

NEVER LOOK BACK

George William Fowler



Never Look Back



William Enzor Fowler at the old Ottawa Lake, Michigan, home built by his father in 1865

Never Look Back

George William Fowler

Sleeping Doll Press

Ford County, Kansas
Mountain View, California

Copyright © 1988 George William Fowler
Portions Copyright © 1967 Emma Eudora Fowler McJones
Portions Copyright © 1890 Eudora Ellen Fowler Baker
Portions Copyright © 2020 Paul Robert McJones

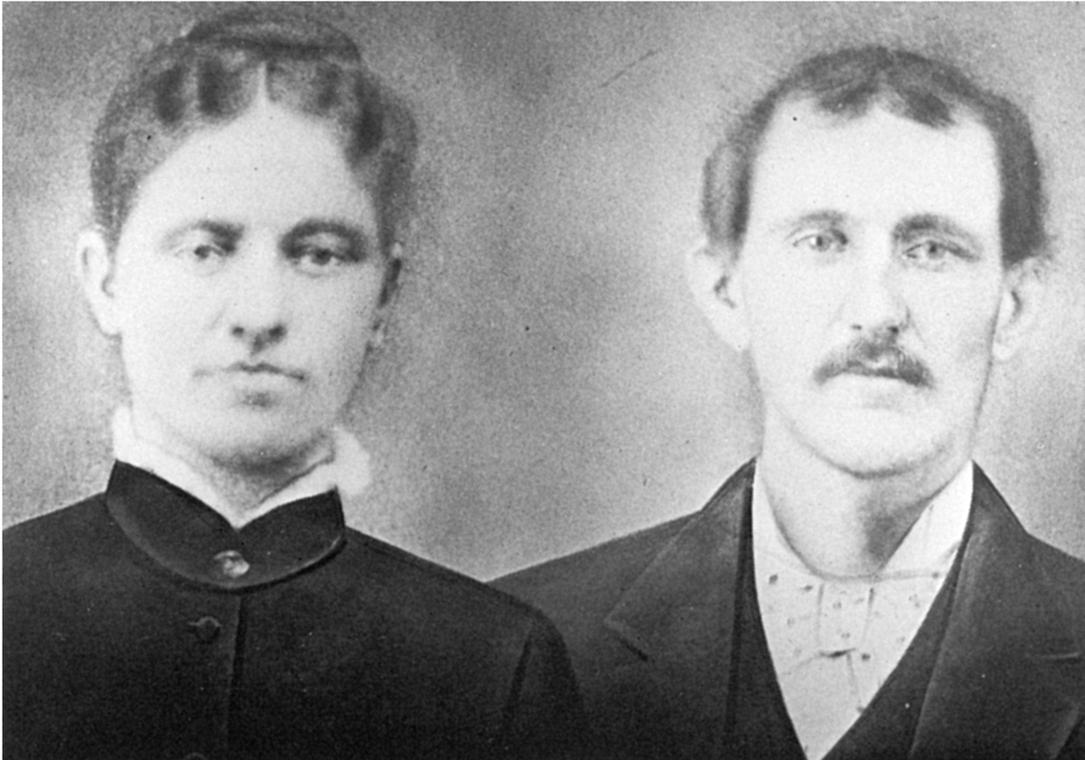
This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.

First printing, March 2020

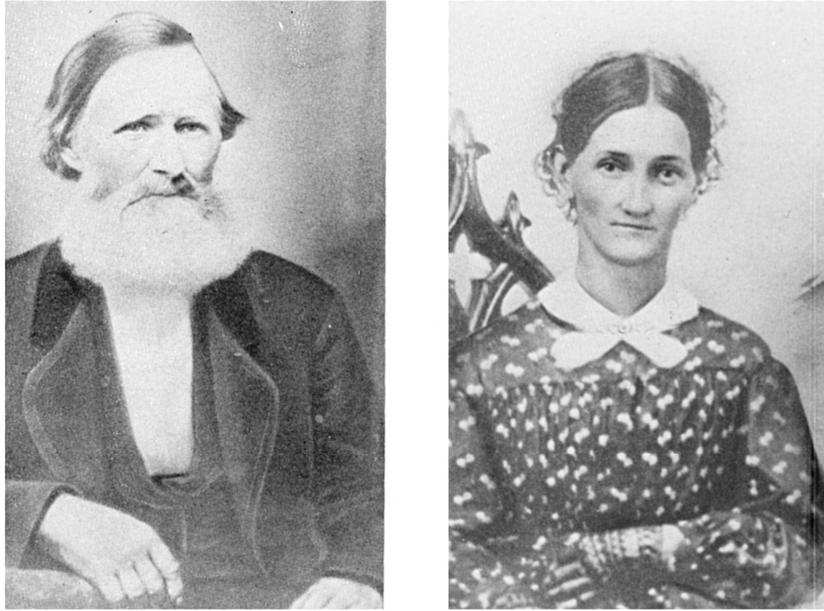
Dedication

Although this book is dedicated to all homesteaders in general and to the memory of my father and mother in particular, it is written for my children, their children, and their children's children, in the hopes that it will remind them of the stock from which they came, and also as a history of an era that is past and alas, may never be repeated.

If it inspires in them a pride in their simple birth and a new faith in the future, my reward will be ample. If others of the present or future generations receive an inspiration or some enjoyment from it, it will be a gratuity to me for my efforts.



William Enzor Fowler and Sarah Ellen Gerber – married February 3, 1881, Whiteford Center, Monroe County, Michigan



George Fowler 1818-1905 and Carolyn Varner 1823-1870 – married 1841 in Pennsylvania



Jacob Gerber (1816-1893) and Elizabeth Zbären (1820-1881) – married 1845 in Munster Cathedral, Berne, Switzerland

Contents

Foreword	ix
Preface	xi
1 A Strange Land	1
2 The Blizzard of 1886	3
3 Nesters Go Home: A Shotgun Confrontation	5
4 Encounter with Thompson	7
5 Prairie Fire!	9
6 The Move to the River	13
7 The Country School	17
8 Tragedy Comes to the Home	19
9 Drought and Grasshoppers	23
10 Mysterious Horse Disease	25
11 On Thrift, Keeping Your Word, Religion, and Morality	29
12 The Family Breaks Up	33
13 World War I Comes to Ford County, Kansas	37
14 The War Years; A Mother's Foreboding	39
15 In Conclusion	41
About the Author	45
Emma Fowler McJones: The Mystery of the Sleeping Doll	47
Eudora Fowler Baker: George Fowler (1818-1905)	49
Fowler-Gerber genealogy	51

Foreword

Never Look Back was written by George William Fowler near the end of his life, and was printed by his children shortly after his death. Enough copies were printed to distribute it fairly widely to the next two generations of Fowler descendants. Now, some three decades later, there are new generations to read it and new ways to read books. This new edition¹ includes the text and photographs from the original edition plus three new appendices:

- i an account by George's sister Emma Eudora (Fowler) McJones of life with the Fowlers around the turn of the twentieth century: "The Mystery of the Sleeping Doll";
- ii a biography of William Enzor Fowler's father George Fowler, written by William's sister Eudora Ellen (Fowler) Baker;
- iii a brief genealogy of William Enzor and Sarah Ellen (Gerber) Fowler.

My father Robert Wayne McJones, son of Emma and nephew of George, purchased copies of *Never Look Back* for each of his four sons. In the late 1990s, as part of an effort to create an archive of family history materials, he digitized the text of the book. After I retired in 2009 I took up his archival work and digitized Emma's photograph collection, leading to the discovery of the two typewritten pages of "The Mystery of the Sleeping Doll". I hope this book will find an audience of Fowler descendants and others interested in a first-hand account of Kansas pioneers of the late nineteenth century.

Paul McJones
Mountain View, California
March 2020

¹A free PDF is available at <https://mcjones.org/Fowler/>.

Preface

NEVER LOOK BACK

The Bible tells the story of Lot's wife, who, looking back to the home she was leaving, was transformed into a pillar of salt. This is the story of a pioneer mother of Western Kansas taking an invalid husband and two daughters, one a babe in arms, to a homestead in a strange land, who never found time to look back.

Although it is the personal history of the author's parents, it could with variations be applied to thousands of other pioneers, who, braving the loneliness and dangers of a strange, harsh land: built homes, schools and churches; fought prairie fires and the scourges of drought and grasshoppers; but never lost faith in God, country, or their own ability to cope with disaster.

We, who today have education force-fed to our children, are often unable to understand the fierce desire that our forefathers had for knowledge. Every page of printed matter, be it an almanac or a calendar, was saved to be studied.

Sarah Ellen Gerber was born December 29, 1858, in Toledo, Ohio; her parents having emigrated from Berne, Switzerland, in the early eighteen fifties.

Her parents being poor, at an early age she hired out to a Mrs. Armstrong to do housework; her education was received in the German Lutheran Church. Sarah Gerber was confirmed at the age of twelve in the Lutheran Church and her education was thus begun in German, but she was determined to write and use English in the home. One of my fondest recollections as a lad was seeing my mother reading a book about the life of Abe Lincoln—holding the book in her left hand while using the right hand to raise and lower the churn dasher, and every so often chuckling to herself at some joke or anecdote of Lincoln's. It is easy to see now why Lincoln became her idol. She must have felt a kinship with him while reading of his struggle to educate himself.

Her faith in her family, God, and Kansas never faltered and if her loyalties had ever had to have been tested on a priority basis, there is no doubt they would have followed in that order.

William E. Fowler, who had only a few months of formal school, had the same passion for learning, but sensed the need for more practical purposes and educated himself to better cope with earning a living. He had learned the carpenter trade from his father, who had built several water-powered grist mills and he loved carpenter tools and cared for them accordingly. I still have some of the rabbit planes that his father had given him. They are handshaped from beechwood and the blades forged, ground and tempered by a blacksmith from steel files.

Chapter 1

A Strange Land

On a bright autumn day in 1885, a Santa Fe train pulled up to the station at Spearville, Kansas, and after unloading a family of four at the depot and switching an immigrant car to the siding, chugged noisily westward to Dodge City, leaving the Fowler family in a strange land.

William E. Fowler was born in Licking County, Ohio, March 4, 1860, the youngest child of George and Caroline (nee Varner) Fowler.

William came from pioneer stock, his great-grandfather, Benjamin Fowler, having served as a young soldier with the British General Cornwallis, and after Cornwallis' surrender to George Washington at Yorktown, he settled in the Wyoming Valley in Pennsylvania.

William's mother was Caroline Varner and she was of Pennsylvania Dutch stock, her grandfather Varner having served with Washington in the Revolutionary War as a member of the Pennsylvania cavalry.

William's father George Fowler was a large rugged man, living to the age of 86. He was a millwright by trade and during his stay in Ohio, he built several water-powered gristmills. He served with the Union during the Civil War, recruiting his own Ohio company.

At the end of the war he moved to a farm in Southern Michigan, a few miles across the Ohio State line from Toledo, Ohio and into the town of Ottawa Lake, where his wife Caroline died in 1871.

William E. Fowler and Sarah E. Gerber were married in the Lutheran Church at Whiteford Center, Michigan, February 3, 1881, and settled on a farm near Ottawa Lake, where the two oldest daughters, Caroline and Cora, were born.¹

About one year before coming to Kansas, William had a long illness of rheumatic fever, and his doctor told him he must move from Michigan to a higher altitude and a dryer climate, so hearing of the homestead lands in western Kansas, he and Sarah decided to make their home there.

They also found that the Santa Fe Railroad was running so-called "immigrant trains" to Kansas, giving a low family rate and transporting a limited amount of personal property, which was carried in box cars on the same train as the passenger cars. It was an arduous method of travel, as the families ate and slept on the trains, getting very little sleep or rest. Worn out from a long ride in a railroad car with wooden seats, the Fowlers had no time to be lonely; already the nights were becoming cold and there was much to be done.

