

A BIT OF ROMANCE

The first formal meeting of our parents as told by a friend of Tante's¹, took place in the Wilbur Home in Bryn Mawr. Grandmother Harriet Wilbur taught an older girls' Sunday School class at the Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church. Mother, who was a student at Bryn Mawr College, attended the class and grandmother grew to admire her. Anna was invited frequently to the Wilbur home for Sunday dinner where she heard glowing accounts of son Bertrand, the medical missionary at Sitka, Alaska. Finally, Bertrand returned on furlough and at Sunday dinner met the lovely Anna Dean. Subsequently Anna, instead of pursuing her education and graduating with her classmates at Bryn Mawr College, married Bert, went to Alaska and became a devoted wife and mother. There seems to have been an interlude after this first meeting when father returned to Sitka and mother went to Europe with her Uncle Will and Aunt Helen Taylor. Father's journals tell of the romance carried on by letter, it taking a month for a letter to be exchanged each way, he writing 'til midnight answering Anna's letters that came by boat so that his replies could go out on the boat the next day. What a way to wait out decisions, he proposing and she "considering"! It took a year to win an affirmative answer which mother gave when father came down from Alaska on a furlough.

The six Dean children lived near Uncle Will and Aunt Helen (Auntie Grandma to us children) in Cincinnati, Ohio. Although father was home on furlough, their correspondence was sporadic. Father finally wrote from Philadelphia that he would be going to Chicago in July 1897 and "if there shall be an opportunity, I shall see you and perhaps we may clear up this sad tangle?" Accordingly, he arranged to go to Gratiot Beach, north of Detroit where the Taylor and Dean families vacationed.²

After father's visit and their engagement, mother wrote her "Confessio Amatus"³ telling of the depth of their love and their strong faith in God. This statement was sent to father who had gone back to Alaska after his visit to Gratiot Beach. It highlights the turmoil and the joy of father and mother's romance. Mother wrote:

Oh, how terrible the waiting was! How I kept the mail days in my mind hoping for that "daily chronicle of my life". Resolving to write - tearing up all I had written - and when July came, every letter, every telegram might possibly be from you - no - the days past. August came and went - with wild zeal I devoted myself to others that I might not have a moment to think - and yet I thought - each happy excursion had the sting of your absence - for always I thought of having you there too. Only Aunt Helen knew and one Sunday in August when I was amusing some children whose mother was very ill, out in the grove with guinea pigs (Little Dorothy called them the "McGinty pigs"), Aunt Helen sent them to the front yard to gather clover blossoms, -and putting her arm around me as I sat there with five little guinea pigs in my lap she said, "Nancy dear, the summer is almost over, isn't he coming?" I said, "I don't know. I hope he will come on his way west, he was travelling east with his mother and sister - perhaps he felt that they needed him then." Then she asked what I heard from you and I said, "Nothing" - I explained that I had not answered your letter, and she said I was wrong - then the children came back and Aunt Helen left me.

But that night she came home and said, "little girl, I take back what I said - on first thought it seemed thee ought to have answered his letter. But he must love thee, love thee so that he will be unsatisfied until he talks with thee face to face - and there can be no answer except from thy own lips when he can look into thy eyes." - I waited for a week. Aunt Helen was gone. But there flashed through my consciousness the illuminating truth - that there was no such thing as a God-given love and that I had a right to aid - for at last my heart told me that if I really loved

you I would forget myself - as I sat down, wrote, sealed and mailed a letter to you before my heart should fail. Of course all the tormenting doubts came back, doubts chiefly of your love - feared lest you had learned to forget me - or found that you never loved. Oh Laddie, it was terrible - but I had to cling to my faith that God would over-rule the mistake if I was wrong since I had done my best.

The Deanery, Gratiot Beach,
Port Huron, Michigan
(The postmark was September 5, 1897)

My dear Dr. Wilbur,

May I know something of your plans for returning to Sitka this fall? We leave Gratiot in two weeks and I have been anxious not to miss you if the opportunity should be given for that talked of visit.

Of course your summer at home has been full of work and pleasure. I can fancy your return to Sitka and the ovation that awaits you there in the stolid hearts of your former patients as they come to the dock to meet you.

Please do not think that I am trying to renew the past or to hold on to a friendship that left me so greatly your debtor. Perhaps, I write because, womanlike I want the last word or perhaps because I cannot help acknowledging the sweet friendliness of your last letter.

September third.

Ever sincerely your friend,
Anna Elliott Dean⁴

Father states in his journal that he responded immediately to mother's letter stating that he would like to visit. Auntie May, mother's oldest sister and head of the Dean family, telegraphed an invitation to father formally inviting him to visit at Gratiot Beach. Mother continues her account more by an expression of her emotions and feelings than in the form of a narrative;

I talked incessantly to Bur all the way down to town until he teased me into being absolutely silent - Would you know me - had I grown much older - I felt absolutely ancient as though I had lived a life time since we met and you seemed so far away from me, and such a stranger - and yet I knew you were coming to ask me to be your wife. Did I love you or myself created ideal of you? My brain was a whirl, and here you were doing the formal, polite - yes a pleasant journey, all were well at home and sent their love - yes the car would soon be here - so tiresome to wait -but finally we did reach Gratiot Beach and you were introduced to the Lake, the lawn and the "boarding house" then the Deanery - This is my big sister, Dr. Wilbur - and my brother, George. (They had declared they were going to ask, "What is the name? Oh Wilbur") Bess was sitting in my room on the floor and peeping through the curtain when the spring snapped and up flew the shade with a bang! but you didn't seem to know it. How abruptly I hurried over to "Hawthorne Lodge" - before you knew where you were, was it not, but you have forgiven me I know for I knew dinner was waiting since your train had been late and oh! I did want nothing to disturb May.

