

A L I F E S K E T C H

of
Dr. E. C. Guild

My father was born at Conway, Mass., April 10, 1832. He was a descendant of John Guild, who landed in Mass. in 1640. Both of his grandfathers served in the Revolutionary war -- one for three years and the other for the entire seven.

When seven years of age he journeyed across the country with his parents and brothers and sisters, to the little settlement at Wayne Center, where for several years he attended a little log school house.

Wolves and deer roamed over the Illinois prairies in those days, and wild geese, prairie hens, sand-hill cranes, and other wild life broke the silence of the great spaces. As far as eye could see to the east and north of Wayne Center, no human habitation was visible, not even a tree. Chicago, the only market for the produce of the settlers, had a population of about four thousand, and not more than twenty-five families lived in Wayne township, six miles square.

The nearest church prior to 1844, when the Wayne Center Church was organized was at St. Charles, some eight or nine miles distant, whence the pioneers journeyed with their trusty oxen and baskets of lunch, the round trip and the unburied services occupying the day.

The cabins of the settlers were rudely built and in winter the snow often drifted in between the half inch clap boards that made the roof, and more than once the family awoke to find a covering of snow on the floor and beds.

As a child my father was known for his deep religious convictions, and also for his keen interest in public affairs. He never missed an opportunity to hear a great man speak, and more than once when a mere lad, he drove a hundred miles to hear a Joshua R. Giddings or a Salmon P. Chase give an address, the trip covering a weeks time. During the

winter of 1854 and '55 he attended Beloit College. On Oct. 27, 1857, he was united in marriage with Alice Darling Blair, who six years earlier had journeyed thru many weeks of stormy seas, with her parents from Edinburgh, Scotland, and then overland to the little Illinois settlement.

Those were the days of the anti-slavery agitation, and their small home became a station on the "Underground Railway," where fugitive slaves found shelter in their flight to Canada and freedom.

A story is told of father in those early days that illustrates his super conscientiousness, particularly in money matters, which sometimes made him the butt of ridicule by the less scrupulous. He had agreed to pay a bill on a certain day, and when night came with rain and inky darkness and miles of muddy roads between, the farmer to whom he owed the money chuckled that this time he guessed "Neal would fail up." It was late evening when the sound of splashing hoofs and a bouyant "whoa" from out the darkness brought the astonished family to the door. The money was paid, and like a flash he was homeward bound.

While still on the farm, a combination of circumstances, chief of which was failing health, turned the young fathers attention to the study of medicine, and with the courageous backing of his young wife, who carried on while he pursued his studies, he was graduated from Bennett Medical College in Chicago in 1874.

He never doubted that he was called to the life of a physician, a profession followed by many of his ancestors for eight generations past. The relief of human suffering became his vocation, avocation and consuming passion, and materia medica was his trusted tool.

The family moved to Bartlett in 1874 where I, and later my younger sister, was born.

Wide stretches of woodland, almost surrounded the little village in those years, which thinned out in all directions to modest farms. The village and the countryside for miles around were his parish.

My first recollection of my father is associated with a team of spirited horses to whom he habitually talked with a coaxing reassurance that betrayed his illconcealed fear that they were getting ready to make a dash for freedom, and we were conscious of a sense of relief when the dim lantern light revealed their glossy figures in the shadowy stalls.

The smug announcement that no night calls would be answered was a conception of later date than those early 80's, as was the boon of the telephone. A knock at the door, a voice in the dark, a hurried pulling on of clothes, doors shutting, a quick firm step on the walk, receding carriage wheels on the gravelled road--these were the familiar sounds of night in our childhood home.

My father had a liberal toleration of almost any human frailty, except the nonchalant indifference of the individual who habitually lived beyond his means, who would call the doctor to deliver a new addition to the family when the previous arrival--silk bonneted, satin shoed and lace smothered--was still an unpaid item on his books.

The worthy poor were the frequent objects of his devoted skill and many times the recipients of financial help in addition to medical care.

One day attending a case, he noticed the table spread, without any butter present. It touched his heart, and as he left, he deposited a bill on the table, without any comment. The next day the entire family went to the circus!

Called to the home of a foreigner, and finding no carpet on the floor, and no cloth on the table, with scarce a chair to sit on, his mental calculation frequently was "a charity case." This impression more than once was dissipated when the horny handed father of the house would emerge from the bed room with a coarse blue sock bulging with currency.

Hospitals and trained nurses were practically unknown in that day, and frequently our home supplied the lack of these modern blessings.

On these occasions we younger children were hustled away, as noted surgeons were rushed by special train from the nearby city to minister to the needs of the stricken ones, often railroad accident victims. These occasions were followed by long weeks of nursing, which supplemented my mother's household duties, and taught us children to walk softly and speak low.

There was humor too, as when one day, having prescribed for the patient, and noting a reassuring improvement, my father snapped closed his medicine case, and pulling on his coat, started toward the door, with the casual but characteristically earnest statement that he would come again tomorrow at the same hour. The old German father of the sick lad said, "No, we don't want you to come no more." "Not come any more-- I can't dismiss this case yet--he is still a very sick boy," answered my father. "Well, we don't want you no more."

"But isn't the boy doing well?"

"O yah, he do fine--he do fine, but we want another doctor. You know that doctor in the city vat doctored our two leetle boys vat died last year--he speak Sherman--we dink we like him de best."

Just opposite our home stood the village meeting house. No loop sky scraper ever thrilled my imagination like the belfrey and steeple of that little church, which I conceived as being within easy talking distance of heaven.

No less important was my father's drug store which housed hundreds of bottles, enticing show cases, and the village post office, and where great national questions were discussed and settled by local statesmen, supplemented by an occasional political celebrity from the outside.

All his life father was a student of current history. He always subscribed for publications opposed to his own attitude on important issues, that he might know all sides. This gave him a tolerance of

opinions differing widely from his own, and a breadth of sympathy and good judgment which distinguished him always.

To be able to quote father on our side - with the familiar preface: "Father used to say" -- has always been an unquestioned asset in any family argument.

In the days of harsh parental discipline, a neighbor from England said to my father: "Guild, you're the queerest man I ever knew - You talk to those boys of yours as if they were your equals!" This was characteristic.

In middle life largely thru Mother's influence, he became keenly interested in the temperance cause which had his devoted and sacrificial support as long as he lived.

In 1889 the family removed to Wheaton for the educational advantages offered. There for 19 years he practiced medicine with marked success until 1908, when an unusually heavy winter's work overtaxed his splendid vitality and he was stricken with pneumonia and heart complications which proved fatal.

The service was held at the family home which for so many years had been home and office. It was exactly six months after the beautiful occasion of the golden wedding. Dr. William Evans, pastor of the College Church, of which father and mother were devoted members, spoke triumphantly of the victory of such a life. Mother survived him 13 years. Both rest in the Wheaton Cemetery.

There were nine children, two of whom died in infancy in Wayne Center. Charles died in Bartlett at twenty, while studying medicine, and Newman died in Wheaton at 26.

Five still live to bless their memory: They are Dr. W. L. Guild of Wayne and Wheaton; R. C. Guild of Buffalo, N.Y.; Mrs. A. G. Loveless, Mrs. C. W. Hadley and myself.

Father's seventy-six years never brought him disillusionment. He loved life and people to his last moment, and lived each day with the eagerness and faith of a boy. He quoted often, and lived always, the words: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," and he gloried in the proof in his daily life that "all needful things shall be added unto you."

by

Mattie G. Squires