

SATURDAY, JUNE 24, 1916.

# MISS RHODA PALMER GIVES REMINISCENCES

**Remarkable Woman, Who Has Just Passed Her One Hundredth Birthday, Recalls Some of the Events That Have Left Their Deepest Impression Upon Her Mind—Well Remembers the Geneva of Three-Quarters of a Century and More Ago.**

A feeling of sadness and loneliness steals over a person at the thought of outliving our day and generation, but this thought is dis-



Miss Rhoda Palmer.

pelled by a visit to Miss Rhoda Palmer of the Lyons Road, who, on Thursday, June 15th, reached her 100th birthday. One can hardly conceive what it means to be able to look back the most of those years, as she can, and note the changes that have taken place as the years have rolled by. It is a wonderful thing to have a memory such as hers at 100 years of age and a keen sense of the humorous, with a spirit back of it that still enjoys a joke and can give one. She still loves to read and occasionally writes, and is greatly interested in what is going on about her at this day and age. Miss Palmer has never worn glasses and her eyes are apparently as good as when many years younger.

kept a school for training boys for college which was on the east side of South Main street. His wife was an author, one of her books being "A New Home, who will Follow?" written after she left Geneva and went to live in New York. Their only son, who was very near sighted, accidentally stepped into the water when landing at New York and was drowned. Miss Palmer also remembered the Rev. Mr. Clark, who preached in the old Trinity church on the same site of the present Trinity church.

Among other notable people here was an Englishman by the name of Swales, who lived opposite the Experiment Station and owned nearly all the land around about down to the Loomis farm. Another of the sleepers in the old Pulteney Street Cemetery whom Miss Palmer knew was the Rev. Henry Axle, once pastor of the old and then only Presbyterian church in Geneva. A family by the name of Bogart lived in the house 63 Main street now occupied by William G. Dove. Miss Palmer told the story of his son-in-law, who stammered badly, who went to the doctor to get some pills. An old colored lady with the same affliction opened the door and one thought the other was mocking, so they proceeded to have a warm time.

Miss Palmer says the business part of Geneva along about 1836 was in the section around Pulteney Park. The stone house on Washington street now occupied by A. P. Rose was for a long time a land office. On the corner was the old Presbyterian church. The Sanitarium, now the Pulteney Apartments, was then the Geneva Hotel, where General Lafayette stopped in 1825 on his famous visit to Geneva. He was also at the old Franklin House, the site of which is now occupied by the Dorchester & Rose store. On the west side of

E  
B  
b  
w  
te

A visit with Miss Palmer is delightfully interesting, as she goes over some of the scenes and experiences of her childhood and girlhood. She is the daughter of Asa Palmer and Abigail Wooden, and comes from the good old English stock of Revolutionary times. Her grandfather, James Wooden, went all through the war of the Revolution, and was wounded in such a way as to leave him a cripple. Miss Palmer, at the age of 7 years, remembers him as he looked then.

When asked if she came from a long-lived family, she said her oldest sister lived to be 90 years of age; her father was over 80 and her mother 79. Not a remarkably long-lived family. In reply to the question as to what she attributed her long life she laughingly said she had done nothing out of the ordinary. Just lived a quiet, simple life in the country with the exception of a number of trips to different parts of the county when a girl. She has for an ancestor on her father's side Roger Williams, Asa Palmer being of the 6th generation following.

Miss Palmer's memory is wonderful. She occasionally is unable to tell the year in which some happenings were recorded, but that is not unlike many younger people. In many instances she remembers clearly the year. In speaking of the families of Geneva who a long through the years from 1825 on were considered the prominent people of Geneva, she mentioned Mr. Colt, who kept a dry goods store at the top of Colt's Hill, with his dwelling next. He had an only daughter who is buried in the Pulteney Street Cemetery, the first cemetery laid out in Geneva.

Ex-Governor Troup lived just west of the First Presbyterian church which site is now the Porter house, Washington street.

She also knew the father of the late Henry Loomis, who wore his hair long and braided down his back in the style of General Washington, but he did not wear the clothes of the same style as the General's.

