CHAPTER 7

Old Homes



This is the former B. H. McHenry home, owned by Roy V. Snyder, Jr., in 1952, during the Moweaqua Centennial. It is the oldest house still being used in Moweaqua.

Our homes, no matter how new or old, have a special meaning to each of us. The following story written by D. F. Russell, perhaps expresses the feelings many of us share.

A Love Story

The characters: The man, C. F. R. The woman, D. F. R. and The Mistress of a hill.

Part I

C. F. R. falls in love with The Mistress

Part II

D. F. R. buys a new dress for The Mistress

Part III

Orchids to Elizabeth

by

D. F. Russell Breeze Hill Farm and Gardens Moweaqua, Illinois, R. 1

A Love Story

PART I

C.F.R. FALLS IN LOVE WITH THE MISTRESS

C. F. R. first met the Mistress of the hill many years ago. When a boy he spent part of the summer vacations with his Aunt Net Adams, who lived two miles south of the hill and often went up to the hill to visit his Uncle Charley Adams. Time marched on. . .C.F.R. grew up and had long ago forgotten about the hill. Being the kindest of men, he came down often to see his Aunt Net to do for her what he could, yet he never re-visited the hill after those childhood days.

AND THEN. . .

One day on his way to see Aunt Net, he turned off onto a different country road and suddenly realized this was the road by the hill he had visited so long ago. As he neared the entrance, he thought, "Why not drive up to the old hill?"

In the yard sat the owner, a descendent of Elizabeth and Ellington Adams, who had built the house in 1838. After greetings were exchanged, he told C. F. R. he was giving up the old home place, today was his very last day on the hill. He was sad to think of the old house being abandoned and in time probably torn down. Without a moments hesitation C. F. R. said, "I'll buy it from you." Later he recalled looking out over the countryside and thinking what a beautiful view from the hill. He hadn't the faintest idea what could or should be done with the old house, but he had the vision and knew it could be done. Fate or destiny had brought C. F. R. to the hill that day.

AND THEN HE TOOK D. F. R. TO SEE THE OLD HOUSE ON THE HILL.

It was a lovely Sunday afternoon, the lilacs were in full bloom. When he turned up the lane to the hill, she became alarmed and asked where he was going. There was no answer. As he stopped the car near the old house, she looked at the desolation around her and urged him, "Let's get out of here." He stepped from the car, smiled at her and then he spoke: "I bought this old house a few days ago, get out and take a look around!" And then he headed for an old barn where he knew the former owner would be waiting for him. How he must have smiled to himself as he closed his ears to the sound of D. F. R. calling, "Come back, don't leave me here alone."

And that, dear reader is the way D. F. R. met the Mistress of the hill.

Fearfully she sat a few moments in the car and then timidly walked toward the house, fighting her way among the weeds. Cautiously she crept across the few remaining boards on the old south porch and stepped into a room. The doors were just hanging by one hinge or no door at all. As she entered, the chickens flew out and rats scampered in every direction. She stood there for a moment looking at grain sacks, tools and other debris. She thought, C. F. R. surely had lost his mind to buy this house!

She saw another door, lifted the bar, swung open the heavy solid door and found herself in a kitchen. She stood there looking at a table, a chair, and an old copper-clad cookstove. Despite a bucket of water, the remains of someone's lunch on the table and heat in the cookstove, it did not occur to her that anyone could be living here and that she was trespassing.

She walked through the huge kitchen and stepped into another room. A bed, a chair and an old dresser, then through a small hall into another empty room, then back through the kitchen she saw the old back stairway. Cautiously she stepped up, fearing they would fall through with her. Here she found another empty room, except for the grain sacks, then into another empty room. There was a step up to a small landing leading to the front stairway. She raced down those steps thinking she could not escape from that house soon enough. She dashed out the front door, landed on a small porch with a few boards still intact and went down between the boards amid chickens taking their afternoon siesta. With screams they flew out, she got up, dusted the dirt and feathers out of her hair and clothes, and was ready to scream for C. F. R.

AND THEN SHE SAW IT. . .

