
Autobiography Of
Buda McCormick Beard
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AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF BUDA C. McCORMICK BEARD

And so my children want a record of their forebears? My mother's family tree is written. I know very little of my father's. But here it is: My grandfather, John Wesley McCormick, was born in Uniontown, PA in 1814 (?). His father was born in Ireland and his father in Scotland. We have no records to verify this, as they seem to have moved every generation. And the ones I knew were not interested in their ancestry. J.W. McCormick was, I am told, a cousin of Cyrus H. McCormick.

My grandmother was Emily Morgan+, born in 1814 in the state of Virginia, but no record of the town nor of her ancestry. Her sister, Polly, married my grandfather's brother, and they moved - all of them - to Ottawa, IL, where my father was born in 1841. They bought farms there, and my father hauled wheat to Chicago before they had a railroad. My father used to talk about his two uncles, "Bill" and "Alf". I think it was Bill who married Aunt Polly. They had 13 children, and Grandma had eight. They were Charlotte, who married Mendez (Uncle Men) Bryant, and had 2 sons, Metellus and one who died in infancy. Uncle Men raised a company of 100 men and drilled them himself and was a captain in the Union Army. He was a prisoner in Andersonville prison and I think escaped. I can see why my children want a record, because I truly wish I had one. Libby and Andersonville were notorious for starving their prisoners. I think from the scraps of information I picked up as a child, that the stories were not overdrawn.

I can understand why my family were all Northern sympathizers. My father tried to enlist but was refused because he failed to pass the physical examination. My grandparents were so alarmed, they sent him and his brother Ralph to Yellowstone Park. But I'm getting ahead of my story.

Aunt Charlotte died soon after her second baby was born. They named me "Buda Charlotte", and I wish I had made them call me Charlotte. Grandma's next baby was Charles. He married Elizabeth Crozier, affectionately known to us as "Aunt Lizzie." Then my father, Nelson, who attended school in Springfield, IL, and knew Lincoln at least by sight. He admired and almost revered him, and often said the Reconstruction days would not have been like they were if Lincoln had lived.

The McCormick clan moved to Missouri and bought farms in Cass County, where my father met my mother, Ella Gates. They were married in 1876 at her home in Connecticut. The next to my father was Ralph. He married Jane Theophilus who was born in Wales but came to America as a baby. Then Zackary who died at about 18 years. Olive married Joe Wauchopa (Walkkup) and lived in Illinois, I think Bloomington. Dow married Dolly Lischie(?) pronounced "Lishy", a beautiful and talented woman. Her picture hung on our wall - a full-length in a lovely dress. She and the baby both died about a year after her marriage and Uncle Dow never recovered from his grief. Grandma's last baby - her eighth - died in infancy. I think her name was Harriet.

Grandpa died in 1895(?) - Grandma in 1884. She was the one I loved best of my grandparents. Her 3 daughters-in-law each said she was the best woman who ever lived. Mama's folks lived in Conn., and I was not with them much. Her sister, Lucy, Mrs. Gilbert Spalding, lived on a farm near us, and I knew the family well, loved them dearly, and greatly admired Aunt Lucy. But my first love, outside my immediate family, was Grandma McCormick.

Daddy had a grain elevator and often went to Kansas City and St. Louis with shipments of grain and livestock. When Mama went with him, sometimes /she left Gertrude and me with Grandma McCormick. We would get on the train at West Line and the next stop was Freeman, 6 miles away,

where Grandma and Uncle Ralph lived. Trump, our beloved bird dog, would go with us. He was well-known to the train men and would go up and down the aisle wagging his tail and making friends with all the passengers. Nobody thought of making him ride in the baggage car and pay his passage. In wintertime it was dusk when we reached Freeman and Gertrude would take a firm grasp on my hand and hurry me to Grandma's before dark. Trump was always first to arrive.

