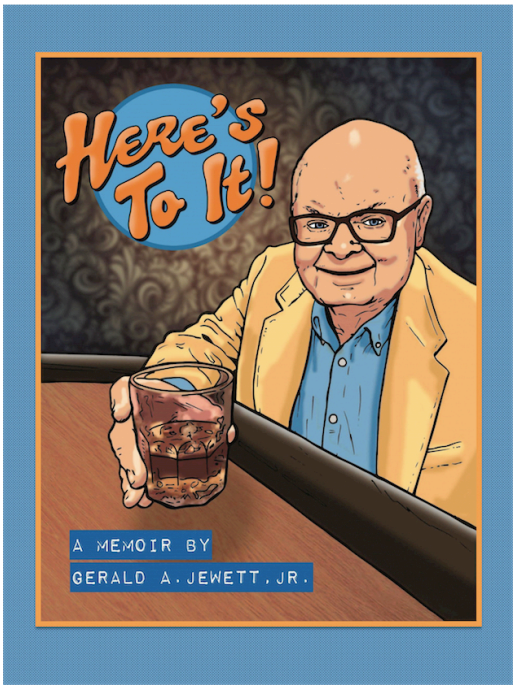
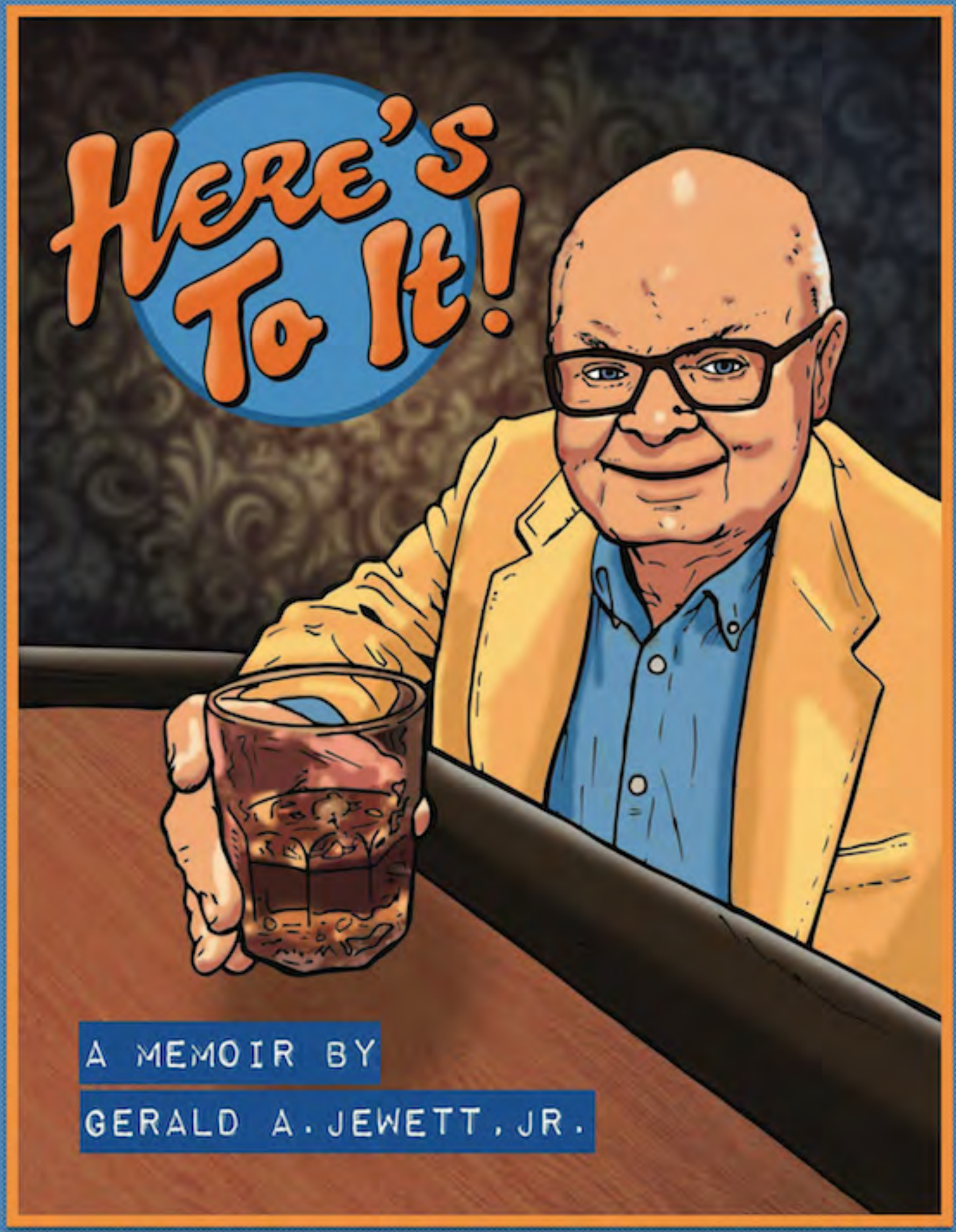


Hop on board for the delightful life journey of this 92-year-young author. From trikes and bikes to cars and trains (and yes, there were airplanes!), the road is also full of breathtaking overlooks into the ancestral lives of those who have helped drive him. A most unusual 'bio-mentary.'

Here's To It!

by Gerald A. Jewett, Jr.


HERE'S TO IT!
A MEMOIR BY
GERALD A. JEWETT, JR.

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Front cover artwork by Jake Dilley; final cover design by Todd Engel

Author's Preface

As a pre-91st birthday gift, my daughter Jennifer offered to put together a memoir about my life, with stories dictated by me. Over the years, I've had lots of interesting experiences, enough that several people have told me to write a book. But I just never wanted to tackle such a big undertaking. Now the offer has been made to do all the work for me if I just sit and tell the stories—I can do that much. My kids have oftentimes recorded me on tape and video and on their cell phone cameras when I get started reminiscing, but not really with enough material to put together any kind of an orderly book. So, I think this is a pretty smart idea, and have decided that now is as good a time as any to get some of those long-term memories onto paper for future generations. And there are scrapbooks and files full of old photos and clippings which should help add a lot more interest to the whole project.

Naturally, I was a little bit hesitant about this idea at first, because I did not necessarily want to tell my daughter, or even have in print, some of the skeletons in my closet. But Jen laughed while assuring me the book doesn't have to be a 'tell-all' deal. She also suggested inserting some historical and genealogical information about my ancestors since I always talk so much about them too—I certainly do like that whole idea. My family has kept our forefathers alive over the years with tales of their drive and determination, and those stories have helped make me who I am. Most of the ancestors, on both sides, even kept written journals (like this book will be, I'm told.) One of my great-grandfathers was also a studious researcher and genealogist in his later life, leaving us records that have assisted family members in putting things together on that side of the tree. So, this book will not only get into my own personal tales, but will also be a good reference source for my descendants who want to learn more about their heritage without having to do so much research.

It really is a good time to tackle this project since my memory is still pretty darn keen. But I just can't believe I've outlived almost everybody in my stories! Though easily recalling the names and faces of family members, friends and acquaintances when I talk about them, we have decided to eliminate most personal names for this book, unless they are already public record or we have received permission to include them here. I'm getting excited to see how this whole thing will turn out. ***Here's to it!***

Gerald A. Jewett, Jr., jerryjewett@yahoo.com, September 2016

Editor's Preface and Acknowledgments (with Afterthoughts about this fourteen-month project!)

I'd been thinking for a long time that it would be nice to help Dad write a book about his life. Everyone has a story, of course, but many of his seem especially intriguing. The guy has always kept others fully enthralled with his compelling (and accurate) tales, not only about his own life and that of his family, but also about the rich history of our city and state. So, I had already started recording, onto paper and onto video, many recollections as Dad told them, hoping to find a way to put things into some semblance of order so that his grandchildren and his 'greats' could eventually listen to and read highlights from the life of their very colorful grandfather. Born when the Roaring 20's slammed into the Great Depression, this man was part of the 'greatest generation' that seemed to emerge as a more footloose and fancy-free bunch—and all of it somehow related to growing up between two major world wars and in an era of such tremendous industrial and technological change.

Of course, I assumed a chronicle about Dad would be a posthumous effort, as with my other genealogical endeavors, but things ramped up when he asked me to start working on his eventual obituary. I did my best to succinctly compile onto the page a lifetime of well-over-the-top activities and involvements, all the while wishing it could be enhanced with some of the back stories that accompanied those listed items. At 800 words, Dad's first reaction was that the obit was just too long, so his assigned chore was to begin crossing out whatever didn't need to be listed. The next time we sat down to look at it, he was fretting about having added even more! Consolidating one's life journey onto a single written page in small font must be daunting, and I appreciated that my father wasn't ready to eliminate any of it. Because the obituary was the origin of this project, you'll soon see that we have decided to start the book with it, giving the reader a little foretaste of the pages to come!

