

The Van Tuyl home, Raymond, Montgomery County, Illinois. Homesteaded in the 1830s by Jonathan Van Tuyl, Sr., this farm was home to three generations of Van Tuyls before the family's exodus to Kansas in the late 19th century. [Dr. Charles D. Van Tuyl collection]

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# *Tales of the Times* 1865 ~ 1913

In the nearly 50-year period from the end of the Civil War in 1865 to the year the last of the contiguous United States were admitted to the Union in 1912, European Americans overwhelmed North America, building towns and cities, railroads and highways, churches, hospitals, and schools, seaports, mines and factories, and most of all farms, farms, and more farms. When this work was done, the United States of America, its population having mushroomed due to high survival rates and an unprecedented flood of settlers from Europe, its people having been spared the ravages of war and foreign involvements for half a century, stood ready to flex its muscles in the 20th century. Like virtually every other American family, the Van Tuyls played their various small parts in this drama of nation-building. They spread out, as did the rest of the populace, into various parts of the country, where they went about their businesses: farming, ranching, trade, building, teaching, engineering, and medicine. Their economic fortunes rose and fell with those of the nation. Some were comfortably well off; some lost everything in financial downturns; some built businesses and farms with dogged determination; and some descended into working-class poverty. There is no coherent story of "The Van Tuyls" during this period, for, unlike a newly-arrived Irish family in Boston or an Italian clan in New York for instance, the descendants of Jan Otten van Tuyl had for the most part ceased to exist as a cohesive family. They shared a common hard-to-pronounce name, but that was about all. Most of them moved west in pursuit of the opportunities afforded by western settlement, leaving a trail of stories that give us a different perspective than that usually found in history books. Among them were up-by-the-bootstraps success types, as well as foolish, irresponsible characters. People with college degrees as well as people who could barely read. They never rose very high in society, nor did they fall very low. They were, in short, at the heart of America's 19th century middle class.

## The Farmers

Had you happened through Raymond, Illinois, at the end of the Civil War, you would have seen nothing unusual - just farmhouses, fields, and soldiers back from the war. But if you had asked about the local people's opinions of their former neighbor from Springfield, Abraham Lincoln, the then-President of the United States, you might have been in for a surprise. As it turns out, Lincoln had barely won the election of 1864, and the folks in his home county and all its

surrounding counties had voted for his rival, George B. McClellan.<sup>1</sup> This included Montgomery County, Illinois, the location of Raymond, the village where Jonathan Van Tuyl and his family lived and farmed.

Jonathan Van Tuyl, the son of Otto Van Tuyl of Somerset County, New Jersey, had come west to Illinois sometime between 1835 and 1838. Jonathan and his brother Otto had left the family farm on the Second Watchung mountain in Somerset County, NJ, after the death of their father. Otto settled in Greene County and Jonathan moved on to Macoupen County before finally putting down roots in Montgomery County, near Raymond. The success of a family farm in those days depended on having a large family: boys to help with the field work and girls to do the myriad chores. The fact that Jonathan's wife Jane Pennington produced 11 children was fortunate, indeed. Nine of the eleven grew to adulthood - a testament to the healthy conditions of the 19th century American farm.<sup>2</sup> Though he was the same age as Abe Lincoln, and lived in Lincoln's territory, Jonathan was probably among the faction that opposed Lincoln and his policies. Apparently, Jonathan's son, Jonathan Jr., felt quite strongly about the matter. Family oral history recounts that when drafted into the Union Army, he hired a substitute (a perfectly common occurrence in those days), then set off to join a local militia unit, a unit which was allied with the <u>Confederate cause.<sup>3</sup></u> Thus it appears likely that - as they had been during the Revolution - Van Tuyls were on both sides of the American Civil War.

Jonathan Van Tuyl, Jr. and his younger brothers, Arthur and Otto, headed west to seek their fortunes in farming during the 1880s. Ironically, it was the *Homestead Act of 1862* - passed during the despised Lincoln administration - that opened the door for them, and thousands like them, to engulf the prairies, break the virgin sod, and develop the heartland of America. Any head of a family at least 21 years of age, a citizen or having applied for citizenship, could claim 160 acres of land for just a small filing fee, work the land and improve it for 5 years, then get clear title. By 1900, over 80 million acres had been so distributed.<sup>4</sup> Another feature of the *Homestead Act* was the setting aside of land parcels to be sold to help build and support public schools in the newly-settled territories. These 19th century homesteaders were not ignorant people - many had fine European educations, or - like Arthur Van Tuyl and his wife Lucetta

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Foote, S. "The Civil War, A Narrative," vol. 3, pg. 625. Such political stratagems as admitting Nevada to statehood just before the election helped push Lincoln over the top with electoral votes. He won with less than 55% of the vote, having lost big in cities such as New York City and Detroit. However, the soldier vote was strongly pro-Lincoln, pushing him on to victory.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The last two girls died in 1858, while young [see genealogy].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Van Tuyl, C., "Van Tuyl Family History," 1995, Second Edition, pg. 8. Family recollection of Jonathan Van Tuyl Junior's war service, coupled with the absence of any U.S. military records for him [National Archives, 1995], lends further credence to the suspicion that he opposed the Union cause. The Confederacy was known to have sanctioned irregular bands of marauders in Northern or border states - e.g. Quantrill's raiders in Kansas and Kentucky [*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th Edition, vol. 9, pg. 840]. <sup>4</sup> *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edition, vol. 6, pg. 26.

Stewart - had studied at teacher training colleges in the U.S.<sup>5</sup> Arthur came west to Kansas with his brothers Otto, James and Jonathan, Jr., the former rebel. James and Jonathan settled in Marion County, Kansas, and Arthur put down roots in La Cygne, Linn County, on the Missouri border.<sup>6</sup> Arthur actually taught school upon his arrival in Kansas, but turned to full time farming soon after.

