

Woman in the Wilderness



A story of Margaret Faulkner Cooley
1818 - 1890



By Myra Snow, granddaughter
1882 - 1969

WOMAN IN THE WILDERNESS

by

Myra L. Snow

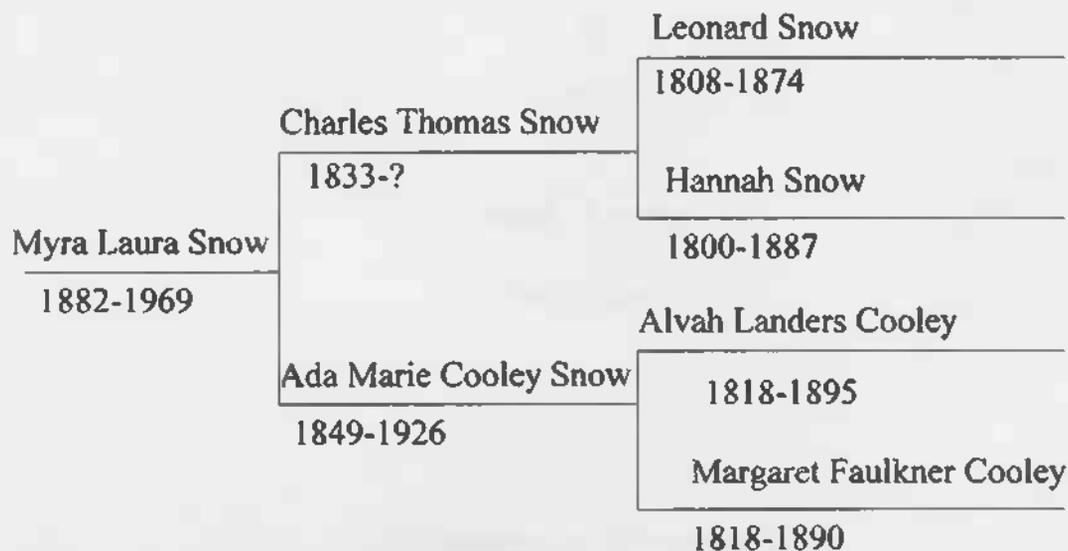
1882-1969

In memory of my grandmother,
who lived the stories, and
of my mother, who told them to me.

To all of Margaret's descendants, with my love.

Myra Snow graduated from the Elk River high school class of 1899, at age 17.

WOMAN IN THE WILDERNESS is a poetic story of pioneer life in Otsego. It was written by Myra Laura Snow, based on family legends passed to her by her mother, Ada Marie Cooley Snow, about her grandmother, Margaret Faulkner Cooley.



Alvah and Margaret Cooley came to Otsego from New York in 1853 with their children Berton, Ellen, and Ada. The first settler in Otsego, John McDonald had come from Maine in July 1852, Less than a year before the Cooley family. Leonard and Hannah Snow arrived in Otsego with their son Charles and other children July 6, 1856.

These families were true pioneers.

The 1860 census shows Charles in the same dwelling as his parents.

In 1870, he is listed in his own dwelling with his wife Ada and children Leon and Nona, age two years and Harry, age one. Myra

was born in 1882 and was the youngest of the family of nine children.

Margaret Faulkner Cooley loved to teach and was the first school teacher in Wright county.

Myra Snow also loved to teach and began

as soon as she graduated from high school - in a one room country

school with all eight grades and forty pupils. She continued her education and earned her BA and Masters degrees. She finished her doctorate thesis, but failing health forced her to discontinue

her studies. She was elected to Phi Beta Kappa.. Myra served as a missionary teacher in China for ten years. While there she wrote

"Woman In The Wilderness". The Japanese occupation of China made

it impossible for her to return after her second furlough. She taught at Wood College, Mississippi before she retired.

Myra died April 28, 1969 at Marysville, Washington.

**EIGHTH GRADE CLASS - OTSEGO DISTRICT 10
(ca. 1895)**



**Back row: Blanch Voigt, Jessie Pippin, Myra Snow, Lizzie Brown, Bessie Davis
Front row: Clarence Montgomery, Laura Davis, Mamie Montgomery, Ellen Hamlet, Ed King.**

In a letter addressed to "Doris", (believed to be Doris Cooley Wise) signed by "Ada", dated August 3, 1975, this statement about "Aunt Myra" is of interest:
"She often said that of all the rich blessings of her life, she valued most her childhood in the lovely countryside of beautiful Minnesota."

MARGARET ELLEN FAULKNER COOLEY

Margaret was born February 9, 1818 in New York. She married Alvah Landers Cooley March 8, 1842. Alvah's family came from England in the 1600's. Alvah and Margaret came to Otsego in 1853 with three children, Berton, Ellen and Ada. Margaret died in Otsego October 4, 1890. Alvah died March 29, 1895.



WOMAN IN THE WILDERNESS

THIS IS THE SONG OF MARGARET'S BIRTHDAY:

"Margaret Faulkner. . . Margaret Ellen Faulkner. . ."
The baby's mother - oh, very softly
Touched the silken head, caressed the tiny fingers.
"My bonnie wee baby, Margaret Ellen."
The baby stirred within the encircling cradle of her mother's arms,
And half the promise of a smile parted her lips
As if she sensed the love that cradled her
More surely than the arms of flesh.
The mother with her baby slept.
Then softly from the corners of the fire-lit room
Came trooping all the little fairy elves
Who visit new-born babies in their beds and bless them.
With hovering wings they bent above the sleeping babe,
And each in turn pronounced her gift.
"She shall be fair", one said
"with gentle eyes, brown eyes, and soft brown hair,
Brown and soft as a thrush's soft brown wing."
"She shall be fleet of foot", a wee elf whispered.
"Slender of limb and fleet of foot,
With hands that flash right quickly at their tasks.
I mark her mine for slender limbs
That love the pulsing joy of movement, the untiring rhythm of life."
"She shall know love", a soft voice spoke.
"She shall have power to love;
And all the height and depth of love shall claim her-
Bitterness and pain, patience and joy and ecstasy -
She shall know love and meet it unafraid."
"She shall be strong of spirit," spoke a voice like running water
Water running deep beneath a hill.
"Strong like the slender birch, the slim deep-rooted birch,
Which bends before the storm, and when the storm has passed
Rears heavenward its beauty and its grace."
The baby stirred as if to wake; but like glancing starlight
A last laughing elf stooped down to whisper;
"My one gift, a merry heart, I need not bestow
For when the baby Margaret was born, a laugh lay in her heart."
Like changing shadows, one by one, the fairy troop dissolved in firelight.
The mother waked to know the deep eternal joys of motherhood;
And baby Margaret stretched her tiny hands to clasp the gifts of life.