About a year and a half ago, it became apparent that I just needed to stop everything else that was filling up my daily schedule, in order to offer services as an editor and 'genealogist wannabe' in helping assemble pieces about this man's fascinating story while he was feeling well enough to share more about it. (Dad has been pretty healthy these past couple of years—better than he was at age 90 or even 89, when we thought we were going to lose him for one reason or another.) So, back in late August 2016, I presented him with a pre-91st birthday gift—a verbal proposal to help compile a book about his life. He took no time in accepting the offer, and we jumped headfirst into this project right after Labor Day.

Before we sat down to begin writing the first time, Dad had already been thinking a lot about it and announced that he'd like to start out with, "My name is Gerald Anson Jewett, Jr." And off we went! We have continued to meet for several hours every week in his cozy Wesley Acres apartment, and at my office in Clive. Though it's finally time to see it go to print, this really is the book with no ending—one story has unlocked the door to another and another. And when he eventually pulled out the massive scrapbook with some of the photos he wanted to include, I almost fell off the chair! Deciding how to begin the book was not a chore for Dad, but deciding how and when to end it has not been easy.

My advance apologies if any details herein have inadvertently slipped by close research scrutiny. I tried to properly vet each and every story my father gave me, making certain the dates and names and circumstances line up—sometimes it's just hard to believe he can be so accurate with that long-term memory of his. On occasion, I would stop him mid-sentence to directly question the veracity of a statement, and he'd say, "Why don't you ask the lady in your phone?!" He was always so proud when SIRI agreed with him and added even more information—what did we ever do without the amazing internet?

As a curious and avid reader of all things history, I've amassed over the years many books, boxes and file drawers of family archives, even predating the arrivals in America of our Jewett and Call forefathers—'when an old man dies, a library burns to the ground' isn't an adage that applies to this family! And my own memberships in the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America required documentation from these sides of my ancestry back to at least 1750 A.D.; for this book about Dad and the things he wanted to add about his forefathers, I have obviously gleaned much from those papers. But historical items can be especially cumbersome in footnote or endnote layout, and not every reader cares to jump to them, so I've simply woven several into the actual text of Dad's memoir… if not of interest, please just skip over the bracketed notations in smaller font to continue hearing Jerry's voice tell his story. For anyone wishing to dig deeper, a multi-page Appendix lists names of some of the books and other sources that fill my boxes and file drawers of family goodies—every possible attempt has been made to contact owners of any copyrights, and I trust due credit has been given. (Frankly, it's tough to know where some information has come from, as there is a lot of data in my head after far too many years of doing this stuff!)

Personal thanks go out to several others who have assisted in this endeavor. Though she claims not to be so interested in genealogical pursuits, I'm grateful to my sister, Stephanie Jewett, for her devotion to (and her keen recall of some details about) our father and our

grandparents. Steph and her sons and grandsons live near Dad and hang out with him quite a bit, catching him retelling some stories that are included herein. Thanks go out to our paternal cousins, Chan, Kyle, Darcy, and C. J. Gibson, who grew up in the early years alongside us in Des Moines and at Lake Okoboji. Their Mom (Connie Cory, Dad's only sibling), was once a treasure trove of our family history, and I have often wished I'd picked her brain more thoroughly while she was able to clearly access the details… thankfully, she didn't keep them to herself, but freely shared great stories with her own kids and others. Though we cousins are now scattered around the country, whenever we have the chance to chat via phone or email, or even in person, the wonderful tales just start pouring out—I love that we typically end up laughing out loud like we did as kids. This book will contain some personal thoughts of recognition from each of them, and from two others (Dad's cousin, Tom Jewett; and my husband, John Dilley), all excerpted from surprise written notes that had been presented as gifts to Dad on his 91st birthday a year ago—it's certainly never too late to thank a 'second father,' or any other, for positively impacting our lives.

And gratitude goes right back to that same paternal cousin, Tom, for his ongoing Jewett family historical endeavors and book compilations; and to Dad's maternal Hutchison cousins who have assembled throughout the decades many Call family history items for all of us to enjoy. I am grateful to Jean Kramer, current President of the Kossuth County Genealogical Society, for sharing additional Algona articles and photos; to Peggy Strief and her local Delta Design team for their seemingly endless assistance with our photographs; and to Christine Karnas for offering her keen eye in the color and picture choices for the back cover (which highlights a ***Here's To It!*** toast from Lake Panorama a few days before Dad's 92nd birthday). My appreciation to Adam Delange of Newellco, who caught enthusiasm for this project when I requested permission to use various Dymo Label Maker references within the pages, as well as a tape likeness on the book's cover; he even offered to surprise my once-Dymo-obsessed father with the gift of a vintage machine! Thanks go out to the many other individuals and/or companies who gave permission to use a name/photo/quote here and there; and to our intellectual property attorney, Brian Laurenzo, for making sure we kept this all on the up and up! Lastly, I'm indebted to (and always amazed by) artistic son, Jake Dilley, who knocked it out of the ballpark with the delightful caricature that graces his Grandad's book; and to designer Todd Engel who seamlessly joined the front and back together to prove you *can* judge a book by its cover.

Special *posthumous* thanks get sent up to my mother (Jackie Berguin, Dad's first wife and the mother of his only two children). After their divorce, Mom became an American

History and World History teacher for the Des Moines Public Schools. I clearly recall the day I came home from my own high school and announced to her, "I just *hate* history! It's all about memorizing dates of things that don't even matter! How can you waste your time teaching such a boring subject?" My mother's simple answer changed the very course of my life… "Honey, it's all just one big story puzzle. Since you love to read and you love puzzles, put it together so the dates make sense of the story." And just that quickly, my focus changed. History suddenly came alive… so alive that it's been my own personal journey to help assemble such historical puzzle pieces for myself, and for others as well. Thanks, Mom! And thanks to all of my ancestors who have since passed, but who continue to assist with these types of genealogical pursuits—it's amazing how they seem to keep themselves quite busy, working for us and with us from the other side of the veil.

Be aware that this book has a chronological order to it, but with wanderings into topical discussions when deemed necessary for the storyline—sometimes the chronology actually develops backward but will make sense in the big picture. For every hour that Dad shared stories, I spent at least another three trying to figure out where to place the information in order to assimilate it into the whole. And every now and then, I couldn't help but add my own ***{Editor's note}*** with personal comments in curly brackets to help give further insight into one of his stories. Thank you for understanding the development of this project, and for just going with the unique flow—it's a hybrid book by design, a 'bio-mentary' (to coin what is likely a new term). I trust this will be an enjoyable memoir, and that the layout will contain a little something for everyone, from the casual reader to the avid history buff.

I was once admonished from the pages of a book to give my ancestors their proper due, because they gave me the ticket to my own life adventure—what a great concept! So, think of this narrative as honoring some of that debt owed to my forefathers (including Dad, who was a real trouper throughout this endeavor). There is indeed magic in looking at family history through the eyes of one who lived it, and I am thrilled to be a small part of keeping "his-story" alive. This has personally been the most fulfilling writing project of my life, and one for which I'll always be grateful—not many adult children have the opportunity to spend quality time working diligently for fourteen months on such an endeavor with a parent in his 90's (now 92, to be exact!). Which reminds me… due to being more than a year in the making, people and stories mentioned in the book have grown up right along with it, so I've adjusted any stated ages or timespans to be accurate at this time of printing.

Jennifer Jewett Dilley, jewettdilley@gmail.com, November 2017

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THE OBITUARY
(an interesting start to a book about one's life!)

Gerald Anson Jewett, Jr. ("Jerry"), a resident of the Wesley Acres retirement campus, was born in Des Moines, Iowa on October 21, 1925, to Gerald Anson Jewett, Sr. and Bertha Shore Jewett. A baptized member of the former Central Christian Church, he passed peacefully into the next life on _____, at the young age of ___. Other than two years spent in the United States Army Air Corps pilot training and service during WWII, Jerry was a lifelong resident of Des Moines and a nearly-lifelong summer resident of Lake Okoboji in northwest Iowa.

The kid kept his teachers on their toes at Greenwood and Callanan, before graduating as President of the Theodore Roosevelt High School class of 1943. College studies were started at Drake University and continued, following war draft obligations, at the University of Iowa, where he was President of his Sigma Nu fraternity and served on the Interfraternity Council before graduating from the College of Commerce with a degree in Business Administration. Jerry became the fourth generation to enter the family-owned Jewett Lumber Company in Des Moines, serving first as its General Manager, then Treasurer, then President. He was a perfectionist with a passion for homebuilding, and others learned much from his keen woodworking prowess. Mr. Jewett was always pleased to give of his time and talents to a variety of organizations. Though he hoped for a short newspaper obituary, it was tough to decide what to eliminate; the forthgoing list of involvements brings an appreciation to his commissioning many years ago into the Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels…

Jerry was one of the founders of the Polk County Heart Association and served as Chairman of the American Heart Association/Iowa Affiliate. He was Chairman of the Boards of Mercy Properties and of Mercy Share Care, Ltd., and served for a number of years on the Board of the Mercy Foundation. Jerry founded and was President of the Polk County Reserve Deputy Sheriff's Association, Chairman of the Polk County Peace Officers Association, and President of the Polk County Society for Crippled Children and Adults. This gentleman was a successful fundraiser for Easter Seals' Camp Sunnyside, United Way of Central Iowa, March of Dimes, and The Salvation Army (enjoying annual turns as a skywalk bell ringer). He was a proud part of the American Legion, and a volunteer Committee member of the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve for the State of Iowa. The man sat for many years on the Executive Board (and later, on the Advisory Council) of the Mid-Iowa Council of Boy Scouts of America, and was a Past President of the Shrimp Club and of the Pioneer Club of Des Moines. He was also a long-standing member of the Okoboji Yacht Club, a Board member of the Okoboji Protective Association, and founder and operator of the Lake Okoboji Seaplane Base. Life memberships were held in the University of Iowa Alumni Association, in Sigma Nu, and in the Jewett Family of America, Inc.

