
West to Wilderness

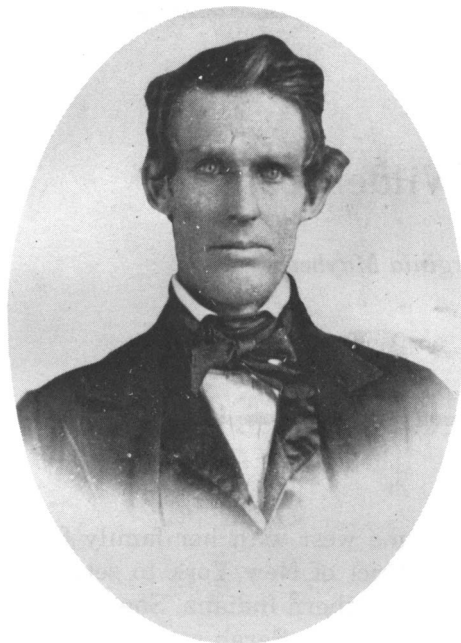
*Edited by Virginia Mayberry**

In 1834 Sarah Jane Brown came west with her family from Penn Yan in the Finger Lakes district of New York to settle in newly organized Elkhart County in northern Indiana. She was ten years old. Seventy-one years later, in 1905, Sarah set down in an unused ledger from her son's drugstore her memories of growing up on a pioneer farm in the wilderness. In the interim she married, reared a large family, and took an active part in the social and religious life of her community. Her colorful autobiographical sketch, excerpts from which are transcribed below, reveals a child both typical and unusual and a family somewhat unique among northern Indiana pioneers.¹

Sarah's story of her migration to the Hoosier state begins in 1834 when her father, Ebenezer Brown, came west ahead of his family searching out a new home for his wife, Hannah Nichols Shay, and four daughters. Brown had served for a time as sheriff of Yates County, New York, was prominent enough in his community to have made at least one trip to Albany as a lobbyist to the state legislature, was well educated for his time, and was relatively

* Virginia Mayberry is a resident of Middlebury and Bloomington, Indiana. She is the author of "Draftee's Wife: A Memoir of World War II," *Indiana Magazine of History*, LXXIX (December, 1983), 305-29; and in 1986 she collaborated in the production of *Middlebury: The Town Beautiful, 1836-1986* (Goshen, Ind., 1986) for Middlebury's sesquicentennial celebration. Her husband, Joseph A. Mayberry, is a descendant of Sarah Jane Brown, the author of the memoir transcribed below.

¹ Much biographical information concerning Sarah and her family was gleaned from her reminiscence, from other family records, and from Elkhart County histories. See, for example, Henry S. K. Bartholomew, *Pioneer History of Elkhart County, Indiana, with Sketches and Stories* (Goshen, Ind., 1930). Sarah's journal, now in the possession of one of her descendants, has no title. The following transcription was taken from Virginia Mayberry's typed copy of the original.



EBENEZER BROWN



HANNAH NICHOLS SHAY BROWN

prosperous.² He and his family were part of the heavy wave of migration that swept westward in the 1830s, but exactly why he determined to emigrate is unknown. Sarah indicates that both her father and mother had earlier participated in the westward movement of American pioneers into frontier New York. Perhaps by 1834 the easily accessible Erie Canal-Great Lakes migration route and the newly available lands even further west proved too great a lure to ignore.³

Also unknown is why Brown chose Indiana and specifically Elkhart County for his new home. The state legislature officially organized the county in 1830 although part of the territory included within its boundaries remained under Indian title until 1832. In 1831 county commissioners selected Goshen as the county seat.⁴ Brown located his new home about one mile northeast of Goshen

² Ebenezer Brown was a descendant of Peter Brown(e) who came to America on the *Mayflower* and who later dropped the "e" from the family name. In 1837 Ebenezer Brown established the Goshen *Democrat*, having bought out an old newspaper office in Penn Yan and shipping the equipment by water to Niles, Michigan, thence to Goshen. A long-time leader of the Democratic party in Elkhart County, Brown was a candidate for state senator in 1844 but was defeated by a small margin in the nominating convention. He also served as sheriff of Elkhart County for several years, which position included the duties of county collector. Anthony Deahl, *A Twentieth Century History and Biographical Record of Elkhart County, Indiana* (Chicago, 1905), 246; Bartholomew, *Pioneer History*, 168, 324-25; Abraham E. Weaver, ed., *A Standard History of Elkhart County, Indiana . . .* (2 vols., Chicago, 1916), I, 277; Charles C. Chapman & Co., pub., *History of Elkhart County, Indiana . . .* (Chicago, 1881), 370.