And

THIS IS THE SONG OF MARGARET 'S GIRLHOOD:

Who is able to sing the song of girlhood?

Who can see deep into the heart of a maid?

Who dares to pierce the elusive defenses

Which guard the unfolding flower of womanhood?

None! None!

Deep in her heart's core the bud is opening petal by petal;

Softly the winds of life blow through her being;

Warmly the sun of hope illumines the depths of wonder and appeal;

Storms of fear, cruel storms that wash the ugliness of life

Up from the hidden deeps around her.

Beat about the opening flower; tear apart the tender petals;

Gentle rain of sorrow, shadows of loneliness and heartache,

Golden light of awakening faith,

Dawn of an awareness of the all-encompassing divinity of love

Play about the unfolding flower of womanhood

As it opens, slowly - surely-

Hidden away behind the elusive defenses

Which guard the heart of a maid.

Who is able to sing the song of girlhood?

None! None!

Only a few things we know - the outward things -

The less important things.

She had been born of pioneers - and they of pioneers.

Early they had moved into the wilds of western Connecticut,

Into the green-forested Connecticut valley,

When the Connecticut valley was still

A refuge for rebellious non-conformist souls.

Now in the opening decade of the nineteenth century

The pulse of life still beat high and strong on that frontier,

But the span of life was often short.

Margaret was just awakening to a life

Beyond the circle of her father's hearth-fire,

Outside the shelter of her mother's arms,

When father and mother were stricken.

Swift, grim, relentless -

Death stalked through the doorway of her father's house

And left her, a lonely frightened child.

A lonely frightened child,

She found refuge in the home of her mother's brother.

Puritan of the Puritans, his generous heart was kinder far

Than his stern Calvinistic theology;
The God he taught in word and prayer was a God of vengeance,
But the God who ruled his treatment of a little lonely child
Was a God of love; and in a little maid's unfolding mind,
By some blessed alchemy of the spirit, the God of love prevailed.
The laugh that was born in her heart
Came back as the months went by;
Her hungry mind absorbed each crumb of knowledge that was offered
On the scantily provided table of the schools of the day;
She became wise in all the lore of house-wifery;
She grew slim and sweet - never tall of stature - but with a strength
In her girlish beauty which spoke of a disciplined soul;
And then came Alvah .

And

THIS IS THE SONG OF ALVAH:

Mill-wright, carpenter, dreamer of dreams,
A practical mind with mystic gleams;
Stubborn chin and full firm lips;
Full of song to his finger-tips;
Stocky of build, with a massive head;
Dark curling hair, with a hint of red;
Genteel sideburns, rather a pride,
And a flair for beating the countryside
With nifty trousers and proper hats,
Fine ruffled shirts and broad cravats;
Always unorthodox, rebel, bold
To welcome the new and disparage the old;
Jealous, passionate, restless soul,
Life-long his manhood paid its toll
To moods that pierced high heaven's air
Or sounded the depths of black despair.
Girls were girls - he'd a way with them all,
But lightly answered their beck and call
Till gentle Margaret crossed his way;
The stars had met - Fate knew his day.

And

THIS IS THE SONG OF LOVE:

Love, thou art magic, white magic;
Thy charm is potent and illusive and steel strong.
Thou art compounded of star shine
And yearning broken bits of song.
And the fragrance of flowers
Growing in hidden nooks at the world's end.
Thou art anguish and ecstasy,
Thou art the roar of the cataract among the hills;
Thou art the thin sweet notes of a flute
In a dusky dream filled garden;
Thou art discord and harmony
Where discord and harmony blend
In the unheard music of the ordered spheres,
Thou art tempest;
Thou art firelight and friend.
Lovers were plighting their vows when the Garden of Eden was green;
Lovers will plight their vows till the last far world grows cold;
And always the song is new as a rosebud's opening sheen,
New as the amethyst dawn - and always the song is old.
And always the song belongs alone to the hearts that sing;
And always the song belongs to the world that smiles through tears;
For the heart that loves is ever a blindly rapturous thing;
And the world is wise with the wisdom that comes from living and years.
And so, Alvah and Margaret were married and went to live in the
Susquehanna Valley in Western New York.

And

THIS IS THE SONG OF THE SUSQUEHANNA which Margaret's heart sang
ten years later as she stood in the door of her home, looking down the valley.

I love you, Susquehanna!
On your ripples shadows quiver,
Change and flow, dance and shiver,
As life's ecstasy and smart
Ebb and flow within my heart.
You are very part of me
Since I came, blithely free,
Just a girl - Alvah's bride
To my home by your side.
Rainbow mist, sunset gold.
Sapphire ice, midnight cold-
All have made my being quiver
In response to you, O River.
Short time ago your wooded hills
Knew no white man's mart or mills;
Algonquins met in deadly fray
Where now my little children play.
Is there ever a frontier?
Something .changing - never here -
Dim, elusive, fair, and far
Calls us out from where we are.
It is calling, Susquehanna!
Alvah hears it, clear and high,
Calling from the sunset sky;
Hears it calling in the night,
An elf call, thin and silver bright;
And his soul cries out to go
While I hear you murmuring low,
See the friendly fields and faces,
All the dear familiar places.
I must leave you, Susquehanna!

