

Missing In Action

The Memoirs of Charles Woodbury Melcher
 as told by Thomas P. Doherty

When I was a few months old, my father left me.

My father, Samuel Henry Melcher, son of Woodbury and Rebecca Melcher,¹ grew up in Meredith Bridge, New Hampshire, which soon was annexed by Laconia. After an early education at the nearby Gilford and Gilmanton Academies, he enrolled at Dartmouth College in Hanover in December of 1847. While at Dartmouth, he expanded his horizons with a term of lectures at the Vermont Medical College at Woodstock and at Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine, over 150 miles away. This was his first taste of what a change in scenery could offer. It soon became an insatiable desire.

After only three years, at the age of 22, he earned a doctoral degree from Dartmouth, receiving the highest grades in all fields except *materia medica*² and therapy. He specialized in the effects of tonics which generally con-



Surgeon Melcher in 1861

Martha A. Ranlet. S.H. Melcher

This may certify that Samuel H. Melcher entered my office as a student Dec. 6, 1847 and has concluded with me with the exception of a term of lectures at Bowdoin & Woodstock at this date - Gilford July 29, 1850. N.H. Bartlett

Examinations for 1850. Nov. 5

By Samuel Henry Melcher (Meredith Bridge) Gilford

Anatomy and Physiology Very well

Chemistry and Pharmacy Very Well

Materia Medica & Therap^y. Well

Theory and Practice very well

Surgery and Obstetrics Very Well

Samuel H. Melcher's Final Examination Grades

tained over 50% alcohol and were thought to have curative effects. In any case, most patients felt pain relief from tak-

*Thesis
 on
 Tonics,
 Their Indications and Effects.
 Samuel H. Melcher*

ing these tonics!

After a brief six-month internship as a house surgeon at City Hospital in South Boston in early 1851, Father practiced medicine and touted his tonics in several small towns in Grafton County, New Hampshire: Hebron, then Groton, Orange, Dorchester, Plymouth and Bridgewater. It was

difficult for him to settle in any one place. Perhaps he was trying to follow the footprints of his father, Woodbury, who had moved away from his family ship-building roots in Portsmouth to become a successful merchant and philanthropist in Laconia [add NH editorial].

In early 1857, two-and-one-half years after his marriage to Martha Ann

Ranlet, Father accepted a position as a physician at the Boston Lung Institute. When I was in her womb, Mother and Father moved to Boston. I was born there on March 4th and named after my two grandfathers.

Very learned and literary and quite the socialite, Mother looked forward to life in the cultural hub of New England. All seemed to be going quite well: a respected job in a thriving city and a newly born baby boy.

Nevertheless, Father deserted us to fend for ourselves in Boston.

With no financial means to care for me in Boston, my mother moved us back home to Laconia (on Lake Winnepesaukee) to live with her parents, Charles and Harriet Ranlet,³ and her maternal grandfather, Isaac Ladd.



Woodbury Melcher & Rebecca (French) Melcher

¹ Woodbury, a cotton merchant, was the son of Nathaniel and Dorothy (Fernald) Melcher of Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

² Homeopathic pharmacology

³ Charles was co-founder of the Ranlet Car Manufacturing Company, one of the leading U.S. producers of Pullman cars.

In July of 1861, my great-grand-father Ladd died at age 86. Four months later, my grandfather Ranlet died of tuberculosis, leaving my 51-year-old grandmother to head the grieving household. Father did not even visit us. I would later learn why. As the years passed by, Mother seemed worried that we might never see him again.

When I got older, I was told that during the bank panic of 1857,⁴ Father and three others sailed from Boston to Galveston, Texas. Then, they traveled by wagon 250 miles west to San Antonio to search for a favorable place for relocation. While Father stayed in San Antonio, the others went back to Galveston to retrieve their trunks of belongings.⁵ After a two-month search, Father could not identify a suitable place to practice medicine, but heard there were opportunities in the Missouri Valley and yearned to go there.

