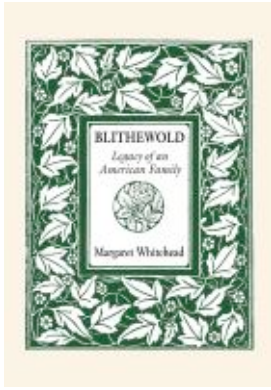


BLITHEWOLD

*Legacy of an  
American Family*



Margaret Whitehead



***BLITHEWOLD: Legacy of an American Family** is a social history of four generations of an American family, from 1810 to 2010, and the legacy they left in the form of Blithewold Mansion, Gardens & Arboretum. Blithewold is a spectacular 33-acre estate on the shores of Narragansett Bay in Bristol, Rhode Island, known as New England's finest sea-side garden estate. The estate's large archival collection of letters and photographs are used to illustrate this remarkable story.*

# **Blithewold**

## **Legacy of an American Family**

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# ***BLITHEWOLD***

***Legacy of  
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Margaret Whitehead

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ISBN 978-1-61434-248-9

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Published in the United States of America by Blithewold Press, 2011  
[www.blithewold.org](http://www.blithewold.org)

First Edition

# **Chapter I**

## **THE PARDEES**

Bessie Pardee Van Wickle McKee was born in 1860 in Hazleton, Pennsylvania, the twelfth child of coal-mining magnate Ario Pardee. She was brought up in a large city-block-square mansion in the center of Hazleton, with all the advantages of wealth and privilege. But her father, Ario Pardee, the provider of all these benefits, was not himself born to great wealth. With good reason he was known in the family as “Ario the Founder,” the name serving to acknowledge his contribution to the well-being and success of generations of Pardees, and also to distinguish him from the many subsequent (and previous) Ario Pardees. (Indeed, for more than 200 years there was always at least one Ario Pardee.)

### **“ARIO THE FOUNDER”**

Ariovistus Pardee,<sup>1</sup> known as Ario, was born in 1810 in Chatham, in the low hills of the Berkshires in Eastern New York State. His earliest recollections were of life on his father’s humble farm in Stephentown, Rensselaer County. His formal education was limited to what he learned at the district school, but he was inspired to greater learning when an excellent teacher, the Reverend Moses Hunter, taught briefly at the school (to supplement his meager salary as a Presbyterian clergyman). Ario always credited the Reverend Hunter with inspiring in him a devotion to learning that lasted his whole life.<sup>2</sup> His formal education ended when he was 15, when he was obliged to leave school and work on the farm; but Ario remembered learning the classics from his father, sitting by the fireside in the modest family

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<sup>1</sup> Father of Bessie Pardee Van Wickle McKee; grandfather of Marjorie Van Wickle Lyon and Augustine Van Wickle Shaw Toland.

<sup>2</sup> From William C. Cattell’s Memorial Address delivered at Lafayette College on Founders Day, October 23, 1892. Blithewold Archives.

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home and working at his books in his limited leisure time. His father, for whom he was named, was an insatiable reader, and, indeed, his paternal grandparents appear to have been Latin scholars for they named their sons Ariovistus, Paulus, and Flavius, and their daughters Lavinia and Palmyra. Ario always knew that he would not follow his father into farming.<sup>1</sup> He had examples of higher learning in the family — one Pardee had married into the Yale family who had founded Yale University in Saybrook, Connecticut, and another was associated with the Rensselaer Institute in Troy, New York. Ario would pursue his own education for the rest of his life,<sup>2</sup> and all his children were educated to the very best of their ability at the finest institutions of learning. He was known as a God-fearing man who became one of the richest men in America by his 50th year.<sup>3</sup> Although his first company was engaged in the extremely lucrative mining of anthracite, he soon diversified his business interests to include iron, lumber, and banking. Many of these businesses still exist today, enhanced and restructured by successive generations of Pardees to reflect changing times. In his own lifetime, Ario supported churches, hospitals, and schools in Hazleton. One of his most philanthropic gifts was a large donation to Lafayette College in 1864 to save the failing institution. He later gave a further half-million dollars (almost \$12 million in today's values) to build, among other things, a science department there.

Ario's ancestors had come to America in the 1600s. The original immigrant, George Pardee, was born in Taunton, Somerset, England, in 1624, the son of a teacher and curate. By 1644, George was living in New Haven, Connecticut, where he was Rector of the Hopkins Grammar School. His son Joseph met and married Elizabeth Yale in

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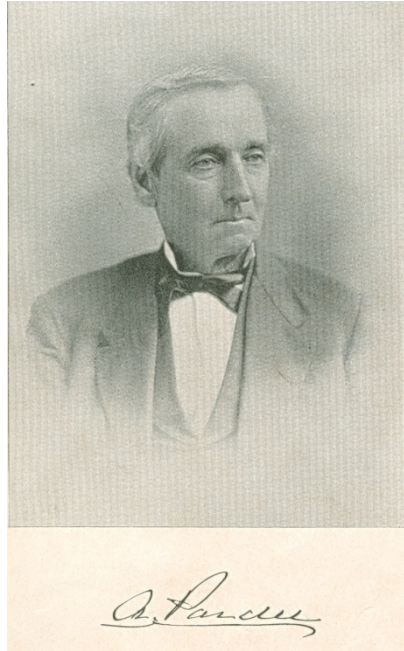
<sup>1</sup> C. Pardee Foulke and William G. Foulke. *Calvin Pardee*. Drake Press, Philadelphia, 1979, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> *Pardee Genealogy*, edited by Donald Lines Jacobus, New Haven Colony Historical Society, 1927, p. 548.

<sup>3</sup> When Ario Pardee died in 1892 the *Philadelphia Press* (April 9, 1892) reported that Ario Pardee's property and personal estate were valued at \$30 million. This would be more than \$700 million in today's values.

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1689. Joseph's son, John, born in 1697, moved to Sharon, Connecticut in 1738 and built a stone house there. The house is extant and is now owned by the Sharon Historical Society. It was John's grandson Calvin who moved to the farm in Stephentown where his son and grandson (both named Ariovistus) were born.



*Ario Pardee<sup>1</sup>*

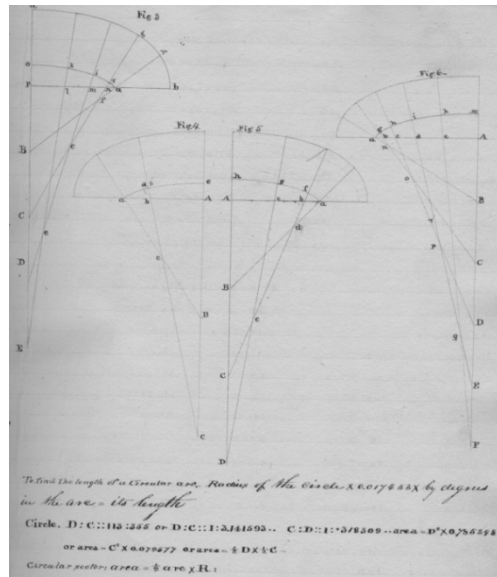
In 1829, when young Ario was 19, he heard that a family acquaintance from Stephentown, Edwin A. Douglas, had been appointed to build the Delaware and Raritan Canal in New Jersey. He wrote to Mr. Douglas asking for a position under him. He was bitterly disappointed when Mr. Douglas, in his reply, told him that the Canal Company was hiring only men from New Jersey. Ario went back to his

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<sup>1</sup> This photographic image and all subsequent images are from the Blithewold Photograph Collection, unless otherwise identified. Information on the Pardees from letters, journals, essays, and photographs are from the Blithewold Archival Collection; from the book *Calvin Pardee* by C. Pardee Foulke and William G. Foulke; and from the book *Dear Pa — And So It Goes* by Gertrude Keller Johnston.

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work plowing, but a few days later his sister Rachael came racing across the field waving a letter that was to change the course of his life. Mr. Douglas had written to advise that if Ario could come to New Jersey immediately he could have the job of rodman<sup>1</sup> on the project. After Ario finished plowing the field that day, Saturday, he went home to gather his belongings. He rested on the Sabbath, and then left home before daylight on Monday morning, joining Mr. Douglas and his men a few miles north of Trenton, New Jersey.<sup>2</sup> When that part of the canal was finished, Ario moved west to Princeton to work on the middle division of the canal; after that it was on to Lambertville in the most western part of New Jersey. Ario Pardee's handwritten workbooks from that time show complicated mathematical calculations and diagrams showing how the canals were made to flow, the crucial gradients, and the workings of the locks.



A page from Ario Pardee's workbook, 1832

<sup>1</sup> A rodman was a surveyor's assistant, so named because his job was to hold the rod used for surveying.

<sup>2</sup> In an April 6, 1876 letter, Ario Pardee told his friend Dr. William Cattell, "You may well believe I lost no time, receiving the letter on Saturday and leaving home before daylight on Monday morning."



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At the same time, rich coal fields were being discovered in the hills of Pennsylvania. The coal was carried painstakingly by mules and wagons down the hills to the towns below, where it was loaded onto canal barges. The barges were pulled along the canals to the railways, which then delivered the coal to the cities where it was used for home heating and for industry. It was an inefficient system, and Edwin Douglas knew that if he could build a better means of transportation from the mines to the canals, the barges could take massive loads of coal to larger towns and cities, including Philadelphia. So he sent Ario to Beaver Meadow, Pennsylvania, to work on a survey for the Beaver Meadow Railroad Company. The railroad company, which owned coal mines near Hazleton, 100 miles north of Philadelphia, planned a simple gravity railroad to carry their coal to the Lehigh Canal at Maunch Chunk. Pulleys and cables lowered cars of coal down the hillside. Mules rode down in the cars with the coal; they then pulled the empty cars back up the hill for reloading.

The gravity railroad was completed in 1836, by which time Ario Pardee was beginning to see tremendous untapped opportunities in coal mining and railroads. He could see that the new gravity railroad was clumsy and that the canal system was already obsolete — not only was it very slow, but the canals froze over in the winter months rendering them useless when they were needed most. He foresaw that the canals would have to be replaced by railways. Ario went to visit his parents, who had moved to Ypsilanti, Michigan, to be close to their married daughters. He used this brief, unaccustomed leisure time to mull over his plan. When he returned to Hazleton (which at that time was scarcely more than a crossroad with ten houses and a small hotel for travelers), he signed on as superintendent of the Hazleton Railroad and Coal Company, determined to learn as much as he could and watch out for future opportunities. He boarded at the Hazleton House Hotel at the corner of Broad and Hazle Streets, built and run by Lewis Davenport whose relative, Elizabeth Jacobs, Ario married in 1838. In 1840, Ario was ready to make his big move. He suspected that there was much more coal in the Hazleton area than the current operators realized, so he started to buy land on speculation. At the age of 30 he

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became an independent coal operator and formed a company with his business partner, J. Gillingham Fell. Ario and Elizabeth lived very frugally, boarding with her parents and keeping careful notes of every cent earned and spent.<sup>1</sup> In 1843, when the young couple bought their own house, Ario wrote in his diary, “*Hazleton. Today I took dinner for the first time in 13 years at a table of my own.*”<sup>2</sup>

Between 1839 and 1845, Elizabeth gave birth to four children, Ario Jr., Calvin, Alice, and Ellen. Two years later, Elizabeth died while giving birth to her fifth child, who also died. Ario was left a widower with four children under eight. His sister Juliet helped look after the children — Ario had given employment to Juliet’s husband, Allen Stewart, and the Stewarts were willing to return the generosity Ario had shown them. They offered to help raise the children alongside their own three. But Ario instead decided to hire a governess, one Anna Maria Robison. Anna Maria came from a large, close family in Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania. Her parents, William and Betsey Barton Robison, were devoted to their 12 children, and were no doubt reluctant to see their daughter Anna Maria leave the quiet little town of Bloomsburg on the banks of the Susquehanna River to go up into the hills to the tiny mining community of Hazleton. But Anna Maria, who had trained as a teacher, took the job, willingly undertaking the task of caring for the four young, motherless children.

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<sup>1</sup>As evidenced in Ario Pardee’s diaries and ledgers in the Blithewold Archives.

