

Letter written by Amelia Cole Hayes about her life, Standish MI, 30 May 1943
Arenac County Scrapbook
Contributed by Eric Alli

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Letter written by Amelia Cole Hayes about her life

Standish, Michigan
May 30, 1943

Amelia Ann Hayes
Born at Erie, Pennsylvania on May 27, 1863
Daughter of Betsy Wilkins and Amasa Cole

Betsy Wilkins was twenty years old and two days after Amelia Ann was born. Amasa Cole and Betsy Wilkins born in Pennsylvania. In the teamster business for self. Betsy had one other child by Amasa, Truman H. Cole born at Erie who was eighteen months younger than Amelia, and died at Lincoln, Michigan on September 12, 1941.

Amasa Cole, Amelia's father, died of appendicitis in Erie, Pennsylvania 2 years after Amelia Ann's birth. Her brother, Truman was four months old when his father died.

Widowed, Betsy came to Michigan soon after his death, bringing her two children (Amelia and Truman) to Michigan where she then made a home. She left her children with her parents, Oscar and Amelia Wilkins in the town of Azalia, Michigan. Oscar and Amelia had five children of their own: Asa, Almeron Ambrose, Perry, Sardius, and Betsy.

Asa, their oldest, was a soldier for the Union Army and died at Andersonville Prison in Andersonville, Georgia.

The Wilkins family bought a farm in London Twp. in Monroe County, Michigan when I was four. They cleared the land. I grew up there, going to school one year in Milan, Michigan walking one and a half miles to school.

My mother (Betsy Wilkins) then married to Charles Canfield, when I was twelve and I lived with them to go to school. It was six miles to go to school, Truman and I used to walk back and forth. Hard five school years.

When I was fifteen, December 25, 1878 I was married at Azalia by a Methodist-Baptist minister to Sanford E. Hayes. The following March, went to Minden, Nebraska where we homesteaded, built a sod house. The house was 10 X 14. We lived there four years. Two children were born. First was Asa who died at two months. Ben was born two years later. Sanford Sr. came one month later and lived three miles from us - had sold

out everything, chartered a car, took stock dogs, etc. with him. We moved to Gibbon in Buffalo County, Nebraska, 22 miles from the homestead, when Ben was five months old. (December 1862) Sanford Sr.'s wife died when Ben was five months and we took their children and entire family with us. Both Sanford Sr. and Sanford Jr. took theological courses at Gibbon Baptist Seminary.

We lived in the basement of the Seminary, while we built a home. Sanford and family lived in our house. He had children: Bert, Mary, Olive, Clara, Sanford and Rutherford.

I worked in the girls dormitory, cooking and feeding for forty girls paying his way through school. He did chores, marketing, etc. to help and he studied hard one year working.

When home was done, we moved in with Sanford Sr. Then Sanford Sr. and Sanford Jr. graduated and about a year or more in Gibbon then moved to Ann Arbor when Ben was two years old.

In Ann Arbor we rented on Huron Street. Sanford went to law school one year. His eyes gave out with granulation so a classmate, Ralph Horth would come and lead him back and forth to classes. He was nearly blind for three months. Earl was born Oct. 10 in Ann Arbor. In the 1880's we came to Arenac County when Earl was two years old. Landed in Sterling and rode on a wagonload of hardware to Al's place east of Maple Ridge in the winter. Very muddy twelve miles.

Stayed there a week until family moved out of Chatterson place. When we arrived at Uncle Al's. Both children, Ben and Earl had the croup (respiratory disease).

Furniture, what there was, had been shipped consisted of wash tub full of dishes, one bed, a rocking chair and one wood bucket full of diapers.

We bought a home later, Whittings in Maple Ridge. Father taught school, was the Town Clerk and had post office (was Postmaster). Lived in Putnam house while they were in a lumber camp for the winter. They came home unexpectedly early. Could move in but did not insist. My mother with us, we moved into a log home drifted full of snow. Got stove up, blizzard came on. Theo born that night. Two children frosted their feet. Glass of water between me and the stove. Little kitchen stove froze. The doctor came but baby was born. We had no doctor for the first five. We came to Standish in 1893 after father was elected Prosecuting Attorney. He stayed with Pomeroy's (family friends).

We now have five children, had nine. One born in Nebraska, one in Azalia and two here in Standish. We have 13 grandchildren, and twenty-one grandchildren.

My father was about 23 or 25 when he died. Mother 62 when she died. Had four husbands by the names of Cole, Canfield, Brundrige, and Marrion.