

The Book

By Hazel Personette Creamer



This "book" was written by my grandmother in 1984 when she was 93 years old. I don't know how much of it is true, but she sure told these stories over and over while my cousins and I were growing up. For years, we tried to talk her into letting us tape her when she was telling them, but she froze every time we turned on the recorder. So we thought they would be lost forever, but she finally wrote them down!

It rambles a bit and is repetitive, but it's pretty entertaining. I've tried to make it easier for you to follow by entering some comments—especially surnames—where I thought it was necessary. My additions are enclosed in [square brackets.]

If anyone has comments or can furnish additional information, I'd love to hear from you! For example, I haven't been able to find out whether the sawmill in Birmingham, Alabama actually existed. Did she make that up?

This first installment is what I've transcribed so far. (It was originally typed on an old typewriter.) I'll try to do the rest soon. Hope you enjoy it!

*Karen Creamer
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"Memory is the treasury and guardian of all things."

The easiest place to begin with collecting good true stories is with one's self. It makes me glad to know that we are all from one good family. We were poor, hard, honest-working people, but we seemed happy. It was my father that really knew how to manage and get ahead. He became a rich man, starting in a sawmill.

These stories are our heritage. They are important to all of us. Part of the beauty of a story is to be able to remember a story and tell it to others.

I am 93 years old, and still have a number of stories to tell. I guess I will never get them all told. An artist cannot paint if he cannot see what effect his brush is producing. I hope I can make my stories plain enough that all will enjoy most of them.

This is our own family's book, and I hope some will be interested enough that they will pass it on. Always know who has "The Book." I know most of my readers will take care of it and pass it on to their children, and they must return it to Mary, Martha, George or Kathryn.

It is too big a job for one to edit alone. It will take years to get it in shape. Maybe it isn't worth it.

I was born in Andersonville, IN on May 27, 1891. It was spring, and May was filled with beautiful flowers.

We lived in Grandpa Jackman's "Town House." The Jackmans lived in the farm home about a mile south of town. We called their home "down home" and their place in town "up home." The home in town looked like a double house, but it wasn't. It was beautiful. I wish I had a picture of it.

On either side of the stone walk in the front yard were two of the biggest pine trees I've ever seen. Hulda Morgan, our great-grandmother, lived here with her daughter Lora. Lora was a thin little girl and didn't live long. They had a large front room facing the street and a kitchen back of that.

Great-grandma had a large four-poster bed, and between the two windows in front was where Lora slept in a pretty "Jenny Lind" bed. That's when I had to go sleep with my great-grandmother. I didn't like that, so I slept at the foot of the bed. I spent my first school year in Andersonville.

Then Papa moved the mill to Metamora. There was a small school not far from us. That's where Katie (or Kathryn) and Eva went to school. I would walk down the road to meet them when they came home. [Kathryn and Eva were her sisters.]

Our home was called "Prosperity." My father named it that, because that's where he first began to make money. He had no schooling, only a few short years in Andersonville, but he knew what he wanted to do. All of his family worked with him. They never quarreled, but he was the Boss and they realized that. When he said, "We are moving," they just moved.

A large barn was built to take care of the horses. Up the road was a steep bank, and it leveled off. That's where the small "shacks" or "lean-to" houses were built for the mill hands, timber cutters and log haulers.

Mama's [Etta Clara Jackman] younger sister Bessie [married Emory Farthing] came along. She and Mama cooked for all the help. I remember huge pans of biscuits, three times a day, six days a week. These men went back to their homes in Andersonville on Sunday.

Within a year Papa had all the timber cut he wanted, and they moved to Fairfield, Indiana. And that's where they stayed. We lived in a "double" with Uncle Ed [Personette], Aunt Mattie [Jackman], and family on the east side of town. Soon after that our family moved two blocks over to the west side and built a house. Not big, but Papa kept adding on to it until we had a good-sized home.

Katie, Eva, Roy and I were born in Andersonville. Hilda [Personette] was born in Fairfield. My parents took Hilda to raise when she was three years old. Her mother [Mattie Jackman Personette] died with TB. I lived in this home until January 3, 1912, when I married Frank Creamer.

