

## THE PAPERS OF EMMET HOYT SCOTT, 1842-1924

*By SAUNDRA B. TAYLOR*

**E**MMET HOYT SCOTT began life in 1842 as the eighth child of a pioneer New York family. He left it in 1924 as a most respected elder of LaPorte, Indiana - farmer, railroad builder, lumberman, manufacturer, mayor of LaPorte, and a nationally recognized agricultural authority. Those years from first to last, and well beyond, are thoroughly documented in the Scott manuscripts in the Lilly Library.

Wiley Huntington Scott, father of Emmet Hoyt, married Aseneth Locke in 1821; they lived and worked the land of Unadilla, New York, together until 1837 when they decided to join the pioneer settlement of Nineveh, New York. It proved a very propitious move indeed as the Scott family prospered in Nineveh and Wiley H. resided as a pillar of the economic and social life of the town. In addition to being a prosperous farmer, Wiley H. Scott also ran a hotel; invested in the Delaware and Susquehanna Plank road which led to his actually organizing and building the road from Coventry to Valonia Springs; and engaged in the manufacture of shooks and molasses. Records of all of these varied activities, along with several others including butchering, a cooper-shop, and a steamship enterprise, are present in the earliest papers and bound volumes of the Scott manuscripts, for what survives of the Wiley Huntington Scott papers, 1817-1872, is in this collection. These include account books, 1832-1836; indentures of various dates;

Hotel Stage-House accounts, 1833-1836; and several hundred pieces of correspondence relating to business and family affairs.

Emmet Hoyt Scott was born in Nineveh, reared and educated there until sent to the exclusive Blakeslee School at Harpersville in 1858. After three years at Blakeslee Emmet returned home to consider a career but soon became involved in efforts to join the Northern cause in the Civil War. After futile attempts to raise his own volunteer New York regiment and repeated failures to get a West Point appointment through Congressman Robert Duell, Emmet Hoyt decided to take a teaching position at the Teachers' Institute in Oswego, New York, December 1862-February 1863. A notebook that he kept during this winter term describes the curriculum and records the attendance at the institute. Meanwhile, two of Scott's brothers did serve in local regiments during the war and letters from both of them to various members of the family describing campaign actions and camp activities are present in the collection. Of perhaps greater interest than the Civil War letters however are those from Emmet's next older brother, Edwin, who was residing in West Virginia in 1859. He wrote home to his father and to Emmet about the Harper's Ferry incident in October of that year. After describing the activities of John Brown and his men, Edwin concluded his tale in an October 19 letter to his father with "Governor Wise and two hundred men came to the Ferry yesterday. He says he will search the country and *kill* everyone he overtakes. The most intense excitement prevails." He repeated the essential details of the events to Emmet on October 23, adding "It is very lucky for me that I had not a drop of abolition blood in me - for they would have made 'day-light' shine through me at the first onset." A December 4

letter to Emmet described Brown's execution where trouble was expected but "all went quiet."

By early 1863 Emmet Scott had lost interest in a military career; rather, he now wanted to avoid the draft. He took a position in Centralia, Illinois in the joint express office of the Adams and American Express Company in order to get out of New York State, but returned home in late summer because of poor health. Several letters in the collection for this period (i.e. 1863-64) refer to Scott's plans to go to South America if necessary to avoid being drafted. Following a year of working for his father, Emmet joined the construction department of the Albany and Susquehanna Railroad, thus taking the first step that would create a prosperous future. His correspondence home during this period detail the problems of railroad construction during the war. Nevertheless, progress was made and one letter, December 2, 1864, described in fine detail the ceremonies on the completion of the railroad from Albany to Cobleskill.

While Scott was learning the railroad construction business, his youngest brother Arthur was mustered out of the service and again took up his education. In August, 1865 he entered Cooperstown Seminary and kept a very detailed diary for the eight months he was there. He described the school, its curriculum, administration, even the building, gave weather reports, and related his own activities and feelings for each day until his departure from Cooperstown March 16, 1866.