<sup>2</sup> Ario Pardee’s diary, Tuesday January 24, 1843. Blithewold Archives.

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*Anna Maria Robison Pardee*

Within a few months Ario fell in love with Anna Maria. For the sake of propriety, Anna returned to her parents' home until a wedding could be arranged. During this time Ario sent her eloquent love letters.<sup>1</sup> *"I shall have no fears that we will get along...lovingly and cheerfully, helping each other over the rough and enjoying the smooth passages of our journey of life."*<sup>2</sup> He wrote her poems,<sup>3</sup> and quoted from Shakespeare. He gave her all the news of the town and its people, the details of his businesses, and accounts of his early philosophy on life. He was an avid reader, even studying Byron, and he was fascinated by the lives of the eminent men of the world. One of his sons later commented that his father seemed to know Sir Walter Scott's poetry by heart. Still only a modestly successful businessman,

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<sup>1</sup> The letters quoted in this chapter, used with the kind permission of the descendants of Gertrude Keller Johnston, are from her book *Dear Pa ... And So it Goes* (henceforth shortened to *Dear Pa*). Private printing, 1971.

<sup>2</sup> Ario Pardee to Anna Maria Robison, July 21, 1848.

<sup>3</sup> Ario Pardee to Anna Maria Robison, August 24, 1848.

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Ario anticipated a comfortable, middle-class life: “*I believe that the middle class are the happy class, and in that road, Dear Anna, we seem destined to travel, neither high enough for envy, nor low enough for contempt.*”<sup>1</sup> Twenty years later, however, Ario Pardee was one of the richest men in America.

Ario’s speculation on the rich coal seams in the Hazleton area proved to be well-founded, and he projected that when his dream of replacing the canals with railroads was fulfilled, huge loads of coal could quickly get to the cities where it was needed to feed the new Industrial Revolution.<sup>2</sup> He quickly became the largest shipper of anthracite in Pennsylvania, and as his personal fortune grew so did Hazleton’s. He built the Lehigh Valley Railroad, which eventually became an enormous transportation system that stretched from Beaver Meadows to Philadelphia, New York City, and Buffalo, N.Y.

Ario began to influence Hazleton’s social, economic, and cultural institutions as well. As he built industries, he also founded banks, churches, schools, and libraries, ultimately being credited with “founding Hazleton,” the highest city in Pennsylvania. He was described as a silent man, but one who possessed vision and organizational genius.<sup>3</sup> He was scrupulously honest in business, and it was said that his decisions were quick and indisputable.<sup>4</sup>

Misfortune, however, was to befall Ario over and over again. The mining industry was inherently plagued by floods, fires, explosions, and crippling accidents, but Ario Pardee always seemed to overcome adversity. Anna Maria learned very early in their relationship that Ario would apply his strict moral code to any situation, business or

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<sup>1</sup> Ario Pardee to Anna Maria Robison, July 26, 1848.

<sup>2</sup> The Industrial Revolution in America lasted from approximately 1820 to 1870. During that time electricity was harnessed and industrial production was mechanized. Better means of transportation were needed to supply the new factories and to take the products to market.

<sup>3</sup> Donald L. Miller and Richard Sharpless in “The Kingdom of Coal.” Wikipedia.

<sup>4</sup> From *Personal Reminiscences of Ario Pardee* by Frank Pardee. Blithewold Archives.

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otherwise, sometimes at the expense of his family. In 1848, the house Ario was building for Anna Maria (which still stands at the corner of Broad and Poplar Streets and is now owned by the Knights of Columbus) was almost finished. Anna Maria was anxiously awaiting the move into her own home with her ready-made family of four young children when a devastating fire at one of Ario's companies — the Cranberry Works — completely destroyed the facility after a night watchman left a fire smoldering. The Cranberry workmen had families who depended on them, but they suddenly found themselves with no jobs and no means of support. Ario immediately stopped work on his own house and directed his resources and energies toward rebuilding the Cranberry Works. He wrote to Anna Maria: *"What is to be will be — it will be all one a hundred years hence, and there's an end to it. We shall both make the best of this...and be not a whit the less happy."*<sup>1</sup>

Ario and Anna Maria were married in Bloomsburg on August 29, 1848, and Anna's new house was completed soon after. She set up housekeeping and became pregnant within three months. But the couple's domestic life was complicated. Ario's children by his first wife, Elizabeth Jacobs, resented their new stepmother and began to behave badly. Anna Maria felt ill from her pregnancy and found it difficult to discipline the children, particularly the boys, Ario Jr. and Calvin, then aged nine and seven. The children were encouraged in their disobedience by the Davenports, relatives of their mother. They told the children that they did not have to obey Anna Maria — they reminded them that she was, after all, only their stepmother. Ario wrote to Anna from Philadelphia in January of 1849, *"I hope you will be able to give a good report of the behavior of the boys and girls. Tell Ario and Calvin that I hope you will be able to say they have been better boys since I was gone than when I was there."*<sup>2</sup> But Ario Jr. and Calvin became so troublesome that they were sent away to a boarding school in Wyoming, Pennsylvania, near Wilkes-Barre. A regular correspondence began between Ario and his sons. He urged them to settle down and take advantage of the opportunity to learn: *"Unless*

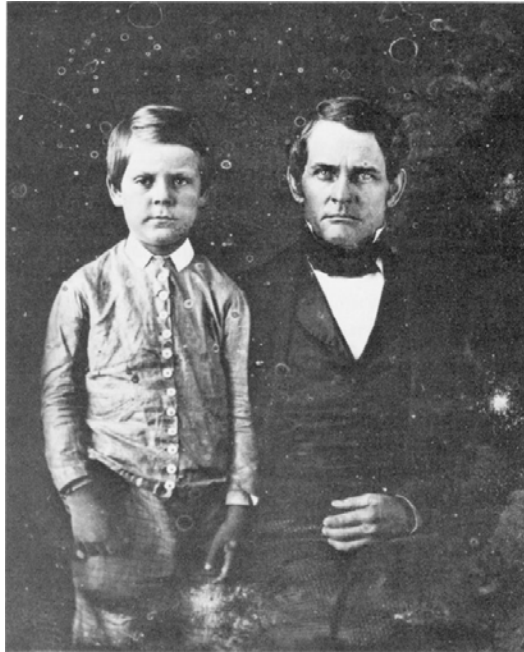
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<sup>1</sup> Ario Pardee to Anna Maria Robison, August 1848.

<sup>2</sup> Ario Pardee to Anna Maria Pardee, January 24, 1849.

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*you lay a good foundation of learning and good behavior while you are boys you will not grow up to be good men.”<sup>1</sup>*



*Ario and his son Calvin, ca. 1850*

At Anna Maria’s urging, Ario offered a job to her brother-in-law, George Markle, who was married to Anna Maria’s favorite sister, Emily. Emily and George moved from Bloomsburg, where George had been a clerk in his father’s harness and saddle store, and built a house next door to the Pardees. “*Mr. Markle is much pleased with Hazleton...He praises Em[ily] very much about having her house so nice and everything,*”<sup>2</sup> wrote Betsey Robison to Anna Maria. The sisters raised their children together, while George moved up rapidly in Ario’s company, eventually becoming a coal operator in his own right. Ario’s generosity was to come back to bite him, however. George Markle’s son John later became Ario’s adversary. He is probably the subject of comments made by Ario’s son Frank many years later when Frank

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<sup>1</sup> Ario Pardee to sons Ario and Calvin, July 30, 1850.

<sup>2</sup> Betsey Robison to her daughter Anna Maria Robison Pardee, June 6, 1849.

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said of his father: *“It was hard for him to see the evil in others, and therefore his lieutenants in business were not always wisely chosen, and were often retained when it was patent to others that they were betraying his trust...he could not believe men he had raised from dire poverty to affluence should fail him.”*<sup>1</sup>

Anna Maria’s first child, a son, was born in July 1849. Named William after Anna Maria’s father, he was adored by his half-sisters Alice and Ellen. That same year Emily Markle gave birth to a daughter, Clora. (Clora would become a lifelong friend of the Pardees, despite her brother’s alleged duplicity.)

Ario Jr. and Calvin became more wayward than ever at school. Ario scolded them for *“getting into the habit of smoking cigars,”* and said they must *“quit at once.”*<sup>2</sup> He urged them to:

*...avoid all bad habits and bad language, be attentive to your studies, kind and polite and respectful to everyone, particularly to your teachers and the family where you board.*<sup>3</sup>

He also cautioned them about handling guns:

*Be always careful whether you have the gun yourself or are with anyone who carries a gun. Never carry a gun cocked. Always carry it with the muzzle pointed up if you are in company with anyone...Never load a gun which is cocked...always think what you are about.*<sup>4</sup>

He tempered his admonishments with domestic news of the family, particularly news of their two younger sisters, Alice and Ellen. *“They*

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<sup>1</sup> Report at Pardee Reunion, June 1913. Blithewold Archives.

<sup>2</sup> Ario Pardee to sons Ario Jr. and Calvin, February 21, 1850. Ario Jr. was by then 10 years old and Calvin was 8.

<sup>3</sup> Ario Pardee to sons Ario Jr. and Calvin, August 19, 1850.

<sup>4</sup> Ario Pardee to his sons Ario Jr. and Calvin, October 10, 1851.

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*amuse themselves with their Grace hoops considerably.*<sup>1</sup> But the boys were unhappy away from home, and in November 1851 Ario Jr. wrote that he was “*getting tired of studying now. I have often wished I was home.*” Both boys threatened to run away.



*Alice and Ellen playing Grace Hoops*<sup>2</sup>

Ario was spending a lot of his time away on business — most frequently in Philadelphia, where he stayed at the United States Hotel. His partner, J. Gillingham Fell, was in charge of marketing the coal and lived in Philadelphia. Ario very much missed Anna Maria and his home and wrote to his wife pleading for her to join him, offering social events in the City and shopping for the latest fashions. He reassured

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<sup>1</sup> Ario Pardee to his sons Ario Jr. and Calvin, March 18, 1851. “Grace Hoops” was a game of tossing a ring into the air and catching it with sticks.

<sup>2</sup> Sketch by David O. Holmes, from *Dear Pa — And So It Goes*, by Gertrude K. Johnston, p. 43.



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her of his deep love: “Dearest, believe that though the stream may run beneath the surface, it is deep, and pure, and springs from the depths of the heart’s innermost fountains.”<sup>1</sup> Anna Maria’s letters to him were full of accounts of daily domestic life, and especially sickness in the town. She was terrified that the children would catch the life-threatening diseases of the time: cholera, dysentery, consumption, scarlet fever, yellow fever, typhoid, and smallpox.

Indeed, Anna Maria had good reason to be afraid. In May 1850, her sister Ellen and her young son Barton came to visit. Ellen’s departure at the end of their visit was delayed because Barton was “very sick, though he is better now — poor little fellow he has been so sick that he could not play with Willie [baby William].”<sup>2</sup> In July baby William died, leaving Anna Maria desolate. She retreated to Bloomsburg, to the comfort of her family. In November, Ario wrote to her, urging her to return to Hazleton: “I am getting rather lonesome...I think you had better turn your face homeward. Finish your visit, and when that is done you will be very welcome home.”<sup>3</sup>

Anna Maria did return home, and life went on. She tended her gardens, growing flowers and exchanging cuttings with her mother. Ario, too, was interested in horticulture. He wrote to Anna Maria:

*Ruckman brought up for you a variety of creepers and woodbines and Honey suckles and Devils clubs and so on which Hal and I planted to the best of our knowledge...if everything lives and grows we should have a wilderness in a few years. The roses in the yard are now all in blossom and the pinks and sweet Williams and musk flowers and mock orange...the yard looks very pretty. Last week the locust was full of flowers, and a humming bird used to come about it every day.*<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ario Pardee to his wife Anna Maria, January 19, 1851.

<sup>2</sup> Ario Pardee to his sons Ario Jr. and Calvin, May 21, 1850.

<sup>3</sup> Ario Pardee to his wife Anna Maria, November 4, 1850

<sup>4</sup> Ario Pardee to his wife Anna Maria, May 2, 1851.

