

October 2000

Volume XVI I

Number 2

Nannie E. Howe

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

The following is from Volume I and II as written by Nannie where she recalls her neighbors, parties and the big tornado.

Father (Jonas Howe) did more for Plymouth than any one person – yes – I may say than any ten persons in the town. He organized the town meetings and directed the men how to conduct them. He organized the school board and helped build the log schoolhouse. He hired the teacher, Miss Sophia Bushnell, and personally saw the parents to notify them to send their children. He had to not only notify them but overcame prejudice against the expense and meet indifference and resentment from foreigners who declared they could not afford it as they were sending their children to Father Clemens to learn the Catechism. But he finally convinced them that they needed English. The English or Yankee populations were all eager for the school. They were mostly from the New England states with the exception of the Hughes who were from England – direct and the Brown's and Bushnell's from the South.

The foreign population thought they could not afford it, that the country was too new. I can remember how tired father used to be when he would come home from a long tramp walking and talking and trying to convince the neighbors that a school was necessary. He tacked up notices for a town meeting with a big N. B. (take notice) on it. The next day a neighbor (a Mr. Newman) came in very abruptly, without knocking. He was very red and angry and walked up to father shaking his fist in his face and crying, "What for you put N.B. on dis paper? What you "tink" N.B.? Hey! I know what you tink. You tink Newman Bull! Jim Parker, he told to me what N.B. is." Father said, "No! No!" and tried to explain it to him. "So?" he asked "Is that for sure?" "Yes, that is correct", father replied. "What for Parker he told me so?" "He must have meant it for a joke" said father. "He liked to joke". "O! A choke!", said Newman. "I will choke him!" he cried. "Mr. Newman" said father, "don't you know me better than that?" Do you think I would insult a good neighbor?" And he talked so sincerely that he convinced him and Mr. Knot, a French

gentleman, who talked to him and told him father was a gentleman and would not do such a thing.

Then Mr. Newman got up a party and invited us to it, letting us know we were the guests of honor. I was delighted with the good time and the long table covered with good things to eat. Newman asked father to say something. Father made a motion for them all to stand up. He told them we were in a new country overrun with Indians – some of them friendly and some not. That we must all be friendly. We could trust one another. That Mr. Newman had shown here friendship by giving us this excellent banquet and we must now show him our friendship by gladly following too and eating the good food."

Mr. Newman's face glowed happily. "Yes, I ask you all to come but Parker," he said. And they all laughed understandingly. That was the first party of Plymouth and it was followed all winter by many others, but the Parker's were never invited and so they made fun of them and the "Duchies and Frenchies".

The Big Tornado

I awoke one night by a hurricane passing over our log house. I never heard such a racket! The wind roared and whistled and blew and shrieked. I can't say our house rocked for it was very solidly built, but the shutters blew in and the glad windows snapped as the branches snapped off the trees and were hurled against them. We could hear the trees falling and snapping in the forest back of the house at the north of it and thudding against the roof – bang, bang, crash. Some of us were in bed upstairs. I saw father and mother by a front window trying to put the wooden shutter up and button it but it

blew so hard that the wind took it out of their hands fiercely and their night dresses were almost torn off their backs. The rain poured in and spread over the floor and sprinkled us till we were dripping wet.

But at last father got the shutter up and fastened. Then mother lighted the lamp. It had been put out. It wasn't a lamp – it was a candle. She was terribly frightened. "O Jonas! What can we do? Just hear the trees on the roof! They will crash it in", she cried. "No! Don't be frightened!" said father. "Don't you hear it is getting calmer?" But it was not. All night the hurricane howled and shrieked – all night the trees fell and pounded on the roof and barn and hen house. All night we heard the din and crash and uproar, or father and mother did for they never closed their eyes to sleep, but I did for when the novelty of it was over I was overcome with weariness and fell asleep in Gerties arms.

In the morning when I awoke, the baby and myself were the only ones upstairs in bed. The sunshine flooded the room. I hastily dressed and went downstairs to be buttoned up, but there was no one in sight, so out I ran and what a sight met my eyes. Two big trees were lying on our roof. Trees were lying prostrate everywhere. Some of them were lying prostrate everywhere. Some torn up by the roots, having a little well or hollow where the roots had been. Trees on the smashed down fence – trees on the barn, corncrib and hen house. The ground covered with a litter of leaves and broken branches. But strange to say, no animals were dead, not even the hens with their chicks.