³ Between 1828 and 1837, during what has been called the Jacksonian Migration, a flood of settlers moved westward into the Old Northwest from all parts of the eastern United States and from Europe. Although many migrants selected land in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Illinois, literally thousands came to Indiana. After the opening of the Erie Canal connected New York City to Buffalo in 1825, increasing numbers of New Englanders and residents from central and western New York joined the westward-moving throng. Traveling the canal-Great Lakes route, most of these "Yankees" settled in northern Illinois, southern Michigan, or Wisconsin, but a number of them, like Brown, came to northern Indiana. John D. Barnhart and Donald F. Carmony, *Indiana: From Frontier to Industrial Commonwealth* (2 vols., 1954; reprint, Indianapolis, 1979), I, 171-76, 227; Logan Esarey, *A History of Indiana* (2 vols., 1915, 1918; reprint, 2 vols. in 1, Indianapolis, 1970), I, 350; R. Carlyle Buley, *The Old Northwest: Pioneer Period, 1815-1840* (2 vols., 1950; reprint, Bloomington, 1983), I, 110-13. See also Gregory S. Rose, "Hoosier Origins: The Nativity of Indiana's United States-Born Population in 1850," *Indiana Magazine of History*, LXXXI (September, 1985), 201-32. Brown may have decided to move west because of some conflict over inheritance. He accepted nothing from his father's [Martin Brown's] estate, giving his portion to siblings.

⁴ Although most of the land composing Elkhart County was cleared of Indian title by the treaties of Chicago, 1821; Mississinewa, 1826; and Carey Mission, 1828, a few sections lying south of the Carey Mission Treaty line were not secured from the Potawatomis until 1832. Departing somewhat from the precedent of officially establishing counties after increasing settlement in new areas made such organization necessary, the Indiana legislature formed Elkhart County in 1830 when, as Sarah confirms, population was extremely sparse. The county was assigned its present boundaries in 1836, and according to the census of 1840, six years after the Browns' arrival, inhabitants numbered only 6,660. Buley, *Old Northwest*, I, 111;

near Butts and Norton lakes on what for many years was known as the Yeoman farm,⁵ and Sarah simply records: "Father took the farm because he liked being near the county seat and the two ponds of water were attractive." Perhaps the northern Indiana lakes reminded Brown of the area of New York whence he came.

Whatever the reason for his choice Brown sent for his family in the fall of 1834, and Sarah's tale of her westward trek begins. "I don't remember much of the fuss and worry of preparing for the journey," she writes. "That, of course, fell mostly on my mother." Sarah's statement was especially apt since Brown chose not to return to Penn Yan but to meet his wife and daughters in Detroit. The Browns had buried a boy and girl previously in Yates County, and it seems likely that their youngest daughter, Helen, was born after the father's departure for the West, thus was an infant when the trip west began. Emma Pamela, the oldest girl, was a young lady of fifteen, well educated for her time. In the raw, new lakeland of Indiana she was able to begin teaching school at once. Sarah Jane, at ten, was her mother's right hand at home, and Jennette, the third daughter, was five years old.⁶

Sarah's admiration for her Irish mother evidences understanding that could have developed only with her own maturity. It is

George Pence and Nellie C. Armstrong, *Indiana Boundaries: Territory, State, and County* (Indiana Historical Collections, Vol. XIX; Indianapolis, 1933), 51-52, 57, 332-37. Elfrieda Lang, "An Analysis of Northern Indiana's Population in 1850," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XLIX (March, 1953), 21. After an abortive attempt to place the county seat at Dunlap, the present site of Goshen was selected in May, 1831. The site was at once surveyed and platted, and the first lots sold in June or July of the same year. Ernest V. Shockley, "County Seats and County Seat Wars in Indiana," *Indiana Magazine of History*, X (March, 1914), 29; Deahl, *A Twentieth Century History and Biographical Record of Elkhart County*, 49-56.

⁵ The Browns' land grant, signed by Andrew Jackson, lay just about on the southern boundary of the land ceded by the Indians in the Treaty of Chicago of 1821. This treaty, along with the Treaty of Mississinewa in 1826, cleared Indian title from a ten-mile strip of land stretching to the northern Indiana border, thus providing access to Lake Michigan. George R. Wilson, "The First Public Land Surveys in Indiana; Freeman's Lines," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XII (March, 1916), 5; Buley, *Old Northwest*, I, 110-13; Bartholomew, *Pioneer History*, 217. Although the two lakes mentioned are clearly indicated on the earliest plat of Elkhart Township, their names do not appear on county maps until much later. Asa Norton was a pioneer landholder, and the area around the western pond is at the present time called Norton Heights Farm. In the early twentieth century approximately sixteen acres of land on the north edge of the eastern pond belonged to one Edward Butts. These facts would appear to explain the later adoption of the names Butts and Norton lakes. The Browns' farm lay on the south bank of Butts Lake, and the family's house still stands at 18078 County Road 22.