This very active individual wore a number of hats for the Greater Des Moines Chamber of Commerce (and for the Junior Chamber as a young man), chairing its annual Goodwill Tour Committee and chairing for many years its Membership Committee. Additionally, he was honored to successfully plan and carry out the big air show for Des Moines International Airport's 50th Anniversary while serving as Chairman of the Chamber's Aviation Committee. Jerry was an avid business and recreational pilot who logged more than 23,300 hours in his own 55 years of active flying and was rated as a commercial pilot for land (single and multi-engine), sea (single-engine), and instrument. He was a well-seasoned traveler with a penchant for remembering details, and was known for being a consummate storyteller (with enough material to fill the pages of his recent book, *Here's To It!,* a published memoir about one very eventful life). In addition to a passion for airplanes, classic cars, magic tricks, and Oreo cookies, Jerry's many pastimes and hobbies over the years have also included sailing, snow and water skiing, ice and roller skating, tennis, golf, hunting, fishing, horseback riding, boating, swimming, tinkering in his workshops, and wintering in Marco Island, Florida.

For well over six decades, Jerry was a member and past President of the Reciprocity Club of Des Moines and of the Quiet Birdmen pilot's organization. He was also a Paul Harris member of The Rotary Club, Honorary President of the Izaak Walton League, and on the Board of The Des Moines Club. Past memberships have included the Ad Club of Des Moines, Des Moines Golf and Country Club, Des Moines Art Center, Drake Boosters Club, Dowling Club, Planned Parenthood, Ducks Unlimited, and the YMCA. Jerry assisted with the Governor's Iowa Emergency Resource Management Plan, serving as Chief of its Supply and Requirements Division. Vocationally, he was a member of the National Association of Home Builders, President of the Iowa Lumbermens Association and of the Northwestern Lumbermens Association, President and Life Member of the Iowa Chapter of Hoo-Hoo, International, and Chairman/President of the National Lumber and Building Material Dealers Association. After the merging of two local family-owned pioneer building material businesses, he served as CEO and then as Chairman Emeritus of Gilcrest/Jewett Lumber Company until his passing.

Jerry Jewett was preceded in death by his first wife, Jackie Berguin, and second wife, Nelle Ross. Left to carry on his immediate legacy are two daughters, Jennifer (John) Dilley and Stephanie Jewett. He is also survived by sister Connie Cory, stepsons Roy (Barbara) Ross and Tom (Gay) Ross, close friend Jeanette Redman, and some very special Wesley Acres pals. Dearest to Jerry's heart were his four beloved grandsons, Joe (Carrie) and Jake Dilley, and Ryland and Kingsley Jewett; and he was simply delighted with his four little great-grandchildren, Ashton and Jack Dilley, and Anson and Jonah Jewett.

Gerald Anson Jewett, Jr. was a man who left an indelible mark on his family and on his world, and we are enriched by having known and loved him. Jerry often gratefully acknowledged the fine teamwork of physicians who kept him in such good balance over the more recent years, asking that those 'major players' be listed herein: Drs. Sean Cunningham, Josh Groben, Craig Shadur and Tom Buroker. He wished any memorial donations in his name be sent to a charity of the donor's choice or to the Wesley Life Foundation, 3520 Grand Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa, 50312.

BEGINNINGS

My name is Gerald Anson Jewett, Jr. I was born at 9:13 A.M. on Wednesday, October 21, 1925, at Methodist Hospital in Des Moines, Iowa… weighing in at 8 pounds, 4 ounces, and measuring 22 inches long. My parents were Gerald Anson Jewett, Sr. and Bertha ("Bertie") Shore Jewett. The baby book Mom kept about me states that she took me home two weeks later, on November 3—I guess they let new mothers relax for a couple of weeks back then, unless I had some newborn sickness nobody told me about.

Eventually, I did have a few unexpected childhood illnesses, the big one being double pneumonia as a fourteen-month-old. Believe it or not, I really do remember looking out of my crib during that long ordeal, especially hating those bars that caged me in. By age 3½, I also had whooping cough for six whole weeks, and then ended up with full-blown pneumonia yet again by age 4. Being confined to a bed was terribly tough on this active little kid. My parents would tell me I needed to rest, and Mother recorded that I replied, "But I'm not sleepy—see how lively and quick I am!"

I grew up at 213-38th Street Place in Des Moines, in the house my folks had built the year before I was born. The lot on which they began construction was once my mother's pony pasture, across a deep ravine that still housed her horse barn behind the 210-37th Street home of her parents, Dr. Francis Edward Victor (F. E. V.) Shore and Mrs. Bertha Call Shore. As a wedding gift to my Mom and Dad, her parents had given them the north rear portion of their large plat of land that ran from 37th Street all the way west to 38th Street Place. (My grandparents reserved the south rear portion of the plat in hopes of eventually building themselves a smaller home on it in their time of retirement.)

Two years after receiving the generous wedding gift, my parents built their first house on that back north lot. I was 4½ when my little sister, Connie, was born, and we loved growing up there. Our home was a beautiful two-story brick and stucco with a slate roof. It had four bedrooms, two baths, a fireplace, a big solarium/sunroom, a full underground basement, and a detached two-car garage.

And like in the homes of all my grandparents, we had an additional back stairway that went from the kitchen up to the second-floor bedroom of our live-in housemaid, Freda, a really nice lady who was with us a long time. I remember that Freda had an ongoing problem, however… when walking from the living room to the dining room, she regularly fell down after tripping over the edge of the oriental rug that was under our large formal dinner table! We never knew why she couldn't get that right.

There was a big metal door to a chute on the (north) driveway side of the house—that's where coal was delivered regularly and dumped down into a very dirty basement storage room. When I was old enough to help, I remember shoveling coal with Dad. We had to carry it clear over to the furnace on the southwest side of the basement, where it could be vented out of the fireplace chimney. A few houses by then were starting to be heated with oil, but ours was still heated with coal until several years later. I'll tell more soon about the workshop I built for myself in that same furnace room as a kid, and about some of the many things I constructed down there.

The northeast corner of the basement was the laundry area—we had a new-fangled electric washing machine with a wringer, but no clothes dryer. Those were the days when you just hung wet clothing items out to dry in the backyard or dangled them from a clothesline in the laundry room if the weather was bad. (And you could even send things to the cleaners when their truck came through the neighborhood every few days.) In the southeast corner of the basement, my very creative Mother had her own art room. And last, but not least, also down in our basement you'd find my Dad's little beverage still, which helped out during those Prohibition years—and no, I never got into it!

While my folks were building that first house, a little neighbor boy was playing after hours at the job site and fell down the two-story chimney the very day it had been constructed. I guess when he was found, all the bricks had to be torn out to retrieve him unharmed. Interestingly, that little boy eventually grew up to serve our country overseas in World War II and was captured—he again had to be retrieved, this time as a Prisoner of War in Germany, and again he returned home alive! (That guy is no longer living, but I finally met and had a nice time chatting with his daughter just recently at a meeting of the Des Moines Historical Society, where she was the guest speaker. Victoria Herring seemed to thoroughly enjoy hearing some neighborhood tales about her young father, and was even more intrigued to hear stories about her *grand*father—a man she never even met, who eventually became an Iowa Governor and U.S. Senator. Victoria has since written a kind

note granting permission to use any names of her family members in this book, so the reader will have the treat of learning a little more about some of them in upcoming pages.)

There was no such thing as a television set back then, but we did have a radio (a Philco console with push buttons) that we kept in the living room. One of the buttons on it said, "TV SOUND," and we all wondered what that meant. Now we know the company was way ahead of its time in preparing its products for such a thing as television. My Dad was always up on the latest models of electronics, which is likely why we had that fancy Philco. We all listened to the radio as a family, but I really only liked hearing the Sunday funny papers read aloud on it. Other than that, my family would go over to my grandparents' house across the ravine on Sunday nights where we all listened to Jack Benny on *their* radio, an old thing that had a box battery about a foot square, which was full of acid to run it—it was real, real primitive, but my grandfather just loved it. Usually, my folks' very close friends, Peg and Woody, would come over for that Sunday night affair too—it was my job to pop popcorn and make fudge for everyone, which of course helped the Jack Benny Show sound even better!