So in 1853 Alvah and Margaret, with their three children, Berton, nine years old, Ellen, six, and Ada, three, moved west to Minnesota Territory. They went on the new railroad to its terminus in Illinois, in which state the obscure backwoodsman, Abraham Lincoln was just establishing a reputation as a lawyer and politician. From the rail terminus they took the steamboat up the Mississippi to the head of navigation at St. Anthony Falls. Here the little village of St. Anthony, (now Minneapolis), was already operating lumber and grist mills, utilizing the abundant water power which was to make Minneapolis famous as the Mill City. From St. Anthony, Alvah and Margaret went by ox-cart forty miles up the Mississippi to establish their new home on the frontier.

And

THIS IS THE SONG OF THE NEW HOME:

When Alvah first took Margaret to see the sight for their new home
It was a gold October day.
The sun was gold; the woods were full of golden light;
On the high bank above the river
All the trees were gold,
With here and there a splotch of oaken bronze or crimson maple.
Alvah beached the boat, the sturdy skiff that his own hands had made,
Just where a little stream that trickled down the hill
Told of a sweet spring on the bank above.
They clambered up the steep ravine, where yet no killing frost
Had withered maiden hairs nor feather ferns and yellow dragon flowers
Which lined the sheltered hollow of the brook.
"Ellen will love this", Margaret said, and then stood speechless
On the level ground beneath the golden trees.
"This is the spot I chose for building", Alvah said,
And watched her face, a question in his eyes.
She loosed the strings that held her bonnet,
Let it slip from off her smooth coiled hair.
"It is a lovely spot", she said;
Her slim brown fingers sought his hand.
They stood thus, silent, underneath the tree of gold;
While, woman-wise, her heart ran out to meet the years;
Almost the finished rooms rang with the shouts of children's laughter;
She could feel the icy breath of winter nights,
When through the miles of snowy woods the wolves howled,
Or the wild-cat and the lynx lay prone and watchful.
She could see the hearth fire throw quaint shadows which embraced her
Her and hers, safe in that circle of enchanted light.
Not even Alvah's jealous moods could dim
The beauty of her hearth fire's steady glow.
Her shoulders bowed before long days of toil;
She felt the burden of an unborn child slowing her slender fleetness;
And the fear of childbirth in the wilderness pierced like a red-hot spear.
And sharper than the pains of birth, she sensed the agony of death.
Untimely death, when baby hands now hot with burning fever,
Now lay cold in death, death in the wilderness.
She could not hear the roll of drums, the roar of Shiloh's drums,
Shaking this humble palace of her dreams -
But something like a dim and shadowy veil

Rose up between her and the golden day,
And all the gold turned to a crimson flood.
She hid her eyes on Alvah's arm.
He drew her close in almost savage tenderness.
She raised her head, and all the merry lights
Came dancing back into her sweet brown eyes.
"We'll build the kitchen here", said Margaret, "my garden over there."
And Alvah said, "We're sure to find sweet water for a well
From the same vein that feeds the spring down yon.
I'll bring the young ones some day soon to pick the butternuts;
The woods are full of them."

And

THIS IS THE SONG OF EDUCATION IN THE WILDERNESS:

What is it, hidden in the hearts of men and women,
Cries aloud to circumstance, "You shall not overwhelm me!"
What is that which reaches out beyond the Now and Here
And links itself with an as yet un-guessed, undreamed-of Future,
Calling to it, "You are mine!"
Long, long, ago, the story says, in Eden's shade,
God breathed His breath into the man, and he became a living soul.
I rather think it is the breath of God that drives us on,
Explain it how you will, with stimulus, response, and knowing cells.
To Margaret, throned upon her household goods upon an ox-cart,
Little Ada close beside her,
No moot questions like to this disturbed her calm philosophy of life.
She drew her sun-bonnet close to shield her from the ardent springtime sun,
And circled little Ada more secure with her protecting arm.
Beneath her feet, safe in a leather trunk, were precious gowns
That she had worn back home, and with them all
The children's Sunday clothes, her lacy shawl,
And the new bonnet with a bit of silk that matched her deep brown eyes,
And made more pink the flush upon her cheek.
Now she looked out from the drab depths of gingham slatted stiff,
Determined not to lose the beauty God had given her,
'Though far be it for her to admit such an unseemly thought.
Upon the cart before her Ellen sat,
With Berton sometimes sitting by her side,
More often running by the plodding team of oxen,
While he used his own small goad to prod them forward
With loud "Gees" and "Haws", and duplicating Alvah's sturdy stride.
"How he is growing up", thought Margaret, "And Ellen, too".
Her busy mind ran back to the small schoolhouse they had left behind
Back where the Susquehanna sang its way
Down through the well-tilled fields to find the sea.
Rude and uncouth that schoolhouse was in truth
But to the mother planning for her brood,
It stood for all the culture of her race;
And she had left it, miles on weary miles behind.
It stood among the smiling fields beside a well-worn road she knew so well,
And she was here in these primeval woods
Jolting through ruts and over roots and bogs.