⁶ Emma Pamela Brown married Chauncey S. Hascall a few years after her family's arrival in Indiana. She was possibly the first woman to teach in the country schools in Elkhart County. During the winters of 1839-1840 and 1840-1841 Emma taught in the log Ulrey school just west of Goshen. Her salary of \$12.00 a month was considered quite good for a woman. For a brief description of Emma's experiences see Bartholomew, *Pioneer History*, 167-68. Minerva Jennette Brown married physician Dr. Erastus W. H. Ellis in 1848. Ellis was active in the Democratic party; was editor of the *Goshen Democrat* for a number of years, part of them in partnership with Ebenezer Brown; and was Indiana state auditor for a time. Jennette died

this appreciation that runs like a brilliant thread throughout her description of emigrating to, and settling in, the northern Indiana country. At one point she remarks: "Mother had an abundance of good, common sense and a quick, perceptive intellect. She had little knowledge of arithmetic as taught in books, but she could make calculations mentally in a way of her own quicker than we could do with pencil and paper. She would keep all business matters in her head without any tangle. Her sons-in-law esteemed her highly, would tell her their business ventures and ask her opinion. Father never had cause to regret taking her advice but several times repented ignoring it. On the temperance [*sic*] question she was far ahead of her time. It was her habit to rise at four o'clock and have an hour for private devotion, reading, prayer and meditation.

"One thing that happened before we moved west illustrated her strength. Seated at her spinning wheel before the fire, awaiting Father's return from a lobbying session in Albany, she glimpsed a hideous face leering at her through the window. She arose, stepped to the door to fasten it with a wooden button, then went to the bedroom where the children were sleeping. There she dropped to her knees by the side of the bed and commended them to the only source of help that was possible. Then she fastened the back door, drew the curtains and returned to her spinning. Father did not get home that night and there was a large sum of public money in the house, but she was not disturbed. Soon afterward a gang of robbers that had been troubling the country killed an old man who fought for his treasure. At trial one turned state's evidence. Yes, he said, they had been at the sheriff's house, but, because the woman wasn't afraid, they concluded the sheriff was at home. Was it Mother's self-control and composure or was it the Higher Power she trusted that turned away the robbers that night?"

Sarah's story of her move to Indiana continues: "I know she [Mother] had a great deal of sewing done and we were supplied with clothes to last a long time as we were coming into the wilderness where it wouldn't be possible to hire sewing done and Mother had not been in the habit of doing much of it herself. Many things we couldn't bring were disposed of in exchange for sewing and material.

in 1856. Helen Agnes Brown married Dr. Thomas B. Elliott in 1853 just after her father's death. Elliott later served on the Indianapolis school board and was associated with the Indiana School for the Blind. The Elliotts were part of the Indiana colony that went west in 1874 to start citrus groves at what became Pasadena, California. Helen became known as the "Mother of Pasadena." See J. W. Wood, *Pasadena: Historical and Personal* (Pasadena, 1917).

"After all that planning, the time finally came when we needed new clothes.⁷ Mother brought out a comfort she had made years before. It was so heavy it had been used very little. One side was red pressed flannel, the other of blue half slayed [sleyed] flannel. Both were methods of beating the wool in preparation for cloth manufacture. All of the goods Mother had spun and woven in her early days of housekeeping. She sat us down to rip the quilting, using pins to save the thread which was very scarce. The red flannel made a frock for me and one for Jennette, the blue dresses for Helen and drawers for Father. The wadding of wool bats she carded into rolls and spun into stocking yarn. Few sheep were in the new country then and no woolen mill.

"Our household goods were sent by canal to Buffalo⁸ and we drove, having our wagon made as comfortable as possible. We didn't camp out but had provisions for as many meals as we chose to take in the wagon.

"The day before we started a man came to the house with a chest of carpenter's tools which he wished Father to accept for a debt he owed him. Mother agreed to take it and rearranged things in the crowded wagon to make room. Father praised her judgement because Father had the Yankee gift of being able to do almost anything with tools.

"When we reached Buffalo my mother insisted on going to Niagara Falls. She had been there but we children would *never* have the opportunity of seeing them after getting so far away in the wilderness. The dear mother lived to see the railroads built and know of the ease of going of which she didn't dream at that time.

