

Introduction to this Digital Edition
Autobiography of Bertrand Kingsbury Wilbur
Just About Me

BKW began JAM in 1933 while still in Haverford, Pa, and wrote the final page in 1938 in San Diego, California as he notes at the top of p. 737 in Vol III:

....It is a long time since I wrote any of this, and I am still anxious to complete it. Having brought old letters and papers to do so with me in anticipation of having lots of time out here, which I have failed to find, I have at last gotten at it. It seems best to describe events as a series of pictures, rather than in anything like history. Its sad enough any way, but it seems to me that you children will want the whole picture.....

As noted at the top of p. 278, Vol II BKW hand-typed five carbon copies of JAM. These three digitized volumes were scanned from a Xerox copy made from Teddy and Nelson's carbon, when I stayed with Teddy at her small frame house in Haverford during the summer of 1981 and helped paint her eaves from a long ladder. I'm forever indebted to Teddy for introducing me to JAM, and for her suggestion that I make this xerox for my family, particularly since all the original onion-skin copies are rapidly deteriorating. And none of them would have held up to the digitization process.

Please note that in many places BKW apparently had later thoughts and memories he wanted to add after writing the main sequentially-numbered text. In such cases he summarized these added memories on pages which he numbered A, B, C...etc. I suggest that you read the main sequential text first. And then read these lettered addenda pages separately; the events they describe do not necessarily fit exactly where inserted in the text.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Begins with BKW's original 3-page Table of Contents which covers Vol I and Vol II, and later supplemented by son Ross Wilbur's expanded Table covering Vol II and Vol III.

FORWARD

Written by sons Bert and Harry during the 1936 'Wilbur Welcomes Wilbur Reunion' in Lavallette, NJ (pictured on p.62 of 'Happy Days') when JAM was only partially completed

PREFACE

Written nine days later by BKW after a coronary event during the summer. He describes the genesis of JAM: *.....this took form, and as it did, I pounded it out from my grey cells by the two-finger-and-thumb method...* BKW speaks of spending many evenings with Anna Dean ('mother') writing, editing, laughing, and reliving their life together during the preparation of JAM/JAU.

HAPPY DAYS & SPECIAL EVENTS

The 900-page JAM/JAU story ends in 1912 when the family was still quite young and living in the big house with many servants, gardens and optimism for the future. It is unclear why BKW chose to end his story at this point, even tho he lived for many more years and died peacefully in 1945. But World War I was brewing in Europe, tastes and customs were changing, and the business climate was becoming more competitive. Perhaps these were the 'sad' years of which he speaks earlier in the text. And he might have had difficulty recounting those years in JAM.

So 65+ years later, after a wonderful Wilbur Reunion in Virginia in 1980, youngest son Ross Wilbur, then retired and living in Minnesota, was motivated to compile this heartfelt 190-page book of photos and personal memories, that fills-in this later period of the Wilbur Family history to some extent.

To compile this work, Ross interviewed his brothers and sisters who were still alive, excerpted sections from the large trove of personal letters and memorabilia he had accumulated, and added his own unique and loving memories. I flew up from Chicago to visit Ross and his wife Helen during the preparation of this volume, and was honored to help Ross in the its production and distribution to every living Wilbur at the time. So it seems appropriate that Ross' later work be included now in this digital Wilbur archive.

SUGGESTED JAM READINGS:

To help readers 'get into' the story of the Wilbur Family, I would like to suggest a few episodes that I have particularly enjoyed:

JAM page

1	Early childhood beginning in 1870 in Camden, New Jersey
13	Family trip to Europe by steamship, train and carriage in 1880
170	Arriving in Alaska for the first time
240	Courtship of Miss Anna Dean
249	Hike up Mt Edgcomb in the wilds of Alaska
296	Summer in Gratiot, Michigan
370	Return to Anna Dean and their wedding
486	Cruise of the sailboat Bertha captained by BKW
558P	Meeting John D. Rockefeller in Alaska
562	Leaving Alaska for the final time
592	Beginning work at the chocolate factory, by 'God's direction'
629	Summer at HO's 'salmon preserve' on the St Lawrence River
658	BKW raises money on the Main Line for a YMCA
667	Buying a 1906 2-cyl Maxwell - top speed 35mph
683	BKW joins the first Board of Health; describes early sanitation standards
712	Discovering Lavallette and the New Jersey shore for the first time in 1908
745	Steamship cruise in 1910 from New York to Caribbean & West Indies
755	Early biplane flights from nearby cow pasture
759	Honeymoon in Jamaica by steamship in 1911
781	Early trips to Lavallette in the new 1912 4-cyl Cadillac
787	Harry Backus and the Family's black servants
801	Starting a Scout Troop soon after scouting came to America

Carolyn Treadway and I as BKW's grandchildren, enjoyed discovering, editing and digitizing this massive work. We hope that future Wilburs will also enjoy reading it and passing it on to their children. JAM represents our heritage. For we believe that within each of us dwells the ideals and spirit of the man who was Bertrand Kingsbury Wilbur.

Clark Maxfield
Son of Helena Ruth Wilbur Maxfield
January 24, 2017