Farm life was dawn-to-dusk hard labor, and hard work was not always rewarded with success luck was a necessary element, too. Arthur and family prospered because they were hard workers, smart farmers, and lucky people. Jonathan had a more rugged time of it. In 1904, tired of farm life and suffering from arthritis, Jonathan Van Tuyl, Jr. moved his family to Shawnee, Indian Territory, where he opened a general store. But good luck did not accompany the Van Tuyls to Shawnee. Their store did not prosper, and after they lost daughter Annie to typhoid fever in 1904, and Jessie and Mattie died the following year, the family was grief-stricken. They left Shawnee, and bought a farm in the Cherokee Nation, near today's Porter, Oklahoma. There they made a go of it, establishing by marriage and procreation a large, successful family.<sup>7</sup>

Hazel Van Tuyl McClave, born in 1897 on the family farm in Raymond, Illinois, remembers farm life on her father Will Van Tuyl's place near Peabody, Kansas.8 Hazel worked with her dad in the fields (unusual for a girl), dawn to dusk, raising corn, wheat, oats and kaffir corn [sorghum]. She remembers that what really supported her family were the chickens they raised on the side. Will Van Tuyl was the eldest son of Jonathan Van Tuyl, Jr., by his first wife, Jane Simms. When Jonathan brought his second family to Kansas in the 1880s, young Will stayed behind in Illinois, to be raised by his grandparents. But in 1897, Will loaded his steam-powered threshing machine aboard a flat car, and moved lock, stock and barrel to Peabody, Kansas. Will's pride and joy was his threshing machine, a two-part affair consisting of a boiler-engine, and thresher. One evening, while moving the machine from one field to another, the crew ignored Will Van Tuyl's orders to take only one section at a time across a weak bridge. With both sections loading the bridge at once, the structure collapsed, sending men and equipment into the creek. At least one man was scalded by boiling water, but was saved by his immediate immersion in the creek. Will Van Tuyl suffered one of those setbacks that constantly plague farmers, but recovered, spending his entire working life on the Van Tuyl farm. Hazel remembers visiting her kinfolk in nearby Burns, but the branch in LaCygne was too far away for visiting in those days, so the families lost contact. Like so many of her generation, when it came time for

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Family records. They met at a teacher's college in Illinois.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Jonathan and James settled in Burns, KS, according to relative Hazel McClave of Peabody, KS. Arthur's farm in La Cygne is still owned by his descendants, says Waneta Van Tuyl, his granddaughter. <sup>7</sup> Over 100 members of this branch convened near Porter, OK on 4 July, 1995. The group ranged from tobacco-chewing farmers to computer-literate college students and one individual with both a Ph.D. and an M.D. By marriage, the family is officially Cherokee, though only to a small fraction. <sup>8</sup> July, 1995 interview. Hazel is the daughter of William Van Tuyl [1.8.3b.11.4.4.1].

Hazel to marry, she did not choose a farmer, but rather a local blacksmith. She spent her adult life in the town of Peabody, Kansas.

Most of the Kansas Van Tuyls left the farm in the first half of the 20th century. Typical of so many American families of the time, they had developed a strong self-reliance which stood them in good stead as they tackled - with great success - the challenges of middle-class life in the modern world.

## New York City Girl Moves West

Exactly how Alice Van Tuyl, a 22 year old well-educated New York City girl, came to own a square mile of apparently worthless West Texas land is a subject of some debate. One family story has the young Alice sitting at the feet of her father who was disconsolately tossing paper after paper into a roaring fire - the aftermath of his business failure pursuant to the *Panic of 1873*. Alice, or so the story goes, saw the barest glimmer of golden threads in the finely-printed paper of what turned out to be the deed to a section of land in what was then still considered to be the "Wild West". Her father, says family tradition, spared the deed, gave it to his daughter, and thus sealed the family's destiny.

A more plausible story is the one passed through the family in writing: Andrew Van Tuyl, New York shipping agent and broker, was - like millions of his countrymen - financially destroyed by one of the first international monetary fiascoes - the *Panic of 1873*. Having its origins in some obscure European currency imbroglio, this panic spread within a year to America, and before it was done, a million men were unemployed, railway projects were derailed, and businesses collapsed in ruin.<sup>9</sup> So it was that Andrew Van Tuyl's firm - stuck with precious few assets of any worth - divvied them up, apparently assigning many of them to the children of the partners, to avoid bankruptcy confiscations. Alice Crossby Van Tuyl was assigned 640 acres "...*situated in Taylor County ... State of Texas...on the East Bank of the Clear Fork of the Brazos River about 16 miles above Fort Phantom Hill...*". <sup>10, 11</sup> Whatever the actual reasons were for Alice's having acquired 640 acres of marginal land in West Texas - land at that time open to Comanche "incursions" as well as Buffalo migrations - the fact of the matter was that this young woman's land deal set the course for her entire family well into the 20th century. Here's what transpired: Ben and Andy Van Tuyl, Alice's younger brothers, headed out to Texas in, or before, 1879.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Kindleberger, C., "Manias, Panics, and Crashes," 1978, pp. 132-33.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Taylor County, Texas Deeds, Book A, page 39. Recorded 28 Feb., 1877 as evidence of the 10 Oct., 1876 sale by George Butler to Alice Crossby Van Tuyl. Locally, it was called Elm Creek - not the Clear Fork of the Brazos].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> But even this plausible version has its problems when scrutinized against the official record. It seems that one George Butler, of Galveston County, Texas, was in New York during the 1870s with property to sell. One of his customers, it seems, was the 22 year old Miss Van Tuyl. The transaction was even blessed by "The Commissioner for Texas in New York City" (with offices at 117 Broadway), and the sale was directly from Butler, the Texan, to Alice Van Tuyl, the New Yorker. It was not a transfer from some brokerage firm.

