

C A B I N G U L C H

*Gift of Betty Walker  
(our Jogger friend)*

*Hay  
Fan*

By Norma Hay Jack

My parents settled in the Meeker area in 1884. An account of this was covered in the first historical volume, "THIS IS WHAT I REMEMBER" so I will relate only what I remember.

JOHN FLETCHER HAY--My father, PAPA  
NORA PEASLEE HAY---My mother, MAMA

I was born when papa was 59 years old, mama was 42 and my oldest sister, Minnie, was 24. I had four sisters, Minnie, Louise, Alice, Dorothy and two brothers, Charlie and John. All but Dorothy were gone from home by the time I was six years old. I have vague memories of living in Powell Park and of my first school year when we lived in Meeker.

Due to crop failures, heavy medical expenses for mama and John, papa decided to sell the Powell Park ranch and move to a dry farm he had near White Rock on upper Strawberry.

John had helped with the fencing before leaving home and Alice had helped grub sage brush and clear some farm land before she left home to work for the telephone company,

This farm was sixteen miles from Meeker, two miles from the county road and in a canyon called "Cabin Gulch". This gulch was probably a half mile wide where the cleared land was but narrowed down farther up. The mountain on the east was quite high with lots of pinion trees and great rock formations which afforded Dorothy and I with many interesting places to explore much to mama's distress as there were lots of rattlesnakes also. The mountain on the other side, not so high, was covered with serviceberry, chokecherry and scrub oak. It was beautiful when the berry trees were blooming in the spring and equally beautiful with the color of the oak brush in the fall. There was a game trail going diagonally up through the brush. This was used by our horses to reach pasture as the top flattened out quite a bit providing good grassland.

We had no neighbors after leaving the county road. Beyond our land was open range so the only people passing through were cattlemen taking their herds up for the summer. Papa always let them go through.

There was a small barn, shop, shed and corral; also one room cabin and cellar. Of course we had to have more room. Papa first added a room to the existing cabin which was board and bat. I have faint memories of mama holding boards and making measurements as she helped papa build this room. It was the same material as the existing cabin but all material had to be hauled by team and wagon from Meeker, sixteen miles away.

I vividly remember the next addition, a large kitchen. Papa hauled stones from the rocky mountain on what he called a "stone boat", a flat drag made of poles. I can't remember whether one horse or two had to be used to pull this. He cut and hauled "quaky" logs from about two miles up the gulch. The stones were for the foundation, the logs for the walls. It was built to form an "el" with the existing cabin. The outside space of the "el" was covered with flat stones for a porch with one door opening into the kitchen and one into the original cabin. The kitchen had windows on opposite sides so was sunny all day.

Mama made bright print curtains for the windows, also for the other rooms and with the braided rugs she had made, everything was cheerful, comfortable and cozy. Most evenings we sat around the kitchen table playing cribbage or five hundred by lamplight. Learning to play those games before I was eight and Dorothy eleven helped us with our arithmetic or maybe our arithmetic helped us with the games--anyway we seemed to do well in both which really surprised our two oldest sisters when they came to visit.



Papa read the Meeker paper and "The Globe Democrat" as he always kept up with current events. He also read to us. Each night he read one story from the 101 "Arabian Nights" until completed. He also recited poetry--one in particular was called "The Woodchuck" and he did it so well Dorothy and I would cry about the "poor little woodchuck" even though we'd heard it many times before. Mama recited many long poems including "Lasca" and "The Curfew Shall Not Ring Tonight", two which I remember so well. She also had a very good singing voice. She wrote many short stories which were quite good and were enjoyed by the family and neighbors. If proper channels had been available to her, I believe some would have been published. We had quite a large collection of good books and Dorothy and I read these over and over as there was no library in our remote area. We also had a set of Boy Scout adventure books. When John was a young boy he had bought these with some of his Christmas money for mama and papa! We always got a laugh out of that in later years. However, Dorothy and I read and re-read them so guess it was a good investment.

The last addition to the property was a granary which of course had to be built with lumber. This also had to be hauled by wagon from Meeker.