When Aunt Charlotte died, Grandma took Metellus, and I loved him best of all my cousins. Partly because he lived with Grandma, but mostly because of himself. When Grandma died, Daddy and Mama wanted him to live with us but he went to Uncle Charley's. He was 14 years old. He told me in after years it was not that he loved them best - but because Uncle Charley lived on a farm and he felt there was work he could do. Metellus was like that.

I doubt if I could give a true story of my childhood. It would have to be colored by my adoration of my father. He died when I was 13, but definitely influenced me more than all others through my 77 years. To this day I cringe and feel my heart flutter when I hear someone speak unkindly to a child. Not that I lived up to the ideal my Daddy set for me, and I'm sure my eight wonderful children will recall times when I was unjust. I've told them to forgive me, as my mistakes were always of the head and never of the heart. I truthfully feel no mother ever loved her children with more complete abandon, and my daily prayer is that my sins will not be visited upon them. For they do "love Him and keep His commandments."

I can remember twice when Mama started to spank me. I was about 4 years old, and Daddy said quietly but firmly, "Don't spank that baby." Mama, all her life, believed everyone should be cut by her pattern. Daddy understood that each one had a personality which should be allowed to develop normally. If he had told me to go jump in the lake I would have known it was for my happiness and would have enjoyed drowning. One of my earliest recollections is of sitting straddle of his neck while he was writing at his desk, and kicking my heels lightly against his stiff-bosomed shirt. He always wore white stiffly starched shirts and I liked to make them rattle. When he got tired of my help, he would give me a nickel to get some candy. A nickel would buy a lot of candy in those days. My sister and I had an ideally happy childhood. We roamed the dear old Missouri hills for wild flowers, lovely columbines, bleeding heart, and "Dutchman's breeches," and other beautiful varieties which may have disappeared because of vandalism. I have often, through the years, when I found it hard to bear the present grief and strain, gone back to West Line in my mind, and made myself go to sleep by imagining I was back in the security and freedom of my childhood. To this day, I love the whistle of a locomotive and wish they still had choo-choo trains. We had to go to bed at 8:00, and I went to sleep listening to a heavy freight train puffing up the Kansas hill. Soothing lullaby!

Does everyone think of his or her birthplace as the center of the earth's surface? When I return for the millennium I think West Line will still be "dear to my heart as the scene of my childhood." Daddy loved to hunt and fish and often let us go with him. No fishing license, but an abundance of fish. No hunting license but plenty of quail, prairie chicken, squirrel, rabbit, an occasional wild turkey, and I guess all the ducks you wanted. Daddy always had wild game. Rabbits were a pest as they ate our garden, and when snow was on the ground, nibbled the fruit trees. We were early taught to keep the Sabbath holy, and Daddy wouldn't fire a gun nor bait a hook on Sunday. We always went to Sunday School and Church and Mama sang in the choir. The tragedy of today is the apostasy in the churches. God have mercy on the children!

Uncle Charlie and Uncle Ralph each had 3 girls, and loved them with the same gentleness which hallowed my own childhood. I never heard one of them speak a short word to their children. Uncle Charlie's two boys died in childhood. Uncle Ralph's son, Ralph, was a pal to him and a fine representative of the name of McCormick. But he died childless, so the name ran out in my generation.

One afternoon, 4:00 o'clock of 21 Feb 1893, West Line school children were sitting with hands folded on desks waiting to be dismissed when we heard a violent explosion. Some one shouted, "The elevator's blown up!" We had sold our home, expecting to move to Ponca City, and lived in a rented house across from the school. I rushed home and Mama was gone. I had felt no alarm, and didn't then. I ran to the elevator and there was a big crowd, and I looked for Daddy who always towered, straight and distinguished, above the crowd. A neighbor, Mr. Cutler, held my shoulders and would not let me go in the elevator, which miraculously did not catch fire. He told me Daddy was hurt and Mama was with him and for me to go home and they would bring him home. I began to cry and pray but turned and went back. He died at 10:00 that night. The last thing I heard him say was "God bless her." His eyes were burned so he couldn't see us, but they told him we were standing there. I couldn't say a word. And now I say without reservation a child's suffering is more acute, more devastating, than anything that can come in afterlife. I faced a stone wall. There was no future. In a moment of time I changed from a carefree child to a responsible individual. I'm sure I have never been able to give my Mother due credit for all she did for us in childhood because she was always so helpless. I loved her. Yes. But when Daddy died my world dissolved.