They set to work establishing a sheep ranch on Alice's property:12

Buffalo Gap Sept. 25, 1879 ~

Dear Father

Yours of 14th to Andy is received...We are working equally here each to receive 7% for his money invested and share equally profits & Losses ~ ...I think we can get up the sides of a storm house say  $12 \times 16$  to the hight [sic] of 8 or 9 ft and set one tent within ~ this will break the wind and we could be quite comfortable roofing it and laying floor...Think we both have clothes enough to last until July next or near it with a few pair of socks and a little shoe leather

# Lovingly Ben.

Were these young men completely crazy? No, they were just optimistic - like everyone else. And they had some reason to be. For some years now - and certainly from the time when the Galveston promoter unloaded the 640 acres on Alice - those irrepressible 19th century developers, the *Railroad Men*, had been at it. In 1871, Congress had chartered a grand scheme to connect San Diego, California, to Marshall, East Texas, along the 32nd parallel with what was to be known as the Texas and Pacific Railroad. The Panic of 1873 derailed the scheme for several years, but a group of Fort Worth businessmen managed to finance the line's expansion to their city by 1876, before the line went into receivership. There the matter lay until 1880 - after Ben and Andy had settled in Buffalo Gap - at which time a syndicate headed by Jay Gould bought up the T&P, abandoned plans for extension to San Diego, and slated the line for feeder service to Gould's Missouri & Pacific. 13, 14 Folks in Buffalo Gap were sure that the railroad would run through their town, and in 1880, land prices started to rise. But railroad officials with power to direct the route started buying up land along a different course - a move typical of the time but grossly unethical by today's standards - and by 1880 it was clear that Buffalo Gap would be bypassed in favor of a yet-to-be built town: the "Future Great" Abilene.<sup>15</sup> The Van Tuyls, located as they were north of Buffalo Gap, came out all right in the end. Their farm was, at its closest point, 2 miles from the railroad station, so the value of their land as a sheep ranch was, if anything, enhanced.16

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Letter from Ben S. Van Tuyl to his father, Andrew Van Tuyl, dated Sept. 25, 1879.

<sup>13</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica, 15th Edition, vol. 11, pg. 663.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> "Abilene Remembered, Our Centennial Treasury book 1881 - 1981," published by *The Abilene Reporter-News*, 1981, pg. 10.

<sup>15 &</sup>quot;Abilene Remembered...," pg. 10.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> By the 2nd half of the 20th century, Abilene, like most American cities had expanded via suburbanization to cover many square miles. Alice's property is today covered by suburbs, being bounded roughly by S. 20th St., S. 27th St., Highland Ave., and U.S. 83 Bypass. Its late 20th century value would have been millions of dollars.

Ben Van Tuyl's circa 1880 map of the Van Tuyl brothers' "Sheep Ranche" located between the village of Buffalo Gap and the yet-to-be-built "Future Great" City of Abilene, Texas. The ranch a han Constit-Sab fals Amade a mistake, Grin anc LUN gricus north + South Horse Roh anun auth P terius & Burrio 2200 redeke Ses no ged G inda ce Theep ະ Q O the Beanch uture adar Cee Chapter 17 on uni sorio H× 100 Farmer. unaw no lee Б Elmer Q muter R P Chacks Oton House, unoccupied d + Mack Clatte - Farmer? S 2 hurray Divite a sottlement in 1:0, quake. Thub rain Farmer v, 5 ador Gr- Where andy & I will camp Straight mit anopeo Car Cl Br- heavest materite Ras \*\* she reon

was established on property owned by their older sister, Alice Crossby Van Tuyl.

J. Stoddard Johnston, an 1881 promoter of the yet-to-be-built town of Abilene, had some enticing descriptions as well as words of caution for potential settlers:<sup>17</sup>

To the north, south, and west of Abilene is a region of country...unequaled for its fertility, health, and adaptability for successful stock raising and agriculture....The country is sparsely settled as yet, but into it immigration is pouring with remarkable rapidity, and as the country develops the town will thrive apace...I have been asked if there was an opening for a good hotel. I know of no place where it is better...There is a good opening for a flouring and grist mill, there being none within forty miles of Abilene...with proper effort [Abilene] could be made the wool market for all Northwestern Texas...Mechanics and artisans of all kinds will find this a good field...[But] Professional men...will find that theirs are to be the branches of business which are most overstocked. There are already full a dozen lawyers in Abilene...

The real problem with Abilene, however, was water. On this point, Johnston was vague and misleading:<sup>18</sup>

As to rainfall...Experience shows that as the prairie country is occupied and plowed, the seasons become more equable and the rainfall greater.

But plainly this was stock country - sheep to the south and cattle to the west of this would-be metropolis on the prairie. Those used to the lush farming characteristics of the East would be bitterly disappointed here. But city boys Ben, Andy - and later, Tom - would find this country better than the urban alternative, and so they made a go of it.

Meanwhile, Alice waited patiently with a dream of her own. As she watched her maiden years drift by, she must have dreamed of settling down in West Texas with the love of her life, a young man she had reportedly met at the 1876 Philadelphia World's Fair: Washington, DC postal worker Arthur W. Burchard. So by 1882, her patience apparently at an end, Alice set out for West Texas - probably accompanied by her younger brother, Tom, and possibly her father, Andrew. Finally, at the relatively late-for-marriage age of 29, Alice wed her beau on Christmas Day of 1882. The newlyweds settled into a small frame house built for her as a wedding present by her brothers.<sup>19</sup> Alice's oldest son, Roland, remembered his mom and what her life was like on the bleak West Texas plains:<sup>20</sup>

The house was built on the bank of Elm Creek, which trickled through the ranch. In the summer this trickle was reduced to a mere drip, and all drinking water had to be brought up from the bottom of the channel...[About 1893] in order to get near enough to go to school in Abilene, we moved the house to the east end of our land, which was only two miles from town [the kids walked to school]. The house was on a hill with a beautiful view. We built three cisterns...our only water supply. [Alice], in spite of the lack of all previous experience, was able to cope

<sup>17 &</sup>quot;Abilene Remembered...," pg. 12.

<sup>18 &</sup>quot;Abilene Remembered...," pg. 12.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Family recollections compiled by Preston C. Burchard, Alice's grandson. The brothers moved some 70 miles to the west, where they took up cattle ranching near Colorado City, TX. Grandfather Andrew Van Tuyl apparently lived with one of them.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> 1960 letter from and 1967 interview with Roland Burchard [b. 1886]. Collection of Preston Burchard.

with anything that was thrown at her, and she took it in her stride, without a complaint and even with a smile. [She had] a disposition that defied discouragement, ignored discomforts - pleasant and cheerful no matter how she felt. No complaints - no regrets.