After the months of somewhat turbulent letter writing, father was anxious to tell mother of his love where they could be alone. As soon as the amenities of meeting the family and having dinner were over, father was able to take mother for a walk along the shore. Mother continues in "Confessio Amatus":

So much of those days is a blank - I must have been in some sort of a trance - But we started out on our walk that evening, I remember that naughty Morris sang through a megaphone, "Does the girl that I adore love me less or love me more, starlight, star bright, tell me do you know?" I have no idea what you said, until as we walked along the single boardwalk to the shore I tried to tease you about the race in the afternoon - You did not answer but stepped beside me and said "Anna it's no use. I must talk to you of my love" - I think I said - "Oh, Bertrand, please don't" - But you slipped your arm around me and somehow or other I found myself sitting on the bank. I could not have walked another step - I never felt so absolutely helpless - I was so, so frightened - I think I must have clung to you - dear, did I - there seemed to be only you in all the world - there must have been two of me that night- my heart longed for the joy and the peace -one me, let you draw me very near to you and you gave me an answering kiss, as your lips met mine - then the other me awoke (was it the intellectual me?) and felt the wrong - no I cannot say wrong for there was truly only the sweetest most sacred joy in that first kiss - my beloved - and that was what puzzled me - I thought to have been horrified, but somehow I felt that we belong to each other - and I was 'close driven' as you say with the old and the new self - I wanted time to fight it out, I could not see nor think, nor feel, so I cried - "Don't, don't -- Oh, Laddie dear, what a night it was - I couldn't see how you could love me, and I wasn't sure you did, really, and I didn't know whether this that I felt was love - I smile at all this now - but then, how I really suffered. Then we walked home, and you quietly held my hand and soothed me into some control of my will, and we went in to chat about Alaska - somehow after that you seemed to belong to me - I seemed to know and understand you - all the "stranger" was lost - instead of turning to my brothers and sisters to help me entertain you - I found myself turning to you to help me to be pleasant to my brothers and sisters.

How restless I was that night - as I thought of the future. If you went back with no more satisfactory conclusion than that evening - and for hours I thought of all that would involve -No,no. It would be better to make this the end of all - better "No" than uncertainty. - but this made all so dark - I could not think of the future that should not include your "friendship" at least. Then it began to grow light - and still I had not slept - when like a thought from Heaven came a new voice - "But if you say - 'Yes' - it is still a miracle wrought by God himself - I cannot understand it - but trouble and worry and doubt vanished - there was only peace and joy - and rest and I said I will tell him in the morning - and I fell asleep so sweetly - I was almost conscious of it.

Finally an understanding was reached, the understanding that true lovers seek and find in such different ways:

---finally you and I (and Lulu started for the woods - I have no idea what made me take Lulu with us - for I wanted to be alone with you - and how thoughtless and unkind to dismiss her, I might have known she would get lost had I stopped to think, poor little girl - Where were all my woodsman instincts - I have always prided myself on my pathfinding, who have for years guided all expeditions to the woods -. Bert, you must have bewitched me - I had simply no idea where I was - and I was so ashamed of my loss of wits. Do you remember finding maiden hair fern and then losing the basket - which you finally discovered and do you remember how you tried to put your arm around me - truly it vexed and troubled me -. Then we came to a little bower that has since become so sacred to us - and you asked whether you should cease telling me of your love - and could I but honestly answer, "No" - I believe I did not half listen to what you said for I was thinking of the peace of the decision I had made during the troubled night -and I wondered whether you truly wanted me to say "yes" - for just then you seemed quite resigned dear, patient Laddie - but I knew I loved you so that I could not be silent any longer, so

“Would you take me with all my littleness and meanness” - and I knew you meant it when you looked up at me to see what I meant - “Yes - I would take you.” Did I manage to say, “Then, take me” -. My own dear Love - it took me several days to realize the depths of the joy that that moment brought to us - but that moment meant I felt peace - the blessing - and I knew it was right - that God had given us to each other - that I loved you - with a new Love. Was it peaceful gladness - that came to us that afternoon - and how the gladness has deepened - how much more fully we comprehend it now even than we did that supreme hour -. How sacred are those few moments - I can only whisper the joy to you - when you are holding me close to your heart- when you are looking into my innermost soul, when I see reflected in your eyes all I would say could words be found to tell you how I love. Hand in hand we wander through the woods, back to the realities of the old life. But how changed the world in which we lived.

So on that memorable Wednesday in the woods at Gratiot Beach amid maidenhair fern, mother and father bespoke their love for each other and agreed to share their lives together. Furlough over, father returned to Alaska within a short time and from there wrote Aunt Helen Taylor on November 7, 1897:

Dear Aunt Helen

That name looks strange to me on paper, as I sit in my office this Sabbath night, but not as strange as I felt the first night I called you that. Indeed I was very much afraid of you, not because the boys had guyed me, but from the few stray remarks that dear Nancy let slip into her letters while you were in Europe. I am so glad that it is all very different now, for you have been so lovely to me, when it must have seemed very hard to think of a stranger as Nancy's lover. Indeed I should love you, even tho you had not been as kind as you were, for Nancy loves you as much.

Our good nurse has gone to church, so I am here to see that none of the patients on liquid diets, steal out to the pantry and get a square meal, or that some stray visitor does not bring a bottle of hooch-i-noo (native liquor) or a plug of tobacco to some case recently operated.

I have been very busy, finding an epidemic of measles raging here on my return. Please tell Dr. Taylor that the little impromptu clinic on the exanthemata which he gave George and me in the House of Refuge, has stood me in good service here. Our epidemic is past and we have fumigated everything so that this letter is not likely to be stopped by the Board of Health. I am very well, thank you, in spite of the weather which has been very wet for almost two months, they tell me. Certainly we have had but two clear days since I came - Now is not that a dreadful place to bring a lovely young wife? But it is not so bad even now. It is tolerably consistent weather, pretty sure to rain so you know you are safe in taking an umbrella and rubbers where ever you go. And you know that white dresses and spring bonnets cannot safely be worn for we never have a hot wave, and then too the weather is a trifle thick sometimes, we never find the air saturated with carbon in a fine state of suspension nor do our lace curtains get dirty in two weeks from the smoke! So you see there are the roses amid the thorns in Alaska as elsewhere.