Unexpectedly, Father received word that the other three had retrieved their trunks in Galveston, but had decided to sail back to Boston instead. Father was stranded in San Antonio. As a last resort, he secured passage north to Missouri by serving as a cook for an outfit driving mules to St. Louis, whereupon he had his trunk of belongings sent to him.⁵

Soon thereafter, Father settled in the small lead mining town of Potosi, Washington County, Missouri,⁶ to practice medicine. As soon as his practice was established, he wrote Mother, “*Now it is time for you to come to Potasi with Charly.*”

Having never fully understood why father left us in Boston, Mother delayed answering. Being an urban socialite, rather than a rough and tumble country girl, she was not particularly motivated to make a long trip west to an isolated small town in Missouri. At this time, as well, the nation was becoming very unsettled after Lincoln’s election. South Carolina and other states were threatening to secede from the Union, and the nation was on the brink of a Civil War.

While the northern sympathizers in Potasi slightly outnumbered southern sympathizers, they did not want to fight against their southern

brethren. In a town meeting in early May of 1861, the citizens jointly agreed to enlist volunteers for an armed force to maintain neutrality

Sensing impending trouble, Father closed his practice and traveled to St. Louis where on May 7th of 1861, he volunteered to serve the Union Army in the Civil War. He was promptly commissioned an Assistant Surgeon in the Fifth Missouri Cavalry Volunteers. His subsequent letter to Mother was accompanied with a photograph of him in his Army uniform. He wanted her to know that conditions in Missouri had deteriorated so much that we would be much safer staying in Laconia. Mother having previously read a newspaper report that Union forces had taken control of Potosi before an armed force could be organized had already decided that she would rather stay in Laconia.⁷

When I was only four years old, Father was serving with distinction in several 1861 Missouri battles including Carthage, Dug Springs and Wilson’s Creek where he removed the body of General Nathaniel Lyons⁸ from the battlefield to Springfield. He could not come to his father-in-law’s funeral because he was treating wounded and ill soldiers.

In November 1861, Father was commissioned Brigade Surgeon and was assigned hospital duty in St.



Flag flown over Missouri battles of Carthage, Dug Springs, Wilson’s Creek, Springfield and Pleasanton

Louis. By the following summer he was in charge of four hospitals there including the U. S. Marine Hospital which, under Father’s command, was cited by the Surgeon General of the U.S. Army as one of the two best hospitals in the Department of the Mississippi.

⁴ the result of European speculation in the construction of the U.S. railroad system

⁵ “Lt. Col. Samuel H. Melcher, M.D.” *The Granite Monthly* XLVIII (7):199 (July 1916)

⁶ Named after the Bolivian silver-mining city, Potasi lies 70 miles southwest of St. Louis in the Ozarks,

⁷ Esther M. Ziock Carroll, “Washington County, Missouri in the Civil War” at

<http://www.carrollscorner.net/WashCoCW1.htm>

⁸ Lyons was the first General to die in the Civil War.

On January 1863, Father, as head of four hospitals in Springfield, organized the "Quinine Brigade"⁹ of over 400 sick and convalescent soldiers and 42 citizens to defend Springfield in case Southern rebels attacked. When they did so, a Rebel shell exploded over Father's head leading to his eventual blindness.¹⁰ A musket ball shattered General Egbert Brown's left shoulder, but Father ignored the advice of fellow surgeons and saved the General's arm from amputation, one of the first and most successful operations of its kind on record at that time.¹¹

On December 21, 1864, as Colonel Samuel H. Melcher, my father tendered his resignation from the Army and wrote that he had served "*a period of forty three and a half months, wholly to the neglect of my private interests which require my attention. I have never been off duty by reason of sickness or arrest and have had but twenty five days leave.*"¹² He used none of those 25 days leave to visit us in Laconia.

By May of 1865, Father wrote Mother in Laconia that he had removed to LaGrange, Tennessee, to run a general store, grow cotton and work for the federal Freedmen's Bureau. In November, Father wrote to join him in LaGrange:¹³

"Nov 4, 1865

Dear Wife -

I am again nearly ready for you to start - should be if I did not contemplate going to Saint Louis - but am obliged to wait for some cotton that I have due me but has not come in.

I am going to farm it next season - the farm is about a mile out of town, expect to have 250 acres in cultivation, have an old log house to live in, shall keep the store going at the same time, one of my clerks will live with us - his family is same size, wife and a little girl 11 years old - think we will get along together. hope you will be contented, do not expect you will like as there are no neighbors near - you & Charly will have to raise chickens, sheep, calves & pigs for company, the woods are full of game - & fish in the river close by at the present time there are

any quantity of beech nuts close by & chestnuts not far

... I do not know how you will like farming - think it may not suit you - there will be many things different from what you have been accustomed to.