Actually, Abilene was not without a cultural life, and Alice made the most of her new proximity to the town:<sup>21</sup>

Now that we were nearer Abilene, she could take a larger part in the church and social activities of the now rapidly growing town. She organized a Shakespeare Club and a Book Club...When dressed the part, with her perfect poise and carriage, not to mention her perfect diction, she was always called on to aid and entertain at any meetings.

But the 19th century had its limitations, especially when it came to medical treatment. In 1897, three weeks after giving birth to her youngest son - Alan Van Tuyl Burchard - Alice Crossby Van Tuyl Burchard died at her home. She had spent the last, perhaps best, 15 years of her life on the West Texas prairie under circumstances all-too-typical of the time. But she brought with her a touch of class and culture from her well-to-do New York City background, and this she shared with her fellow pioneers in Abilene. A flower of the prairie, she had "bloomed where she was planted."22

## The Townspeople

The movement of New York City's Van Tuyls to the plains of Texas ran counter to the main trend in late 19th century America. Whereas during The Revolution only 5% of Americans lived in cities, by 1880 28% of the country's population was urban, and by 1900 this had increased to 40%. This trend was never to be reversed.<sup>23</sup> In fact, America at this time was enjoying a boom in both its rural and urban populations, due to the large birth and survival rates, as well an unprecedented influx of immigrants from Europe. Immigration had risen steadily throughout the 19th century, showing a slight decrease only in the 1860s - the decade of the Civil War. From 1881 to 1890, over 5 million people immigrated to the country - twice the total population at the time of the Revolution. In the 1880s, this influx amounted to about 10% of the nation's population and was nearly equal to the number of new births for the decade.<sup>24</sup> But whereas many of these European immigrants moved directly to the homestead farms of America's heartland, many more joined the tide of the native-born moving to the cities.

23 Encyclopaedia Britannica, 15th edition, vol. 29, pg. 241.

<sup>21</sup> ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> By 18 Nov., 1919, the lingering effects of the 1917-18 drought forced Alice's family to sell the neverprofitable farm. Today, it has been absorbed into Abilene's suburbs.

<sup>24</sup> Kurian, G., "Datapedia of the United States, 1790-2000," Section C. World Almanac, 1995, pg. 376.



Alice Van Tuyl Burchard with her sons Harry [left] and Roland, on the porch of her prairie home. Homespun clothing was not for Alice or her boys.

Alice's home near Abilene, Texas. The sole water supply was from rain-catching cisterns. The supersturcture was an observation platform which enabled the family to survey their 640 acre domain. Today, the property has become part of suburban Abilene.



Alice Van Tuyl obtained title to 640 acres of undeveloped Texas property in 1876 - when buffalo roamed over the land and Comanche raids were still a threat. In 1879, her brothers - left with no prospects after a family business failure - moved onto the property and developed it for her. It was here, in 1882, that Alice married her beau, Arthur Whitman Burchard, and settled into a frontier life with genteel overtones. She founded a local Shakespeare Club and a Book Club, and was much in demand in Abilene society.

One of the first Van Tuyls to move from the farm to the city was Abraham I. Van Tuyl. After the War of 1812 - and following the tragic death of his young wife - he had moved to Philadelphia, participated in that city's affairs, and became father to a westward-moving branch of town dwellers. Among his descendants were Dr. David Bartholemew Van Tuyl, early physician of Dayton, Ohio, and his half-brothers Isaac and Charles. They all followed the lead of their cousin, Dr. Henry Van Tuyl of Dayton, following him west in the 1840s.<sup>25</sup> When Dr. Henry died, the family split up, with Dr. David heading to South Bend, Indiana, and Isaac to Indianapolis, Indiana. Town life was not easy for these Van Tuyls, but they persevered, and by the turn of the century had joined the ranks of the urban middle class. A particularly interesting family are the descendants of Horace Greeley Van Tuyl.

Horace Greeley, the liberal anti-slavery publisher of the *New York Tribune* must have been much admired by Dr. David Bartholemew Van Tuyl of Dayton, Ohio. When the good doctor's first child - and only son - arrived in 1845, he was named in honor of the abolitionist editor, an act fully in keeping with the Dayton/Troy, Ohio Van Tuyl family's politics. But Dr. David's feckless attempt to run his own medical practice out from under his uncle Henry's wing came to a tragic end in 1858 when Dr. David died in South Bend, Indiana, leaving his wife and children penniless. Twelve year old Horace Greeley Van Tuyl was now the man of the house, and he was forced by circumstances to take a job as a night watchman in a factory to support his mother and sisters. The teenage boy probably found ready employment during the Civil War, and by some means or other held his family together.<sup>26</sup> Probably after the Civil War, Horace moved north to Detroit, Michigan, married, and entered the dry goods business. The hard-working young man did well enough in the prospering Great Lakes city to not only support his children - something his physician father had failed to do for *him* - but to send two of them to the University of Michigan! As far as we know, Horace's son Frank Foster Van Tuyl, with his 1895 degree in engineering, was the first Van Tuyl university graduate in the United States.<sup>27</sup>

Frank Foster Van Tuyl was a paragon of turn-of-the-century family values. No drinking, smoking, or swearing would be tolerated in his home. But he was a fun-loving man with a variety of interests. A flute player, he performed with the town band in the park. He was a person who always wanted the "latest thing" - a crystal radio, for example, or a car (he got one in 1914).<sup>28</sup> Frank had a successful engineering practice in Detroit, a wife, three children, and a lovely home when, in 1912, tragedy struck: his wife Laura died at age 37, leaving Frank with 3 kids to raise. Single parents abounded in those days, largely - but as we will see, not exclusively

<sup>25</sup> See Chapters 12 and 14.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Family oral history collected by Joseph Van Tuyl Kempton, a descendant of H. G. Van Tuyl.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> See American Van Tuyl Genealogy. Frank became an engineer, but brother Horace - though a U. of M. medical graduate - never could face the responsibility of a medical career. The descendants of Frank Foster Van Tuyl are now in their 5th generation of U. of Michigan graduates.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Recollections of his daughter Anna Van Tuyl Dudley, in 1994/95.

- due to the death of a spouse. Unlike grandpa Horace's case, where he as the oldest son could take some responsibility, the situation of Frank Van Tuyl was none-too promising: a diabetic 9 year old daughter, a 7 year old girl and a 5 year old boy. Frank Van Tuyl was a man in need of a wife.

