

Ira Ayer I
1885

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Reminiscences

From

The Life of a

Pioneer

By

Ira Ayer

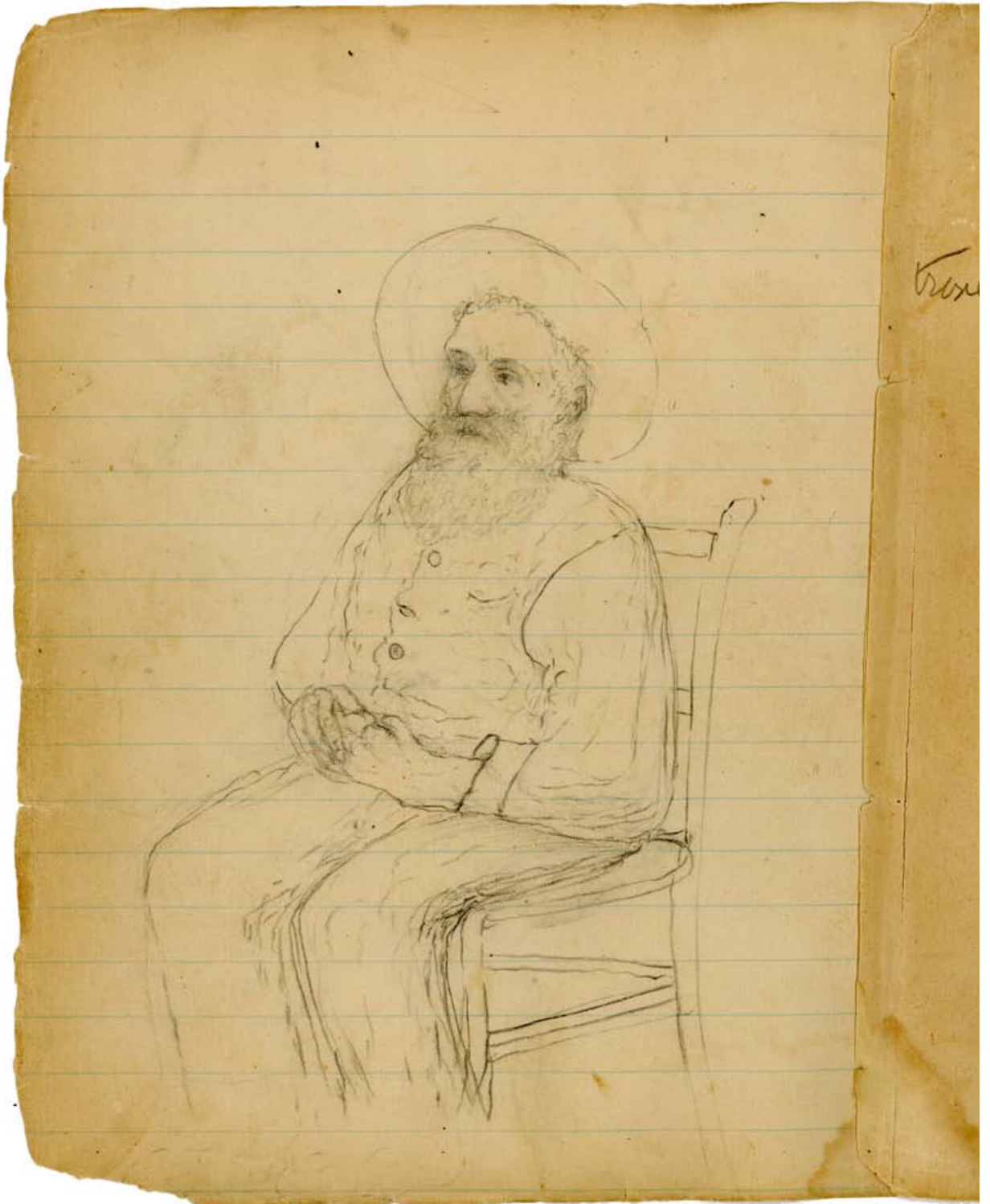


Figure 1 - Ira Ayer Self Portrait

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About Ira Ayer I

Even though there are several biographies of Ira I in this book I think that it would be appropriate to include a short description of his life here. He was born on December 26, 1802 in Haverhill, Massachusetts. He had three brothers and four sisters and his father owned a farm on the banks of the Merrimac River. When he was eight years old his family sold the farm put everything they owned in two covered wagons and moved out west; that is to Buffalo, New York. His father got a 439 acre piece of undeveloped land west of Buffalo in an area that is now part of the town of Evans. They built a one room log cabin where the family of ten lived for many years.

When Ira was sixteen and his brother Goreham was eighteen they had to return to Haverhill to get the balance of the mortgage payments for their old farm. They were owed \$1000 and the round trip was a 400 miles. They had to go on foot (I will not say what happened, you have to read it).

In 1828 he married Julia Mariah Wadsworth and they had 7 children. Julia died in 1861.

In 1827 he was a Lieutenant of the 48th Regiment of Infantry, New York Militia. By 1837 he had reached the rank of Colonel and in 1838 served in the Patriot War. The Patriot War was a war between Canadian rebels and the British Government. The rebels or "Patriots" were mostly American farmers and artisans who were trying to free Canada from British control. The United States Government was officially neutral and to protect that neutrality sent militias to the borders to protect them. Ira's militia was sent to Grand Island near Buffalo and served for four weeks. The Patriots were holding Navy Island which is less than a mile away and part of Canada.

After Abraham Lincoln called for 300,000 volunteers in 1862, Ira, age 59, recruited and trained a Company of men. They were the first to be trained and report for service for the 116th Reg. N. Y. Volunteers and therefore became Co. A1. They served through the entire war, however Ira only served until March of 1863 when his health was failing.

In 1869 he married Bessie Cronkite who was 40 years his junior. They adopted a girl name Lolah. Both Bessie and Lolah survived him when died in 1889.

Ira had been a farmer by trade and according to the censuses in 1850 his farm was valued at \$2650 and by 1870 his real and personal estate was valued at \$7000.

About Ira Ayer I

The original of "Reminiscences" is hand written on all 100 pages of a note book. I have included the original drawings. It was probably all written in the Ira's own hand sometime around the mid 1880s when the Ira was in his early 80s. It includes a portrait of an elderly man sitting down. This is assumed to be a self portrait.

Toward the end he mentions that his sister Sarah is 78 years old. She was born on April 2, 1809. This implies that the passage was written in 1887 or 1888.

He wrote the stories in response to a plea from two of his children. By about 1920 the book was in the hands of Julia Fletcher Ayer Jessup (Ira's granddaughter by his son Ira II). When Julia was planning to move she was going to throw out all her old things. She told her niece Angela Lucia Williams (daughter of Alice Wadsworth Ayer Williams and granddaughter of Ira II) that she could have anything in the attic. Angela found and rescued the book.

In the 1960s Alice Wadsworth Ayer Williams and her sister Clementine Ayer Morse were doing a genealogical study of their family and had the book typed up. The typed version suffered not only from not having any of the original drawings but the typist took many liberties in interpreting the stories. The typed version was full of errors, grammar brought more up to date, and significantly altered facts. Also the first and last section of "Reminiscences" were excluded completely.

Clementine or Alice and Clementine added a Forward to introduce Ira Ayer. That Forward is included here.

In this version I tried to be as faithful to the original copy as possible. I wanted it typed for the ease of reading, but I wanted to retain as much of the original flavor as possible. I have included all the drawings with as much of the large hand printed parts as possible. I copied the text as faithfully as I could. If there was a word I couldn't read I put it in [brackets] with question marks for the letters I did not understand. The last section was the hardest to read and is full of []s. If I thought that something needed further explanation I put a footnote.

The grammar of Ira Ayer is therefore retained but this means that I also included many of his errors.

Bill Scholtz

Introduction to Reminiscences – By Clementine Ayer Morse and Alice Ayer Williams

OUR GRANDFATHER, IRA AYER, was born in 1802 on what he described as the most beautiful farm on the Merrimac River, and lived there with his brother and sisters until he was 9 years old, when his father, James Ayer, had the urge to pioneer to western New York so they were in time, ready to start with two wagons covered with blue painted canvas and four fine horses, who would act a very important part in the long journey to the Wilderness. After a fine and exciting trip, they were finally settled on a 430 acre farm on Lake Erie and they grew with the country and prospered. When our Grandfather was 16, he and his brother, 18, walked back to Haverhill to collect mortgages for their father, in all, over a thousand miles. One hundred miles in 3 days. He was born when Thomas Jefferson was President and had his first vote when John Quincy Adams was elected. Those were exciting years especially for the Pioneers. Buffalo on Lake Erie was burned to the ground by the Indians in 1812. Commodore Perry won the conflict over the British on Lake Erie. 1814, battles of Chippewa and Lundy's Lane, and the capture of Fort Erie. The same year Washington was burned and in 1815 the decisive battle of New Orleans was fought. He was a Colonel at 34, and took part in the Patriot War. He had many commissions. And, when, over 60, and Lincoln called for 300,000 volunteers, he recruited and trained a Company of young men, and as they were the first to be perfected and to report, were mustered into the service as Co. A, 116, Reg. N.Y. Vol., which served through the entire war. His youngest brother James also recruited and trained a Company and was killed in one of the Southern battles.

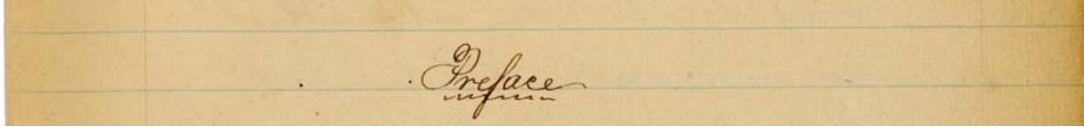
Clementine Ayer Morse and Alice Ayer Williams

1960

Preface

Reminiscences

Preface

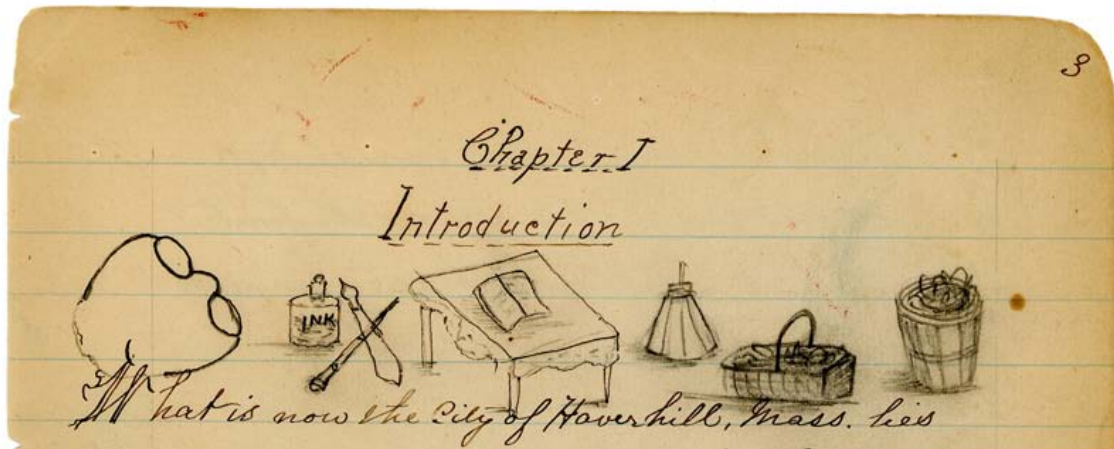


God in the creation of man, saw fit, in his wisdom and in the exercise of His goodness towards him, to give him a lesson of instruction, that he might know where his place was, not only as regards his maker, but also in relation to all animal creation. In this instructive lesson man found that he had a place very near his Creator, so that we find nothing in all animal creation that intervenes between the Creator and the Created man; more than this, God, in the creation of all things that had life placed within them the fear of man, and still more, has taught man to love and obey his Creator, and to rule well over the created. God, knowing the aptness of man to forget, and to let many important things drop by the way, caused it to be written out in a Book, that man might read and know in all generations to come, what the Lord had taught their Fathers; also in order to gratify their aspiration to know the particulars concerning the experience of the Fathers these four thousand years.