First, to find a place for Sarah and the girls, Caroline, age 3, and Cora, a babe in arms, born January 8th of that year, locate land, build a shelter, file a claim and have food and fuel hauled to the claim to get ready for winter.

The Santa Fe Railroad had reached Dodge City in 1872 and the homesteaders followed the rails, filing claims on all land near the towns. Luckily for the Fowler family, a new tract of land, known as

¹See the photograph opposite the title page.

the Osage Strip, was opened for homesteading.

This was part of what had been the Fort Dodge Military Reservation, which the Osage Indians had ceded to the United States government, and when in 1882, Fort Dodge was abandoned as a military reservation, the government had given the Fort Dodge property and some of the adjoining land to the state of Kansas for a state soldier's home for Civil War veterans; the balance was opened up for homesteads.

Due to a conflict in early surveys, a long narrow strip of this reservation extended due east from Dodge City, on the north side of the Arkansas River, to north of the present town of Ford, and it was on the southeast $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 17, Township 27, Range 22, three miles north of the river, that William E. Fowler and family were located by an agent who performed such services.

Checking his resources, William found that they had a stove, a bed, a handmade cradle for the baby, bed clothes and some warm clothing, his carpenter tools and two hundred dollars in cash. With the money, he must pay a filing fee, buy lumber for a house, buy food and fuel and have it freighted the ten miles south from Spearville to the claim.

But the weather held nice that fall of 1885, and before Christmas, they were settled in the new home, anxious for spring to come in order that they could plow the land and plant the seeds they had brought with them from Michigan.

Chapter 2

The Blizzard of 1886

A spit of rain, a rising gale,
Then sleet that cuts like icy hail,
Drive in the stock before they stray,
Or they'll be lost, by end of day,
No luck, they drift, helter, skelter,
No chance to get them back to shelter,

You turn your horse's head for home,
But find you are lost in the blinding storm,
You loosen the reins and say a prayer,
And hope your pony will know the way,
Your wise horse turns his head to the Storm,
And you finally see the shape of a barn,
You unsaddle your mount and feed him hay,
And thank the Lord that he knew the way.

* * * * *

New Year's Day, 1886, will go down in Kansas history as the Great Kansas Blizzard.

Not only was it the worst in duration and low temperatures but the most disastrous to the homesteaders and the livestock because they were unwarned and unprepared for its coming. Newspaper accounts of this storm tell of men becoming lost a short distance from shelter and the bodies not found until a week later, of oxen frozen stiff standing in their yokes. Cattlemen, who at Christmas time in 1885 were wealthy, discovered a few days later that they were bankrupt, and it was recorded that after the storm, one could walk from Dodge City to Cimarron, a distance of twenty miles, on the dead carcasses of cattle, without touching ground.

Due to a combination of luck and good management, the Fowler family survived, because a few days before Christmas, William had hired a man to bring a load of coal to the homestead and had it piled beside the door of the house.

At the time the shanty was built, there were no hinges to be had at Spearville and William had fitted the door to the casing or frame and fastened in in place with nails driven in the casement. As the storm reached the height of its fury, he and Sarah sat vigil at the combination heating and cook stove and stoked it night and day. William would remove the door from the frame and refill the coal scuttle without going out into the storm.

They moved the bed and cradle near the stove and covered the two small girls with all the bedding and clothing they had, and the family survived, although a bucket of water sitting on the floor near the

stove froze over with ice. At that time, having no stock to care for, they stayed inside and survived.

Chapter 3

Nesters Go Home: A Shotgun Confrontation

Although the first Herd Law requiring owners of livestock to fence their ranges was enacted in Kansas in 1872, it was a county option law enacted by the county commissioners of each county, and some western counties had open range until the middle nineteen thirties. In spite of the fact that Ford County had a Herd Law enacted in 1880 requiring livestock owners to herd their stock or fence the pastures, it was resented by many of the cattlemen of that time, who, having used free range for many years, felt they had a vested right to all unfenced land. This lingering resentment often caused quarrels, and in some cases, bloodshed between the ranchers and the homesteaders, whom the cowmen often referred to as Nesters. Sarah and William Fowler had one such confrontation while proving up their claim and Sarah's nerve won the match.

Although they had many fine neighbors with cattle who respected the legal rights of the settlers, there was, in most localities, one or more characters who attempted to drive out the homesteaders with gun play or threats of gun play. One such man had his ranch headquarters a few miles from the Fowler homestead and had assembled a herd mostly by picking up unbranded strays and depended on boys to herd for him.

William had harvested a small crop of cane hay which he had stacked near the barn, and the rancher's cattle found it one night and had eaten or destroyed most of it. Sarah and William managed to drive some of the cows into a stout corral, and closing the gate, William had put a chain and padlock on the gate and waited for the owner to appear.

The same day, two boys on horseback came looking for the cattle, and William informed them there were damage charges to be paid and for them to bring the boss. They departed and a few hours later returned with the owner riding ahead with a shotgun carried across the pommel of his saddle. Without a word of greeting, he rode by William who was standing in the yard, and upon seeing a padlock on the gate, said in a harsh voice, "I came to get my cattle or die." William, sensing a grand stand play, replied, "You may die before you get your stock without paying damages." The rancher then broke into a foul outcry about the nesters who had no right to live here and who planted a little feed just to stick the cowman. To which William replied, "Hold your horses, you say I want to stick you, but you have never asked how much damages I want.

The Fowlers had brought a muzzle loading shotgun with them from Michigan, which they kept loaded with buckshot just in case a coyote came too near to the henhouse, and hearing the threats, Sarah came from the house with the gun and offered to hand it to William, but he refused to take it saying it was a friendly argument that could not be settled with guns.

At this point the bluffing cowman lost his nerve and turned to Sarah and said, "Why, Mrs. Fowler,

if this gun is causing trouble I will take it out and bury it in the sand. I just happened to have it with me because I have been hunting rabbits. Sarah replied in her firm voice, "Perhaps you had better do just that, as it does not look good carrying a gun and making threats about getting cattle or dying. Completely at a loss for words, he and his riders rode out of gunshot range, and he sent the boys back to find out the amount of the damages. Then sending them back the second time with the money, he rode away leaving his riders to drive the cattle home.

A short time after this incident, he disposed of his herd and left for parts unknown; however, there were many owners who could not find missing stock.

It has often been said that in those times no one had money for a lawyer or even the paper on which to write a contract. They had to live by their word, and if that was no good, they were soon known as fourflushers, and no one would deal with them or help them.

Chapter 4

Encounter with Thompson

William Fowler had one other encounter with a rough character of that time.

About a year after the Fowlers' coming to Kansas, a boyhood friend from Michigan, by the name of Jordan, came for a visit and decided he would like to stay and homestead a claim.

At that time, every parcel of land in eastern Ford County had been claimed as a homestead, but there were cases where the homesteaders had deserted the claims and such land could be legally contested because no one was living on them. In such cases, the filing of a contest was a mere formality as the land was vacant, and if no one showed for the hearing, the land was given to the new settler. There was also a provision in the Homestead Act for a widow to homestead under what was known as a widow's dower. This provision was often violated by a married woman claiming she was a widow and both she and the husband claiming a quarter of land.

William Fowler told his friend Jordan that the 160 acres adjoining his homestead on the south was filed on by a woman who, claiming to be a widow, was in fact living with her husband, a man named Thompson, on his claim some miles away, and that it could be successfully contested. Jordan put a small shack on the land and moved in a cot and an old cast iron stove and traveled to the land office at Dodge City and filed a contest on the claim.

In a few days, Thompson, the husband of the woman, came by and seeing the shack, entered and broke up the stove, and then came riding a mule to the top of the hill near the Fowler homestead firing a six shooter and yelling that no yellow bellied tenderfoot could contest a claim that he had an interest in.

Jordan was at the Fowler home during this time, and after Thompson had made a second trip to the top of the hill, returning and beating on the old stove between trips, Jordan became panicky, and grabbing William's squirrel rifle from above the door, ran out to the foot of the hill and laid down behind a clump of red top bunch grass that grew on the sand hills at that time. William Fowler tried to stop him but he was both mad and frightened and told William to mind his own business, that this was his fight and he wanted no help or advice. The shack was hidden by a small hill and Jordan waited for some time, but Thompson never came back, but rode south out of sight.

It was never known whether he had seen Jordan come out with the rifle or had tired of his rampage, but it was a lucky break for Thompson that he did not return, for Jordan was a dead shot with a squirrel rifle and he was in no frame of mind for further needling.

When evening came, Jordan announced that he was returning to Michigan, and although William urged him to stay telling him that Thompson was a fourflusher and a bluff, he would not change his mind saying that the land was not worth fighting for and that he would only cause trouble for his friends, the Fowlers, who were trying to make a home.

The nearest railroad was at Spearville, Kansas, and William told him that if he would wait until

morning he would take him there, but he insisted on leaving as soon as it became dark, and after reaching Michigan, he wrote that he had walked all the way to Kinsley to take a train, a distance of about twenty-five miles, because he feared that Thompson would waylay him on the trail to Spearville.

William wondered what Thompson's reaction would be, knowing that Jordan was William's friend, and the showdown came a few weeks later. The first bridge was being built across the Arkansas River north of Ford, and William was working with the crew that was building it, walking to work in the morning, taking along his noon day lunch, and walking home in the evening.

Returning from work one evening at about sundown, he saw Thompson coming toward him from the north riding a mule wearing a collar and hames with a big six shooter hanging from one hame. The trail was just two wagon tracks, and it was the custom of that time that on meeting another vehicle, to pull to the right hand track allowing the oncoming team to have half of the trail. In case one vehicle was a loaded wagon and the other was a light buggy or buckboard, courtesy called for the light rig to pull off to the right and give the entire road to the heavy loaded wagon.

William was walking in the left hand track at the time he first saw Thompson, and when he was a short distance away he stepped over to his side of the road. No sooner had he done this when he saw Thompson deliberately guide his mule over into the same path, and William knew that if he gave any more ground that Thompson would run him out of the county. Standing his ground he grabbed the mule's bridle and jerked him to one side saying, "Would you let your dumb jackass ride right over a man?"

Thompson had jumped from the mule, but he was farther from the gun that was hanging on the hame and realized that William could beat him to it, so his first words were, "Don't give Cook a damn cent," referring to a good neighbor of the Fowlers. William replied, "You act like a madman. I don't know what you are talking about." He was told by Thompson that he was only warning him that a neighbor was begging and that he was better off than his neighbors.

William believed at that time that Thompson was just a bluff and fourflusher, but found out years later that he had indeed been a bad man and a gunfighter. He had killed a marshall at Abilene, Kansas several years before and had engaged in several deadly gunfights at Austin, Texas, and Dodge City, when he was a hired gunfighter for some ruthless cattle barons.

This story came back to the author's mind a short time ago while passing the land that Jordan had said was not worth fighting for, seeing an irrigation wheel slowly spraying the sandy soil, and hearing that it had recently sold for \$500 per acre.

Chapter 5

Prairie Fire!

As the homesteaders learned to cope with winter storms by lining their homes and building shelters for the livestock, another phenomenon of the plains, prairie fires, threatened their ability to survive.

Prairie fires had occurred in the western plains from the time that the Indians and trappers first brought fire to the West, and even before, being caused by lightning, but during the decade of 1885–1895, conditions seemed to favor their origin and they caused the greatest damage. Often started by careless campers or by sparks from railroad locomotives, even from a hot box on an overloaded box car, with unfavorable wind conditions, the fire would spread and cover whole townships, destroying all vegetation and any unprotected homes in their path.

William and Sarah Fowler suffered losses from two such conflagrations, the worst of which started near Spearville, about twelve miles north of the homestead, and burned out at the banks of the Arkansas River, a distance of about fifteen miles from its point of origin.