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Still distressed, Anna Maria turned to the church, becoming extremely devout. In May 1851, Ario pledged to pay \$2,500 for a church to be built on land that he would donate. That church became the First Presbyterian Church on West Broad Street in Hazleton, where generations of Pardees subsequently worshiped. Ario supported the church all his life and brought up all his children to be committed Christians.

The Pardee business empire continued to grow as mines sprang up around Hazleton. In 1851, the town was incorporated as a borough. Ario employed many family members and financed others in their own ventures. His nephew, William Platt, son of his sister Caroline and her husband (and cousin) Edwin Platt, worked for Ario in Hazleton for a time. He then decided that he wanted to try his luck in the California gold rush. Ario paid his passage, and William Platt traveled overland via the Rocky Mountains and Nevada City, sending accounts of his adventures to Ario along the way, only to die of typhoid in California in 1856.

Anna Maria became pregnant again in 1852, with the baby due in mid-July. In May, though, she suffered food poisoning from “*Indian cakes*”<sup>1</sup> and went into premature labor. They were much surprised by the arrival of twin boys, two months early. One twin died two days later; the other was tiny and feeble, but stubbornly tenacious. He was named Israel Platt, but was called “Izzie” by the family. Izzie was always small and sickly as a child, but he grew to be a strong, feisty, robust man with a great sense of humor, one who lived a long productive life and was loved by everyone.<sup>2</sup>

In November of 1852, Calvin wrote from school to Ario, “*I want to come home. I will not come back here anymore.*” When he came home for Christmas, the family enjoyed a Christmas dinner of turkey and oysters, and Ario began the family tradition of reading “The Night

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<sup>1</sup> Quote from *Dear Pa* by Gertrude Keller Johnston, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> C. Pardee Foulke and William F. Foulke. *Calvin Pardee*. Drake Press, Philadelphia, 1979, p. 38.

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Before Christmas,” by Clement Moore,<sup>1</sup> to his children every Christmas Eve. Although Calvin did go back to school after Christmas he later ran away. He was sent for a while to another school, in Easton, Pennsylvania, but he misbehaved there, too, and soon returned to his old school in Wyoming, Pennsylvania.

Anna Maria’s family continued to grow, with a daughter, Anne, being born in February 1854. *“She is a pretty little thing; she came on Valentine’s Day...Izzie can walk by chairs, and creep a little,”*<sup>2</sup> wrote Ellen to Calvin, referring to 20-month-old Israel. In May of 1854, when Izzie was 2 years old, Ario wrote *“We are...all well except Izzie. The poor little fellow seems to have a hard time of it in this world.”* Anna Maria was always appreciative of her comfortable life, and she reached out to others less fortunate: *“How thankful we ought to be who have enough to eat and wear and if we have it to spare to give to those who are needy and not waste or spend foolishly.”*<sup>3</sup>

Ario continued to bear the principal responsibility for his two older sons, Ario Jr. and Calvin. As always, his letters to them were full of advice and criticism, as well as domestic news:

*In your letters you say “I want you to write,” “I want you to do so and so...” That is all well enough but would it not sound better to put it in more polite phrase and say “We should be much pleased to have a letter from you soon”...“Please do so and so.” I think it would, do not you?<sup>4</sup>*

A curious scolding was, *“You spoke of sending the pen wiper in a newspaper. But it is contrary to law to send anything or write in or on a newspaper. And aside from its always being best and honest to obey the Law, there is a fine of \$5 attached to the offence.”*<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Clement Moore wrote “The Night Before Christmas” in 1822.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen Pardee to Calvin Pardee, February 17, 1854.

<sup>3</sup> Anna Maria Pardee to her stepson Calvin, January 19, 1854.

<sup>4</sup> Ario Pardee to his sons Ario Jr. and Calvin, March 17, 1853.

<sup>5</sup> Ario Pardee to his son Calvin, March 7, 1856.

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Ario Jr. left the school in Wyoming later in 1854 to attend the West Jersey Collegiate School in Mt. Holly, New Jersey. From there he went to Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York (the school Ario himself had dreamed of attending as a young man), where he studied civil engineering. (According to its founder, Stephen Van Rensselaer, the Institute's mission was "*to instruct people in the application of science to the common purposes of life.*"<sup>1</sup>) Though Ario Jr. had now become a serious student, he found the work there very challenging. He wrote, "*I think that a person cannot fool away his time and [still] get through the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.*"<sup>2</sup> Calvin, in turn, moved to the West Jersey Collegiate but his behavior continued to deteriorate. The headmaster wrote to Ario: "*Calvin's conduct has become seriously bad...he has been guilty of several very reprehensible acts of disorder, showing something worse than mere heedlessness, and seems disposed rather to resent punishment.*"<sup>3</sup> Ario would have to wait quite some time for his second son to mature and find his purpose in life.

1855 was a year of travel for Ario. Apart from his regular visits to Philadelphia he went to Detroit; Washington, DC; Portland, Maine; and Albany, New York. He often traveled from early Monday morning to late Saturday, although he always returned to spend the Sabbath with his family.<sup>4</sup> His diaries consistently show strict attention to business six days a week, and only on Sunday did he allow himself any domestic reflection.

In May and June of 1855, Ario and Anna Maria took a long trip — first to Bloomsburg to pick up Anna Maria's mother, and from there to Ypsilanti, Michigan, to visit Ario's family. They then traveled to

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<sup>1</sup> The History of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, by Palmer C. Ricketts 1914. RPI website. The Institute was founded in 1824 by Stephen Van Rensselaer.

<sup>2</sup> Ario Pardee Jr. to his father Ario, March 11, 1856.

<sup>3</sup> Samuel Miller, West Jersey Collegiate School, to Ario Pardee, December 17, 1855.

<sup>4</sup> C. Pardee Foulke and William F. Foulke. *Calvin Pardee*. Drake Press, Philadelphia, 1979, p. 79.

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Niagara Falls and Chicago. Ario disliked Chicago, but predicted that it would become a great city:

*Nothing would tempt me to live in Chicago. It must stink in hot weather for stagnant water stands in all the ditches and the houses can have no cellars for the water of the Lake is not more than two or three feet below the top of the ground. Still, Chicago is destined to be a large city, having the only tolerable port on the south end of Lake Michigan and some nine or ten Rail Roads radiating out from it.<sup>1</sup>*

This, almost 40 years before Chicago was cleaned up for the World's Fair!

In December of 1855, Anna Maria had another baby boy whom she named Barton, after her mother's family. 1856 turned out to be a year of respite for Anna Maria, with no new baby, but Ario contracted typhoid fever that year and contemplated his mortality: *"It brings solemn thoughts when we feel how suddenly we may be brought to the border of that shadowy land from which no man returneth."*<sup>2</sup> As soon as he recovered he continued with his heavy travel schedule, particularly to Philadelphia where his business partner, J. Gillingham Fell, was still in charge of marketing. On one particular trip, he and Mr. Fell took some time out and went to the Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia to see an exhibit of English watercolor paintings. The two men appeared to enjoy leisure time together — the following year they took a fishing trip to Lewis Island near Portland, Maine.

Even as Anna Maria became more and more occupied with her growing family, Ario became increasingly frustrated that she declined to join him on his travels. From Philadelphia he wrote: *"I hope you will be able to accompany me oftener in my journeys...I have no faculty for getting acquainted with the world, and am alone in the crowd. Everybody and his wife, except me and my wife, has been sleighing*

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<sup>1</sup> Ario Pardee to his sons Ario Jr. and Calvin, June 8, 1855.

<sup>2</sup> Ario Pardee to his son Ario Jr., December 16, 1856.

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today.”<sup>1</sup> But in 1858 Anna Maria had just given birth to Frank, her fifth child in nine years. Alice (sixteen) and Ellen (fourteen) who were at boarding school in Ypsilanti wrote to Anna Maria, commenting on the name of the new baby. “After ‘Ariovistus,’ ‘Calvin,’ and ‘Israel’ it seems as if he ought to have a fancy name!” wrote Alice. When a smallpox scare that summer threatened the Hazleton community, Ario arranged to have a “genuine” smallpox vaccine scab sent from Philadelphia. He wrote to Anna Maria from Detroit, instructing her to have everyone in the house vaccinated.

In the same letter a little bit of family gossip lightened the mood. Ario reported that his nephew Sammy Post “*must have kicked a little over the traces before marriage, as they have a young son about 3 weeks old...by all accounts the sudden advent of the young stranger made quite a commotion.*” But his generous nature mitigated the news somewhat, for he continued “*...the least fuss there is made about such accidents the better generally for all parties.*”<sup>2</sup>

Anna Maria had a Daguerreotype photograph taken of herself with her two youngest children, Barton and Frank, for Ario to take with him on his lonely travels. “*It looks very life-like, I am yet foolish enough to like to look at your counterfeit resemblance when I cannot see the reality.*”<sup>3</sup> Young Izzie, meanwhile, was gaining strength, if not stature, and he was described as “*acting like a little tiger.*” He spent most of 1858 in Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, with Anna Maria’s mother. He thrived there with attention, strict discipline, good country food, and the company of many Robison cousins. Betsey Robison taught him to read and encouraged him to eat: “*He is getting to look quite healthy.*”<sup>4</sup>

In 1857 Calvin joined his brother at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and they boarded together for a year. After Ario Jr. graduated in 1858 as a Civil Engineer, he immediately took charge of

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<sup>1</sup> Ario Pardee to his wife Anna Maria, February 20, 1858.

<sup>2</sup> Ario Pardee to his wife Anna Maria, July 9, 1858.

<sup>3</sup> Ario Pardee to his wife Anna Maria, October 1858.

<sup>4</sup> Betsey Robison to her daughter Anna Maria, October 1858.

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the mines of his father's company, "A. Pardee and Company." One year later, on his twenty-first birthday, he married Mary F. Allison. Calvin, meanwhile, continued his carefree life at Rensselaer.



*Bessie Pardee, 1862<sup>1</sup>*

In January 1860, Anna Maria gave birth to the prettiest and gentlest of her children, and named her Bessie.<sup>2</sup> Bessie was the seventh of Anna's ten children,<sup>3</sup> born on her grandmother Robison's birthday, a good omen. Again Alice voiced her opinion on names, suggesting Lucy or Sarah, but eventually agreed that Bessie would be a good name.

In July, Ario traveled to Ypsilanti from Hazleton to collect Alice and Ellen from school and bring them home. Seven-year-old Izzie went with him, and they had good father-son times, traveling on the trains and stopping off to visit relatives along the way. Ario wrote "*Izzie*

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<sup>1</sup> Photograph of Bessie taken from *Dear Pa*, p. 181.

<sup>2</sup> Bessie would later marry Augustus Van Wickle, and after his death William McKee, and would become the owner of Blithewold.

<sup>3</sup> Bessie was Ario's twelfth child.

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*stands it very well and eats all before him. So far he has enjoyed his trip very much and I keep him well by not giving him too much trash.”<sup>1</sup>*

While Ario was away, Anna Maria took over the planning for their grand new family home to be built on a large lot in the center of Hazleton, a whole square block bounded by Broad, Church, Green, and Laurel Streets. The house was a massive three-story stone mansion, with a porch on three sides, a tennis court, stables, greenhouses, spacious lawns, shaded porticos, and magnificent trees.



*Pardee Mansion, Hazleton*

Meanwhile, Calvin’s career at Rensselaer was overshadowed by unruly behavior and inattention to academics, with tensions being brought to a head in early 1860. In Ario’s letters, he expressed great disapproval of Calvin’s extravagant ways and bad habits, as well as

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<sup>1</sup> Ario Pardee to Anna Maria Pardee, July 11, 1860.



### *Legacy of an American Family*

his mishandling of money. Several times he threatened to cut off Calvin's allowance. He admonished, "*Unless you make a radical change now you may rest satisfied that your life will be a failure, a miserable failure.*"<sup>1</sup> Thankfully, and perhaps surprisingly, Calvin graduated from Rensselaer in 1860 with a degree in Civil Engineering. "*If he did graduate he must have applied himself more closely than usual,*" said his father. (One of Calvin's classmates was Alexander Cassatt,<sup>2</sup> who became president of the Pennsylvania Railroad and later built the tunnels under the Hudson River from New Jersey to New York so that his trains from Pennsylvania could run directly into Penn Station in Manhattan.) After graduation Calvin took a job at one of Ario's companies, the Glendon Iron Company in Easton, Pennsylvania.