Aspirations in the human heart to know the experience of the Fathers of their own family, in generations long since gone by, have not abated in the least; this fact together with the fact, that my son Ira and daughter Sarah are very desirous that I should write out in detail the experiences of my early life, has induced me, in a circumscribed manner, to comply with their wishes.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Chapter 1 – Introduction



What is now the city of Haverhill, Mass., lies immediately on the north shore of the Merrimac River, about 15 miles from its mouth. About one mile above the city is a very beautiful farm, exceeding any on the river. The north boundary of the river lot, was what is called the River Road. On this road, the buildings of the farm were placed. The house was wood color, and I should think, always had been. The west end was brick; it had a number of holes in it, said to be there for the purpose of shooting Indians in olden times. How this was I cannot say; judging from appearances however, it might have been so, for the house looked as though it had been through the wars. It had a chimney on the brick end. The kitchen, bedroom, and buttery were all the rooms below. There were only one square room and two bedrooms above. The stairs were one side of the chimney. The stories were low; the well was between the house and the barn

Chapter 1 – Introduction

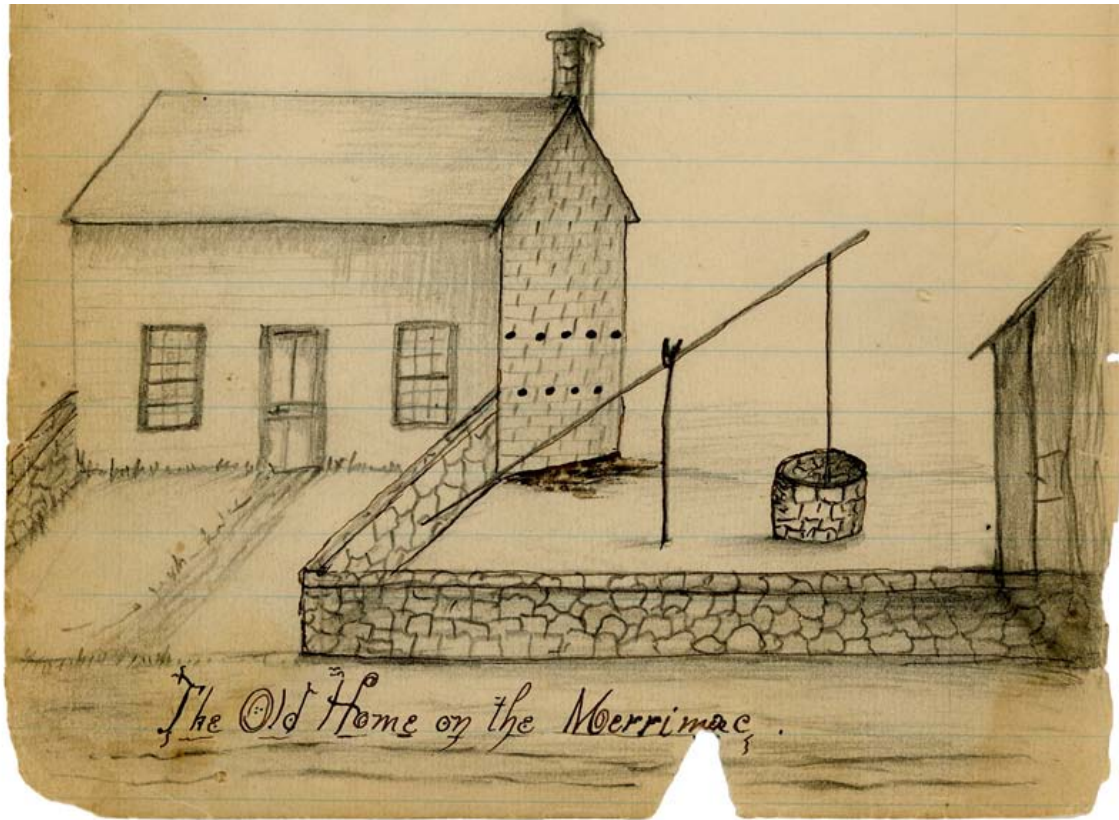


Figure 2 - The Old Home of the Merrimac

It was on this beautiful farm and into this less beautiful house that my parents moved in their early marriage, about 1794. You may ask, reader, "How was it that your father had the best farm on the river?" I cannot tell you how it was, but I can tell you how it was not; viz by any dishonesty, whatever. So I suppose it was by fair contract, just as all my father's descendants do business.

Old Mrs. Frink was a woman with one eye. She lived about half way from my parents' home and the town. It was said she was a witch. She saw my mother about the time of her moving into the new house and said "When you get moved, I will come and see you." I suppose Mrs. Frink was not pleased with my mother's reply, for it was said that after that she looked over into the pigpen and bewitched the pigs. At any rate the pigs jumped out, so the story went, and ran about in such a way as to lead one to say they were bewitched whether they really believed it or not. I remember the old woman very well; she used to call when she came along, to rest herself. As I remember how the old lady looked, if I believed in witches, it would not be hard for me to credit the pig story.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

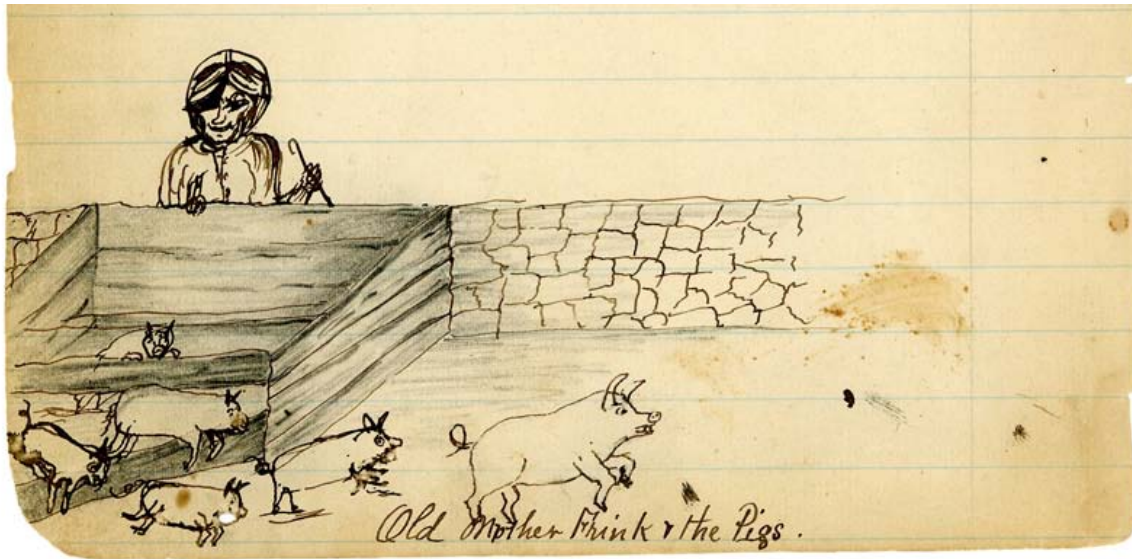
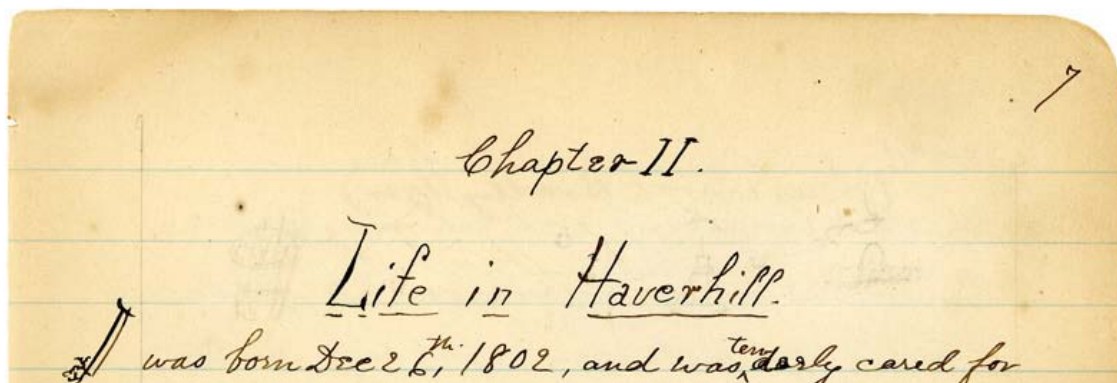


Figure 3 - Old Mother Frink & the Pigs

Chapter 2 – Life in Haverhill

Chapter 2 – Life in Haverhill



I was born December 26, 1802, and was tenderly cared for in early life, excepting in one case in infancy; my nurse, in a petulant mood, it was said took hold of one of my hands or feet and snatched me roughly into bed. How much this effected my after life I don't pretend to say, but this much I know, I never was such a strong heavy and laboring man as my Brother Goreham. But to say nothing more of this, I was blessed with parents of high respectability, who looked well after my wants, always ready to administer to my necessities. If they saw anything in my behavior not according to the rule of good manners, they admonished me of my fault, if in no other way by the shake of the head. I had only the advantages of a common school education as more than this was not expected except in the few. My parents (James and Sarah Bradley Ayer) were strictly a church going people; they were not professors of religion, but regarded those who were, perhaps we might say, with more respect than otherwise they would. They attended the close communion Baptist church. I well remember that cold Sabbath Day with four feet of snow upon the ground when, we had to go home from church 'cross lots, turning into the lot on the hill not far from Judge Foster's, coming into the road again opposite Shoemaker Harvey's. Here the whiffletree, or something, hit the bar post, or something and broke the harness, which had to be fixed by the shoemaker with his waxedend. Then we got home nicely.

As soon as I was old enough, my parents let me go out around with Lowe and Goreham. I remember going fishing with them one cold winter's day, over a mile or two, to a pond. Two or three holes were soon cut through the ice and hooks dropped in; it wasn't long before we had a bite and then a pickerel out upon the ice. Never were our hearts so glad before; at least it will do to say so, he was a large fellow. We caught a larger one that day, at any rate, and I shouldn't wonder if this was the one, after all. We were a happy lot of boys, jumping and laughing, anyone a mile off could see that we had caught a fish, that is if they had pretty good eyes. We arrived home laughing and happy, with three fish and one was a bouncer.