The mild-mannered Frank's need was filled within 2 years when into his life came one of the period's most remarkable women: human dynamo, ground-breaking lady life insurance agent, minister's widow, and mother of two - the amazing and fiercely ambitious Mary C. Tubbs. These two middle-aged single parents each had what the other needed, and they proceeded, methodically, to put the puzzle pieces together. They instituted a series of two-family picnics, the point being to introduce their children to one another. The kids got along well. The parents got along well. So Frank and Mary tied the knot in 1914. Their marriage of convenience proved durable and productive over the years, with Frank adopting Mary's two daughters and their union producing two children of their own. They were, early on, what most of the family's branches would become sooner or later: the very example of 20th century middle class respectability, achievement, and stability. But like most Americans, and unknown to them in these days before World War I, they were to face difficult times ahead in the new 20th century.

## Divorce, 19th Century Style

As the railways crisscrossed the heart of America, linking towns and villages to the major metropolitan areas, there arose a new breed of American: the *travelling man*. Actually, men had travelled the country for commercial purposes long before the railroads were built, but the unprecedented mobility afforded by the steam locomotive precipitated the great age of the commercial traveller. Not only did salesmen travel, but farmers (along with their equipment and livestock) rode the rails; young men in search of adventure took to the freight cars; preachers, hoboes, promoters, lecturers, builders, and land speculators found their way to every corner of America. And where they went, there were women eager for their company. So it was not unusual for situations which would have been rare to occur in the rural Midwest of the early 19th century - where isolated and tightly circumscribed farm life dominated - to erupt with a vengeance once people attained mobility, or moved to the big cities.

One such case was that of Edward Barrett Warman, a travelling lecturer and Professor of Elocution, based in Chicago. Warman was married to Marie Van Tuyl, the daughter of Isaac Van Tuyl of Indianapolis, who was the son of Abraham I. Van Tuyl of Philadelphia. This was the same Isaac who had been helped by Dr. Henry Van Tuyl of Dayton, and whose sister, Anna, had married her uncle, Dr. Henry Van Tuyl.<sup>29</sup> Marie - often called *Maybelle* or *May* - was to be involved in a scandal of her own, and this scandal would be documented in lurid detail by the Chicago tabloid press. Frequent separations took their toll on the Warman - Van Tuyl marriage, it seems. He had been kicked by a horse during the Civil War and sat out further service at his <sup>29</sup> See Chapter 14

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home in New Boston, OH. Exactly how Edward met May is a mystery, but in 1871 the couple were united "...'til death do us part." By 1887 the couple would come to appreciate the full import of their solemn vows.

Perhaps the story is best told by one of the original sources - the Chicago Herald of October 5, 1887:



"Won't you speak to me May? Won't you say a single word? Don't go away feeling hard toward me."

The little woman stopped, and a moisture began to show itself in her eyes.

"Edward," she murmured in a low voice, as though she had something she would like to say to him, and she started to give him her hand. The old man at her side quickly saw the drift of matters and was as quick to act. He threw himself between the husband and wife and rudely separated them, and then endeavored to hurry his daughter away. But she was loath to go and said she wished to speak to her husband. They had a brief talk, but it did not result in any reconciliation and they parted.

The divorce case of Edward B. Warman against his wife, Mary B., was one of the most hotly con-tested cases ever tried in Chicago court, and yet, had the wife been willing to make but a slight ad-vance, the couple would have left the court room together, reunited. But it was not to be so...

The Warmans eventually did manage to get their divorce.<sup>30</sup> But their experience in the public limelight illustrates how different the country was during the century when people separated themselves from farm life and its isolation, and started to experience some freedom of action. As the case of May Van Tuyl Warman illustrates, 19th century America was not yet ready for 20th century lifestyles. However, 19th century tabloid journalism was, it seems, every bit as lurid and sensationalistic as its late 20th century counterpart.

<sup>30</sup> Information supplied by Jean Warman Guertler, granddaughter of the estranged couple.

An unidentified newspaper quotes love poems from the grave :

Judge Jamieson was engaged yesterday in trying the amusing contested divorce case of Professor Edward B. Warman, a teacher of elocution in Chicago but formerly of Indianapolis and Detroit, against his wife, Mary B. Warman, the daughter of Isaac Van Tuyl, of Indianapolis. Warman charged his wife with infidelity with Captain William A. Owen, of Detroit, one of the influential citizens in that city at one time, but now dead. The parties were married in August, 1871, and they lived in Detroit for eight years. The Professor's business required him to be on the road a great part of the time, and in his absence Captain Owen was an almost constant visitor to his wife. He took her out riding frequently and gave her valuable presents. On one return Warman said he found his wife in a compromising position with the Captain. He said nothing, but left the house. Warman then stood up and read an original poem written by Captain Owen and addressed to Mrs. Warman, which is as follows:

> Along a path of toil and strife, Of care and anxious hope, I oft have wearied of my life, While passing down its slope.

Of late I've had an anchorage safe, Something on which to lean, To some 'twould seem a fleeting waif, It's to me a heavenly sheen.

I am anchored safe in loving arms, A soul by me adored, 'Twas Heaven which sent her angel charms, A messenger from the Lord.

A Heaven is mine, of perfect rest, Forgetting all earth's toils, My head when pillowed on her breast, Is dumb to all earth's broils.

Dear, nestle close to me, While blind to other charms, I nowhere else can happy be,

Oh, fold me in your arms. Detroit, April 26, 1883.

Mrs. Warman is a good-looking woman, and well educated. She testified that Captain Owen visited her with her husband's consent. He even advised it, as he thought she would be lonely in his absence. She stated that Warman was an advocate of free love, and believed in the widest possible liberty for both sexes. She positively denied any intimacy with Owen, and in a cross bill charged her husband with adultery. After all the evidence was in the court held there was no testimony that the wife was guilty of infidelity. He would not brand the character of a woman upon such evidence. Both bills were dismissed. After the decision Warman attempted a reconciliation with the wife, but was prevented by her father, who separated them.

