

*Letter from Naomi Moore*

LOOKING BACK ON A FULL LIFE:

It all began in 1905 for me. A small town in Florence, Colorado. George and May Mentzer came to Colorado where he had a job in the local newspaper. His mother and sister also lived there. I was born there. Two years later, my sister, Dorothy Hazel was born. I have seen the houses in later years and there are very few changes.

A year later, father was called to a job in Michigan, to a town called Hart, after the family who had the big canning factory and owned the biggest part of the town. Senator Hart of Michigan is one of the descendents.

Mother's two brothers living in the Chicago area, both railroad men, heard of land in Michigan that was cheap and would raise a good crop of potatoes. Uncle Harry and Uncle Orville invested along with our father in adjoining land. Uncle Harry and family moved out to one farm and we went to another while Uncle Orville stayed on the job in Chicago. We were near a small hamlet called Mears.

Our Grandfather Mentzer came to live with us and help on the project, while father continued working in Hart, bicycling to and from work for five miles each day. The following year, our brother, Gordon Harold was born.

My memories of the farm are vague. I do remember the house, a two story with a cupola on one side. It was in this area we girls had a play room with our toys. Also, the soil was very sandy, but grew wicked sandburs so we seldom went barefooted. One time Hazel pushed a grain of corn up her nose and it proved to be a rush trip to the doctor as it became painful. Then, one time mother needed some kindling to start a fire and I was sent to get some. I proceeded to try and cut some. I missed and almost cut my big toe off - another hasty trip to the doctor. The men planted potatoes, but how the crop did I am not sure. They also cleared some land of stumps and had a good corn crop. They shocked it and one night the neighbors came over and all roasted corn and danced. (Odd, how little things like this come foremost to my mind.) Aunt Clara, Uncle Harry's wife was unhappy with all and soon persuaded them to go back to Chicago. Grandpa left for Iowa, so we left and moved into Hart. Gordon was a year old. Mother was not well after Gordon was born and finally had to take her to the hospital. We had a hired girl by this time. Mother never survived the operation.

Finally, Grandmother Harrah came to help take care of us; but it became too big a problem. Grandma Mentzer wrote for father to bring us there in Colorado. So we left Michigan.

How well I remember our train ride, a layover in Chicago, being bussed from one depot to another. The long wait until departure. Hazel was sick all the way. Gordon just 20 months old and not broke - poor dad, he had his hands full. The cinders and smoke from the train was bad. We changed in Denver also and again in Pueblo. It seemed forever.

Grandpa and Grandma met us with their surrey. Our first ride in one. The country was beautiful and the mountains so impressive. Father went to Salida to work which was quite a ways from us. Only able to see us now and then. We missed him and his love so much. Our home in Colorado was a lovely two story brick home. Bedrooms upstairs, kitchen, diningroom downstairs. Family room, parlour and special bedroom (where we were when ill).

The parlor was off-limits to us children. The only time we saw into it was when the preacher came, Ladie's Aid met or company visited. Grandma went to Canyon City with the Ladie's Aid now and then to entertain the men at the penitentiary. When she got out of sight, into the parlor us children went to play on the organ look over the picture books and the pretty pillows on the green velvet couch. Once we got caught and were punished for it.

We stayed in Colorado for four years then father got called back to Michigan and he persuaded all of us to move there. So our grandparents sold their lovely home and shipped our furniture. We rented a nice home near a school and not too far from town and father's work. I finished grade school and graduated. It was during the last year or so Hazel and I developed bad coughs after several bouts of influenza. Hazel was never strong, so father made a trip west to find a warm place. In the meantime, Grandpa had gone back to Colorado. He just could not reconcile himself to the new environment or the people. Grandma stayed. We children owe her so much gratitude for all her sacrifices she made for us and father.

Our stay in Michigan made for many nice friends. A few who are still living. There was a church just across the street from our house, called The Church of the Bretheren and one of my friends belonged to it. Although we went to the Methodist Church Wednesday, Saturday evening and Sunday twice, and father taught Sunday School, I went now and then to the Sunday School across the street. There was to be a camp revival with that church, in Northern Michigan at Lake Anekema. So Ida and I decided if I'd join, I could go with them, so I did. Can't recall father's reaction if or not he approved. I continued going there until I left.

In retrospect, by delving into family history, our family's religion stemmed from Menonites, Dunkards and Bretheren on the Mentzer side. I believe Hazel and Gordon's friends were from the school and church folks of the Methodist. My church record is still in Florence, Colorado, Methodist, Church. I sent for reference to help get my birth certificate.