Chapter 2 – Life in Haverhill



Figure 4 - Gone fishing

While I was yet in my early boyhood I recall another fishing excursion. Brother Goreham and myself took it to our heads to go a fishing on the river ice, whether with or without the consent of our mother I am not sure. Be this as it may, off we went, a little down the River, I think about half way to the City Bridge. This we called our fishing ground. Our tackling was soon ready, and if we did not cut holes in the ice it was because there were cracks running up and down the ice caused by the tide from the ocean, through which we could fish. What luck we had, this time, I cannot say, but the hours passed on so rapidly that we hardly realized how long we had been gone; rapidly with us, but slowly with dear mother. How little, children know the anxiety of their parents for their safety. We heard a hallooming for quite a long time, but were not certain what it was; to be sure it seemed to come from the direction of the house and sounded like our dear mother's voice and yet we didn't know but it was the cock crowing; finally we come to this conclusion, hoping we were right, yet fearing we were wrong. Nevertheless, taking our chances, we kept on fishing; it may be until the evening shades began to gather around us. At the same time, it maybe, we began to feel that our dear mother was concerned about us. So we fixed up our fishing

tackling and started for home. No doubt our dear mother's heart was much relieved to see us once more in the body, how happy to see us alive and well shedding it may be tears of joy. Dearest, dear mother, true to your family, true to your neighbor, true to the poor, true to the church, true everywhere and now in Heaven! Glory to God in the highest, Hallelujah to the Lamb forever! Blessed dear mother in Heaven, yes in Heaven! I trust I shall see you there bye and bye dear Mother, amen and amen! You are a stranger to grief now my dear mother. The tears that fill my eyes now will be wiped away when I see you. Dear, dear mother, Amen--Amen.

Perhaps during the war of 1812 Brother James, then a baby, had his dish of bread and milk in his lap, while sitting on the floor in the log house. His dish was a pint cup with a handle on one side. While managing as well as he could, holding on to the handle with one hand and eating his bread and milk with the other, he made a little miss and all went on the floor; after his mother had scooped it all up into the dish with her spoon and was about to carry it away,

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Squire Gray, one of our neighbors said, "Let the baby have it, he will never know the difference!" The Squire spoke in a laughing way, but my dear mother was so far from joining in with him in the laugh, that she said, rather disapprovingly, "I would never give a child what I wouldn't eat myself."

While in my early boyhood, say five or six years old, I commenced going to a public school with brother Lowe who was about 12. Lowe took part with the ball players, while I was nothing but a looker-on. I suppose it was noon-time when the boys out on the sod were playing away briskly, each side striving for mastery as best they could. While thus engaged, with all possible might, young Bartlette sprang forward, with a furious jump to catch a rolling ball in time to hit another before he got to his goal. Bartlette failed; he was a little behind time, and said it was because Lowe Ayer was in the way, and in his fury took the ball, which by the way, was brother Lowe's and threw it at my brother as best he could. How the matter was settled I don't remember, that is, between Brother Lowe and Bartlette; between myself and Bartlette it remains unsettled. Our teacher Mr. Chandler, had but one eye, and had to wear a pad over it. Mr. C. was a very efficient teacher as well as gentleman. Bartlette in school time fixed a pad over his eye, the same as the teacher had, over his and went forward, up the aisle, to the teacher to be instructed in some question in his lesson. I don't suppose the teacher appeared to notice him, but of course it made a great disturbance in the school. This is the last of my remembrance of Bartlette. He may be living now. If so he is about 90 years old. If he by chance should call on me I might see a gentlemen, or a tramp and a scamp; if the former, he has made a happy change for himself, if the latter, he had no change to make. I may be a little prejudiced on account of the play ball affair.

In the same summer, on a bright Sabbath day I was standing on the Little River bridge. It was the day appointed for baptism. The ceremony began, and a boy standing by me would say, as each candidate was baptized, "dip." Only once he omitted to do so and the thought struck me that this one was the boy's sister. I afterwards made inquiry and found it to be as I supposed. However rude the boy was, we find this redeeming quality that he had respect for his own Sister.



Figure 5 - Great Grandmothers Marble's funeral

the second wife of Joseph Bradley. The only child they had together was Enoch Bradley, Ira's Grandfather. After Joseph Bradley died she married John Marble. Before she married Joseph Bradley she was referred to as Mrs. French from Newbury. It is not known if the name French is from an earlier marriage or if it was her maiden name. She died on April 26, 1809 at age 97.

Now I will go back to the occasion of my Great Grandmother Marble'sⁱ funeral which I can just remember of attending. I think it is the very first thing in my life that I can recollect. It has just come into my mind. She was about 90 years old. While living she was about as deaf as she could be, and I should think blind too. She lived in one of the old fashioned small wood colored houses, a mile or two back from the River Road

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and about three miles from us. I want to say a word or two about this old house; I should think it might have been one of the first framed houses ever built in that neighborhood "round about". Oh how very, very old the old house looks to me, in my mind. When I think of it, it almost makes me lonesome. The funeral ceremonies, I suppose were observed with precision and solemnity. My great grandmother Marble is gone. I suppose she has been in her grave nearly eight years. Good bye dear Grandmother. I hope we shall meet again on the other shore. Amen. The friends went back from the grave to the house again for tea, before parting. I remember the fried cakes were not quite cooked through. Good bye to the past; Every day carries it farther and farther away.

Goreham and I had the promise of going to see Grandma Bradley, sometime, if we would be good children. The long wished for day finally came and off we started as laughing and happy as we could be. We were not long going two miles up the River Road to Grandpa's house. All was pleasant, all was happy: a day or two passed on with satisfaction to all. Finally dear Grandma thought it would be "a good time to get a lot of chips picked up, now the boys are here if they are willing." Of course we made no objections. Baskets, new and old were brought forward, and carried out to the chip yard for us to fill as best we could. We soon found the yard of chips was not sufficiently large to fill all the baskets with good chips, yet we supposed our dear Grandma expected we would fill all the baskets with good chips. Finally we concluded to solve the difficulty by putting small chips in the bottom of the baskets and good ones on top. In this way we could fill all the baskets to satisfaction, at least in appearance.



Figure 6 - They Solve the difficulties

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At it we went and in due time we had them all filled and carried into the woodhouse. We heard nothing of our mode of filling the baskets until dear Grandma came to our house, visiting, when she told Mother all about it. Of course they had a good laugh at Goreham's and my expense: but as I remember about it now, it was a matter of necessity: so, at least, it seemed to us at the time. Dearest Grandma Bradley how long since you have passed away into the great future! How soon am I to follow! Your generation is gone and mine will soon be with it. How I like to indulge in the thought that we shall meet, dear Grandmother bye and bye. How beautiful, how grand the thought! It is engraved as we may stay, on the pillars of heaven! It is the paramount of glory. I hope we all will be there!

Uncle Lowe Bradleyⁱⁱ went to sea in early boyhood, I suppose by the consent of his parents. In after years he was captain of a vessel, was cast away and remained on masthead three days. He was a man of very fine appearance, more than ordinary height, straight, heavy, broad shouldered, commanding attention wherever he might be, without saying a word. After leaving the Sea, he bought himself a small farm about two miles above our house, a little off from the River Road, perhaps on the same place where Grandma Marble used to live. He built a very pretty house, not to say large and expensive, but just such a one as it might be expected a man of his appearance would build. On his way to town he would often call to see his sister. I remember that one of these occasions dear mother had carpet rags around sewing, and Uncle Lowe took to show the children how to sew them. At another time, he called to take tea. Of course I was too young to sit at the table when Uncle Lowe was there, so I stood by the fireplace. In the mean time I had a young robin concealed in a hole under the oven. During the time of eating the robin made a loud chirping. Not thinking anything in particular was the matter with little robin, I didn't go near it for fear of Uncle Lowe's hearing that I had a robin in that dark hole. I knew if he found it out he would reprove me sharply for doing such a thing to a young innocent bird, and finally say so much I would have to let it go. The bird, after a while stopped its chirping and as I supposed, all was well. No sooner had Uncle Lowe left than I ran to the hole. An awful sight greeted me, one I had never seen before and I do not remember any since that, that ever gave me such a shock. The old cat had done the mischief. Had I known what was going on, Uncle Lowe or no Uncle Lowe I should at once have run to the rescue of robin. What added to my grief was, that I should have to wait a whole long year before I could have another, it being past the time to catch young birds.

ⁱⁱ The only Low that Peters (Bradley of Essex County) lists in the family of Enoch Bradley and Mary Low is Caleb Low Bradley, born 22 Feb 1780. He was between 25 and 30 years old at the time bird story to be described. The Haverhill

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Figure 7 - Should have rescued the Robin

But I must pass on, Uncle Lowe has long since passed away, I hope to that better land.

The potatoes were [???]: the corn in the other end of the field was not gathered in: the after grass on the meadow was grown to make a good bite for the milk cows, but what was to be done! Father finally concluded to turn the cows on to the grass, and let Ira watch them to keep them from the corn. How long the corn was safely guarded, I am not able to say. After a while, watching the cows became an old story; so pleading loneliness I finally prevailed upon them to let Sister Mary go with me to watch the cows. This went on very well for a while, until we finally concluded to play at something. We decided upon making ovens by covering our feet with dirt, on the potato ground, in a very firm way, so that the dirt would not cave in when we drew out our feet. In this way we passed our time very happily for a number of days, it may be; in fact we began to think more of making ovens than of watching cows. It seems that the cows thought luck had turned in their favor; the watchers being on one end of the field and they on the other, they concluded to try a little corn with their grass: So into the corn they went, and began eating as fast as they could. Mary and I were so engaged in our play we had quite forgotten the corn, but, in the mean time, our father had seen, from the house that the cows were in the corn. Soon, we saw him coming as fast as he could with a small stick in his hand.

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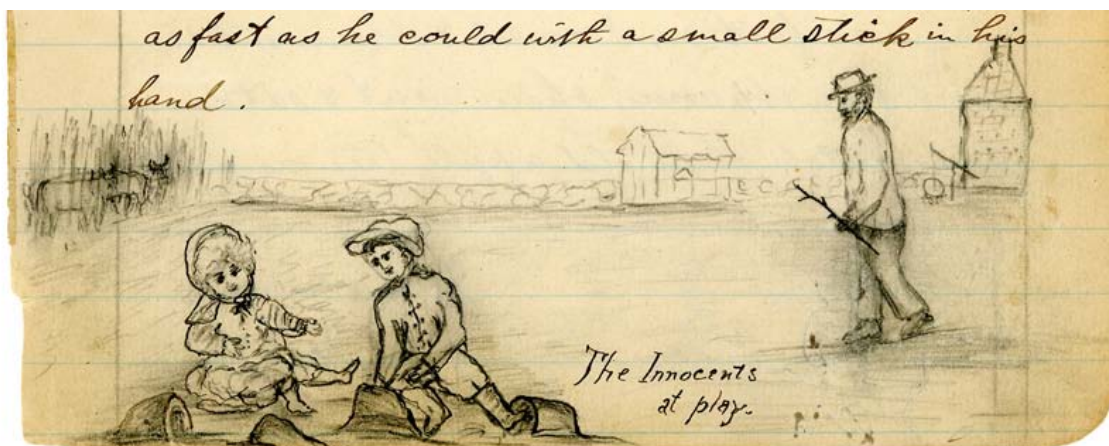


Figure 8 - The Innocents at play

I suppose we thought it a very strange way for Papa to come, so we asked him what he was coming for. He said "he would show us." Soon he had me by the shoulder with one hand, and was whipping me with the small stick in the other. Then he said "Go and drive the cows out of the corn." While the whipping proceeded Mary was crying to see how Papa was whipping Ira, not thinking that she herself might soon pass through the same experience. But no sooner had he finished whipping me, than he took her and did the same with her saying, "Now go to the house." Of course I ran as fast as I could and drove out the cows from the corn, then went and sat down in the crotch of an old apple tree as mad as I could be.