Harry Fred ran a livery stable. Papa hired his surrey and got Frank's family—Grandma Creamer, Frank's sister Vera McFall and her two small children, Imo and Wendell. They came down to Brookville on the Big Four train on the morning of the wedding. Papa took them back after the reception, and they took the evening train back.

As I remember it, the reception amounted to good home-made cakes and "Jell-O," something new, served at the long table in the dining room. Rev. Ryan, our fine-looking

minister, married us in the pretty living room. We had a car, but we didn't drive it in the winter. We had snow and ice on that day.

Now it was time for me to settle down. No more hunting with my brother Roy and cousin Fred. The boys both had guns. I had a Stevens repeating rifle. We three would get on the log wagon when the log haulers went to pick up the logs. They would put five big logs on their wagons. We would sit on top of the logs on the way home. We stayed close together when we were hunting so we wouldn't shoot each other. The boys were good to me. They would spot a squirrel up in the tree and let me shoot it. Sometimes I would have three and they wouldn't have any.

I had to clean the squirrels when I got home. I had two big nails on the garden fence. I would hang a squirrel head down and pull the skin from head to the feet, never leaving a hair on them. They were pretty and pink.

I don't think my father owned a gun, but Uncle Ed had lots of them. He taught me how to shoot "clay pigeons." I could shoot a rabbit or quail on horseback when we rode on country roads. I would just say, "Maud" (that was our pretty black horse with a white spot on her forehead and white knees to her feet.) The horses knew every word we said.

"Kitty Wants This Corner"

In each corner of the room is a cat, and a spare one that has no place to go.

I was the spare one and hurrying to find a corner when I ran into a table that had a large lamp on it. "Kitty wants a corner." When I ran, I fell over the table and the lamp fell and broke.

We were all barefoot, and the blood was coming from my foot. Dr. Linegar came. He called "Ett," (my mother) Oh! Get me a clean towel and your sugar bowl." He poured sugar on the cut until it stopped bleeding. I will carry the scar to my grave.

We all went barefoot the first day of May, no matter what the weather was. I wouldn't know how many nails I ran into, but Mama hurried and poured turpentine on my foot. In a couple of days I was going again.

Wish my children could have a picture of our Lumber Yard. The front was even and pretty; the back was like stair-steps. We kids could climb over that like cats. No one ever fell.

It was great to watch Papa and a man that bought a stack of lumber. (George Jerman had Papa's measuring stick.) You would think they were at an auction sale; they could do it so fast. [George Jerman was the eldest son of Kathryn Personette and C. Curtis Jerman]

George Jerman also had Papa's hammer that he marked a tree he wanted to buy. It had an X on one side and a P on the other. The farmer let him pick the tree he wanted to buy; then he would stamp it, and the timber cutters would go through the woods and hunt for the stamp.

They would saw the tree, then the timber cutters would work all day, felling trees. The next day the log haulers would go to this farm and hunt the trees. I was 8 or 10 years old. My friend Belle Armstrong would go with me sometimes.

The men would put five huge trees on their wagons. Belle and I would sit astride on top, and we would be up high, but we never fell off.

Papa's business was a big one, for he had lumber yards in Cherry Gap, Tennessee, where he built a railroad to go back into the forest, and in cities all the way to Birmingham, Alabama. The saw mill there cost him \$250,000. What would it be worth today? No big farmer had more than my dad did.

When Mama sent me to the grocery, I was to say, "Good Morning" to every one in the street. I didn't want to, but Papa said, "They know you are my daughter, and I buy from them."

Shann Petro had a grocery and was some kin to Mae Miller. That is the reason she traded with him.

My Grandma Jackman was called a second Carrie Nation. She was the one who went around trying to clean up the world. If it was a "mess" then, what would she think of it now?

Grandma would go to the poolroom, and if her sons were there she would make them go home. Clyde Spears was a middle-aged man trying to teach the boys how to play cards and gamble. I was a small child visiting my grandparents. Grandma heated her big black tea-kettle to the boiling point and said she was going to the Barn. I followed her. She went inside and called "Clyde Spears, are you there? Come down, or I will scald you."

No one answered, but she made her boys come down one by one. I think he (Clyde) was hiding under the hay and sneaked down when it got dark.