... want you to remember I have told you it is a bad uncomfortable place to live - & don't be disappointed - you will have more funny stories to write home than you ever did before -

all my love

SHM"



Charles W. Melcher
at age 8 (1865)

We joined Father in La Grange.

Then eight years old, I had a rewarding 2½ year experience in a completely new environment. I also gained a great appreciation for nature and farming and new machinery that was being developed increase farming efficiency. For the first time, I also had the chance to get to know my father. On the other hand, Mother "*naturally didn't care for the attendant hardships*" of the farm as she had "*led a very sheltered life.*"¹⁴

The New Hampshire doctor she had married was now a nearly-blind, bat-

tle-scarred soldier comfortable in battle and a disciplinarian. I often found my Mother in tears after some harsh words. She was not comfortable engaged in a marital battle. They did not get along very well, providing me an additional incentive to get outdoors and experience nature.

Father had thrived in the military, partially because it quenched his thirst for change. He was always moving from battle to battle or hospital to hospital. He was not required to settle anywhere.

⁹ Many soldiers were being dosed with quinine for malaria.

¹⁰ See Thomas P. Doherty, "The Eyes of the Surgeon" (2007), unpublished.

¹¹ See Medical and Surgical History of the War of the Rebellion; Vol. II, Part II (1876) p522 and letter: Brig. Gen. E.B. Brown to Col. S.H. Melcher (Aug. 1, 1864)

¹² Letter of resignation from the Army by S. H. Melcher, (December 21, 1864).

¹³ abstracts from Nov 4, 1865 letter: S. H. Melcher of La Grange Tenn. to wife Mrs. M. A. Melcher of Laconia, N.H.

¹⁴ Letter from Alice Frances MacMillan, granddaughter of S. H. Melcher, to her son, Charles Daniel MacMillan, 27 Apr 1969

In large part because of his failing eyesight, Father's various business ventures were not very successful. In February of 1868 he filed for bankruptcy in Fayette County, Tennessee, and was discharged of all debts by November. We were left with not much more than the "necessary wearing apparel of the petitioner and family," some "exempted property": beds, bedding, household furniture, pictures and a little jewelry (worth \$10), plus tools of his trade: three cases of surgical instruments, books, farming implements and farm animals.^{15,16} Mother and I went back to Laconia.¹⁷

Docket--Case No. 343 ; Page 343
 District Court of the United States,
 District of West Tennessee.

IN BANKRUPTCY.

IN THE MATTER OF

Saml. H. Melcher
 Bankrupt

Certificate of Final Discharge of Bankrupt,

GRANTED TO

Saml. H. Melcher

OF

Fayette County

the 30 day of November A.D. 1868

highest qualifications requisite for a Surgeon in charge of a Hospital. He is a good surgeon, attentive and skillful, and his executive ability excellent. I have never seen a man so uniformly popular with his patients who was as good a disciplinarian as he was." On March 9th Major General J. M. Schofield praised Father as "one of the most efficient officers ... I have ever known as a surgeon in charge of hospitals."¹⁹ On April 23rd he was "appointed Surgeon of the

¹⁵ Certificate of Final Discharge of Bankrupt, granted to Saml. H. Melcher of Fayette County the 30 day of November 1868 [Docket case No. 343; page 343 District Court of the United States, District of West Tennessee].

¹⁶ Certificate of Exempted Property 15 May 1868 in the District Court of the United States for the District of West Tennessee in Bankruptcy in the matter of Coolidge & Cooper & S. H. Melcher, bankrupt.

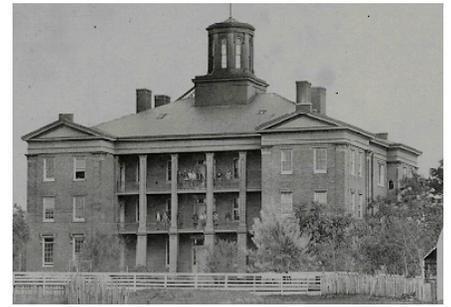
¹⁷ Belknap Co NH Deed 47:591 (14 Jul 1868)

¹⁸ formerly Asst Surgeon in chg US Gen Hspl Springfield

¹⁹ Letter: Geo S. Bomwell, Secretary of Treasury (April

23, 1870) to Dr. Samuel H. Melcher.

US Marine Hospital at St Louis ... at a salary of one thousand dollars ... per annum." Now he could support our family! Mother and I joined him in St. Louis.