# BOTH PARTIES DEFEATED

UNIQUE OUTCOME OF A DIVORCE CASE BEFORE JUDGE JAMIESON.

Neither Party Being Able to Prove the Allegations Made, the Judge Dismisses the Whole Matter, and the Husband and Wife Are Still One - A Reconciliation Almost Effected in the Court-Room

It is not often that a case results in a defeat for both parties, but Judge Jamieson was able to decide the divorce case of Edward B. Warman against Mary B. Warman in such a way as to satisfy neither party. Warman is a professor of elocution in the city, and charged his wife with adultery with a Capt. Owen of Detroit. She denied the accuration and retorted that he had been too the accusation and retorted that he had been too intimate with a number of his lady pupils. He denied this. Warman was the only witness as to his wife's alledged frailty, and his Father-in-law, Mr. Van Tuyl, was the only witness as to his shortcomings. Van Tuyl said Warman had voluntarily confessed to him that he had been unfaithful. It was evident that there was some high and lofty false swearing somewhere, but the Judge adroitly dodged the delicate matter of accusing any one of perjury by saying that the charges on neither side had been corroborated. He blamed Warman severely for allowing his wife to continue her alledged intimacy with Owen after he became suspicious that affairs were not right ne became suspicious that arrans were not right and ended by dismissing both bill and cross-bill. Both parties are well to do, refined-looking people, and Mrs. Warman is more than usually good - looking. They were married in 1871 and separated in November last. After the decision Warman stepped up to his wife with tears in his event to bid her good.by and she appeared as eyes to bid her good-by, and she appeared as though she was willing to at least part kindly. Perhaps there might have been steps made toward reconciliation, but Van Tuyl quickly interposed and the parties separated.

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"Old Mr. Van Tuyl" - Isaac [1.8.3b.1.7.1b.2] Van Tuyl of Indiànapolis, IN - is cast as the cold-hearted nemesis of true love in this unidentified newspaper's account.

# The Builder

Lew Van Tuyl grew up in a man's world, a world full of his father's stories of military glory: days on the road, riding on horseback in pursuit of victory, and days spent driving men to their limits as if their lives depended on it (which they had). Lew Van Tuyl was the son of Erastus J. "Cap" Van Tuyl, the former lieutenant of the 12th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry.<sup>31</sup> Lew's dad joined the Grand *Army of the Republic*, and Lew belonged to the *Sons of Veterans.*<sup>32</sup> Erastus and his wife Sallie - now *Sarah* - found themselves in the growing village of Verona, Misssouri by 1872, raising their kids: Bill, Lew, Jim, Dora, and Harry. Though Lew was the second son, he took on the mantle of the eldest after his older brother Bill was badly injured by fire at a young age.<sup>33</sup> Lew learned the carpenter's trade from his dad, as did Jim and Harry after him. All the boys involved themselves in the building business to one degree or another, and passed their trade along to their sons in turn. But for Lew Van Tuyl, building became more than a trade, more than a business - it became his life.

Verona, Missouri was, in the 1870s, a promising Ozarks village of 566 residents - the second largest town in Lawrence Co., Missouri. Verona was served - starting in 1870 - by the *Saint Louis and San Francisco Railroad* - commonly called the *Frisco* line.<sup>34, 35</sup> In 1871, when Erastus Van Tuyl settled in Verona, there were only 3 carpenters in town. But the town was expanding, with new stores, shops, mills and houses going up all the time. His skills must have been in demand. In fact, he probably helped build many of the wood frame houses that comprise Verona to this day.<sup>36</sup>

The first day Lew Van Tuyl started looking at women is not recorded: the last day is - it was the day he died. If not the first target of his affections, Florence Chumbley was the first woman he really courted seriously. She turned him down. Florence was the oldest daughter in a family of 12 children born to Samuel C. Chumbley and his wife Molly. Fellow Civil War Veterans, Sam Chumbley and Erastus Van Tuyl were probably good friends. Chumbley was a charming guy, full of tall tales and stories. He never amounted to much, but was fondly remembered by his grandchildren, for whom he babysat in his old age. Certainly, the hard-driving and egotistical Lew Van Tuyl was not anything like her gentle, fun-loving dad, so it's not surprising that Florence chose one of the Gray boys as her mate. Lew was so embittered by her choice that he

<sup>31</sup> See Chapter 15.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> "Verona Missouri 1868-1968," 1968, Valley Printers, Verona, MO, pg. 91. Also, family memorabilia. <sup>33</sup> Family oral history. Sadly, Bill was badly burned in childhood and was handicapped for the rest of his life. He never married.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> "Verona Missouri 1868-1968," 1968, Valley Printers, Verona, MO, pg. 85. Actually, the Frisco Line acquired the existing railroad in 1876. In 1881, Verona shipped 75 cars of cattle, 97 cars of hogs, 7 cars of sheep, 302 cars of wheat, 35 cars of oak lumber, and nearly 2.5 million pounds of other freight. The Frisco Line, though it never did reach San Francisco, was a successful southwest feeder railroad for years.

<sup>35 &</sup>quot;Lawrence County Missouri History," Lawrence Co. Hist. Soc., 1974, appendix.

<sup>36 &</sup>quot;Verona Missouri 1868-1968," 1968, Valley Printers, Verona, MO, pg. 15.

vowed never to speak to *any* Gray again, as long as he lived. He never broke his vow. But Malinda, Florence's younger sister, saw something in Lew - or maybe she just saw the chance to escape her poor, crowded home life - and in July of 1889, this 18 year old girl married the young carpenter. Their marriage - never based on the strongest of motives - was, it seems, doomed from the start, and not just because of Lew's attitude toward the Grays. Lew could not keep his mind - or his eye - off women.