The weeks since I returned have passed quickly in retrospect. The days seem to go fast enough, by themselves, but somehow they don't count up very fast and the spring to 1899 seems so far in the future I have to use my mental telescope of powerful imagination to see it at all. One of our returned missionaries, who was staying here a few days, told of an experience she had with a native boy and girl who were engaged. They were very anxious to be married and the man came

to the missionary and said: "Mrs. McFarland, I very much want to marry Mary. My chest is sick and I don't think I can live very long and I want to be married as much as I can". Well -doubtless there are others who feel the same way! regarding the latter clause especially. Which brings me to the subject of my beloved sweetheart as every letter, every conversation surely will do, if continued long enough and it is not necessary to be very long either. Dear Aunt Helen, there is something very beautiful, very stange about this love I have for dear Nancy. It is not a fancy, for fancy is born of imaginings and dreams, I think, and you know that I hardly allowed myself to think of her in the long five months we did not correspond. But this love's so real. It seems to be in every fiber of my life. It has purified me, enabled me and filled me with new energy and loftier ambition. Absence only makes the heart-hunger more keen. Is it not almost Divine? Certainly in the sense that it is God given it is divine.

When I was a youth of about eighteen I was wont to dream of such a love. But that was that exceedingly 'calfy' age when Carlisle says "all young men should be kept in a hogshead and fed through the bung hole until they arrive at the age of discretion". So when I had arrived at the age of presumable discretion I thought love a little less real and a little less able to work miracles than in the earlier days. Truth is, I was rather cynical and fast growing more so, but that is all gone.

I long to see Nancy so! Indeed I don't get used to it at all and it just gets worse day by day. Her letters are exceedingly sweet and I wonder how a girl can realize just what I crave in order to supply that want. It is inexpressibly precious that never has one disappointment crossed my-mind regarding Nancy. Now don't you really think she is the loveliest woman God ever caused to bless a man? Don't you. I do.

Ah! me! My letter is full of my love and I have not told you how I thank you for your goodness to me - Please accept my sincere gratitude and if I offer my very true love I don't think the Doctor will care, do you? I really mean it.

Kindly express my best wishes to the junior Doctor and his Sister.

To Dr. Taylor, my respects and my sincere regard. May our God bless you, dear Aunt Helen, filling your life with gladness and ever making you the blessing you already are.

I am, by your leave, very dutifully,
Your nephew, Bertrand

Once more the coastal steamers carried letters back and forth between the young lovers for nine months but this time with the assurance that comes after the engagement. Mother was busy in Cincinnati making plans for the wedding and father was becoming increasingly impatient for his return to the States and his betrothed.

Bertrand and Anna were married June 15, 1898 at Cincinnati, Ohio and then went to Gratiot for a brief honeymoon before going on to Alaska. Mother wrote to Aunt Helen en route. Among their companions aboard ship were prospectors going to "the Klondyke" in the gold rush of that year.

On board the Topeka
Pyramid Harbor, July 5, '98

My dear Aunt Helen,

From the land of the glaciers - greetings! How I wish thee and dear Uncle Daddy might see these things with us. The mountains snow-capped rising out of the sea - the islands, the numerous, wonderful glaciers, some high in the mountains, others coming to the water's edge and presenting a broad green-blue wall. It is beautiful, wonderful. We are in the land of perpetual day now, and it is so hard to leave the deck for the necessary sleep when each turn brings a new beauty.

To speak no longer in general terms of our trip, I will tell you of these Alaska towns at which we have gone ashore. Wrangle - the home of the totem poles - came first, and we spent the entire afternoon in wandering around this village. A route to the Klondyke via Sitkun River gave Wrangle a great boom and new houses eclipse the old Indian huts, and the totems appear in the midst of these new houses, stores, tents, boats, wharves, lumber yards. It is impossible to describe the amalgamated mess of one of these boom towns, built on the mountain slopes with no more clearing than is absolutely necessary. We called at one of the houses - Chief Katashan's - his children are at Sitka. As we walk along we will hear a guttural sound nearby, and some native, old or young, will be beaming at "Dochtah, Dochtah, Sitak Dochtah!"

Leaving Wrangle, we went to Juneau - about a twelve-hour run. Can you imagine the Fourth of July at Juneau! You have probably seen pictures of Juneau, but none of them can give you any idea of it as it is built there on a landslide. We climbed a hill back of the town and oh, it was the loveliest of places - a high wooded mountain, snow-topped, the streams roaring down the precipices to the narrow valley - and the rushing, tumbling stream that received them all - and flowers and ferns and pines everywhere. We called at the mission there, then went to town again to see the parade. We took a few snaps of the procession and hope they will be good enough to give you some idea of the celebration. Uncle Sam led the procession with a warship on his back labeled "Maine," and at the final celebration this was "blown up." All the natives in their gaudiest blankets were there, and all the townspeople. In the afternoon we crossed the channel to the greatest gold mine in the world - the Treadwell mine on Douglas Island, and Bertrand made it intensely interesting to me by explaining the operation. . . .

This morning we reached Skagway (about 2 a.m.), which is the present boom Alaskan town, and affords the best route to the Klondyke over the Chilkoot pass. A number of our fellow passengers have "gone in" from here. We hope we are to go to Glacier Bay, but we will not know until afternoon when we reach the cross roads, for it all depends on time and tide. If not, we will be in Sitka tomorrow morning. Every moment of our week's voyage has been delightful, and I hope it will not be long before you and Uncle Daddy are personally conducting a tour to Alaska with Sitka as an object point. If Bertrand were not fast asleep in the steamer chair he would send a message of love - so as it is I enclose it anyhow. I send you my love.