U.S. Marine Hospital, St. Louis

The next year, the governor of Missouri made Father the manager of the state lunatic asylum, an experience that would prove useful to him later.

Then we heard word of the death of my grandfather Melcher on November 10, 1870 in Laconia. His obituary in the Democrat said he had "accumulated a handsome fortune" but "has been liberal with his ample means ... [especially for] the proper training of the young." He was a trustee of the Asylum for the Insane and ... President of the Laconia Savings Bank.²⁰

His 1865 will was not probated until January 2, 1871 but it was an eye opener:



"I give and bequeath to my son Samuel Ten dollars ... to Martha A. Melcher, wife of the above named Samuel H. Two Thousand Dollars ... to my grandson Charles Woodbury Melcher One Thousand Dollars to be paid by my executors as wanted, for his education, and Two Thousand dollars to be invested."

I give and bequeath to my son Samuel Ten dollars, to Woodbury Melcher Five thousand dollars, to my daughters Rebecca A. Gove and Eliza T. Hilton Five thousand dollars each, I give and bequeath to my Executor, in trust to be invested in United States Bonds and the income to be paid to Martha A. Melcher wife of the above named Samuel H. Two Thousand Dollars. I give and bequeath to my grandson Charles Woodbury Melcher One thousand dollars to be paid by my executors as wanted, for his education and Two thousand dollars to be invested



²⁰ Obituary in The Laconia Democrat, 17 Nov 1870, p.2

Basically, Father was willed \$10, while his three siblings were granted \$5000 each. Mother and I were to share Father's \$5000 inheritance instead. Grandfather noted that while he loved his son, he would not support his gambling nor condone the lack of respect he displayed for his family. That disdain caused Father to feel inadequate as a family man which in 1873 contributed to him leaving us again.

He served the military with distinction, but as a father he was too often missing in action.

... to be continued Part 2: Father's Sojourns

This is part 2 of a 3-part story about Dr. Samuel Henry Melcher (1826-1915) in the eyes of his son, Charles Woodbury Melcher (1857-1939). The two-column format with images and footnotes is found in several genealogical magazines, such as *New England Ancestors* and *NGS News Magazine* and (w/o footnotes) in *Newsweek* columns, *Smithsonian* and *AARP* magazine.

In Part 1 (see <http://copland.udel.edu/~tdoherty/MissingInAction.pdf>), Samuel left his wife and new-born son in Boston while he sought out a better place for his family in Texas and then Missouri. When the Civil War broke out, he decided to enlist in the Union Army in Missouri as a Surgeon serving in several battles including Wilson's Creek (1861) and Springfield (1863). A Rebel shell exploded over his head during a battle and led to his eventual blindness.

Instead of returning home after the war, Samuel began farming in La Grange, Tennessee and wrote his wife Martha, then in Laconia, New Hampshire, to come with their son Charlie to help him farm in this "bad uncomfortable place to live." They did, but returned to Laconia within three years when Samuel, a battle-scarred soldier, and Martha, a learned and literary socialite who did not care for the attendant hardships, were incompatible, and Samuel's financial ventures caused him to go bankrupt. In 1870, with glowing recommendations from Civil War Generals, Samuel secured a position as a hospital administrator in St. Louis. He could now support his family which then joined him in St. Louis.

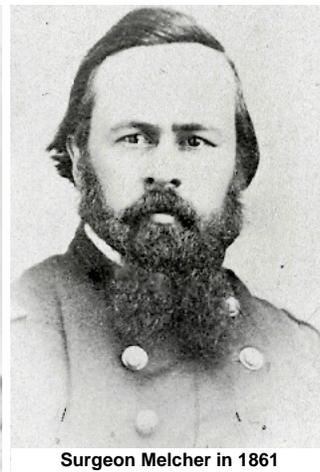
Father's Sojourns

The Memoirs of Charles Woodbury Melcher, Part 2
As told by Thomas P. Doherty

Father demonstrated extensive executive abilities as a hospital administrator by being attentive, efficient and uniformly popular with his patients; He could thus maintain exemplary discipline. Emphasizing his success, in 1871, the governor of Missouri appointed him to the additional responsibility of managing the state lunatic asylum, an experience that would prove useful to him later. However, these same talents did not translate to harmony in our family and caused his father much sorrow. In a letter attached to his 1865 will, Grandfather expressed his feelings about his son Samuel to all his children:

"My affection for him is as strong as for either of *you* but I am not ignorant of his waywardness which has caused me many unhappy hours, his repentance now before I leave this earthly tabernacle would fill me with joy & happiness & I should forget all past sorrow...