There was also a telephone in our new house, and it was kept on a little drop leaf desk at the top of the stairs. My folks later added another phone, moving this one into their bedroom and putting a second one in the downstairs solarium. Our phone was originally on a party line… you just picked up the hand-held receiver and the call went through an operator. By junior high and high school, I was able to call my friends whenever I wanted, with the exception of one guy who lived clear out in Valley Junction (now known as West Des Moines)—I wasn't supposed to ring him because it cost a nickel to call that far.

Our first phone number was simply '505.' As Des Moines grew in size, preface names were added to the phone numbers—the first two letters of the new preface names corresponded to the first two numbers on the phone dial. Our '505' became 'BL-505' (the 'BL' stood for 'Blackburn;' other preface names were 'AM' for 'Amherst,' 'CH' for 'Cherry,' 'CR' for 'Crestwood,' and so on—longtime Des Moines residents will remember those.) Years later, two numbers were then added to the *end* of phone numbers, and ours became BL-505-25. Eventually, 'BL-505-25' became '25-505-25' or as written today, '255-0525.' (Area codes came along much later, of course.) This may seem boring, but

I wanted to bring up the phone number story for a good reason… When my parents eventually moved from that first home in their later retirement years, they kept the same 255-0525 phone number. And after my parents had both passed away, my daughter Stephanie was able to secure that very same phone number for herself. Believe it or not, our original 'BL-505-25' is still Steph's landline number all these decades later!

Our house on 38th Street Place wasn't really all that fancy, though it was in a fairly fancy neighborhood. But across our backyard and ravine, the homes along 37th Street where my grandparents lived were, in fact, *really* fancy. I guess there was only one house that wasn't… it was the 'bookshop house' north of Greenwood School. The lady who lived there was a widow, a friend of my mother's, and had sold her large house a few blocks east after her husband passed away. She moved into the small home next door to my school and kept it so nice and neat and well-arranged. Her front room was covered in books, and that's where I took reading lessons. I was far-sighted and had to wear glasses to read as a kid. Jennifer just asked if they were wire-rimmed glasses and, yes, they were—I don't think there were plastic rims back then. As a matter of fact, I don't recall anything made of plastic that early. The first car we ever had with a plastic steering wheel that replaced the wooden wheel was about a 1938 Ford, I think. ***{Editor's note:*** *Readers will learn that Dad determines history by the cars of the era!}* Anyway, the tutoring must have helped because I didn't seem to need special lessons after that. I still don't consider myself a fast reader though, and am almost dreading reading the final draft of this book about my life for fear it will take me until I'm 94 years old to get through it. Whenever I think about that reading tutor who lived next to Greenwood School, for some reason I think about the pair of hand-me-down pants 'inherited' from her son, Tom. I just hated those pants because they had a little spot on the front of one leg that Mom could never get out, so I finally just refused to wear them.

As a little kid, I sure loved Winnie-the-Pooh, the character introduced by author A. A. Milne the year after I was born. I had my own Pooh bear, sleeping with it every single night and carrying it around wherever I went during the day. Long before I could read by myself, Mother would sit and read to me about the adventures of this new little Pooh guy bumping down the stairs behind Christopher Robin. Naturally, it was fun to pretend I

was Christopher Robin with my head full of light-colored hair like his (but you can see that mine had lots of curls peeking out of some very stylish hats!).

Mom also read to me about other A. A. Milne characters, like the three little foxes who didn't wear shoes and didn't wear soxes and kept their handkerchiefs in cardboard boxes. Those particular foxes must have made quite an impression on me, and I always kept plenty of handkerchiefs myself. I grew up sneezing a lot, with allergies to things like goose feathers, household dust, powder, white potatoes, cocoa, insecticides, corn, and ragweed. And because of hay fever, there was a special air filter in my bedroom. I remember having a 'Schick test' back then to see what things I was allergic to—my doctor scratched a place on my back and then gave my folks a huge list of far too many things I was supposed to stay away from! (All these decades later, I no longer keep my handkerchiefs in cardboard boxes, but do continue to regularly use a fresh cotton one carried daily in my pocket! I've dealt with other sensitivities to a few things over the years, and an annoying itch sometimes brings them to my attention. But a recent blood test shows no food or environmental allergies at this time, and it's a great relief to know that chocolate isn't a current problem—you're reading about a self-confessed chocoholic who has been addicted to Hydrox and then Oreo cookies since childhood!)

I just loved my little crank-up record player with its small vinyl disc full of Pooh songs, and would sing them all day long. First, I had to crank and crank and crank, then the player would play and I would sing along with it until the words started slowing down, then I'd crank and crank and crank again to be able to finish songs. My parents and sister talked for years about how I used to sing the songs as a little kid just exactly as I heard them, with all the warps and skips and varying speeds! One of my favorites was about the changing of guards at Buckingham Palace, and how Christopher Robin went down there with Alice. There are several verses to that song, and I memorized them all—they were to come in so handy in the future when singing those childhood songs to my own daughters (and singing to myself to stay awake while flying airplanes solo). Another favorite poem by the same author was about the King and Queen having breakfast—it also had several verses, and I memorized them too, of course. That particular recording on my vinyl disc sounded just like live theater, and I loved to repeat the breakfast poem with the same distinguished voice for the Queen and the same high-pitched little voice for the Dairymaid. ***{Editor's note:*** *For me, the all-time best day Dad and I spent in writing this book was the day he tapped into his memories of the Pooh songs and poems. We both began to sing, smiling at each other in wide-eyed surprise that either of us recalled them… gotta love that long-term memory!}*

When putting me down to bed at night, my folks and I always prayed a popular prayer that starts, "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep…," but I often asked Mother to read to me the one from my Pooh book where Christopher Robin asks for blessings on everybody in his family, but almost forgets to add, "God bless *me*!" I really did want God to bless us all.

Evidently, I was a very observant little guy and must have had a lot of questions. Mom said that I asked her when I was two years old if the trees were electric since their leaves moved in the breeze—it's so great she wrote down that statement in my baby book, or I might have forgotten it. I do recall thinking that electricity was magic and that if anything moved it must be electric. By the time I was about four, a friend of Dad's had given me a little electric motor that you plugged into the wall, and I used it to make the engine-like hum when playing with my toy cars—that was the best sound!

Even though it was fun playing indoors with my cars and singing songs along with my record player, I was also a busy little kid who loved to be outdoors, not only in my own backyard but all over our neighborhood and beyond. And I especially enjoyed spending a lot of time at my grandparents' home across the ravine. One day I was playing with my toy cars in Grandma Shore's living room while she was having Bridge Club. I remember one of the women saying to my grandmother, "Bertha, where were you from originally?" and Grandma answered, "I was a Call girl from Algona." All the ladies laughed, but I didn't know what they were laughing at…

MY CALL HERITAGE

"Call" was Grandma Shore's maiden name. Her father, Ambrose Adolphus Call (along with his older brother Asa Cyrus Call), founded the Iowa town of Algona in 1854. The two boys had been born in Ohio, and both soon became young patriots with an inner urge for adventure. Their grandfather was a Minute Man in the Revolutionary War of 1776 [Asa Call, Sr., 1763-1825, whose "immediate cause of death was the wound in his head which he received in battle and which troubled him for years"], and their father had served in the War of 1812. Their father had been a widower with no children, before marrying his second wife (their mother, Mary "Polly" Metcalf), with whom he fathered eight. Ambrose, born on June 9, 1833, was the youngest of those eight children—he would one day become my great-grandfather. [And only a few generations before that, ancestor Ralph Sprague (1599-1650) had originally arrived in Salem, Massachusetts from Upway, Dorsetshire, England on the ship 'Abigail.' He is attributed with being one of the founders of Charlestown (Boston) and of Malden, Massachusetts; additionally, he became a Deputy to the General Court, as well as a Lieutenant of the Charlestown Company.]

The story of Ambrose and Asa, the two Call brothers, is terribly fascinating to me, so I wanted to make certain we put some things about them here. The boys' father [Asa Call, Jr., 2/4/1792 - 3/13/1833] had died at the early age of 41, just a couple of months before my great-grandfather Ambrose was born. Their father's lengthy medical problems had drained all financial resources of the family, and their young widowed mother was forced to move away from Ohio with her kids. Though born in Vermont, she had relatives and supportive friends in western New York, so she moved back there with her children. After five years, she and the kids all headed west again and relocated in South Bend, Indiana for a lengthy period of time. [In 1848, after fifteen years as a widow, Ambrose and Asa's mother married James Finch in Fulton, Illinois, just across the Mississippi River from Clinton, Iowa. The couple resided in the Clinton area (in a town then known as Lyons, Iowa) until Mr. Finch's death there in 1862. Mary Metcalf Call Finch eventually moved to Algona, Iowa, to live near her sons, Ambrose and Asa, in the town they had founded in 1854. She passed away in Algona on September 19, 1868, at the age of 69 (having been born on May 24, 1799, in Corinth, Vermont). Mary "Polly" Finch is buried with her sons and families in the Riverview Cemetery in Algona, Iowa.]