In the fall of 1860, Alice and Ellen began school at Miss Green's (later The Graham School) at 1 Fifth Avenue in New York City, the school all the Pardee daughters, including Bessie, attended in their turn. The young sisters were very excited about the election campaign of Abraham Lincoln: "*A great many people here [in New York] are anticipating a very sorry time on account of Lincoln's election.*"<sup>3</sup>

### **THE WAR YEARS**

Early in 1861, it began to look as though war between the northern and southern states was inevitable. In February 1861 Ario was in Philadelphia on business and saw Abraham Lincoln, who had been elected President the year before. "*He is a much better looking man than [the people] supposed he was. He does not look as old, and*

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Ario Pardee to his son, Calvin, February 29, 1860. From Calvin Pardee Papers, Skillman Library, Lafayette College.

<sup>2</sup> C. Pardee Foulke and William F. Foulke. *Calvin Pardee*. Drake Press, Philadelphia, 1979, p. 47.

<sup>3</sup> Alice Pardee to her parents Ario and Anna Maria Pardee, November 28, 1860.

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*has not as coarse features as from his portraits you would suppose.”*<sup>1</sup>  
Ario’s sister Sarah wrote from Ypsilanti,

*I rejoice in the belief that we now have a President who is both a patriot and statesman, worthy of all confidence, raised up for just this great emergency...God give our President the wisdom he seems to feel he needs, that he may rightly meet the great responsibilities resting upon him.*<sup>2</sup>

On April 12, 1861, in South Carolina, Confederate soldiers fired on Fort Sumter, a Union garrison, marking the beginning of four long years of hostilities. On April 15, President Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to serve for three months. Calvin immediately enlisted and was one of 200 men sent to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Ario Sr. was so emotionally invested in the justification for war that he raised a company of men from Hazleton, most of whom were employees of A. Pardee and Company. He fully equipped them at his own expense, not only with flags, uniforms, and rifles, but with the cooking utensils and food supplies that they would need. The flags and uniforms were made by the women of Hazleton, and when these wore out the mothers, wives, and sisters made more. At the age of 21, Ario Jr. was appointed Captain of the “Pardee Rifles,” the Hazleton company. The soldiers could send money home to their families in Hazleton — *“all they had to do was to inform Captain Pardee, and relatives could draw on the elder Pardee for the cash.”*<sup>3</sup> Calvin was anxious to join his brother once his three months’ service was completed. He wrote to his father, *“Please let me know as soon as Ario joins. I hear that you are raising a regiment and it pleases me very much indeed.”*<sup>4</sup>

At school in New York, Alice and Ellen were swept up in the excitement of war preparations, but at the same time terrified that harm would come to their brothers. Alice was particularly afraid for Calvin who was only nineteen years old: *“He is so young, still he has*

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<sup>1</sup> Ario Pardee to his wife Anna Maria, February 21, 1861.

<sup>2</sup> Sarah Pardee to her brother Ario Pardee, April 3, 1861.

<sup>3</sup> “Pardee Reunion,” Calvin Pardee. Blithewold Archives.

<sup>4</sup> Calvin Pardee to his father Ario, April 24, 1861.

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*been wishing for a more stirring life, and God grant he may return safely.*"<sup>1</sup> She reported that in New York everyone was wildly energized. All the buildings were decorated with flags, and she watched out her window as the 7th Regiment passed down Broadway — "*sons of the best families in the city...have been brought up in the greatest affluence. I wonder if they can bear the hardships.*"<sup>2</sup> Alice was only seventeen years old herself but appears to have been wise beyond her years, with premonitions of things to come. "*Of course, we cannot realize yet the horror of a civil war...Oh! It is so terrible.*"<sup>3</sup> She wrote frequently from New York, begging her parents for more war news, anxiously concerned for her brothers' safety, but at the same time very proud of them. She read the New York newspapers and then conveyed the news to Hazleton. In Bloomsburg, two of Anna Maria's younger brothers, Boyd and Isaiah Robison, enlisted, and two of her sisters, Jane and Belle Robison, went to Washington to work as nurses in the hospitals.

Baltimore welcomed the Union troops — Calvin wrote to Ario "*We have received nothing but the kindest treatment from the people of Maryland...The majority of the people are strong for the Union, and the Union cause is growing stronger daily. We were not molested in any way on our march through the city today; on the contrary we were cheered repeatedly.*"<sup>4</sup> But Calvin was apprehensive about the crippling heat. He worried that as the summer progressed and they moved further south, the warm season would "*kill us off rapidly.*"<sup>5</sup> His unit was "*anxious to meet the enemy*"<sup>6</sup> at Harpers Ferry before their term of enlistment expired. Calvin appeared to have at last found his passion, and he quickly showed signs of being a fearless, committed, and disciplined soldier. More importantly, he finally had his father's approval. He began to write home every few days, reporting on the war's progress. Ario posted the dispatches in his Company Store so

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<sup>1</sup> Alice Pardee to her parents Ario and Anna Maria, April 19, 1861.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

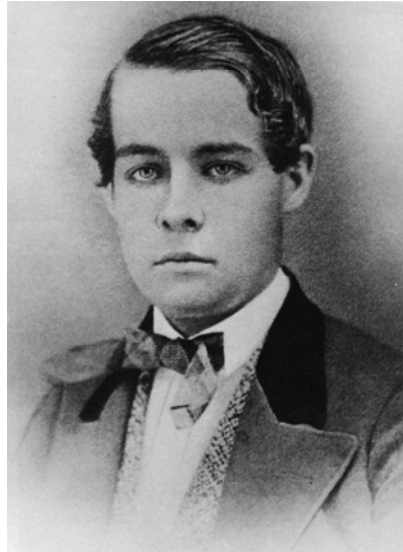
<sup>4</sup> Calvin Pardee to his father Ario, June 2, 1861.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

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that the people of Hazleton could keep up with the news and assure themselves of the whereabouts and circumstances of their fathers, sons, brothers, and husbands, despite the fact that the news was often alarming. The heat continued to be oppressive, and there was a smallpox epidemic, but Calvin was headed for Harpers Ferry, determined to “*crush this rebellion once and forever.*”<sup>1</sup>



*Calvin Pardee, ca. 1860*

Anna Maria and her mother, Betsey Robison, exchanged news about their gardens. It must have helped to take their minds off the fate of their sons and daughters and given them comfort. Anna wrote: “*I took several turns in the garden, thinking all the time of war.*”<sup>2</sup> Gertrude Keller Johnston wrote of her grandmother, Anna Maria: “*She had the anxiety for her boys fighting for their country, and getting her hands in the good earth was a true tonic.*”<sup>3</sup> Betsey grew roses, Canterbury bells, whittavia, and verbena, and exchanged cuttings with her friends and neighbors.

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<sup>1</sup> Calvin Pardee to his father Ario, June 16, 1861.

<sup>2</sup> Anna Maria Pardee to her children, June 30, 1861.

<sup>3</sup> Gertrude Keller Johnston, in her book *Dear Pa*, p. 145.

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Letters from the warfront from Ario Jr. and Calvin became more distressing as they described the appalling conditions. Ario outfitted a second Company, named Company A, 28th Regiment, and when Calvin was mustered out of the service at the end of his 3-month enlistment he reenlisted in this second company, along with Isaiah Robison. His father Ario frequently traveled to Washington and further south to visit his sons and Anna Maria's brothers and sisters, and to show support for his regiment, taking supplies and letters from home for the soldiers of Hazleton. At home, however, he tried to maintain a semblance of normalcy for his wife and children. Frank Pardee remembered being walked around the house standing on his father's feet, totally oblivious to the tension his father was feeling.



*Ario Pardee and Little Frank*

*Ario Pardee and his young son Frank<sup>1</sup>*

Frank wrote later, *“When the Civil War was raging, and his country was endangered at home, he walked up and down the hall*

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<sup>1</sup> Sketch by David O. Holmes, from *Dear Pa — And So It Goes*, by Gertrude K. Johnston, p. 148.

BLITHEWOLD

*with me standing on one foot, clasping his knee. Little did the three-year-old boy know his troubled thoughts.”<sup>1</sup>*

In October 1861, Alice and Ellen went to hear Abolitionist Henry Ward Beecher, the minister of Plymouth Church in New York, speak on the wrongs of slavery. (Beecher and his church were part of the Underground Railroad.) At Miss Green’s school the young ladies knit stockings for the soldiers and called themselves the “Blue Stocking Society.” Anna Maria’s mother and sisters were also knitting “for the boys,” as well as raising money to purchase blankets for them.

Anna’s sisters Jane and Belle were both working at one of the soldiers’ hospitals in Washington,<sup>2</sup> where Jane was appointed Directress of Nurses. Winter came, and everyone seemed surprised that the war was lasting so long. In November 1861, Ario Jr. was made a Major;<sup>3</sup> and Calvin and Isaiah Robison developed typhoid fever.

April 1862 brought the spring and some pleasant distraction for Ario and Anna Maria as they coordinated the finishing touches on their new house in Hazleton. Plans for the grounds, for the “arrangement for trees,” the grapery, and the greenhouse, were submitted by Henry Dreer of Dreer’s Seed House and Nurseries of Philadelphia.<sup>4</sup>

In May, Ario Jr. and Calvin were on leave in Philadelphia; Calvin was still suffering from typhoid fever, however, and their return to duty was delayed. Ario went to Washington again and visited Anna Maria’s sisters Jane and Belle. While there, he tried, unsuccessfully, to exert some influence to have Anna Maria’s brother, Isaiah Robison, promoted to the safer rank of Sergeant. Boyd Robison, injured at the Battle of Richmond in August, was sent to Washington to be nursed

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<sup>1</sup> Quote from *Personal Reminiscences of Ario Pardee* by Frank Pardee. Blithewold Archives.

<sup>2</sup> Many of the soldiers’ hospitals in Washington were set up in various government buildings (Gertrude Keller Johnston, *Dear Pa*, p. 191).

<sup>3</sup> Wikipedia, biography of Ario Pardee, Jr. *Civil War in the East*.

<sup>4</sup> Dreer’s Seed House and Nurseries later named a rose for Bessie, called the “Bessie Pardee.”

by his sister Jane. He had been shot through the left hand between two of his knuckles. Calvin returned to his regiment in June, though still unwell; he consequently suffered a second attack of typhoid as his regiment approached Antietam. He was ordered back to the hospital the day before the great battle took place.

### **The Battle of Antietam**

On September 17, 1862, Major Ario Pardee Jr. was in command of his regiment at the Battle of Antietam, the bloodiest single-day battle in American history, with about 23,000 casualties. The battle raged from dawn to dark. *“My horse killed but am unhurt...Will write again soon as I can, giving you all particulars,”* Ario Jr. reported to his father.<sup>1</sup> After the battle, he located all the wounded and missing men from his regiment and sent reports to his father so that the families in Hazleton could be kept informed.<sup>2</sup> And five days later,

*You can have no idea, Pa, of the battle, and it is folly for me to attempt to describe it. The [Confederate] regiments suffered terribly under our fire. The ground was literally covered with their killed and wounded. We actually walked over and on them. It was a terrible day. A bloody battle, but won. The Hazleton Corps stood up to their words.*<sup>3</sup>

Ario Pardee hurried to Sharpsburg, Maryland, where he found Calvin, Isaiah Robison, and Ario Jr. suffering from battle injuries; Ario Jr. had been hospitalized with a serious back injury. Ario wrote home to Anna Maria *“I tried to get leave of absence for them, but could not.”*<sup>4</sup> Ario Jr. gave his father his regiment’s silk flag, which had been made by the women of Hazleton. He afterward realized that he had made a grave mistake, and he wrote to his father asking him to return the flag as soon as possible, before anyone noticed that it was missing. He

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<sup>1</sup> Ario Pardee Jr. to his father Ario, September 18, 1862.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ario Pardee Jr. to his father Ario, September 23, 1862.

<sup>4</sup> Ario Pardee to Anna Maria Pardee, September 30, 1862.