It occurred in the late fall, after the buffalo grass had dried, and fanned by a north wind with a velocity of 45 miles per hour, the fire destroyed everything in its path.

It was on a Sunday afternoon and William had walked to visit a neighbor who lived about one-half mile north. When seeing the smoke cloud, he started running south toward home, but before getting there the head fire passed him and he escaped the flames by getting onto a small field of plowed ground.

By the time he reached the homestead, the hay roof of the barn was on fire, and he saw Sarah holding their team of horses in the corral to keep them from panicking and going back into the burning barn. The barn was a total loss together with a set of harness and all the feed, and a brood sow in a pen nearby had her legs so badly burned they butchered her at once to save some pork from the disaster.

As was the practice of all thrifty nesters, they had gathered a large stock of cow chips for winter fuel and piled them near the house. They had caught fire and for three days, the Fowlers drew water from a sixty foot open well, using a rope and bucket, trying to extinguish the fire in the chips, but to no avail. They lost all of the winter fuel, which could not be replaced because every chip remaining on the prairie near the homestead had been consumed by the fire.

Western Kansas homesteaders learned from bitter experience how to fight prairie fires. It was an unwritten law that whenever one saw a cloud of smoke in the sky, no matter how far away, he dropped whatever he was doing and rushed to help his neighbor.

Hitching a team to a wagon, they would load some oak barrels in the wagon filled with water, a plow, and a can of kerosene together with torches made by tying a rag to a stiff piece of wire; then they drove as fast as possible without upsetting the water barrels to the nearest flank of the blaze. It was useless to try and fight the fire from the front, but they would try and contain it by outflanking



Cora Mae, Caroline Elizabeth, Lena Beatrice, and Emma Eudora Fowler

the main blaze. Arriving near the fire the men unhitched the teams from the wagons and put them to the plows and began plowing a furrow, always throwing the upturned sod toward the fire.

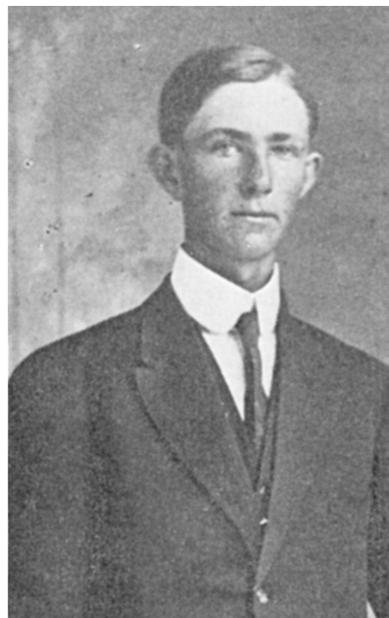
The women would light rag torches dipped in kerosene, or as it was then called, coal oil, and set backfires between the furrows and the raging fire, thus starting what was known as a backfire and burning a wider guard. The children would grab gunny sacks (burlap bags), dip them in water and walk along the furrow, and beat out any flames from the backfire that jumped across the furrows.

Another hazard was burning cow chips that would be picked up by a strong breeze and carried across the furrows, as a large fire would create its own drafts causing whirlwinds and dust devils.

It was hot, choking work, and sometimes lasted far into the night, but no one deserted until the job was finished. It was this neighborly cooperation that took much of the terror and destruction from a common enemy, and it also cultivated a good feeling among neighbors and cemented life-long friendships. Alas, that today, when folks are too busy to be civil to their next door neighbors, we seem unable to make life-long friends through sharing common adversaries.



George William Fowler



William Christopher Fowler



Clarence Caleb Fowler



Lester Frederick Fowler

Fowler brothers

Chapter 6

The Move to the River

The first turn in Sarah and William's fortune came in the early 1890s during a drought and depression. Sarah had received a small inheritance from her parents' estate in Toledo, Ohio, and had used the money to buy a few head of milk cows. Also following the custom of most of the homesteaders, they had mortgaged the homestead and had purchased a team of Morgan mares and some farm equipment. Then came the first great drought. Weather records show that Dodge City recorded only 10 inches of precipitation in 1893 and 12.6 inches in 1894, which were the two driest successive years since records have been kept. Forage and grain crops shriveled up in the heat and the prairies were scorched by prairie fires. Claims were deserted as the homesteaders sold their livestock and personal belongings and began the sad trek "back East."

Then from out of the black cloud of despair, there came a golden opportunity for those quick to recognize it. A quarter section of school land in Section 36, Township 27, Range 22 had been purchased by a man who had improved it by planting alfalfa and every type of fruit tree and berry bush that was available at that time. This land laid in the Arkansas River bottom, northeast of Ford, and had a lot of native river hay land adjoining it.

The owner had been a major in the Union army drawing a pension of \$75 per month, which was considered a fortune at that time. He should have become wealthy, but he had no talent for the drudgery of farming, spending his money on Hambletonian harness horses and wolf hounds and his time chasing coyotes and racing. He also boasted of being an atheist and a disciple of Robert Ingersoll. In addition, he was an inventor of sorts and a promoter of irrigation, numbering among his inventions an Infidel Pump and a Devil's Air Motor Windmill.

He had been elected Treasurer of a newly organized school district, and after spending \$200 of the district funds, had gone to Kansas City. The other two members of the school board were on his bond, and fearing they would be required to make good the shortage in school funds, had come to William Fowler and stated that if he would put up the \$200 they would have the missing treasurer assign his land contract to him. This was accomplished, and the Fowler family moved to the river valley farm that was to be their home for the rest of their lives.

It should be noted that at the time that Kansas was admitted to the Union, Congress had granted to the state for aid to schools, Sections 16 and 36 of each township, which were called state school land. These lands were sold to families for the minimum appraised value of \$1.25 per acre, with long time terms and interest at the rate of 4% per annum. The proceeds were kept by the state in what for many years was known as the permanent school fund, with the interest each year being distributed to all common school districts on a per pupil basis. However, to qualify for ownership of such lands, it must be occupied as a family home.

On moving to the new location, the Fowlers found the place deserted, except for a Hambletonian



George W. Fowler on “Billy” — 1914

stallion registered under the name of “Go On.” He was so vicious that he was confined in a box stall tethered with a long rope attached to a windlass which was used to lead him back into the stall. William had a natural talent with horses, being by nature both firm and gentle, and he soon had “Go-On” well trained, and for many years most of the foals in the neighborhood were sired by the Hambletonian.

The horses of the late 1890s, before the days of the Clydesdales and Percherons, who were needed for heavy field work, were especially adapted to the needs of the homesteaders. They were mostly Morgans, a carriage type horse suitable for traveling the long distances to towns and markets, but sturdy enough to do light field work; or western mustangs, a small animal of tireless energy used in handling cattle.

During those early years, William always had a stallion in the stable. Following “Go-On”, he had a colt of his named “Billy”, a beautiful dark bay from a Morgan mare, and later as the prairies were converted to farmland, a large dappled gray Percheron named “Shep”.

“Shep” was purchased from a leading breeder, George Ralston of Mullinville, for the then unbelievable high price of \$500 and was lost during the 1913 horse disease that almost decimated the horse population of Ford County.



William E. Fowler with Trotter horse "Billy," colt of Hambletonian stallion "Go On"



Fowler Home — Ford County, 1902: (L to R) Bill Rinehart, Will, Beatrice, George, Mamma, Emma, Clarence, Papa

Chapter 7

The Country School

A philosopher has said that we value most highly the things we have never possessed, and if this be true, it explains the dedication of the homesteaders to the public school system. Because most of them had little chance for schooling, they were willing to make any necessary sacrifices to have their children secure an education.

While living on the original homestead, the nearest school for the Fowlers was at Ford, Kansas, four miles south and on the other side of the Arkansas River. When the oldest Fowler girls were of the age to attend, Sarah would take them to school, or during the winter, often rented a small house in Ford to live with them.

After moving to the home on the river in 1895, William and Sarah saw the need for a rural school and together with the neighbors organized Rural School District 67. School districts were numbered in the order in which they were organized, Dodge City District being Number 1.

To organize a new school district, it was necessary to take a school census of potential pupils, get a signed petition of residents, have a map showing the boundary of the district, and a report from the county clerk giving the assessed valuation of the proposed district.

Under Kansas law, a homestead was exempt from taxation until it was “proved up,” that is, until the federal government issued a patent to the homesteader. This accounted for the delay in the organization of rural schools, because for the first few years after taking of homesteads, many areas in need of schools did not have the required assessed valuation to support a school. It also explains the contour of the early districts as many were long narrow lanes adjoining the railroad right-of-way and stretching away for miles in order to include the required number of pupils needed to organize. Those districts having the greatest number of miles of railroad within their boundaries were known as the rich districts.

Old District 7 near Spearville, Kansas was one of the richest rural districts in Ford County, getting its choice of the teacher talent, having an ample supply of coal, maps and atlases, and also having a stable for the horses that the pupils rode or drove to school. In the poorer districts, the pupils generally walked to school, distances of up to three or four miles, or if they rode to school, would picket the horses to graze on the grass near the schoolhouse.

In organizing District 67, the Fowlers, Rineharts, Cooks and Imels had no problem in meeting the requirements of area or pupil count, but financing the building of the schoolhouse and paying the wages of a teacher were formidable problems that were solved by the homesteaders in a very personal and dedicated manner.

Time was too precious to wait for tax income, therefore, as soon as the district was organized, the school board elected, and a site chosen; work was started on the building on an acre of land on the northeast quarter of Section 34, Township 27, Range 22. The site was donated to the district by

William Fowler.

The first school board was composed of Henry C. Cook, Director; Flay J. Imel, Clerk; and William E. Fowler, Treasurer. They journeyed to Bucklin, Kansas, and personally signed a note to S.D. Aulls, a lumber dealer of that city, for the material, hauled it to the site, and donated the labor to build the schoolhouse. When the building was finished, they painted it with two coats of white lead and linseed oil, and over the door facing the east, they proudly painted in large black letters, "SUNRISE SCHOOL District 67." And thus for 52 years, during good years and crop failures, when their own homes badly needed paint and repair, the schoolhouse was kept neat with shiny white paint, a source of pride to the neighborhood and a monument to the homesteaders' devotion to learning.

Having made such a personal sacrifice to the cause of education, it was natural that the parents were serious about school, and each September morning, on the opening day of school, William would call the children together and remind them of the importance of an education and discipline, ending with the stern promise that in case they received a whipping from the teacher, they would receive another one at home, and I recall that the fear of the whipping at home saved us from many at the hands of the teacher.

Sunrise School has disappeared from its place on the hill, and today, all that remains to mark its site is an old-fashioned cast iron pump standing in a field of wheat, but the author cannot pass that way without once again remembering his youth as a husky, barefooted boy, in homemade shirt and overalls, with an apple in his left hand and a cheap baseball in his right, trying to hit a home run in a game of "Work Up" or "One Old Cat".

Nostalgia seems to lead to moralizing, and I hope you will forgive me when I observe that something of irrecoverable value was lost to America with the advent of school consolidation and the closing of the rural schools. I recall a verse that a dedicated teacher, Eulalia Nevins, had me memorize when she was a teacher at District 67 and I was in the fourth grade. It was a verse from Oliver Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village," penned over 300 years ago, the poet bemoaning the curse of the feudal system in England:

"Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay
Princes and Knights, may flourish or may fade,
A breath can make them, as a breath hath made,
But, bold peasantry, a nation's pride,
When once destroyed can never be supplied."

Chapter 8

Tragedy Comes to the Home

The Fowler children had their first experience with death when a cousin was killed in an accident that occurred on the Fowler ranch. The victim was William Gerber, a son of Sarah's brother, Christopher Gerber of Ottawa Lake, Michigan, who had come to Kansas to spend the summer.¹

William Fowler had just previously purchased an Emerson foot lift gang plow, a new type of riding plow that was rapidly coming into use in Kansas. It was designed for four horses, and when tripped by the foot of the operator, the pull of the horses lifted the moldboard gangs from the ground. This type of implement was new to William Gerber, who had always used a walking plow, where it was necessary for the plowman to tie the harness lines together and put them over his shoulder leaving the hands free to hold the plow handles.