So, my great-grandfather, Ambrose, and his Call siblings received their later public education in South Bend. By the time their mother remarried, Ambrose was striking out on his own as a 15-year-old teenager. He headed back to Ohio (the state of his birth) to attend commercial college while also establishing a news depot in Dayton, "delivering to subscribers the Cincinnati dailies ahead of the mails." My great-grandfather's pioneering spirit was strong and by the age of 20, he headed westward, exploring new lands by starting at the headwaters of the St. Croix River in Wisconsin and then traveling

downstream. In the meantime, Ambrose's older brother, Asa, caught a bad case of 'Gold Rush Fever' and had struck out for California in 1849, walking with a herd of cattle all the way from St. Louis to San Francisco. He was a survivor of the famous sinking of the Winfield Scott steamer off the Channel Islands near Santa Barbara on December 1, 1853, but that's another story! [The wreck site is part of the Channel Islands National Park and Marine Sanctuary, and has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1988.] Not long after surviving the shipwreck, just four years after heading west, Asa returned to Iowa from the California gold fields (where he had amassed a small fortune of $6000 in gold, secretly sewn into the lining of his buckskin coat for the trip back east).

[Before heading west in 1849, Asa had done some school teaching while he also attended, and graduated with honors from, Oberlin College Institute in Ohio (following his public schooling in South Bend). Having had experience with Native Americans while making his western trek, Asa was then appointed by the Army in California as 'Indian Commissioner,' with the rank of Captain. His duties, along with the 100 men under his command, were many, including recovery of stolen cattle from the Snake Indians (Native American tribes near the Snake River, which eventually included the Northern Paiute, Bannock, and Shoshone) and the pursuit of ongoing negotiations with the tribes. While in California, Asa was also a correspondent for the *National Era*, an abolitionist newspaper published for several years in Washington, D.C. Asa's great-great-grandson, John R. Call (and wife Vanessa) did two years of extensive editing work on the journals of Asa Call, kindly gifting us with a copy of their final 1998 edition of *The Diaries of Asa Cyrus Call: March 28, 1850-December 26, 1853*.]

After then getting married, Asa and his new wife settled in Iowa City, the capital of our state at that time. He regarded their Iowa City home as temporary, however, having decided to select some "eligible site" for a new town of his *own* making. As quoted by Asa in his personal journal, "I had for several years intended to found a new town. I was determined to find a place where I could get fine lands and as many other advantages as possible." Asa had apparently explored the upper Mississippi, where every available site was already occupied; he also explored the western shores of Lake Superior, where he found good harbors but no land. Eventually Asa decided to look inland.

[It was likely while on his explorations further east that Asa had met and soon married Sarah Heckert, daughter of John and Elizabeth (Fisher) Heckert of Elkhart County, Indiana. After they wed on June 13, 1854, Asa and Sarah then traveled 300 miles west, ending up in Iowa City. Historically, the first capital of the Iowa Territory had been in Burlington (at one time called 'Flint Hills'). Iowa was still uncharted territory when Burlington became the capital, and squatters crossed the Mississippi River to begin clearing the land and building cabins and fences. But they were driven back east across the river by American soldiers who burned those cabins and fences, because the government had promised the Indians that no white settlers would come into the Iowa land before June 1833. After that date, there was a population explosion and by 1838, the 'Territory of Iowa' was formed. It wasn't long before the early settlers realized that a more central location for a capital would soon have to be chosen. By 1839, a spot nearer the center of the growing population movement westward was found on the Iowa River in Johnson County—then called

'City of Iowa' and now 'Iowa City'—one log cabin served as the Capitol Building for the Iowa Territory until a larger structure was finally completed in 1842. Iowa officially became a state in late December of 1846. By the time newlyweds Asa and Sarah Call moved to Iowa City in 1854, the legislature was already deciding to move the capital from Iowa City to Fort Des Moines, to be near the fork of the Raccoon and Des Moines Rivers. (For confusion purposes, 'capital' is not spelled 'capitol' unless referring to an actual building, and is not 'capitalized' unless referring to the state or U.S. 'Capitol Building' by name!) Iowa's capital move finally happened by 1857—the same year the word 'Fort' was dropped from 'Des Moines.' The State University of Iowa, called the 'University of Iowa' since 1964, had been founded in Iowa City in 1847, just two months after Iowa became a state. Once the seat of government moved out of Iowa City, the entire State University of Iowa was housed in the old Capitol Building ("Old Cap") for another six years until a second structure was built on that land owned by the University.]

In the meantime, Asa's youngest brother (my eventual great-grandfather Ambrose) was temporarily living in Stillwater, Minnesota, a logging center on the west banks of the St. Croix River. The boys must have kept in touch somewhat, because Ambrose received a letter from Asa, persuading him to head south in order to discuss a joint exploration venture of founding a town in unsettled northern Iowa. So, Ambrose took a boat down the river to Muscatine, apparently meeting up with Asa and taking a stage together over to Iowa City. The two of them laid out their plan and finally headed west to Fort Des Moines (as our city was first called), then turned north to follow the Des Moines River into the 'Upper Des Moines country' and beyond. The pioneering brothers were fully aware that they would be entering uncharted and hostile Indian territories, but both had valuable experience dealing with that. So, they chose to proceed with the adventure into northern Iowa—Asa was almost 29-years-old, and my great-grandfather Ambrose had just turned 21.

[At that time, "there was across eastern Iowa a definite path one hundred miles long to guide the movers going west. No furrow had been plowed in northern Iowa, but there remained a faint trail as far as the abandoned military post at Fort Dodge. Three tribes of Indians who for centuries had roamed Iowa—the Sioux, the Winnebagos, and the Sacs and Foxes—had been shrewdly bargained with by their white brothers, and for a few paltry dollars and the hope of much firewater had parted with their ancestral hunting grounds and fishing streams and lakes, and were moving westward. They were not happy in their bargain and were loath to go. Tribe hating tribe, and all suspicious of the white man, they lingered and begged and thieved and robbed in small bands, keeping the settlers and each other in a constant state of alarm and suspense."]

My grandmother told me that when her father (Ambrose) and her uncle (Asa) went north from Fort Des Moines and moved up the Des Moines River, they were armed with one rifle and were walking, carrying their only belongings in knapsacks. Along the trail, they came upon a man riding an old pack horse, and were able to purchase the animal and take turns riding with their goods on its back. They were relieved when finally making it to the very small settlement of Fort Dodge, 90 or more miles later. It's kind of interesting that there were government surveyors who had been assigned to the area north of Fort Dodge the

week before the brothers arrived, but they had been robbed by Indians and had retreated forty miles back down to that Fort as well. The surveyors talked of the great and beautiful land to the north, however, which further motivated Ambrose and Asa to forge ahead in order to find the spot they would claim as their own. The excited brothers then purchased a second rifle and another horse, along with a wagon to carry their new homesteading provisions, and kept proceeding northward. [The surveyors also had encountered extreme amounts of mosquitoes, writing, "the air would be literally thick with them… if we talked they would get in our mouth, they would fly into our eyes and ears, would cover our faces and hands, and not an inch of our bodies unprotected by clothing would escape them. In going to and from camp we would carry our tools so as to have one hand free to fight these little torments." Later accounts by early settlers tell of tacking cloth mosquito netting to cover the windows of the log houses in the spring.]

Grandma said that when her father and uncle finally came upon the big bluff located where Algona is today, they both thought it would make a beautiful place for a town. The date was July 9, 1854. Asa wrote in his journal, "At the site of Algona I found a tract of good land, with a fair supply of timber, some water power, and near the center of the county… at that time there was no settlement north of Fort Dodge." Ambrose recorded that they used a spade and "investigated the nature of the soil," then "drew up our team on the high ground… noted the beauty of the location overlooking the river and the bluffs beyond, with a fine grove of timber to the north and south… My brother said, Ambrose, I believe this is the place for our city—we will build the court house right here on this high ground." My great-grandfather Ambrose later wrote more emotionally about how he felt upon that first sighting of their new home: "It was a beautiful inverted mirage that appeared in the clouds after sunset, outlining to us the groves of timber along the Des Moines River west and north of our camp clear to the Minnesota line. The mirage is common in all prairie and desert countries both in summer and winter when atmospheric conditions are favorable, but I have never since seen a double mirage, and never before or since did I see so beautiful a picture in the heavens."