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wrote, “Please hurry up the flag. Nothing has been said concerning it, and I trust will not until I can produce it. I was most confounded foolish.”<sup>1</sup> The flag was returned in good order, but with one star missing, and Ario Jr. wondered if it had been removed in Hazleton.

Disillusioned and still suffering great pain, Ario Jr. tendered his resignation from the 28th Regiment on October 7, 1862. There was a long-standing personality clash, as well as serious tactical disagreements, between Ario Jr. and the regiment’s leader, General John White Geary. Later in the month, Ario Jr. was placed in command of the 147th Pennsylvania Regiment.

At home in Hazleton, Anna Maria remained true to her “baby schedule,” giving birth to her eighth child, a girl she named Edith. Ario’s Aunt Sarah wrote “I am glad the addition to your family is a girl, for it seems that our sons are born only to be slaughtered or maimed. Oh! This unnatural and cruel war! It...leaves its inexorable shadow on every hearth stone throughout the length and breadth of our country.”<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, Anna Maria was sick with worry. To add to her misery, a false report reached her that Ario Jr. had died from his battle wounds. In fact, he had recovered somewhat from his injuries and had returned to the battlefield. Christmas came but it was impossible for Ario Jr. and Calvin to get home. On Christmas Eve Ario Jr. wrote, “The prospects for a ‘Merry Christmas’ are very poor, but for a ‘Happy New Year’ we all hope.”<sup>3</sup> The people of Hazleton put together a Christmas dinner and sent it south to all their loved ones fighting with Ario Jr. and Calvin.

The New Year of 1863 found Ario Jr. suffering from typhoid fever, and a tremendous snowstorm in February made conditions close to intolerable. He succumbed temporarily to despair.<sup>4</sup> However, an article in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* describes Ario Jr. as “an officer

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<sup>1</sup> Ario Pardee Jr. to his father Ario, September 30, 1862.

<sup>2</sup> Sarah Sackett to her nephew Ario Pardee, October 10, 1862.

<sup>3</sup> Ario Pardee Jr. to his father Ario, December 24, 1862.

<sup>4</sup> As evidenced in letters from Ario Jr. to his father, January and February 1863.



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*as brave as he is accomplished and able...*<sup>1</sup> In April, Ario Jr. wrote to his father asking him to take care of his wife Mary in the event that he should be killed in action. He also asked that, should he die in battle, his body be brought home and buried beside his mother, Elizabeth Jacobs, “...in full uniform, provided I fall honorably.”

Back in Hazleton, threatened strikes by his mine workers added to Ario's concerns. Anna Maria again took solace in her garden: Her mother, Betsey, sent her plants for the gardens in Hazleton: “I have sent for over 90 roses and 100 verbenas, 1 doz. Fuchsias, ½ doz. Lantanas...13 Dahlias...Lemon Verbena...Did those Chrysanthemums grow that I sent you? Mine look better now.”<sup>2</sup>

At the end of April, Ario Jr. and Isaiah Robison fought at the battle of Chancellorsville, a significant defeat for the Union army. General Robert E. Lee fought a brilliant strategic battle against the Union Army's Major General Joseph Hooker, but the death of General Stonewall Jackson was seen as something of a victory for the defeated Unionists. In May, Ario went again to Washington, hoping to get permission to go to Aquia Creek in Virginia where Ario Jr. and his regiment were camped. He reported the deaths of many Hazleton men at the Battle of Chancellorsville.<sup>3</sup>

### **The Battle of Gettysburg**

In June of 1863, the North was greatly alarmed over the possibility of an invasion by the Confederacy. In spite of his wounded hand, Boyd Robison reenlisted for the emergency.<sup>4</sup> One month later, on Friday, July 3, Ario Jr. fought in the greatest battle of his career at Gettysburg. One part of the great battlefield of Gettysburg is commemorated as Pardee Field in honor of Ario Jr. In a lovely grassy spot at the foot of a little wooded hill lies a great boulder on which two

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<sup>1</sup> *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 11, 1863.

<sup>2</sup> Betsey Robison to her daughter Anna Maria Pardee, n.d. Spring 1863.

<sup>3</sup> Ario Jr. to his father, May 8, 1863, “My loss is 94 killed, wounded and missing.”

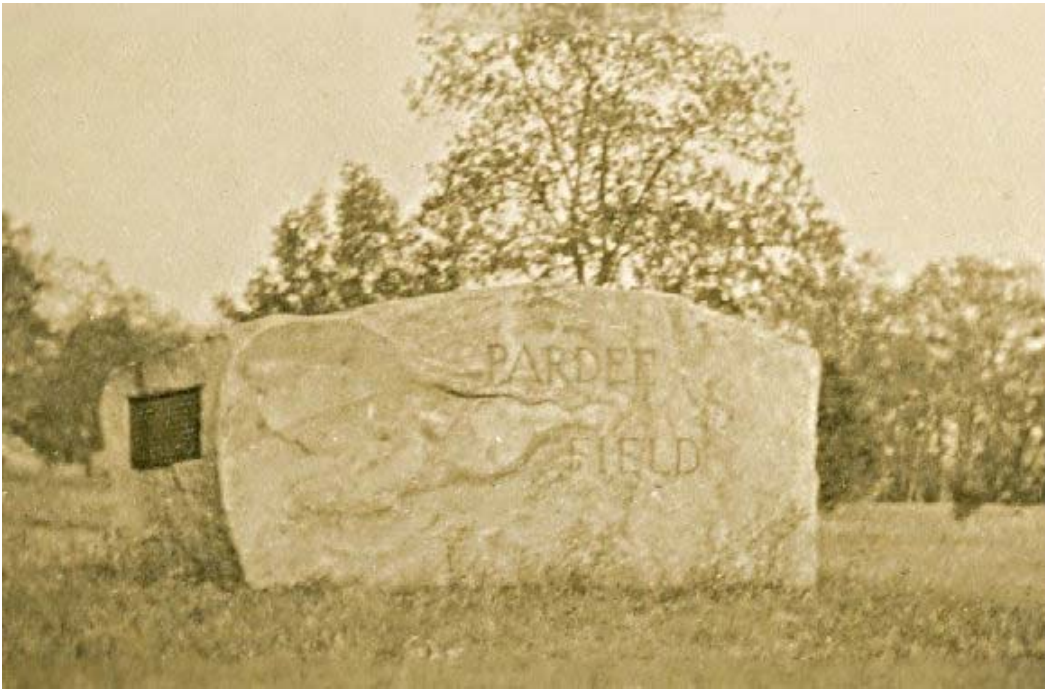
<sup>4</sup> *Dear Pa* by Gertrude K. Johnston, p. 253.

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bronze tablets tell of the brilliant charge that Ario Pardee Jr. and his men made across that field.<sup>1</sup> The stone marker reads:

*At 5 A.M the one hundred and forty seventh Pennsylvania Volunteers (Lt. Co. Ario Pardee Jr.) was ordered to charge and carry the stone wall occupied by the enemy. This they did in handsome style, their firing causing heavy loss to the enemy who then abandoned the entire line of the stone wall.*

There were heavy losses on both sides: 6,655 killed, more than 29,000 wounded. A great number of the wounded would die of their injuries because of the lack of medical care, and of the 19,000 missing most would ultimately be declared dead.



*Stone monument in "Pardee Field" at Gettysburg*

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<sup>1</sup> From Pardee Reunion address by Calvin Pardee.

### **Union Troops March South**

By October 1863, Ario Jr.'s regiment was in Tennessee, and Isaiah reported that they were heading for Chattanooga. Ario Jr. was suffering with excruciating back pain, which would plague him for the rest of his life. The Union Army was running short of food rations: the men were put on two-thirds rations, and then half rations. They were running out of money and they had not been paid for four months. Ario Jr. asked his father to send him a map of Tennessee "*on muslin if it can be obtained.*" In November Ario Jr. and Isaiah fought at the Battle of Lookout Mountain, which Isaiah described as "*another great victory.*" But by the end of the year Ario Jr. was suffering from severe depression and intolerable back pain.<sup>1</sup> The conflict continued, however, and he was determined to "*see the war ended.*"

In January 1864, Ario Jr. made his way further south, as the battle for Atlanta was foremost in the Unionists' plans. At home in Hazleton his father Ario took time out from his busy schedule to travel to Michigan to visit his parents. He dropped off Israel, then eleven years old, in Bloomsburg with his Robison grandparents, and continued on to Ypsilanti, Michigan. Israel accompanied his Aunt Belle Robison back to Washington, where she took him to a "President's Reception." Izzie (as he was always known by the family) met President Lincoln who reportedly asked him how old he was, and if he was a good boy.<sup>2</sup> Much later he remembered feeling humiliated when Aunt Belle answered on his behalf, "*Sometimes.*" He divided his time in Washington between Aunt Belle and Aunt Jane, had his photograph taken, and on one occasion visited the Capitol Building.

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<sup>1</sup> Ario Jr. to his father, Dec 30, 1863: "*My back ... produces much suffering. I feel so miserably and 'blue' that I have not sufficient energy to attend to my regiment.*"

<sup>2</sup> Belle Robison to her sister Anna Maria Pardee, March 27, 1864.

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*Izzie Pardee, March 26, 1864. Washington, D.C.<sup>1</sup>*

On the warfront, Ario Jr. and Isaiah got as far south as Bridgeport, Alabama, when an epidemic of scurvy broke out among the troops. Meanwhile, Belle Robison was sent to Fredericksburg, Virginia in May of 1864, where very heavy casualties were expected at the Battle of Spotsylvania. She was housed there in unspeakable conditions, and her days were occupied with nursing soldiers with the worst war wounds she had ever seen.<sup>2</sup> Spotsylvania saw the Civil War's most brutal battle. It lasted for thirteen days, the cannons fired continuously, and the stream of wounded soldiers was endless. Belle reported that 40,000 were killed and wounded. She had arrived at the camp without luggage (it was lost in transit). She had to sleep in a tent with the surgeons and was wet from the rain and the mud with no opportunity to dry out; food rations were sparse.

*I worked so hard today and my feet are so sore I can scarcely stand on them Oh how much I've wished I had*

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<sup>1</sup> Photograph from *Dear Pa* by Gertrude Keller Johnston, p. 283.

<sup>2</sup> Belle Robison to her mother, Betsey Robison, May 1864: "Dressed some terrible wounds, was afraid to undertake at first...I dressed one this morning that had maggots in it..."

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*supplies to have given every soldier I see who asks for something to eat. They would give almost anything for some soft bread or decent crackers. We have been obliged to feed hard tack most of the time and it does go so hard for our severely wounded men. How often I'm reminded that you at home don't know anything of the realities of war.*<sup>1</sup>

Knowing that victory in this battle would lead to an easy march on Richmond, the capital of the Confederacy,<sup>2</sup> her spirits were buoyed. In fact, Belle and Jane were offered work on a hospital steamer going to Richmond.

In June, Ario Jr. and Isaiah Robison were in Marietta, Georgia, preparing for the assault on Atlanta. Ario Jr. reported:

*Tomorrow morning we march again in pursuit of the enemy — and I do not think we shall be obliged to go far to find them...if Sherman and Grant are successful we shall be able to see the end...I cannot tell you how much a private soldier suffers and sacrifices for his country.*<sup>3</sup>

Tension continued to build up through June and into July. Then, on July 20, 1864 came the Battle of Peach Tree Creek, near Atlanta. Ario Jr. and Isaiah and their men fought a brave battle. Bates' *History of Pennsylvania Volunteers*, Volume IV, page 555, says,

*The unwavering front presented by this regiment (Colonel Pardee Commanding), with the aid of the artillery posted in its line (two full batteries, twelve pieces), and the tenacity with which it held its ground, repelling with great slaughter the most desperate charges of the foe, undoubtedly saved the corps from disaster.*

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<sup>1</sup> Belle Robison to her sister Anna Maria Pardee, May 21, 1864.

<sup>2</sup> Belle Robison to her mother Betsey Robison, May 11, 1864: "The news has been cheering since the commencement of this campaign. I do hope it will continue so and that the next official news will be we are in possession of Richmond." From *Dear Pa* by Gertrude Keller Johnston, p. 292.