Just what happened will never be known, but when found, the cousin was under the plow in a pile of soil at the end of a field that was plowed out to point rows. The lines were tied together and around his shoulders, and he had smothered in the pile of loose soil. The supposition was that in tripping the foot lift of the plow, he had fallen forward from the seat and became entangled in the lines and was dragged in the plowed ground at the end of the field. It was a bizarre accident and one that had never occurred before or since.

William Fowler accompanied the casket to the nephew's home at Ottawa Lake, Michigan, and a somber cloud of grief hung over the family for many weeks. It was hard for the Fowler children to understand the finality of the death of a favorite cousin who only a few hours before had been laughing and joking at the dinner table and now was gone from them forever.

It seems that in the lives of most of us there comes a time when an accident rides the razor's edge between life and death and in the Fowler family two examples come to mind. In the spring of 1916, a record breaking ice jam occurred on the Arkansas River in western Kansas. The winter had been unusually cold and the river had filled up with its bed being frozen over completely with thick ice. Then suddenly, a heat wave hit the area and the ice melted so fast that great floes of ice began breaking off and piling up in the river.

The Fowler family had that winter purchased from the McCollom Brothers Agency a Dodge Brothers touring car, one of the first that was built, and after owning it for a short time, they were advised that the motor blocks had been improved, and that the factory would replace them charging only for the labor involved.

The Fowler boys, being mechanically inclined, decided to save this cost by doing the work and had successfully completed the task, but found that while installing the old valves in the new block, the valve stems fit so snug that after the motor had heated up, one intake valve would not close, thus

¹Christopher's son William H. Gerber lived from 1890 to 1987, so it's not clear who the victim was. But Emma's account on page 47 also mentions this death.

stopping the motor.

The work was completed on a Friday and the boys and Beatrice, the only sister at home at the time, decided to attend the literary meeting being held at the Ford City Hall. About one-half mile from the approach to the river bridge, the same bridge that their father had helped to build in 1886, the car stopped. They waited about fifteen minutes for the motor to cool and then proceeded to cross the bridge.

There was a full moon, and upon arriving at the center of the bridge, they heard the crashing of the ice floes which they saw piled high against the wooden railing of the bridge and George, who was driving, remarked that he did not think the bridge would be there much longer. Just as they drove from the end of the bridge, they met a boy on a motorcycle who was riding to Dodge City by moonlight. Upon entering the literary hall, it was announced that anyone living on the north side of the river would have to return by way of Dodge City as ice had taken two spans from the center of the Ford Bridge.

Inquiring, they found out that the news had been brought back by Leslie Hatfield, the boy they had met on the south approach, who had ridden slowly onto the bridge, and seeing the ice passing directly in front of his cycle, had managed to stop in time to prevent going into the river. In computing the time, it was less than one minute from the time they had crossed until the two spans were swept away, and if they had looked back, they could no doubt have seen the bridge disappear a few feet behind the rear wheels of the car.

For many months after, the Fowler family talked about the narrow escape and shuddered to think of the tragedy that was averted because the Dodge car started at the last minute.

Another instance comes to mind when George, riding a motorcycle during a dust storm, rode the Excelsior machine through a newly installed wire gate, catching the top wire under his chin with about six feet of barbed wire tearing away his turtle necked sweater and grinding the flesh on the right side of his neck, missing his jugular by less than an inch but leaving scars for the rest of his life.

In his book *Fate is the Hunter*, aviation author Ernest K. Gann tells of many near air tragedies where it seemed that providence, or some unseen power, intervened to prevent the accidents at the last second. Perhaps Fate is the Hunter for all of us, deciding at the last second who is to live and who is to die; oh, how much simpler for Sarah Fowler's children to believe that a mother's love and a mother's prayer rather than fate had decided their destiny.



George W. Fowler seated in 1913 Lambert



George W. Fowler's first new car: 1915 "KRIT" Roadster. Father W. E. Fowler, standing, brother Lester Fowler, in car (the Fowler home is in the background).



Bridge on Arkansas River, near Ford, Kansas. Winter 1916 after damage caused by ice floes.



Arkansas River Bridge, June, 1914. William E. Fowler helped build this bridge in 1886.

Chapter 9

Drought and Grasshoppers

Although the year 1874 went down in Kansas history as the Grasshopper Year, the insects returned in lesser numbers several times later, usually during periods of drought.

The Fowler family tried to control these depredations by catching them in grasshopper sleds—long shallow tanks filled with water and about an inch of kerosene on top. The tanks had an upright canvas sail at the rear and were mounted on low sled runners and pulled by horses through the fields. The hoppers, rising from the field, would hit the canvas sail and drop through the kerosene into the water. As with all other insects, the kerosene proved deadly, and when the tanks became full, the dead hoppers were removed with a homemade screen. More kerosene was added and the work continued until great heaps of dead hoppers were piled up at the ends of the fields.

However, in the summer drought of 1913, no control methods were of any avail. Great swarms of yellow-winged hoppers arrived in early July, coming in swarms that looked like clouds in the sky, and within a week, no vegetation of any form was left.

The Fowler's 160 acre field of corn, just in the stage of tasseling when the insects arrived, was eaten to the ground; and Sarah's garden, which was her pride in early June, was a total loss. The hoppers would eat the beets and onions right out of the ground leaving holes the size of the devoured vegetables. All cherry, peach and apricot trees were killed and most of the shade trees except a small hackberry, as the hackberry was the only tree that the insects would not touch. That one hackberry seedling which survived is now a large stately tree 75 years after that disastrous summer of 1913.

But Kansas, true to its reputation, followed famine with a feast, for in the fall of 1913, the rains came in time to sow wheat, and in the summer of 1914, Ford County produced the largest wheat crop in its history up to that time. At threshing time, Kaiser Bill of Germany marched into Belgium and wheat rose in price from \$0.50 to \$1.50 per bushel. The Fowler family was able to replenish their food supplies and bank account.

Chapter 10

Mysterious Horse Disease

Together with droughts, grasshopper plagues and hailstorms, the Fowler family endured their share of other disasters, including the mysterious horse disease which appeared in western Kansas during the summer of 1913 and stripped the farmers of most of their horseflesh, causing a double loss, both in the value of the animals lost, but also because they were unable to harvest the crops of that season or to prepare the fields for fall planting.

The vets were unable to find any cure or preventive for the malady, though all kinds of remedies were tried, including the hanging of bags of asafetida in the stables. This was a foul-smelling concoction made from the root of an Asian plant and believed by some to be helpful in the curing of spasms. If it had any beneficial effect, it was that due to its fetid odor, it made everyone who came under its influence sick to his stomach and no doubt curtailed the amount of food consumed at the table.

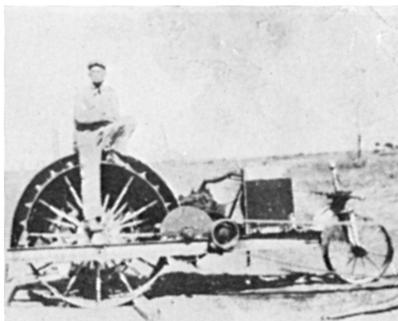
The most commonly used and perhaps the most effective remedy was the germicide permanganate of potash, a maroon powder, which, when dissolved in the stock water tanks, gave the water a beautiful wine color. For many years after the epidemic, horsemen would not water their horses from a water tank that did not show this telltale symbol of the disinfectant.

The disaster was so much greater because the disease seemed to first strike the strongest work horses and stallions which were kept in stables, while those that were kept in pastures seemed to escape the plague. The Fowlers lost most of their best work horses to the disease, and also a registered Percheron stallion, a beautiful dappled gray animal, the pride and joy of William and his sons.

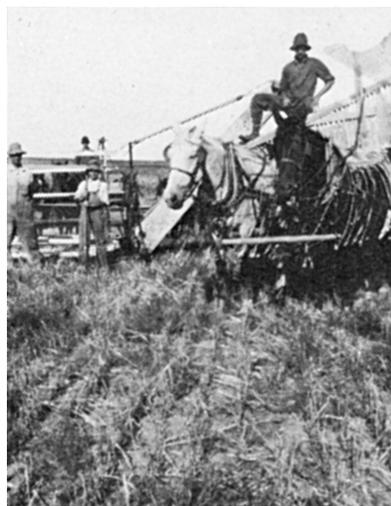
The year 1913 also marked the beginning of the transition from horseflesh to mechanical horsepower in rural America, the beginning of the end of diversified agriculture and the first step toward specialized production of farm products. Mechanics had been designing and building farm tractors for many years before 1913, but they were huge mechanical monsters, Hart-Parr and Rumelys, with massive cast iron open gearing. They lumbered like prehistoric creatures across the fields at speeds of one to two miles per hour powered by slow running kerosene burning motors, which were so imperfectly balanced, that in case a connecting rod came loose, the neighborhood would rain cast iron for ten minutes. But in 1913, there became a demand accelerated by the loss of horseflesh for smaller frame tractors. Within a few years, this demand spawned an array of machines of fantastic types, including a so-called iron-horse, a mechanical device designed to be hitched to a horse-drawn plow and controlled from the plow seat by the driver using a pair of leather lines and the same motions that were used in driving a team of horses.

To go forward, the driver loosened the lines; to turn right he pulled on the right line, and to turn left he pulled on the left line. To come to a stop, he pulled back slightly on both lines; if he pulled harder on both lines, the machine would reverse and back up.

It was a marvelous mechanical device that was impossible to keep in running order and very few



The Fowlers' first tractor, a 1914 Peoria



Header crew, 1918

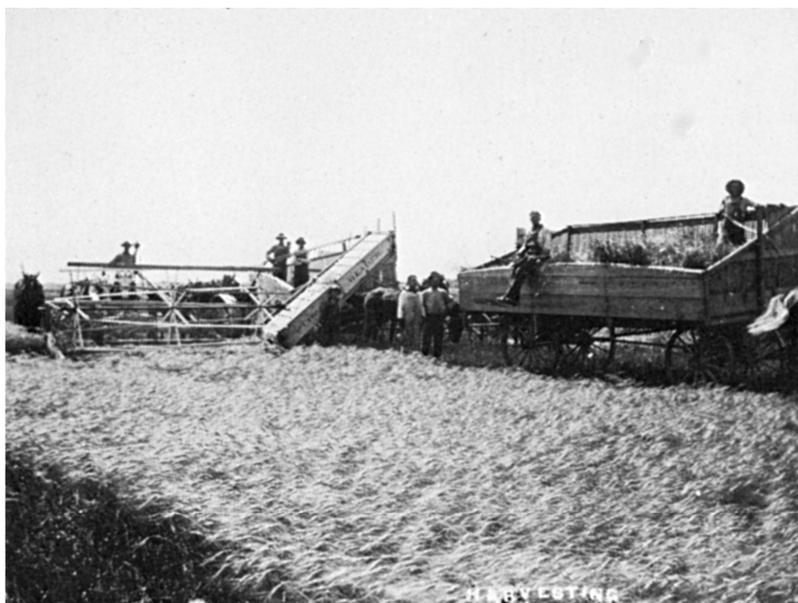
ever reached the field. There were also conversion kits to be used in converting Model T Ford touring cars into tractors, some of which reached the field; but because they were geared so high, when hitched to a moldboard plow, the soil was thrown three or four feet beyond the furrow.

However, after his loss of horses in 1913, William Fowler was disenchanted with horses for field work, and he and his son Will traveled to a tractor show which was held in Wichita, Kansas, in the spring of 1915. They returned with two small Peoria tractors, one of which was sold to a neighbor and the other was used for several years of plowing and belt work.

