helped to support us. Standing with my nose pressed against the cool window glass and feeling very edgy, I was instantly happy when my Grandfather drove up in his big wagon. That meant that he would take me back to the farm with him! A place where there was plenty of space for playing on a rainy day. In his broad white house and in the great long shops below it where the Prairie

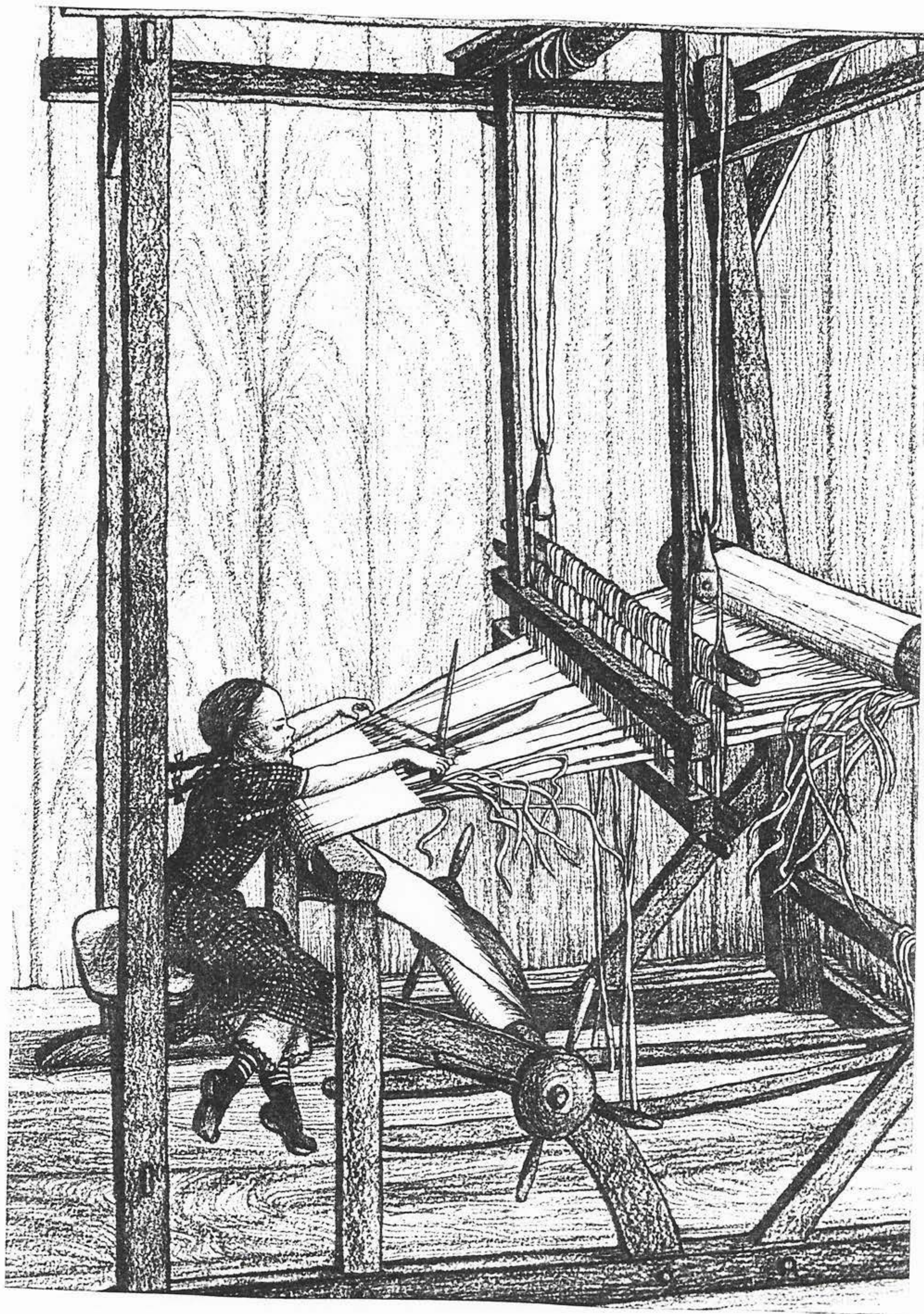
Schooners were built there were always new things to see. Grandfather, known in his new England youth as a Master Builder of ships, now fashioned in Illinois the big, high-riding wagons that took settlers further and further west and south. He made the plans for them and for the houses and building projects needed on the farm on his pine wood drawing board and then planed it smooth again when each new thing was finished. He would even let me draw too with his broad wedge-shaped pencil! On a dull day like this I could watch the Hickory hoops being bent to an oval shape in the vats of hot water and later see them lifted and placed on the framework of the wagons where they held up the Canvas covers. These Canvas covers were all the houses that some little girls going West would have for a long time and that was exciting too. On a rainy day it was fun to sit on the high pile of shavings and cover my black hair with white wooden curls and imagine myself as "Little Eva" with the golden hair! Or, up in the attic of the house, my cousin John and I could "dress up" in the gold-trimmed officer's coats stored there and in the colored sashes and mount the wooden saw-horses for a "Ride to Vicksburg".

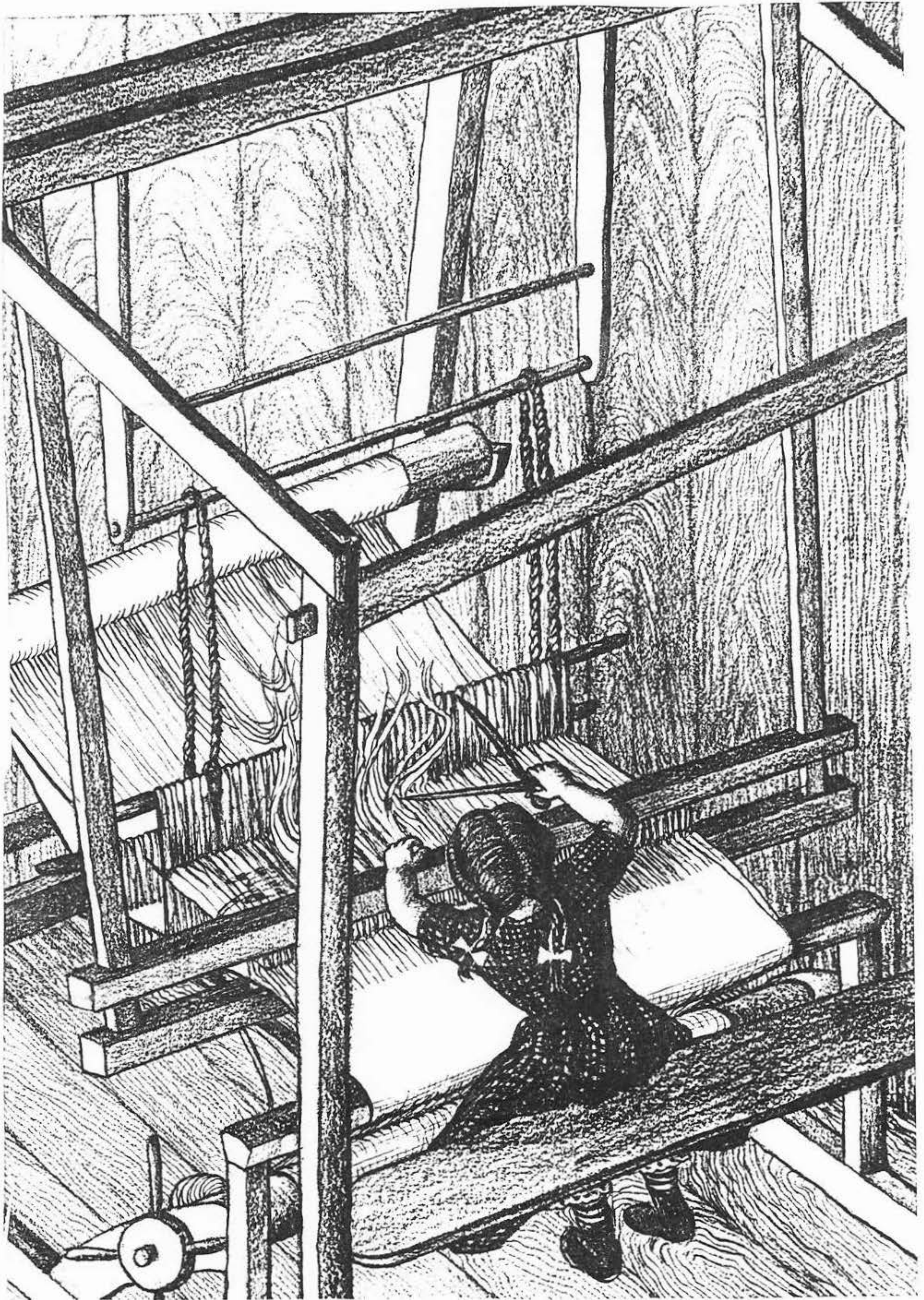
Yes, a visit to the farm was a treat at any time, but on this tiresome, gloomy day what a welcome prospect! Soon I was up in the high wagon, planted firmly between Grandfather's knees, my hands over his on the reins as I joyed in the pretense that I was driving the big horses. The rain no longer mattered. All my troubles were forgotten.