"he seems to have neglected his family and does not treat them with proper regard & respect, much that is unpleasant has come to my knowledge which I do not wish here to repeat. Another important reason is that he has been en-



Surgeon Melcher in 1861

Martha A. Peanlet, S. H. Melcher

gaged in track speculations that I fear has involved him deeply in debt so that it would go to pay for some old & unwise speculations that I should be unwilling to pay, thereby depriving his family of that which they ought to have."

Father and his siblings did not know this letter existed until their father's will was read in early 1871. While Father only received \$10 as his inheritance, the rest of his "equal share" was instead distributed to Mother and to me for my education. Now, the inheritance he had thought was "rightfully" his, belonged instead to my mother and me,



*My dear children,
Having this day made a disposition of my property by Will it is right that I should make an explanation which I could not well do in that Will, why I did not give Samuel Henry an equal share with you. My affection for him is as strong as for either of you but I am not ignorant of his waywardness which has caused me many unhappy hours.*



Woodbury Melcher's 6 June 1865 letter to his children about why son Samuel did not receive an equal inheritance.

because Grandfather had lost faith in his son (my father). Mother assumed more control over household affairs and quickly built a cadre of friends she would often have over for tea and conversation and gossip. This loss of control and standing in the household left Father with great consternation and depression. He became a less effective "head" of household. Mother and Father were frequently at odds, especially over money matters.

In large part because of his depression, Father's once promising career in hospital administration was short-lived. In 1873, he left us again, this time moving to Chicago to set up a private medical practice on South Kingsbury.²¹ He was always more comfortable if he was the one in control, but, then again, Father was never one to stay in one place very long. Unfortunately, he continued to slowly lose his eyesight from complications due to a Rebel shell that exploded over his head during the defense of Springfield in 1862. His failing vision limited his ability to diagnose patients, and he could no longer perform surgery. Therefore, his physician income was significantly lower than expected, being only slightly compensated by receiving his first pension check (\$30 per month) in 1874 as a disabled veteran of the Civil War. It had taken a ten-year struggle with the United States Pension Office (Dept. of Interior) to qualify.

Thus, Father changed his medical practice by reinventing the theme from his Dart-

mouth doctoral thesis [*"Tonics – Their Indications and Effects"*] and sought comfort in a medical partnership with Dr. J. S. Cram at his 115 Randolph office and later at 157 Milwaukee.²¹ One of their specialties was "Fluid Lightning,"

which they described in a 65-page booklet published in about 1876. Dr. Cram appears to have been the force behind "Fluid Lightning," a "Chemical Electricity" that was described as "*the cheapest medicine in existence*," an "*instant cure*" and the "*unsurpassed remedy for all pain*" such as crick in the back, toothache, diphtheria, headache, bronchitis, asthma and croup.

Father had researched these curative effects at Dartmouth, so it seemed natural for him to partner with Dr. Cram. However, by 1879, Cram had left the partnership and Father welcomed a Dr. Brydon, a new partner, to the Milwaukee Avenue address. But that partnership didn't last either. The next year, he was practicing alone, and in 1881 he formed S. H. Melcher & Co. which dealt in "drugs."

Medicated Inhalation.

After twenty years experience in this method I am satisfied it is the only reasonable treatment

For Diseases of the Lungs.

By Inhalation, the

REMEDIES PROPERLY PREPARED FOR EACH CASE

Are introduced directly to the diseased lung, and that dreaded disease,

Consumption, CAN BE CURED.

It is better in most cases to make a personal examination in every case of Consumption, Bronchitis or kindred diseases But they can be successfully treated at a distance by letter and an Inhaler of our own manufacture, with suitable remedies to inhale, sent by express.

Consultation and Examination 10 to 12 a.m., 2 to 4 p.m.

Address letters for information to

S. H. MELCHER, M. D.

115 East Randolph St., Chicago, Ills.



Fluid Lightning.

The ONLY instant and infallible cure for

Neuralgia, Rheumatism, Tic-Douloureux,

**Crick in Neck, Toothache, Headache,
Crick in Side, Earache, Bronchitis.
Crick in Back, Diphtheria, Asthma,
Lame Back, Felons, Croup,**

And all aches and pains having their origin in a derangement of the nervous system. It is the only SURE THING, and every bottle is WARRANTED to do all we claim for it or the MONEY REFUNDED.