"Our goods were in Buffalo and the next day we went aboard the steamboat *United States*.⁹ That night a severe storm blew up

⁷ Sarah's experiences parallel those of other westward-moving migrants. In describing the material side of pioneer life in his preeminent study of the Old Northwest, historian R. Carlyle Buley writes: "As essential [to the pioneer] as food and shelter was clothing. Original settlers brought along as much substantial wearing apparel, or materials for making their own clothing, as convenient or as they could afford, but the rough life of the open soon necessitated replacement . . ." Buley, *Old Northwest*, I, 203.

⁸ Penn Yan was located at the northern end of Crooked Lake at approximately the point where the lake connected with Crooked Lake Canal, a feeder line of the Erie. The Browns' household goods could have left their home via this canal, thence into Seneca Lake, the Cayuga and Seneca Canal, and finally into the Erie Canal at Buffalo on the way to Detroit. Noble E. Whitford, *History of the Canal System of the State of New York* . . . (2 vols., Albany, 1906), I, [viii].

⁹ Since one source describes the *United States* as a "big new steamer" in 1836, it must have been *very* new in 1834. According to the same source there were eleven steamboats crossing Lake Erie by 1833, and in that year alone it was estimated that they carried approximately fifty thousand passengers westward from Buffalo. Harlan Hatcher, *Lake Erie* (Indianapolis, 1945), 126. Between forty and fifty steamboats were engaged in trade on the Great Lakes by 1836 and 1837. In 1839 steamboat fares from Buffalo to Detroit were eight dollars cabin and three dollars steerage, while freight to Chicago was sixty-two cents per hundred. Whitford, *History of the Canal System*, I, 424, 429.

and the boat only held her own without making any headway. The passengers were all sick except my mother. She was the only woman on board who went to meals regularly and the captain complimented her highly. He came for her and conducted her to the dining table each meal.¹⁰

"There was a little girl about my age on board who was sick and Mother waited on her as she did on us. The people in whose care the child had been placed were sick, too. She was the daughter of a major stationed at Green Bay, and she was to go from Detroit to Mackinaw in a steamer and from there in a canoe sent by her father. I always wanted to know how she got there but couldn't write as mails were very uncertain. It was no use to attempt to find out.

"Father met us in Detroit. We stayed a day or two to let our horses recover from seasickness from which they suffered as much as people. I remember Detroit's queer, old French houses built with very steep roofs and three rows of dormer windows.

"Father brought along two men and two more teams to help haul our goods, and they were needed to get over the almost impassable roads. Sister Emma and I amused ourselves counting the holes when the wheels went down to the hub, she on one side, I on the other. We came through Ypsilanti, Coldwater and White Pigeon, Michigan, and then crossed into Indiana. I had studied enough of geography to be able to bound all the states and knew Indiana was south of Michigan.

"There was no habitation until we came to Middlebury, to the banks of the Little Elkhart River, where I think a man by the name of Woodbridge lived.¹¹

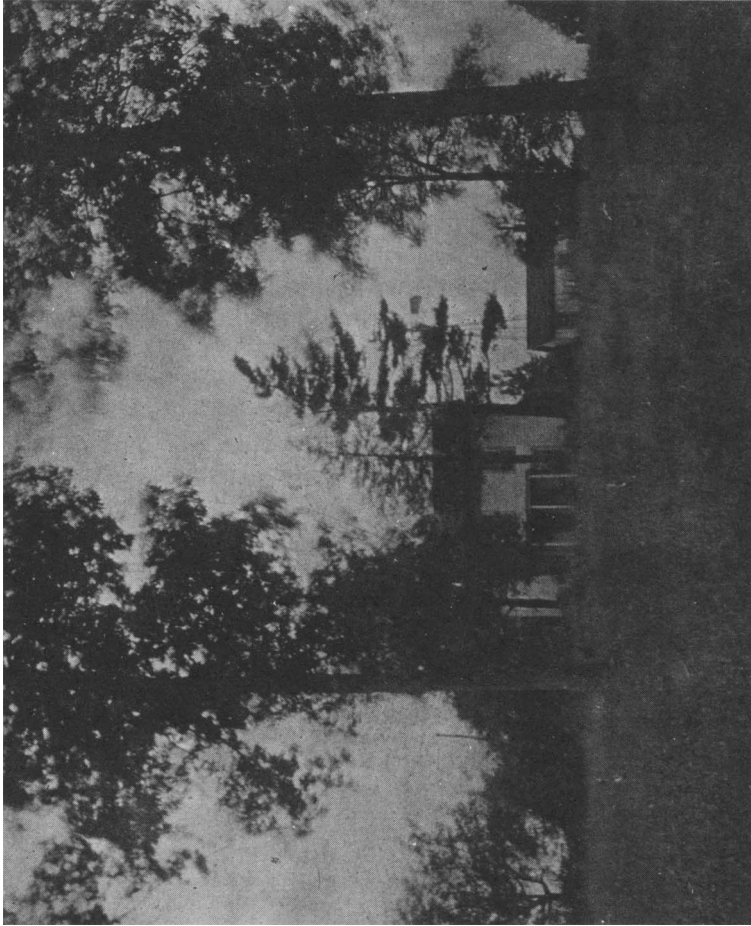
"Moving southwest, at the big marsh we passed the old Cornell place.¹² The road across the marsh was made of logs. In places the water was so deep the road floated. From there to Goshen the only