When we reached the farm house we found my Aunt Sudie busy with the weekly baking in the kitchen. My cousin John was away for the day. My little old blind Grandmother thought that it was far too damp for me to wander down

to the big shops. When I fussed at this she said, "Now, now, children should be seen and not heard!" The feeling of gloom returned. Here, even as at home, there was nothing to do. I began to "get in the way". My Aunt Sudie took me out to the side porch and told me to stay there until she finished her baking. If I wanted anything I could call. For a while I was amused building houses with the corn cobs heaped in a corner basket for the kitchen fire. But I missed my playmate John. There was no fun in being alone!

In the long chicken yard opposite the porch the chickens were clustered forlornly around the door looking very hungry. Here were things alive and much more interesting than cobs. I slipped out and filled a big bowl full of yellow corn from the bin and began to scatter the kernels over the ground. How exciting and pleasant to feel the chickens running and milling around my feet. They pecked busily at the bright grain and clucked cheerfully in thanks. I didn't notice the door to the chicken yard back of me. It was wide open and the hens began to roam out into Grandmother's flower garden and into the vegetable garden and down the slope beyond. It was then that Aunt Sudie appeared from the house to see what I was doing. One look told her! It took her a long time to shoo all the chickens back inside their fence so I went back to the porch disappointed and cross. Grown Ups were being much too interfering today. But when she finished and broke off a switch from a tree nearby and came to switch me, I couldn't bear it. This was too much! I cried out: "Aunt Sudie, if you don't stop that I'll get so mad I'll kill somebody!" When the words came I was as surprised as Aunt Sudie. I meekly let her take my hand as she put the





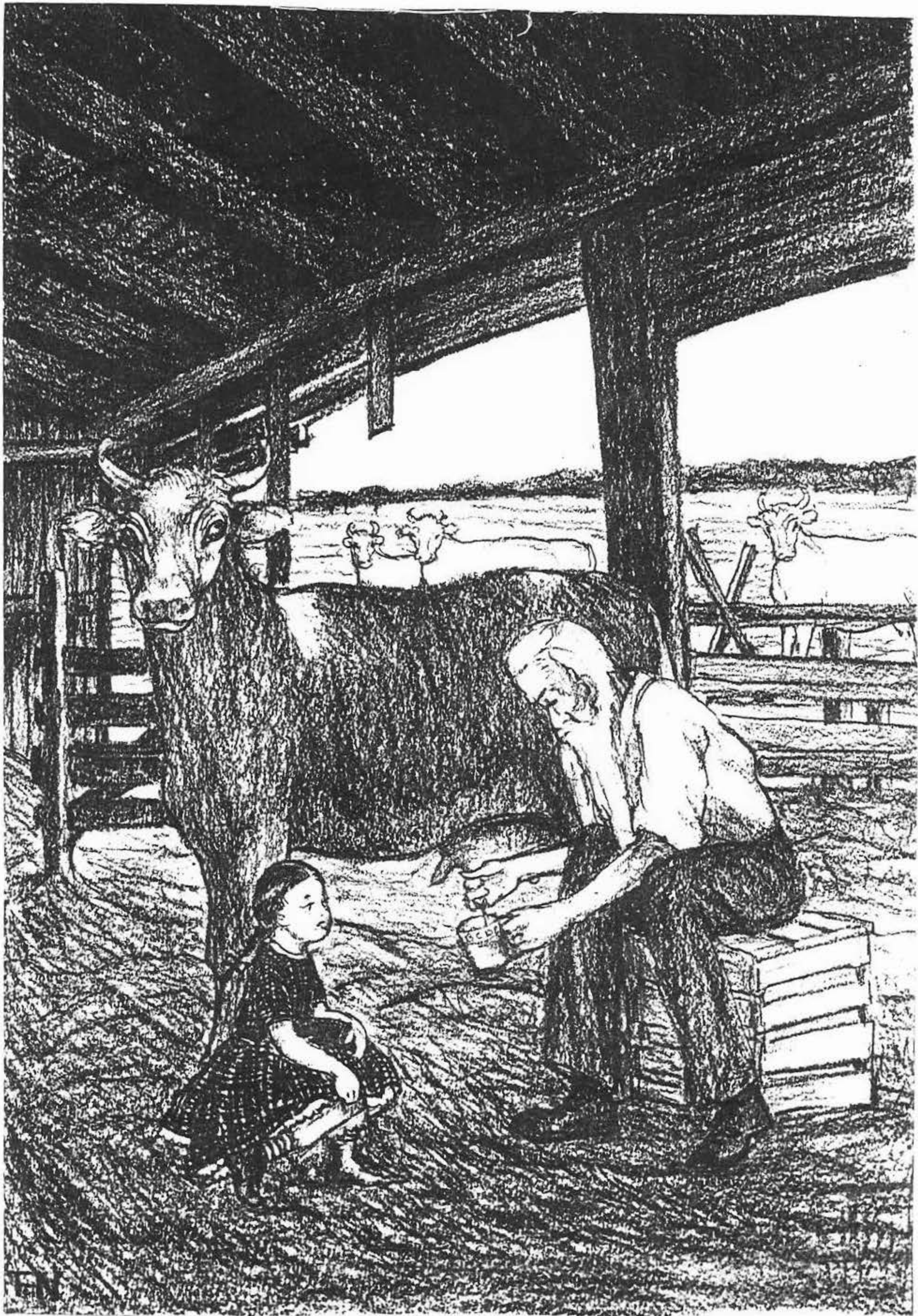
switch down and led me up the stairs and down the hall and into Grandmother's Loom Room. It was quiet there. I could cool my hot temper alone. When she closed the door I stood for a long time where she left me digging the toe of my shoe into a crack of the floor and getting lower and lower in my mind. After a while I tired of standing and climbed up to sit on the high weaver's bench before the loom. The great wooden frame with all the carefully put-in warp threads stretched out before me. I couldn't feed the chickens but I could weave instead! I had watched Grandmother do it. First she pressed the treadles down there under the loom near the floor and shifted the sets of warp threads now up now down. At the same time she moved the bobbin with its colored weft threads back and forth through the open sheds and then pounded the wool firmly together with the big wooden beater. My feet tried to reach down for the treadles but my legs were short. The bobbin of red wool in my hand slipped away and fell and was caught in the middle of the warp threads. No poking or prying helped me loosen it. And I wanted so much to weave! On the bench beside me I noticed a pair of long scissors, just the thing to help me free the bobbin. I clipped and I snipped around the place where it was held firm. Finally, I cut the whole warp through to get the bobbin out. Then, suddenly faced by all those useless hanging white strings, defeat swept over me. I couldn't weave either!

But all was not lost. There on the high chest beside the loom my eye caught the gleam of the white plaster church which at Holiday time stood glowing on the dining table, its windows of bright red paper a blaze

of light from the candle inside. I pulled a stool over and climbed on it to reach for the prize. But the stool tipped and fell. The church and I crashed down with the beautiful white plaster walls and the steeple broken in pieces and scattered over the rough, wide hand cut boards of the Loom Room. This time I made such a noise that Aunt Sudie came.

When she saw all the mess she took me and put me in to a small closet where Grandmother's bobbins and wools were kept stored in home made wooden buckets. She set me on one of the piles of soft wool and then shut the little cupboard like door that led back to the Loom Room. I heard the latch click shut. I was in a tiny loft over the wood shed. A low window let in a dim light. I was really a prisoner now with nothing to do. There was only the sound of the steady monotonous raindrops on the roof. As I sat and imagined myself dying in there and starving to death, I saw outside to the left of the window and mounting almost to the sill a high pile of stove wood. It was cut into lengths for winter burning. The more I looked the more that pile of logs seemed like a safe and sane way to get down. The window opened easily and quietly outward when I turned the latch and I squeezed through. But when I got out on the logs they began to roll. The wood and I came sliding and crashing to the ground.

This time the Grown Ups in the house all heard the thundering fall. The chickens set up a lively squawk, Aunt Sudie in the kitchen dropped a pan of newly raised bread and ran around the house wiping her floured hands on her apron in her hurry, the tap of Grandmother's cane quickened over the



porch floor and her voice called out questioninly. The Lame man who stitched canvas all day in his little workroom and some men from the shops started up the hill to rescue me and the household goods. I lay among the fallen logs feeling bruised and battered and very scared. My dress was ripped, my stockings torn, the wood was down, the loom was ruined and the beautiful little church was in pieces and I should be punished!

Then,out of the confusion, a tall figure leaned over me and my Grandfather's strong firm hand closed gently over mine. Helping me up he led me away from the stern faces and the excited voices and across the road to the barn. The cows had all come up to the fence after being driven in from pasture. Grandfather produced from nowhere a little tin cup I prized highly for the alphabet letters stamped around just under the rim. Kneeling beside him I watched his fingers strip down a little milk first from the tip of the udder to be sure it was clean. Then,holding the cup well down so there was foam on the top as if it were beer, he filled my cup with fresh warm milk. I drank it all and it was very comforting to feel the warmth going down past the big lump in my throat. I was glad to remember that supper was near and the day almost finished as we slowly made our way up to the house.