"I'll start a school myself, if so needs must.
I'll teach them all that I have ever learned."
She thought, and reached to rescue Ellen's sun-poke.
"Tie it on, my dear," she said.
"Don't think because we 're far away where folks can 't see
That you should ever be less than your best."
And Ellen, who was docile and serene, pulled up the hated poke
And tied it on to hide her rosy face and smooth brown curls.
That weary journey done, they settled down to live
A year in the small trading-post of Orono upon the River Elk,
Where Alvah plied his trade in growing towns along the busy streams.
True to her vow, here in the trading post,
Did Margaret start her humble little school.
And education, such as books supplied, was first enthroned
In Sherburne County woods in her rude living room.
And when the next year they crossed the Mississippi
To begin a new life on their wooded homestead,
She again set on her self-appointed task.
One other home, a mile away, sent her their boys and girls to teach.
For in that day from old St. Anthony up to St. Cloud,
A hundred miles of forest, meadows, lakes, unbroken stretched,
And these two families the only white folk in that lonely wild.
But next year and the next, and year by year,
Came folks to fell the virgin trees, break up untried soil,
And plant the seeds of old New England and the Middle East
Which were to blend into that sturdy crop,
That first fine flowering of the Middle West.
Then Margaret was glad to yield her place as teacher,
For the task had not been light.
With spinning woolen yarn and knitting socks,
And making all the family store of clothes.
Soap in the springtime, candles in the fall,
With butter to be churned and meat to cure.
With all the food to bake and boil and brew,
And often all the farm to oversee
When Alvah would be working in the towns.
So Margaret was happy when a rude log hut was built
To house the district school.
And first a wise old man with kindly heart
And well-conditioned mind employed to teach.
Six dollars every month they paid to him,
And for the rest he boarded round each week
Among the homes which patronized the school.

Three miles and four the children often trudged
Through woodlands lovely in their springtime green
And yet more lovely in the crimson fall.
But savage in the bitter winter,
When the biting wind and drifting snow assailed with cruel cold.
Then Margaret at the door would meet her young ones coming home from school,
And, if they voiced complaint, she silenced them,
"Would you grow up an ignorant, worthless crew?
Be thankful there's a school where you can go.
As soon as you are warm, Berton must run and feed the pig
And bed the horses down while Ellen does her knitting stint for me;
Those stockings must be done by this day week.
And Ada can stand on the high old stool and stir the cornmeal porridge
With this fine long wooden spoon that Berton made for me.
Just think how good that cornmeal mush will taste
With that white sugar pa sent us from town!"
"Ma, where does sugar grow?" Ada would ask;
And then, while winter howled through frozen woods,
O'er dark and empty miles of drifting snow,
Inside the warm and candle-lighted room,
While Margaret plied her needle,
She would lead her children far away to tropic lands,
Sleepy and hot beneath a noon-day sun;
And they would see palmetto trees and vines,
And black men toiling in the cane-breaks there.
"The slaves," she said with pity infinite,
"But some day men will surely set them free.
God never meant His creatures to be slaves."
Then when the simple meal was done
They gathered round to read and play;
And oft to tell again the lessons of the day,
To "speak the pieces" they had learned;
Or else when Alvah was at home,
From its high shelf he'd take his old accordion down,
And sit beside the fire, while he would sing for them
Old songs and new, the gay and plaintive songs,
A heritage of melody that came
From long ago and very far away.
Oh education in the wilderness
Was not a thing of words read in a book;
It was a very precious thing that grew
To satisfy the hunger of a heart,

To fill the living need of each day's toil,
To meet the wilderness and conquer it.
For education in the wilderness
Was evermore a precious thing that grew
Into the very fiber of one's soul!
And nourished there the genius of a race.

And

THIS IS THE SONG OF MARGARET'S GARDEN:

Larkspur and lily, zinnias and phlox,
Sweetbriar and marigolds, yellow rose and broom,
Every name a poem - a dream in every bloom.
Monkshood and rosemary, Pinks and hollyhocks ,
Every name a poem with a rhythm singing down
From Scottish hills in springtime or a little English town;
An English cottage garden, with a casement open wide
To the sweet breath of morning or fragrant eventide.
A dream in every bloom; a dream of lilacs far away
In a quaint New England village; a lonely child at play,
Running with the wind between the careful rows of box -
Whispering to the larkspur, telling secrets to the phlox.
Dreams of youth and love time, with all the world in tune,
Sweetbriar and yellow roses, essence of immortal June;
Hope and love and promises, promises and dreams,
A garden in the wilderness is more than what it seems.
Each blossom is a memory, each fragrance is a friend,
Each sprig of thyme and lavender tells tales that never end;
Tales of birth and death and love, of greeting and good-by,
Pain and joy that blend in beauty in the mist of days gone by.
These seeds are from the old home where the Susquehanna flows;
A neighbor in Elk River slipped the prickly yellow rose;
A friend in old St. Anthony sent roots of pinks and phlox;
A man whom Alvah worked for gave the crimson hollyhocks.
Garden in the wilderness; a thing of love and hope;
A thing which grows through bitter years for weary souls that grope
For beauty in the midst of toil, gold lights shot through the gray
For blue and rose and scarlet in the drab of everyday.
To Margaret, her garden brought heart's ease after pain,
Eternal hope that sunshine would follow every rain;
Sure knowledge that the springtime would bring the bursting sod,
A simple faith that beauty dwells eternally with God.
Larkspur and lily, zinnias and phlox,
Monkshood and rosemary, pinks and hollyhocks,
Sweetbriar and marigolds, yellow rose and broom,
Every name a poem - a dream in every bloom.

And

THIS IS THE SONG OF THE WINNEBAGOES:

Winnebagoes, friendly neighbors,
Margaret's Minnesota neighbors,
Early came with gifts of friendship
To the house above the river,
On the bluff above the river;
Came with gifts of nuts and berries;
Came with venison and wild fowl;
Came with moccasins and bead work.
Margaret greeted them politely,
Talked to them with signs and symbols,
Learned a little of their language,
Smiled with them at their papooses,
Joked with them when they were merry,
Helped in illness and in sorrow.
And the Winnebagoes loved her,
Loved to come and watch her working,
Loved to come and watch her teaching.
Near the window of the new house
Was a bank of earth and litter
Piled breast high beneath the windows.
Margaret busy with her children,
Heard one day a smothered titter,
Heard a sound of muffled laughter
When she tweaked an ear convenient
Of an urchin bent on mischief.
Lifting quick eyes, Margaret saw them,
Four young bucks prone on the sandbank,
Four brown faces grinning at her,
Beady black eyes laughing at her.
Every day they came and watched her,
Lying prone upon the sandbank.
There they watched this slender white squaw
With her merry eyes and quick step,
With her voice like rippling water,
With her laugh like liting bird note;
Watched her give the talking paper
To the little white papooses,
Watched her trace the magic symbols
On complaining slates, and listened
To the children's shrilling voices
Like the chatter of the squirrels,
Like the jargon of the chipmunks,