The Peoria was equipped with a modern four cylinder gasoline engine, would pull a two bottom sod breaking plow at about the same speed of a good six horse team, and had the added advantage of not becoming tired, so was often operated night and day, working either by moonlight or with the light of a kerosene lantern mounted on the front.

However, it had some disconcerting idiosyncrasies, because having only three wheels, a right hand turn under a load would cause it to upset, and having an open water tank to cool the motor, the upset would result in the loss of all of the water and necessitate a trip to the barnyard tank for a refill. The cost of the new machine was \$600, or about the cost of three good horses, and the machine returned its cost in the work it performed. However, the advent of the tractor and power farming changed the entire economic future of the American farmer.

Whereas, before he had produced his own horse flesh for power and fuel in the form of feed on his land, he was now dependent upon industry for most of his needs; with the coming of mechanical specialized farming, his capital needs expanded, and his independence vanished. His sons became mechanics instead of lovers of good horses, and on balance, America seems to have lost more than it gained.



Wheat harvest



William E. Fowler with team

Chapter 11

On Thrift, Keeping Your Word, Religion, and Morality

The homesteaders, through necessity, learned the value of money and the necessary priorities for spending, as every dollar represented a sacrifice, and the waste of anything that was usable was a crime.

During the long winter evenings, Sarah would knit woolen mittens and socks for the family, fitting them to small hands and feet as she worked. All white twine from the grocery store was saved and the children were taught to knit strong light ropes using a spool with three pins attached at one end as a loom. Many friendly contests were held between them as they raced to see who could weave the fastest. When completed, these ropes were attached to each pair of mittens enabling the small tot to remove one mitten without losing it in play. Weeks before Christmas, William would spend his evenings carving wooden jumping jacks or wooden dolls for the Christmas stockings.

Sarah inherited from her Swiss parents a love of dairy cattle and her specialty was making cheese, a trade that required special knowledge and extreme care. She would gather from the butchers in the nearby towns the rennet glands from veal calves, the extract of the rennet being used to curdle the milk which was the first step in the process of cheesemaking. Year round, the basement of the Fowler home was filled with cheese in the various stages of aging, and a standard lunch in the field was homemade cookies, cheese, and sweet milk, or during harvest, lemonade was often substituted for milk.

Another characteristic of the homesteaders was the pride they took in being as good as their word, a trait that was necessary for their survival because often it was the only asset they possessed. The oldest son, George, learned his lesson the hard way at the age of eight.

William had bought George a secondhand bicycle. It was on a high frame and George and his younger brother, Will, learned to ride it by taking it to a hillside and riding downhill as they could only reach one pedal at a time. When the tires became worn out and no new ones could be found, they improvised a method of wiring one inch rope around the wooden rims, thus having the first puncture proof tire of record. However crude, it was the only bicycle in the neighborhood and a status symbol.

Then one spring, George rode his bike to a country church about seven miles away where the children were practicing for the Easter exercises. There, two boys, much older than he, talked him into trading his bicycle to them for a pocket knife. As it was late afternoon, the boys agreed to allow George to ride the bike home and deliver it the next day.

Upon reaching home and studying the deal over, George was sure he had been taken and decided to keep the trade secret from the rest of the family. But Brother Will at the supper table suddenly blurted out, "George traded his bicycle," and the father asked if it was true and what he had received

in return. When shown the pocket knife, he laughed and said that if the boy had started out with a horse, he would not have come home with the halter. George then remarked that he was going to take the knife back and back out on the deal. But his father would have no part of that and ordered George to deliver the bicycle the next day and walk back, saying that on the seven mile walk, he would have time to consider the value of his word and to make no more promises that he did not want to keep.

It was no disgrace for boys of the neighborhood to trade, as they all traded marbles, pocket knives, school luncheons, and even the warts on their hands, in case they had any. George just had to carry the stigma of being the only lad in the neighborhood who was stupid enough to trade a bicycle for a pocket knife.

Luckily, within a few weeks, the knife was lost and the incident was eventually forgotten; but twenty-five years later, when standing at his father's grave, when an old neighbor came up and said to him, "Your father was a good neighbor, and you could put his word in the bank," George suddenly remembered the bicycle trade, and he knew that his father had always been right.

Perhaps the reason that the homesteaders placed so much emphasis on their word was because it often was the only asset that they possessed. As William had acquired his share of land and cattle during his lifetime, mostly by hard work and careful management, perhaps part of his success was due to the fact that his word was worth a premium when money was non-existent.

Sarah Fowler held a stern view on religion and morality which under today's standards may seem fanatical, but looking back after eighty-five years, we believe she was right. There were no gray areas in her distinction between right and wrong and she often used the old German-Swiss admonishment, "You might as well eat the Devil, as to drink his broth," whenever one of the children tried to justify an action that she believed was wrong.

This adage comes to mind often in these days of tricky government, C.I.A. intrigue, and government assassination plots. Can a nation which allows its agents to break all ten commandments under the guise of national security, cleanse its conscience by putting "In God We Trust" on its currency or "Gott mid uns" on its soldiers' belt buckles? If we are a Christian nation, we should conduct our national affairs as Christians, and not as pagan Huns.



William and Sarah Fowler family — 1902: (standing L to R) Beatrice, Emma, Caroline, and Cora; seated: William, Clarence, Will C., Sarah and George (standing)



William and Sarah Fowler family — about 1917: (standing L to R) Cora, Clarence, Emma, George, Caroline, Will C.; seated L to R: Lester, Sarah, William, Beatrice

Chapter 12

The Family Breaks Up

The most grievous chapter of a family history is when the time comes for the nestlings to leave the nest and take their place in the outside world.

The four daughters, the eldest of the children, wanted to be teachers, as this was the most popular, and in some rural areas, the only occupation open to young women of that era. Sarah and William were pleased that the daughters were able to qualify for such work.

The Kansas laws of that time required that to receive a certificate to teach in the common schools, you must be not less than sixteen years of age, be of good moral character, and have a certificate of graduation from the eighth grade. Also, you must attend a thirty day normal institute held during the summer at the county seat. This was conducted by the county superintendent of schools, with the aid of several teachers, most of whom had degrees from the State Teachers Colleges.

At the end of the normal institute, an examination was given in the basic subjects of reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, geography, physiology, United States history, Kansas history, and civics. To secure a beginner's certificate, called a third grade certificate, you were required to earn an average grade of 75% with no grade lower than 70% in any subject. After one year's experience in teaching, the teacher could attend the next summer's institute and if her grade in the final examination was 80% or better, she was given a second grade certificate. Then, after two years of teaching and a grade of 85%, she was awarded a first grade certificate. This was accepted as proof of a dedicated teacher and was sought by the wealthier rural schools or village schools.

Caroline, the eldest, began her teaching career at the age of eighteen in 1901; Cora, the next daughter at age sixteen in 1902; Emma in 1906, and Beatrice, the youngest in 1910.

However, they still returned to the nest during the holidays and summers. The first permanent departure occurred December 25, 1904, when Caroline was wed to George Umbach and moved to a farm about seven miles away. Emma married William McJones on September 4, 1912, and moved to Topeka, Kansas, where her husband was employed in the Santa Fe shops. Cora May finished her teaching career by deciding to become an osteopath. She graduated from the American School of Osteopathy at Kirksville, Missouri, and began practice at Bucklin, Kansas. Beatrice became a registered nurse and practiced mostly at the Dodge City Hospital or in private homes in Ford County.

Thus, the nest was gradually losing its occupants except that, until the coming of World War I in 1917, the family always attended the Christmas dinner at the family ranch.



Caroline Elizabeth Fowler
George W. Umbach
Married December 25, 1904



Emma Eudora Fowler
John William McJones
Married September 4, 1912



George Fowler on "Blaze"



Beatrice Fowler, WW I nurse



George Fowler, Co. B. 110
Military Police, 35th Division

Chapter 13

World War I Comes to Ford County, Kansas

To George, the oldest son of Sarah and William, August 5, 1914, was always remembered as the day when the world became so small that events in Europe affected the lives of all Americans. It was on that morning that the custom thresher came to the Fowler farm to begin threshing the 1914 wheat crop, which was one of the largest ever grown in Ford County. 1913 had been the historic grasshopper year, which combined with the drought, had left western Kansas as a desert. But beginning in September, 1913, fall rains had fallen on the fallow ground and with a mild winter and an ideal spring, every wheat field became a bonanza. The Fowlers had wheat everywhere. One field of 160 acres, which was harvested with a binder and threshed “from the shock,” averaged 37 bushels per acre, an unheard of yield at that time. A standard farm wagon of that time had a wagon bed that held exactly two bushels of grain for each inch of height, and as most beds were 26 or 28 inches high, a load of wheat was called 52 or 56 bushels. It was this first load from the machine that George was told to take to the grain elevator at Ford, Kansas.

On arriving at the Farmers’ Elevator, a cooperative elevator which William Fowler had helped organize, the manager, Mr. Beauchamp, tested the grain at 64 pounds per bushel, and upon weighing found that the 56 bushel bed weighed out at 63 bushels. He told George that he could pay 56 cents per bushel, but to tell his father not to send any more as England and France had declared war on Germany, pandemonium raged on Wall Street, and that wheat might go to one dollar a bushel or become worthless. George never forgot that conversation as he had never heard the word “pandemonium” used before and was too proud to ask the manager what happened when “pandemonium” raged on Wall Street. However, he conveyed the message to his father, and the Fowlers filled the home bins and piled wheat on the ground. That was the last wheat they sold for less than \$1.50 per bushel. Prosperity had come to western Kansas and modern homes, farm tractors, Ford cars, and college educations became common place for the families, who a few short years before were existing from hand to mouth.

While the Turks who had allied themselves with Germany and Austria held the Straits of the Dardanelles against the assaults of the English and Australians, keeping Russian wheat from being shipped to England and France, Kansas wheat went to \$1.75 per bushel. An ominous division of opinion was developing in America and a growing worry was coming into Sarah and William’s lives. Born during the Civil War and living during a period of fifty years of peace, except for the Spanish-American War, they could not understand the savageness of war or the sinking of ships by the German submarines. Sarah, with her Swiss family history to back opinions, wished America to remain neutral, and although a lifelong Republican, she voted for Wilson for re-election in 1916 in the first election in

which Kansas women were allowed to vote, because “he kept us out of war.”

Chapter 14

The War Years; A Mother's Foreboding

“While I am rocking you, my son, and singing lullabys,
Someone is building faster planes for death to ride the skies.
While I am dressing you my son in little boyish suits,
Someone is making uniforms and sturdy soldier boots.
While you are chasing butterflies amid the tangled grass,
Someone is testing chemicals to make a deadlier gas.
And while you eat your simple fare,
Perhaps the warlords sit to start again the bugle notes that only call the fit.
While I would make of you, my son, strong man, my son,
Someone in secret is building a farther shooting gun.
A gun which on some distant day when drums of battle roll,
May leave me with a golden star and iron in my soul.”

Author Unknown

George, the oldest of four sons of William and Sarah, was 23 years of age the year that America entered the First World War. He was still footloose and fancy free. He had sold autos, traded motorcycles, owned a steam threshing machine, and taught one term of school. He was attending the Los Angeles Normal School in Los Angeles, California, in the spring of 1917, when it became evident that the United States would take a stand on entering the war. He had hoped to join the aviation section of the California National Guard and become a flyer, but his father, who was visiting Los Angeles at the time, urged him to return home before enlisting. Following his father's advice, he began his trip home going by a coastwise steamer, the *Harvard*, to San Francisco on the first leg of his return to Kansas.