<sup>3</sup> Ario Pardee Jr. to his father Ario, June 8, 1864.

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Isaiah Robison was killed in that battle, and by the end of September it became clear that his brother Boyd was missing. He had not appeared on lists of killed and wounded. What the family did not know, however, was that he had been captured and was in the infamous Libby Prison in Richmond. Betsey Robison desperately wanted to have Isaiah's body returned for burial in the family plot in Bloomsburg: "*Oh could he have been buried here what a consolation it would be to decorate his grave with flowers, he who fell in defense of his country, had endured so many perils, suffered so much, and now to be thrown in the ground uncared for.*"<sup>1</sup> At the same time she prayed constantly for Boyd's safety and longed to have news of him.

*Oh if he is alive and can outlive the cruelty of such Barbarians it will be a mercy. I can't give up the thought but we must see him again...if prayers will avail he has them in his behalf and may God in his mercy grant them. But I can't trust myself to think of my two dear boys — but one is at rest.*<sup>2</sup>

Her daughter Jane wrote letters of encouragement, "*It is time enough to take the worst when it comes...*"<sup>3</sup> But by Christmas 1864 there was still no news of Boyd.

On the home front Anna Maria had given birth to her ninth child in 1864 and named him Robert Johnson Pardee. In January of 1865, Ario Jr. was made a Brigadier General "for special gallantry and noble conduct at the battle of Peach Tree Creek." Two days later he successfully led his regiment into the Battle of Atlanta. Only Richmond remained in enemy hands. In March, Boyd was released from prison as part of a prisoner exchange program and made his way home to Bloomsburg. He was in poor health but determined to find work, either in the law (he had qualified as a lawyer in Mercer County, Pennsylvania) or in teaching.

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<sup>1</sup> Betsey Robison to her daughter, Anna Maria Pardee, August 5, 1864.

<sup>2</sup> Betsey Robison to her daughter, Anna Maria Pardee, November 18, 1864.

<sup>3</sup> Jane Robison to her mother, Betsey Robison, December 4, 1864.

*Legacy of an American Family*



*Brigadier General Ario Pardee, Jr. ca. 1864*

**The End of the War**

April 1865 was a month that would change American history. On April 1, it became clear to the Confederate government in Richmond that they were totally outnumbered and would not be able to save Richmond from the advance of the Union Army now on its outskirts. General Robert E. Lee gave orders to the Confederate government to leave the city but to burn all papers, supplies, and liquor before their exodus. Fanned by strong winds, the deliberately set fires soon raged out of control, ultimately burning more than 54 blocks in the center of Richmond. As the Confederates fled, the Union Army, under General Godfrey Weitzel, entered the city and began to put out the fires and restore order. In celebration, Abraham Lincoln visited the city and urged his army to treat the citizens of Richmond compassionately. On April 9, General Lee surrendered at Appomattox, bringing the war at last to an end.

BLITHEWOLD

On Good Friday, April 15, 1865, just two weeks after the great Union victory at Richmond, Abraham Lincoln was assassinated in Washington. Lincoln, accompanied by his wife Mary, was attending a performance of *Our American Cousin* by Tom Taylor at Ford's Theatre when he was shot by actor and Confederate sympathizer, John Wilkes Booth. A contemporary sketch by Currier & Ives shows Booth entering the President's box and shooting Lincoln at point-blank range. Soon after, Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America, was captured and charged with treason for his part in the assassination plot. (Although Davis was not tried, he was stripped of eligibility to run for public office.)



*“The Assassination of President Lincoln” by Currier & Ives<sup>1</sup>*

At last the long war was over and the companies of soldiers began disbanding. Ario’s Aunt Sarah Sackett wrote to Anna Maria, “Ario will return in safety, after a four years war — it seems wonderful to me that one has escaped with life and limb.”<sup>2</sup> In her book *Dear Pa* —

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<sup>1</sup> Image from Wikipedia.

<sup>2</sup> Sarah Sackett to Anna Maria Pardee. May 29, 1865.



*Legacy of an American Family*

*And So It Goes*, Gertrude Keller Johnston (Ario Pardee's granddaughter) asks,

*What was it that gave courage and endurance both to those who tried new ways (the six who went to war, soldiers and nurses) and those who stayed at home? Loyalty, three-pronged; loyalty to their family, their country, and their God. The family was the most important unit in their society. The larger the family the greater the contribution to their country.*<sup>1</sup>

Ario Jr. returned from the war a broken man. He never recovered from his wartime back injuries, suffering chronic pain for the rest of his life. In 1868 he and his wife Mary took an extended, two-year trip to Europe, spending months at a time in England and in the south of France, hoping to restore Ario Jr.'s health and his optimism. According to family accounts, however, he became short-tempered and antisocial,<sup>2</sup> perhaps as a result of the constant pain. He died in 1901 at the age of 62. The memorial issued at his death by the Pennsylvania Commandery of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion testifies to his:

*...consummate skill and unquestioned bravery...General Pardee was an American soldier and a patriot, one who loved his country with an intense love, and appreciated the fact that his country's destiny depended upon the success of the Union army, and that the great issue was personal freedom and human liberty.*<sup>3</sup>

## **FAMILY LIFE RESUMES**

As peace descended once more on a united America, Ario Pardee Sr.'s business interests continued to grow and provide his

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<sup>1</sup> *Dear Pa* by Gertrude Keller Johnston, p. 327.

<sup>2</sup> *Dear Pa* by Gertrude Keller Johnston, p. 328.

<sup>3</sup> C. Pardee Foulke and William F. Foulke. *Calvin Pardee*. Drake Press, Philadelphia, 1979.

## *BLITHEWOLD*

large family with the best that money could buy. Anthracite was in greater demand than ever after the Civil War. New collieries were opened, and Ario built more railways to service them. Their good fortune did not protect them from one more tragedy, however — the baby Robert Johnson died within a year.

The last of Anna Maria and Ario's ten children was born in 1866. She was Gertrude, the much-loved baby of the family, and it was she who saved many of the Pardee letters. Ario had fathered fifteen children, all of them born in Hazleton. The ten who survived grew to be healthy, productive adults, and they gave Ario thirty-two grandchildren, most of them also born in Hazleton. As his businesses prospered, Ario bought additional holdings in Virginia, New Jersey, New York, and Idaho, as well as in Canada. (Ario Jr. and Calvin inherited their father's business acumen and worked tirelessly in the Pardee companies. When Calvin married Mary Byrne in 1867, they bought a house directly across Broad Street from the Pardee Mansion, where they raised their nine children, and later built a large home in Whitemarsh, Pennsylvania. As the years passed, Calvin amassed great wealth and became the patriarch of the family. He loved nothing more than to be surrounded by family and friends.)

### **ARIO SAVES LAFAYETTE COLLEGE**

In 1864, Ario was approached with an urgent request from Dr. William Cattell, Dean of Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania. Lafayette had been founded as a liberal arts college in 1826; named after the Marquis de Lafayette, it was strongly aligned with the Presbyterian Church. But by 1864 the future of the college hung by a thread after a prolonged struggle for financial survival. Dr. Cattell had inherited a severe deficit when he became Dean in 1864, and the Trustees were considering closing the school. Dr. Cattell immediately began a largely unsuccessful last-ditch fund-raising campaign; the future looked bleak. He knew nothing of Ario Pardee beyond the fact that he was a rich businessman from Hazleton, and that he was a

*Legacy of an American Family*

member of the Presbyterian Church there. A lay-preacher, Dr. Cattell accepted an invitation to preach at the Pardees' Hazleton Church one Sunday, and he was invited to stay at the Pardee home.

As Dr. Cattell was walking through the gardens the next day with Ario Pardee, he found himself describing the struggles of the college and the urgency to find "generous donors" for its support. Ario listened patiently, and then Dr. Cattell made his move — "*and such a man I take you to be!*" Ario replied "*Yes, I see. I thought you had come to Hazleton to preach; but you came here to ask me for money to carry on a college. I would really like to know how much you expected to get from a plain business man like me.*"<sup>1</sup> Dr. Cattell, bracing himself to ask for \$500, or \$1000 at most, could scarcely believe his own audacity on hearing himself asking for \$20,000!<sup>2</sup> Ario turned and walked into the house without saying a word, coming back with a promissory note for \$20,000 and a check for \$600. William Cattell said afterward, "*I stood in a sort of daze wondering if I had rightly understood, or whether indeed it was not all a delicious dream, but I had in my hand his note ... and his check. He bid me good morning.*"<sup>3</sup> This was the beginning of a very close friendship.

Ario's initial gift saved the college, and he later gave a further half-million dollars<sup>4</sup> (almost \$8 million in today's values) to build, among other things, a scientific building (Pardee Hall) patterned on Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and the Sheffield Scientific School at Yale. He became very involved in college affairs, meeting regularly with Dr. Cattell throughout Dr. Cattell's twenty years as Dean to discuss principles of administration, internal policy, and executive details. Ario was later asked to become Chairman of the Board of Trustees. His generosity had brought scientific education within the reach of the

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<sup>1</sup> David B. Skillman. *The Biography of a College*. The Scribner Press 1932, p. 266.

<sup>2</sup> Almost \$300,000 in today's money.

<sup>3</sup> William C. Cattell, Memorial Address delivered at Lafayette College on Founders Day, October 23, 1892. Blithewold Archives.

<sup>4</sup> Pardee Genealogy, edited by Donald Lines Jacobus, New Haven Colony Historical Society, 1927, p. 372.

BLITHEWOLD

masses. When Pardee Hall was rededicated in 1880, Dr. Cattell said in his address that: *“Such wealth ought never to rouse the faintest sigh of envy. Every poor man in Pennsylvania has reason to be glad, and give thanks today, that Ario Pardee is rich.”*<sup>1</sup>



*Pardee Hall, Lafayette College, Easton, Pennsylvania*

Ario had developed such faith in Dr. Cattell that he asked him to supervise the education of his minor children. In 1869 Dr. Cattell accompanied seventeen-year-old Israel and fifteen-year-old Anne on a one-year educational tour of Europe. They traveled as one large family — Dr. Cattell, his wife Elizabeth, their two children, James and Henry, and the two Pardees. Dr. Cattell was studying teaching methods in the polytechnic schools in Europe. They met up several times, in different capitals, with Ario Jr. and his wife, Mary, who were traveling with Ario Jr.’s twenty-three-year-old sister, Ellen. In July 1869, while the Cattell party was in England, they received an urgent message from Ario Jr. from Paris. Ellen had contracted typhoid fever and was desperately ill. Dr. Cattell immediately escorted Israel and Anne to Paris, but Ellen died on July 15, shortly after they arrived. She was buried in Paris, and Ario Jr. and Mary returned to America, heartbroken. The Cattell

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<sup>1</sup> William C. Cattell, Memorial Address delivered at Lafayette College on Founders Day, October 23, 1892. Blithewold Archives.

### *Legacy of an American Family*

party continued their tour, visiting Sweden, Norway, Finland, Russia, Poland, Prussia, Denmark, Saxony and Switzerland.<sup>1</sup>

In December of 1869, from Berlin, Anne wrote to Bessie describing the excitement leading up to Christmas in the German capital, ending her letter: *“Tell Pa when he reads ‘The Night before Christmas’<sup>2</sup> on Christmas Eve, he must think of us, and so must you all. I have never spent Christmas away from home before ...”*<sup>3</sup> In the same envelope she sent a letter to her father on a rather more serious subject. She suffered from near-sightedness, and was having severe pain in her eyes. Dr. Cattell took her to eminent oculists in Paris and in Copenhagen. Both doctors had recommended surgery, and she was anxious to hear her father’s opinion. Unfortunately, we do not know whether Anne had the surgery, but she suffered from poor eyesight all her life, becoming blind in her old age.<sup>4</sup>

When the group returned to the United States, Israel immediately enrolled in Lafayette College, so impressed was he with Dr. Cattell. He was the first Pardee to attend the college that his father had supported so generously. He graduated in 1874 with a degree in Chemistry, and then stayed for a further year to do postgraduate research. In 1875 he went to work for his father’s iron company in Secaucus, New Jersey. Israel Pardee was a benefactor of Lafayette College for the rest of his life, serving on the Board of Trustees and helping to establish the college as a fine, progressive institution.