Is the only Remedy that does produce Electric Action.

If your druggist does not keep it, we will send it by mail, on receipt of price,

ONE DOLLAR PER BOTTLE.

GRAM & MELCHER, - CHICAGO, ILL.

SOLD BY ALL FIRST-CLASS DRUGGISTS.

²¹ Chicago city directories and newspaper advertisements.

My father never came back to St. Louis, but in 1876 he wrote Mother to request that she leave St. Louis and come to Chicago to live with him again. When Mother and I passed through Chicago on the train in 1876, I reminded her that Father had asked her to come to be with him. She flatly refused and said, "I will never live with him again."

Father's eyesight continued to get worse. When he applied for a pension increase in 1878, he stated that he had "almost total loss of sight, rendering the constant attendance of an assistant necessary." In an affidavit, an acquaintance, E. S. Sawyer, swore under oath that Father "cannot go from place to place after sunset unless he has someone constantly with him -- and even in the daylight, it is unsafe for him to go alone as he is unable to distinguish steps, obstructions, holes, curbstones."

Father needed household help which is probably the real reason why he asked Mother to come and live with him. I don't think it was love. However, having learned of Mother's defiant stand, Father instead filed suit against Mother for divorce on September 1, 1879 in the Cook County (Illinois) Circuit Court. His grounds were that she "willfully deserted and absented herself from [him], without any reasonable cause," in spite of the fact that he had "always conducted himself toward his said wife as a true kind and indulgent husband, and provided for her support according to the best of his means."²²

At the time of the suit, Mother was living in New Hampshire and could not answer the Court's summons until June 8th of 1880 on her train ride back to St. Louis. At that time, Mother essentially agreed to the claims that she had not come to Chicago

with Father and refused to live with him again, but took "exception to the manifold errors" in Father's claims.

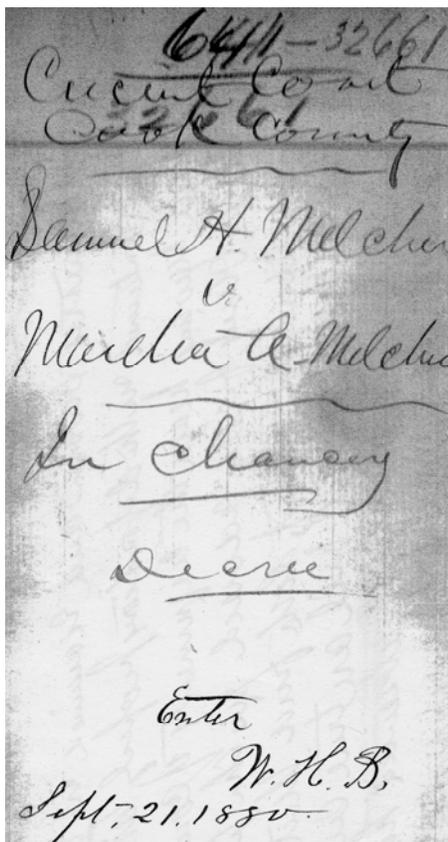
Nonetheless, the judge ruled that the marriage be dissolved and Mother "shall have no dower, right, claim, or interest whatever in [Father's] property or estate, real or personal." Since Father had difficulty managing money, this restriction didn't seem to be a substantial concern. Mother was then living in Laconia and being somewhat supported by my father's younger brother, Woodbury, the town's mayor.

However, it seemed wrong that Father won on grounds of desertion. He was the one who deserted her.

Back in 1876, I was 19 and enrolled in an engineering program at Washington College in St. Louis. I was living with Mother at the family's Clark Avenue home.²³ The next year we moved to Mrs. People's boarding house on South 14th street.

In 1879, Mother wrote me from Laconia and suggested that "it would be very pleasant for you to have a room at Prof. Smiths and perhaps some advantage to you also."²⁴ I looked into the possibility and did indeed take room and board at the home of Charles A. Smith, my former engineering professor, and his wife. It changed my life.

There, I met Anna Sophia Binney, Mrs. Smith's younger sister from Amesbury, Massachusetts, who was an art teacher in St. Louis. Annie and I fell head over heels for each other. It was definite love at first sight. At the Smith house we had a safe opportunity to enjoy each other's company and get to know each other better while we lived together in the same house.