Ever your Anna Dean Wilbur

After their arrival at the Presbyterian Mission at Sitka, mother wrote a long letter to her older sister, May, telling of their first few days in their new home and the welcome she and father received from the community.

Sitka, Alaska

July 13, 1898

My dear Maysie,

Here I am at the hospital for office hour with Bertrand and I am going to take time by the forelock and begin to tell you some of the happenings of this my first week in Sitka. I found I had thirty-nine notes of acknowledgment to write, so the time I have has been given to this duty. I was so sorry yesterday when a tourist steamer wandered in unexpectedly that I did not have a letter for her to take to you, but I did get all the notes off on her so you will understand how it is that Marion Cram and the Armstrongs have letters while you do not.

But to take up the thread of my story when I left it on board the Topeka. When we woke up Wednesday morning we found the captain had been able to get through Peril straits without waiting for the tide, and that brought us four hours nearer to Sitka than we had anticipated. When we were on deck we were already in familiar waters and dear Bert enthusiastically pointed out all of his friends, the mountains, the islands, and the bays. It was all so beautiful we made very little concession to breakfast for we were in Sitka Bay. The tide not being favorable to enter the usual channel, we made a circuit of the bay, which gave us chance views of Sitka town, then the mission and even dear little Raven's Nest⁵ across the bay between the islands. As we passed the Mission buildings, handkerchiefs were waved from the windows, and by the time we reached the wharf the band was stationed there to give us welcome. Mrs. Carter, the hospital girls, and several teachers were also waiting, and a number of townspeople, perhaps not with the special object of welcoming us, but they welcomed us just the same. Our fellow passengers, including some Britishers, were very much interested and said we had a hearty welcome.

After a little delay in shaking hands on the wharf, we proceeded up the street, passing the Greek church and then turning to the right were on the road along the bay that shows on the picture. In front of the first house, branches of hemlock were spread before us to walk over in triumphant entry, and from the porch five or six friends sent a shower of rice. Coming to the first mission building, the boys' dormitory, we were greeted by the teachers who could not get down to the wharf on time, and in the yard were groups of interested spectators smiling and waiting for a word of recognition from "Doctah."

Then on to Raven's Nest. How good it was to get there. You can have no idea from the photograph of the perfectly beautiful bit of earth those steps span. It is just naturally wild - a chef d'oeuvre of natural art, with ferns and flowers and shrubs and trees - until you reach the very doorstep of the nest. And how shall I describe the nest - so cosy and homelike and comfortable as the living room seemed that morning when I was welcomed to my new little home. The four large windows reaching almost from floor to ceiling framed the wonderful views of sea and islands and mountains. The room within was itself so tasteful and bright. You know the curio corner and Bert's handsome desk with its book shelves above; opposite this is another well filled bookcase - and the couch with some of its familiar pillows is between the front windows, a Morris chair and three rockers, desk chair, table, etc. finish the list of furniture - come see how cosy it is, you dear people.

Bertrand's room opened from the living room, and the woodshed back of that you know - of course I had to see it all, and then up the companionway (which isn't half bad after all and is so businesslike in the way it gets you immediately to the second floor) to my room over the living room. Bertrand had fixed it up so nicely - a gold brown carpet, white woodwork, yellow paper,

white and brass bed, chiffonier, bureau, wash stand, bookcase and steamer chair upholstered for lounging, and the other chair. Three beautiful windows and yellow and white draperies. The bureau had the Dean pictures on it, May and Bess and Arch, so you welcomed me to Raven's Nest. Some of our steamer tourist friends wandered up at once, among them some true Britishers that I had taken a fancy to - they were taking a tour of America and were most genial; one of them said, "Your little new home is most terribly cosy, now isn't it?"

That first day we didn't do much of anything. I believe our time was so broken by people and things. We took supper and dinner at the teacher's club, where everyone was most cordial and pleasant. I am agreeably surprised in finding all the workers so nice - I feared they might be cranky, but we have very jolly times at the table usually. Mr. Kelly, the superintendent, is just splendid, quiet perhaps, but with a streak of humor and always thoughtful for others. Miss Gibson, the nurse at the hospital, has been so kind and good to us. We take breakfast at the hospital every morning because the rest of the school keeps such early hours. Aunt Deal has been so busy that we have not seen very much of her, and she is going away this August so bid your anxious fears subside. The others I will speak of later.

Thursday morning I was introduced to the sea pools in our front yard, and found so many interesting things: jelly fish, star fish, crabs and all sorts of shell fish, anemones, sea urchins and beautiful sea weeds. The shore is so beautiful. Fancy what the rocks at Newport or Marblehead would be if the bells and ferns grew out of the crevices of the highest ones and the heather, shrubs, vines, deep moss and trees wherever the tide left them undisturbed in little depressions of the rock. We had a little row over to a near island in the afternoon, and going out I cast my trolling line and caught two big fish - black bass, each weighing at least three pounds. (I judge by comparison with Frey's 3-lb. fish.)

We have had good weather every day, but Friday was one of those gloriously brilliant days that Alaskans claim as their specialty. The teachers were busy getting ready for the reception of the evening, so since we were not allowed to help make the cake, ice cream or salad, we cleared out from under foot by taking the little canvas boat about twelve o'clock and going over to Bluebell Cove Island (I caught some fish on the way over, too!) It is such fun to have a perpetual bait. We landed on a clean beach washed four times a day by the tide, and the water here is so pure and clean that it really cleanses and leaves no dirt behind. Bertrand built a fire, and soon we had the chocolate ready - and sardines, fresh tomatoes, chocolate, bread and butter, chocolate cake and fruit were spread on a level space with overhanging vines the little flowers peeping out around the edge of the cloth. Oh, it did taste good! After a little climb around the island to points of vantage for views, or sequestered little flower dells, we came home in time for a swim. The water was delightful, about as cold as Gratiot but being salt it was glowing.