¹⁰ Hannah Brown came from a seafaring background. Her maternal grandfather was Henry Fluskey of a family of northern Irish "gentlemen" seamen who sailed to America in their own vessel.

¹¹ In 1832 Enoch Woodbridge and his sons-in-law, John C. Holmes, George A. Buffam, and Jonathan Pratt, came from Vermont to settle in Section 10 of Middlebury Township, Elkhart County. In 1833 Woodbridge built a sawmill at the east end of what was to become the town of Middlebury. Higgins, Belden, and Co., comp. and pub., *Illustrated Historical Atlas of Elkhart County, Indiana* (Chicago, 1874), 23.

¹² On the south side of County Road 22 at County Road 31 stands the "old" Cornell school. A one-room brick building dating from 1888, this structure replaced a log school built in the mid-1830s on land owned by Jacob Cornell. Cornell, who had studied medicine, had held school in his home prior to the erection of the log building. An interim frame structure may be one later moved to stand behind the brick Cornell home nearby. Recorded by Dean Garber for the Elkhart County Historical Society Museum, Bristol, Indiana, in a study of one-room schools, presently available for research purposes on request at the museum office. See also *Middlebury: The Town Beautiful*, 138-39.

THE BROWN HOUSE ON MIDDLEBURY
ROAD NEAR GOSHEN, ELKHART COUNTY,
c. 1900



house was our new home, but it wasn't completed yet, so we went into Goshen, to the home of Mr. Godley, one of our drivers, at the corner of Third and Washington Streets, and later to board at the Stilsen tavern.¹³

"There were but few people in Elkhart County called easterners, that is, from New York or New England. Most were from Ohio or Virginia and on south.¹⁴ The houses were mostly log, some of clapboard. Mother was rather disappointed in finding a comfortable frame house instead of a log cabin which seemed more appropriate in the woods. Later she was glad of it. Father and Mother both had known what it was to go into a new country and live in log houses when they were children, but coming into this country had no hardships to compare with the settlement of western New York.

"That winter was mostly pleasant. We settled in our new home in time to get a good supply of hickory nuts. For the first winter we had to buy everything. There was no beef, just pork and wild game. As there was little market for produce a farmer raised only the vegetables his family used, not much variety. There was no orchard in the area and no way of keeping wild fruit except a little preserves.

"We bought cranberries by the bushel. One day Father sought to buy a large pile of pumpkins. 'Oh, them's just cow punkins,' the farmer said, and showed him a kind of squash his family used for cooking. We preferred the old kind for pie and Mother even made some palatable mince out of cranberries and pumpkin.

"When there was no saleratus (baking soda) available at the stores Mother made her own this way. She filled a large iron kettle with clean corncobs and set them on fire. When all were burned to ashes she stored these in a bottle. To use them in baking she'd put

¹³ In 1832 the Elkhart County board of commissioners granted Abner Stilson a license to keep a tavern in Goshen. Deahl, *Twentieth Century History and Biographical Record of Elkhart County*, 133. Sarah helped the daughters of Innkeeper Stilson at waiting table and did her job so well that when Brown settled his board bill she had paid her own. Stilson's name is variously spelled in Elkhart County histories.

¹⁴ Despite Sarah's statement regarding settlers from the East, the Browns' migration was part of a pattern. By 1850, when census canvassers first recorded the nativity of inhabitants, 1,156 New Yorkers, 1,586 Pennsylvanians, and 433 New Englanders of a total population of 12,697 resided in Elkhart County. Migrants from New York accounted for 15 percent of the non-native Hoosier, United States-born residents of the county, a higher percentage than the state mean of 6.3 percent for this group. Sarah's observation that "most" of their neighbors were from "Ohio or Virginia and on south" does, however, help to support historians' belief that the pervasive southern influence obvious in southern, and to a somewhat lesser degree in central, Indiana may have extended into northern counties as well. For an analysis of the nativity of Elkhart County's population in the decades of the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s, see Lang, "An Analysis of Northern Indiana's Population in 1850," 17-60; Elfrieda Lang, "Southern Migrants to Northern Indiana Before 1850," *Indiana Magazine of History*, L (December, 1954), 349-56; Rose, "Hoosier Origins." See also Barnhart and Carmony, *Indiana*, I, 161-80.

a large spoonful of ashes in a cup, cover them with water and pour this off carefully into the dough to make it rise.

