

Early Days

on

The Plains

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Written

by

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Edited

by

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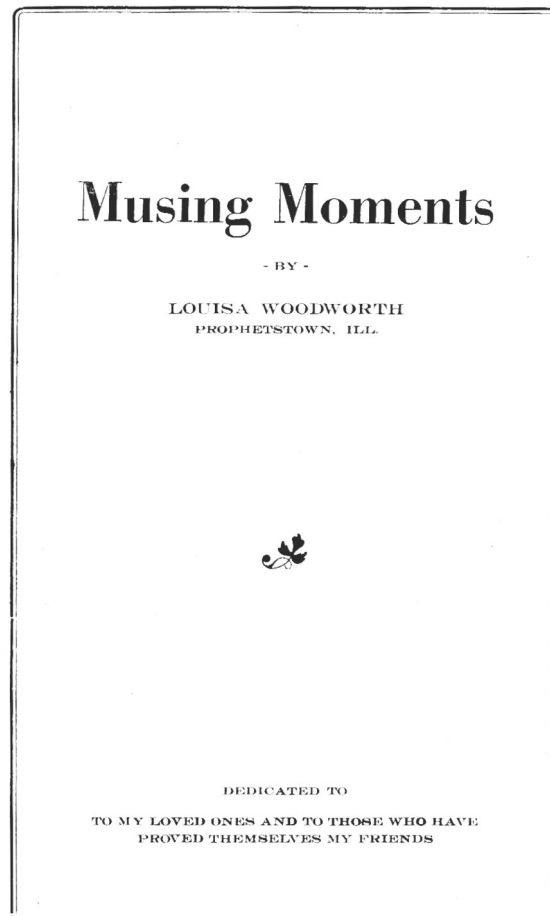
Prophetstown Area Historical Society

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Introduction

Louisa Anderson-Woodworth was a resident of Prophetstown and became a poet of some note. I like to call her the poet laureate of Prophetstown. This was her home at 322 East Ave. On the next page is one of her poems.

Her story you will read here details her early life, beginning in Hooppole, before settling in Prophetstown.



TO PROPHETSTOWN

When Indians roamed the Middle-
West,
And old Rock River did it's best
To help the Redman in his quest
For food and transportation,
The redman chose this goodly spot,
To pitch their wigwams, as they
ought.

Their chieftian was the "Prophet."
Naught
Could give them information
As could this prophet, wise and bold,
Who ruled this place in days of old,
and prophesied, so we are told,
Before white Immigration.

The Redman thot this prophet knew,
And told them things that would
come true.
And always looked upon him too,
with eyes of adoration.

Then came the white man in his quest
For trade and knowledge and the
rest
Of things the white man loves the
best;
Some call it speculation.

They named the townsite Prophets-
town
After the chief of great renown.
Some think it should be Profits-town.
We think that's expectation.

The Prophet sleeps on Thunderbolt
hill
Or did sleep there, they say, until
Some white man sought his bones,
to fill
His head with information.
Of what the Redman used to be,
Before the White man came, and
he
Stepped down and out, no more to be.
And what was their relation.
But Prophetstown long since outgrew
Her trading post and wigwams too.
The old has given place to new.
Far more than expectation.

Red man and white, who were then
so fleet,
Have crossed the river where the
two worlds meet.

Still others and others have followed
their feet
Grown tired of time's rotation.

And Prophetstown may well be proud
Of those who have passed on with
the crowd.
As well as those who are shouting
loud,
For modern innovation.
Of those who wish the town to be,
The town the people wish to see.
And it is apparently,
Quite close to realization.

Our factories are turning out,
Some things our neighbors talk
about.
And other things without a doubt,
Are worth their imitation.

When nature seems to spill and spout,
And railroads kick their bridges
out,
Old Prophetstown's still on the route,
Of rapid transportation.

Our churches all men view with pride.
Their doors are always open wide.
And good will found on every side,
Fulfills our expectation.

O, little place called Prophetstown,
On maps you're not of much re-
nown.
But people here your head will crown,
with goodly reputation.

Lou Woodworth.

Early Days on the Plains

Mrs. Lou Woodworth

Source unknown.

In 1860 when I was a very small child, my father, William Anderson who lived near Hooppole, placed his family, a chest of medicine, a large chest of carpenter tools, food, bedding and other things in a covered wagon, hitched an ox team to the wagon and along with another family by the name of McCloud, started for the gold fields of the far West.

The carpenter tools he expected to use in building a log cabin when we stopped, as he was a carpenter by trade. The medicine chest was filled with medicines as calomel, ipecac, aloes, etc., which my grandfather, who was a doctor, sent with us in case of need. Looking back, as I remember, we took many doses of calomel without doing any of us harm.

Our first stop on our western trip was at Anamosa, IA., in Jones County, Ia., where lived my mother's father and family. Jacob Luther, as some of the oldest residents around here will remember. We stayed there just long enough to make a farewell visit and then pushed on west across Iowa and fell in with a wagon train who were also after gold and on the way to California.