And that, children, is the story of my Baddest Day!"

The Doanes as pioneers began in the little Plymouth colony about 1628. They pioneered all along the Massachusetts coast and, finally Seth Doane with his young family went west as far as Fort Dearborn, that settlement out of which Chicago finally grew. They lived in Chicago aborning. When my Grandfather Seth Doane and his wife built their first log house in what is now Chicago, it was just a stockade in the wilderness. As more settlers from the east came and built houses so the population of Chicago reached 200 people, Seth Doane felt it was too crowded and abandoned his Lakeshore property. He took up land grants near Peoria expecting that his sons and sons-in-law would be there to work it. Grandmother Doane did not agree with the move to Southern Illinois and never gave up her "Dower rights" to the Chicago properties. These would be worth millions today! They travelled down to central Illinois by farm wagon and canal. When they came from the east Grandmother had a very large trousseau. On the route west a wagon would take them a day's journey and they would stay over night. The farmer would load their things and in that way they finally arrived. A farmer once said to Grandmother: "Madam, you travel with a sight o plunder!"** They had twelve children. Their fourth child, Amanda, was born in one of the first houses built outside of the stockade on the lake shore. Their six daughters all married between the ages of seventeen and eighteen. Aunt Sudie was close to twenty before she was finally gathered off. Aunt Mary was one of the six daughters who lost her lover in the Civil War. Contrary to what was then expected Aunt Mary didn't go into a decline. When an eligible young man came along and

(**after a quoted phrase indicates the saying became part of Ga Ga's favorite family quotes. This one used when anyone came with too much baggage, indicating accent on possessions!)

suggested that he would be very glad to relieve him of his daughter Mary, Grandfather was so shocked that he sat down and swore. Aunt Lucy married Uncle Shadrick and had ten children. They lived on a big farm. He wanted only to be a farmer. Aunt Lucy's only idea was that her children were to be educated. She always on all occasions wore a slat bonnet and a calico dress. Aunt Sarah was the proudest most cantankerous person. The increasing strife between the North and the South influenced the whole region. Abraham Lincoln, not far away, dominated the political thinking of the group. Seth Doane took with him from the East his craftsmanship, his skill as an architect and ship designer. And there in the west he began again to build; first the log house that just sheltered his family, then additions and, finally a white Colonial house that would have been at home on the streets of Salem or Plymouth, Mass. There was no need for fine houses in Illinois then. The Western Move was on the way and in the great shops opposite his house on the farm near Peoria,Seth Doane began building the Prairie Schooners. Amanda was the one of Seth Doane's children who understood and worked with him in his drawing. She was truly an artist. She made her own patterns for those little collars which were embroidered, tracing out designs of flowers on blue paper with delicate lines. My Grandfather would take my Mother around and say: "Mandy, look at that." He would not let her draw then. He was training her memory. She would go home and draw. At nineteen she married John Parker, a young school teacher. When the spirit of war swept through that community, he enlisted in a Volunteer regiment. Their home was broken up and, when he

went to camp, Amanda went back to the home of her father and mother. There, a few months later, her second child was born. Life in that big house became an endless struggle. Grandmother, frail, blinded and unhappy over the loss of her sons on the battlefields of the South. The young wife, later widowed, with two small children, overworked with all the cares of a family on a farm from which the active workers had been drawn into the battle. She had little time for care for her children.

In Grandfather's house there were wide strips of flowers that led up to the front door. The house looked like any good Georgian house. When you opened the front door you came into one big room. Opposite the door stood a full length mirror with a wide ornate gold frame and resting on a low marble topped stand. On either side of the mirror were the only two books I remember in the room, a Breeders Cattle catalogue, a large illustrated collection of racing horses, Norman horses and plow horses. It was bound in blue and stamped with a gold design on the cover. On the opposite side was a large yellow book depicting the glories of Vicks Nursery, mammoth pears and peaches, clusters of grapes. I used to sit on the floor and turn the pages of these wonders. The floor was carpeted with, I think, the only "store carpet" in the neighborhood, an ingrained carpet in shades of green and yellow with flecks of red. The many windows had deep gilt cornices, long Nottingham lace curtains looped back over French gilt rosettes. A few fine cane-seated rocking chairs. The beautiful inlaid mahogany table that my grandmother had brought all the way from her home in Cambridge. For me, life was centered about the recessed porch. Grandmother's bedroom was back of the parlor, and opened out of the porch. To the left of the

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hall was a big fireplace. On the other side of the mirror a doorway which went into a passageway and stairs that went up from there. To the left was the big kitchen in which most of the life of the diminishing household was spent. The huge fireplace with the iron andirons and crane, the brick bake oven, the straight-back hickory split chairs on either side. Beyond that was the modern cook stove with the water tank at the back, a marvel of modernity and a concession to the daughters of the household. Rag carpets were on the other floors of the house, woven in the Loom Room at the head of the stairs. A long shed ran back of the kitchen in which wood was sorted and piled high. One window on one side of this. You would walk down the wood path and pick up your wood. Two or three steps went up from the shed to the kitchen. Upstairs there was a long gallery of a passage way. Three bedrooms over the living room. Another across the end. Then came the Loom Room. The peaked roof of the shed began to come against the house. To the loft over the shed there was a low door. Here there were boxes of spindles and bobbins of different colors. In the Loom Room a bureau with the plaster church. The loom stood next to this passageway where boxes of spindles were kept. The loom was not as wide as a blanket. The great road ran through the middle of the farm. Long shops with a funny house of the old man with the crippled legs. Between the main house and the garden were enormous corn cribs that slanted up, then pigs and then a long building where cows were kept. The back of the house were the spring house and the chickens.

Grandfather was very fond of me. He had a blustering air. He always barked at you. He took me everywhere. When the horses went to water, I would

sit on the back of one, Grandfather holding me. When they bent to drink I was conscious that if it weren't for that big hand I would slip down into the pool. I would run to him and throw my arms around his waist. I was certain that he was built in two pieces and that all that held him together was his suspenders. One day he took off his suspenders. I threw myself to the ground in a paroxism of fear that he would come apart. "Grandfather, put them on again or you'll come to pieces!" When he picked me up I realized he was safely in one piece.

At the back of the house in the recessed porch between two of the wings of the house my life as a small child began. My blind grandmother sitting by the door leading into the big drawing room. A crippled sister on the couch. I think I can even remember when I hardly walked, sitting on a quilt building houses. My Grandfather would come in with great baskets of corn cobs for the kitchen fire, dump the carefully selected ones on the floor beside me, calling: "Here Sis, build you a house!" Sometimes he picked me up, this tall fiery old man, and carried me out of the house down the straight narrow walk, across the road into the low long shops sweet with the wind of the Western prairies and with the piles of clean white shavings about the great benches. I saw there the wheels built for the Prairie Schooners, the hoops that formed the canopy over which the canvas was stretched, the wide planed boards that became seats. I watched his lean old hands make drawings, not on Watmans best white paper, but on clean planed white pine boards. And then saw them take shape into things of beauty or of use. Sometimes I escaped from the house and made my own way across to the shops after an admonition from my Grandmother when I talked too much, "Little girls should be seen and not heard."

There were two chairs before the fireplace. One tall and one short and small. Grandfather would take out his corn cob pipe, go over to the mantel piece and pour himself some hard cider from the jug, light his pipe and then he would reach down into his pocket and get a short piece of grape vine for me, stick it in my mouth and light the end. We would sit side by side on the two chairs. I would try to cross my legs exactly as his were. I would hold his grape vine in my mouth and we would sit and puff. Then he would cross his legs the other way. I would try to follow, but usually I would fall down. Grandfather would pick me up. When he saw my grape vine was out he would seriously reach over and light it up again. I would say later: "No I'm not - I'm not going to sleep. I'm just shutting my eyes." Then, when I finally got to sleep he would pick me up in his arms and I would have no recollection of being put to bed.

Grandfather always wore his blue broadcloth coat and fine linen cravat when he went to service or abroad. Grandmother wore a lace cap and a black silk dress and a parasol. Filigree ornaments ~~pinned~~ were pinned to her shawl. For ordinary farm garb, the men's trousers were usually loose fitting and held by suspenders. Vests were largely worn and usually in cold weather a scarf around the neck. The vest served the dual purpose of being warm, having pockets and a handy place to tuck in the beard while working.

The story is that one day at a country fair up in Maine one of the ancestors of Grandfather who had been off in the wilderness suddenly appeared. He was first in the wrestling matches. After a while an old man, watching him in all these feats of strength and prowess said, "It's either a Doane or the Devil!"**

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Sitting one day in the door, my Grandfather called to me: "Hi Sis, look in my coat pocket and bring me my plug of tobacco." I remembered the candy and how good it had been and I thought that something my Grandfather wanted so much must be very good. I climbed on a chair, found the tobacco in his pocket, walked down the path, sat down on the edge of the platform about the barnyard pump. I saw him and the farmer with him just disappearing into the barn. I looked at the brown shiney plug of tobacco. I thought it must taste good. I held it firmly and took one large circular bit out of the corner, gave two or three vigorous chews before the juices began to strangle me. I spat it out, pumped and held my mouth under the dripping spout and then followed Grandfather into the barn. I handed the plug to him. He looked at that mutilated corner quizzically, shook his head and said, "Why Sis, I'll have to look after my tobacco after this!" I followed them about. I saw Grandfather go to the long row of bee hives, take out his pruning knife and cut off a great chunk of honey and hand it to the farmer to taste. A bit of salesmanship, but all my life it has seemed that, however disappointing the taste of tobacco was, nothing was sweeter than the taste of that dripping chunk of honey.