After a hasty supper with the teachers, we came home to don our best bib and tucker for our reception. I wore my white and yellow silk (and, by the way, all my clothes arrived in excellent condition). The teachers rooms - the front rooms on the first floor of the boys' building - were beautifully decorated with potted plants, ferns, hemlock and such a wonderful profusion of pansies. The way things were extemporized interested me, I thought it was so clever and looked so pretty. Pieces of clay pipe were bound with white crepe paper and through the strings were slipped these great large pansies until the whole was covered - thrust into the top of the pipe was a great spreading bouquet of ferns, grasses and fine vines with brilliant leaves. The dining room looked so pretty, too, with circles of pansies around the white table cloth and almonds, olives, rolled sandwiches, chicken salad, coffee, ice cream and cake were served to about two hundred guests. All the white people in Sitka were invited, so we met at one moment the Attorney General, at the next the clerk of the grocery store, perhaps the Russian priest next, and the

guard at the jail; then the Governor and perhaps your Irish wash-lady; but all cordial and polite and clean and glad to see the Doctor's wife. I was so proud of my husband, for they all seemed to be devoted to him and indeed I cannot blame them for he is always so pleasant and kind to everyone. Mr. Kelly and Mr. and Mrs. McClelland (the minister and his wife) received the guests, Mrs. Carter stood with us and presented them. I thoroughly enjoyed the evening, and I think it was so kind of the "Ladies of the Mission" to give the reception for us, for it meant so much trouble for them - writing and delivering the invitations, preparing every bit of the refreshments themselves, decorating, and collecting a little necessary china, silver and linen from all their friends. We did thoroughly appreciate what it meant.

Sunday afternoon we went out in the large boat with Mrs. Carter and the three hospital girls for a final celebration because Annie and Salina were to go back home Monday as their time at the hospital is over. We went to another island and Bertrand and I climbed up a steep ledge of rock to the summit of the cliff and then each of us climbed a crab apple tree in order to get sufficiently above the shrubbery to see the bay. . . . The others of our party stayed on the shore and picked the salmon and blueberries that grow here in such profusion. Then we rowed over to another island, a small bed of rock cleft by the water into two parts with almost perpendicular sides. The marine life is always so interesting on all these islands, and it is all so new to me. This island had so many of those exquisite abloni (?) shells on it.

Home again, and Miss Gibson came over for supper with us. Bertrand made some delicious creamed chicken, string beans, biscuit, chocolate, apricots and chocolate cake comprised the menu. We spread our cloth on a knoll on the hillside of Raven's Nest, with the ferns and flowers around it, and our new silver coffee pot and tea spoons we were very proud and haughty and everything tasted so good. We had supper at home several times, and Bertrand is just the best cook. One time we had been working hard all day, I forget whether we were moving down to the manse or building a chicken coop, but that dear husband of mine thought I looked tired, so he invited me to supper at Raven's Nest. I was not allowed in the kitchen but read on the couch until he came for me - and there was the daintiest little supper you can imagine all ready for us. A pretty center piece of flowers and ferns from our front yard, and a little bouquet at my place -and smoking hot and most appetizing broiled venison and such good gravy, beans, bread and tea with sliced apricots and cake for dessert.

Have I explained any place in this letter that we have three rooms in the manse where we are sleeping now while Mr. McClelland is away, to keep his wife company, but we expect to live there while we are building? Our plans are all made now, and we are to order the lumber on this boat and expect to begin work the middle of August. There are ever so many things I would like to write about, but that will all come gradually for I must not take any more time just now.

I keep thinking of you and loving you and wishing you might share all of my excursions and the beauty of my new home. Bertrand sends his love, heaps of it, to you all, and we are just as happy as can be.

Ever your Anna

Written "a little frequently" in homopathic doses ever since I have been here until now.

This was the auspicious beginning of the family that grew to number ten children, Bert and Harry being born in Alaska. The chapters that follow tell of the "Happy Days and Special Events" of that family, although there were also days and events in which our parents experienced disappointment and sorrow. Throughout the forty-six years of their marriage, they maintained a steadfast faith in God and an enduring love one for another.

THE FAMILY AND THE NEIGHBORHOODS IN WHICH WE LIVED

The Early Years

Father's Journals, "J.A.M." and "J.A.U."⁶ cover in detail the seven years (1894-1901) he spent as a medical missionary at Sitka. It was following the death of Uncle Harry Wilbur, an older brother, that grandfather (H. O.) persuaded father to join him and Uncle Will Wilbur, the oldest brother, at the chocolate factory.⁷ Father felt it was God's Will that he leave the mission field and his medical practice, which he enjoyed immensely, and respond to "duty to his family." The appeal to family loyalty coincided with increasing friction with the Home Mission Board, which kept insisting on greater emphasis on evangelism at the expense of the needs of the medical work at the hospital. Consequently, father and mother, with Bertie and baby Harry, moved to Ardmore, where they lived for several years.⁸ (See footnote for the several neighborhoods in which the family lived.)

From the time the family left Ardmore, Pennsylvania, following Don's birth in 1903 until the fall of 1918, they enjoyed a period of suburban living at 42 Rosemont Avenue. Rosemont was a quiet street with cordial neighbors, large homes built in the early part of the Twentieth Century with extensive back yards having vegetable gardens, grape arbors, fruit trees and in our case a chicken yard with laying hens. It was here that the children from Buddy to Ginny (seven in all) were delivered at home with the assistance of the family doctor, Dr. Powell. After moving to Rosemont, mother told of her home and her new life in a letter to her sister, Elizabeth Dean (Tante):

Sunday morning

My dear Betsy,

Now it is your turn at last for a long visitation for I have a two days old cook and I cook no more. Donald is asleep and all the rest of the household at church. I have just been out around the farm to prepare the Sunday fruit and make a lovely centerpiece of red, purple and green grapes and pears from our own vine and tree, and added rosy peaches and red and purple morning glories with a leaf border. Come have some it is so fresh and pretty.