Father, mother and the other children were walking around in the morning wreck. It was a bright lovely morning. Suddenly a deer came from the woods and stood still gazing. She caught sight of us and bounded away as I said, "O, father, look at that dog". It was the young fawn at her side. He stood still for a second or two and father said, "Get my gun!" but the next minute he had vanished.

Then father said he must go and see if the "Old Maids" were blown away or still alive. They were our nearest neighbors to the left of us. Martha and Lizzie Moses keeping house for their brother Henry, who was away just at that time. But before father got away, Lizzie rode up on horse back and we gathered around her. She said they were all right, with the exception of the lean-to (build on the kitchen) being blown away and out of sight and the new barn lumber scattered around against the woods. She said Henry had not come home yet.

She looked around at the wreck. "O, My! Look at the green twigs like a carpet" she said. And sure enough they covered the ground.

The new barn was only partly built. And the scaffolding had been swept away like a straw. A part of the skeleton of it was left as it was sheltered by the sturdy plum grove.

I thought Lizzies horse was the handsomest one I had ever seen (at that time we owned only oxen) and it was certainly the largest. Lizzie looked like a small girl on his back.

We followed her back to view the damage after mother had given her some cake and plum preserve and a cup of tea. I don't remember that we ever went away to a neighbor's house without a lunch of some kind, if only a piece of suet cake or gingerbread. Lizzie begged us to come in and I was glad to leave the debris of lumber that filled the yard. I was more interested in a bright blue button that Lizzie gave Gertie for her charm string. We were very neighborly in those days and when we went on a visit, the visit most always lasted all day. But not that day, for we wanted to know how the other neighbors had fared in the tornado. So the "men folk" went away to other homes. No lives were lost around our neighborhood at least.

Mother used to be awakened in the night by the howling of the wolves. She wouldn't let no children wander off in the forest for many years, although father said we had frightened away the wild animals.

The Neighbors

One day mother took me over to the Parkers' with her and coming home by the "short cut" through the woods and bushes, we saw an animal shuffling along swinging a little from right to left as he walked just outside the bushes of the path. I credit out "Look, mother what is that – a big calf?" Mother took me by the hand, looking pale and frightened and stood as if she were frozen. The animal stood up on its hind legs and looked at us. It stands up just as Rover does when he wants to beg, but the animal lumbered down and off. I turned to mother and said "come on" but she did not budge. I don't know who will believe me but I know she was what is termed as paralyzed with fright.

All of a sudden, Dan Parker came along with a gun. "Hay de do Mrs. Howe", he said. I'm hunting for a bear they say Mr. Richards said he saw but I don't think he did see one, any such thing! I've been on the look-out for two days and if there was one I'd have seen it.

"O-Yes!" said mother, "I've just seen it! O! Mr. Parker! Take us home! I'm so frightened I can hardly move!" Mr. Parker asked a few questions and mother described the bear. "Which way did he go", he asked. "O – don't go after him! Take us home," begged mother. And so he did. Father just laughed. He said it was only a yearling calf that Jim Parker had lost, but I think he only said that to calm mother. She said, "But calves don't stand up on their hind legs – he did din't he Nannie?"

Later there was a hunt for the bear. Sure enough they found one and killed it but my father didn't get any credit for he didn't go with them to hunt it. But, he did go with us to school for a while and that made me think he believed it was a bear and when he stopped going with us he told us to go around by the main road but that was not till after the bear was killed.

The women liked to come to see mother and her dresses and carpets and china, that old Mr. Smith's German called

porcelain. She was looked up to as the “First Lady” or “Upper Ten” as Mrs. Tolman called it. Mrs. Tolman was a fat lady that was called painfully neat. She made Mr. Tolman take off his boots before he came into the house and at last he stayed out in the barn a good part of the time. I used to think she was a great lady for she wore such a lot of jewelry. She had a watch and heavy chain, bracelets on her fat, white arms. A handsome brooch, earrings and several little gold pins on her ample bosom. They said she bought her husband. That she was very much older than he was. Anyway, I thought my mother was much prettier but I did think mother ought to wear ore jewelry and not call Mrs. Tolman “vulgar”.