My Grandfather in common with his neighbor, Abe Lincoln, was tall, angular and an inveterate story teller and was given to profanity. I have not inherited many things from him, but all my life I have struggled against repeating his explosive swearing and to curb a desire to "top this" when anyone told a story. So it was not surprising when one day when the horses were in the lane and my Grandfather called to them to get out of the way that I said: "Grandfather, swear at them and then they'll do it." Feeling that life moved by the force of his profanity.

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My Mother feared nothing. She would go up in the barn, lift off the loose boards over the stall of Grandfather's wild stallion. Dropping a blanket on his back first, she would drop down on his back. She rode him with a gag bit. There is one story of a time when she and the stallion fell down a gully, she freed herself and the horse fell further and appeared to land on his neck. She followed and found that he was alright and helped him up and rode him home. Next day Grandfather kept saying, "I can't understand what makes that horse so lame!" One time my sister, Addie, toddled out to the barn and was sitting in the barn doorway when Mother rode out with the black stallion. My Mother leapt the horse over and free of the child."

There was always in the corner of the kitchen a great bag filled with cut rags to be sewed and wound into balls, then woven into carpets. On rainy days the bag would be emptied on the floor of the kitchen or the porch and we were given the job of sorting out the colors. There were the great balls of red and yellow and blue and white, the black balls and then the great hit-and-miss balls where one picked a white one, a grey one, a brown one. When enough had been accumulated and rewound on the great turned wooden bobbins in the box by the side of the loom, the warp strung, and the weaving begun. There were always red rags, for the men wore bright red flannel shirts and the children and sometimes the women bright red flannel petticoats. Sometimes this flannel, like the blankets, was woven from the rough wool of the sheep that grazed on the wide meadows at the back of the house. By the side of the great fireplace in the kitchen were tall crocks in which dyes were mixed and kept. A combination of colors and stripes used in the making of these homely carpets gave one of the few outlets for the artistic skill of the women.

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My father with my mother packed their household goods into one of the big Prairie schooners that my grandfather gave them and drove to the unbroken ground where my father had built a raw, two-roomed house on a land grant in Iowa that he and his father had taken up. My father was to teach school in the neighboring settlement and my mother tried, as so many pioneer western women did, to make a home. She knew before the home was put in order that a child was coming. Appalled at the thought of all the loneliness and privation, she laid the new rag carpets on the floor, took a hand-embroidered petticoat from her wedding outfit and made curtains for the two bare windows that at night were black against the pine walls. When my father came home from teaching one night he found her on a rough chair tacking up the partly cut curtains. He laughed at her and said she would never make a pioneer wife. The next morning, after he went off to his school, she took down the curtains, packed her few treasures into the little skin-covered trunks, put them in the Prairie Schooner that had brought them west, took the horses from the open shed, harnessed them to the wagon just as my father came home in the late afternoon. She was going home. He could go with her if he wanted to, but she was going. One horse was unhitched and he drove about the country making hasty provision for the school that he must abandon. Early in the morning they started the long trek back to the great house on the hill. A few belongings were put back in their places. Then he drove to the near village, coming back late that night. He found her sitting on the porch. He sat down on the low step at her feet and told her that he had enlisted in the Civil War with a Regiment made up entirely of Volunteers, both officers and men. She said she felt like ice when she went to her room that night. There were weeks after that when she went sometimes

to the camp where he was in training, taking with her the little crippled daughter who had been his constant companion. These trips to the camp were gala times for the sick child. When she came back to the great white house with all the empty rooms and empty chairs and the silent, blind grandmother the little girl would ask wistfully, "Won't you take Addie home? Hasn't Addie got a little home somewhere? Addie wants to go home!"**

The Iowa farm was at last sold. The money came and was put carefully away. My father had gone off to the Southern battle fields before I was born. My Mother's brothers had gone. One, the youngest, after a few brief months, had died. My aunts' husbands were all officers or soldiers in the camps in Tennessee, Murphysboro and all about there. I was so small I could not have remembered anything of these war torn days when lonely women went about their task of planting and plowing, gathering fruit, carrying water, feeding stock, knitting endlessly for the soldiers. And then, my aunt told me, after the beginning of the new year a message came that my father was ill. He had been so useful with his Volunteer Regiment, the 47th, that they could not let him take leave off to recuperate. A letter from him said "We are dying like flies". The entire regiment was decimated. There were no hospitals. The sick men were on the floors of the school house in Murphysboro, Tenn. Would my Mother come? Late, she said, one night my Grandfather took her in his wagon. She carried me under her long cloak. At the village my Aunt Sarah was waiting to go with them to the rough open station where a detachment of soldiers were waiting,

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men going to replace those who were in the hospitals or sleeping in the graveyards. My Mother said that, as she rode up on the high wagon seat, she gave me my last supper, trying to relieve her overfull breasts before she started on her journey. She told the officer standing on the platform why she must go south with that train. He said gruffly: "There are no accommodations on this train for anyone but soldiers". Then, seeing her distressed face, he said: "I'm going to walk to the engine, the door to the caboose is unlocked." She handed me to my aunt, walked hastily to the caboose, climbed up the steps, opened the door and sank down on a great pile of tents. Through the long hours of the night, she sat there, growing feverish with the pressure and pain of the overfull breasts. Then, in the grey early morning, they stopped at a way station to take water from the great tanks into the engine and to drink black coffee and eat corn bread. The colored cook saw my mother sitting in the corner of the room so evidently in distress. She asked her what the trouble was. My Mother told her. The cook opened the door and took her out to the rough porch and with her great soft black hands released the pressure as she would have released the over-full udder of a cow. Lack of food, anxiety and fatigue made such further service unncessary. At the end of the journey she found my father with a thousand other men lying on the floors of the classrooms and in the corridors of the school. She begged to take him home when the physician came, but it was too late. My father came later in the sealed casket and was laid in a little weed-grown cemetery where other men came home to rest.

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My aunt, who had a small boy a few months older than I was, nursed us both during the time of my mother's absence. Having no brothers, there grew up between me and this small red headed John Doane the closest affection. I hardly knew whether I really belonged to my mother or to my Aunt Sarah. I was so completely at home in her home. She had had no advantage of modern techniques in bringing up the pre-school child, but her imagination, her gaiety made life in that house an unending picnic. In the wide woods about the place there were twenty-four small figure four traps set for unwary rabbits, pheasants and prairie chickens. The woods were full of nuts and there were stores of them in the barn and in the attic. The cellar was full of apples and there were no restrictions on the number we ate. The place was littered with apples into which one bite had been taken and then discarded for the chipmunks and the rabbits. Sometimes, in the early morning, John and I with flour bags made a round of the figure four traps and came back with rabbits or prairie chickens. The family had had their breakfast but there were two places waiting on the end of the long table. The rabbit was killed and cleaned and fired. The great pancake griddle was brought to the front of the stove, chunks of sassafras bark were broken into the boiling water, shortly to emerge in beautiful pink tea. A big blue bowl of sugar, a small pitcher of cream and a big pitcher of milk. The corner of the table was spotted with dishes of jam and jelly and honey and the pancakes began to come. One for him and one for me. There was

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a fierce rivalry as to which one of us would finish his cakes first. Gradually the cakes became smaller and smaller, almost imperceptible at first, but in the end these lovely brown things about the size of a two-bit piece just large enough to hold a blurb of jelly - and the bowl was empty and we were full and ready for new adventure.

My Uncle Allan Fahnestock was a Colonel in the Illinois army regiment after first having been a Captain. He had this old white horse called "Lady" who always rode in Chicago in the parade with "Old Abe" the eagle. When he came home from the war he bred a horse each for his sons from "Lady". He had red sashes and various military accouterments with which we would play soldier in the attic, getting dressed up and riding the saw horses to the battle of Chipamaugwa or to Vicksburg. We would get tired of this and go and sit on the great pile of butter nuts by the attic window and crack nuts. There always seemed to be a place in this house for children, the attic was more like a playroom than a storage room. We also rode Uncle Allen's horse. I was the last one on. Frank, John and Addie were in front. They gave him a quick start and there was I sitting on the grass! Later on Uncle Allan had the big store. I was left a while with Uncle Allan and Aunt Sudie later on. They told me my mother had gone to Iowa to sell a farm that my father and his father had taken up when the government was giving land grants. They had had dreams of developing there a great farm like the one that my Grandfather had built in Central Illinois. My little red haired cousin, John used to say he wasn't a nice boy at all but a nice girl with black curls!