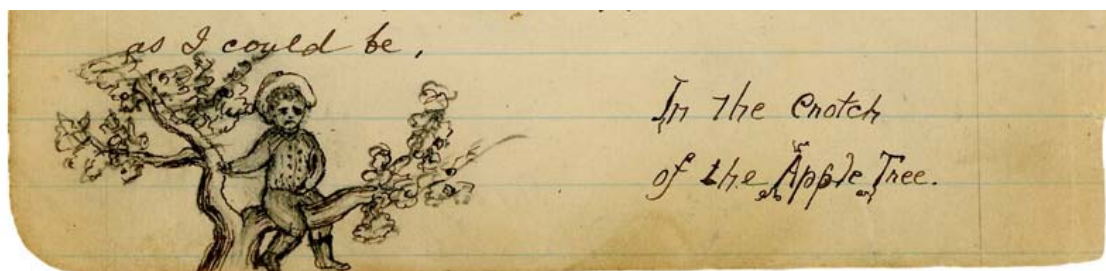


Figure 9 - In the crotch of the Apple Tree

Chapter 2 – Life in Haverhill

One day my dear Mother had a matter to attend to upstairs and took baby Sarah and myself with her. Soon she was ready to return and on her way said hastily, "you stay here Ira and take care of baby." Not giving me time to even say "I don't want to." I felt it all the same, notwithstanding. The words rang in my ear, You stay here, Ira, and take care of the baby. I looked the words over with much care, hoping to find some loophole where I might dodge out, but I found none. I could put but one construction upon it; in fact, it meant but one thing; just the right words were used, not one too many nor one too few. Now the question was, what did Ma mean by care. Well, I finally thought she meant



Figure 10 - Taking care of the Baby

keep baby from falling down stairs. So I kept the stairs well guarded, and let baby creep around as she would. By and by she crept into the bedroom: the window was low and shoved up. It may be baby thought it a good time to see what there was in the outside world, and in order to see to good advantage, she found it necessary to get her little stomach pretty well up on the window stool. Now, I thought, was my time; Baby will not come to the stairs now, and down I went. No sooner had I reached the floor than my dear Mother asked in a very earnest and excited tone, "where is baby." "Looking out of the window," I replied. "Run up and get her quick!" she exclaimed, more excitedly than ever. On the instant the point flashed into my mind, and the next moment I was at the head of the stairs, but no baby was there. I ran to the window just in time to see dear Mother taking baby from the ground. The little innocent was not badly hurt, after all. After she was rocked to sleep, Mother said to me, "I should have thought, Ira, you would have known better!" All I could say, was "I didn't know she would fall out of the window."

The common way of traveling for people going to Town from the back country, was on horseback. If the traveler was seen coming by the farmer, he would make it in his way to be by the roadside, in order to have a little talk with him. This was expected on both sides, for they believed, in those early days in the practice of reciprocity. Their greeting would seem to be almost in the form of a dialogue, commencing it might be in this way; "How do you do Sir?" This would be the

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introduction on both sides. Then one party would ask at the other "What may I call your name Sir, if I may be so bold?" "Not at all, Sir, my name is John Dole. What may I call your name, enquires horseback, with a respectful nod of the head. "My name is Ayer, James Ayer," with a genteel bow. "Well Mr. Ayer you have made a great improvement since I traveled this road before, excepting in the old house with a brick end; that looks just as it did in war time. Let me see, how old are you?" "If I live to see the 25th of next month I shall be 38 years old," was the reply. "Oh, I am a good deal the oldest. I was all through the Revolution. Well I was going to say something about the old house, it was wood color then, and its the same now: it don't look as though it ever saw a painters brush in the world, does it now? The old brick end looks the same as it did in war time, holes and all: we used to call them port holes. Often a company of us, after we had been out on skirmishing duty, would come down this way. If we saw a puff of smoke from one of the port holes, we knew there was trouble. If we judge we were strong enough to storm the garrison, we made a rush at once; if not we turned and run as fast as we could. In one instance while running in this way, one of the boys received a slight wound. Upon this we made a rush on them (Indians they proved to be) hit or miss and gave them a good flogging, killing a few and making prisoners of the rest. After hand cuffing them and tying them together with a bedcord we had with us, we took their guns and marched for town where the prisoners were securely placed in the "jug up," as we called it. That was the last trouble we had with the Indians.

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Figure 11 - What might have been

While I do not say that the above conversation ever actually occurred I do say it is very likely to have occurred and in very much after the manner indicated.

The witch bridge was about a quarter of a mile above our house, on the River Road. I have sometimes thought in my own mind why it was called witch bridge, and finally concluded that in a very early day, grandmother Frink had stopped there possibly to take a drink of water from the brook and that some one who came along not knowing the old lady had gone home and told his folks that he had seen an old lady down by the brook bridge who looked like a witch and that ever after, they called it by the name of witch bridge.

Uncle Peter Ayer lived about a quarter of a mile above the witch bridge. He had a large family much respected by his neighbors. He had six daughters, Abigail, Harriet, Adaline, Ann, Jane, and Clarissa. His three sons were Richard, Robert, and Varnum. Abigail married Capt Lowe Bradley. They had two sons, one of them, I think, engaged in business in N York City. I have made some inquiry, hoping to find him the same Bradley that was chosen a member of the Pres't Hayes committee to decide who was Pres't; but as I couldn't make it appear very clear I let it drop.

Chapter 2 – Life in Haverhill

Richard Ayer married a girl by the name of Head. She lived over the River, about opposite, I should think. She was an only child but not generally thought to be very attractive. Her Father was said to be very rich. I don't know whether that had anything to do with the marriage, or not. Robert was looked upon as a sharp dealer, though as I should presume, highly respected by his acquaintances. Varnum, when we left Haverhill was yet in his boyhood. He was older than myself, yet we mated very well. On one occasion we were out in the barnyard, playing. His uncle James Ayer, my father, was cleaning out the stable. Varnum was maneuvering around, and happened to be standing right opposite and near by a large opening, between the boards. His uncle made up his mind that he, Varnum, was about to treat him in a way unbecoming to a man of his age, and an uncle at that. So he concluded to help master Varnum out with his play; that there should, in fact, be two parts to it, one part to be performed by Varnum on the outside and his own from within. The inside party discovered the beauty of the play depended upon his performing his part at the instant the outside party had finished his. A shovel full of fine manure was in readiness and at the right moment, thrown from within through the boards, with a force, that no doubt led Mr. Varnum to say in his own mind "Uncle James acted his part well," while his Uncle James felt that he had given as good as was sent, in other words, had paid for all receipts in full, to date.

Varnum grew to be a clever man and married well; although it was said of him that he would not confine himself to water to quench his thirst, when he could get something he liked better.

The history of Uncle Peter's family is ended. It may be I am the last to tell the story. What is man? He comes forth in the morning; he flourishes like the grass of the valley at noon day; at evening he is cut down like the mown grass, and is no more.

The time for going into a new country was near approaching. Some things were already packed; the looking glass was removed and nothing but the bare post remained where it had so long been hanging. All was confusion. The far west was the order of the day. Sister Martha was 13 years of age. Jim Kelly was a tall young mad who had the appearance of not being favored with the advantages of social life, and seemed to care little for what might be said to him for his improvement. Martha occasionally would indulge in trying a joke on Jim. As luck would have it, about this time Jim came in; Martha met him with a look of excitement and said, "Jim, what is the matter with your face?" "Nothing as I know of," was the reply. "Nothing!" said Martha; "then what is it that makes you look so; I should like to know? have you been having a fuss with some body? do you have spells sometimes Jim? go look in the glass, and see for yourself." At the time Martha stepped one side, in order that Jim could see the way opened for him to go to the glass. While on his way Martha sprang for the door out of Jim's sight to enjoy a good laugh. Jim went up to the post with no little curiosity to take a look at his face, but to his surprise found nothing but a bare post; he saw the

Chapter 2 – Life in Haverhill

joke at once, and started for the door, grumbling as he went along, "that's just one of Martha's tricks." I have no recollection of hearing anything from Jim since Martha had a long laugh at the time, and I suppose for weeks after would laugh out when she thought of it.

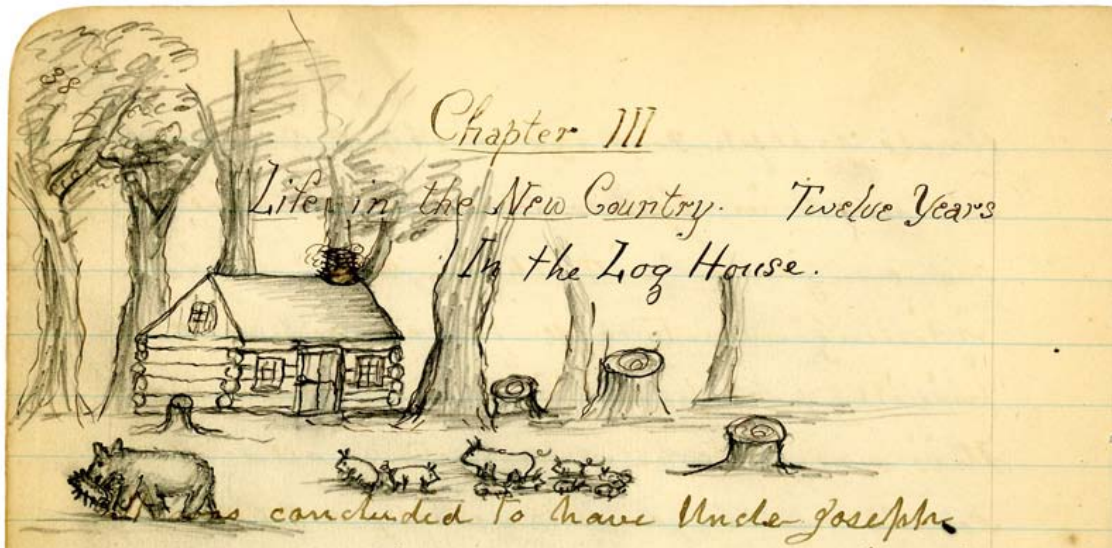


Figure 12 - The Joke on Jim

More on Martha in the next chapter.

In a short time all was in readiness for a start. Two wagons covered well with painted canvass, one for the family, the other for the luggage; stood at the door. To them were attached four fine horses well [Red?] up, who seemed to understand they were to act a very important part in going the long journey to the far west. Some things for common use, such as table ware and the like were packed in the wagon; some pretty well worn were thrown away, and the balance I suppose was laid aside to go at auction. Neighbors to say goodbye had called; the Family were all seated in the wagon, tears all wiped dry. The horses at the crack of the whip, started.