On April 6th, the *Harvard* was nearing the Golden Gate Bridge when the wireless operator issued a bulletin informing the passengers that Congress had acted upon President Wilson's request and had passed a declaration of war. Upon arriving home, George found western Kansas already preparing for war. A Cavalry Troop of the National Guard had already been formed at Dodge City and many of the local boys, including three seniors of the Ford High School, had signed up.

Sarah Fowler asked George not to enlist without talking it over, and he promised. But after continued solicitation from the local boys, he made the decision that he should serve, and it would be easier to serve with young men who were his friends; he informed his mother of his decision. On May 2, 1917, he became a private in Troop C, First Cavalry, which was mustered into Federal Service on August 5, 1917. In September, the troop entrained at Dodge City and the following day found themselves at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. They were in charge of the Remount Station and over 3,000 head

of horses and mules. Two months later, they were designated Company B, 110th Military Police, a unit of the 35th Division under the command of Major General William Wright.

Chapter 15

In Conclusion

Being an apology in the form of an explanation.

The writing of a family history is an arduous task due to the writer's tendency to elaborate upon personal details that seem important to him but may seem trivial to the general reader. It is very hard to be factual or objective when discussing your immediate family or friends, but I have tried to write of events as they were related to me, or as recalled from personal experience.

Times and conditions influence people's characters and mode of living, and the homesteaders were a product of their environment. Looking back from 93 years of age, the writer realizes that he had the good fortune to have lived during the most exciting generation of all time.

During this generation we have moved from the oxen and wagon to supersonic flight; from a wondering youth gazing at the beauty of a harvest moon to astronauts planting a flag upon its surface; from the homesteader holding the handles of a rod breaking plow to the modern farmer in an air conditioned cab on a 200 horsepower tractor tilling more soil in one day than the homesteader could work in a season.

Upon the sandhill homestead that William and Sarah proved up and gave to an eastern mortgage company for \$1,000 due, and where they drew water from a 60 foot well in a vain effort to save their winter supply of cow chips, a giant irrigation circle now moves night and day raining water on a thirsty crop of growing corn, which will be used to feed the fattening cattle in a feed lot only one mile away. The unfenced prairies that their children at one time rode over, herding cattle or picking prairie flowers, are now golden fields of wheat, the bread basket of a hungry world, and the despised tiller of the soil is being used as a pawn by the politicians in a worldwide game of power politics.

When the writer was a boy, it required two hours to haul a wagonload of wheat the five miles to the nearest market. Today, a supersonic plane can fly from London to New York in less time, racing with the sun and beating it to the meridian. Does this mean that man must change his tenets or morals to conform with the advance in technical knowledge? I believe the answer is no. For we are still mortals, and even at satellite speeds, none of us can live long enough to travel to the outer fringes of the firmament that has been revealed by powerful telescopes.

In the present world of frenzied finance, of buying, selling, and giant mergers, I believe there is still a place for the integrity of the homesteader whose word was his bond, and I believe there is also a place for the unpretentious faith of Sarah Fowler and her Lutheran God, faith that enabled her after 82 years of labor for her family to uncomplainingly lie down on a sofa in the living room, and calling her son to her, simply say, "Willie, you have been a good son and have always been good to me, but I must leave you now." And with no seeming pain, pass into endless sleep.

There is no epitaph on her tombstone, and she would not have wished it, but a fitting one that comes to mind is from the last verse of "Thanatopsis" by William Cullen Bryant:

“So live, that when thy summons comes to join
The innumerable caravan, which moves
To that mysterious realm, where each shall take
His chamber in the silent halls of death,
Thou go not, like the quarry-slave at night
Scourged to his dungeon, but, sustained and soothed
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave,
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.”



George William Fowler (1894–1988)



Mae (Dooley) Fowler (1898–1989)



Mr. and Mrs. George William Fowler



George William Fowler

About the Author

George William Fowler was born February 26, 1894 in Ford, Kansas. He received his common school education in a country school, District 67, known as Sunrise School. He attended Dodge City High School and served one term as teacher at District 49, a rural school near Wright, Kansas.

He was attending Los Angeles Normal School in 1916-1917 and was on his way home to Ford County on April 7, 1917, when war was declared with Germany. Enlisting in Troop C, First Kansas Cavalry in May, 1917, he went to France as a member of the 35th Division as a Cavalryman. He served later as a Military Policeman, and when the 35th Division went into action in the Argonne, he had been detailed to drive a truck in the 110th provisional motor train.

Upon returning home after the war, he entered the garage and tractor business at Ford, Kansas. In 1924, he moved to Dodge City and was successful until the Great Depression of 1933 followed by the four years of the Dust Bowl. This compelled him to trade for a cattle ranch in Finney County and begin anew.

He was always active in civic affairs, serving on local school boards and serving as a member of the Kansas House of Representatives for eight years.

He was awarded the Banker's Award for soil conservation, was listed in *Who's Who in the Southwest*, and served as National Commander of the Veterans of World War I for the years 1979 to 1980.

Together with his wife of nearly 65 years, the former Mae Dooley, they resided in Dodge City, Kansas.

They had four daughters and two sons.

George W. Fowler answered the final call on January 8, 1988.



Emma Eudora (Fowler) McJones (1887–1974)

The Mystery of the Sleeping Doll¹

Emma Eudora (Fowler) McJones

Beatrice, who was seven years old, wrapped her doll, Anne, in a blanket, put her to sleep and placed her in the unfinished wall, then Beatrice went to bed. The evening, a winter one, was long, so our father worked on finishing the wainscoting of that wall and, not knowing that Anne was sleeping within, he finished that area and in the morning Beatrice said that Anne was asleep within and has slept on in her prison all these seventy years. In her deep sleep she has recorded this story, such is the mystery.

The house was completed in this manner, the upstairs was finished 2 years later and could then be used in winter and summer. So the home of W. E. Fowler and Sarah, the wife, was built and life went on. And the doll, Anne, slept on and recorded all the activities within those walls.

In 1900, Clarence was born. This birth was in the northeast bed room and then on Dec. 31, 1902, Lester, the fourth son, was born and this was in the small bedroom on the first floor.

So time went on in that busy household, William and Sarah, his wife and the eight children, plenty of room, plenty of food, and plenty of work and plenty of play and all those years the sleeping doll was recording this story. The long winter evenings were spent in that large room which was always comfortable. The girls, who were older, getting lessons in winter time evenings, and when the work was done spending the evenings, the long winter ones, with the parents. Playing cards, High Five, Euchre, Seven Up and other games.

And later as the girls got larger they had parties as the room was large enough for games, and dances, someone who played the violin would be called to play, William and Sarah would dance the Polka and the shottish and Sarah would play the accordion and William would play the Jew's Harp and that would please everyone. Waltzes, two-steps and quadrilles too were danced.

Those happy years passed by, then there was a wedding on Dec. 25, 1904, when Caroline and George Umbach were married. The ceremony took place in the parlor, which was upstairs from the dining room, but the Wedding feast was in the large room and The Sleeping Doll could record all that took place and it was a lot of talking as there were many guests.

[A second manuscript page begins here; it is not known if other pages are missing. The narrative appears to jump from 1904 to about 1907.]

After the death of Billy Gerber it was necessary for life to continue as normal.² Carrie, George, and little Mildred went to their home.³ The next year Irvin Plattner, another nephew, came to make his home in Kansas.

¹Unsigned, undated typescript pages found in the papers of Emma Eudora (Fowler) McJones, 1887–1974. Emma's sister Lena Beatrice was seven in 1897, so that would place the writing of the story ("all these seventy years") in 1967.

²See Chapter 8, Tragedy Comes to the Home.

³Mildred was born 28 August 1906.

Emma did not teach school the year of 1908–9, Cora was teaching school in Dodge City and Beatrice was in high school in Dodge City. In December of that school year Cora and Emma went to Meade, Ks, and [each] filed on one quarter of land to prove it then each have 160 acres. Irvin Plattner, who was then 21 years old and a resident of Kansas, also filed on a quarter of land in the same section. He decided not to go ahead with his plans as the land was very rough and poor, but he and his cousin Emma went to the land early in 1909 and built shacks on the quarters.

In 1910⁴ in August Emma attended Normal School Review in Meade and secured a First Grade Certificate to teach school again and did teach in Riverside School in Ford County, and Cora continued to teach in Dodge City. In November Cora and Emma went to Meade and made final settlement on the land and secured the Patents from the State of Kansas.⁵

In the summer of 1909, Sarah and William decided to lease the farm to Will Cook and Irvin Plattner and the livestock was sold and the family moved to Dodge City and rented a home on Central Ave. for the winter and the four boys and Beatrice would go to school. George and Beatrice were in high school. But when the year was finished they went to the farm that was, or had been, leased for one year. Beatrice had finished her Junior year in high school; George was a sophomore. Sarah was not happy in Dodge City with four boys and wanted more than all else to get back to the farm which was so much of her life and William was ready for the changes. A small home was built for Irvin where he could farm and live and he soon married the daughter of the neighbor and took care of part of his Uncle Willie's farm land. When Mildred was 2 years old Marjorie was born and all was doing well in that home.

In 1910 Cora was still teaching in Dodge City and Emma began to teach there too and Beatrice began her Senior year but she contracted typhoid fever and was forced to stop school in that year.

There was silence in the large room where the Sleeping Doll slept while the family was in Dodge City, as two men living alone and doing the outside work had little conversation in the large room, but that year passed and there was again much activity.

There were some accidents that could have been serious or even fatal: the motorcycle accident to George when his neck was cut severely⁶ and when Beatrice had her hands frozen while teaching school. But fate it seems was kind to this family or was it not fate but knowledge and courage to try to do all that could be done for sick and injured. Bill attends high school in Ford but not to graduation.

When Caroline and George were married, two phone boxes were bought and one was placed in their home and one was placed in the Big Room so the family could be in touch at all times. Wires were attached to the boxes and to the barb wire fence so that contact could be had. It worked ...

⁴Actually, 1909.

⁵Actually, Emma's Patent was issued March 28, 1911.

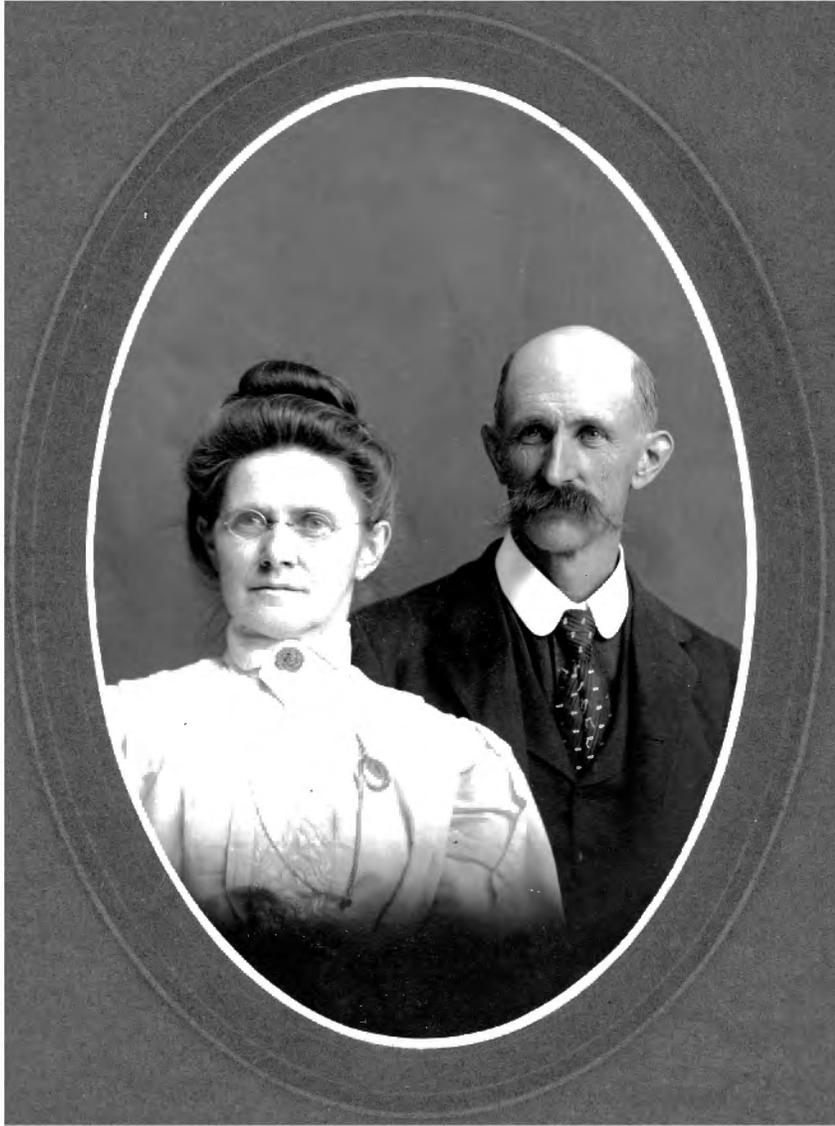
⁶See Chapter 8.