Uncle Allen [Jackman] never married. Uncle Charley [Jackman] married late. Those two boys and Aunt Ruby [Jackman] took good care of Grandma a long time. Later, Aunt Ruby married [John Humphrey], but the two sons took care of her. They were fine cooks and made the best salt-rising bread I have ever eaten.

Grandma sat up in a chair with her swollen legs up on another chair. She had dropsy. The doctors took the water from her legs every so often.

Uncle Ed [Personette] and Aunt Mattie [Jackman] were parents of Fred, Babe and Hilda Personette. Aunt Matt died before Uncle Ed. The children were split up. My parents, George and Etta, took Hilda to raise. She was three years old. It wasn't long until Frieda [Hazel's youngest sister] was born in 1904.

Fred and Babe had it hard. They were always moving from our home to Grandma Jackman's or Grandma Personette's. Edward died a few years after his wife.

Fred was old enough to feel the pinch and said, "If I ever get married, I will never have a child. I will never leave an orphan like we were left." That came true. He married a good lady [Margaret Quast] who had three small daughters. Fred treated them like they were his, and they called him Daddy, but his wish came true. He never had a child of his own.

The first good magazine came out in 1904. It was "The Ladies Home Journal." That was the year Frieda was born. We took the "Brookville Democrat," the "Andersonville Herald," the "Cincinnati Post," and the "Indianapolis Star." This was the year of free delivery.

Now when Frieda was born, Mama was in the big bedroom. Next to it was Eva's and my bedroom. It was early in the evening. (We went to bed at dark.) We heard Mama call Papa. She was moaning. She said, "Go get Ellie." Ellie was a mid-wife and brought the babies before the doctor got there.

We heard the baby cry. Papa came to our door and said, "The Halloweeners have brought you a baby sister." Now this is 1984. Frieda will be 80 years old the last day of October, 1984.

We had had a grocery several years when my sister Frieda said, "If Frank and Hazel can run a grocery and have a nice home and yard, we can too."

Morris (Brauchla) and his dad and farm hands were eating dinner—and maybe supper too—every day and Frieda was cooking all the meals for them. Morris wasn't happy there on the farm, either. So his father gave him some money and they came to Connersville and found an empty building on West 6th Street and started a store. He wouldn't do one thing without her. He called, "Frieda," every breath he took. I told him I thought that's the last thing he would ever say. And many years later when he died, with the last breath he had, he called, "Frieda."

He fell. They took him in an ambulance to Methodist Hospital in Indianapolis, and he passed away shortly. Frieda was shocked; she managed a beauty shop in their home. He had always managed the money, and she was so scared she wouldn't know how to do it. So the day after he was buried, she called her customers and told them to come. From that day on, she was on her own and made lots of money. She is still working and will be 80 years old Halloween night, 1984.

Times are so different as I grow old. I really don't feel old. You will think me odd if I say, "I loved my childhood days!" We had so much, and there was no rushing and hurrying.

We had piano and vocal lessons every week, waded in nearby creeks and ice skated all winter long.

Papa was a good provider, and Mama an excellent cook. Papa started working in Beal's sawmill in Andersonville when he was 13 years old. He kept saying to himself, "Some day I will own a sawmill." And he did. He owned lots of them in his time, in Fairfield, Brookville, Nashville, Tennessee, Chattanooga and Birmingham, Alabama.

His parents were Charles [Personette] and Jane [Rebecca Jane Osborn]. Charles lost Jane when his three sons, George, Elmer and Edward were small boys. In time he married "Liza" [Eliza Jane Smith] They had three sons: Wilbur, Omer and Orville.

Grandpa Personette, George's father, was a cabinet maker. He made coffins for all the family and friends. George C. Jerman has a beautiful chest made by him. It had fruit carved handles on the drawers. He worked in his son's sawmill on the cross-cut saw and cut his left arm off above the elbow. [This event is recorded in Jerome Wiley's diary!] That didn't stop him from doing carpenter work. He built many houses and barns.

The six boys had nicknames, all but George. He never did. Elmer was "Gangel," Wilbur was "Duke," Omer was "Skinny" and Orville was "Turk." Papa should have been called "Leader." He provided for them all.