There was a Mrs. Clay that we went to see rather often. Mr. Clay kept the Post Office. Grandma Green was Mrs. Clay’s mother and the most delightful company. “O! What interesting stories she used to tell! Only I thought it so funny she smoked a pipe like a man! She used to spin yarn for most of the neighbors and came and stay weeks at a time at our homes. Sometimes she took a present of a baby to the homes. She took my brother, Georgia, to us one day.

“Where did you find the darling?,” I asked her with a happy laugh. “O! I found him up a gum tree in the Tamarack Swamp just a clinging and a laughing and he said he wanted to go to the Howe’s”. “O! My! How luck y you found him!”, I said. “He might have frozen!” for it was winter and a cold one at that. They all laughed and father said, “Nan is pretty sharp – she don’t believe you.” But I did “Frenchies, Dutchies and Yankies” got together and were friendly and like brothers and sisters. How did enjoy them. I thought Mrs. Varney was the most lovely woman. I thought her brown dress with her dainty shoes was the prettiest dress and shoes of all, but when I said so, mother said it wasn’t near as costly as her silk dress.

Then there was Mrs. Chantler that I did not like because she said I was a vain little brat. “Well!; said mother, “it is not her fault so much as it is the fault of people that will call her good looking right to her face”! “I never heard anyone speak of it at all,” said Mrs. Chantler coolly. Then the Eastman’s came to see us just then driving up from Golden Valley in their carriage. After the bustle of greeting and laughing off wraps was over, Mrs. Eastman took me upon her lap.

“The little pet”, she cried, “I think she is a little beauty and such lovely curls!” Why, Mrs. Howe all your children are very good looking! Only it is a pity you have only one boy! I confess I like boys better than girls!” “So do I,” I said eagerly and they all laughed but I was thinking of our new brother, dear baby Georgie.

Mrs. Chantler always seemed to be talking to father. At that time of my young life I did not think anything of her chasing him around but later on I did when I saw mother didn’t like her.

One day after she had asked father to drive her home saying she was really afraid of that horse. Mother said, “that woman hasn’t any manners or common sense or else she (Mother) would like very much to go herself if it wasn’t asking too much. Mrs. C. made some excuse so mother said no more.

The next morning Mrs. C. drove in, got Cora and went away on the journey.

“Well!” said mother, “Mrs. C. is kinder than I thought she was – I guess I misjudged her.” She was gone two days and mother worried about her Cora and repented of letting her go. Mrs. C. had said she was going to town (meaning Minneapolis) and we never had to stay overnight, we could easily make our purchases and get home sometime in early afternoon.

We loved to go to town and took turns in going, but Cora went oftener than the rest of us for we were willing, always to let her have that privilege. The third day Mrs. C. came driving up to our house – not from Minneapolis – but from her home. Mother ran out to meet her, glad to get Cora, but surprised.

“Why, Mrs. C”, said mother, “Did you get home only now?”

“O – I went home last night by the Fort Snelling road,” said she.

“Shy didn’t you come by the Watertown Road and leave Cora here? I worried so! I surely thought some accident had happened,” mother answered. “Take these things out of the buggy”, said she, “I got some clothes for Cora.”

“What did you do that for?” said mother. “We didn’t want you to do that!”

“Now don’t be huffy! I couldn’t help people being sorry for the poor child! Some of ‘em even cried because she was deaf and dumb!” Mother was disturbed and even angry as Mrs. C. took out the things, some day goods and dresses and dishes and we youngsters took the things into the house very cheerfully.

“Wait! See here! Mrs. Chandler! Did you go begging for Cora?”

“Nothing of the kind!” said she. “The people were so touched and kind-hearted for her affliction that I couldn’t insult them by refusing to take the things.”

Father came home and when he saw the things he said quite philosophically, “It’s done now. It won’t help matter to refuse to take them.”

“Especially her shoes,” said Mrs. C., “they won’t fit anyone else.”

But mother was humiliated and wouldn’t have the things. So Mrs. C. drove away as angry as mother, very likely only she was cool and said, “You don’t have to feel that way about it, Mrs. Howe – I meant it all right. I’ve got a good heart and Cora is tickled to death with the things.”

“You meant what all right? Then you did beg them?” mother asked.