Aunt Lucy came from Eureka, Kansas, and my dear Sunday School teacher, Mrs. Liggett, came and they put their arms around me and comforted me with a prayer. But all Mama would do was cry and say, "Don't tell me God is good, to take my husband away from me." This probably is not of interest to anyone but me, but it is so burned into my memory. It was my soul's awakening. I could always feel sorry for Mama, but I couldn't understand her. I never did.

We moved to Eureka and I went to school there three years. Aunt Lucy's family were all so good to us, and made up as far as was humanly possible, for the loss we sustained. She was as near my ideal as any woman I ever knew. They would come after us Friday and take us out to the farm until Sunday. It was a home where peace and plenty reigned. At that time Colwell was married and lived on an adjoining farm. Gates and Max were at college, Coit home. The boys, of course, were in and out. Uncle Gilbert read a lot and kept up with current events and politics, just as Daddy always had, and their home was piled with good literature. Aunt Lucy was really a home missionary, and recognized as such in her community.

They were all musicians, and in the evening the boys would get out their musical instruments and Aunt Lucy would go to the organ and in those days before radio, etc., it was a real blessing to hear the excellent music. The boys always sang a quartet and that is where I learned so many college songs. I never went myself. They also sang classical ones which I couldn't learn. I have rhythm but no musical talent. I still think "There Was a Frog Lived in a Spring," and "Poor Old Granny Went over the Sea - she took all the rest and left poor me..." are the prettiest songs I ever heard. Daddy danced us on his knee to those tunes. But when he sang to himself, as he always did (and so do I) it was mostly songs about Heaven. The one he sang most was Longfellow's "Psalm of Life," that so far as I know, simply fitted into a tune of another song. He often did that. But from his lips I learned that "Dust thou art and to dust returneth was not spoken of the soul."

In October 1896 I quit school - my senior year - and Mama and I came to Oklahoma. I was to teach a country school which my cousin, Ollie McCormick Taylor, had secured for me. We came to Perry on the Santa Fe. Uncle Charley had made the run when the strip was opened, and got a farm a mile from Perry. It was a crazy arrangement, but the one who drove the first stake claimed the 160 acres of land and most all farms had contests. Uncle Charley lost his although he rightfully owned it, and the man whose testimony went against him was afterward imprisoned for perjury. I've often thought if anything could in a measure make up to us for Daddy's being gone, it was the very great kindness and generosity of our relatives. Uncle Charley was having a hard time and they were living in anything but luxury, but there was a royal welcome for us and my uncles all treated me as their very own child.

Kate took me to my school - the first in that district, and by no stretch of the imagination could I be called a good teacher. I was 17 years old, and five boys and two girls were older than I, and several more near my age. I only knew to make friends with them and not to offend them by correcting their English or anything. Anyway we all survived. I got \$25.00 a month salary, and paid \$8.00 for board, room, and laundry. Ollie and Will lived in Shawnee, and after two terms in the country, I started teaching in Shawnee and stayed with Will and Ollie. I marvel now at how good everybody was to me. I definitely loved Uncle Charley's girls as much as my own sister. I believe it is true that the Irish are loving and happy and generous and kind. We were only half Irish, but we lived and loved in true Irish fashion. Today is March 22 so maybe I am still feeling sentimental over St. Patrick's Day!