An old lilac bush, brought from Kentucky by The Mistress in a covered wagon. It was loaded with blooms and oh how D. F. R. loved the lilacs. She stepped to it, circled the old bush, and buried her face in the fragrance of each bloom. The last step brought her to the spot facing the old house. She looked up into the eyes of The Mistress and heard her speak to her. "My roots are buried deep and strong here. I defy you to think I haven't the strength and courage to live on for many years. With love and care, I can be beautiful again and give love and shelter."

D. F. R. knew it was not necessary to answer The Mistress in words, she knew she had heard her speak. And The Mistress smiled down as she saw her rush back into the house. This time she leaped over that almost boardless south porch, into the room, again full of chickens. She chased them out crying, "How dare you come into this house!" She ran up the old back stairs, through those two empty rooms, toward the front stairway. She paused a moment looking into two more rooms. Stepping into the south one, she stepped to a window and found herself looking down into the heart of the old lilac bush. She stood a moment drinking in its beauty, then down the front steps, this time safely leaping over the tiny porch and turned to make a dash for C. F. R. By now he felt D. F. R. had surely fallen in love with The Mistress as he had and was coming to find her. At the North East corner of the old house she saw him. They flew into each others arms, no word need be spoken, he knew.

They set about restoring The Mistress of the Hill, but only as one might a summer cabin. They had every intention of going back to the city for the winter. The weeks went by and fall came. Then as surely as Nature still survives, the winter months came. Each day they thought they would have to leave tomorrow. But The Mistress and Nature had other plans, it was a very mild winter, they thought surely the calendar must be wrong. They kept warm with a fire roaring in the huge fireplace and the copper clad cookstove. Then as always the Spring came back, and they knew they could never leave The Mistress of the Hill.

Part II

D. F. R. BUYS A NEW DRESS FOR THE MISTRESS.

It was C. F. R. who would say, "You know Honey, it be nice some day to do this or that." And D. F. R. would set about putting his ideas into action. All the credit for the gardens is given to him. At our door hangs this sign: "This garden was inspired by the kindest man I know, my husband, C. F. Russell."

The old fireplace had been rebuilt in our first days here, the outside doors to the room rehung, the chickens and grain sacks pitched out, the rat holes stopped up and the room made as shiny as possible for a room that had been so sadly neglected. But in that first summer here we had not furnished it, and kept the door into the kitchen closed. Then late fall, and C. F. R. said: "I'm going to have a big fire tonight." So we moved in an old glider from the yard, put on our heavy coats and snuggled up together as we sat in front of the open fire. Our backs may not have been warm but our hearts certainly were.

All the dreams and plans for The Mistress, every step was done to surprise C. F. R. How he loved the open fire and the fireplace room as we called it was my first surprise for him.

The room was cleaned as never before. We coaxed a little more dirt from between the worn floor boards and set about to measure for this and that. The drapes were made, the floor covering and the wall paper ordered and all secretly delivered to Aunt Net's home with the promise from Leon Adams to bring them at a moments notice.

Sunday morning, C. F. R. left for his golf game. A quick phone call to Leon, "Leon, he's gone, bring up the things quick." A call to the Mitchell's who were standing by to hang the paper. Within moments all the helpers were here. As the Mitchells hung the paper on one wall someone stepped up to hang the drapes at that window. And when the paper was up, the floor was laid.

At 2:00 I heard his car. From my secret place I heard his step on the south porch. It was a very hot day and from his sigh of relief to be home I knew he was weary and ready for a nap. He walked right by the window of that room, entered the kitchen and called, "Freda Ann." And then he noticed



the kitchen door to that room was standing open. His first nap within its arms, and oh, how he loved that room.

Another room planned for C. F. R. Again the workers were standing by, the drapes, furnishings etc. were ready. Evening and another surprise for C. F. R. And thus it went until D. F. R. had sailed through all eight rooms and the three porches.

Even the landscaping was done to surprise C. F. R. The plans were drawn up, shrubs ordered, date for delivery set, and the nurseryman parked his truck a mile west, then moved in when the signal was given, "All is clear, C. F. R. has gone."