"Our sugar was maple, brown Orleans and wild honey. Loaf sugar came in a large cone with a wrapper of thick purple paper. The loaf had to be broken with a knife and hammer. The paper we saved to use for dye. One of our best treats was to cut off the top of a turnip and scrape out the inside with a spoon. Turnips were fine-grained tender and sweet. I have seen none like them for years.

"It is said that more farmers' wives become insane than those of any other occupation because of the dullness and monotony of their lives. Now that seems very strange to me for my remembrance of our farm life is that it was full of interest. The seasons brought changes. In spring there was plowing and planting, chickens, calves and lambs. During haying and harvesting it was for women mostly cooking and washing dishes for a dozen or more men, but we enjoyed that no matter how hot it might be. We took pride in having the best food at such times.

"I think we enjoyed winters a little more than any other season because the work was not rushing and we had more time for reading and quiet occupations. The long evenings when we read or knitted or sewed or had company were very enjoyable. Father and Mother had candles on the table and we girls usually squatted on the hearth and used the firelight. The big fireplace made a bright light all over the room. When we speak of living by candlelight we must take that into consideration.

"For entertainment in bad weather we had books and papers. Once we had 103 papers in the mail. One gentleman sent Emma a French magazine so she would not neglect her study of the language. I got *Peter Parley's*. We had the *Philadelphia Saturday Courier* and Father took an Indianapolis newspaper to know what the state was doing, he said. Once we burned a lot of them, then we found the local merchants would be glad to get them for wrapping paper.¹⁵

"We also brought a pretty good library, including Buffon's *Natural History*, *Don Quixote*, *Gil Blas*, *The Lady of the Manor*, Johnson's works and British essayists, Shakespeare and lots of collected sermons and speeches.¹⁶

¹⁵ *The Tales of Peter Parley about America* by Samuel Griswold Goodrich was published in Boston in 1827. It attained tremendous popularity, and Goodrich wrote scores of Peter Parley stories for young readers in succeeding years. Included were *Tales of Peter Parley about Africa* in 1835 and *Parley's Ancient History and Customs* in 1836. Goodrich also edited and published a periodical called *Parley's Magazine* in 1833-1834.

¹⁶ Relatively few of the first settlers brought books with them when they moved west, and few acquired extensive collections after their arrival on the frontier. Although, as Buley points out, books were often found in unexpected places on the frontier, "in town dwellings, neat farmhouses, in log cabins," the size of the Browns' personal library is very unusual. Buley, *Old Northwest*, II, 564-69. The Browns could have brought with them any number of translated editions of *Histoire*

"During the next summer the cough Mother had had before we came west returned and she became very feeble. Father was anxious to get in a piece of wheat as the price was high, but it was also time to dig potatoes. Mother urged him to plant wheat.¹⁷ We girls took Mother's chair to the potato patch where she sat in the sun and directed us how to pull up the stalks and dig so as not to cut the tubers. We would dig a few and when they were dry carry them into the cellar. Well! We dug 80 bushels, but long before we were done Mother's cough was gone and never returned. She thought it was the stirring of the soil and mild air and sunshine that cured her.

"When we were coming through Michigan people would say 'Going to Injeany you'll have the shakes 'til you can't stand it,' or 'The fever'n ague will ketch you.' There was as much in Michigan as in Indiana, but they wouldn't acknowledge it. We had very little because of my mother's prudent management and wise care of our health. She always kept a fire on the hearth no matter how warm the evening was. That gave good ventilation and counteracted the miasma of the air. She had the same theory that Dr. William Hall advocated years afterward as to the unwholesomeness of the night air: that is, that there is more malaria in the air about sunset and sunrise than any other time, that the night air two hours or so after sundown until about the same length of time near sunrise was as healthful as at any time of day. We never took quinine for the ague. Mother would give a cathartic, then, about an hour before chill time, would get the patient into a sweat and asleep and the ague was forgotten. We were always cautioned about going out in the evening without a wrap.¹⁸

