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My Life in Boone County  
More than Sixty-Three Years

By

Mabel G. Sayre

Undated, c. 1951

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MORE THAN SIXTY-THREE YEARS

Mabel G. Sayre

"I must apologize for the frequency of the first person, singular, I, in this paper; but if it is my story, I don't see how else I could write it.

"My family moved to Florence in June, 1888, when I was 16 years old. It was not the Florence of today for you had to stretch your counting to get 250 people.

"But this was not my introduction to Boone County, for a sister of mine, Caroline Johnson, had married Ephriam K. Tanner who owned a farm on the Burlington Pike a little more than a mile from Florence. Even before I was old enough to go to school in Cincinnati, where I was born, I frequently made long visits to the farm. After I started to school, the very day it closed in June my sister was there to get me, and she kept me till the day before school opened in September. Consequently, all the happy memories of my childhood are connected with Boone County.

"When we first moved here we lived in the house now owned by Mr. A. M. Yealey and stayed there till the Catholics bought it for their parsonage. The Catholic church was then located where the Florence Dry Cleaning Establishment now is, at the corner of Shelby and Center streets. We then moved to an old brick house on Shelby street which stood where Mr. Tom McHenry's house now stands.

"Our family consisted of my father, mother, sister Sallie, and a six year nephew, Ed. Arrison. We were all Methodists and moved our membership from Cincinnati to the Florence Methodist Church which was then on Banklick street where Floyd Chipman's house now stands.

"We had Sunday school in the in the afternoon and frequently stayed after Sunday school to sing. I had a rather high, strong soprano voice which carried well and which seemed to charm a young man named Frank Sayre who also attended the Methodist Church.

"It developed that his mother and my mother went to the same school in Madison, Indiana, when they were girls and had not seen one another for forty-one years.



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"Frank and I soon became very good friends, which bond endured till his death in 1928. We were married in July, 1891, and he graduated from the Miami Medical College in Cincinnati in March 1893. I lived with his parents. But I have skipped a part of my experience.

"My sister and I worked in Cincinnati; she at the Methodist Book Concern, and I as a stenographer for Professor John L. Shearer who operated a Lecture Bureau. We caught the early Commuter train which left Erlanger at 5:50 a.m., and we rode from Florence to Erlanger at that time in the winter morning in a bus which someone had aptly named Conrad's Summer Kitchen. Mr. Jesse Corwine was the other regular passenger and we tried to forget how cold it was by singing all the way. As there was never any active opposition from the people living along the way, the music was a regular habit.

"After Frank became Dr. Sayre he began looking about for a location in which to practice. Dr. Dick Gordon was leaving Hebron so we concluded that was a good place to locate and so it turned out, for the people were so lovely to us and took such good care of us, that going to Hebron still means going home, to me. We moved on May second, 1893. The road from Limaburg to Hebron was impassably muddy, so we went by way of Burlington, Idlewild, and up to Hebron.

"We had rented a three room cottage and all our furniture was hauled on a hay-wagon. I was twenty-one years old and Frank was twenty-nine and life began to really unfold for us. The practice was hard (mud roads in all directions) and money mighty scarce; but, at that time, a dollar bought much more than it now does and we did not actually suffer.

"About three weeks after he quit practice Doctor Gordon went to Chicago to the World's Fair. He was killed in a street car accident and brought back to Hebron for burial. On September 14th, 1893, our son Frank was born and everybody seemed interested in Doctor's baby.

"My first introduction to surgery occurred in January, 1894, when Mr. Charles Castinetta, of Constance, got his hand caught in the chains of a corn shredder and the hand was so badly mangled that three fingers had to be amputated. The operation was done in our office. Dr. Frank Jackson, a Veterinarian, was living in Hebron and was pressed into service to help. He rode horse-back over here to Florence (we had no telephones then) and brought Dr. Will Corey back with him and the operation began.



"The front room of our house was the office, the middle room our bedroom and the back room the kitchen. About 10:30 or 11:00 o'clock Dr. Sayre came into the bedroom and announced, 'Mabel, you will have to come in and help. We need someone to thread needles and it is too late at night to go out for anyone,' so Mabel went in. They had laid the amputated fingers on my marble topped table and I had to reach across them to get the surgical needles. It was not a pleasant job, but I lived through it.