Today the children go to the nursery school and are given great lumps of clay. Then, in the quiet mid morning, if we went to the big kitchen, we found my mother or Aunt Sarah kneeding big mounds of dough ready for the baking. The table stood out from the wall, so that three or four of us could rim about her as she worked. She would cut off small pieces of dough and hand them to us to work and shape and, as we worked, we saw that she too was playing. The dough was no longer a great round mass. I remember one day seeing her broad thumb pinching the dough. The ears came, the long snout - the handle of her knife splatted the flat end of the pig's snout as it rested between his two front paws; and then, lifting the knife, she said: "And I am the Butcher!" and the pig was cut into five slices and each slice mounded into a round white loaf that went into the big pan and into the oven. We went off to play, lured back later by the indefinable smell of fresh bread just lifted out of the oven and turned on its side on the white cloth. We were too hungry to wait. I think that I shall never taste anything as good as those warm slices of bread that were cut, the pale brown of the crust and the butter spread over it and then: "Now, run and play."

But there were other joys from the bread board. I often came in in the middle of the morning and asked for bread. My Grandmother would take the loaf, hold it firmly against her chest and cut a deep slice and hand it to me and say: "If you're hungry, you won't want anything on it." I knew the answer to that. I sped past the porch, down through the wood shed, past

the chicken yard, through the gate at the end where a little brook ran through and around the milk house and on an island in the middle sat great pans of milk cooling. A thick yellow cream crusted the top. I would step carefully across the stone over the stream, lay my slice of bread down in the middle of one of the pans, pick it up crusted deep with yellow cream. Sometimes it dripped a bit on the stone. I knew the answer to that. I used to dip my foot in the water and rub it carefully on the stone until the traces of cream were gone. One day I came late. I learned the real meaning of my Grandmother's phrase: "Wait until the cream sets". That day the cream had set. When I put the bread down I lifted it up with a crimpling coat of thick cream. I looked at the pan. There in the middle was a square opening as if it had been cut out by a knife. I watched anxiously for the cream to separate and cover that tell-tale mark. The cream didn't taste quite so good that day and when I came the next day with my bread I found high above my head where I couldn't reach it a wide wooden board holding the door of the milk house tightly shut and locked.

The marvel was that these women, overworked, unhappy, without modern methods to chart their way in child care, succeeded in providing long happy days for their fatherless children.

Mother moved to Peoria where her Aunt Sarah lived and took a house. From that time on until I was nearly six whenever Grandfather would come to town he would pick me up on his big wagon and let me pretend to drive and we would drive out to the farm.

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The Hippity Hop Game or
How the Cake Disappeared at the Quilting Bee

I went into the house and found my Aunt and the women of the neighborhood in the great common room quilting. In the dining room the table was set for the party always a part of the gatherings. My small red headed cousin, John Fahnistock who was my constant companion was with me. We looked hungrily at the table, went to the tin-panelled cupboard, opened the door to find on the shelves cakes cut ready for the feast. They were very tempting. We each took a large slice, grasped hold of hands and somehow managed to eat cake, skip and sing: "Hippity Hop to the Barber Shop to Buy a Stick of Candy." The last crumb of cake was gone when we got back to the cupboard. Could it be done a second time? We tried, we were in for an orgy of feasting and only the few crumbs on the plate were left to tell the tale. We slipped out of the door, round the house and out into the great empty barn. There never was such a play house as that for children. Instead of great piles of hay, the corn stalks had been leaned against the sides of the walls, forming alleys through which we crept. Finally, we sat down on the floor behind one of the tents of corn stalks, subdued at last not by a guilty feeling but by the surfeit of sweets. We fell asleep to be awakened later by my uncle carrying a lantern. We were taken back, undressed and tucked into the trundle bed and into the big four-posted bed. I have no memory of reproof or of punishment. I cannot think that the children of this War II or I will have memories as happy as were those of the children of the Civil War in the neighborhood in which we lived.

Biley Buster
or
The Sickly Little Hen Who Grew to be a Fighting Rooster

One day my Aunt Helen and Uncle Jake drove their wagon over a hen and killed her. Beside her on the road was a forlorn little chicken they gave to me and my sister. Living in a little house which Grandfather had built at the end of the shops was a crippled man, one of the returned soldiers who came back from battle hobbling painfully on leather knee caps covering stumps of legs. He had a little forge in his shop. He mended shoes, harness, and made the baskets for gathering apples and potatoes. I used to go down with a tin double-decker lunch pail for him. We were great friends. When things grew too thick and there was too much of the "Don't talk so much." I would go to see him. I would ask him: "Why do they say that?" and he would say: "And do they say it!" - "Now me, I like them to talk. You come in here child and talk all you want." One day he reached over the low bench where we were sitting and brought out the loveliest little blue cradle for my doll. At first the little chicken was puny and we nursed it back to life. I would feed it from my own bowl. After I had the cradle, it used to be put to sleep there. It lay with its little claws curled up under it. Sometimes we put it on top of the bureau where it could see itself in the glass. It would get excited and peck at its reflection and then look back of the mirror to try to find the other chicken. We thought it was a little hen, but one day we were greatly surprised when it got into a full fledged row with a rooster on the other side of the fence. We had given it a girl's name but it hardly suited him.

One day I visited my friend in his sunny work shop, the little blue cradle under my arm and the rooster walking with me across the dusty road. He was growing fast and, as I sat down in the shop to begin one of our long talks, the hired man watched him puff himself up and preen and said: "If he don't watch out he'll bust his bilers!" Our tiny little playmate who had been given to us half alive grew up to be the largest rooster on the farm and everyone called him "Biley Buster"!

My mother had moved into the little white house in the village where people knew her and loved her and who were sorry for the young widow in her black dress and her two small daughters in their black dresses. She was earning her living sewing for her neighbors so that I was left much to my own devices. I remember going far down the street one day. At the gate of a small empty house I met two cousins. We went inside. The damp wall paper was beginning to peel. I took hold of a strip by the door and pulled a little. The long strip rolled off on to the floor. We suddenly were seized with a frenzy of vandalism and tore the paper off until the whole floor was littered and covered with it!

On another day I went into a neighbor garden. There were great ripe green watermelons. I could see all that lovely pink pulp with the little black seeds inside. I had seen my Grandfather take his knife out of his pocket and cut a plug in a melon to test its ripeness. I found a piece of glass. Raising my arms over the end of each melon, I cut plugs in one watermelon after another and brought them up. The end was white. I slipped the plugs back into place and went on to another watermelon, hoping always that I would find one that was pink and ripe. Fortunately for the rest of the field, I was called in.

Carrie and Aggie Smith lived next door. They had been washing their blankets out of doors in the tub. I wanted to wash my hair but Addie had the basin. So I got mad and went over and washed my hair in the blanket water. When my Mother saw my hair all covered with lint, she was wroth and cut it all off short. In those days you weren't decent with short hair and were very proud of your long locks. I was going for a music lesson. My music teacher's name was Maude. I worshipped her so much that, when I wanted to add a middle name to the single name given me, I said my name was Minnie Maude. I couldn't take my lesson with short hair. So I purloined my grandmother's false front which I tied on with a faded pink ribbon so that the hair hung down on each side in front. I forgot the back showed all shorn short. My music teacher never said a word!

I was only four. I went into the Primary grade. Addie wouldn't go without me. It was quite cold. Someone had given me for the coming cold weather a very bright green beige veil. I insisted that it could not be taken off. I went to school this first day enveloped in this green beige veil. Somehow they always seemed to steer a way around my most violent break-outs. Standing before the school stove with almost frozen fingers one day the teacher held a tin cup with water to thaw out my hands.

All little girls had their ears pierced. When it came time for ours to be done, Uncle Orville took a sharp needle and then squeezed the ear lobe so that the blood all went out and it didn't hurt much. But Addie pulled away and wouldn't let him do it. Uncle Orville, who lived in Chicago and was always buying expensive things, gave me a pair of ear drops that looked like gold for my ears. He finally got Addie to have her ears pierced but he waited

a long time before he gave her any earrings. When mine were new we met a friend who also had a brand new pair and she looked at mine and said: "Mine are pure gold, are yours?"**

One Fourth of July we were going to have a fireworks display. I had $1.21. I spent it all on fireworks. I put them all on an old wooden chair without a back out in the yard and then I carefully put newspaper on the chair first to be especially neat. I put my punk which was lit on the edge of the chair while I went into the house for something. While I was inside, I heard all of my fireworks go off. My sister and the neighbors' girls all shared some of theirs with me later.

My Uncle James had a photographic studio. The Indians would come in to have their pictures taken and they would always dress up with their gayest colored blankets and beaded shirts and head dresses. When the tin-types would come in without any color they didn't like it at all. So Uncle James would touch up the tin-types later on.

Uncle James had a trick of throwing a coin against a wall and making it stick. He told me: "Now, if you can do that you can have it." I had watched him and I knew he took a knife and made a little clip on the edge of the coin. He didn't know I knew and in this way I acquired 34¢.

My Mother and I were visiting in this town and stayed in a little old frame hotel on the Main street. I went to the store to see what I could buy. I bought one yard of red ribbon for 10¢, a brass match box for 10¢ and then I searched for something to buy with the 14¢ left. So I got fourteen sticks of lemon candy. I would take it all home to Addie who couldn't come along. On the way home on the train I would run my hand down into the little trunk

containing my things and break off a piece of candy. Then it would taste so good I would do it again. When we got home I ran to Addie and told her how I had brought all this candy home for her. Then, when I unwrapped the package, there were only three little broken sticks!