At Mile Point lived a man by the name of Charles Williamson, whose father was a titled Scotchman. The son went to Scotland and upon his return went to California intending to buy a section of land for a Scotch colony or settlement. Before this was accomplished he died and now lies in the old Pulteney Street cemetery. Then, she said, there was a man by the name of Dwyght who was director of the bank, which was on the south side of Pulteney Park. There was, also, Mr. Kirkland, who

& Rose store. On the west side of Pulteney Park were dry goods stores. On the east side, where Mr. Bader now resides, was a Young Ladies' Seminary which Miss Palmer attended one winter. Other shops and stores were in this section. Near the old Methodist church on Seneca street was Hall's jewelry store. One door south of the Suydam block, about where the Gates' Furnishing Store now stands, was another jewelry store, kept by a Mr. Sweeney. What is now known as the Chipps or Geneva House, corner of Exchange and Lake streets, was in 1825 a hotel run by a Mr. Gillespie.

Geneva was then a small town, Seneca, Linden Lane, South Main street, Water or Exchange street, and a few others being nearly the size of the town. The Main school was on Geneva street. But a very few houses were on North Main street. The first Scotch Presbyterian church was on Seneca street.

The newspapers of the town in those days were the Geneva Gazette, Mr. Bogart, editor, and the Geneva Palladium. This was about 1836. The postoffice was near Dr. Covert's present office.

Among other reminiscences given by Miss Palmer were these: She remembered the time when the first white men crossed the Rocky Mountains. They were Lewis and Clark, missionaries. They held a meeting in the old Methodist church on Castle street in about 1836, with some flathead Indians present. She does not remember the purpose of the conference. A nephew of Red Jacket, the Indian chief, whose name was Peter Wilson, graduated from the Medical College, which stood just above the house now occupied by H. H. Henderson. He married a white girl, a Miss Collier, of Geneva. The last known of him was that he lived on the Indian Reservation near Buffalo.

She also saw graduate the first woman student from the Medical College. The Commencement exercises and all Fourth of July speeches were held in the old Presbyterian church. Peter Wilson, she thought, graduated the same year. Miss Palmer saw the launching of the first steamboat on Seneca lake. The name as she remembered, was Seneca Chief.

She spoke of the time the old Scotch church, which was on the corner of Castle and Genesee streets, where the Y. M. C. A. now stands, was in its glory, and when her brother-in-law, John Simpson, was choir leader there. Mr. Simpson's home and cabinet shop in 1835 was on

Exchange street about where the Baumgartner market is now. These buildings took fire and, as there were no fire companies then, a leather bucket brigade was formed which reached to the lake and the water was passed along in that manner.

Miss Palmer said she did not remember, but she knew a woman once who did remember, when the first person was buried in the Pulteney Street Cemetery. Another interesting thing that comes to her mind is the time when there were no roads or canals and when the stages ran from New York to Albany, and from Albany to Buffalo. All the way were toll gates at intervals. Five miles out from Geneva to Lyons was a plank road and five miles from Lyons toward Geneva was a plank road, but there was a space without planks between. She smiled at the pleasant remembrance of seeing the stage come in with its four horses and the driver blowing his horn as they came swiftly in from the west and east, stopping at the Geneva House, later known as the Sanitarium, and at the Franklin House.

An amusing incident and the telling of which illustrates Miss Palmer's ability to see the funny side of a thing, was her meeting with that famous, eccentric, wander-

"Child, the Lord never even heard of you."

Miss Palmer also spoke of a man by the name of Ray, who lived here and who was something of a poet. She quoted a line or two of one of his poems dedicated to Geneva. They were:

"Thy sons and thy beautiful daughters,  
Find peace and plenty focking at thy doors."

She also spoke of times when she was a little girl, when the Indians would camp in the woods round about Geneva and her home for weeks, and she visited the camps. Once four squaws and a papoose slept all night on their kitchen floor. Again she mentioned the name of Red Jacket and said he could speak French and English fluently, but was too proud to use the languages except when he was intoxicated. He stopped at one time at a public house west of Rochester, which was kept by Miss Palmer's uncle. She said a man once asked him his age and he compared himself to the hemlock, whose top dies first, as his hair had become thin on top. He said: "I'm like the aged hemlock. The frosts of 70 winters have whistled through my branches. My top is dead."