Bert got home safely last Tuesday after his week on the yacht.⁹ The boat was at Marblehead when he arrived, and they cruised up the coast that afternoon and the next morning early started for Boston, where he spent the rest of the week under the shadow of Bunker Hill dismantling the ship. He thought he was to have some fun running around, but the captain was sick and then had to be discharged, so Bert found he was working and couldn't leave the ship after all. So he did not get to Annie Beals Parker's and quite incensed Aunt Annie Dean by not seeing her until Sunday afternoon.

Affairs at our house move smoothly and happily. I have been filling fruit jars industriously with everything that came my way and was cheap enough. The little boys will soon start to kindergarten, which Harry insists on confusing with zoological garden in spite of my many and oft explanations. This morning while dressing him for Sunday school he said, "Muover, when can I go to kindergarten to watch the monkies?" I thought he might in his innocence be nearer the truth than I in my wisdom. I have been making Donald some dresses with belts and he seems quite a boy now. He is a monster big one. I used a pattern a year older than he is and when I tried it on, it was perfectly tight, although I had anticipated enough fullness to gather both the neck and waist while the sleeves are so long they hang below his fingers. He is so cunning now and talks a great deal. Just now he has a fad for Chinese and adds ee to every word - mamee,

walkee, drinkee, goodee, kissee, etc. My oldest has reached the tree climbing stage and many are the rents I am called upon to repair. I have now made overalls and laws whereby "no overalls no trees" is the edict. The bannisters are also the scene of many exploits, and both boys whiz down as recklessly as we used to do. They have not yet asked for tableboards to toboggan down stairs.

I haven't forgotten that I owe you a bill of \$1.43 but have been expecting to see you all summer and still hope you are to get east, but now that you are so well and frisky I suppose you will be planning to settle down somewhere and work. Don't forget I love you and want you to come make this home whenever you are ready, and I hope this time you can meet some of the people and have a good time.

I am your,

Nancy Jane

The Affluent Years

It was from our Rosemont home that the family packed up every June after school was out to go to the shore at Lavallette, New Jersey; that the three older boys went to the Haverford Preparatory School for Boys; and that Buddie went to the Model School for Girls in Bryn Mawr. For two years (1916-1918) Deanie, Helena and I were tutored at home since I had been born with a harelip and cleft palate and my poor speech made it difficult for me to be understood in the public school where I was subject to merciless teasing by fellow students.

Several of our relatives lived in the vicinity. Aunt Helen W. Elliott, father's older sister by sixteen years, lived a block away in an impressive stone house on Montgomery Avenue with the grounds extending to Roberts Road. This home was built after grandmother's death, and grandfather, with whom she and her daughter Madeline had been living, moved from the old family home another block east on Montgomery Avenue on the edge of Bryn Mawr. Father's oldest brother, William (Will), resided at a country estate perhaps a mile or so from the old Saint David's Episcopal Church. Mother had two brothers in the area: Archer Dean, the youngest in her family, lived in Ardmore, and Morris Dean in West Chester. Each brother had a daughter, and the three families regularly celebrated Thanksgiving and some of the other holidays together.

The year Ross was born, 1910, the family built an ocean-front cottage between Magee and Vance Avenues at Lavallette, New Jersey. It was a well-planned summer home with spacious living and dining rooms, a den, tool shop, large pantry, kitchen and laundry room. There were seven bedrooms and two additional bedrooms for servants over the kitchen and laundry, which were entered outside from the second-floor porch and were used by the family in later years. There was a large attic with three gables, a spacious dormer on the ocean side to the east. There was a large, wooden, water tank that occupied an eight-foot space and supplied the second-floor bath. The attic was where the boys slept.

First and second floor porches surrounded all but the north side of the house, so the sea could be enjoyed from sunrise to sunset. The west side overlooked Barnegat Bay, which was some six blocks or more away. On the south side of the second floor was an open deck where we children would lie after being chilled by an ocean swim and toast ourselves out of the wind, in the hot sun. Many of the special events and activities recorded in these pages took place at the "cottage."

Family fortunes were at their best during the mid-teens and early twenties. It was in 1918 that the family moved to "Anberten"¹⁰ in Haverford on Railroad Avenue across from the entrance to Haverford College. Grandfather "H. O." purchased the property for about \$18,000 and gave it to father and mother, who assumed responsibility for the substantial remodeling of the old Victorian house with many gables, balconies, decks and intricate decorations.

The main entrance to Anberten's one and one-half acres was from Buck Lane. A large carriage house and horse stable was on a knoll on the left of the entrance and nearby the tenant house that Harry Backus occupied. Our home stood on the right, surrounded by spacious lawns shaded by large maples and oaks. The driveway circled under a porte-cochere where guests entered the house through large oak doors into a paneled entrance hall having a fireplace, oak table and leather-covered couch and armchair that matched the table. A large moose head hung above the mantel. To the left a staircase led to a landing where a grandfather clock gave the Westminster chime each quarter hour, then the staircase turned and led to the second floor.

Opposite the entrance and across the entrance hall, sliding doors led to the dining room with a gas heater in the fireplace. And on the right side of the entrance hall another set of sliding doors led to the living room, which looked out on a terrace and across Railroad Avenue to the campus of Haverford College. At the end of the dining room, French doors opened to the music room, with double doors leading on the right back to the living room. And on the left, large doors led to father's den or study, which was also paneled in walnut and had a large fireplace with Alaskan totem poles supporting the mantel. Like the living room and music room, the den faced the terrace running across the front of Anberten. A doorway led out of father's den to a porch, and from there a path curved to a walk-in entrance to the property from Railroad Avenue. A large butler's pantry, kitchen and maid's sitting room with a small porch completed the first floor, except for connecting passageways, coat closets and a powder room off the entrance hall.