Chapter 3 – Life in the New Country: Twelve Years In the Log House



It was concluded to have Uncle Joseph Bradley go with us and have a voice in some of the movements of the journey. We started briskly on and reached Bilricaⁱⁱⁱ sometime before sunset, but Uncle Joseph thought it would be as well to stop for the night. This conclusion of Uncle's that it would be as well to stop for the night, together with the fact that Bilrica was to the left of the road that should have gone, appeared a little strange to Father, but after hearing all the facts in the case there was nothing strange about it. Miss Brower was Uncle Joseph Bradley's Prettiest girl, and she lived in Bilrica. From Bilrica we started on our journey with cheer. Our manner of living was to call for a room, with the privilege of providing our own meal. This seemed to be satisfactory all around. So we moved on pleasantly and happily. We crossed the Hudson at Albany, took the Cherry Valley road, and moved nicely on. It might have been somewhere on this road that it was thought it best to have a little change in our way of living. I think it was in a village place; we called for our meals right out. This made it much easier for dear mother and smoother as we might say all around. The bill was \$7,00; even after that, we fell back on the old plan. As days passed on, nearly four weeks passed by, until the number of days and number of miles to our journey's was complete. Here, in due time, Uncle Joseph left us, to go back to Haverhill, I suppose, by the way of Bilrica. I think we stayed in Buffalo about three weeks. We found it a new country town, nearly all; from where the Mansion House is now, to the Buffalo Creek was a swamp of adders. No one spoke of Buffalo as to what it was but, as to what it is going to be. During our stay in town Pa, I suppose, was inquiring what the farming lands were in every direction. He finally concluded to go up the Lake. Everything being ready, we went as far as the Eighteen mile creek, (Pa_ had already been to see Mr Palmer he was keeping

ⁱⁱⁱ This is Billerica, a town about 15 miles Southwest of Haverhill.

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Tavern at the mouth of the creek on the up Lake side, Mr Palmer showed Pa_ a small log house where he could move his family; the house was on the same side of the creek that the Tavern was) most of the way on the beach. It was dark. Pa Hallooed, Mr Palmer from his home across the creek answered and soon he was out with a lantern. He shouted to us, the best he could where to go into the creek, and what course to take, when we got there. Pa understood, and drove as well as he could, and the horses pulled the best they knew how, and up the creek we went; sometimes, it may be, the water would run into the box; then we would find ourselves on the rapids; then would stop to hear what Mr Palmer said; then it may be, we would turn to the right or left as Mr Palmer would direct; so up the creek we went, about a half a mile; then another shout from Mr Palmer. "Come out of the creek here:" we stopped to hear what our guide said. "Come out of the creek here;" he cried the second time. Pa_ drew on the gee line and cried out at the top of his voice, "Getup!" The horses sprang; the next moment both wagons were high and dry: we found we had reached our new home. Dear Ma inhaled a full breath and all was right again. Pa and Mr Palmer consulted together a short time. The house was provided with a light; goods were carried in; the horses were cared for; supper was brought forward and placed on the table in good condition; everyone felt like eating their portion and all were cheerful and happy. Mr. Palmer after kindly doing for us all that was needed to be done said goodbye and went home. The bed time hour was at hand, beds were made ready and soon all were in bed sleeping sweetly.

The next day was the time to put every thing in order. The old log house was small, yet a place was found for every thing and every thing was put in place. So far, so good, but where is our farm? was in inquiry. In a day or so Pa started to find a farm. He went to Springville and found one that suited him, I suppose, very well. He soon returned home and started for Batavia to get an Article. As he started along he called on Mr. Palmer and told him he was on his way to Batavia to get an Article of a piece of land in Springville. Mr. Palmer advised Pa to look up the Lake as he thought he might do better; so Pa turned and went home, and soon selected the farm, a part of which James Ayer now lives on. He soon started for Batavia the 2nd time and took an Article for 439 acres; but Ma and the family had a great fright about Pa; he was gone so long, we certainly thought that something bad had happened to him. We thought of many things; possibly he was taken sick, or the horse had been stolen, or that Pa had been robbed, or that he had fallen from the wagon and was badly hurt; possibly killed; as days passed on we more and more feared we should never see dear Pa alive. Again dear Ma began to look over our situation to see what would be best to do if we had lost dear Pa. We kept looking and wondering until our last hope had almost faded out. By and by while all this was going on in our minds, some one cried out, "Pa is coming!" All ran to look; "yes" said another "that's dear Pa!" Then as with one voice they all cried out "Yes our dear Pa is coming! dear dear Pa Pa is coming!" Soon he was at the door. All ran to kiss him. After the greeting was somewhat subsided, dear Mother said, "Mr. Ayer what has happed to you that kept you so long?" "nothing;" said dear Pa, "only bad roads." He had gone and done his

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business all right, and come home as soon as he could. Now for moving to our new neighborhood. After a day's rest, dear Pa went up to see what was the first thing to be done.

Now Pa is gone, it will be a good time to tell what a scare I had with a bull dog. I had made myself a squirt gun and was playing with it around, and as I and bull dog were standing near the bank of the creek together, I squirt some water in bull dog's face, I thought by bull dog's actions he didn't like it very well; he stood on his hind legs, so that we stood face to face, his head as high as mine; he appeared to be angry. I kept the dog between myself and the creek as well as I could then went to patting him, saying, "good bull dog!" After a while, he seemed to cool down and I carefully separated from bull dog. I never squirted water at bull dog after that.

In a day or two, Pa returned. He said that a man by the name of Taylor had very kindly offered to have us move into his house, until we could build ours. Pa said Mr. Taylor's People were mechanics and would help us about building. We got ready as soon as we could and moved in with our new Neighbor. Arrangements were made at once for building our log house; soon all was ready and Neighbors from far and near, were invited to the raising. At the appointed time they come dodging through the bushes from every quarter. When night came, the log house was up. All were friendly wishing us good luck, saying they were glad we had come to take a part in the woods with them and with a friendly goodbye, left for home.

I think before we had time to do anything more to the house four feet of snow fell. This was a set back, to be sure, but perseverance was the order of the day; all hands went at it with a will: every day told something I think. In about six weeks the house was ready for the new comer; no chimney, no hearth, and I think no chamber floor, yet the house was ready for the newcomers. At the word ready we moved in at once; the winter was cold but wood was plenty, and near by; we cut our wood 4 feet long, sometimes our backlogs would be 2 feet through. We would stick the ax in one end of the log; the men get hold of the helve next to the ax; then the women would get hold of the mens hands and all pull together. The log would move at once: sometimes the first haul would take it to the right spot for rolling onto the fireplace where it belonged. The next thing would be back stick about a foot through, the fore stick about the same size. All this we would call a good foundation for a fire. (One thing I have forgotten to tell you; for hand irons we used short pieces of wood.) Now would come on the kindlings and small wood well rounded up with the latter. The large sticks would last 24 hours round, the small wood put on as needed. In this way we would have a variety of climate as dear Mother used to say, in cold weather freeze on one side and burn the other. Dear Pa made it his first business to cut all the trees within reach of the house so they would not be falling onto the house by the wind, or any other cause. While engaged in this business, he came to a tree that seemed to say to the woodsman use your best skill to make me fall this way or that way, I will go

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where I am a mind to. It was a large beach, rotten on one side. Dear Pa didn't pretend to be much of a woodsman but thought he would try it any how. It leaned a little towards the house. Pa commenced chopping, using all the caution he could, to keep the tree from falling on the house. The baby was in the corner by the fire. Dear Mother was near, if not in the very place where the tree fell, looking through, between the logs, watching the tree. As the time drew near for its falling, anxiety increased on the part of all. Dear Mother and baby were on the side of the house where the tree was about to fall. All was silent but the sound of the ax. Soon there was trembling in the top, a sure indication that a tree is about to fall, dear Mother was looking out between the logs. The tree started. Pa Halloed to the top of his voice, Mother ran to the baby to run out with it if possible in time to escape harm. The tree fell just where she had been standing. You see Mother was saved by her love for the baby.

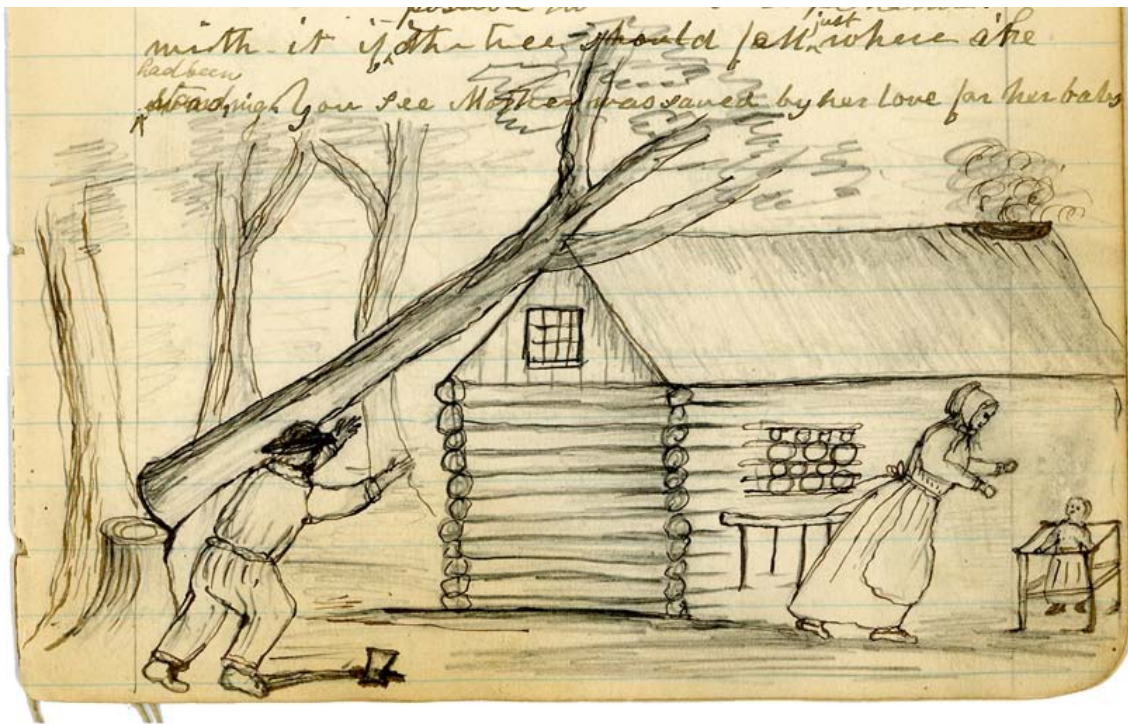


Figure 13 - Saving Baby

We had been living in the log house about two years. Bear thought it about time to make the newcomers a fashionable evening visit, but when he got to the house of the strangers he found all in bed fast asleep; bear thought it not worth while to disturb them; there being plenty of young hogs around, he could get his own supper all very well: as he was somewhat tired by his long travel he felt like lying down a while and possibly take a short nap. He slept longer than he intended to. Looking about he found it was almost morning and finally concluded on account of it being so late he might as well take his breakfast with his supper all at the same time. It was not long after he came to this conclusion, before he made a pounce on a small pile of young hogs. He was very fortunate, or as it

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might be he so intended, to catch the best hog in the lot. We never doubted that bear carried out his intention to eat supper and breakfast at the same time. Bear concluded he had better be going, for he didn't know what folks would think. In the morning they might say we will have his hide for pay. As soon as the family were up the cry was, "Something had killed one of the hogs!" We were New England people, and hardly knew what to think about the whole affair. We sent for Mr. Dustin, one of our neighbors who was better acquainted with gaming, than we were: he said it was a bear that had done the mischief. Well what was to be done? for we didn't like our fashionable caller very well for a neighbor on account of his taking so much liberty among strangers. The cry was, "Set a trap for him!" Dear Pa asked Mr. Dustin what he thought about it, and enquired of him if he could set a trap. Yes he said, I can set a trap well enough. We took what hog there was left for last and started for the woods. A log trap was soon in readiness. In the course of a week or so Mr. bear was caught. Sure enough, the log on his back brought him down on the log below, to the very pinch. It was cold weather and it was thought best to take him into the house to skin. This we did and had a good time.