²² Samuel H. Melcher vs. Martha A. Melcher divorce case: filed 1 Sep 1879, granted 1880 for reason of desertion [Cook Co (IL) Circuit Court, case #32661]

²³ St. Louis city directories.

²⁴ Letter, Martha A. Melcher (in Laconia NH) to "Charlie" 12 Oct 1879.

		Father's Sojourns						
40	8	9	Smith Charles A	W	M	33	1	Prof. Civil Engineering
			— Emily B	W	F	31	1	Keeping house
			— Gertrude	W	F	7	1	attending school
			— William B	W	M	6	1	attending school
			— Emily H	W	F	4	1	at home
			Binney William	W	M	57	1	Lawyer
			— Anna J	W	F	23	1	drawing teacher
			Melcher Charles	W	M	23	1	Mechanical Engineer
			Schmitt Helena	W	F	20	1	domestic servant
			Melcher Martha	W	F	47	1	boarding

Charles A. Smith household in 1880 census at 415 High St in St. Louis, Missouri on Nov 8th



Anna Sophia Binney & Charles Woodbury Melcher, 1879

In October, 1880, I wrote Mother, “Annie and I are engaged. I hope you won’t feel bad about it for I shall love you just the same. We are not to be married for two years or so until I get well started in my business ... Annie sends her love and hopes you will give us your blessing.” She replied on the 17th, “Yes ... and may the love that you and Annie now feel for each other ripen into that pure holy love and attachment that will abide with you through life.” She grew to love Annie as her own daughter; and when Mother visited in November, she also boarded with the Smiths and got along famously with Annie.

On Thursday evening, September 29, 1881 at the Smith house.²⁵ Annie’s father, Amesbury attorney William Binney, Esq., proudly walked Annie down the aisle. I was somewhat disappointed that neither my father nor mother could

²⁵ letter Emily (Melcher) Graves to Thomas P. Doherty August 5th 1875 [they couldn’t wait the original two years!]

attend. Father simply declined, but Mother could not be there because she was then a patient at the Boston Homeopathic Hospital (since Dec. 12th 1880) due to an injured knee which would not bear much weight, an injured arm and “a nervous condition.”²⁶ Annie and I visited her in June before our wedding, but Mother was not strong enough for the train trip to St. Louis. She had made many friends at the hospital and several others visited her throughout each week for the ten months she needed to recover. We were pleased to learn that Mother was doing well and was far from lonely. She had written our wedding day in her diary and sent a box, and we sent her some wedding cake. We exchanged many letters.

Nine months after our wedding, we were blessed with a daughter whom we named Alice Frances.²⁷ Ah, what joy. Now feeling much better, Mother returned to St. Louis to live with Annie and me and help us care for young Alice and then our first son, Austin, in 1884. It was wonderful to have her there.

After the divorce, Mother lived with us and continued her writing with such philosophical pieces as in the excerpt from “True Greatness” below:

“Some would toil night and day for the sake of becoming popular and great. ... Some distinguish themselves by winning some glorious battle which forever immortalizes their names. Others as Poets present to the people a Poem, which ... is eagerly received as the work of a noble mind. ... The Mechanic has presented [us] with the numerous useful machines, by ... which a great mass of people are employed. ... Some indeed have toiled for

²⁶ Martha A. Melcher 1881 diary (entries 1 Jan to 11 Oct)

²⁷ Grandmother of author Thomas P. Doherty

wealth; but there are exceptions. Has it been the nobleness of the mind, the magnanimous spirit, the generosity of a noble heart, and the elevation of the soul, or have they labored to be applauded and renowned for the distinction and the respectability they had gained? I think the majority have sought the latter and have wished only to be looked up to by those whom they thought to be their inferiors. ... If this is what they sought they have not acquired true greatness. ... True Greatness does not consist in obtaining from public opinion honour and fame. ... True Greatness consists in elevating the intellectual and moral powers, and storing the mind with that useful and better knowledge which will here after crown us with glory of an immortal life.



Martha A. Ranlet.

M. A. Ranlet"

Is the battle winner Father and the mechanic me?

On May 15th 1885, while holding Alice in her lap, Mother had a fatal stroke.²⁵ We were devastated. She was only 55 years old.

to be continued in Part 3: *Dakota Blues*.