We walked the two and one half miles to school in the fall and in the spring if the mud on the road wasn't too deep. In the winter we rode double on a mare my brother Charlie had left with us when he moved to Oregon. She was very gentle. However, as there was no shed or barn at the school she was tied to a fence post all day. If it was real cold, with icicles hanging on her mane and tail, she was real frisky when we got on to go home and many times would buck us off. This only hurt our pride as we always landed in a snowdrift. One year we had a man teacher who offered to warm her up for us one evening and we were delighted when he also landed in a drift--he never offered again. If the weather was extremely cold papa would take us in the sled and come after us when school was dismissed. There was never any thought of staying home from school because of bad weather as both parents considered education a "must".

I loved to go up the mountain after the horses although mama worried about me getting hurt. I always had our wonderful dog, ~~Keno~~, along. I can even now see him trotting alongside my horse; when I looked down he would look up and wag his tail. Rounding up the horses was not a hard job as one mare had a bell on and the others stayed close to her. Once I got her started down the trail the others followed right along and they couldn't wander off as the brush on either side of that trail was too thick.

The mail was delivered twice a week by a vehicle I cannot really say was a truck or a car. It was probably a Model T with no fenders or windshield. It was supposed to arrive about mid-morning but was usually late and sometimes did not arrive at all. One day I rode down to pick up the mail. It hadn't arrived by noon so the neighbors who lived at the junction of our road and the county road asked me to have dinner (noon) with them. I thought that was great--they had no girls, only one boy in his teens so they gave me lots of attention. I was still waiting about two o'clock when the mother who was rather strange but nice, asked me to look at the bread she was making. She wanted to know if I thought it was ready to put in the oven. I decided it was (had no idea but didn't tell her so) so she followed my advice. When I told mama about it later (with pride) she had a good laugh about anyone asking an eight year old about baking bread. Anyway, about three o'clock, here came papa in the buggy as they were afraid I had been thrown from my horse. I couldn't understand their concern. The mail never arrived.

#### RATTLESNAKES--

Dorothy and I were too young to be scared of them but followed mama's advice about being cautious. We never got off a horse without first looking down. Mama carried a snake bite kit with her if we walked any distance from the cabin and also a good, sharp hoe which she used to kill them--and kill many she did.

One early evening she was watering some tomato plants and laid her hoe down. As she stooped to water one plant, a snake emerged--she threw her bucket of water on him and went for the hoe--she got him.

We had a calf picketed near the garden fence when we suddenly heard it bawl and saw it jump in the air. The rattler had got him on the nose. Mama wanted to save him but couldn't get near as he was so frightened so she swabbed his nose with an old broom dipped in permanganate of potash. He survived.

Dorothy and I were riding double, bareback, one day and came running down a hill. At the bottom turn our horse didn't slow down so we both fell off. Dorothy sprained her wrist. That afternoon she was carrying a small box with her good hand, tripped on something and fell down and sprained her ankle. She spent the rest of the afternoon sitting in a low chair, sorting some scrap material for doll clothes. We helped her into the kitchen for supper and mama went back to pick up some of the scraps. One scrap (she thought) raised it's head. She grabbed the cribbage board off the side table and gave it, the snake, one good whack which was enough. Fortunately the rattler was a small one and the cribbage board was hardwood with a steel top for pegging. After it was over she was shaken up quite a bit. We guessed the snake must have come in from the porch screen door which probably hadn't been closed tightly.

Alice arrived one day with her husband, Jimmy, whom we had not yet met. Papa had just killed a rattler close to the house. Much to our amazement Jimmy wanted to skin it and did.

Dorothy and I had staked out a play house with stones for room dividers, etc. This was on the hill back of the house. One evening mama came up to see what we were doing and sure enough there was a rattler in our "bedroom". That was the end of that play house.

One of the problems living at Cabin Gulch was the water situation. There was a spring up the gulch and the creek from this ran by the house but the water was alkali. Papa had made a couple of small reservoirs to hold water for the stock but we had to haul our drinking water from the neighbor's well--two miles. In the winter we had snow water to drink; in the summer we saved rain water for washing our hair and white clothes.