Figure 14 - Mr. Bear visits

Time passed on, counting baby James Ayer we were ten in the family. Clothes were getting thread bare. New ones were wanted, new ones we must have soon, and no money to buy with and what shall we do? This question no one could answer. Dear Mother was the first to see a star of promise; it was this, we must make our clothes, and went on to tell the story. We must get some sheep, we must raise flax, we must have spinning wheels, we must do our own spinning, we must do our own weaving. All were standing around and Pa with the rest. Three

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cheers for Mother, the children cried out but where will you get the loom Mother? "I will see to that," was the reply. Soon, Mr. Gray and Mr. Taylor were sent for. They came with broad ax and plane and such framing tools as they wanted to build the loom. The first thing to be done was to get the best white ash log that could be found in the woods (of suitable length of course) the next thing they wanted was a beetle^{iv} and wedge. The splitting was a matter to be accomplished just right: it must be not too large not too small. While Mr. Taylor was doing the splitting, Mr. Gray was hewing^v. This too, was a very nice part of the work. The line was to be split if possible it must not be hewed too large it must not be hewed too small. As soon as the splitting was done, Mr. Taylor commenced framing and so they worked together, until the loom was finished (and a very nice loom it was). I made the warping bars. In the meantime, Sister Martha called on some of the weavers to learn what she could about weaving. As soon as she pretty well understood the art, a web was ready to put into the loom, and in it went, and as soon as the whole thing could be brought around, we had the wool and the flax^{vi}. We had the big wheel humming and the little wheel whirling and the loom a slamming. Every one knew their own work and could do it without oversight. Pa would dress the flax, Ma would hatched^{vii} it, and card the tow^{viii} into rolls and spin the flax on the little wheel. Sister Mary and Sarah did the spinning on the large wheel, and so it was humming with the large wheel, whirling with the little wheel, slamming with the loom, all going on at once. All this was for summer wear. By and by the wooling rolls came from the carding machine. The spinning of them was the work of the large wheel. This renewed the humming. All was pleasant cheerful and happy. As soon as the warp of a woollen was spun, Martha was ready to put it in the loom and go on with the slamming. All this worked nicely for years until cloth was so cheap, that it was better to buy than to make.

Yet we had our discouragements, but not without courage to go with it. We had been in the habit of getting money from a fund we had in Haverhill to help us over the tight places. The last we sent for, was \$140,00. As the money always had come safe, we supposed this would come in the same way so we lived on credit, as we had need, but the money never came. You may ask reader, if we were discouraged at this disappointment. O no no no dear friend to be sure it was a great disappointment but we had no room in our history for the word discourage. Years passed away and the time came when Goreham and Ira should go to Haverhill. It had been talked about for some time. We had \$1000, coming to us there, which would be enough to get a deed of our farm. We were well fitted out for our long journey. Our clothing was made of the finest wool of our sheep. Our boots were new, our hats I suppose the same, our canes were made of good hickory, with a suitable amount of lead run on the top. We were to go a foot. We

^{iv} A beetle is a tool consisting of a heavy weight or head, usually of wood, for driving wedges, and ramming down paving stones, etc. (from "Concise Genealogical Dictionary" by Maurine and Glen Harris, Ancestry Publishing)

^v Hewing is carving with an ax.

^{vi} The fiber from a flax plant.

^{vii} A hatchel is an instrument for combining flax.

^{viii} Tow is coarse and broken part of flax separated by the hatchel and ready for spinning.

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were to go to Vermont near Montpelier, to see Uncle Jonathan Ayer. This was about one hundred miles out of the way; but we wanted to see Uncle Jonathan. It was about January 1, 1818. Ira was 16 years of age and Goreham 18^{ix}. I think we had our knapsacks to carry provisions with us, in order to make a little money go as far as possible. It was early morning we kissed goodbye and started. The first day we reached Cold Springs, stayed I think at Hodges Hotel. So went steadily on, sometimes we would catch a ride. One day we rode nearly 20 miles in a six horse wagon with a tire six inches wide. The business of these wagons was to carry Merchandise from Albany to Buffalo. We went to Saratoga Springs. There we stopped a while to rest and take some spring water. Possibly it did us good and helped us on the way. I think we crossed the Hudson at Sandy Hill, about 10 or 12 miles above Troy. Now we began to feel that we were on our way to Uncle Jonathan's. We had got over our lameness and we stepped off with good face and cheer. In a few days we were at Rutland; from thence we passed over the mountain, there took a road to Montpelier. It was not many days before we reached Uncle Jonathan's. We knew Uncle very well, he looked so much like Pa, but we had to tell him who we were. After finding out who we all were we had a laugh and a happy time. I think we stayed two days. All that time Uncle did what he could to make it pleasant for us. We had a five dollar bill we asked Uncle to change it for us. He gave us two dollars and told us to keep the bill. We had about 200 miles, before us yet to go. We went through New Hampshire and called at Chester, about 15 miles from Haverhill, to see Mr. Walkers and wife. Mrs. Walker (whose maiden name was Betsy Gay) was a girl that dear Mother brought up, I suppose from a child. We had a fine time. Mr. Walker done what he could to please us. He took us around to show us this and that, and among the things he showed us a Meeting House they had lately built, (probably Presbyterian) which led us to think he might be a member of the church, Mrs. Walker was almost overjoyed to see the boys. Kisses were almost showered down upon us. All this was acceptable to Goreham and myself, for they were the first kisses we had received since we left home; We stayed one or two days and started for Haverhill. There I suppose we were expected: no great demonstrations except kisses; much of this was done of course for we met cousins in abundance all around. Many questions were asked by all, about the new country which we listened to and answered the best we could. Uncle Enoch Bradley was very kind to us to take us to Town, and round about to see Relatives, and old Neighbors, that we might have it impressed on our minds how Haverhill looked, and who our friends and neighbors were, and how they looked, so it was we received many kindnesses from all, which were treasured up, and brought Home with us and not forgotten for a long time. I think we stayed about two weeks at any rate. The time came for us to go. The night before starting dear Grand Mother had our shirts hanging on the chair to air. The \$1000, was already in Goreham's shirt pocket; The thought entered Grand Mothers mind what if the chair that had Gorham's shirt hanging on it with the \$1000 in the pocket, should tip into the fire. She sprang in an instant and ran into the sitting room and made all safe. The next morning came, every thing was ready, and we started. Uncle

^{ix} Tow is coarse and broken part of flax separated by the hatchel and ready for spinning.

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Enoch Bradley took us with his carriage, as far as Methuen, 6 or 8 miles, where we had to cross the River. He saw us safely across, and we parted.

Now after doing the business all right that we came for, and took our last look at Haverhill and our friends we started on for home with a good pace and cheer. We looked through the mist of 500 miles and saw the log house and dear Father and dear Mother and all the dear Brothers and sisters and we longed to be there. We stood on our best nerve and said If the Lord will we will be there and on we started with light hearts and a quick pace. Our manner of living was to buy what we wanted to eat, where we could get it: but we had our three meals a day. When the hour came for a meal, we would call at some good looking house, and tell them we would be pleased to have them get us some tea; we had vituals with us in our knapsacks. The tea would be forthcoming. We enjoyed our meals nicely, and on we came, making one hundred miles in three days. Sometimes we would do better than that; much depended on the condition of the roads. After some days we come to green Mountains; how defiant they looked! but we almost laughed at the proud Goliath: up and down we went for nearly two days, we went slowly up and faster down. Sometimes we would run going down. Before we got over the mountains, in going down on the run I caught my cane between my legs and it snapped like a pipe-stem; but not knowing what use we might have for it, having a \$1000, in our pockets, I thought it best to keep the lead end. This I did by holding the lead end in my hand and running the other end up my sleeve. So the days passed on, every one telling from 33 to nearly 40 miles nearer home. During our absence, nothing had been heard from us, that is to say, I think so. We soon told the folks we had the money all safe. Soon Pa went to Batavia and got the deed for 439 acres all safe to be laid away.

Now I will go back and tell a short story about the war before Perry's victory on the Lake. The British Navy seemed to pride themselves in sailing up and down the Lake near our Shore. After a while they took into their heads to make a friendly call and get something to eat. In one case they took Mr. Bates, living within a few rods of where I now live and Cap. Gates living on the Salsbury Place. The alarm was soon given around the Neighborhood. A friendly Quaker that lived about a mile off not feeling it right to go himself with a gun, came over as fast as he could and told Pa what had happened and I supposed advised him to go to the Lake as quick as he could (Sister Martha had it in a poetical form. "Come James Ayer to the lake repair, for the British have come o'er: they have taken Capt. Gates, they have taken Bill Bates, and carried them from our shore.") This was for the benefit of our friendly Quaker. The prisoners were taken down nearly as far as the Eighteen mile creek and put near enough shore so they could wade the rest of the way. After that I think the Neighbors kept a guard here on the bank, until the victory before mentioned.