Minnie and the Revival Meeting

Mrs. Van Cott was as famous a Revivalist in 1860 and 1870 as Billy Sunday was later. On her visit to the country town where we lived she had gathered in a great many "Souls for Jesus" at church meetings. So it was decided that Revival be held for school children. My Mother, a young widow, was a Unitarian. Everyone liked her very much but felt that Unitarians were akin to Atheists. They would comment: "Such a fine woman and doomed to be damned!" The Methodist Minister lived across the street from our house. He took a great interest in my sister, Adelaide, and in me. We would go to the porch of his house and sit while he quoted Scripture or told us of the Parables. He was helping Mrs. Van Cott at the meetings. I could see him from the front row of seats in the church where all the small children were seated. He was sitting on the platform. When Mrs. Van Cott reached the place in her appeal to the children where she asked for personal experiences and declarations of faith, it looked as if no child would respond. My friend the Minister leaned down and beckoned to me to come to him. Thinking, no doubt, that if he directed questions to me I would lead off for the other children. I went cheerfully and stood facing him.

"Now, Minerva, you love Jesus don't you?"

"No", I replied with the obstinancy of a child being exploited.

"What!", his astonished voice went on, "You don't love Him!"

"No", I answered again.

Wishing to clear up this embarassing frankness, he asked, "Why?"

I explained, "I have seen a great many people that I don't like. I have never seen him, but I don't think I would like him."

Mrs.Van Cott turned, looked in my face, lifted her hand with that waving motion which indicated to the Congregation: "This is the time to stand". Then she prayed long and earnestly not only for my soul but for the soul of my Mother while I felt waves of disapproval sweeping over me from the multitude. But I had no notion of why my straightforward answers should bring upon me this public rebuke.

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My Uncle Allan Fahnestock had an enormous country store where they sold everything; farm equipment, sewing machines, coffins, clothing of every kind and boots hung from rafters at the top or second floor. Boxes of fancy buttons and thread. On the grocery side were hung red canisters filled with tea, etc. On a shelf above were rows of big glass jars as high as two sticks of candy filled full. My cousins who worked in the store would lift me up and say: "Now you can pull out any kind you want." Then the excitement of deciding which you would choose! Lemon pale yellow, winter-green white with green stripes and Peppermint. One day on the shelf between the jars of candies there was a box the like of which I had never seen before. The strange white wood, the lace edge and you pulled off the paper and there someone had developed this new kind of candy. Shiny chocolate, two artificial green leaves and little pink candy decorations. It seems as if they were too

good to eat and too beautiful to be true. It was new to have a white box. The only thing we had had up to that time was hard licorice sticks and Roots hoar-hound candy and lemon drops and peppermint drops.

One day a woman came in and asked, pointing at me, "Allan, whose child is that" and my Uncle Allan replied, "Oh, that's John Parker's orphan." She looked at me very carefully and said: "Why, she's one of my children!" (I did not know that she was the nurse or mid-wife who had been with my Mother when I was born.) I went out and sat on the porch where the wagon was fastened to the ring. I sat next to it and I had the strangest feeling that I should wait for this woman to come out and get me. She came out, said: "Hello Sis." I stood up by the side of the post waiting for her to put me in the wagon. She waved goodby and went off. Later when I was six and went to Normal, Illinois to live in a new place where people didn't know us, I said: "Why, she isn't my mother at all, my mother lives in Glasford!" Pure fiction in my mind that I was an adopted child.

The first wax dolls I saw were on a long counter in my Uncle Allan's store where I had gone the week before Christmas. I had never seen SUCH Christmas things. There in the center of the table were three wax dolls. My uncle said: "If there is one of them that isn't sold by Christmas, I'll give it to you." I haunted the store. I watched every customer about the table, saw the first doll carried away and then the second wrapped in the rough brown store paper that was used in country stores. The toys were pushed up to this one doll in the center of the table. I had grown to love that doll! Sometimes, standing by the great old stove in the back of the store, I dreamed of a time when she would be taken out of that pasteboard box

with its blue paper corners and dressed and carried in my arms. I came to the store the last morning before Christmas. The doll was still there. They were working anxiously on the big store stove. The fire had gone out during the night. The doll was still there but across the yellow of her pompadour was a wide crack and there were minute cracks on her cheeks where the frost had bit into the wax. The doll was mine! I can't remember feeling any less affection for her because of these defects. Just as I think most mothers love their children more because of blemishes on their faces or in their characters.

Late in the afternoon the time had come for me to go home. It was also the first time that I had ever gone on a train alone. My uncle wrapped the doll in brown paper, tied it with a strong string with a loop in the middle for me to carry it by and put into my other hand the parcel in which they had packed the garments I had brought with me when I came. At the station when my uncle lifted me out of the wagon he put the parcel in one hand, slipped the cord under my wrist and I carried the mummy-like package into the train and sat primly on the seat, my feet dangling. I put my satchel on the floor and took the package in my arms, running my hand down, pinching, I found the little hands and then on to the feet. I tore away a piece of paper to be quite sure that they were there. By the time I reached my destination the floor was quite covered with bits of paper. It was growing dusk when I got off at the station very near my home. I walked across the wide Common, sat down on a bench and tore off the last remainder of paper and held the doll in its muslin shimmy tight in my arms for the rest of the distance home. The doll had become really part of my life, never quite complete. One garment after the other was made, to make life

beautiful for a doll, even a doll with a cracked head. She seemed beautiful to me.

There would usually be a box in which they would put sample buttons, ends of ribbon and bits of lace. These we had to make doll clothes out of. Gay handkerchiefs that were samples. Uncle Allen would go to Chicago and there would be an orgy of stocking up. He would come back with something for Aunt Sarah. There was a gold canoe, a pair of oars crossed on an anchor and various nautical pieces of jewelry. Aunt Sudie was really the most colorful character that you can imagine. All purely ethical points of view Aunt Sudie disregarded. Man, woman and child, she had the most glamorous appearance.

Uncle Orville, who was Aunt Sudie's second husband had to retire at seventy. His father and Grandfather were Captains on the Lakes.(J.D.N. says that he was Capt. on the Mississippi and that it was he from whom Ga Ga learned to swear when she visited him on his steamer?) After he retired he bought a small pleasure boat out in California and had it anchored off shore. He would leave his bungalow and Aunt Sudie and go down and live in it for days. Aunt Sudie was always all decked out like a Christmas tree in the jewelry he would buy her.

The first doll I remember; sitting on the porch at my Grandfather's house, he brought in a big roll of new muslin. One ~~the~~ end was stamped, "Fruit of the Loom" in large letters. Before the garments could be cut this piece about a yard long was cut and put aside. My Mother took it up and said: "I think I can make her a doll out of this". A long strip on the edge was cut and then the slender arms and hands, the tiny thumb and rounded fingers were sewn and stitched and turned with infinite care. I sat holding this one arm until the

second one was finished. They were held carefully side by side on the long table. One by one the legs and the feet grew, the slender little body with the wasp-like waist, the long oval face, the arms were sewed tightly to the body, the legs were added. My mother with deft clever hands drew with India ink the eyebrows, the slender nose, the Cupids bow of a mouth, the little ears, wrapped it in a towel and gave it to me in my arms when I went to sleep that night. Late the next day she took the doll, braided black wool for hair, stitching it carefully into place. Then, from the piece basket that was never far away she fashioned little skirts and drawers, dainty black satin slippers and a gay little dress, tied a red ribbon around its waist with a little bow and long streamers behind. I remember carrying this doll about until its little hands were grimy as any baby's playing in the dirt. But it was to me, an orphan of the Civil War, as much comfort as I hope the dolls that are sent to the children abroad, orphans of World War II.

Slowly there settled upon my Grandfather the realization that never again would his sons or the husbands of his daughters come back to work with him in the fields, in the barns and in the shops. The children were growing older and would need schools. Grandmother was growing frailer and Grandfather, the Pioneer, heard marvelous tales of fortunes to be made by pasturing and selling cattle in the western states. The farm was to be sold. I used to sit on the wide step of the front door looking out at the unkept flower beds that had been my GRANDMOTHER'S pride. Contrasted with the simple homes and crowded quarters of our neighbors, it seemed to me very beautiful. It was austerely plain, uncluttered.

This room had been used by the neighbors as a gathering place for dances, as a gathering place on Sundays when by chance some itinerate minister passed through, as a gathering place for my Grandfather's horse trading cronies.