"The winter practice was very hard. As I have said, there were no pikes except the one from Constance to Petersburg which went through town, and much of the time the mud roads were so bad you could not use a buggy, so the Doctor went horseback. We had a great big bay mare named Fannie and she was a good riding horse. I have known Dr. Sayre to start out about 9 a.m. with the horse-blanket over the saddle and then wrapped around him and travel that way all day from patient to patient and sometimes it would be eight o'clock at night before he got in for his supper.

"He had one patient at Taylorsport, a young man who had measles, then pneumonia, then uraemic poisoning. Doctor went down there one Saturday at noon and did not come back till the next Tuesday night. He stood over that boy for forty-eight hours and had the satisfaction of seeing the uraemic coma let go and the boy get well. When he rode up to the house on Tuesday night he called out, 'Does the widow Sayre live here?' One time in winter the temperature registered twenty-two below zero and once on the eleventh day of November it was eighty-eight in the shade.

"About two years after we went to Hebron I moved my Church letter to the Lutheran Church there and my associations with that congregation were of the happiest. We lived in Hebron twenty-four years; four years in the first little house, then moved next door into a five-room house where we stayed eleven years, and then across the street into a six-room house where we lived for nine years. We joined the Grange at Bullittsville and, later, one was organized in Hebron and I was its Secretary. I was also Secretary of the County Grange and, in 1905 was made Secretary of the State Grange, which office I held for fifteen years. In 1905 Dr. Sayre's father, Dr. A. Sayre, died at his home in Florence and his mother lived on there alone.

"In December of 1916 the Hossman's, who owned the house where we were living wanted it for themselves, so we came back to Florence to take care of Ma Sayre, as I always called her. It turned out we had done wisely for in August of 1917 she sus-



tained a hip injury and had to be cared for until her death in October of 1925. But we still practiced medicine.

"Dr. Sayre had been a sufferer from hay fever since he was four years old and, in his later years, went to Cheboygan, Michigan, to escape it. In 1926 and 1927 I went with him. We would go August first and stay till November first. We rented a five-room furnished house for the extravagant price of twenty-five dollars per month and lived there like we did at home. Dr. Sayre made many friends and, as he loved to fish and the fishing was good there, he was quite happy and contented. But in 1928 he had three bad sick spells; one in May, one in August, and one in November from which he did not recover.

"I felt that my life work was ended; but my son, Frank, had me move to Turtle Creek, Pennsylvania, about fourteen miles southeast of Pittsburgh, in January, 1929, to make a home for him. He had been working for the Pennsylvania Railroad for six years; but in October of 1929 the railroad made some changes that Frank felt would imperil his job, so we packed up and moved back to Kentucky. Our house had been rented for a Tourist Home so we rented an apartment on Monroe street in Newport and lived there till March, 1930, when we came back home.

"In February 1938, I was appointed Town Clerk and held that office for ten years. Both Councils with whom I served were so very good to me and it was only on account of my advancing years and the increasing work which compelled me to relinquish my office into Mr. William Fitzgerald's more capable hands. The Council gave me a wonderful send-off with a banquet at Acacia Inn and the gift of a Philco radio. Altogether, my public life in Boone County has been active and full.

"In looking this over I find that I have failed to mention my affiliation with the Red Cross, the Lloyd Society, and the Homemakers. The Red Cross Chapter was organized by Reverend Edgar Riley in 1917, when our boys were going into the army for World War I. The headquarters were in Burlington with Mrs. Bernard Gaines, President, and Mrs. Garnett Tolin, Secretary. We had fourteen auxiliaries over the county, eleven of which were making the gauze work. I, as <sup>the</sup> doctor's wife, was chosen chairman of the Florence group and I had a most faithful band of workers. When peace came we found we had nearly three thousand dollars in our treasury, so Miss Eunice Willis was hired as Red Cross Nurse and she certainly rendered excellent service.

"In 1936 I joined the Homemakers and about the same time I joined the Lloyd Society. In fact, I seem to have been a chronic joiner.

"I still have not told you how I got my reputation of being a good doctor. Dr. Sayre practiced in Boone County for more than thirty-five years and I am safe in saying that during the last twenty-five of them I did my full share of the office practice. From the beginning, Dr. Sayre talked over his cases with me, explaining what he did for certain sets of symptoms and what results he hoped to get. Consequently, when similar symptoms showed up, I knew what he would have done for them. So, if he were busy or away from home, I took over and gave what I knew he would have given. I helped in all the surgical work and, where the invitation was given, I went with him to his obstetrical cases. Many of the babies in the Hebron and Florence neighborhoods are my babies, too, and many of them still call me Aunt Mabel. So you see, I was merely the echo of the good doctor, for I only knew what he had taught me."