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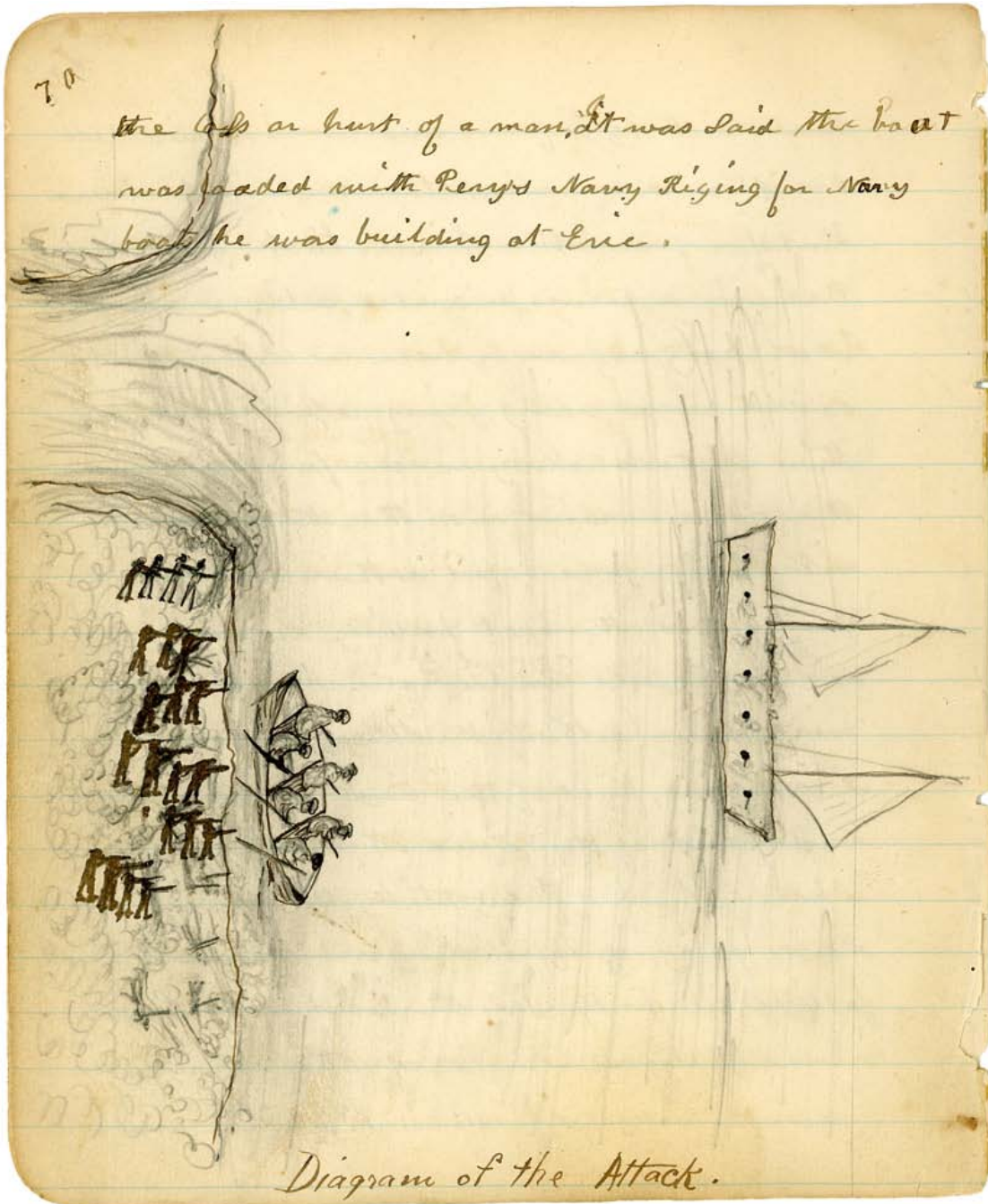


Figure 15 - Diagram of the Attack

I will tell one story more about the war and close. Not far from the time that Gates and Bates were taken prisoners, a large open boat hugging our shore as close as it could come along, going up the Lake the British Navy made for the boat; the alarm went out; the Neighbors ran with their guns as fast as their legs would carry them; the boat pulling away as fast as they could covered by our fire. The Navy doing their best with their cannon, firing I suppose, part of the time at the boat, and part of the time at the men on shore. It was thought by the men on

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shore judging by the whistling balls and falling limbs to say the least they had a very liberal share of the Navy's fire. The boat got safe into Cattaraugus Creek without the loss or hurt of a man. It was said the boat was loaded with Perry's Navy Rigging for the Navy boats he was building at Erie.

Martha at the age of 15 or 16 years was called on to teach a school in Hamburg in the Neighborhood of a Christian people. Martha met with them at their Preaching meetings, prayer and class meetings. It seemed all new to her, on account of the spirit manifested by the Brethren and Sisters, also on account of the spirit she felt herself. She said nothing for a while. At the same time the spirit of God seemed to be pressing upon her; it was all new to Martha, such manifestations as she saw in the people and what she was experiencing herself. Finally she spoke to one of the Sisters about it; she told Martha it was the Lord's Spirit in the hearts of the Brethren and Sisters and in her heart too. Martha said to the sister she was never in such a meeting before and wanted to know what she should do. The sister told her she must pray. Martha asked her if she wouldn't pray for her, for she had never prayed in her life. Yes the sister said, and was about to kneel down; Martha hesitated and asked the sister if it wouldn't do as well in another room. Yes the sister said she didn't know but it would but hadn't we better kneel here? if you think best, we will, was the reply. They both knelt, and the sister prayed that Martha might have faith to believe that things are ready. Martha saw the point and said "I do believe." It was the same instant she said this that she experienced religion, and was made very happy in the Lord. The Brethren and Sisters soon saw what the Lord had done for their teacher and rejoiced greatly. Reader let us praise God for his goodness and loving kindness to the children of men.

Martha at once joined the Methodist Church and conformed to its rules in dress as well as in everything else; not so much because they were the rules of the Church, but because she loved them, as well; and all this, because she was a new creature, and old things had passed away. She got her a Quaker bonnet and a dress and other wearing apparel to compare with it. She soon wrote home to dear Mother, and in her letter she spoke of Brother Canfield so and so Brother and Sister Oakes so and so and some good old Mother in Israel so and so. What does all this mean? says dear Mother. It can't be Martha is going to or has got married. In the mean time an aged Sister of another denomination came up from the lake through the woods nearly a mile and a half, and told Mother that Martha had joined the Methodists and went on to tell dear Mother many things that were quite disparaging about the Methodists. It seemed that the old lady took all this pains in coming so far, to let Mother know in time, what was going on in Hamburg, that if possible to save the girl before it went on any farther. It was all new to dear Mother. She didn't know what to do about it or think about it. She finally concluded it best to keep still a while, until Martha came home. Then she could tell better. As soon as school was out, Martha came home. She brought her story with her. She told it; it was a good one; it was the power of God unto Salvation to every one that believeth; no room for Calvinism___: to every one that

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believeth. The old lady no doubt meant well but we heard nothing from her after her call. In the course of a week or so, Brother James Hall called on us. Martha had formed an acquaintance with him in Hamburg, probably an arrangement was made between the two for his coming. Before going to bed, he proposed prayer and then after prayer he spoke to the whole family as they sat around in the form of a class meeting. He talked to them about religion. He told them of its importance, and how they must get it. I suppose He stayed and preach the following Sabbath. Rev. James Hall was one of the Great Men of the Earth. He lived to see 90 years or more, and died in Mayville, Chautauqua Co, New York. His wife lived a number of years after, and died in the same place.

Our family at this time consisted of the following persons:

- x Father - James Ayer Sr. Born about 1766 He Died Mar 13, 1839 Age 73
- x Mother - Sarah B. Ayer Born about 1774 She Died Dec 7, 1844 Age 70
- x Lowe Ayer Born Dec 1796 Died Sept 18, 1844 Age 48
- x Marth Ayer Born Dec 1798 Died May 1852 Age 54
- o Goreham Ayer Born Dec 1800 Died Oct 4, 1870 Age 69y 10m
- Ira Ayer Born Dec 26, 1802
- x Mary Lowe Ayer Born Nov 1804 Died 1853 Age 49
- Sarah B. Ayer Born Apr 1808
- x Henrietta Ayer Born Apr 1810 Died Aug 29, 1832 Age 21
- o James Ayer Born Aug 14, 1812 Died Jan 4, 1862 Age 50
- In camp in N Orleans

x Burried in the Cemetary at Evens Center, Erie Co., NY

o Burried in the Cemetary at Angola, Erie Co., NY

I must say more about Martha. It seems she was chosen of the Lord to be the first to carry Salvation to her Fathers house. She did this. She was a true messenger with the Bible in her hand, she told the story of the cross, as it read: Whosoever will let him come for my yoke is easy and my burden is light. It seemed to be her delight to do all she could. She would take the family to a stable that was vacated for a time, to hold prayer meetings, and probably enquire meetings, to know how each were getting along in the good way. All was interesting and encouraging because the Lord was with them. As the fruit of her labor, she soon saw five or six of her own family, besides some from without, formed into a church of her own choice. But her work was not done and she felt it never would be done as long as she could hold up a hand for Jesus; her course was onward, all of her Fathers family sooner or later were converted to God.

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Eight of them joined the Methodist, one the Baptist and one who went South I think I understood joined the Cumberland Presbyterians. Please reader allow me to go back to the time when Martha first came from Hamburg, then I will proceed and tell you more about Martha in coming years.

When Martha first came from Hamburg, (after it was noised about she had experienced religion) she found she was on the battle ground of Calvinism. Her own family all took her part. Her Father and all. The Presbyterians would bring forward Bible to prove that Calvinism was right and Methodist was wrong. Martha would make her best defense as far as she knew the Bible. If they brought forward anything that she was not prepared to defend at the time, she would pass it off and drown it into forgetfulness for the time as best she could, until our Ministers came around. Then she would lay the matter before them in order to get the right interpretation of what she had been talking about, with the Presbyterian brother. If opportunity offered, she would call the Presbyterian's attention to what they had talked about when they last met; then Martha would tell him just how it was and bring forward scripture to prove it. In fact Martha got the argument and the Presbyterian brother felt the force of it, and would be glad to start for home as soon as courtesy would allow. Often times the Calvinist would talk with Pa on the Calvinistic doctrine. Pa's way was to give them a blow over the left where they least expected. I will give you a case. Pa and Dea. Talman were working together and were talking on the subject of Foreordination. They were through work for the day. Pa finally asked the Dea. if he supposed that the Lord decreed that he shouldn't strike another blow tonight. The Dea. answered in the affirmative. Pa struck another blow and said, I have broken one decree anyhow.

Sister Martha was married in the log house. She brought up quite a large family most of which were pious in their early years, and joined the Methodist Church. Her grandchildren I knew but little about except Julia's family who were mostly if not all, professors of Religion. One of them, Rev. Ward Platt^x is a prominent member of Genesee Conference. He is preaching the word in power and demonstration of the Spirit. Sister Martha lived to a good old age. She was a devoted advocate for the Christian Religion from the day of her first experience, until the day of her death, when the Lord took her. In the course of a few weeks I think of making a visit to the grave where her precious dust lies. Hoping and trusting I shall meet her in the sweet bye and bye to part no more forever.

In the balance of my writing may be found the names of Sarah Black^{xi} Ira Ayer and family. Mrs. Sarah Black experienced religion soon after the return of her Sister Martha from Hamburg. Sarah had a full benefit of Martha's experience which was a great help to her. Martha told her that faith and repentance was the ground work to build on, though in the days of early youth, she seemed to

^x It is assumed that Martha had a daughter named Julia who married a man named Platt and they has a son named Ward.

^{xi} Ira's sister Sarah married a man named Joe Black.

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understand the way, and embraced it as a foundation, to build for her present good and everlasting welfare. Sister Sarah Black proved to be a sister in the church well fitted to fill every place where she could do good. Her seat would be filled at the preaching, her voice would be heard at the prayer meeting; and at the class meeting. She had a good story to tell. Her motto was, it must be done; her exhortation was to her Brethren and Sisters onward. If Meeting House was to be built, or buildings to be repaired, she and her worthy husband Joe Black, also a devoted Christian were always ready to share her portion of the expense and a little more. She is now seventy eight years of age, ready to go when the Master calls.