Naturelle, Générale et Particulière by George Louis Le Clerc, comte de Buffon, the number of volumes depending on the edition. See, for example, *Natural History, General and Particular . . . : The History of Man and Quadrupeds*, trans. by William Smellie (20 vols., London, 1812). *The Works of Samuel Johnson* also appeared in many different editions, each with a different number of volumes, as did Shakespeare's works and those of various British essayists. See, for example, *The Works of Samuel Johnson* (12 vols., London, 1823). Various editions of *Gil Blas* were available. Sarah may have referred to Alain René Le Sage, pseud., *Adventures of Gil Blas of Santillane*, trans. by T. G. Smollett (2 vols., London, 1833). An interesting set of volumes in the Browns' library was Mary Martha Sherwood, *The Lady of the Manor: Being a Series of Conversations on the Subject of Confirmation Intended for the Use of the Middle and Higher Ranks of Young Females* (7 vols., London, 1827-1828).

¹⁷ There was much "sick wheat" in Elkhart County and northern Indiana during 1835. The resultant scarcity of grain may have caused the high wheat prices. Sick wheat resulted from planting in overrich soil. The grain seemingly matured and looked sound but severely affected the stomachs of humans when baked into bread and even of hogs when they were fed the grain. Seven to ten years were often required for "new soil" to produce a good grain. Buley, *Old Northwest*, I, 169-70.

¹⁸ Although newspaper editors and other town boosters often bragged about the salubrious climate of their area, the general unhealthfulness of the West was an important deterrent to immigration. The possible fortune and freedom to be found in the new lands could not counteract the deleterious effects of exposure, lack of

"I think 1838 was the very sickly season owing to the very early spring. They plowed and sowed oats in March. Everything was very forward, oak bushes leafing out. Then May 3 turned cold and froze all those tender leaves. The decay of them caused a bad odor in the woods which perhaps had something to do with the sickness later in the season.¹⁹

"I was just able to sit up after a second attack when Emma was taken sick. While she still had fever Mother went down. There were only two doctors, Latta and Taylor.²⁰ Sometimes it was three days until one of them could see us. Father had the ague and Helen some milder illness. Jennette and Cousin George who was staying with us were the only well ones.

"I remember Father kneading bread on his well day.²¹ It reminded me of a legend Mother had told us long ago. A man who

sanitation, decaying vegetation, numerous ponds and swamps, dense forests, and thickly matted grasses and weeds. Of all the autumnal fevers—including variations of bilious, intermittent, remittent, tertian, etc.—the ague, a malarial fever, was probably the most common and was virtually inescapable. Quinine was neither readily available nor universally accepted as a treatment for the fever. The miasmic atmosphere of marsh and swamp was generally recognized as the cause of the disease; the mosquito was not suspected. Hannah Brown's theories, however, contained at least a grain of truth since the anopheles mosquitoes that spread malaria are most active in the evening. In addition, lack of screening in pioneer homes was probably somewhat counteracted by the hearthfire and wearing of wraps. Hannah's practices did closely resemble those of Dr. William Whitty Hall (1810-1876), a physician, missionary, and author who was born and educated in Kentucky. Hall practiced medicine for many years in New Orleans, Cincinnati, and New York and wrote a number of widely circulated books dealing with the prevention of diseases, particularly those of the lungs. See, for example, William Whitty Hall, *Health by Good Living* (New York, 1871), and *Sleep; or the Hygiene of the Night* (New York, 1873). For a detailed discussion of pioneer ills, medicines, and doctors, see Buley, *Old Northwest*, I, 240-314.

¹⁹ County histories confirm that 1838 was a particularly virulent year for ague and other types of fever: "nearly everybody was sick and there was scarcely anyone to take care of the suffering ones. Those who were the least ill had to take care of the others." Deahl, *Twentieth Century History and Biographical Record of Elkhart County*, 75; Weaver, *Standard History of Elkhart County*, I, 182. Buley indicates that in 1838 almost half the population of Elkhart County was affected with bilious disorders. Buley, *Old Northwest*, I, 241-42.

²⁰ Dr. Johnson Latta of Goshen practiced in Elkhart County for a number of years and was considered a good physician for his day and generation. County histories identify his nephew, Dr. M. M. Latta, as a young man in 1838. He, too, acquired an extensive practice, but whether he was working as a physician as early as 1838 has not been established. Deahl, *Twentieth Century History and Biographical Record of Elkhart County*, 75; Weaver, *Standard History of Elkhart County*, I, 207. Dr. Francis W. Taylor, an early resident and first postmaster of the village of Benton in Benton Township, practiced as a physician in Elkhart County for eight to ten years before his death. Bartholomew, *Pioneer History*, 48, 211-12. There were a number of other physicians practicing in Elkhart County in 1838, some of them fairly near the Browns' home. Exactly why Sarah referred only to Taylor and Latta is not known.