The Verona, Missouri business directory for 1898-99 listed *Lew Van Tuyl, carpenter.*<sup>37</sup> But he was more than a house builder in a small Ozark village. Frequently, Lew hopped aboard the *Frisco* railroad line in Verona and headed west to where the jobs were: Indian Territory.<sup>38</sup> This was the classic period of red sandstone architecture in what was to become the State of Oklahoma.<sup>39</sup> About 1895, Lew built a beautiful school building in the Osage Nation at the town of Hominy. The railroads took him to a new world - a world where he could develop his talents for organizing, managing, and executing big construction jobs. The boy from Verona was developing something new in his line of the family: a *career*. He took to working arithmetic problems on any scrap of paper he could lay his hands on. Material orders, men's wages, and schedules were never far from his mind, as evidenced by his constant calculations. He had what it took to build some of the best structures of the 1890s through the 1920s - some of which still stand at the end of the 20th century. Lew Van Tuyl, whatever his personal flaws, was a man of ability.

In 1898, Lew's brother-in-law, Bill Harvey, presented him with a book. It was shameless propaganda designed to stir the passions of war in the breast of every red-blooded American:

THE WAR IN CUBA BEING A FULL ACCOUNT OF HER GREAT STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM BY Senor GONZALO de QUESADA Chargé d' Affaires of the Republic of Cuba, at Washington, D.C. AND HENRY DAVENPORT NORTHROP The well-known author

Lew, the cavalryman's son, must have felt his blood boil as he read Henry Northrop's purple prose:<sup>40</sup>

40 De Quesada, G. and Northrop, H., "The War in Cuba...," Liberty Publishing Co., 1896.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> "Verona Missouri 1868-1968," 1968, Valley Printers, Verona, MO, pg. 7. It also lists his brother, Jim as having a business: "Cigars and Lunch".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> In 1892, while working in the Chickasaw Nation town of Tishomingo, Lew decided to name his daughter *Tishomingo* Van Tuyl. Tishomingo was the name of a Chief. The daughter came to be known as *Tish* or *Ming*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Some of the buildings of the period are truly elegant. Belgian architect Joseph Foucart was among the designers who set the tone for this sandstone-and-brick school of design.

America had her Revolution, her Bunker Hill and Yorktown. Cuba has her patriot army, resolved that her fertile plains shall no longer be trampled under the heel of Spanish tyranny...Beautiful Cuba! For ages she has writhed under the oppression of the haughty Castillian...

Toughened by his forays into the rough-and-tumble Indian Territory, stifled by his small town family life, enraged by the situation in Cuba, Lew Van Tuyl decided he was going to Cuba to "...kill himself a Spaniard."<sup>41</sup> With little or no thought for the welfare of his wife and children, Lew travelled south to Louisiana under the pseudonym "L.G. Vant", volunteered to fight, and was given a stick of wood for a drill rifle. His dreams of military glory never progressed beyond this stage, it seems. His military unit never left Louisiana, never got real rifles, never went to Cuba, and never killed any Spaniards. The only souvenir of this interlude as "L.G. Vant" is a photo of Lew, taken in some Louisiana portrait studio, dressed in an ill-fitting uniform. It shows a man seething with anger - either due to his hatred for "Spaniards" or, more likely, his frustration in knowing he would never be able to outdo his father's cavalry heroics. It may have been the most bitter disappointment of his life.

Lynn Chumbley Van Tuyl's biggest life disappointment would have to have been her husband, Lew. About 1904 she either caught Lew with a particular woman, or just threw up her hands at his philandering ways. She was a proud woman. She asked for, and received, a divorce from her husband, even though it left her with children to support by whatever means she could.<sup>42</sup> The times were not kind to a woman without a man, nor were they particularly demanding that a man should support the children he had sired. Lynn shouldered the burden as best she could, working as a construction crew cook and road manager. She had a somewhat shy personality, but was a hard worker and somewhat of a "mother" to the younger men on the construction crews. One of the young men was her son Ardo, probably about 13 at the time he and his mom headed up to Wyoming to join a pipe-laying crew. When Lynn came down with some illness, the foreman, having no choice in the matter, informed Ardo that *he* was to be the crew's cook until his mom recovered. Ardo later recalled, in his always-comic vein:<sup>43</sup>

Well sir, mom got sick up there in Wyoming and the boss told me: "Son, you're the new cook.." Hell, I didn't know the first thing about cookin', let me tell you. So I worked up this batch of biscuits for the boys on the crew, and let me tell you, those were the hardest damn biscuits you ever saw. Nearly broke my toe when I dropped one of 'em. Well, the boys couldn't eat the biscuits, so they put 'em out for the horses. One of them horses like to died from eating the things! So that was the end of my cooking career.

<sup>41</sup> This story is family oral history.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> No formal record of divorce has been found - there may never have been a legal one. Lynn confided years later that if she had it to do all over again, given the difficulties of life for a single mother of the times, she would have swallowed her pride and stuck with her philandering husband.

<sup>43</sup> A favorite story related to Rory Van Tuyl and others by Ardo Rena Van Tuyl.

Determined to match his father's Civil War exploits during the brief 1899 conflict with Spain, Lew Van Tuyl had to content himself with this studio-posed image instead. The Spanish-American War ended before his outfit received so much as a single rifle.

> Sandstone-and-brick public school, Hominy, Indian Territory. One of Lew's first big construction projects.



The Frank Phillips home, Bartlesville, Indian Territory. About 1905, Lew Van Tuyl remodeled this simple home for banker-oilman Frank Phillips. When Phillips' gushers came in, he built an elegant mansion.

[Courtesy: Phillips Petroleum Company]

Lynn suffered the presumption of promiscuity heaped upon unmarried working women of her time. But through it all, despite the hardships, she held the family together, thus earning the enduring gratitude of her descendants.<sup>44</sup>

Lynn was the heroine, but it was Lew who went places.

Among his destinations: Bartlesville, Indian Territory, where he remodeled a house for a dynamic banker and oilman named Frank Phillips, the man who later founded Phillips Petroleum Co. Also, Chanute, Kansas - where his roving eye caught that of a young girl named May Simmons. Lew then went west to California, the land of opportunity. May moved to San Diego to be with Lew, got pregnant, then returned to Chanute, Kansas to give birth and to raise her daughter with the help of her relatives. She never saw Lew again.<sup>45</sup> Lew's sons Harold and Ardo paid him a visit in San Diego, California in 1912. The boys worked on their dad's construction crew, experiencing firsthand what it was like to slave under the direction of a hard, hard man. And though no affection developed between Ardo and Lew, a milestone in father-son mentoring must have taken place. For although Ardo never would emulate his father's behavior with women, it would be but a few years until this son of Lew Van Tuyl was himself pushing construction crews in the Oklahoma oil fields. The torch, it seems, had been passed from father to son during that formative year of 1912. Ardo, like Lew, was to be one of those millions of men who shaped the American 20th century. He would be a *builder*.