And let me remember, now that I'm rambling on about things that are of interest to my children, and not branch off on other memories. Seldom do persons shape their own lives - though they like to believe they have - specially if they've achieved a measure of success. It was not my decision that took me to Shawnee. It was circumstances. Will and Ollie lived there and gave me a happy home with them. After my first year of teaching there, they moved to Ollie's farm near Chandler, and I boarded with the Wallace Manns. Seems like everyone I knew was so sweet and kind to me. I mustn't forget to mention the Mapes family where I boarded in the country. They seemed like my own family. I still correspond with Grace, now living in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and she still calls me "Sister." We are the same age and had as much fun together as two 18-year-olds are capable of concocting. Her mother joined all our activities-that is in spirit - and when we'd drag in at midnight, half frozen, - horse and buggy days you remember - she would be up and have a roaring fire and unlace my high-topped shoes, as my fingers were too stiff with cold! Don't you think women like that are the answer to juvenile delinquency? Don't you think mothers ought to find their chief pleasure in seeing their children enjoy life during the fleeting years between childhood and marriage? We sure wouldn't have done anything to worry one hair of her head. I'll be seeing them again some day.

So to get back to Shawnee. The Manns had four children and I enjoyed them all. Allene, the oldest, was in my room at school and a teacher's delight. Studious, intelligent, pretty, and affectionate. Mr. Mann had a "general" store and they lived well and Mrs. Mann used to be waiting for me when school was out with old "Coley" and the surrey. We would pick up some of the other teachers and ride around town, maybe over to Tecumseh, and when Anna Anthony, another teacher, couldn't find a good place to board I asked Mrs. Mann to take her in and share my room. She was jolly and we all got along fine. But Essie Quiett was my chum and the one I loved best. I still write to her.

To have a balanced life you must have girl friends and boy friends. If I didn't have a steady, I was looking for one as girls always are, whether they admit it or not. The one I was dating more often

was the principal of the high school, E.W. Johnston, though neither of us was serious. One night he was telling me rather excitedly that his buddy in the army, Lyman Beard, was coming home! He, Johnston, was secretary for the Rough Riders' Association and he had a lot of correspondence to catch up on, and Lyman could help. So he didn't take me to church that night. I went with Manns and sat behind Johnston and some tall stranger with pretty black, curly hair. When services were over, I was introduced to Mr. Lyman Beard.

He told me afterward that he went home and told his folks he had met his future wife! Men are funny. Christmas vacation came then, and I went to Oklahoma City to Uncle Ralph's. The entire vacation was taken up with a state teacher's convention. Johnston took me to most of the meetings, and when we got back to Shawnee, asked me for a Sunday afternoon date and said Lyman wanted to come with him. I said, "OK - I guess since he's your friend."

Now I still don't quite know why I decided to help Mrs. Mann's maid clean up our "front room" that Saturday morning - I sure wouldn't if I'd known it was going to cause so much excitement. We had our own private living room, separate from the Mann's, and Anna was engaged and it wasn't uncommon for her to offer to help clean up. But me? I'd never cared. So, "Who was coming Sunday?" Well, Johnston was. They still were suspicious, but I didn't tell them. And in after years I could almost tell how interested my own girls were in their dates by the care they took in dressing, in cleaning up the house, and maybe baking a lovely cake! But honestly I didn't know why I did it.

The boys would always come Sunday afternoon, sometimes take us out to supper, sometimes we would invite them to stay, but most often they would go home and come back and take us at night. But that afternoon I bet a pound of candy with Mr. Johnston and won the bet. But long before church time, here came Lyman with the candy, and said Johnston didn't get his Rough Rider letters written. Well, I guess that is it. We all went to the M.E. Church, and they started a revival that week, and Lyman came every night. I broke dates with two other boys who had asked me to help with the young people's program of the revival. I didn't intend to, but Lyman just got there first. He always wanted to get everywhere before the doors opened. Grandpa (Beard) was the same way. He took me to catch a Frisco train three-quarters of an hour before it was due, and when he and Grandma went to the G.A.R. in Portland he hailed a huckster wagon to take him to the train, because he was afraid the bus from the hotel would be late! He tried to get Grandma to go with him but she wouldn't budge. That was one thing I'd love to have seen. Grandma sure did make a good story out of it. Expect her to ride in that nasty old chicken coop - and before all those honorable people!! And she didn't miss the train either. She was always the dignified lady and Grandpa was always the pioneer.