Ira Ayer^{xii} embraced the great doctrine of Salvation at an early day. He has been a decided advocate for the teachings of the Bible ever since. He looks upon it as the word of God, he loves it as his own book, he is ready to battle with the Infidel or even the Skeptic on the side of the Bible. He has much of a Lady for his wife. She has a judgment in business matters and she is ready to tell her Husband what it is, moreover, it is often accepted by her Husband as being the best way. Ira has a family of 6 children, one son, the rest daughters. I was told by relatives who visited Mrs. Ira Ayer in New Jersey not long since, that they had a family of children much to be admired. In the war of the Rebellion Ira Jun. joined the Army in an early day. He was a scholar in the Meadville College at the time. He went as Capt. His command was made mostly, I suppose of the scholars of the Collage. He joined the 10th Reg. of the Pennsylvania Reserves. When all was ready, the Regiment went forward to do battle for the country. Soon they were called to take their place in line of battle. The first wound Ira received was in his arm, it proved very serious. It appears the ball entered his arm near the wrist and lodged in his elbow. The surgical apprentice supposed there was no ball there and dressed the wound in a way that led him to think in due time it would get along alright but instead of that, it grew worse all the time, until it became so exceeding painful that Ira's condition was considered alarming. The surgeon examined the arm again and found the ball was in the arm lodged I suppose in the elbow. His first business was to get it out, if possible. This he did: the wound had already been of long standing, but the surgeon knew his business and dressed the arm as well as he could, and it got along finely. Ira had a number of narrow escapes during the war. The rim of his hat was pretty well shattered, his side in one instance was grazed by a ball and I think there were other cases where he very narrowly escaped. He finally was wounded in his leg so seriously that within the last few years the bone has become diseased and he has had to use crutches from time to time. But in all the war and in all the battles sometimes not so threatening, at other times when the balls would fly like hail around, yet in every case it would seem, the Lord would say to the flying bullets, thus far thou canst come but no farther; what words! the firing of small arms, swords in the sunlight flashing, cannon roaring, all was confusion, the voice of man could not be heard, yet God spoke in a low yet commanding voice, thus far shalt thou come but no farther. Ira was saved. O Praise the Lord for this goodness and His

^{xii} Ira Ayer Jr.

Chapter 3 – Life in the New Country

loving kindness unto us. Ira and your dear family. Ira is now engaged in Government business at San Francisco

Jesus our all to Heaven is gone.

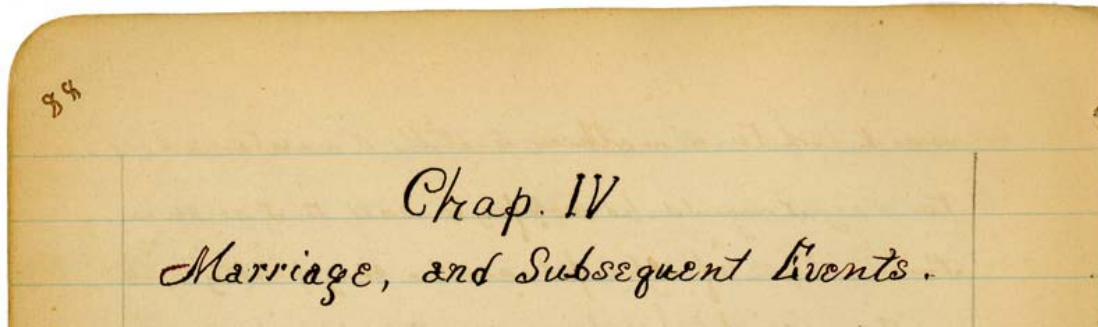
He whom we [fis?] our hopes upon

His track we [?ce] and we will pursue

The narrow way tell Him we view

Sarah is a lover of God and has been for many years. In early days she was taught by her own Mother to be good, and if she wanted the Lord to love her she must love Him and many things her Mother taught her that had a lasting benefit even until the Present. Sarah is now a Christian woman. Her voice may be heard on the Lord's side. She advocates the right in all things. In this she is outspoken, though it may be but a small matter controverted if it embraces the sentiment of right, Sarah's voice is heard on the side of right, whether it is asked for or not. She is loved in her own town. The Ladies of Titusville look to Sarah as being competent to take a leading part in literary matters.

Chapter 4 – Marriage, and Subsequent Events



I was on a visit to Sister Martha's in Hamburg and who should come around but the prettiest girl I had ever seen. As soon as I had opportunity I enquired of Sister Martha what girl that was? (This enquiry was made in a whispering tone of course) She told me she was their school teacher. So much the better, I thought in my own mind, and finally it was established to myself at least that she should be my wife some day if my efforts could bring it about, for she was my prettiest girl. As it happened she went out the same after noon to pick currants for tea, as a chance thing I happened to come around where she was picking, and said a few words suited to the occasion, and finally one word led to another, until I ventured to say I would be happy to call to see her sometime if she pleased. My prettiest girl with a slight blush and with hesitancy said if you please; the time was agreed upon that I should call. I was true to meet the engagement, and I found the girl was as true to meet me, at the time and place agreed on. Time passed on, I made frequent calls on my prettiest girl, for a few months, until the time of Marriage was agreed upon. I think it was December 26th 1828 that Julia Mariah became the wife of Ira Ayer. Mrs. Ayer invited a Lady friend Suphronia Hard for a companion, home with her, that our family might be sufficiently large to form a ring, in order that our social hours might be improved to better advantage than otherwise they could. Time passed on pleasantly; yet we soon found that getting married was not all there was of life, though we both regarded it, as a good beginning. The first thing to be considered was the building of a new house. The size was to be 24 by 36 feet. The out side finish was to be plaster with a heavy coat and gravel thrown in, as thick as the plaster would hold. This made a good finish, and was somewhat fashionable in those days. As soon as we could reasonably bring it around, we started to build the new house. The mason was already paid for doing the out side work. The first thing to be done was digging the cellar wall, and drawing stone from the lake for stoning it up. This was all going on at once, and in due time the cellar was was up, and a fine cellar it was too. It may be, by this time the house was ready to raise. If so, it wasn't long before it was up. Now the time for making arrangements for the rooms had come. Mrs. Ayer was at hand to do her part of this work. Of course it was a very important part. This Mrs. Ayer well considered finally in due time the house was finished enough to live in but it was a number of years before it was fully completed. During the latter part of the time mentioned I was engaged in building for my Neighbors; after some years I built a saw mill. This I found to be a good

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investment. It was profitable for ourselves as well as convenient for our Neighbors, so work increased on our hands; that is the more we done was an opening to more that wanted doing. In about 1842 or 3 there was a blessed Revival of Religion in Brant. I will call it blessed, because the Lord was there. I never shall forget the time nor the little school house about 14 by 16 feet. I felt truly the time had come for the Lord to give me what I had been asking for so many years. All were blessed all around more or less. The year following it, was concluded by the brethren and Sisters around the Center to build a Meeting House at the center. A meeting was called, but few attended. Yet the few, thought best to go forward notwithstanding. A vote was taken to build a Meeting house. Those that wasn't present at the meeting or at least a part of them made enquiry if they had a meeting. O yes was the answer. did they do anything? yes. what did they do? they voted to have a meeting house was the answer.

The stake was struck, and well driven, and no one dared to move it. Timber was hewed the coming winter; a part of it on our own farm. This gave dear Mrs. Ayer an opportunity to help some. She Love the boarding of the hands. White wood logs were drawn to mill for sawing, the same winter, for inside finishing. Two teams were engaged drawing stone from the lake for underpinning; at the same time the framing was advancing, and before haying. The meeting house was raised. The following year it was dedicated to the Lord. Presiding Elder Gleson Filmore Presiding. I think this evening while writing that the Reformation in Brant a year or two before was a moving Element in building the House^{xiii}.

Dear Wife raised a family of seven children Ira, Low Bradley 1, Low Bradley 2, Lavinia, Sarah, Henrietta, Julia and Martha (the eldest). She died Aug 14, 1861 leaving an evidence that our loss would be her gain. It rejoices our hearts for the evidence we have that dear Wife and dear mother is in Heaven.

Miss Bessie Cronkhite and Myself were joined in marriage Oct 14, 1869. There is quite a comparative difference in our ages but this in our social relation is hardly ever mentioned or thought of, as I know she has ever manifested a great interest in all matters for the welfare of the family. When ever or where ever help was needed out doors or in, she is ready to give a helping hand. My family of children were her family of children as well. Receiving visits and going to see them with all

^{xiii} Ira describes it as a team effort but LeRoy S Oatman describes it differently. In his Memorial to Ira Ayer he said "Until 1844 the worshipers met in private houses and school houses. During that year Ira Ayer determined that a Church should be built. He began alone, cutting the trees and hewing the timbers, and though others came to his aid from time to time he labored almost daily until the house was completed. In his younger days he had worked some as a carpenter and soon after his marriage he had constructed a saw mill near his home on the Little Sister Creek. The trees were mostly, if not all cut on the Ayer farm and sawed at the Ayer mill and a large portion of the work was done by him or under his supervision until the Methodist Church at Evans Center, which was occupied until a few years ago, was completed. From his early manhood until his decease he was an official member of the Church and of his exemplary Christian life it is unnecessary to speak."

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the tenderness and love that she would if they were her own. Little Lolah^{xiv} is our darling. Sometimes she behaves like every thing but we like her all the same. She loves devotion, always ready to bow her head in prayer.

Reader, How wonderful are the ways of Providence. We would do well to observe this more then what we do. I have told you that Pa started for Batavia to get an article of a farm in Springville and on his way he met Mr. Palmer, who advised him to look in Evans for a farm and I have told you also Reader how it was that Martha experienced Religion and come home with the story of the Cross upon her lips and as the fruit of her labor most of the family were converted to God and joined the Church and no doubt the influence of Martha's christian experience was wide spread. Now, if Pa hadn't met Mr. Palmer, Pa would have moved to Springville and as far as we know into a Neighborhood of sinners, where the family would have lived and died sinners.

^{xiv} Adopted daughter of Ira and Bessie.

The Voice of Wisdom to a Traveler



Halloo Traveller which way are you going? as I was looking from the window and see you were gazing at the Mansion as though you have some thoughts of calling. There are a great many thousand people traveling in the way you are every day and I call out to them as I have called to you and invite them in as I now invite you so you see all are invited. What is this for asked the Traveller? because said Wisdom God has no respect of [preasous] and more than this said Wisdom God has prepared a new way called the [man???] way of life, it cost a great price but God was so merciful and kind that He provided it for the whole human family that they might have life, perhaps I might as well tell you now Traveller as any time that you and all this crowd I have mentioned are in the [broad?] way that leads to death. You know Traveller how it was with the rich man and the beggar. The beggar died and went to Heaven. The rich man also died and lifted up his eyes being in Torment and asked Abraham if Lazarus might dip the tip of his finger in water and touch his tongue for he was tormented in this [flam?] Abraham told the rich man no. He told him once he had his good thing and Lazarus his evil but now ah what a change dear reader what an awful change but now Lazarus is blessed and thou art tormented then the rich man asked other favors of Abraham but the answer was a denial of the rich mans request in every case. It may be said that this dialogue between Abraham and the rich man was a parable it may be it was it maybe it was not it makes no difference. I don't care which way you have it if it was a fact it was made a matter of record for the benefit of man if it was a parable it was for the same purpose. Now reader let us come to this conclusion that we will sooner die beggars as Lazarus died if needs be and go to Heaven than to be rich and as consequence be lost forever.

Traveller you have been calling me Friend Wisdom you have said right. I am your Friend and friend to all. Now let us come to this conclusion That we will do all we can to [Turn?] what we can. Brother Traveller I believe in the letter as well do I believe in the Spirit. If we would get a [Sumer?] to Heaven [?????st] be ware that we are going there [ausdebienes?] before we can say [same?] and go with us Now Brother may God so help us that we can say at last we have fought a good fight hence path there is a [crowse?] Said [???] for us Eternal and in the Heavens Amen Ira Ayer