A few months before my Mother had gone to Normal, Illinois where almost the first of the Normal schools for the training of teachers had been built. A part of its training was a new experimental primary school. Friends had urged my Mother to come there and build a home for herself. Funds from the sale of that farm of my father's in Iowa were enough to build a house. Friends who lived next door had supervised the finishing of the house for which my Mother made the plans. Perhaps nothing in the world is harder on a child than the dismantling and dismembering of a home that has grown to be the very warp and woof of his life. The beautiful mahogany table that had seemed to me the very prize of that great living room on the farm was carefully wrapped and put on top of my Grandfather's wagon. A roll of new rag carpeting which was the last of the rags that had been woven. The Loom was sold. The door closed on us for the last time. My Mother and my sister and I came down the long walk. We climbed on to the high wagon seat. Sitting between my Mother and my Grandfather we started on our way to the new house in Normal. I remember the long ride as if it were yesterday. The end of the first day we came to a little log house by the road. There was a pungent odor of cheese making. We went in and asked the man and woman who were there if they could take care of us for the night. They said that they could. It seemed there was no place in that little house where we could possibly sleep. My

Mother brought a basket of food from the wagon and we sat at the end of the long table to eat our supper. The tired little cow was untied from the back of our wagon and tethered and fed. The woman lit a latern and said: "Come with me." Through the black night we walked across a grass grown field and came to a little new white house. Across all these years I still feel the pride of possession of that woman when she opened the door. The almost untrod rag carpets on the straight stairs to the bedrooms. On the beds deep, fluffy feather beds. We slept on one feather bed and another feather bed in a muslin cover was over us. The long long night came. I went to sleep seeing the flickering of the candle on the white plaster, the white wood and the two wide beds. In the early morning we dressed, washed our faces and hands at the tin basin beside the pump, walked to the old log house and sat at the rough brown table. There was, I remember, for breakfast a great pitcher of milk, bread and eggs, but the whole air of the place was so pungent with the smell of milk making its way toward great cheeses that even the milk in the clean white pitcher tasted sour. The horses were harnessed, the little cow tied to the end of the wagon and we drove on, reaching the new home late in the afternoon. My Grandfather tied the horses to a young tree that grew just outside the gate. We went on to the front porch. My Mother took the key to the front door out of her pocket and we went in. It was our home!

Opposite the front door the enclosed stair went rather steeply up to the second floor with a room on either side of the hall. The spare bedroom downstairs and a long, narrow dining room. A kitchen so stream-lined that it was a forerunner of the modern kitchen. At the side the wing with a tiny bedroom

and sitting room where my Grandmother could come to us when my Grandfather went west to herd cattle to, as he fondly hoped, double the money that had come from the sale of the farm. It was late afternoon. The first thing lifted from the back of the wagon was the new, shiney cook stove with the long pipe. In the front of this stove my Grandfather, the skillful workman, had put his tin sheers, his wire and hammer and all the utensils a good workman needs. The stove was carried in, the feet slipped under, the pipe cut and put in place. I was sent to the cellar to bring up a pile of the bits of wood that had been left from the building of the house. In a very little while a fire was burning in the stove. Next, the great roll of red carpeting, three breadths of which already had been sewed together, was brought in and laid on the floor of the sitting room. The trunks were brought in. The Mahogany table with its two leaves wide open was, for once in its life, to be used, not as a parlor ornament, but as a dining table beside the new stove. Across the way were acres and acres of flowers. I had come to see, not the catalogue, but the reality of the great nurseries where they raised and packed and sent over the country their roses and fruit trees and shrubs. I had not even wondered where we were to sleep. There were no beds. Very soon I saw my Grandfather and my Mother walking over to the sheds of the nurseries each carrying two bed ticks. Later, a little procession came back with the four ticks no longer flabby, but filled full of the moss that was used in the nurseries for packing and shipping. Two were put down in the corner of the carpeted room, two in the corners of the other room. I was given my supper. I have no memory of what we had to eat. I remember my clothes being slipped off and creeping into the bed with its hard-woven blankets,

and lying there awake with the moon coming up through the uncurtained windows. Life had taken on its new pattern.

Later on Grandmother came to us. Grandfather went west on the cattle enterprise. Grandmother died. Grandfather got pneumonia. When one of the aunts went out to care for him she found him married to a designing young widow with one child. I never saw him again.

Minerva Parker Nichols was born on May 14,1862 in Glasford ,Timber Township,Peoria County,Illinois. She was the fourth child (second living child) of John and Amanda Parker. Her father enlisted in the Illinois Infantry on August 7th,1862 and died of dysentery on July 23,1863-when Minnie was just 14 months old. After her father's death she spent her early childhood on her grandfather Seth Doane's farm (vividly described in "The Baddest Day and Other Stories.")
The farm and prairie wagon factory of Seth Doane was in Orion Township, Fulton County, Illinois. She also spent a good deal of time with her Aunt ~~Sudie~~ Sarah and Uncle Allen Fahnestock in Glasford. When she was about five years old her mother bought a house in Normal,Illinois,where she first went to school. At or before she was ten the family moved to Chicago . Gaga (Minerva) loved to tell her grandchildren stories of the great fire,so she probably was there in 1871. Her mother married Dr. Samuel Maxwell in 1875 and they lived at 387 W.Madison,(a street missed by the fire). Part of the time they lived in Chicago Adelaide and Minnie attended the Convent School in Dubuque,Iowa .In 1876 the new Maxwell family moved to Philadelphia,Pa. at 1612 Green Street. In 1877 Dr. Maxwell died and later the same year Minnie's half brother, Samuel R. Maxwell, was born.

Minerva prepared for her career in architecture before academic training was available for women in Philadelphia. She obtained a teacher's certificate for drawing from the Phila. Normal Art School (1879-1882) and then a certificate upon completion of a full course in architectural drawing at the Franklin Institute in 1886. She continued her studies at the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Arts (1888-89) during her first year of practice .From 1889 until her marriage she actively pursued her profession, first working for an architect and then becoming the first known solo practicing woman architect in the United States. She had her office at Broad and Chestnut Streets.(The Wanamaker's Men's Store was later built at that site.) Kathleen Sinclair Woods,a historian of architecture, has written an extensive summary of Minerva's career. Minerva designed numerous homes, row houses, a factory, and the New Century Club buildings in Phila. and Wilmington,Delaware. She gained some notoriety when she was chosen by the Isabella Society to design a woman's pavilion for the Columbian Exposition of 1893. Her design was Spanish in style while the Exposition was to be entirely Georgian. Because of her style and perhaps because of the animosity between the Isabellists and Mrs Hanore Palmer and her Board of Lady Managers, Minerva's design was rejected and Sophia Hayden's design was chosen.

In 1891 she married William I.Nichols,the minister of the Spring Garden Street Unitarian Church of Philadelphia, which she attended. After her marriage she gradually shifted over to being a minister's wife. In1893 she was listed on the faculty of the Phila. School of Design for

Women. Her husband was much more inclined towards social issues than to being pastor for a group a well-to-do parishoners. It was no surprise when he accepted the call to be the general manager of the Brooklyn Bureau of Charities in 1894. During this period (1894-1912) Minerva raised her four children and assisted her husband. From 1912 to 1917 William's health rapidly declined. The family were at Wilton, Conn., Deerfield,Mass., Cambridge,Mass., and at Hingham (at the time of his death).

Minerva moved to Milton,Mass. to live near where her daughter, Adelaide,was teaching and where her youngest son,William,was going to school. Several years later she returned to Wilton. When her daughter and her husband (Jack Baker) built their larger house (designed by Minerva), she moved into their former home next door. These homes were on Guard Hill in Westport, Conn. From 1927 until her death in 1949 she presided over her eight grandchildren as they came and went. Up until the end of her life she kept her fingers in touch with her profession. At Deerfield she renovated the church; she designed a new dormatory for the Brown and Nichols School; and in her later years did several family homes.

After her death, in the 1980s and 90s, an increased interest in America's pioneer professional women produced a renewed interest in her accomplishments a century before.

Historical Validity of "The Baddest Day"

In the early 1940s,then in her 80s Gaga (Minerva Parker Nichols) told three of her grandchildren stories of her early childhood. These stories were transcribed, illustrated, and presented to each of the grandchildren by Francis Nichols, her daughter in law.

In doing research into the Illinois period, I compared documented material to Gaga's Stories, where events and people are described .Her stories covered the period from 1862 to about 1868. I have learned that she had an amazing memory for events and people but that after 75 years, dates and numbers were often incorrect. Overall it is really amazing how much she remembered correctly. Some of the erroneous facts expounded by later generations could have been avoided if more attention had been paid to her stories.

In the following paragraphs are family records relating to the contents of the book.

A. Where did everyone live. Amanda Doane Parker lived in Lancaster, Timber Township, Peoria County, Illinois. After her husband's death she spent time with her sister, Sarah Fahnestock who lived in Glasford, and in Lancaster (both in Timber Township). She also spent time with her parents in their home in Orion Township in adjacent Fulton County. The story about the nurse midwife telling Allen Fahnestock at his Glasford Store that Minnie was one of her babies is logical. Gaga was born in Glasford (according to information on the birth certificate of her son William).

B. Were all the relatives Gaga told about real? Seth Brown Doane was the oldest of the eight children of Edward Doane. Three of his siblings-Edward Jr.,Julia Ann, and John lived at one time or another in Illinois. When Gaga said Amanda stayed near her Aunt Sarah in Peoria , after John Parker's death, she was probably referring to her uncle John Doane's wife ,Sarah.

Gaga tells us many tidbits about her aunts and uncles. She said there were twelve. The "Doane Family "genealogy only listed eight. The 1850 Federal Census added three more names making eleven, close to the number she said. They were;

1. Lucretia,born in 1824. Married and died in 1853 at age 29 after loosing five children in infancy.

2.Lucy Ann, born 1827. She married Shadrack Scott from Kentucky. They had ten children and lived on a farm as Gaga said.