George Fowler (1818-1905)

George Fowler was born in Columbia County, Pa, Sept. 12, 1818. His grandfather was an Englishman and came to this country as a soldier under Cornwallis during the Revolutionary war; he was taken prisoner at Yorktown by the American Army and afterwards settled on Long Island. The parents of George Fowler were Benjamin and Elizabeth. George has been twice married, first in 1841 to Caroline Varner, daughter of Daniel Varner of Luzerne Co., Pa, by whom he had eight children, five of whom are now living. She died in 1870. In 1871 he was married to Mrs. Emma Pool of Whiteford. In 1845 Mr. Fowler removed to Licking Co., Ohio, where he followed milling and the millwright business for a number of years. In 1863 [he] located on his present farm of 80 acres in Whiteford to which he was obliged to cut his own road through the forest two miles; he now has 60 acres under improvement. He was originally a member of the old Whig party, but afterwards became a Republican and took a deep interest in the Union cause during the Rebellion, assisting in the formation of three regiments in Ohio.

Eudora Ellen (Fowler) Baker⁷
Whitley County, Indiana
1890

⁷Eudora was an older sister of William Enzor Fowler. This was originally published in: Talcott Enoch Wing, editor, *History of Monroe County, Michigan*, 1890, page 50.



Siblings Eudora Ellen (Fowler) Baker and William Enzor Fowler, about 1902

Fowler-Gerber genealogy

Ancestors of William Enzor and Sarah Ellen (Gerber) Fowler

1. Fowler, William Enzor. William Enzor was born on 1860-03-04 in Licking County, Ohio, USA. He died on 1927-05-27 in Ford County, Kansas, USA. He was buried in Ford, Ford, Kansas, USA.
Gerber, Sarah Ellen. Sarah Ellen was born on 1858-12-29 in Lucas County, Ohio, USA. She died on 1941-10-18 in Ford County, Kansas, USA. She was buried in Ford, Ford, Kansas, USA.
2. Fowler, George. George was born on 1818-09-12 in Briar Creek, Columbia, Pennsylvania, USA. He died on 1905-03-09 in Whiteford, Monroe, Michigan, USA. He was buried in Lambertville, Monroe, Michigan, USA.
Varner, Caroline. Caroline was born on 1823-03-03 in Newport, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, USA. She died on 1870-05-03 in Whiteford, Monroe, Michigan, USA. She was buried in Lambertville, Monroe, Michigan, USA.
Gerber, Jacob. Jacob was born on 1816-06-25 in Schangnau, Bern, Switzerland. He was baptized on 1816-06-28 in Schangnau, Bern, Switzerland. He died on 1893-01-21 in Toledo, Lucas, Ohio, USA.
Zbären, Elizabeth. Elizabeth was born on 1820-09-29 in Lenk, Switzerland. She died on 1881-04-15 in Toledo, Lucas, Ohio, USA.
3. Fowler, Benjamin F. Benjamin F. was born on 1794-03-15 in Briar Creek, Northumberland, Pennsylvania, USA. He died on 1867-08-14 in Center, Columbia, Pennsylvania, USA. He was buried in Bloomsburg, Columbia, Pennsylvania.
Kile, Elizabeth. Elizabeth was born on 1789-02-28 in Columbia County, Pennsylvania, USA. She died on 1853-03-24 in Briar Creek, Columbia, Pennsylvania, USA.
Varner, Daniel. Daniel was born on 1798-03-23 in Salem, Luzerne, Pennsylvania, USA. He died on 1889-04-14 in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, USA. He was buried in Berwick, Columbia, Pennsylvania, USA.
Hampton, Mary Ann Margaret. Mary Ann Margaret was born on 1806-08-26 in Nazareth, Northampton, Pennsylvania, USA. She died on 1874-03-29 in Berwick, Columbia, Pennsylvania, USA. She was buried in Berwick, Columbia, Pennsylvania, USA.
Gerber, Johannes. Johannes was born on 1769-04-07 in Schangnau, Bern, Switzerland. He was baptized on 1869-04-07 in Schangnau, Switzerland. He died on 1839-08-10.
Wermuth, Barbara. She died in 1823.
Zbären, Peter. Peter was born in 1779. He was baptized on 1779-07-25 in Lenk, Switzerland. He died on 1837-04-11.

Rieben, Magdalena. Magdalena was born in 1791. She was baptized on 1791-12-04. She died on 1860-09-04.

4. Fowler, Benjamin. Benjamin was born on 1761-10-14 in White Plains, Westchester, New York, USA. He died on 1847-10-09 in Espy, Columbia, Pennsylvania, USA. He was buried in Columbia County, Pennsylvania, USA.

Fowler, Deborah. Deborah was born in 1761-03-00 in Cortland Manor, Westchester, New York, USA. She died on 1821-03-09 in Briar Creek Twp, Northumberland, Pennsylvania, USA. She was buried in Columbia County, Pennsylvania, USA.

Kile, John William Sr. John William was born on 1765-11-27 in Easton, Northampton, Pennsylvania, USA. He died on 1852-04-22 in Sugarloaf, Columbia, Pennsylvania, USA. He was buried in Benton, Columbia County, Pennsylvania, USA.

Hess, Maria Catherina. Maria Catherina was born on 1765-11-21 in Forks, Northampton, Pennsylvania, USA. She died in 1830-06-00 in Sugarloaf, Columbia, Pennsylvania, USA.

Varner, Johan Adam. Johan Adam was born in 1755 in Northampton, Pennsylvania, USA. He died on 1846-10-21 in Salem, Luzerne, Pennsylvania, USA.

Gerber, Peter. Peter was born on 1746-05-08 in Schangnau, Bern, Switzerland. He was baptized on 1746-03-08. He died on 1805-03-25 in , Durrenroth, Bern, Switzerland.

Tschanz, Anna. Anna was born in 1745 in of Huttwil, Bern, Switz. She died on 1802-03-21.

Zbären, Johannes. Johannes was born in 1751 in Lenk, Switzerland. He was baptized on 1751-02-28 in Lenk, Switzerland. He died on 1828-03-28.

5. Fowler, Nathan. Nathan was born in 1730 in England.

Fowler, David. David was born on 1728-06-17 in Westchester County, New York, USA. He died in 1806 in Briar Creek Twp, Northumberland, Pennsylvania, USA.

—, Sarah. She died in 1806.

Kehl, Johannes Georg. Johannes Georg was born in 1724 in Krumbach, Neckar-Odenwald-Kreis, Baden-Württemberg, Germany. He died on 1792-11-23 in Douglas Twp, Montgomery, Pennsylvania, USA.

Catherine. She was born in 1748 in Muehlhausen, Thueringen, Germany. She died in USA.

Hess, Johann Wilhelm. Johann Wilhelm was born in 1744 in Williams, Bucks [Northampton], Pennsylvania, USA. He died on 1827-02-17 in Catawissa, Columbia, Pennsylvania, USA.

Godhard, Anna Catharine. Anna Catharine was born about 1740 in Williams, Northampton, Pennsylvania, USA. She died about 1813 in Sugarloaf, Columbia, Pennsylvania, USA.

Gerber, Johannes. Johannes was born on 1717-05-02 in Schangnau, Switzerland. He died on 1799-10-11.

Siegenthaler, Barbara. Barbara was born about 1720 in , Of Schangnau, Bern, Switzerland.

6. Fowler, Jeremiah. Jeremiah was born in 1694 in Flushing, Queens, New York, USA. He died in 1766 in Hempstead Harbor, Long Island, New York.

Dusenbury, Susan. She died in 1806.

Keil, Nikolaus. Nikolaus was born on 1691-01-30 in Krumbach, Neckar-Odenwald-Kreis, Baden-Württemberg, Germany. He died on 1749-04-14 in Krumbach, Neckar-Odenwald-Kreis, Baden-Württemberg, Germany.

Eisenhauer, Eva. Eva was born on 1691-06-06 in Krumbach, Neckar-Odenwald-Kreis, Baden-Württemberg, Germany. She died on 1763-10-15 in Krumbach, Neckar-Odenwald-Kreis, Baden-Württemberg, Germany.

Hess, Johann Conrad. Johann Conrad was born on 1714-08-19 in Mutterstadt, Ludwigshafen, Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany. He died on 1797-02-06 in Williams, Northampton, Pennsylvania, USA.

Best, Anna Maria. Anna Maria was born in 1723 in Williams, Northampton, Pennsylvania, USA. She died in 1785 in Williams, Northampton, Pennsylvania, USA.

7. Fowler, William. William was born in 1659 in Providence, Providence, Rhode Island, USA. He died on 1714-05-11 in Flushing, Queens, New York, USA.

Thorne, Mary.

Dusenbury, Henry. He died in 1768.

8. Fowler, Henry. Henry was born about 1633 in Hambleton, Bucks, England. He died in 1687 in Mamaroneck, Westchester, New York, USA.

Newell, Rebecca. Rebecca was born 15 July 1637 in Roxbury, Essex, Massachusetts, USA. She died 23 March 1680 in Westbury, Nassau County, New York, USA.

Thorne, John.

Pearsall, Mary.

9. Newell, Abraham Sr. Abraham was born about 1581 in Ipswich, Suffolk, England. He died on 1672-06-13 in Roxbury, Suffolk, Massachusetts, USA.

—, Frances. Frances was born in 1594 in Ipswich, Suffolk, England. She died on 1682-01-13 in Roxbury, Suffolk County, Massachusetts, USA.