During the conversation with Miss Palmer, after giving these reminiscences of Geneva, she, in reply to a

road was first built Miss Palmer rode from Marshall to the southern part of Michigan, and was the only passenger on the train. There was only one building on the railroad and that was where they took on wood for the engine. All the rest of the country was woods.

The summer Miss Palmer was 21 she went to Chicago. She was three weeks going. She went by the Erie Canal and steamboat on the lakes. There were head winds most of the way. Once the boat ran aground and it took 24 hours to get it off. There were several hundred people on board and the passengers would run first to one side of the boat and then to the other until they worked it loose from the bottom. On this trip on the lakes she saw Indians in their bark canoes fishing. She passed two large islands where the people made their living by furnishing wood for the steamboats, drawing it to the landings by oxen. When in Chicago she one day stood on a draw bridge where boats were passing through when a steamboat which was towing a schooner, blew up. The air was so full of splinters she could hardly see. In just a few moments over a thousand people had gathered for the sound was heard for miles. When she first saw Chicago it had but 6,000 inhabitants. It was just a straggly little village with an old French fort.

with that famous, eccentric, wandering preacher of Maine, Lorenzo Dow. She went to hear him preach in a grove that was on the ground now occupied by the Church Home, Pulteney street. He went through the country on horseback. She said at this meeting two men were present who tried to have a little sport with Lorenzo Dow. The name of one was Root and the other Bush. They asked Mr. Dow what Heaven was like. He said, "It is a smooth, even plain with neither root or bush on it."

Miss Palmer's father, who was a Quaker, was also a strong Abolitionist. "She said, "Father was a great anti-slavery man. There used to be slaves in this state, but they were freed by Legislature in 1826. I remember slaves coming to our home and then they would be sent on to another abolitionist, and so on, until they reached Lake Ontario." Miss Palmer told of hearing the old colored woman called Sojourner Truth, so-called because she believed in sojourning and preaching through the country. In one of her meetings a man arose who was in favor of slavery. He said to her that he would be afraid to preach the doctrine of anti-slavery for fear God would "drop him dead." Sojourner told him when God wanted any dirty little job done he chose a colored person to do it, so she proceeded to "lay him out." She told him

of Geneva, she, in reply to a question said that in her younger days she had taken several trips. She had visited Philadelphia, been several times to New York, had been in Vermont, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, etc. These trips, especially West, were when the country was new and Miss Palmer said she had had many strange experiences. Once when visiting Miss Jane Haviland, a friend, who moved from Geneva to Indiana, she and Miss Haviland in a buggy forded a river so deep that the horse had to swim across. While visiting these friends she and Mrs. Haviland drove from Mrs. Haviland's home to Michigan, a distance of 200 miles. They made 40 miles a day. It took them five days going and five days to return.

On one of her trips in the west, as they traveled a blazed trail, which was the usual roadway—marking the trees to show the trail—they got out of the main road for several miles and were obliged to go back and find the trail. On the way they stopped at a community. These communities were to be found occasionally. People settled in groups for a time and then moved on. They found this one deserted except for one man. He gave them their dinner and when Miss Palmer offered to pay for it he said he was "sorry" and "lay him out." She told him

French fort.

Another trip taken by Miss Palmer was from Brockport to Geneva. She came from Brockport to Rochester on a packet. The canal was frozen up and they could hardly get through. The first time she saw Niagara Falls was in 1840, when she went to Buffalo via the Erie Canal. On the return trip coming down from Niagara Falls she saw on the highway, which was near the canal, a drove of yearling buffaloes which had been bought by P. T. Barnum and were being sent to Hoboken. From Hoboken they were sent to Europe. From Rochester Miss Palmer came by stage. There were three seats with three passengers on each seat and two with the driver in front. Four horses were attached.

On Sunday, June 18th, 1916, Miss Palmer's nephew, who came from Michigan to help celebrate her 100th birthday, took her in an automobile to see her old home and birthplace on the Lyons Road and then brought her to Geneva, riding a distance of eight and one-half miles.

The organization of the Woman's Suffrage movement also comes within the memory of Miss Palmer. It was the first suffrage convention held in this or any other country and was held at Seneca Falls in 1848. Miss Palmer is one of the original members, and is the only living one. Among the noted speak-

(Continued on Page 2).