Were the children's shrilling voices
To the listening Winnebagoes.
But one day a Winnebago,
Drunken with the white man's whiskey,
Crazy with the white man's whiskey,
Rode his pony to the doorway.
Margaret heard a wild hallooing,
Heard the pony's hoofs that clattered
On the stones before the doorway,
Saw the rearing, plunging pony
As his master whipped him forward,
Urged him in the open doorway.
Swiftly as a darting swallow,
Nerve-taut as a striking eagle,
Margaret leaped to swing the oak door
In the frenzied pony's pathway,
Dropped the great bolt in its socket,
Turned to still the screaming children,
Heard without a wilder yelling,
Heard the pony's clattering hoof-beats
As his rider reined him outward,
Galloped madly down the river.
And one day a Winnebago,
Searching for the white man's whiskey,
Mad to drink the white man's whiskey,
Came again to Margaret's doorway,
When alone with little Ada
She sat spinning in the kitchen.
Sunlight filtered through the branches
Of the elm outside the window,
And the pollen of the wild grape
Filled the air with golden fragrance,
And a thrush's liquid love call
Pierced the gold air with its sweetness.
Suddenly the doorway darkened
As if birds of prey descending
Left the noon sun black in heaven.
Margaret sprang to meet the stranger,
Quick to give a courteous greeting
To the buck-skin coated stranger;
But his countenance was sullen
Lowering like approaching thunder.
"Me want whisk," he said, and pointed
Past her to the sunny kitchen,

Pushed her roughly by and entered.
"I've no whiskey," Margaret answered,
Standing in the sunny kitchen,
Where the spinning-wheel's soft whirring,
Silenced, left the silence lonely.
"White man Bill" he said; and Margaret
Felt that ice ran where her blood ran,
Even as a mounting anger
Set her temples hotly beating.
White man Bill, the Indian trader,
In the post across the river,
Hated Alvah, while he feared him,
Feared his honesty and bluntness,
Hated him for never winking
At illicit trade in whiskey
With the childlike Winnebagoes
White man Bill who sent the Indian,
Sent the thirsty Winnebago
To the house above the river,
To the lone house in the forest,
And had told him that at Alvah's
He might quench his thirst for whiskey.
Now he stood there, sullen, waiting-
There in Margaret's sunny kitchen -
Towered above her, slim and supple
As a birch tree in the forest,
As a white birch by the river.
"I've no whiskey," she repeated.
But his sullen eyes grew stealthy,
And he pointed to a bucket
Standing covered on the table,
Then she led him to the table,
Showed him every closed container;
Still his watchful eyes were on her
And his breath was hot beside her.
Then she took him to the pantry,
Opened every jug and bottle
Let him taste or smell the contents;
Then she led him down the ladder,
As he pointed to the cellar,
Holding high her flickering candle
Where the white mold on the rafters
Made fantastic ghostly pictures,
And the blackness lapped about them

Like a damp and clammy garment;
out again their search was fruitless.
Back again within the kitchen,
In the sweet and sunny kitchen,
Margaret faced the Winnebago
As he towered there above her.
Little Ada pressed against her,
Looked up in her face inquiring;
Margaret waited for the Indian,
Stroked the child's dark hair and waited,
Waited for the Winnebago.
Did he still believe her lying?
Would he turn on her in anger?
"I've no whiskey," she repeated,
Smiling up into his bronze face.
Then with unperturbed manner,
With great dignity, he answered,
"White man Bill one damn big liar!"
And he strode out of the doorway,
Flung himself upon his pony
And went loping through the woodland
Where the pollen of the wild grape
Filled the air with golden fragrance,
And a thrush's liquid love call
Pierced the gold air with its sweetness.
But without the white man's whiskey
They were guileless Winnebagoes,
They were Margaret's friendly neighbors
Through those long and weary seasons,
Through those early lonely seasons,
When the white men very slowly
Moved across the Mississippi,
Staked their claims and broke their clearings,
Hauled their household goods with ox-teams
From the head of navigation at St. Anthony down the river.
Up the river road they hauled them,
Through deep forests, past wild meadows,
Over verdant little prairies,
Rainbowed with the flowers of springtime,
Starred with wild phlox in the summer,
While in autumn frost-blue asters
Matched their gold hearts with the sunshine,
And the goldenrod's plumed yellow.
Through the mud and dust of summer,

Over roads, roads in name only,
Plodded on the patient oxen,
Bringing Margaret's white neighbors.
Very slowly through the seasons
Came the white men with their families,
Hewing homes from out the forest!
Building in some verdant clearing
With the precious finished lumber
Which the uncomplaining oxen
Hauled from mills in old St. Anthony,
Where the Falls of old St. Anthony
Turned the mill wheels of the settlers.
Very slowly came the settlers,
And the months were long and lonely
In the lone house in the forest,
In the house above the river,
On the bluff above the river.
Often on a winter evening
When the wolves howled through the forest,
And the drifted snow lay gleaming
In the cold and silver moonlight,
When the children read their lessons
In the warm and shadowy kitchen,
Worked their sums or played at checkers
At the candle-lighted table -
Margaret writing at the table
Telling Alvah of the family,
Alvah working in Anoka,
In St. Cloud or old St. Anthony.
Suddenly heard muffled footsteps,
Feet in moccasins tread softly,
And a gentle knocking sounded
On the panel of the oak door.
Then the children shouted greeting,
Swung the great door wide in greeting,
Sprang to meet the welcome comer,
Led him gladly to the fireside,
Brought him food and drink, and listened
While he proudly used the English
They had taught him, and with symbols,
Many signs and symbols many,
Told of hunting in the forest,
Told of trading with the white man.
Oftenest of all came White Wolf,