“O – No, No! You don’t know your true friends!” said Mrs. Chandles – riding off in indignant loftiness.

Then father and mother questioned Cora who told them by sign language all about it. Cora let them know that Mrs. C. not only went to the stores and seemed to ask for things for Cora – but went to the homes. She went to St. Paul and begged and even to the home of Governor Ramsey.

Outside of the Governor’s home, she stopped Cora and wrote “Cora Dow” on a slip of paper. Cora wrote “Cora Howe” to correct her. Mrs. C. shook her head and pointed to Cora Dow again and then touched Cora’s shoulders – but when Mrs. Ramsey gave Cora a pencil and made her understand, she was to write her name – Cora wrote “Cora Howe”.

Mrs. Ramsey turned to Mrs. C. and seemed to be wanting an explanation but Mrs. C. – only laughed and seemed to smooth it all over, Cora explained.

Well, the result of this was that father and mother dropped all intimacy with the Chandles and refused the goods. And that wasn’t all – they took pains to find out the facts and let people know it was all done without their consent or knowledge.

Another thing occurred about this time to disturb father and mother. They had quite a lot of books and used to lend them. One day Mrs. Dan Parker borrowed Tom Pain’s works and Voltaire and other books of that character, and a book on Spiritualism from father and he, Parker, burned them – he was so angry that such books were published. He told father he burned the books. Father told him he was wrong. Maybe Parker really thought he was doing right, but father told him it was as bad as stealing.

Afterward he asked father to overlook what he had done but added he begged him not to believe these false doctrines.

‘I did not say I believed any “Doctrines, I simply said it was as bad as stealing to burn my property,” father answered.

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



Jonas Howe Farmhouse Built Circa 1873 when log cabin burned.

The Howe's log cabin described in the story and when it burned in 1873 replaced with a large farmhouse. For reference the Howe's farm was located approximately where the MacDonald's is located in Plymouth on Highway 55.



Old Fashioned Christmas

Just an early reminder to mark your calendars!

On Sunday, December 3rd from 2-5 pm, the Plymouth Historical Society and the Plymouth Park & Recreation Department are co-sponsoring the 14th Annual "OLD FASHIONED CHRISTMAS IN PLYMOUTH". The purpose of the event is to provide some old fashioned Christmas spirit and activities for families in Plymouth. Children can visit with Santa and Mrs. Claus will be right there to help the Elves hand out candy canes. A hay ride pulled by Belgian horses with bells jingling will be giving rides (50 cents per person), hot cider and cookies will be provided, carollers and making Christmas decorations are other activities for the children.

This year Bob Gash will be back with this great storytelling.

Current Officers

The following are the present officers:

President	Vern Petersen	763-559-2313
Vice President	Vern Doseth	763-559-3777
Secretary	Mable Swanson	763-545-7705
Treasurer	Harvey Schiebe	763-545-6127



Meetings

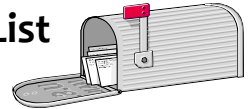
The monthly meetings are normally held on the 4th Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. in the Plymouth Historical Society Building, located at 3605 Fernbrook Lane North, Plymouth, MN.

|Wanted!

The Plymouth Historical Society is look for:

- Old pictures of the Plymouth area such as churches, homes, farms, people and events.
- Old children's toys for Christmas display.

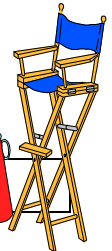
Mailing and Membership List



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

The annual dues are:

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



Board of Directors

The following is the present Board of Directors:

Kay Bertrand	763-559-5042	2000-2003
Ben G. Broman	763-559-5721	2000-2003
Alberta Casey	763-559-9366	1999-2002
Vern Dotseth	763-559-3777	1999-2002
Myrtle Eckes	763-545-6168	1999-2002
Jim Garvey	763-559-3047	2000-2003
Delores Morris	763-535-8756	2000-2003
Joe Morris	763-535-8756	1999-2000
Joyce McCaughey	763-557-6948	1999-2002
Vern Peterson	763-559-2317	1999-2002
Gary Schiebe	763-473-4889	1999-2002
Harvey Schiebe	763-545-6127	1999-2002
Margerite Schiebe	763-541-7187	2000-2003
Mable Swanson	763-545-7705	2000-2003