Because Algona land was still unsurveyed, they could 'take up government claims.' So, the Calls wasted no time… my great-grandfather Ambrose made this important entry about staking the first claim in Kossuth County the very next day: "We made our camp at noon… and while dinner was preparing and the team eating I made my way through the jungles to the river at the Indian ford, just above the bridge, where I found plenty of moccasin tracks. On my return to camp with my hatchet I blazed a walnut tree and wrote: Ambrose A. Call claims all that part of section 11, Tp. 95, Rg. 29, lying south of the river. Dated July 10, 1854." The Call boys were then the only white settlers north of Fort Dodge and west of the

Cedar River in the state of Iowa. [Staking a claim back in those days was just as it sounds—literally hammering down a stake on a portion of land that had not yet been declared as owned by anyone else. Since the territory had yet to be fully surveyed, settlers held their land by 'right of possession.' One book on the history of Iowa and of Kossuth County details, "When Iowa had been a state for four years, the code of 1850 had declared that any person occupying any part of the public lands not yet in the market and having his claim plainly marked out should have constructive possession of the same to the amount of 320 acres… sometimes it was difficult to measure the land exactly when it followed the winding course of the river, but if there was any uncertainty, the settler usually claimed enough to cover all contingencies… In order to avoid trouble, the few settlers decided to follow the example of older groups on the frontier and organized a 'Claim Club.' This was the first formal meeting ever held in Kossuth County and undertook to protect each member in the peaceable possession of his claim."]

After staking their claims, Asa and Ambrose returned to Fort Dodge and then to Boonesboro to collect the necessities for a pioneer existence. From there, Asa continued heading south and east, back to Iowa City to reunite with his new wife [where they were temporarily living as boarders in the local hotel] and to begin preparations for their return to Algona together in the late fall. Ambrose realized he would need help in completing some of the huge tasks ahead of him over the next few weeks, so he invited another man, William T. Smith, to join him in first finding the best route back to Algona. Call and Smith flattened a good trail along the way by hitching a log under the rear axle of the wagon to drag down the grass, allowing others to eventually follow their trail north. My great-grandfather and Mr. Smith then began building a 14' x 16' log cabin on Ambrose's chosen site. He later told my grandmother and her siblings that the cabin was "built exactly as Great-grandfather built in Vermont and similar to the one in which Abraham Lincoln learned to read his Bible." The logs were "as large as two men could raise, with a door made of puncheons hewn from basswood logs, a one-sash window 10 x 12 inches, a chimney made of sticks with mortar made of yellow clay, a fireplace of boulders, and a hearth of dirt." It was the first cabin built by white men in Kossuth County and was tucked high in the rugged hills which were surrounded by old growth forest, forty miles from the nearest cabin.

The hand-drawn sketch here is dated December 17, 1856, and comes from the many written journals of my great-grandfather, Ambrose. This must have been what his original cabin looked like, and it

appears he had added an outbuilding by the time he drew the peaceful setting two years after he started to reside there. I'm guessing the stumps in the drawing are from trees he felled to build the structures or to fill his fireplace. It's hard to imagine these few original settlers braving the harsh northern Iowa winters, and without much interpersonal contact once they had laid up sufficient wood to burn and game to eat throughout the severe months when only tallow candles furnished light as needed. It had to have been lonely living in such a vast, silent wilderness; and yet my great-grandfather Ambrose thrived.

[The settlement was originally named 'Call's Grove,' after which 'Callville' was presented as a potential replacement name. Asa wrote, "It was quite a study to get a name that was suitable. We came to the conclusion that we would not tack a city to our name. We thought if it ever came to be a city, people would find it out and it would only be ridiculous to make it a part of the name. It was finally left for my wife to name the place and she decided to call it 'Algona.' This was not a pure Indian name…" When Asa's wife, Sarah, and her husband joined back up with Ambrose at their new settlement several months after the brothers founded it, she may have suggested the name to signify nearby waters belonging to the Algonquin tribe. But there also seem to be other accounts of how 'Algona' got its name. It is likely some sort of combination of 'Algonquin' and 'Algoma' (a name often found in regions of the eastern U.S. and Canada). The name's history does signify water, which would make sense for this new community, surrounded on three sides by the winding of the Des Moines River.]

That site is now part of the 138 acres known as the Ambrose A. Call State Park—the land was gifted to the state and was dedicated as a park in July of 1929 at the three-day 75th Diamond Jubilee Anniversary celebration of the founding of Algona. Development for such a park had taken place on that original tract of great-grandfather Ambrose's land, and it opened with new "splendid roads, beautiful picnic spots, deep well water supply, and a large and comfortable shelter house." Most importantly, in honor of Ambrose and his love of the wild, the park's commitment was to keep the native timber and shrubbery and wildflowers in their natural state.

My grandparents likely attended that big Call Park event in 1929. Mom and Dad and I may have been there too, but I really have no recollection of it. [In attendance and speaking at that gala affair were Governor John Hammill, as well as Senator George Patterson and Congressman L. J. Dickinson. Others addressing the group included the Secretary of State, members of the Board of Conservation, and representatives of the Call family. (Ambrose's eldest daughter, Florence Call Cowles, was slated to speak but became ill during the trip to Algona from Des Moines and had to return home—her son Gardner Cowles, Jr. spoke in her stead.)] I do remember, however, all the picnics we have had in the Ambrose A. Call State Park over the years since then—more than I can even count. We always stopped there on our travels to and from Lake Okoboji during the summers. The cabin that currently sits in the heavily wooded park is not the original one that my great-grandfather built and lived in, but is a close replica and near the spot where his sat.

Back in July of 2004, I participated in the 150th Sesquicentennial Anniversary celebration of the founding of the town of Algona. In attendance for that weekend were several surviving great-grandchildren of the founders, including my sister and myself and a few of our relatives from around the country. The local Des Moines cousins also in attendance included David Kruidenier, Ted and Tom Hutchison, and L. Call Dickinson, Jr. [Gerald Jewett, Jr. and Constance Jewett Cory are the grandchildren of Bertha Call Shore, David Kruidenier was the grandson of Florence Call Cowles, Ted and Tom Hutchison are/were the grandsons of Edith Call Hutchison, and L. Call Dickinson was the grandson of Myrtle Call Dickinson.] Each of us rode as Grand Marshalls in one of five open convertibles, while our own children and grandchildren (more than 100 descendants of Ambrose and Asa) rode on or walked behind a trolley bus that carried members of the Call family along the eighteen-block parade route. It was quite an event, with Algona residents cheering and yelling thanks to us as we paraded through their town.

On the final day of that 2004 celebration event, the Mayor and others topped off the weekend by providing us with a lovely Sunday luncheon in the park that carries my great-grandfather's name. Sis Connie and I were still in attendance for this final day picture, as

were my wife (Nelle), niece (Kyle), daughter (Jennifer), and son-in-law (John). A local newspaper article prior to the big weekend celebration had quoted their Mayor (Mr. Lynn Kueck, who still serves in that capacity) as saying, "These descendants are like celebrities—I want them to go home and say, 'Wow! We were treated like royalty.'" Sure enough, I went home and said, "Wow! We *were* treated like royalty!"

Just recently, in July of 2017, son-in-law John drove me (and Jen) up to Algona for several hours of enjoyment at their Founders' Day Weekend. After first cruising by the County Historical Museum at the Fairgrounds in order to look at a fine outdoor display of vintage cars, tractors, motorcycles, and race cars, we then met up with members of the Kossuth County Genealogical Society for a nice personal chat. Our next stop was at the public library to view an art exhibit (generously sponsored by the Stinson Prairie Arts Council) of original paintings by Mary Call, daughter of Asa and Sarah Call. Mary's art looked so much like the paintings done by my own mother—it was hard to believe it wasn't Mom's work, but that of her cousin [once removed] instead. We were then able to squeeze in a quick tour of Algona's WWII P.O.W. Museum and to take in its historical audio-visual presentation. Stopping there was especially meaningful since I had personally seen that P.O.W. camp in Algona during the war days—the tall barbed wire fences that contained 10,000 or so prisoners left quite an impression on me back then.

We ended our afternoon trek to that recent Founders' Day Weekend by taking an educational walking tour led by Mayor Kueck, observing the river country with its tall grasses and woods and ponds on some of the original ground once owned by my great-grandfather. (Fortunately, I didn't have to actually walk it, as the Mayor had kindly arranged for me to ride in a Polaris Ranger driven by the man who owns the 240 acres of land on which part of the tour took place). It was such an interesting historical excursion—all of the participants enjoyed learning even more about the rich history of the Algona territory founded by the Call brothers. After the other tour-takers left, the generous landowner then took the three of us on our own private tour of his 'Wildhaven Campus' (I was still a passenger on his Ranger, and John and Jen drove a John Deere Gator), venturing even

further into the rough native lands once owned by Ambrose. It was exciting to find ourselves deep within the thick overgrowth, encountering several more acres of silent territory inhabited by all sorts of wildlife. A pair of bald eagles faced each other from their perches on two tall posts overlooking what was likely a favorite pond full of fish; their *huge* nest was in a nearby tree. All agreed this four-wheel adventure was our trip highlight.

But we had also stumbled upon another fun affair earlier in the afternoon when stopping in at the 'Train Wreck Winery,' owned by area native NFL Super Bowl Champion, Dallas Clark. Their actual vineyard is located on the Clark family's Century Farm south of nearby Livermore (next to the site of a 1920 famous train wreck, thus the name); the retail operation we wanted to see occupies the refurbished old 'Chicago and North Western' railroad station that had been built in 1917 and sits next to a north-south track on the east end of Algona.