Came the keen young hunter, White Wolf,
Came the straight-limbed hunter, White Wolf.
Very dear to him was Ada,
Was the little black-haired Ada,
Five short years, of play and wonder,
Sturdy, brown-skinned, Tom-boy Ada.
And she dearly loved the hunter,
Loved the straight-limbed hunter, White Wolf
(Best of all she loved to teach him)
Loved to bring her little primer,
He would lift her very gently
To his knees, and very patient
He would watch her small brown finger
As it pointed out the letters,
Very patiently he mouthed them,
Very patiently he learned them.
Many days the Winnebago,
White Wolf, the young Winnebago,
Came and sat in Margaret's kitchen,
Played with all the white papooses,
Most of all with little Ada,
Little brown-skinned, black-haired Ada,
As she taught him all his letters
From her little dog-eared primer,
From her precious little primer.
Then one day the Winnebagoes
Heard a message from the Great Chief,
From the Great White Chief who ruled them,
From the far-off great white chieftain.
They must leave the rolling prairies
Where they fished for pike and pickerel,
Where they trapped the mink and muskrat.
All the clans of Winnebago
Must move northward to the pine woods,
To the Red Earth Reservation,
Find new hunting grounds for red deer,
Find new streams for fishing pickerel,
Find new ponds for trapping muskrat.
One by one they came to Margaret's,
Brought her parting gifts of friendship,
Brought her gifts of love and friendship.
Then one day came brave young White Wolf,
Came in glorious new apparel,
Came in splendid new regalia,

With his pony gaily saddled,
Bringing wampum, bringing mink skins,
Bringing moccasins and beadwork.
Not as parting gifts he brought them,
Not as parting gifts to Margaret,
But to buy the little white child,
Buy the little black-haired Ada
Who had been his sturdy playmate,
Who had been his little teacher.
It was a day in early autumn,
All the air was sweet with harvest;
Margaret and her little daughters
Greeted White Wolf in the doorway,
Greeted him with words of welcome,
Cordial words of friendly welcome;
And the little black-haired Ada,
Little black-haired, Tom-boy Ada,
Clapped her hands and danced about him
As he lighted from his pony,
Stood erect there by his pony.
Very grandly White Wolf stood there,
Tall and straight and very courteous.
Then while Margaret watched him, puzzled,
Puzzled at his strange behavior,
First he pointed to his pony
Loaded down with furs and wampum,
Then he pointed to small Ada
Clinging now to Margaret's apron,
Puzzled by her friend's behavior.
Slowly Margaret understood him,
Guessed his meaning from his gestures;
He had come to buy her baby,
Little black-haired Tom-boy Ada,
Sturdy little brown-skinned Ada.
Very gently Margaret told him,
More with gestures than with language
That she could not sell her baby,
Could not sell his little playmate.
Still with dignity unchanging
He made signs to give the pony
Decked in all its gay new bridle,
Decked in all its splendid trappings;
still as Margaret refused him,
With a little choke of pity,

with a little thrill of terror,
She could see his face still graver,
Stern, and grim and still determined.
Then he took his precious rifle,
Wealth of wealth to every Indian,
Made her know that he would give it
With the store of furs and wampum,
With the pony and its saddle,
With the pony and its bridle;
All his wealth he gravely offered,
With a dark set face he offered.
Still as Margaret refused him
Pity mingled with her terror,
And she felt her little daughters
Pressing close in fear and wonder
As young White Wolf stood there,
Leaning on the gun she had rejected,
Stood with set face, with his dark eyes
Gazing steadfast on the ground there
Where the pony cropped the herbage.
Time seemed very long to Margaret
While she watched him - silent, waiting.
Then he turned away in silence,
And his still face broke in grieving;
With no word or sign he mounted,
Laid the rifle in position,
Turned the pony's head, and slowly
Paced away into the forest,
Started on his long ride northward
To the Red Earth Reservation,
To his new home in the pine woods.

Now I sing of old Horora,
Friend of Alvah, old Horora;
Straight and tall and very handsome,
Straight as fir trees in the forest,
Tall and strong and very handsome.
Oft he came to Alvah's workshop,
By the lone house in the forest
On the bluff above the river.
And his daughters came to Margaret,
Watched her working in her kitchen;
In her sweet and sunny kitchen,
Watched her caring for her children,

Watched her working in her garden,
In the larkspur and the lilies,
In the lavender and lilacs,
In the rosemary and sweetbriar.
And Horora sometimes traded
With the white man by the river,
Sometimes brought his furs and beadwork,
Sometimes. brought his seasoned buckskin,
And when Alvah went to labor
In the towns - in old St. Anthony,
In St. Cloud or old St. Anthony-
He would take Horora's produce,
Take his furs and beads and buckskin,
Sell them for the white man's silver.
For the white man 's gold and silver,
Always with clean hands they traded,
Always with white hearts they bargained,
And the pathway of their friendship
Was a clear trail where the shadow
And the sunlight of life's journey
Mingled, made the path more pleasant.
Then one summer old Horora
Knew a season of misfortune,
And his friends advanced him silver
Till the autumn days of trapping
Should again bring furs and fortune.
Alvah sold him corn and buckwheat,
Trusted him and did not question.
Then when Alvah had departed
To his work far down the river,
In the towns far down the river,
Came the great white chieftain's order,
Came the final proclamation
That the friendly Winnebagoes
Must go northward to the Red Earth.
Then Horora's patient women
Struck his tepees, packed his ponies,
All the household gear assembled,
And through all the golden autumn
They moved northward through the forest
To the new home in the pinewoods,
To the new home on the lakeshore.
As the autumn days grew shorter,
All the early blasts of winter