Grandma said whenever she started to write a letter, Grandpa would go jump in the buggy, which was always hitched up and ready to go, and holler, "Maw, haven't you finished that letter yet? I'm ready to go mail it." And you can't change the leopard's spots. Lyman would go get in the car, maybe without a necktie, and usually wearing a battered old hat that the girls called "Old Fairly" - because when they tried to separate him from it and force him to wear a respectable one, he said affectionately, "Why this is a fairly good hat" - Grandpa and Lyman really seemed happier in dilapidated old relics and I learned to accept the situation. But Grandma never failed to burn Grandpa up about it.

But to get back to my story. Exactly two weeks from our first date, Lyman wanted me to resign my school and get married. It was too hard work for me!! Surely he had given me ample time to make up my mind, and he had sacrificed his handle-bar mustache that must have taken six months to grow

and train to point at exactly the proper angle - and he even threw away a cigar, and swore off smoking - all for me... Well, I never yet can see how a girl could stand being kissed by a guy with a mustache, and smoking was, to say the least, an extravagance, and sometimes injurious to health. I think it was because my father never used tobacco in any form that I saw my ideal man as one void of the weed. I've never been militant about it, and wish preachers wouldn't leave their Bibles and harangue about cigarettes. But anyway I was glad Lyman shaved his mustache and threw away his cigar. The mustache would have gone the way of all those facial decorations in the course of time. But smoking isn't so simple. I'm sure I know men - good, sweet men - who would be glad if they could go down to the barber shop and have the smoking habit cut off - just like that.

Well, Lyman and I were not married until August 8, 1900. Maybe it was because I had neither father nor brothers, but when I heard the sacred words, "I pronounce thee man and wife," I began to live again. I belonged to somebody. I was first in the life of someone I loved. There was something to live for. (And God knows that today, when I'm no longer necessary to anyone's happiness, that I really do try to find my place here on earth and not plead, "Lord, I want to go home." I know He will take me when He wants me to go.)

I suppose Lyman and I were as silly and as blissfully unconscious of how we were unable to hide the fact that we had just been married as newly-weds always are. We took the "Choctaw" - (Rock Island) - train to Oklahoma City and changed there to the Santa Fe. We went to the Lee Huckins, best in town, then for supper, and who should we run into but Mrs. Remington, an old friend from Shawnee, recently moved to Oklahoma City and living at the hotel. Remington's Drug Store occupied the corner of the hotel building. And I know Mrs. Remington had everybody in that hotel lined up on both sides of that long hall to stare at us as we had to walk out! Lyman never batted an eye nor seemed to know they were there, but I had that self-consciousness which plagued me all my life, and of course I blushed furiously and kept my eyes glued to the floor. Anyway we escaped safely.

I guess I should not record what I'm about to write - but we had to stay one night in Davis, and another in Roff, before we could get to Ravia. A lot of Beards were in Roff and gave us a royal welcome. But one unhappy memory I have of it all is that both Etta and Laura managed to get me off to myself and tell me how to keep from having a baby! I flashed back at each of them in my normal Irish fashion and told them I wasn't interested in how to keep from having a baby. That I wouldn't have gotten married if I didn't want children. And Laura said, "Sure, but it is embarrassing to have one right away." "Not to us, it won't be," I assured her. And Lyman and I both resented their advice, and almost ten months later we had the sweetest baby boy that as of then had ever been born.

One day in after years a bunch of us were talking about our "red-letter day." I said mine was the day I first became a mother, and Lyman looked like he had received a mortal blow, and said reproachfully, "My wedding day was my red-letter day." I had to think fast, but I think I repaired the damage. I said, "Yes, so was mine. But then I was only getting happiness for myself. And when I brought a child into the world, I was giving something to the world." That fixed it up all right. And Lyman understood. Motherhood is God's greatest gift to woman. No use writing down what I know about that. It is as old as Eve!