Emmet Scott continued with the Albany and Susquehanna work until 1867 when his supervisor, George S. Marsh, and principal shareholder, Elisha C. Litchfield, decided to send him to LaPorte, Indiana as superintendent of the construction and operating departments of the Chicago, Cincinnati, and Louisville Railroad Company

to plan and oversee the construction of a line from LaPorte to Peru, Indiana. Once again, Scott performed in such a superior fashion, not only building the new line but actually reconstructing the existing line between LaPorte and Plymouth, that Litchfield retained him under personal service after selling the C.C. & L. to another group of investors.

Thus, in 1869, Scott left LaPorte for East Saginaw, Michigan to manage Litchfield's properties there and to enter into the lumber manufacturing business - thereby beginning his personal road to prosperity. He wrote to his brother (Silas?) on April 2 an explanation of his resignation from the railroad company and explained Litchfield's offer of an annual salary of \$2000 "to supervise his western lands." While in LaPorte Scott had met Judge John Barron Niles and his family, in particular Miss Mary Relief Niles. Having to visit LaPorte from time to time to clear up details concerning the C.C. & L., he courted Miss Niles and in 1870 asked her father for her hand. They were married December 29 of that year.

Scott continued to work for Litchfield, and to build his own future in East Saginaw until 1876. Then he and his growing family moved to LaPorte where they were to remain. Materials in the collection pertaining to East Saginaw and to the lumber industry there are numerous and detailed. Not only Scott's diaries, memoranda books, and correspondence for this seven year period, but later files through at least 1887 contain indentures, sales and production figures, law suits, etc., relating to this area as Scott retained his own business interests there. He also served as agent for properties in Michigan and Indiana in the bankruptcy of Elisha C. Litchfield and the Litchfield estate from 1873 until its final settlement in 1887. Scott's associations in East Saginaw included being

secretary-treasurer of the Saginaw Land, Brown Stone, and Mining Company and director and chief stockholder of the Saginaw Copper Company. Meanwhile, in 1876 he also became involved in the receivership, foreclosure, and sale of the Chicago, Cincinnati and Louisville Railroad, records and legal notices of which are in the collection.

Upon returning to LaPorte Scott went into partnership with his brother-in-law William Niles in the operation of a wheel factory. In April 1877 they formed the company Niles and Scott and in 1881 incorporated to manufacture wheels for implements and vehicles. The company was sold in 1902 but the name was retained because of the excellent reputation associated with it. It was one of LaPorte's most important businesses in the late nineteenth century.

Mary Relief Scott quickly returned to LaPorte life and society, including participation in the New Jerusalem Church, a Swedenborgian association. Consequently, found in the collection is a volume entitled "Record of the First New Jerusalem Society of LaPorte, Indiana." Contained therein is a history of the Society, minutes of meetings, constitutions, by-laws, membership lists, baptism, marriage and death records, 1859-1924. (William Niles was secretary of the Society for many years, beginning in 1870.)

In addition to his multi-faceted business interests Scott was also moving in civic and political affairs. In 1880 he was appointed as a LaPorte school trustee; in 1889 he was elected mayor on the Democratic ticket. His files are remarkably scarce for this period of service (until 1894) but his incomplete autobiography, which he was composing for his grandchildren at the time of his death, contains an almost daily account of city business

and actions, virtually all of which can be verified in his diaries for those years. Various clippings and posthumous materials in the collection attest to his effectiveness, and controversiality, as mayor. He has been described as one of the most efficient executives the city has ever had. He instituted many changes in local government and authored several ordinances himself, among which was the provision requiring people to keep their cows out of the streets. He is credited with the development of the county agent system in Indiana through creating the first such in LaPorte; and it was during his incumbency that LaPorte became the first city in the world to adopt an automatic telephone exchange. An invitation issued to the Hon. Emmet H. Scott by the Strowger Automatic Telephone Exchange "to attend the installation of its first system," November 3, 1892, is present in the files.