²¹ There were varieties of ague, all of which affected the victim in different ways. "Some had the combined chills and fever each day, or on alternate days, or even every third day; others had the chills one day and the fever the next." On days between attacks the patient felt relatively comfortable, and work schedules were arranged to accommodate the bouts of fever. Buley, *Old Northwest*, I, 245.

was looking for a wife let it be known that his horse liked to eat the scrapings of the dough trough after bread was made. He visited all the eligible young women in his town. Some, wanting to please him, would save a quantity of scrapings for the horse. Some would have less. At last he came to a girl who said she never had any dough left in her bread trough, and that's the one he married. The story never went on to say whether her frugality made him happy.

"When Father and Mother were away one afternoon I was left in charge of the two little girls. Suddenly the door opened and in walked two men and a little boy, and, without saying so much as 'by your leave,' they sat themselves down by the fire. Their clothes were so queer I thought of Irving's description of Rip Van Winkle and the early Dutch in New York. I learned afterward that they were Amish, but when they inquired after a man named *Yoder* I decided in my own mind they were scamps and there never was a man of that name. We were all quite frightened and I had quite a time soothing the little girls after the men were gone. They went as they came, without ceremony."²²

"Generally our social relations were very pleasant. The few close neighbors we had were eastern people, kind and helpful to each other. At one party I remember the older people started playing 'Pussy Wants a Corner.' In the midst of it Emma went downstairs and got the old cat and dropped her in the middle of the room. The poor thing was dreadfully frightened. So were some of the company. Mrs. Jernigan sprang over a chair and into a bedroom and Miss Marchant into the other bedroom and they couldn't be persuaded to come out until assured that the cat had been taken away. Well! For farmers I think we were quite gay."²³

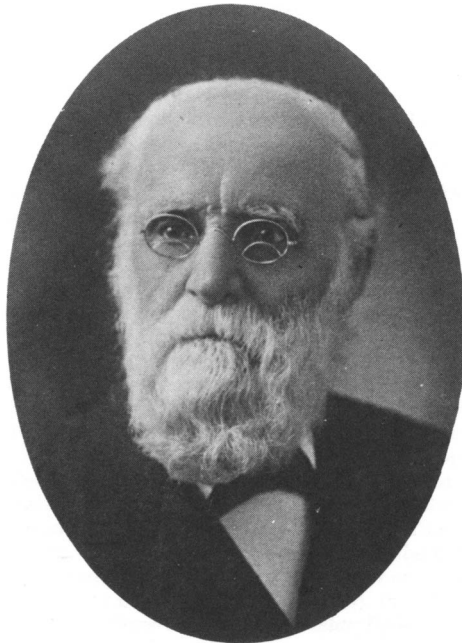
In 1844, when she was twenty, Sarah married Joel Prescott Hawks. His father, Cephas, Sr., of an old Deerfield, Massachusetts, family, founded an industrial complex at Waterford Mills, south of Goshen. Here he and his numerous sons ran grist, saw, and woolen mills, a cooperage, a distillery, and a general store. Products were shipped on the Elkhart River to the St. Joseph by ark during high water times. When a railroad passed through Goshen, the entire

²² The Goshen telephone directory for 1986 lists 529 Yoders in the town's immediate vicinity. Since many with this family name are still of the Amish faith, thus do not employ telephones, it can readily be seen that the few who settled in the area originally have proliferated.

²³ Leah Jackson Wolford, *The Play-Party in Indiana: A Collection of Folk-Songs and Games with Descriptive Introduction, and Correlating Notes* (Indiana Historical Collections, Vol. IV; Indianapolis, 1916), gives a glossary of terms, diagrams, and descriptions, together with words and scores, of several dozen songs and dances that were popular at the midwestern pioneer play parties.



SARAH JANE BROWN HAWKS
c. 1900



JOEL PRESCOTT HAWKS
c. 1900

operation was moved there, but water power from their Waterford dam and millrace was still utilized.²⁴

It was after Joel's death in 1905 that Sarah's children asked her to write her autobiography.²⁵ She covered one hundred pages in the big ledger from her son's store and broke off in mid-sentence during a description of her sister's house in Indianapolis. She died in 1906.

²⁴ The Waterford dam and millrace are part of a small nature preserve today.

²⁵ Sarah and Joel Hawks had seven children: Alice S. (1845-1892); Emma D. (1849-1938) m. John Mayberry; Dwight Hadley (1851-1930) m. Estelle Burns; Minnie J. (1855-1881) m. Henry Butler; Mabel (1858-1942); Joel Prescott, Jr. (1860-1930); Lora Agnes (1862-1871).