C. F. R. fell in love with The Mistress of the Hill that first day so long ago and D. F. R. fell in love with her while looking up into her eyes, yet neither of us could have dreamed how great our love would grow to be. In the evening when we returned to the hill from the days work in the city, no matter how weary, the moment we entered our gate and saw our beloved old house, we were refreshed anew, the weariness washed away. C. F. R. always said she had given him ten extra years of life.

The years passed on, C. F. R. was sixty, then seventy and in time the first heart attack. A few more years and then... The tap on the shoulder came to C. F. R.

"Fades the light. . .And afar. . .Cometh day. . .Cometh night. . .And a star. . . Leadeth all . . . Speedeth all. . . To their rest."*

PART III

ORCHIDS TO ELIZABETH

The guests had just departed and I sank down in a chair to rest a moment and to reflect on the happiness of the day. Across the room my eyes rested on our first guest register. I must look to be sure all my guests had signed it. Four names, then my eyes stayed on the fifth one, for this friend who had so enjoyed her day in the old house had written, "Orchids to Eliza beth."

How nice I thought, to pay such a nice compliment to Elizabeth. I had heard a great deal about her, and my guests were always eager to hear about her, but in those early days I hadn't felt I was living in her house.

And then one day I thought, "Some day I will write a book about the old house on the hill." But when the daydream to write that book first crept into my mind I thought, "But what could be the title." Then "Orchids to Elizabeth" flashed back into my mind. The cover would be white, and a modern day woman would be presenting an orchid to a pioneer woman. It would be dedicated "To Elizabeth who built a house on a hill and through it brought great happiness to C. F. R. and D. F. R."

Elizabeth became an unseen guest, yet it seemed she sat near by listening. I tell her. . .

I can feel her peace in knowing how well she built her house, that it still stands after some 140 years. That it no longer stands with head bowed while making every effort to pull her dress down to hide her worn shoes. Once more her head is high, that within its walls there is much happiness, laughter, joy, friends and especially children. That it gives peace, warmth and comfort to all who enter here. How we enjoyed telling our friends how she came to this spot in a covered wagon, planted her lilac root and how they built their house from trees cut on the land. And lovingly call to their attention the hand hewn walnut doors, that one wall remains of the original walnut weather boarding. They marvel at the original wavy glass in the windows and amazed that the original hand hewn lathing which Elizabeth and Ellington had mixed by hand with lime and hair from their cattle, is still on the walls. And how thrilled we were after removing many coats of paint from the old original floors to find they were still beautiful.

Then I take my friends to the highest point of the hill to see the family cemetery, they look for the stones of your ten children, many of the stones are so weather worn they can hardly be read. I say to my guests, "Come, let me show you the stone for Elizabeth and Ellington who built this house." It stands tall and straight and the words are as plain as the day they were carved in the stone. That too, I feel is a part of the plan for me, another gift.

I tell Elizabeth her old house long ago ceased being just a house, instead she is a person. She is my friend, my companion, and my sanctuary. And then I walk up to the highest point on the hill, and lay an orchid at her feet.

OLDEST HOUSE IN MOWEAQUA

All records indicate the B. H. McHenry House at 130 North Main Street as the oldest house still standing in Moweaqua. A newspaper account in 1889 indicated a portion of the McHenry house, the kitchen, was built prior to 1852. In 1861 the house underwent extensive remodeling, the work being done by Robert B. Wilson. The house remained in the McHenry family until 1947 when it was purchased by Roy V. Snyder Jr. At his death the house passed to Erma Gloria Johnson who in turn sold it to Betty and Dwane Brooks in October of 1974. In the recent remodeling the kitchen area of the house, the oldest portion, wooden pegs and square nails were used. The rough cut timbers, well over 124 years old, were found to be in excellent condition.

The house today downstairs consists of a spacious living room, two bedrooms, music room, kitchen and dining area, walk-in pantry, den and bathroom. The wainscoting and a brass gas chandelier in the music room were in the original house. The upstairs has two bedrooms and a bath. The original plank doors still serve their purpose at the upstairs rooms.