Shook the lone house in the forest,
On the bluff above the river.
Margaret missed the Winnebagoes,
Missed their friendly morning visits,
Missed the evenings by the fireside
When the happy children chattered
With their forest friends and listened
To strange stories of the woodland
Told in symbol and in gesture
All interpreted by friendship,
All made clear by love and friendship.
Margaret missed the Winnebagoes,
And the forest seemed more lonely
Where the wolves howled in the starlight,
Where the wildcat prone and watchful
Waited in the shadowy starlight,
And the white men in their homesteads
Far away among the forests
Seemed yet farther when the deep snow
Gleamed in drifts among the bare trees,
Silver cold beneath the black trees.
Came a week of blinding blizzard
When the storm fiends filled the forest
With their shrieking and their laughter,
And the bare boughs of the forest
Groaned in anguish, writhed in anguish,
While the snow piled ever deeper
Over road and trail and woodpath.
But at last the storm fiends, sated,
Growling, slunk into their caverns,
Sighing, slumbered in their caverns.
All the silver of the Indies,
All the diamonds of the rajahs
Shone beneath the dazzling sunlight
In each road and trail and woodpath,
But the piercing wind was bitter;
Icy death lurked in the woodpaths,
Followed then a week of moonlight,
Silvery, lonely, aching moonlight.
Margaret's heart wept at the beauty;
Poignant, inchoate longings
Cried out for the days of childhood,
Cried out for the love of girlhood;
Cried out for the friendly home life

Of the Susquehanna Valley;
Cried out for the boy who wooed her
In the old New England village;
Jealous, passionate, imperious,
Bending all her will to his will,
Till she followed where he led her.
Bore the children of his passion,
Broke her body in his service,
Lonely, dwelt there in the forest,
In the lone house in the forest,
Haunted in the aching moonlight
With inchoate, poignant longings
For she knew not what old magic
Whispering through the silvery moonlight,
Drifting through the silvery moonlight,
As the east wind caught the crystals
Powdered from the glistening snowfield
Breathed them out in fairy cloudlets
Floating o'er the shifting snowfield.
But within the low-ceiled kitchen
Where the candle light was ruddy
And the hearth fire glowed and flickered,
Casting weird fantastic shadows
On the wall behind the children,
Margaret forgot the magic
Of the icy aching moonlight.
All her heart 'sang round her children,
All her motherhood flowed round them,
And like any girl she led them
In their games and in their stories,
Taught them, loved them, and inspired them.
And when they were safely sleeping
In their warm beds in the chamber
Flooded by the silver moonlight,
Made more icy by the moonlight,
She would sit beside the table
In the candle-lighted kitchen
Where the voices of the children
Still re-echoed in the silence,
Writing news of home to Alvah,
Alvah, working in Anoka,
In St. Cloud or old St. Anthony.
When the letter was completed,
Signed, "with all my heart's love, Margaret",

She would kneel there by the fireside
In the lone house in the forest,
Lay the burden of the morrow
On the Friend who never failed her,
Thanking Him for home and fireside,
Thanking Him for love and loved ones,
Thanking Him for care unceasing
That watched o'er her in the forest,
In the lone house by the river.
Then one night when all were sleeping,
In the lone house in the forest,
Came a shouting in the farmyard,
Came a knocking on the oak door,
Came an outcry in the moonlight,
Margaret, from her frost-veined window,
Saw three Indians on their ponies,
Blanketed against the north wind,
Shoulders bowed before the north wind;
And a guttural voice called to her,
"Me Horora! Old Horora!"
Then she dressed with icy fingers,
Roused the sturdy little Berton,
Raked the coals from out the ashes,
Built again the glowing hearth-fire,
Welcomed them into her kitchen,
Old Horora and his daughters,
Who had ridden pathless snow fields,
Near two hundred miles had ridden
From their new home in the north land,
From their new home in the pinewoods,
Through the icy depths of winter
They had come to pay to Alvah
The ten dollars that they owed him,
The small debt that still they owed him.
For three days they stopped and rested,
For three days they slept and feasted
On the best that Margaret's larder
Could supply for their enjoyment.
Then they wrapped them in their blankets,
Turned again their ponies northward,
Bade farewell to the slim white squaw
Standing with her sturdy children
In the icy snow-banked farmyard
Of the lone house in the forest,

Rode away into the forest,
Rode away on their long journey
To their new home in the pine woods,
Near two hundred miles to northward.
Left the farmhouse yet more lonely
In the glistening white of winter,
In the midst of glistening snow fields.
Farewell, friendly Winnebagoes,
Farewell, honest old Horora,
Farewell, trusting forest children.
Never more they 'd tread the forests
Where their fathers and grandfathers
Hunted deer and wolf and wildcat;
Nevermore in stream and river
Would they fish for pike and pickerel,
Nevermore trap mink and muskrat.
Nevermore bring friendly offerings,
Venison and nuts and berries
Nevermore sit by the fireside
Playing with the white papooses.
Margaret watched the three dark figures,
Silent, dark, upon their ponies
Till they vanished in the forest,
Vanished in the snowy forest;
And she knew that song was ended -
Knew that book was closed forever.

And

THIS IS THE STORY MARGARET TOLD TO HER GRANDCHILDREN:

forty years later when they said to her,
"But what did you do, Grandma?
Did you ever have any parties?"
Then Margaret dropped off the years and saw
Herself, young, full of life and zest,
Only her own sweet loveliness saw not,
And answered, "Yes, my dear, we'd many parties;
Corn huskings, barn raisings, and quilting-bees.
A party in the sugar bush each spring,
And in the winter, spelling-bees;
Each July fourth a picnic. Ah my child,
If you had been at one of those gay times,
You'd know what fun a party in the wilderness can be!
It seems like yesterday Spade Smith
Came riding by upon his old white horse
(Spade had the first horse team in all these parts)
To bid us to his barn-raising. He said,
'Them timbers been a seasonin' since year ago last May.
I vow, this new barn's bound to last plum into Judgment Day.
Yes, we're goin' to have a risin' on Wednesday come a week.
Sure, bring the wife and young ones, Stubbs'l make the fiddle squeek.'
I mind that Wednesday was a shining day.
A bit of rain the night before had left
The new world washed, the sunshine fresh as on
The day when God first said, 'Let there be Light. I
All the neighbors came from all the roads
That ribboned off into the deep green woods
To find a clearing there, the boys and girls
All set for frolic, while the men folks squared
Spade's timbers, set the rafters for the barn,
And heaved the giant framework into place;
And every now and then a pair of sweethearts
Found a shady trysting place beside
The pasture bars or down the meadow lane.
But in the kitchen where the heat rolled up
In swirls of steam and smells of cloves and ham,
We mothers got a meal that old folks still
Recall when they drive by and see Spade's barn.
Then when the work was done, and it was cool,