I contracted typhoid fever, probably from drinking bad water. There was no hospital in Meeker. Since our house there was rented, mama rented a room with kitchen privileges and took care of me. Dorothy went to stay with Minnie and her family. It was about three months before I could go back to school. As I was not supposed to have any rough food or apples which I loved, Dorothy supervised my eating away from home. I would do a lot of arguing but she usually won out.

Mama was a good nurse, having had lots of experience. Dorothy and I both had scarlet fever when I was about three, pneumonia and a broken collar bone when I was four.

We used wood for fuel. Papa cut and hauled this from up the gulch. In the fall our wood pile looked like a small mountain but by spring it was down to chips. Sometimes he would get a load of coal from a neighbor who had a small mine.

Although the only cash money we had was from the sale of wheat and the small rent from the house in town, we had enough to eat. We had a large garden so stored potatoes, carrots, turnips, onions and Hubbard squash in the cellar during the winter. Mama made squash pie; it was much like pumpkin and just as good. She canned peaches and pears purchased in Meeker and made chokecherry jelly from the wild fruit. We usually had a sack of apples in the cellar too.

Our travel was either in a two-seated buggy, the wagon, sled or on horseback. We had two saddle horses, one we rode to school; the other one stumbled quite often so if we rode her it had to be bareback for safety reasons. I liked riding her better as her gait was smoother but she was sort of peculiar. I remember one sunny, lazy day I rode her down to the field where papa was repairing the plow. I was sitting on her, day dreaming, when she suddenly laid down. Maybe she was day dreaming too but it sure woke me up in a hurry--I never forgot it.

Sometimes when papa was plowing we would watch from a little knoll as a coyote would follow about a hundred yards behind the plow. When papa stopped, the coyote would stop and when papa started up again so did the coyote. This would go on all afternoon. I suppose the coyote was picking up the field mice turned out by the plow.

When papa took grain to the mill in Meeker he used two teams and a wagon. Otherwise we went in the buggy, usually on a Saturday. We would stay with my sister Minnie and family. Dorothy and I were a few years younger than her two girls, Mary and Helen, but then and always we were more like four sisters.

We also took the buggy when we went to Bear River to visit my sister Louise and her husband, Delos. I would guess it was about twenty five miles by taking a short cut through Temple Canyon. We turned off the county road at Pine Tree hill, went up another steep hill and then down a very steep one. Papa put some kind of brake on the back wheels of the buggy so it wouldn't run over the horses, I guess. Mama, Dorothy and I would walk down. Going through the canyon was slow as the few families who lived in this remote area would come out to visit with us, mostly about the weather and crops.

Occasionally we would go to a neighbors for Sunday dinner or they would come to our house. Sometimes in the winter there were dances at the schoolhouse with a midnight supper. It usually didn't break up until dawn so people could see to drive home by team and sled.

Mama made most of the clothes Dorothy and I wore. She would let us select the style (from looking in the Sears catalog) and the color. She used no pattern but they looked just as good as those worn by anyone else. I did a little sewing also--papa would skin snowshoe rabbits and dry the hides for us. Our dolls weren't much to look at but dressed in the beautiful white rabbit fur coats and hats we made they were quite elegant (or so we thought).

When papa spent a long day taking a load of grain to Meeker, mama must have had a lot of courage to stay alone except for two little girls, no telephone and two miles to the nearest neighbor. No matter how late papa got back Dorothy and I knew without a doubt he would bring us enough candy to fill a small brown bowl we had. Also when he rode up in the higher country where the white lupines grew, he would bring a bouquet back for mama and us.

Education was very important in our family. I remember when Mary, the oldest granddaughter graduated from high school. Although he was a sick man, papa dressed very carefully and left much earlier than necessary. He was very proud of her and was going to be sure he didn't miss any of the graduation exercises. He was also very proud of Helen as she played the piano very well, playing for local dances. We all loved to hear her play and Mary sing.

Papa didn't live long enough to see any of his other descendants graduate but both parents took pride in all their grandchildren and would have been very proud of those who completed college.

Mama and papa were interested in people, the community and especially their own children.

Although they were never wealthy, they had the respect and affection of all who knew them.