ONE OF THE FIRST BRICK HOMES BUILT IN MOWEAQUA AREA.

One of the first houses built in the Moweaqua area is owned by Mrs. A. C. Wright. It is located one half mile northwest of Moweaqua, and was for many years the only brick house in the locality. This house was built over a hundred years ago by Smith & McCarthy, who owned the land. They made the bricks from clay dug on the farm. Being perfectionists, it took them eight years to get enough acceptable bricks. The walls of the house are sixteen inches thick, extending to the bottom of the two room basement. The original woodwork remains. Although the roof once burned, the chimney struck by lightening which knocked off the ceiling plaster, and a tornado splintered trees and outbuildings nearby, the house still stands.

^{*}Words to the plaintive notes of "Taps."

THE OLD HOMESTEAD

Mr. and Mrs. Michael Schneider founders of the town of Moweaqua, built "The Old Homestead" one quarter mile west of Moweaqua in 1854.

The house was a square, two-story house with a cupola on top. A large fireplace at the east end of the living room accomodated logs three feet long. There was a "summer kitchen" at the back of the house connected by a porch.

When the Schneiders retired, their daughter Margaret and her husband, Tom Candy Ponting bought the place. The



The Old Homestead

cattle sales in the great round barn were attended by people from all over the United States.

The next owners were Mr. and Mrs. J. Wheeler Adams. Mrs. Adams being the Ponting's daughter. Before moving in they did extensive remodeling and added the two-story colonial pillars and several porches. The house has beautiful chestnut woodwork, leaded glass windows and spacious rooms.

Subsequent residents have preserved much of the original beauty but the cupola and a few other features have been changed. Although The Old Homestead is 122 years old at this Bicentennial year it is still sound and handsome. The house now is owned by Duane Andreas of Archer Daniels Midland; Decatur.

CAMPBELL HOUSE

The A. C. Campbell residence at 130 West Madison Street was among the first built in Moweaqua. The stair rail and door frames were made from the walnut trees cut from the Campbell's land. The house remained in the Campbell family until the death of Polly Jolly in the 1950's. Glen Snyder purchased the house and made it into an apartment house. Several years ago the house was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Windel.

SNYDER HOUSE — 1872

The Valentine Snyder residence at 200 West Main Street was built in 1872. This home remained in the Snyder family until 1928 when it was purchased by Harvey Whitsett. Later it became the home of Mayor Chalk Howard and family. The lovely old structure is vacant at the present time.

DAY HOUSE — 1872

The H. F. Day residence at 125 North Macon Street was completed in 1872 after two years of labor. The beautiful old home remained in the Day family until the death of Miss Edna Day in 1965. Since that time the home has changed hands several times, the present owners being Mr. and Mrs. Vennard Dowd and family. The familiar old brick summer kitchen was recently torn down.

FRAZEE HOUSE - 1886

The Oscar Frazee residence at 430 North Putnam Street was built in 1886. The house has remained in the Frazee family since that time, now being the home of Mrs. Mabel Frazee Snyder. Other than the addition of modern conveniences the house remains much as it did in 1886.

PRESCOTT HOUSE — 1891

The Ezekial Prescott residence at the southwest corner of Wall and Macon Streets was built in 1891. The house remained in the Prescott family until 1920 when it was sold to C. Frank Johnson. Through the years the Johnson family restored much of the old home and it remains much as it did in 1891.

COULTER HOUSE — 1892

The Coulter House at 307 East Elm Street was built for Miss Rebecca Coulter in 1892 by Robert M. Stine, carpenter. The house has remained in the family since then, successive owners being, Mrs. Samuel Coulter, Mrs. Matilda Coulter Stine, Roy G. Stine, Mrs. Essie Armstrong Stine and Jean Stine Hodge.