# The River and Grandpa Henry

For centuries the Van Tuyls along the River Waal had lived with the threat of floods. Each century brought its share of dike-breaks and tragedy, but mostly, this consisted of property damage and economic distress. Seldom were people killed outright by the river's fury. But in the great American Midwest - home to one of the world's mightiest river systems - permanent habitation along the stream banks was barely 100 years old at the beginning of the 20th century, and flood-control measures were often woefully inadequate. Along the Great Miami River, men had constructed canals, millraces, diversion dams, and some levees, but at the turn of the century almost no one had a full appreciation for this river's true power. They would not have long to wait.

In March of 1913, the Great Miami River showed what just one small tributary of the giant Mississippi could do. The normally docile river overflowed its banks, flooded most of Troy, Ohio, and killed a number of people in the process. Among the victims was 78 year old Henry

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Lynn did remarry. First to contractor Charles Savage and, after his death, to one of the Gray boys whose family was so despised by Lew.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Rebekah June Van Tuyl met met her father only once. She had no regular association with him through the years, except via mail.

M. Van Tuyl, former carpenter, Civil War veteran, and longtime resident of the city.<sup>46</sup> At the time of his death, Henry was estranged from his wife, the former Mary Frances Somerville. He lived alone in a little house, subsisted on his Civil War pension, and had a drinking problem.<sup>47</sup> In the spring of 1913, nature - and Henry's own stubbornness - would put an end to his travail. Here, based on eyewitness testimony, is the story of how Henry met his end:<sup>48</sup>

Monday afternoon [24 March, 1913], L. A. "Ducky" Thomas asked two of his neighbors, Buck Underwood and George Snyder, to help him pump the water out of the cellar boiler room of his greenhouse on Grant Street... They finally gave up when Grant Street started to flood and water came into the basement windows. George hurried down Grant Street to tell his grandmother [Mary Frances] Van Tuyl and her visiting son to get out while they were still able. Then he ran across West Market to the little house by Con Halter's Blacksmith Shop to warn his grandfather [Van Tuyl]. "They [grandma and grandpa] wasn't gettin' along at the time," George explained. The old man hiked himself up another step on the ladder where he was perched and declared, "I'm stayin! It ain't gonna get no higher!"

The situation grew steadily worse, with the residents only gradually coming to realize what a predicament they were in. Finally, when the church bells rang and the power plant whistle went off all at once, they knew they were in trouble. Several rescuers got into a boat and paddled as best they could down Grant Street, where...

...they discovered Bob Mott clinging to a telephone pole...Having helped his own family wade across Grant to refuge up Market Street, he had come back to help his next-door neighbor, old Mrs. Van Tuyl. [Bob said] she was still in her house and that they were practically in front of it. Getting Bob in the boat too, they ducked under Van Tuyl's porch roof and broke the door pane to float right into the house. There was a small gas light on a high wall bracket, and they could see Mrs. Van Tuyl in a wheel chair on top of a high bed and her son kneeling on the bed to keep the chair from rolling off...with great difficulty, they eventually got Bob Mott and both the Van Tuyls to the haven of Ducky Thomas' apartment over the greenhouse packing shed.

The water continued to rise, and by the next day, Tuesday, March 25, much of the town was flooded. The *Big Four* Railroad ran right through town, and ironically, its embankment was acting as a dike - but this dike was keeping water *in* instead of *out* of town!

It was still raining hard and the water was rising almost to the tracks.... They noted that the embankment was already starting to erode... [City] officials plus a lot of concerned citizens - big important men like Elmér Thompson and excited young sightseers like George Snyder - decided that the only thing to do was to blow up the embankment. But who would take the responsibility? Who knew anything about demolition? For that matter, who knew where they could get

<sup>46</sup> Henry M. Van Tuyl [1.8.3b.1.7.2.5] was the son of Oliver Van Tuyl [1.8.3b.1.7.2] and brother of Erastus J. Van Tuyl [1.8.3b.1.7.2.6], with whom he served in the Civil War. [See: American Van Tuyl Genealogy].
<sup>47</sup> US Civil War Pension Application #762740. Frances had in fact tried, unsuccessfully, to get the government to pay half of Henry's pension directly to *her*, accusing Henry of gambling away the pension check while drunk, before she could get her share of the \$15 dollar-per-month stipend.
<sup>48</sup> Davies, L., "The 1913 Flood in Troy," in *History of Miami County Ohio*, Miami County Historical Society, 1982, pp.40 - 43.

some dynamite? "I do!" shouted George Snyder. "Out at Peters Nursery!"

So young George Snyder and his pal Muggins Kelley appropriated a motor scooter and headed out to get the dynamite. They brought two sticks of dynamite and some blasting caps and fuses back to the embankment, where the demolition charge was set up.

Three different eye witnesses do not agree on who made the decision and who lit the fuse. As soon as the fuse started to burn, everybody quickly backed up almost to Walnut Street. As soon as the explosion occurred, they all rushed back to see what had happened. Sure enough! It made a big opening right beside the streetcar under pass. The current was suddenly unbelievable! Trees, chicken coops, horses, barns, outhouses were swept through! George swelled with pride. They never could have done it without him and Muggins. Suddenly, he went pale, "My Gawd," he exclaimed, "there goes my grandaddy's house - and him in it, too!" Muggins put his arm around George and said, "George, you need a drink." At the little bar near the depot, the kindly bartender said, "George, you look a little nervous. Have another one on me, son." The next day George woke up in a coal bin on Main Street.

The *Miami Union* of April 3, 1913 reported that Henry Van Tuyl, Veteran of Civil War Service in the 147th Ohio Volunteer Infantry, died March 25, 1913 during the flood, by drowning. He was interred at Troy Riverside Cemetery.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Obituary Files, Troy Historical and Genealogical Library, Troy-Hayner Cultural Center, Troy, Ohio. 332