Following defeat for re-election in 1894, "the saloon keepers and the great number of their patrons which they controlled were influenced to vote the Republican ticket and I was defeated . . . by the dentist F. W. Carson," (Autobiography, p. 269), Scott began developing and promoting the town of Munising in Alger County on Lake Superior. He purchased the site for the town on the northern peninsula of Michigan, organized a railroad company to build a line from Munising to Little Lake and took charge of the construction and operation of the road himself. He formed the Lac La Belle Company, serving as its president, for "the purpose or purposes . . . to engage in and conduct the business of buying, manufacturing and disposing of all kinds of timber and the products thereof; and incidentally to purchase, hold or sell the lands connected therewith, and to purchase the grant of lands made by the United States to the State of Michigan . . . and to sub-divide and sell the same in

parcels . . . ." (Articles of Association, Article II) Scott's influence and unflagging energy led to the establishment of many important industries in Munising and the resort community experienced a decade of phenomenal growth. The collection is replete with deeds, indentures, and mortgages for property in the area. In addition to the immediate Munising area, Scott owned lands around Presque Isle River. In 1886, as the railroad was being built through those lands, he suggested a name change for the community, coining the name Marenisco from his wife's name, Mary Relief Niles Scott. The new railroad station in the area was duly named Marenisco and shortly thereafter the township of Marenisco was formed.

About 1904 Emmet Scott began making a yearly inventory of his "estate," usually January 1 of each year. According to these inventories, with documented support from other records during the year, Scott was an almost irrepressible investor in stock, regardless of returns. Year after year one can see the value of his holdings decline in relation to what he had originally paid, yet each year he purchased more shares in newer enterprises. Many such holdings became virtually worthless as shown by the presence of share certificates in the collection which have remained unredeemed. Examples include the Chicago-New York Electric Airline Railroad Company and the Venango and Pitt Hole Petroleum Company, just to cite two.

Beginning with the turn of the new century Scott became interested in world travel, both for business and vacation interests. In 1904 he and Mary Relief, along with a business associate, toured Mexico on a semi-business trip, to view mining operations in which Scott had invested. His correspondence home to son Emmet, *et al.* demonstrates clearly that he never lost contact with his

business and investment concerns. And in several letters present in the files he wrote of "this land of sunshine and silver." (He had stock in silver mines in Mexico through United Mining Company.)

In 1911 Scott toured South America studying agricultural techniques and developments. His major interests and concerns by this time were agricultural. He had developed many acres in Fulton County Indiana, transforming them from swamp to productive fields by drainage. His recently acquired son-in-law Edward A. Rumely stimulated and supplemented this interest through his operation of Advance Rumely Company, maker of agricultural implements.

By 1912 Scott was a nationally recognized authority on agriculture and was invited to join an American committee investigating agricultural conditions in England and on the Continent. The tour was organized and conducted by the Boston Bureau of University Travel, led by Dr. Adolph Eichorn of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It consisted of ten members who visited England, Scotland, France, Switzerland, Germany, Holland, and Belgium. Future vice president of the United States Henry A. Wallace was a member of the party. Scott sent back letters describing the countryside and agricultural conditions for publication in the *LaPorte Herald*. Scrapbooks of these articles as they appeared in print are in the collection, as well as numerous letters to his wife and family about the trip. At one point, in a letter to Mary Relief, dated August 12, he commented that the *Herald* articles kept him too busy to write to anyone other than her (he had wanted to write to his sister "Fanny and others"), or even to send postal cards. Also present are several photographs of the tour, both on board ship and on location.

Mary Relif died in 1916 and from that time Emmet Hoyt Scott turned over more and more of the business operations to his son Emmet. However, he did not retire entirely from work, and certainly not from an active life. In 1922 he visited Central America, both as a tourist and observer of things agricultural and industrial. Returning home to LaPorte he began writing an autobiography for his grandchildren. He was in his office composing that very document when he slumped over his desk, dead instantly and painlessly. That was June 20, 1924. Scott completed his "Grandfather's Story" up through 1894, and was about to start on the Munising period of his career. The 286 typed pages of the autobiography that were completed are in the Lilly Library.

There are more than 65,000 items in the Scott manuscript collection. The total collection represents much more than the life of Emmet Hoyt Scott for it contains in fact the papers of the Scott family, three generations worth.

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