The young folks cleared the furniture from off
The kitchen floor. Old Stubbs was throned upon
A high old stool, his fiddle in his hand;
Oh, I can hear that fiddle thrumming now;
'You can't have any my rusty rye,
You can't have any my barley,
But you can have some weevily wheat
To make a cake for Charley.'
They swung their partners, they sashayed, they bowed;
In glad abandonment of play they beat
The time that sang from Stubb's fiddle; then
'Happy is the miller boy that lives by the mill;
As the wheel rolls round he's gaining on his will;
One hand in the hopper and the other in the sack,
The wheel rolls round, and he cries, "Grab back":'
Of course you tried to grab the girl who filled
Your heart with deep confusion, and whose touch
Prevailed to shatter all your manly strength.
The world knows little change from age to age;
And young life in the wilderness could quaff
Its cup with quite the same delight that thrills
The clear-eyed youth and joy-bright girl today,
And so Spade's barn-raising became a thing
Of history;; one of those common things
Where fates are sealed; the heat and toil forgot,
The joy and song live on forevermore.
I always loved the quilting bees where maids
And mothers met around the patchwork quilt
To set infinitesimal stitches through the prints
Of 'Nine-patch', 'Double Wedding-ring', or
'Rose of Sharon'. Much of life was stitched into
Those lovely counterpanes; for lonely hearts
At times rebelled against the wilderness;
A day of talk and laughter brought release
From weeks of pent-up bitterness, and sent
The wife back to her task with hope renewed,
With strength to laugh again and will to love.
We had a sugar-bush those days, a grove
Of sugar maples on your grand-dad' s farm.
And when the slant rays of the springtime sun
Shot through the leafless woods, a thrill
Of wakening life stirred in the sleeping trees;
Each day the sap shot up the warming trunk,
Each night it crept back from the freezing chill

To hide again in the deep-bedded roots.
Each day brown earth would show itself where sun
Struck warmest, but the snow-drifts lingered on
Where shade lay dark along a lichened log.
Then Alvah got the buckets out and said,
'It's sugar weather!'
What an answering shout
The children raised; like joyous nymphs that danced
About a forest god they followed Alvah
To the sugar-bush. His keen-edged axe
Bit sure and true in each smooth maple bole,
A hollow spike inserted, caught the flow
Of the old tree's life blood, and drop by drop
It filled the waiting bucket. At the camp
All was prepared to apply the fiery test
Which should transmute the sweet thin-dripping flood
Into brown crystals, fit for gods or kings,
Or who is worthy to partake of that
Which only who partakes can fitly praise.
The sugar-bush meant nights of sleepless care,
When shadows weird crept up on leaping fire
And flickering lantern-light; and shy wood things
Soft-footed, crept outside the ring of light
And peered flame-eyed, but dared not venture in.
But on a day when all the world was spring,
We'd always bid the neighbors to a frolic.
The maple buds were swelling, bit by bit,
Green blades of grass showed where the lifting sun
Was warmest; squirrels frisked their plummy tails,
Scolded, and leaped to tree-top safety; youth
Rushed in, flowed through the forest like a flood,
And common sugar-making turned to a sylvan rite.
But maple wax, cooled on the hard-packed snow
Brought from the hollow yonder -
Who can speak
Its luscious savor?
And when the sweetness cloys
The palate, just look yonder in that brown
Stone crock; after one sour bite of good cucumber
Pickle, you're prepared for yet
Another round of sweet. The' sugaring-off'
Stands out in memory with the tang of clean
Wood smoke, the sunset shadows lengthening through
The trees, and far and sweet the call of glad good-byes.

The spelling-bees were Alvah's choice;
And children loved the coasting on the hill;
And when the hastening years brought in more folks
I loved the gatherings in the meeting-house.
Oh yes, we'd parties in the wilderness."

And

THIS IS THE SONG OF THE MEETING-HOUSE:

Margaret, her life long, paid her grateful tribute to heroic men
Who rode the circuit, fought the frontier devils, brought God within human ken,
In the meeting-house, the neighbors from their lonely homes, too far apart,
Met to clasp a friendly hand, to share the troubles of a burdened heart.
Margaret found sanctuary in that woodland church, where faith burned clear;
Not spoken word so much upheld her as the Presence, year by year.
Summer Sundays, all the windows of the little church stood open wide
To the sweet breath of the woodland; so a restless child by Margaret's side
Could look out and up into the tree-tops, see the tiny swelling throat
Of a thrush or wren or golden oriole; catch the faintly echoing note
As the song, released, ascended to the cloud-filled, over-bending sky.
God was up there, somewhere, sitting on a throne all glorified and high.
Then the weary child would lean his head against his mother's arm,
And she would draw him close in perfect love and tender understanding sympathy.
This the consolation Margaret knew, as year by year, and week by week,
Found her in the little woodland meeting-house among the blessed meek.
There she rested from the toil that bound the wilderness to earth alone,
Let her soul rise with the swelling hymn to pierce the veil before God's throne;
Like a tired child, she leaned her heart upon the heart of Him who knew
All the springs of life that fed her spirit, felt His strength her strength renew.
Oh the wilderness was stern, and souls too oft were sick with shriveling blight;
But, as oft, like conquering giants, climbed serene to some far shining height.
Now my hand is on the lock; close the door and turn the key.
And still the rivers of life flow on, and the questing waters seek the sea;
The future mingles with the past, and the present becomes eternity.

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