Unbeknownst to us, we happened in on the very day the local managers and personnel were celebrating the Depot's 100th Anniversary, and I was just in time to be served the first piece from the sheet cake prepared for that birthday party. Along with the complimentary cheese and crackers and a glass of "Kate," their best-selling sweet red table wine (this one named in honor of railroad heroine Kate Shelley), we learned there really *is* such a thing as a free lunch!

Before leaving the winery, each of the patrons in the establishment had entered our names into a drawing for a free T-shirt; believe it or not, my name was drawn as the winner of that! And after the managers learned of this book being compiled about my life, they offered for us to come to Algona to hold a signing party in their Depot, which we may indeed do. (The Kossuth County Genealogical Society had already offered to sponsor such a book signing event up there, and now it looks like we'll have a place to hold it.) All in all, the railroad station celebration was a terrific unplanned stop for us.

This is probably an appropriate time to tell of another type of transportation network—The *Underground* Railroad—which was taking place behind the scenes back when my great-

grandfather and his brother were founding and settling Algona. [Wikipedia most succinctly describes the Underground Railroad as "a network of secret routes and safe houses" used by tens of thousands of African American slaves "to escape into free states and Canada with the aid of abolitionists and allies who were sympathetic to their cause."] I'd heard stories about this slave freedom network running east and west through Central Iowa, but had really not heard about any connections through the undeveloped land further north. Of course, there had to be some who escaped in that direction too, in order to reach Canada, and I was proud to learn that my great-grandfather and the new Algona settlers were able to assist a black slave in his bold escape to freedom in the summer of 1855, exactly a year after the Call brothers had founded the town.

[A short recap of the Underground Railroad story, as recorded (portion in quotes) by Ambrose himself: "…A young black man, haggard and hungry, tattered and torn, hatless and barefooted… showed up at (my brother) Asa's cabin door… Our guest was a colored boy about 25 years old who had escaped from slavery in southern Missouri. Fleeing for his liberty, he had followed the north star by night until he came to the end of the road. He then followed the trail across the prairie until he found our settlement. After a week's rest our wayfarer was supplied with shoes, hat and clothing sufficient to keep the sun from blistering his naked body, and a supply of bread and meat sufficient to last until he reached the Mankato settlement. He was then started on his way rejoicing. One of our number accompanied him for half a day to the end of Union Slough and charged him to keep on the east bank and on the east bank of the stream flowing north from it until he reached the settlement. We heard later that he reached it safely… A week or two later, there was loud talking outside the first meeting of the Claim Club. On going to the door we discovered the contention was caused by two long-haired men loaded down with revolvers, on lank, jaded horses. The question had been asked by one of our party what they expected to do with so much artillery." As it turned out, the two guys were looking for the slave that Ambrose and Asa and friends had housed and helped. Thinking the slave was still in the vicinity, the two men planned to capture him, but "when they saw some ten or fifteen men emerging from the cabin, each with a long rifle in his hands… (they) turned their horses' heads to the south and rode away." The two frightened slave hunters later reported back to others that "in Call's settlement, the settlers had gathered with their guns to protect him." The two guys also said they "considered themselves fortunate to escape with their lives."]

In 1856, a new family arrived at the Algona settlement—the Hendersons, whose ancestors had already come to prominence as well-known settlers of the state of Kentucky. Most important to this story of *my* life is the "red-cheeked twelve-year-old," Nancy Eliza Henderson, who eventually became my great-grandmother. The Hendersons had heard about the new opportunities for growth in northern Iowa and had come west in a covered 'prairie schooner' wagon—Nancy's father, stepmother, and all her siblings, step-siblings, and half-siblings. Through subsequent years, Nan was known for fondly recounting some great stories about incidents that happened during that harrowing and yet exciting trip west. [Nan's mother (Nancy Hill Henderson) had died in Indiana shortly after Nan's birth, and the little girl had resided for several years in Charleston, Illinois with her maternal grandparents (her Grandfather Hill was a Presbyterian minister). Nan's father, (Hezekiah "Ki" Ashmore Henderson) married a second time, to a widow with several of her own children, and together they added even more children to their brood.]

Though Nan's restless pioneering father, Hezekiah ("Ki") Henderson, and family didn't stay in Algona more than a couple of years, Ki was highly involved in its early physical growth. Hezekiah Henderson was an energetic construction maverick, and right away had built the largest log cabin in the settlement—not only did it house his family, but it also had an upper sleeping loft that held 12-15 men who had come to work the land. Ki holds the distinction of being the area's first 'landlord,' and his wife baked the very first bread out of flour made from wheat raised locally.

By that time, Asa Call and his wife Sarah had built their own log cabin (after spending their first winter in Ambrose's) and had begun harvesting sod corn—the first crops raised in the county. Sarah wrote, "Our little cabin was made of poles, a stick chimney and a little clap board door about four feet high... but we soon fixed it comfortable… The room was so small that when strangers came in the country and stopped with us, as they usually did, we were obliged to set our table and chairs out of doors and make beds on the floor…" She also journaled, "We opened a sugar camp which is now in Ambrose Call's grove… We invited all our neighbors, three families, to help us sugar off. Someone got up on a stump and made a speech. I remember only one remark: he predicted a bright future for Algona."

And a bright future it was. The little community really blossomed during the summer of 1856, after having been platted that spring. "Improvements of importance were made, and quite a few settlers, among them a number of intelligent and ambitious men, found homes in Algona and its vicinity," my great-grandfather wrote. The time was "particularly prosperous and hopeful… the crops were fine, the seed-corn and potatoes yielded abundantly… everybody seemed pleased they had come to Algona."

Then the winter of 1856-57 hit with a vengeance. There was so much snow, with never-ending blizzards, and the cold was terribly intense. The Henderson 'log hotel' sent men many miles away on foot, with hand sleds, to get flour. Several residents were caught in storms, causing amputation of hands and feet due to them being so badly frozen. Family animals died of exposure. Snow drifted over the cabins so that only a chimney pouring smoke was visible. Neighbors didn't see one another for weeks at a time. Provisions were scarce, and "there was alarm about it," according to accounts.

Finally, spring arrived, but with it slowly came word that the terrible Spirit Lake Massacre had occurred. Asa journaled, "After the Spirit Lake Massacre it was necessary to take some measure of safety. We sent out scouts in every direction… who explored the whole country

and reported that there were Indians on our rivers and that we were at the frontier, all the settlers beyond us having fled." Stockades were built at Algona and nearby Irvington to help keep the Indians out of the settlement. One account describes, "They had a sawmill at Irvington and plank(s) were sawed at the mill. They were stuck up endways in the ground. The fort was built with bastions on the corners which commanded a view of anyone approaching from two directions…" Asa himself reported of the stockade that he "considered it entirely safe against any Indians that had no artillery."

And my great-grandfather Ambrose journaled some additional thoughts to help describe the spring that had everyone on edge: "The snow was mostly gone, the streams and sloughs all bankfull of water with no bridges or boats, which made travel almost impossible and added to the fear and panic of the settlers… the air was filled with rumors, every stranger was viewed with suspicion… many settlers fled, and some never returned…" By summer, things had settled down somewhat in Algona, and a number of speculating young men arrived from the New England states, grabbing up land that had been abandoned by those who had fled, hoping to sell it for a profit the next year.

But the next year brought its own troubles! My great-grandfather wrote, "We had a repetition of Noah's flood. The Des Moines River was a sea from its source up in Minnesota to its mouth; every ravine was a mill stream and every slough a pond. No newcomers came, but the reverse. Added to our local troubles a general financial depression existed throughout the country causing universal stagnation in all business enterprises. Emigration ceased and speculation in lands and town lots was a thing of the past. The speculators and land owners refused to pay their taxes and it was impossible for the newly organized counties to collect sufficient money on the tax list with which to transact the ordinary course of business."

Most of the hearty settlers (the Call brothers in particular) stuck it out and made the best of it, however. They were strong and ambitious, always looking for and finding ways to improve their plight and to strengthen the settlement. One of the first obvious needs had been for a grindstone to sharpen tools. My great-grandfather wrote that he had searched the area until he located a stone quarry several miles away and used his ax to "attack" a ledge of rocks, hauling back to Algona a two-foot square slab to be used by settlers far and wide. Word spread that Ambrose Call, "the man who had a grindstone," lived in the area; my great-grandfather wrote, "I can say without fear of contradiction that while this grindstone lasted I was the most popular man in northern Iowa."

His brother, Asa, had soon realized the need for a sawmill so that crude log cabins could be replaced by wooden structures, and sent the younger Ambrose east to Dubuque and then even further east across the Mississippi River into Illinois to obtain and then haul machinery (by a team of oxen) back to Algona. The new combined 'grist and sawmill' was obviously a huge overnight success in the community. (I sure do love these stories about the resourcefulness of my ancestors and other Iowa pioneers, and was especially interested in learning about this first area milling operation. And believe it or not, that first 'lumber company' was later lost to a fire, like my own a century later!).