CORRINGTON HOUSE — 1894

W. E. Corrington built the residence at 249 West Main Street in 1894. The entire structure is made of brick, made at the Corrington brick yard which was west of Moweaqua. All the walls in the house are brick, inside and out. The interior walls are solid brick, some are 15 inches thick. The house has changed hands several times but has been in the Coffman family since 1940. It is now the residence of Mrs. Verne (Josephine) Coffman.

MOWEAOUA NEWS NUMBER 41

VOLUME 70 CLAUDE V. SNYDER, Editor

MOWEAQUA, ILLINOIS, WEDNESDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 8, 1952 Devoted to the Best Interests of a live Town, and Country, and an Enterprising People.

15,000 View Centennial Parade, Saturday

25.000 Attend Thursday Evening's Activities; 4,000 See

Mrs. R. Herman

Hostess To Club The American Home Club met with Mrs. Ronald Herman, Wed-nesday, Oct. 1. All members came dressed in their Centennial cos-

Pageant, "Mirror Of Moweagua" Saturday Afternoon



Many were busy Friday morn-ng putting the finishing touches o their floats for Saturday's pa-ade. In the aftermoon from 2 to 3 ing rade acts Here Rufe Davis was the

ing to have these pictures for their souvenir scrap books. Prizes in the parade went to: Local organizations: 1st, Junior Woman's Club. Their float was the bride and groom of 1852 and the bride and groom of 1952. On the center of the float was an archway of red roses and a huge meddime cake

wedding cake. The Flat Branch Home Bureau float was second. 3rd place went to Moweaqua Home Bureau night Unit and Penn Home Bureau was derful array 4th

4th. In the business floats, Gregory's was first. This was an old fash-ioned huckster wagon, equipped with hardware utenslis and also a crate of eggs The sign read 14c a doz cash; 16c a doz, in trade. This was pulled by horses with Floyd Jacobs as the driver. His outfit was in keeping with the century old costumes. 2nd place went to Fleetwood Oul Co., 3rd to Bohlen Bros., and 4th to Cities Service.

Hats Off To Moweaqua!

Moweaqua: The Centennial was a marve-lous celebration. The chairmen and their helpers should be con-gratulated. Firstly, we remember how the Moweaqua News started the agitation for a celebration and all through kept up every-bodys interest by reporting the progress made each week. So cheers for Elsie and Claude!! And how the former natives gathered from many states! We mention some of them—Arthur

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It was wonderful parade and a wonderful Pagesan." Mirror of Moweaqua' written and presented by Howard Paul of Springfield. Mrs. Wayne Lowe, Sr., was Pag-eant chairman and Mrs. H. B. Ayars and Msr. Paul Gorman as-sisted ably.

sisted ably. And where did all the horses come from in the fine parade, and the long tailed coats and high hats, and such luxurious and hor-rible whiskers, an old dresses and high shoes and bonnets? A won-

derful array. We missed our good Mayor with his happy personality and were pleased when Dr. Sparling spoke of his fine service for Moweaqua through twenty years. He has sacrificed his time and strength and our reviews on up for his and our prayers go up for his complete recovery from his illness. This is written by an old timer --Aileen Day.

MARY AND MARTHA

Century old costumes. Znd place went to Fleetwood Oli Co., Snd to Bohlen Bros., and 4th to Cities Service. In the individual class: 1st Went to Dick Ater and partner, both on horseback. Znd was The King's old auto. 3rd was Dr. K L Pistorius and 4th The Baird's aress and More, Mrs. Sylvia King's old auto. 3rd was Dr. K L Pistorius and 4th The Baird's aress and More, Mrs. Sylvia Setting a horse and buggy with a the white stork carrying a baby hung lakes in front of it and it brought many s a cries from the crowd: the "Hurry up, Doc! Better get a RUFE DAVIS old auto. Dr. Pistorius was drv. Mrs. Pearl Manley. Roll call-His "Hill Billy" music and the white stork carrying a baby hung while singing and talking, was a cries from the crowd: great thrill to the large crowd. He "Hurry up. Doci Better get a fine entertainer and gave a move on, Doci" wonderful performance. Along The Queen of the Centennial were given a big applause from (Continued on Page 8)



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