An unusual feature that had been built into the old house was a hand-operated elevator that led from father's den to the master bedroom directly above. This room also had a fireplace as did the guest bedroom. There were five bedrooms, a sewing room, porch and three baths on the second floor. The third floor contained four bedrooms, a bath and servants' quarters with a bath.¹¹

The three oldest boys graduated from Haverford College, and Buddy from Bryn Mawr, while he lived at Anberten. Mother entertained with gracious cousins' parties for twenty-five or more on the terrace and lawn. Harry's graduation party and Bud and Hugh's weddings were other memorable occasions that took place there. Fortunately, grandfather's was the only funeral held at Anberten. He died in his ninetieth year after having lived in luxurious retirement at the Bellevue Stratford Hotel in Philadelphia for many years.

If this were a journal instead of an overview of the family's activities, considerable space would be devoted to the family's involvement with the Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church. Father's two journals tell of his extensive relationship to the church as a youth and young man, and of his fondness for its beloved pastor, Dr. William H. Miller, who encouraged him to go into the mission field. I was named for the minister of the church, Dr. G. A. Johnston Ross. Dr. Andrew Mutch baptized the three younger girls and some of the grandchildren, confirmed several of us and married Bud and Hugh, Don and Beth. He later conducted the interment services for the ashes of both our parents.

Father was an elder of the Presbyterian Church all of my youth and served communion each quarter wearing the formal, daytime cutaway coat with striped trousers. The older youth of the family were involved in Christian Endeavor where, it is said, that the imaginative Harry

A WILBUR ALBUM



Henry O. Wilbur
1834 - 1924

PHOTOGRAPHS SELECTED FROM THOSE AT THE 1980 WIP-O-WIL FAMILY REUNION

Anna Dean Wilbur
1874-1952



Bertrand Kingsbury Wilbur
1870-1945



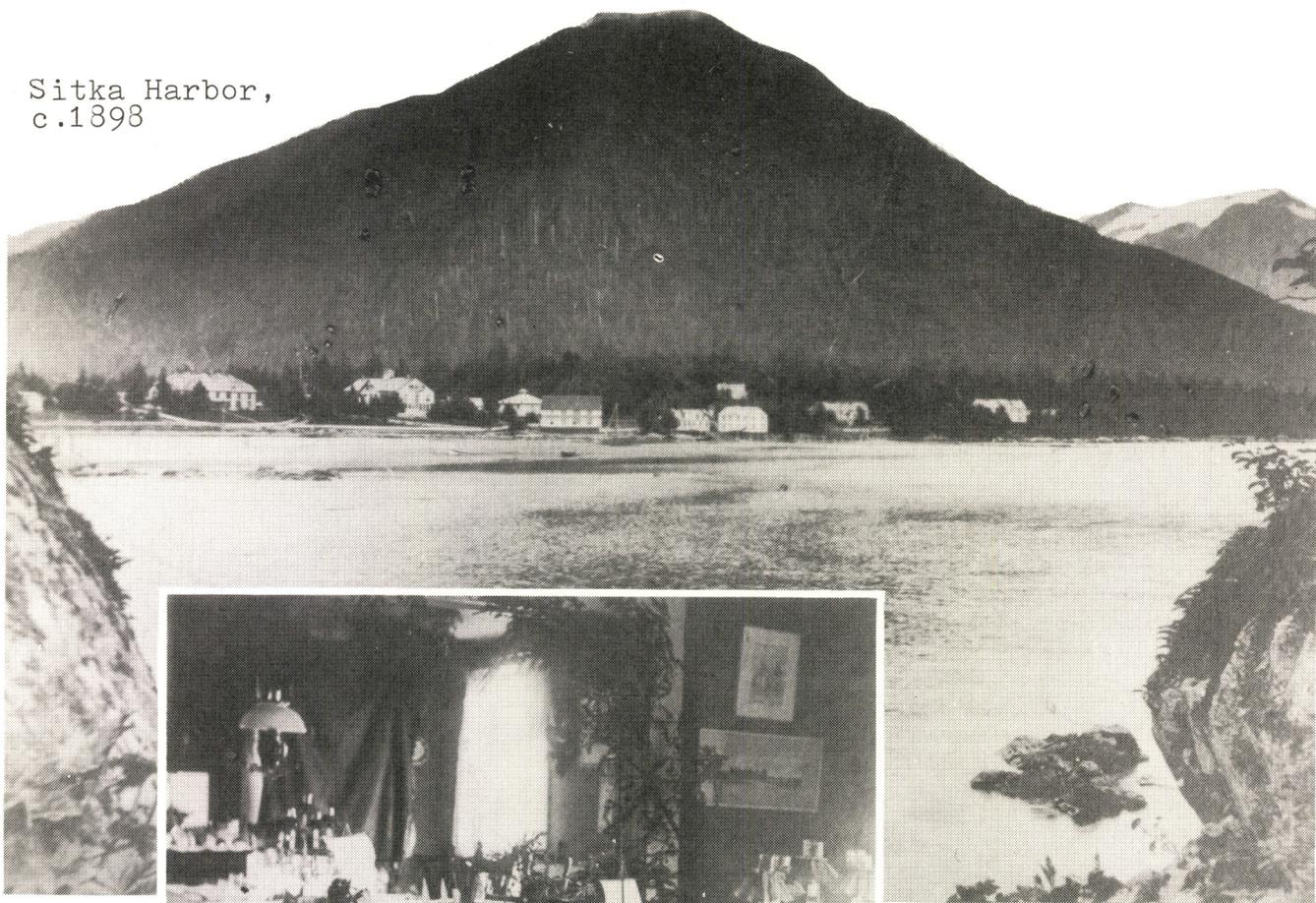
Doctor and Mrs. Wilbur: newlyweds!
Avondale, Ohio, 1893

SITKA, ALASKA 1898-1901

B.K. (with baby Bert)
and Anna (with baby
Harry) at their home
"Raven's Nest" 1901



Sitka Harbor,
c.1898



Thanksgiving at
"Raven's Nest",
1898

BACK ON THE "MAIN LINE"...