3.Sarah, born in 1829. She married Allen Fahnestock. They were very important in Gaga's stories. Gaga correctly described his military career and his occupation after the war. Sarah and Allen's youngest child,John A.(not John Doane) was nine months older than Gaga and her frequent playmate.

4. William, born in 1831 died as an infant.

5. Leander, born in 1832 went West as a young man.

6. Seth, born in 1834, moved all over.He lived five years in Fulton County after he married Nancy Ann Crossen. Moved to Kansas with his father,Seth.

7.Amanda, born in 1836. Gaga's mother.

8.Catherine Helen, born in 1838. Called Aunt Helen. Married Uncle Jake who drove his wagon over the chicken in the story of "Biley Buster".

9.Mary, born in 1841 is referred to as the younger sister who lost her husband in the war and remarried.

10. John, born in 1844 is probably Amanda's younger brother who Gaga said died in the war.

11.Meloria, born in 1848 is not referred to in the stories.

This leaves one aunt unaccounted for-Aunt Sudie.She was prominent in the stories and is mentioned once as being at her grandfather's house.She did not get married until she was a older lady of 20! She was married to Uncle Orville, who was a Great Lakes Captain and he pierced Gaga's ears. Orville retired at seventy and they went West.. I could find no one by either name. Was Sudie a sister of Amanda, a very dear friend called "aunt" , or a sister of Meloria, Amanda's mother?

There also is no record of Uncle James,the photographer in the stories.

C.John Parker. Gaga correctly said her father was a teacher (he listed" teacher" as his occupation in the 1860 census). She correctly describes him enlisting, going for training, going off to war and dying in Tennessee. She incorrectly remembered his regiment as the 47th. It was the 86th. Gaga said she was born a few months after her father enlisted and went off to camp. He went to camp in August 1862 and moved out in September of 1862. Gaga was born in May of 1862, so she was three months old before her father enlisted on August 7,1862. She was 14 months old when her father died.

D. Seth Brown Doane. Seth was said to be a man of many occupations. Gaga portrayed him as a wagon maker. In the 1850 Census he is listed as a wagon maker. His farm was appraised at $600. Pretty good for 240 acres.

E. Land Grant. Gaga mentions a land Grant in Iowa and said that her father and his father owned this land. She said Amanda sold the land and bought property in Normal,Illinois. The land grant has yet to be found, but Amanda lived in Normal at the time of the 1870 Census. Her property was assessed at $4000. Gaga said she went to Normal when she was six. This would have been around 1868.

So there is much more truth than fiction in Gaga's childhood stories.

Amanda Doane Parker
"Mandy"- 1865

Daughters

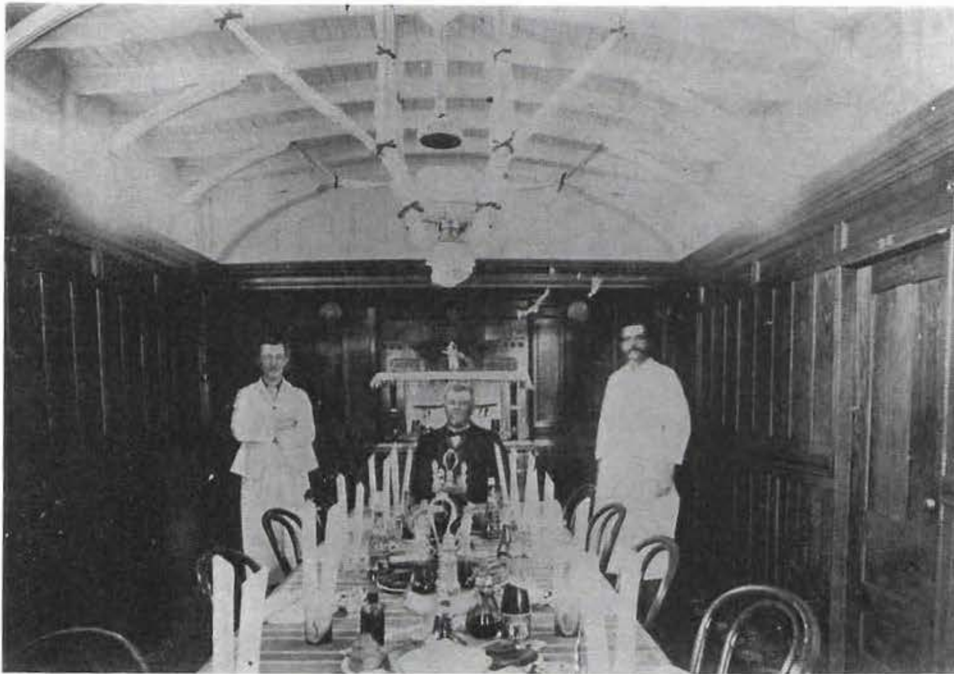
Adelaide Parker-"Addie"

Minerva Parker -"Minnie"

Seth Brown Doane 41

Meloria Johnson (Doane) 42

Uncle Orville
Captain of a Great Lakes
Chicago



The Uncle Who Pierced Minerva's Ears

Col. Allan Fahnestock
Minerva's Uncle

Sarah Doane Fahnestock
Aunt " Sudie"

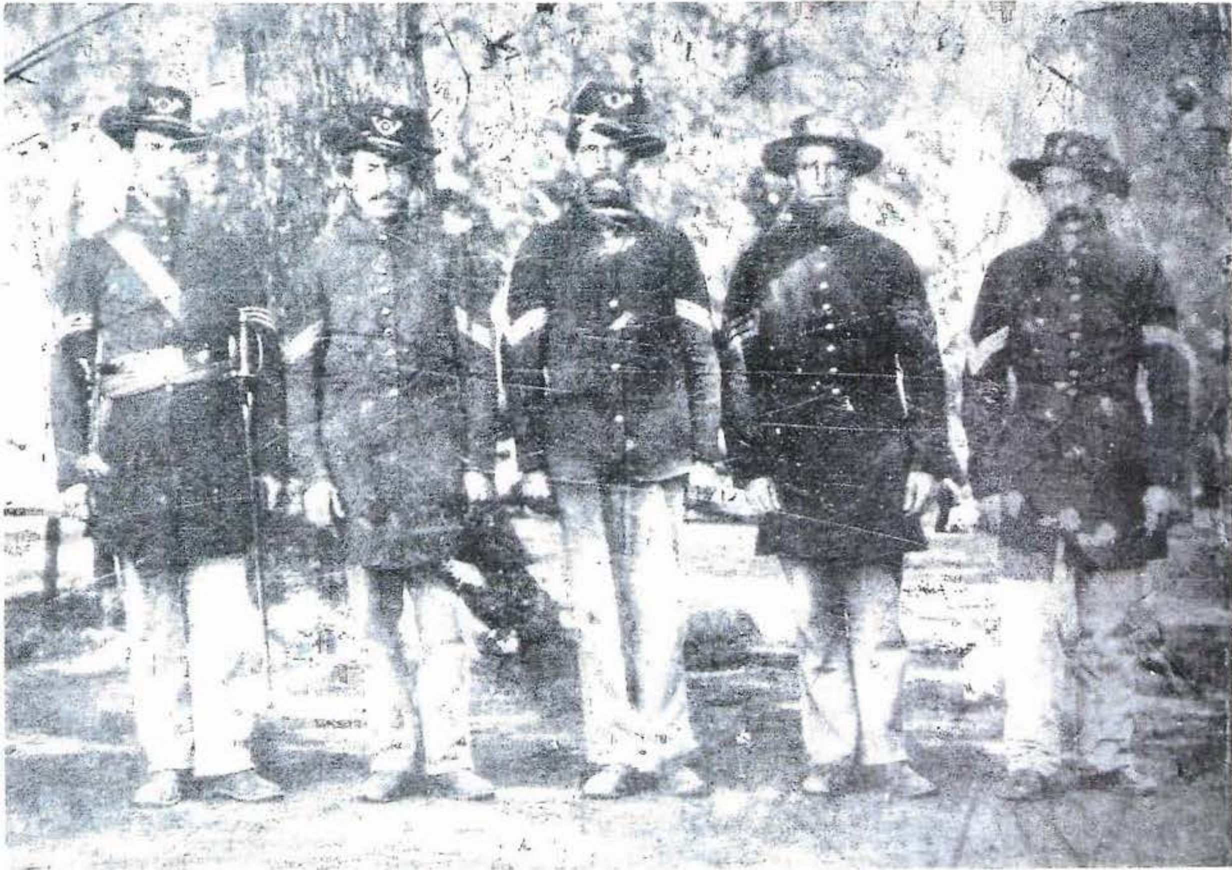
John Fahnestock
Minerva Parker's Cousin and Playmate

Minerva Parker Nichols (7)

Designs by
Minerva Parker (Nichols)

New Century Club
Phila.,Pa.

Isabella Pavillion
Submitted for Columbian Exposition
Chicago,Illinois
But not Selected



Sgt. John Wesley Parker (25) (Second from Left)

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