### **THE GRAHAM SCHOOL**

Anne Pardee’s education continued after she returned to America. Her parents sent her to Miss Green’s School in New York

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<sup>1</sup> Quote from the Israel Platt Pardee Diaries, 1869–1870. Skillman Library, Lafayette College.

<sup>2</sup> Referring to the Pardee tradition begun in 1852.

<sup>3</sup> Anne Pardee to Bessie Pardee, December, 1869. Blithewold Archives.

<sup>4</sup> Anne’s older sister, Alice, also became totally blind. She learned to type and read Braille. Bessie, too, suffered from poor eyesight all her life.

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City, the same school that Alice and Ellen had attended. Her cousin, Ida Markle, went with her. Bessie, in turn, attended the school, though by the time she went in 1872 its name had changed to The Graham School. The school was situated at 1 Fifth Avenue, and the Pardee girls often referred to the school simply as “Number One.” Bessie’s letters home were more about clothing than academics — and her preoccupation with matters of dress lasted her whole life. Her letters were filled with long descriptions of clothing purchased or desired, and requests for money. Anne was charged with taking care of her younger sister: “*Bessie is fitting into school well...a good little girl...with classes arranged so as not to be ‘too taxing’.*” Bessie studied French, Geography, Arithmetic, and Music, and also took dancing and riding lessons. But it was her interest in fashion that predominated. When she was thirteen Bessie described a dress to her mother “*...a white dress decorated with a tea rose and a long smilax vine, one end of the vine caught up at the throat with the rose...I will wear the white dress no matter what Miss Graham thinks...*”<sup>1</sup>

By the time Bessie was seventeen her preoccupation had turned into a passion. In April 1877 she wrote to her mother,

*I went to Arnolds...they showed me a perfect beauty which I immediately set my heart on. It is a Paris dress and one they had left over from last summer, marked down from \$200 [almost \$3000 in today’s money] to \$75. From the first figure you can imagine what a handsome dress it was. The material is raw silk. The color is something like a black and white stripe but giving the effect of a pretty light shade of grey, trimmed with black silk faced with a lovely shade of light blue. Besides wearing it this summer for best, I could wear it next winter for an evening dress. About the price. I do not think it is very much. Certainly not more than I usually pay. If you think I had best not get it (I do hope you will let*

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<sup>1</sup> Bessie Pardee to Anna Maria Pardee, October 6, 1874. Blithewold Archives.

*Legacy of an American Family*

*me) there are others that are cheaper but they are not to be compared to this other beauty. Please say yes!*<sup>1</sup>

Bessie got the dress.<sup>2</sup> Other references in Bessie's letters from school show her early love of flowers, as well as her predisposition to severe headaches. She had inherited the family trait of near-sightedness and wore glasses almost her whole life.

It was at The Graham School that Bessie met two young women who would remain among her very closest friends. They were Belle Grier from New York, and Alice Lee from Buffalo. Alice actually became Bessie's sister-in-law when she married Israel Pardee in 1889. Both Alice and Belle were bridesmaids at Bessie's wedding to Augustus Van Wickle in 1882, and both became regular visitors at Blithewold. Bessie's younger sisters, Edith and Gertrude, would follow Bessie to The Graham School in 1879 and 1883. Taking care of them all was Estelle Clements, a young woman with Hazleton connections. Estelle paid particular attention to the Pardee girls, took responsibility for them on holidays and weekends, and took them often to her family apartment in New York City to visit her mother.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bessie Pardee to Anna Maria Pardee, April 7, 1877. Blithewold Archives.

<sup>2</sup> From a study of Bessie Pardee by Mary C. Philbrick.

<sup>3</sup> Estelle Clements enjoyed a very close lifelong friendship with all the Pardees, and also with the Markle family. All the Pardee and Markle children called her "Aunt." When Estelle's father (a New York City doctor) died, his widow and daughter went to live in Hazleton. Estelle's mother may have been from Hazleton; a true familial relationship has yet to be determined, however.

BLITHEWOLD

MISSES GRAHAM,  
 SUCCESSORS TO THE  
 MISSES GREEN,  
 SCHOOL FOR YOUNG LADIES  
 FIFTH AVENUE,  
 FIRST HOUSE FROM WASHINGTON SQUARE,  
 NEW-YORK.

*The Course of Instruction includes the French, English, and Latin Languages; Geography, Astronomy, Chemistry, and the other Natural Sciences; Arithmetic, Algebra, and Geometry; History, Belles-Lettres, Moral Science, Elocution, and Writing.*

TERMS FOR THE COURSE.

Senior Department,	including Fuel and Stationery,	\$225 per Annum.
Junior Department,	" " "	150 " "
Primary Do. First Division,	" " "	100 " "
Do. Do. Second Do.	" " "	80 " "
Day Boarders,		200 " "
Use of Piano for Day Scholars,		12 " "
Instruction in French only,		125 " "

*Terms for the Italian, Spanish, and German Languages, Music, Drawing, and other extra branches, regulated by those of the masters employed.*

*Terms for the Family, \$800 per annum, including the regular course of tuition, board, fuel, and stationery.*

*Each young lady to be provided with bed-linen, towels, napkins, silver fork and spoons, marked in full.*

*Use of Piano, \$15; Laundress, \$50, semi-annually.*

*School in session from the 26th of September to the 15th of June. Pupils will be received at any intermediate period, the proportion only of the year from the time of engagement to enter being charged.*

*In case of the removal of a pupil before the expiration of the school year, payment for the full year will be required. No deduction made for absence.*

*Bills payable in advance, on the 26th of September and the 1st of February.*

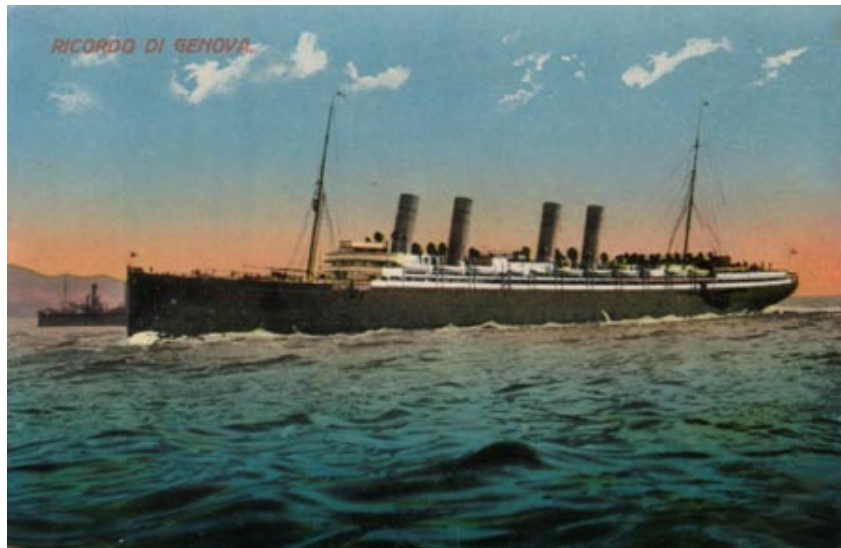
Brochure for The Graham School, 1872



## Chapter VII

### EUROPEAN TOUR, 1903

On June 6, 1903, the three young women and their chaperone boarded the *Deutschland*, a luxury ocean liner of the Hamburg Amerika Line, and holder of the “Blue Riband of the Atlantic” award for speed and luxury.



*Hamburg Amerika Line's Deutschland*<sup>1</sup>

Bessie and William McKee were at the dockside in New York to wave goodbye as Marjorie set off on her eleven-month adventure. Every comfort was thought of and provided for on board, and there was constant entertainment, including parties and dances every night. The famous opera singer, Ernestine Schumann Heine, gave a concert one evening. Marjorie, who had been invited to dine at the Captain's table, described the Captain's Dinner, the highlight of the voyage:

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<sup>1</sup> Postcard in the Blithewold Archives.

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*The room was decorated with the flags of the nations, and on every table were fascinating flags and all manner of festive “set pieces” — statues of Liberty, etc. As dessert time drew near, all the lights were extinguished and an illuminated model of the Deutschland was let down in the middle of the room and all the waiters came in (80 of them) single file, and each wearing cocked hat and the German colors and carrying a lighted torch and a big platter of ice cream with illuminated Swiss cottages as a garnish. They marched round and round the lovely tables making a most picturesque scene...Then we had “crackers” and wee flags passed round as souvenirs. Learned Doctors appeared in paper caps, and everyone went back to their childish days and had a jolly time.<sup>1</sup>*

## EUROPE

The first stop on the tour was Paris, where the group stayed at the Normandie Hotel near the Opera House. Marjorie visited the Louvre several times and began to develop a new appreciation for European art. From Paris they went to London, following a popular tourist route from there to Oxford, Stratford, Warwick, Chester, North Wales, Loch Katrin in the Highlands of Scotland, Edinburgh, Roslyn, and Melrose. Marjorie wrote letters and postcards home every week — dozens of pages in each letter, full of descriptions of her travel experiences, the hotels, the people she met, the architecture and the gardens, and her own observations on the culture and traditions of the different European countries. Everywhere they went they were armed with their trusty *Baedeker* guides (popular travel books of the time), letters of introduction, and addresses for the nearest Thomas Cook’s travel office where they could pick up their mail from home and draw cash on their letters of credit.

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<sup>1</sup> Marjorie Van Wickle to Bessie Pardee McKee, June 11, 1903. Blithewold Archives.

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In London they attended a gala performance in Covent Garden in honor of Emile Loubet, the first French president to visit London after Edward VII introduced the Entente Cordiale. The young American women were afraid their dresses would be unsuitable since the tickets said "Evening Dress Required," so they took a pair of scissors with them in case they needed to cut their bodices low in front to make them look like evening gowns! They need not have worried, however: their dresses were fine, and from their excellent front-row balcony seats they were able to look out over the distinguished audience and admire the gowns and jewels and the dashing uniforms.

From England they traveled across the North Sea to Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, then south to Germany and Austria, visiting museums and attending concerts and operas in all the major cities. When they arrived in Venice in September, Marjorie began a love affair with Italy that was to last the rest of her life.

Her first impressions of Venice were poetic. As she walked out of the train station she gasped as she caught her first glimpse of the Grand Canal:

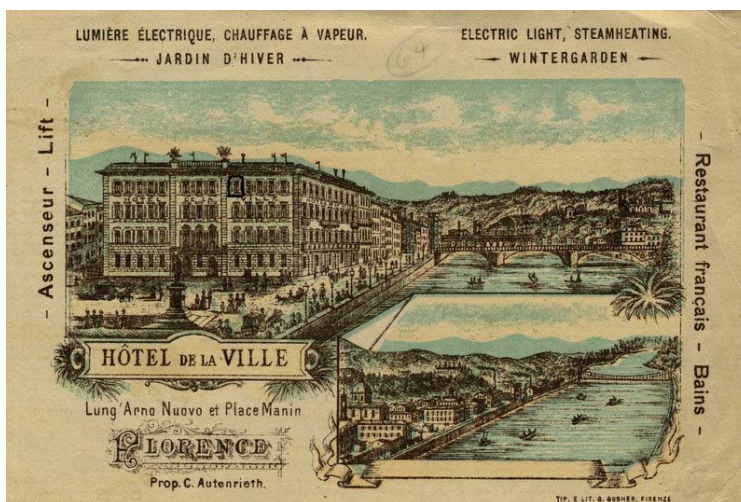
*We could hardly believe our eyes. All the picturesque old Venetian palaces were there spread out before us, such as we had dreamt of all our lives, and at our feet lay a gondola ready to take us and our trunks to the Hotel. A more fairy-like ride I never had — the soft cushioned gondola with its graceful rowers and gorgeous blue of the canal. It was perfect weather, warm like mid-summer, and as we wound in and out of the labyrinth of piccolo canali and under the quaint stone bridges and looked up at the soft tinted houses with their vine covered balconies, I thought it must be very like Heaven... [The next day] we breakfasted looking out over the Grand Canal and watched gondolas gliding up and*

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*down with their slender black hulls and white-suited gondoliers.<sup>1</sup>*

They stayed at the Grand Hotel across the Grand Canal from the Santa Margarita Church. They dined at Florian's, bought embroidered linens at Jesurum's, and took afternoon tea at Caffè Quadri's<sup>2</sup> — all in St. Mark's Square with its magnificent views of the cathedral of San Marco.