Father came back from his trip to find a warmer and dryer climate for us. He had covered California, New Mexico and Arizona. He found a newspaper to buy in a small hamlet called Boure, Arizona. So, again, we packed and entrained for our new home. Grandma came with us but she as well as the rest had a rude awakening. How well I remember our getting off the train about 10:00 p.m. in a place with a depot saloon with rooms above. Grocery store, mercantile store, Post Office and the newspaper office. There was a scattering of houses. Very little could be seen at night.

The only place to stay was over the saloon. It was a big room with four beds all made up. Grandma pulled back the cover on one and a cloud of dust arose. To say the least, she was out of her element. She proceeded to shake everything down the stairs and to try a semblance of order. She raved at father off and on all night, so after breakfast at the depot, he got her things packed and put her on the next train to go to Denver to our aunts. She stayed a year, then we had a place of our own and she came back.

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Rereading the first, see some is a repeat here. After you've read and got what you want from it, send this back and some day I'll go on into our beginning in Arizona. We arrived in Arizona in 1921, and I was married in 1924, so not too much Gordon or Hazel doesn't know.

Florence, Colorado, even though I was only past seven when we got there, many things are remembered. Leaving Michigan, Dad with three youngsters, Gordon 20 months and not broken yet, was a problem, Dad had to contend with. Each day, seeing we were dressed, clean and fed. I recall little of the train ride of 4 days except Hazel was sick all the time. She ate things in Chicago that started it and then train motion and odor was the rest of it. She had a very weak stomach. The coal fumes and ash were a problem for all of us. Grandma and Grandpa had a lovely place and although grandma was old to take us on (70 years), she was happy to do so.

It was a beautiful brick house. Large kitchen, pantry, dining area, then a closet and a front bedroom. A regular dining room and a parlor with stairs off the dining room, to the upstairs which had two large bedrooms. We girls had one bedroom and Grandpa and Grandma had the other with a crib for Gordon. The house also had a side porch out from the steps upstairs and front and back porches and a big cellar. Our drinking water came from a big ditch from the Arkansas River. It ran in a ditch to the back of the house passing through sand and charcoal filters into a cistern. This cistern had a chair pulley with cups on it which created the water when same brought it to the surface. Inside the top was a shelf on which Grandma put butter, cream and perishables from the table as we had no ice in those days.

Grandma made "smearcase" or cottage cheese, but and sold cream to the city elite, bringing her a good income along with eggs and fryers dressed in season. On Saturday, Grandpa and I made the deliveries, I doing the holding of the horse while he collected. Afterwards we went into town and bought the things Grandma ordered. Grandpa often played cards or checkers with some cronies in the park. He always gave me a nickle to spend while he did this and said "we wouldn't tell about this when we get home". Grandma was raised a Hard Shell Baptist and cards or any games of chance was a sin. However, Dad was a Methodist and she went to our church and even belonged to the church's Ladies Aid Society. One time Gordon got a whipping because of me and I was so sorry he got the blame, but I truly had forgotten. It happened I was swinging in the swing, that swung out over the big ditch and as had been cautioned, too, off my glasses and put them on the post fence as usual, I thought, but instead they were found in the grass below and somehow Gordon got blamed for taking them and as I had to have glasses to see any distance, the money was something Grandma had to worry about, so I guess instead of putting as usual on the top of the post, I layed them in the grass at the base. Ten days later they were found.

The place Grandpa had was only 1½ acres, but every foot produced. Grapes and berries along all of the fences. Apple trees (many varieties) with alfalfa, oats or just hay between their rows. The main garden had everything. There were trees in the

yard, but apple, cherry, pear and peaches and one catalpa tree, our only really shade tree. We had board walks to the house from the road, to the johnnyhouse, to the barn and to the chicken house. Washed them every wash day!!!!!! Also had a barn and a pig pen. A wonderfully thought out place. No space was not in use. Had a root cellar for cabbages, carrots, turnips, apples and potatoes. Grandpa Parker was English, but a German had made this his idea. I saw the place, at the end of Fourth St. in Florence, going west, and it was still a lovely place. At that time, the large home where Hazel and I were born was still there in 1964. As I was always the instigator of things forbidden, I often got into trouble. Once Grandma went with the Ladies Aid to Canyon City to entertain at the place for criminals, cant think how to spell that name. Knowing she would be gone all afternoon, decided we'd have a show on the front porch. Got out blankets and sheets and tacked up and around. Sent Hazel and Gordon and neighbor girl out to tell their friends, opened the front door and banged on the organ for music. Don't remember all the acts. A bevy of kids came. It cost one or two pins (imagine! We put on quite an act, but dallied too long as Grandma got home and caught us, well, to say the least, I got it, where it really hurt. But if Grandma hadn't forbid the use of the parlor and our interest in music and taught us how to play we (I) might not have done such things. I have since said "dont say - you can't" to me as its like waving a red flag. Enough.