Some descendants of William Enzor and Sarah Ellen (Gerber) Fowler

1. Fowler, William Enzor (b. 1860-03-04 - Licking County, Ohio, USA, d. 1927-05-27 - Ford County, Kansas, USA)
sp. Gerber, Sarah Ellen (b. 1858-12-29 - Lucas County, Ohio, USA, d. 1941-10-18 - Ford County, Kansas, USA), m. February 3, 1881 - Whiteford Center, Michigan, USA
2. Fowler, Infant son (b. 1881-10-29, d. 1881-10-29)
2. Fowler, Caroline Elizabeth (b. 1882-10-22 - Riga, Lenawee, Michigan, USA, d. 1955-07-07 - Spearville, Ford, Kansas, USA)
sp. Umbach, George Werner (b. 1877-11-22 - Watertown, Jefferson, New York, USA, d. 1955-08-12 - Spearville, Ford, Kansas, USA), m. 1904-12-25 - Ford County, Kansas, USA
3. Umbach, Mildred Sarah (b. 1906-08-28 - Spearville, Ford, Kansas, USA, d. 1992-11-30 - Emporia, Lyon, Kansas, USA)
sp. Wilcox, James Jay (b. 1906-11-24 - Kansas, USA, d. 1978-04-08 - Emporia, Lyon, Kansas, USA), m. 1942-07-03 - Spearville, Ford, Kansas, USA

3. Umbach, Marjorie Lucile (b. 1908-08-12 - Spearville, Ford, Kansas, USA, d. 2002-09-06 - Larned, Pawnee, Kansas, USA)
sp. Clayton, Colonel Sanford (b. 1896-02-26 - Forsythe, Taney, Missouri, USA, d. 1984-11-20 - Larned, Pawnee, Kansas, USA), m. 1957-08-27 - Larned, Pawnee, Kansas, USA
3. Umbach, Hazel Eudora (b. 1910-10-09 - Spearville, Ford, Kansas, USA, d. 1971-11-26 - Sun City, Maricopa, Arizona, USA)
sp. Gregory, Lewis E. (b. 1917-06-17 - Lewis, Edwards, Kansas, USA, d. 2011-04-30 - Youngtown, Maricopa, Arizona, USA), m. 1942-02-22 - Spearville, Ford, Kansas, USA
3. Umbach, Evelyn Wilhelmina (b. 1913-01-18 - Spearville, Ford, Kansas, USA, d. 2003-04-24 - Hutchinson, Reno, Kansas, USA)
sp. Barb, Harold Sylvester (b. 1910-02-23 - Kansas, USA, d. 1983-08-30 - Hutchinson, Reno, Kansas, USA), m. 1935-05-25 - Woodward County, Oklahoma, USA
3. Umbach, Eleanor Elizabeth (b. 1915-07-10 - Spearville, Ford, Kansas, USA, d. 2004-03-08 - Santa Fe, Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA)
sp. Wright, Nelson Jones (b. 1913-10-27 - Jersey, Licking, Ohio, USA, d. 1989-11-10 - Santa Fe, Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA), m. 1939-02-04 - Kansas, USA
2. Fowler, Cora May (b. 1885-01-08 - Blissfield, Lenawee, Michigan, USA, d. 1959-06-15 - Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, USA)
sp. Rickard, George Thomas (b. 1885-02-05 - London, Middlesex County, Ontario, Canada, d. 1945-12-31 - Bucklin, Ford, Kansas, USA), m. 1919-11-19 - Ford County, Kansas, USA
3. Rickard, Mary Margaret (b. 1923-09-17 - Kansas, d. 1952-02-24 - Colby, Thomas, Kansas, USA)
sp. Patterson, Richard Royce (b. 1924-01-13 - Ford, Ford, Kansas, USA, d. 1952-02-24 - Colby, Thomas, Kansas, USA), m. 1946-12-28
2. Fowler, Emma Eudora (b. 1887-11-06 - Ford County, Kansas, USA, d. 1974-10-21 - Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, USA)
sp. Jones, John William (b. 1879-09-05 - Lyons, Rice, Kansas, USA, d. 1963-11-28 - Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, USA), m. 1912-09-04 - Ford County, Kansas, USA
3. McJones, Justin William (b. 1914-03-23 - Topeka, Shawnee, Kansas, USA, d. 1929-08-19 - Garden City, Finney, Kansas, USA)
3. McJones, Lee Fowler (b. 1915-07-06 - Topeka, Shawnee, Kansas, USA, d. 1979-04-26 - Albuquerque, Bernalillo, New Mexico, USA)
sp. Shafer, Helen, m. 1942-07-04
sp. Myers, Betty Jane (b. 1921-09-17 - Chillicothe, Livingston, Missouri, USA, d. 1985-02-00 - Twin Falls, Twin Falls, Idaho, USA), m. 1949-09-04 - Chillicothe, Livingston, Missouri, USA
3. McJones, Robert Wayne (b. 1922-08-19 - Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, USA, d. 2015-06-17 - Grand Rapids, Kent, Michigan, USA)
sp. Prater, Norma Jeane (b. 1925-03-24 - Kismet, Seward, Kansas, USA, d. 1993-12-04 - Rancho Palos Verdes, Los Angeles, California, USA), m. 1946-08-25 - Kismet, Seward, Kansas, USA
2. Fowler, Lena Beatrice (b. 1890-07-22 - Ford County, Kansas, USA, d. 1939-11-16 - Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, USA)
sp. Aton, William Irl (b. 1892-08-29 - Springfield, Greene, Missouri, USA, d. 1966-09-15 - Jetmore, Hodgeman, Kansas, USA), m. 1924-06-16 - Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, USA
3. Aton, Dorotheanelle Beatrice (b. 1927-01-16 - Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, USA, d. 1977-08-07 - Jetmore, Hodgeman, Kansas, USA)

- sp. Kellogg, Everett Roy (b. 1922-02-28 - Jetmore, Hodgeman, Kansas, USA, d. 1997-08-21 - Harlingen, Cameron, Texas, USA), m. 1944-08-03 - Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, USA
3. Aton, William Fowler (b. 1928-06-15 - Kansas, USA, d. 1985-01-22 - Lafayette, Lafayette, Louisiana, USA)
sp. —, — — (b. 192x)
 2. Fowler, George William Sr. (b. 1894-02-26 - Ford County, Kansas, USA, d. 1988-01-08 - Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, USA)
sp. Dooley, Mae Louise (b. 1898-02-10 - Ford County, Kansas, USA, d. 1989-06-02 - Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, USA), m. 1921-01-15 - Jetmore, Hodgeman, Kansas, USA
 3. Fowler, Mariellen (b. 1921-09-14 - Ford County, Kansas, USA, d. 2016-02-17 - Kansas, USA)
sp. Rhoades, Lewis Harland (b. 1920-12-24 - Ashland, Clark, Kansas, USA, d. 1969-03-15 - Hamilton, Ellis, Kansas, USA), m. 1946-06-01 - Ashland, Clark, Kansas, USA
sp. Anderson, Lemuel Clark "Corky" (b. 1922-08-07 - Kansas, d. 1944-08-07 - France)
 3. Fowler, Evelyn Beatrice (b. 1923-04-17 - Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, USA, d. 2011-01-21 - Port Saint Lucie, St Lucie, Florida, USA)
sp. Sutton, Robert James (b. 1915-09-12 - Fellsmere, Florida, USA, d. 2007-01-21 - Homestead, Dade, Florida, USA)
 3. Fowler, Georganne (b. 1925-04-25 - Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, USA, d. 2014-11-03 - Carrollton, Denton, Texas, USA)
sp. Hiser, Arthur Burgoyne Jr. (b. 1923-05-14 - Nortonville, Jefferson, Kansas, USA, d. 2012-03-08 - Carrollton, Dallas, Texas, USA), m. 1948-02-01 - Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, USA
 3. Fowler, George William Jr. (b. 1927-03-28 - Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, USA, d. 1961-09-07 - Hodgeman County, Kansas, USA)
sp. Weiss, Maurita M. (b. 1931-10-10 - Pleasant Valley, Cowley, Kansas, USA), m. 1950-06-02 - Bellefonte, Kansas, USA
 3. Fowler, Donald Duane (b. 1928-09-17 - Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, USA, d. 2009-06-28 - Cimarron, Gray, Kansas, USA)
sp. Behrends, Cheryl Yvonne (b. 1937-08-06 - Beloit, Mitchell, Kansas, USA), m. 1958-10-11 - Olathe, Johnson, Kansas, USA
 3. Fowler, Colleen Nelle (b. 1929-11-29 - Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, USA, d. 2012-10-07 - Great Bend, Barton, Kansas, USA)
sp. Riegel, Jerry Manford (b. 1933-01-27 - Great Bend, Barton, Kansas, USA, d. 1978-12-03 - Great Bend, Barton, Kansas, USA), m. 1954-02-14 - Great Bend, Barton, Kansas, USA
 2. Fowler, William Christopher (b. 1897-01-28 - Ford County, Kansas, USA, d. 1969-06-22 - Bucklin, Ford, Kansas, USA)
sp. Dooley, Nelle Ellen (b. 1895-01-26 - Wilroads, Ford, Kansas, USA, d. 1969-07-18 - Bucklin, Ford, Kansas, USA), m. 18 June 1951 - Clayton, Union, New Mexico, USA
 2. Fowler, Clarence Caleb (b. 1900-10-25 - Ford County, Kansas, USA, d. 1963-08-01 - Ford County, Kansas, USA)
sp. Stone, Sybil Audrey (b. 1901-06-18 - Hayes, Reno, Kansas, USA, d. 1974-01-02 - Denver, Adams, Colorado, USA), m. 1920-05-18 - Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, USA
 3. Fowler, Clarence Calvin (b. 1922-02-20 - Ford County, Kansas, USA, d. 2004-03-27 - Norman, Cleveland, Oklahoma, USA)
sp. Caywood, Phyllis May (b. 1926-10-13 - Alden, Rice, Kansas, USA, d. 2011-08-04 - Norman, Cleveland, Oklahoma, USA), m. 1945 - Kansas, USA
 3. Fowler, Dorothy Maxine (b. 1926-12-20 - Ford County, Kansas, USA, d. 1978-04-11 - Denver,

Adams, Colorado, USA)

sp. Hefner, Marshall Lane (b. 1922-08-16 - Hartville, Missouri, USA, d. 2013-01-18 - Fort Dodge, Kansas, USA), m. 1945-11-11

3. Fowler, Darlene (b. 1930-06-18 - Ford County, Kansas, USA, d. 1930-06-18 - Ford County, Kansas, USA)
2. Fowler, Lester Frederick Sr. (b. 1902-12-31 - Spearville, Ford, Kansas, USA, d. 1947-08-31 - WaKeeny, Trego, Kansas, USA)
 - sp. Cherry, Mary Ruth (b. 1903-11-06 - Athens, Menard, Illinois, USA, d. 1986-08-15 - Pensacola, Escambia, Florida, United States of America), m. 1927-12-31 - Cape Girardeau, Cape Girardeau, Missouri
 - 3. Fowler, Cherry Lesene (b. 1928-11-25 - Marshall, Platte, Missouri, USA, d. 1963-07-05 - Mount Prospect, Cook, Illinois, USA)
 - sp. Hertel, Donald Lee, m. 1948-08-07 - Ness City, Ness, Kansas, USA
 - sp. Turner, Carl L (b. 1924-12-02 - Trigg, Kentucky, d. 1996-11-19 - Burlington, Boone, Kentucky, United States of America), m. 1954-03-27 - Jackson County, Missouri, USA
 - 3. Fowler, Sara Ferita Fe (b. 1930-08-10 - Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, USA, d. 2014-02-08)
 - sp. Hudson, Robert Lee, m. 1950-11-03 - Englewood, Arapahoe, Colorado, USA
 - sp. Guenther, Morgan William (b. 1927-06-08 - Cleveland, Cuyahoga, Ohio, USA, d. 1989-07-15 - Ohio, USA), m. 1964-01-02 - Las Vegas, Clark, Nevada, USA
 - 3. Fowler, Lester Frederick Jr. (b. 1934-05-21 - Dodge City, Ford, Kansas, USA, d. 2006-11-12 - Pensacola, Escambia, Florida, USA)
 - sp. —, — — (b. 194x)

NEVER LOOK BACK

The Bible tells the story of Lot's wife, who, looking back to the home she was leaving, was transformed into a pillar of salt. This is the story of a pioneer mother of Western Kansas taking an invalid husband and two daughters, one a babe in arms, to a homestead in a strange land, who never found time to look back.

Although it is the personal history of the author's parents, it could with variations be applied to thousands of other pioneers, who, braving the loneliness and dangers of a strange, harsh land: built homes, schools and churches; fought prairie fires and the scourges of drought and grasshoppers; but never lost faith in God, country, or their own ability to cope with disaster. (From the Preface.)

This special edition adds a short biography of George Fowler (father of William Enzor Fowler), "The Mystery of the Sleeping Doll," and a family tree.

Photograph, front and rear cover: William Enzor and Sarah Ellen (Gerber) Fowler, about 1851.