Father Wilbur
with Bert(left)
and Harry(right)
c.1905



THE FAMILY AT ROSEMONT, c. 1909

From left: Donald, Mother Wilbur with Esther on her lap, Bert, Harry, Father Wilbur. Elizabeth (standing in front of B.K.). Nelson(seated).



FAMILY PORTRAIT c. 1914

Back: Harry, Bert, Donald
and Father

Middle: Mother holding Helena;
Elizabeth holding Deanie

Front: Nelson, Ross and Esther



About 1916: B.K., Harry, Bert and
Den (top right). Ann and Ruth (in oval)



LAST YEAR AT ROSEMONT

Standing (from left): Donald,
Esther, Harry and Bert

Middle: Mother holding Virginia,
Elizabeth, Nelson and Father

Front: Ross, Ann (Deanie) and
Ruth (Helena)



Anberten: The new home,
November, 1919.

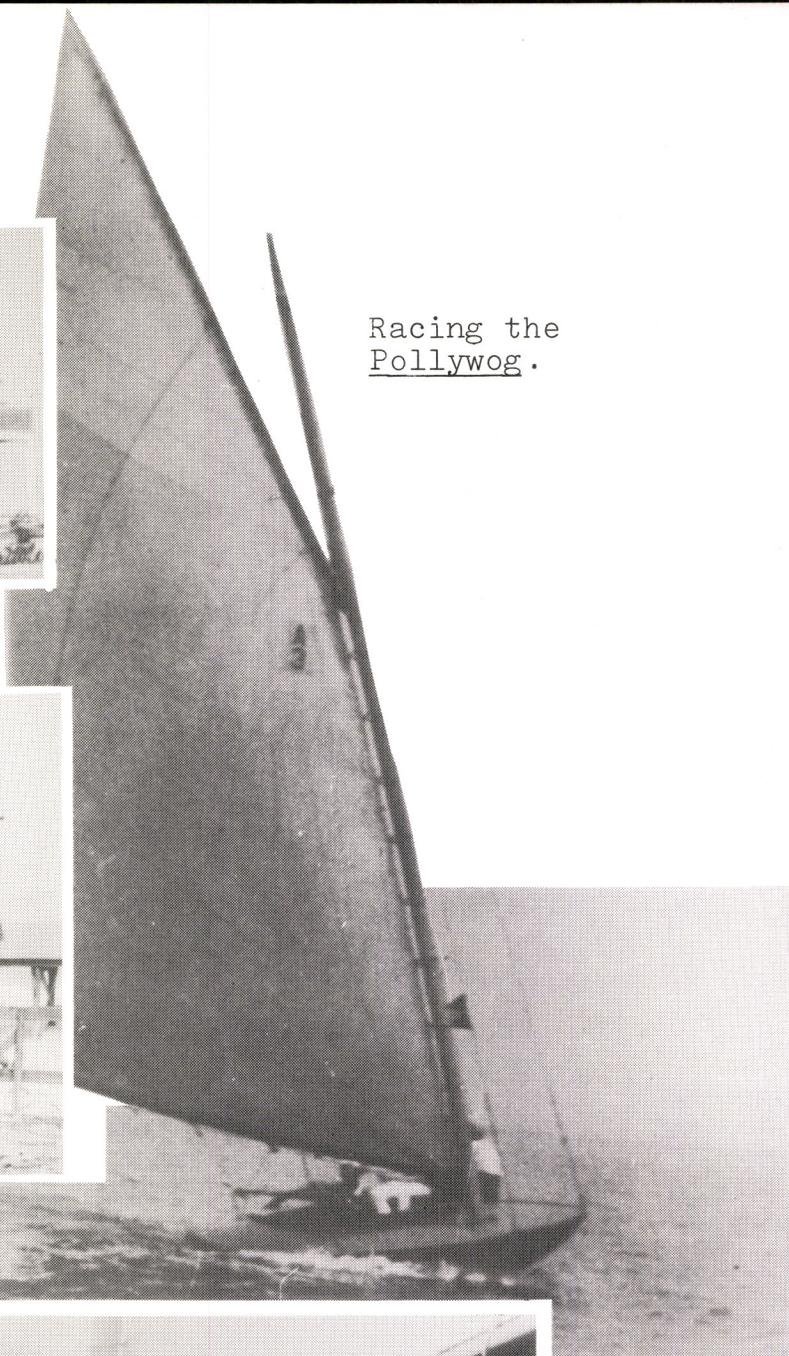
LAVALLETTE, 1919



"Drowsy Dunes"



Bert(left) and
BKW on his
birthday(right).



Racing the
Pollywog.



Mother Wilbur and the gang
aboard Pollywog.



SILVER WEDDING ANNIVERSARY, ANBERTEN, JUNE 1923

Standing (from left): Cousin Alice Lyle, Aunt Marian Dean, Uncle Morris Dean, Catherine (Kitty) Dean (Strohkarck), Nick, Esther, Don, Aunt Teresa Dean, Uncle Archer Dean, Beth Dean

Middle: Aunt Elizabeth Dean (Tante), Harry, Mother, Step-grandmother and Grandfather H.O. Wilbur, Father, Aunt Helena Elliott, Great Uncle Will Lawrence, Elizabeth

Front: Ross, Helena, Virginia, Deanie