Their next stop was Florence, where they stayed for 6 weeks, soaking up the art, studying the Medicis, and taking great pleasure in the people and the architecture. Based at the Hotel de la Ville on the Arno River, they took trips into the surrounding hills, to Fiesole, Siena, Pisa, Perugia, Assisi, and Orvieto, visiting churches, gardens, and museums, as well as studying the history of the country with Miss Macartnay.



*Letterhead from Hotel de la Ville, Florence, 1903<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Marjorie Van Wickle to Bessie Van Wickle McKee, September 1903. Blithewold Archives.

<sup>2</sup> All of these establishments are still doing business in St. Mark's Square today.

<sup>3</sup> Careful scrutiny of the letterhead shows the window that Marjorie marked as her room at the hotel on the top floor where it faces the Place Manin.

### *Legacy of an American Family*

Europe expanded Marjorie's understanding of art and music, and she began to see art in a completely different way. She wrote "*Do you remember that I used to say I didn't like Art Galleries? Well, I've changed my mind for good and all!*"<sup>1</sup>

From Rome they traveled south to Sorrento, Naples, Pompeii, Taormina, and Amalfi. Bessie saved all the "*postales*" that Marjorie sent to her from Europe and put them into albums, creating a pictorial souvenir of the trip. The albums are preserved in the Archives at Blithewold.

At the end of 1903, first Dorothy and then Gertrude left the party to return to America. Marjorie and Miss Macartnay returned to Rome and spent Christmas 1903 at the Hotel Russie — Marjorie's first Christmas away from home. They bought flowers for their rooms from flower sellers on the Spanish Steps, and enjoyed the Italian festivities. On their last day they threw coins into the Trevi Fountain to ensure their return to Rome. Marjorie had asked for and received permission from her parents to stay on in Europe and to add on a 3-month trip to Egypt.

### **EGYPT**

On January 11, 1904, Marjorie and Helen Macartnay traveled south by train to Brindisi, Italy, and from there they set sail for Alexandria, Egypt. From Alexandria they took another train on a 3-hour journey to Cairo. The intrepid travelers spent a week at the historic Shepherd's Hotel in Cairo, where it was said that if you sat long enough on the terrace there, you would see the world go by. Marjorie wrote, "*I never sat long enough!*" Hiring a dragoman<sup>2</sup> to take care of them, they visited mosques and bazaars, silk shops and carpet weavers. Marjorie was fascinated to see how large silk carpets were

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<sup>1</sup> Marjorie Van Wickle to Bessie Van Wickle McKee, June 22, 1903. Blithewold Archives.

<sup>2</sup> Egyptian guide and interpreter.

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woven, the loom stretched right out into the street, the weavers walking up and down weaving with huge shuttles. With great excitement they boarded the famous paddle steamer *Rameses the Great* for their journey up the River Nile to Luxor and Aswan. “We have got our single rooms on the upper deck of the *Rameses Great*,” wrote Marjorie. “The very ones we wanted — they are on the sunny side and the best cabins on the boat.”<sup>1</sup>

They stopped off to see almost every palace on the river, in each place hiring donkey-boys to guide them. In the Valley of the Kings, Marjorie was given a donkey named “George Washington,” and her donkey-boy taught her a poem in Arabic, which pleased her immensely. She later proudly repeated it to their head dragoman, who was horrified. “Oh Miss,” he said, “You must never say that again!”<sup>2</sup>



*Marjorie on board the Nile steamer, Rameses the Great, 1904*

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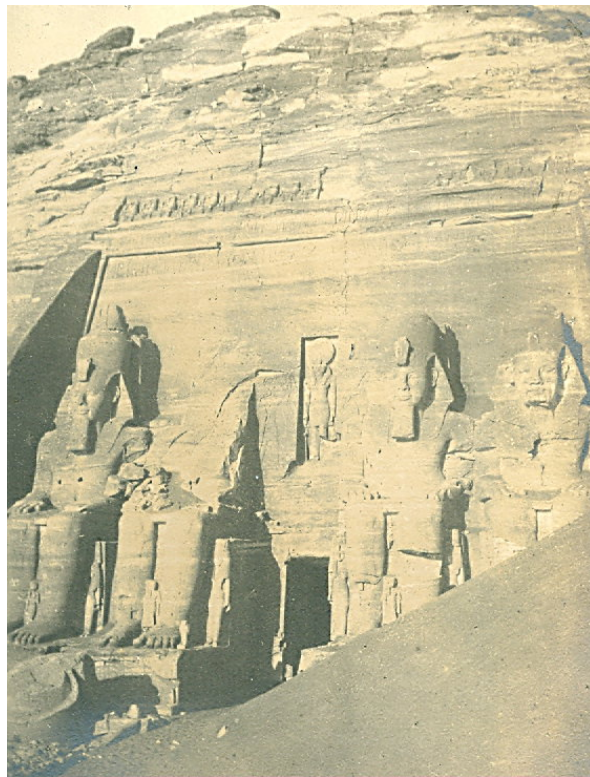
<sup>1</sup> Marjorie Van Wickle to Bessie Van Wickle McKee, January 17, 1904. Blithewold Archives.

<sup>2</sup> *Reminiscences by Marjorie Van Wickle Lyon in her 90th Year*, as told to her niece Marjorie Shaw Jeffries. Blithewold Archives.

*Legacy of an American Family*

The highlight of the steamer trip was a visit to the great temple of Abu Simbel, which they saw first at sunset and then later by moonrise. On February 11, Marjorie got up at 4:30 a.m. to see the temple and its huge regal carvings at daybreak. As the sun came up she saw:

*...beam after beam slowly creeping down the mountainside until the crowns, and then the faces, and finally the whole of the great figures were lit to a blaze of glory. Was it imagination, or did they really smile when the sun's rays first kissed them?<sup>1</sup>*



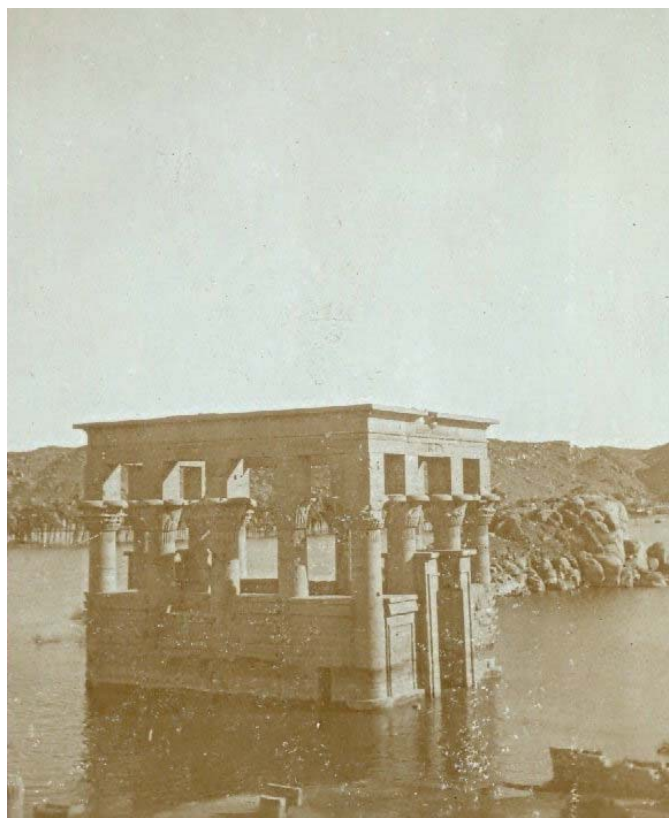
*Abu Simbel, 1904*

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Marjorie to Bessie, February 21, 1904. Blithewold Archives.

*BLITHEWOLD*

The next stop was the Island of Philae, near the first Cataract in Upper Egypt, where Marjorie found one of the loveliest temples in the country. The temple had withstood two thousand years of visitors and wars, but when the Aswan Dam was built in 1898 the temple had been flooded and was now threatened with total destruction. Marjorie and Miss Macartnay floated through the temple and its courts in small boats, between the columns, admiring the grace and beauty of the buildings reflected in the water.<sup>1</sup> (Many years later, the temple was stabilized and moved to higher ground.)



*Philae – Jewel of the Nile, 1904*

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<sup>1</sup> Marjorie to Bessie, February 21, 1904: “...going in boats through courts and pylons ...the reflections in the water were truly lovely.” Blithewold Archives.



*Legacy of an American Family*

At the hotel in Aswan, Marjorie and Miss Helen were asked to sit at the same dining table as an English gentleman and his two daughters (“*Luckily they were very nice!*”). He was Sir William Preece,<sup>1</sup> a famous British scientist. In February 1904, Marjorie wrote:

*In the evening we sat with the Preeces and had the greatest of treats for Sir William took us up to his room, and in the dark showed us his precious atom of “radium.” It was under a microscope — so tiny that you couldn’t see it at all by the naked eye. As we looked though we could see a substance like silver fire, shining and seething. It was very still for an instant, but kept rippling like the surface of the water, and sending out curious little seaweed-like fingers in all directions. It was most interesting. It’s the nearest thing to perpetual motion they have ever found, Sir William Preece says; he told us lots about it, if I could only remember it. But I couldn’t even understand but half. I know that it’s made from a mineral substance called Pitch Blend that is found in Germany and that a ton of it, after being reduced and reduced and all the unusable part thrown away, makes a very small fraction of an ounce of Radium.<sup>2</sup>*

Marjorie had unknowingly witnessed a tangible illustration of an important scientific discovery.

Back in Cairo, they took land carts to see the great pyramids and the Sphinx. Marjorie was so moved by the Sphinx that she went

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<sup>1</sup> Sir William Preece was one of the few scientists to support Guglielmo Marconi in his quest for wireless communication. Sir William supported him financially, and encouraged him in the face of fierce opposition and efforts to discredit him. In 1903 Marconi had made the first transatlantic telephone call, from Cape Cod, 3,000 miles across the ocean, to King Edward VII in London. From Erik Larson, *Thunderstruck*, Crown Publishers, 2006, p. 240.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Marjorie to her mother Bessie, February 1904. Blithewold Archives. Radium had been discovered by Marie Curie in 1898.

*BLITHEWOLD*

back later to see it by moonlight: “I sat down on the sand beneath her feeling awed at the great presence.”<sup>1</sup>



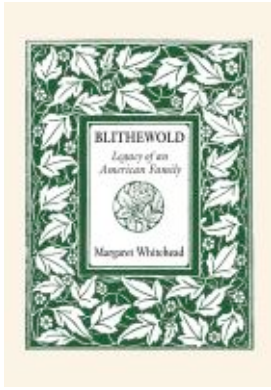
*Rameses II, Luxor*

When Marjorie arrived back in New York on May 5, 1904, after having been away for eleven months, her family was at the dock to greet her. She was returning a wiser young woman, with a lifelong devotion to travel, music, and art. And she was already planning her next trip to Europe.<sup>2</sup> In the meantime, though, she was only too happy to spend the summer of 1904 at her beloved Blithewold, entertaining her friends and cousins, playing tennis, and sailing.

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<sup>1</sup> *Reminiscences by Marjorie Van Wickle Lyon in her 90th Year*, as told to her niece, Marjorie Shaw Jeffries. Blithewold Archives.

<sup>2</sup> In many of the letters written to Bessie during the trip of 1903–1904, Marjorie suggests that the whole family might do the trip together so that they could share her experiences.



***BLITHEWOLD: Legacy of an American Family** is a social history of four generations of an American family, from 1810 to 2010, and the legacy they left in the form of Blithewold Mansion, Gardens & Arboretum. Blithewold is a spectacular 33-acre estate on the shores of Narragansett Bay in Bristol, Rhode Island, known as New England's finest sea-side garden estate. The estate's large archival collection of letters and photographs are used to illustrate this remarkable story.*

# **Blithewold**

## **Legacy of an American Family**

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