When they started south, building along the way, he took his crew along—mill hands, timber cutters and log haulers. Most of them were relatives. His last and largest mill was in Birmingham, Alabama...\$250,000—that was a fortune in those days! They stayed in the South until they cleaned out lots of the forests.

April 8, 1981, was the time I thought about stories of my childhood. I wasn't afraid of anything. Our home was in Fairfield, Indiana, a beautiful little town in the valley. Of course we saw lots of high rivers.

I had flown to Largo, Florida on January 1, 1981 to spend the cold months with Mary, James, George and their families. I had plenty of time, and the children and grandchildren loved these old stories.

My father was the leader and provided for so many. Insurance companies were just beginning to pop up. When they called on Papa, he was furious and ordered them to leave his house. He said, "I can bury my dead," and he did, because he was the only one in the large Personette family and Jackman family who made money. In fact, he was wealthy. He was a big lumber man. When he was 13 years old, he worked in Beal's sawmill in Andersonville. He kept saying over and over that some day he would own a sawmill. His wish came true, because he owned them from Indiana to Alabama. Birmingham was his \$250,000 mill. It was the largest of them all. It would be impossible to tell how he worked and kept all of his family in steady work. His brothers were timber cutters, log haulers, mill hands and moved along with him.

His first mill was near Metamora. He named the place "Prosperity." He and his brothers built a large house for our family, a large barn for the log haulers' horses and a row of small cottages for the men and their families. They cut all the timber around Metamora, then moved the mill to the beautiful little town called Fairfield.

There must have been 400 homes in Fairfield, two churches, a creamery, a bicycle shop, two barber shops, two horse-shoe shops, two doctors, a saloon, two grocery stores, two livery stables (Armstrong's and Fred's.) One church burned when I was small, so there was only one minister. The saloon was owned by Harry McHarry. Egypt Hollow was 2 ½ miles north of Fairfield.

I was 12 or 13 years old, small for my age, and a champion bicycle rider, so they said. Our school superintendent presented me with a dictionary. In the front he wrote, "To the Champion dare-devil bicycle rider of the town!"

I was the only girl that owned ice skates. Price Kline, the fellow who hollowed "Stop, Stop" at the river crossing, and Walter Steiner, who was a little older, were great on skates, too. I saw Fred get too close to a dangerous spot. He fell in, but managed to get out and nearly froze going home with his clothes wringing wet.

When I was 16 years old, I took elocution lessons from Mrs. Clair Buckley of Brookville. She went to Cincinnati once a week and took lessons, then she came home and started a class. Later I took lessons from our minister's wife at our church when we lived at 1078 East 5th in Connersville.

Every winter our class at school always put on a play. I was always stage struck and got the lead. I think I was 14 or 16 when we had our first real play put on in the Red Men's Hall. How excited we were, running from house to house begging furniture to set up a pretty living room!

I took the part of the deaf old lady. Now at 91, that would just fit me, wouldn't it? (Ha!) Guy Cromwell, who was Blanche's nephew, had the part of the Tramp. He came pounding on the door. I was dressed in a long black dress, sitting and sewing. I heard the pounding and said, "Peers to me the wind is blowing hard tonight." He looked in and hollowed at me, "I want some bread." I said, "Dead? Who's dead?" He said, "Bread, please." I said, "Letitia Pease, Tom's oldest daughter? Well, that's too bad, to be sure." That's all I remember, but from then on I was stage struck and in every play we put on.

Now the next play was great. I got to be "Belle" with beautiful clothes. Our music teacher went to New York, studied music, came home and taught every child in town that was able to take lessons. Of course when she was in college she had real pretty clothes. She loaned me her black evening dress with a long train.

In this play I was to be shot. So when he pulled the trigger I was so close to the edge of the stage that my head fell off, and I couldn't keep from laughing.

We had lots of fun putting on these shows. We had to meet at our homes every night until we had our play in good shape. Well, now the real sad part comes. I was to get shot and that night someone had put a real bullet in the gun. When it went off, one of the girls got shot just above the knee. Dr. Linegar lived across the street. Someone ran for him. He took a very thin wire, tied a white silk handkerchief on it, and pulled it through the wound. It never even got sore, the girl said. Her name was Nora Snider.

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