On we went across the plains, as those prairie lands were called then. It was pretty hard tiresome traveling, but we took the traveling the way the Irishmen cut off his dog's ears, he took off a little piece every day so it would not hurt as bad.

One incident that happened while crossing the plains I remember distinctly. Seeing four poles like telephone poles, standing a distance from the trail, which were placed close together and topped by a platform on which stood a large box, one of the men of the train climbed one of the poles and found a blanket en-wrapping what was left of an Indian's skeleton. We learned afterward that some tribes of Indians buried their dead this way, while other tribes buried in the ground and buried their treasures with them. If a chief died he was placed in the grave astride his most valued horse, the horse still alive, and then the grave was filled and his horse sent to the happy hunting grounds with his master.

Soon after this we met some people who told us it was not safe to go beyond the Rocky Mountains, for west of them the Indians were on the war path. Well, the men consulted together and the wagon train concluded to press on. The McCloud family decided to go on with them as there was safety in numbers, but my father decided he would turn aside and to up into the mountains of Colorado for gold was to be found there also.

Afterwards we learned that the Indians had captured and massacred a large wagon train west of the Rocky Mountains. We greatly feared it was the one we had traveled with and as the McCloud family was never heard from afterwards we felt sure they among the victims.

Well, we stayed in the territory of Colorado (it had not been admitted to the Union) and passed thru Denver which was then only a little town scattered along Cherry Creek. We ended our journey about 20 miles above Denver.

Here father built a log house and then started to hunt for gold just below our house on a large Plateau. The Indians of that territory who were at peace with the whites at that time used to meet and hold their pow-wows and war dances and feasts.

Father used to watch them with great interest, but my mother and we children watched with fear and trembling.

While we lived here my oldest brother was born and afterward went on record as being the first white child born in that county.

I will relate an incident which seems to prove that the Indians respect bravery. We had all gone down to Denver for supplies and as we traveled with oxen it took a few days to go and come. On our way home as we traveled up the mountain we met a band of Indians coming down. As they came near we noticed some Indians with tin dishes hanging on their saddle horns, others with carpenter tools, and

one old Indian buck, as they were then called, with mother's wedding bonnet, which was trimmed with ostrich feathers, fastened jauntily on his head.

Knowing where these things came from we were badly frightened, but father stopped the old chief and told him he must make his men give up the things. Pretending he knew nothing of the thieving the chief made them give up everything but the bonnet, which mother would not have, as she said nothing could tempt her to wear it again. So the old buck went on his way rejoicing.

We did not find gold, though we hunted for three years, and about this time word came that the Indians were rising and would soon be on the war path. This frightened mother and us children terribly, so father concluded to moved down to Denver, which we did.

During this time the Civil War had broken out, and every bit of news which filtered in was listened to in dismay. Mother got news that her youngest brother, a boy of 18 years old, had enlisted, gone South and had been captured by the Confederates and put into Andersonville prison where he virtually starved to death,

Shortly after this we children came in one day and mother weeping. Asking the cause we were told that Abraham Lincoln had been assassinated. That was the way the common people all over the United States took the death of Lincoln. There was weeping and moaning and "they refused to be comforted because he was not."

As father had given up hunting for gold, and mother was very, very homesick, father concluded to return to the states, which we did and located in Iowa. But the lure of the West was in the Anderson blood, and after we were all grown and mother died, four of my brothers and one later went west and settled in the new state of Colorado and stayed there. One now a lawyer in Denver, Col. and two others are in Trinidad, Col. Father followed them and spent his last days in Colorado.

Note: The Andersonville prison camp mentioned here was notorious for the mistreatment of Union prisoners of war. Not only did Mrs. Anderson lose her brother, but there were thousands who died there. The commander of that POW camp was the only Confederate we executed after the Civil War.

Henry Wirz was the commander of Andersonville Prison, officially known as Camp Sumter, during the final 14 months of the American Civil War. A Swiss immigrant and Confederate captain, Wirz took command of the prison in March 1864.

Andersonville Prison became infamous for its horrific conditions, housing over 45,000 Union prisoners, nearly 13,000 of whom died from disease, malnutrition, overcrowding, and poor sanitation. The camp, designed for 10,000, was severely overcrowded, with inadequate food, water, and shelter. Wirz's Trial and Execution: After the war, Wirz was arrested, tried by a military tribunal, and convicted of war crimes, including conspiracy and murder. He was hanged on November 10, 1865, in Washington, D.C., becoming the only Confederate official executed for war crimes during the Civil War.



Examples of the starvation which took place in the Andersonville prisoner of war camp.

Louisa's mother was Elizabeth Ann Luther-Anderson. The brother of Elizabeth who died in the Andersonville Civil War prison camp was Jonathan Luther. Here is his record:

Name	Jonathan Luther
Rank	4 Corporal
Unit	IA 9 Inf B
Birth Information	IL
Death Information	02 Nov 1864 Andersonville GA
Cemetery	Andersonville National
Cemetery Location	Andersonville GA
Comments	11752 enl 12 Aug 1861 age 18 res Rome severely wounded abdomen 19 May 1863 pmtd 4 Corp 01 Dec 1863 POW 14 Mar 1864 Claysville AL died