Nan's father, Ki Henderson, had erected (with newly milled lumber) a building in town—it was a 'storefront' structure, which over the decades served as the post office, a storeroom, and even the Courthouse. Ki and his family left Algona after a couple of years, and Nan returned to her grandparents' home in Illinois for just one more year of school. After that, at age 15, she and her elder brother [Milton Henderson] boarded another prairie schooner and headed back to Algona to live permanently.

***{Editor's note:** This female pioneer ancestor of ours seems to have walked off the pages of a Laura Ingalls Wilder book. One later newspaper article states that she was "possessed of high spirits and a charming personality, and was the belle of the frontier settlement." I just can't help but wonder if an adolescent Nan (at ages 12-14) had met and fallen in love with the handsome and adventurous young twenty-something Ambrose Call while living in Algona with her Henderson family during those two years, before heading back to her grandparents' home for only one year of school. Unless we uncover other reasons for her return so soon, I like to think of it as the lure of love that boldly brought Nan back to Algona as a 15-year-old girl, accompanied by one brother as her only family member.}*

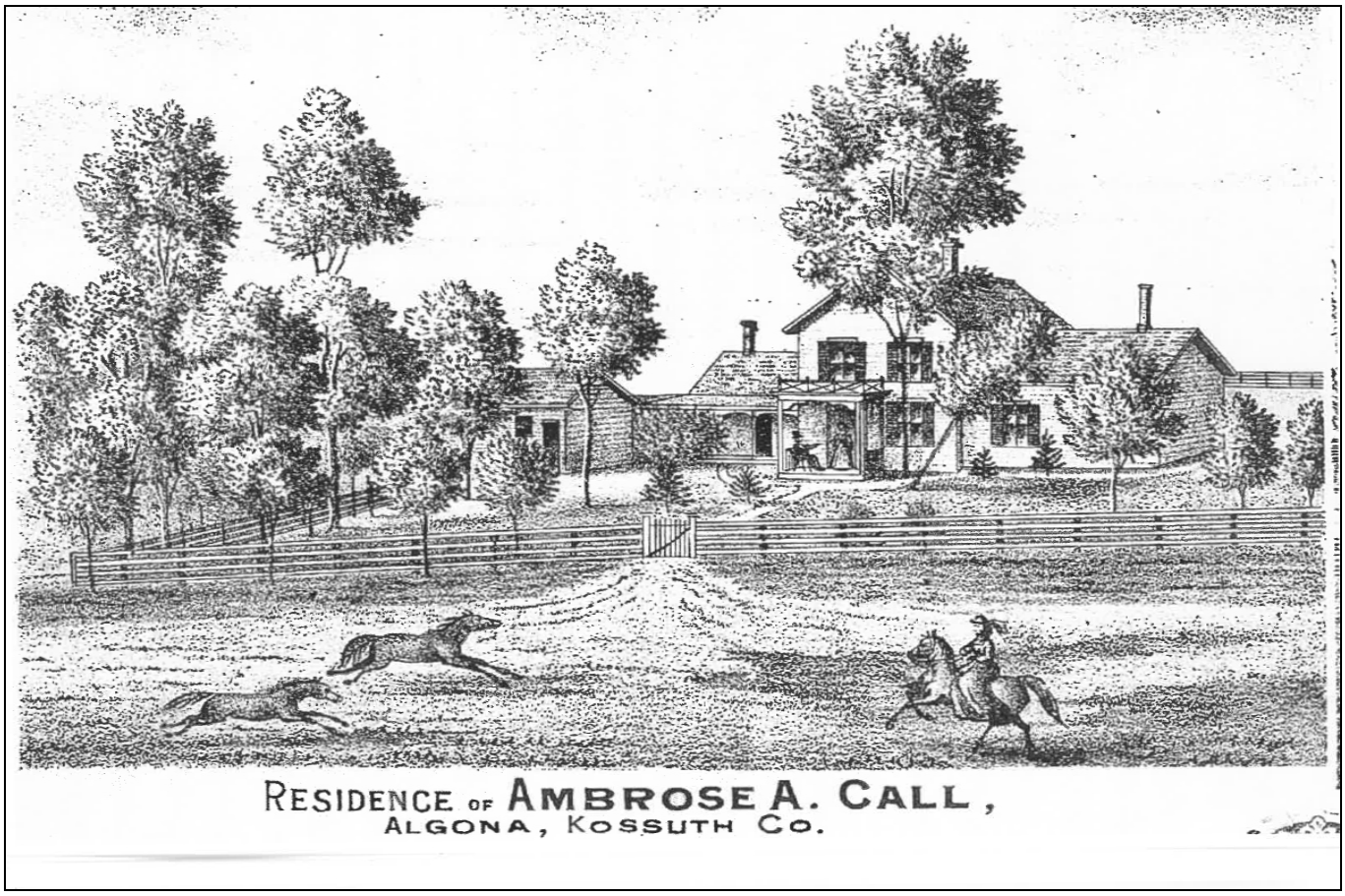
It was so fortunate for Algona that Ambrose and Asa Call both had keen business minds. Because of the depressed tax situation at the time, "the 8th General Assembly enacted a stringent revenue law authorizing county treasurers to advertise and sell lands upon which the taxes had become delinquent and allowing a liberal price for publishing the same, which was to be done by the paper in the county having the largest circulation." Kossuth County didn't have a newspaper, so the resourceful Call brothers got creative once again… "My brother Asa and I thought we saw in this law an opportunity to get a newspaper for Algona, an ambition we had long cherished, and we at once set to work with this end in view." He describes searching various places around Iowa until "we finally heard of a printing outfit at Fort Des Moines which he offered to sell to us for $600 in county

warrants at their face. We accepted his offer and had the press and fixtures hauled up by ox teams. The machine was a used Washington press which… seemed quite old and the type was badly worn. We managed to get the press up in time to get the tax list out," and "after the tax list was finished the paper went to sleep until the next spring!" By agreement of the brothers to then split their joint assets, Ambrose took possession of the printing operation and commenced publication of the *Algona Pioneer Press*, putting himself in the editorial chair to get it up and running over the next three years.

It was only a year or so after young Nancy Eliza Henderson had returned to Algona that she and Ambrose Call were married. The bride was 16 and the groom 27 when they drove in a wagon down to Oskaloosa, Iowa for their wedding [on October 30, 1860] at the town in which Nan's father and family had since settled. Upon returning to Algona, a five-day wagon trip using horse or oxen, the young couple continued helping to establish their new town while also establishing their new home—baby daughter Florence was born ten months later.

Pioneering women were obviously made of hearty stock, and it could safely be assumed that Ambrose's wife, Nancy, and Asa's wife, Sarah, surely must have been two of the heartiest. There are many stories of the things these two women did to advance the early settlement of Algona, while living without the 'creature comforts' now taken for granted. One prime example is a story about great-grandmother Nan, a young woman still in her twenties when she had a toothache that took her to the local veterinarian (since there were no dentists in the area) … "The horse doctor proceeded to pull out all of her teeth in one sitting, after which false teeth were eventually ordered from the Montgomery Ward or the Sears Roebuck catalog." Decades later, Nan replied to one of her granddaughters [Bertha Cowles Quarton] who had just paid her a compliment about her lovely looks, "I wish you could have seen me with my own teeth!"

Apparently, Ambrose had moved out of his bachelor log cabin before his marriage, residing for awhile with his sister and her husband. [John Ellison Blackford was married to Asa and Ambrose's sister, Mary Minerva Call. Mary was six years older than Ambrose, and was the only Call sibling who came to Algona—she and Mr. Blackford had moved there from northern Indiana the year after it was founded by her brothers, and became very prominent settlers of the community. Their daughter, Ella Algona Blackford (Clarke), was the first white child born in Algona.] This was likely during the time that Ambrose was building a new home for himself and his soon-to-be bride on a lot with several acres of land he had secured a couple miles north and closer to other settlers. Ambrose and Nan put down their roots in the new dwelling, adding onto their home as more children came along.



The family experienced a big house fire during the winter of 1868, but rebuilt and lived comfortably there for another seventeen years. At the time of this fire, Nan would have been very pregnant with their fourth child, my grandmother. The eldest two children (six-year-old Florence and four-year-old Edith) had been rolled up in quilts and whisked off to the home of the nearest neighbors. They survived, as did two-year-old Etta, "thanks to the quick work of their hired hand and all the neighbors" who came to their rescue. In spite of the icy cold weather and living through something as terrible as a winter house fire in those early days, the children of Algona seemed to really love the Iowa winters. As an adult, Ambrose and Nancy's daughter Florence reflected, "Instead of dreading the cold, we loved the fierce storms that built drifts so one could walk for weeks over gates and fences on the hard crust, and nothing was so musical to our ears as the sharp crunch of the snow under our feet when the thermometer was 10 or 20 degrees below zero… On the long winter evenings we cracked nuts around the fire and listened to the stories our fathers and mothers told of earlier days of danger and hardship, making them seem as heroes in our eyes."

Growth in the community of Algona continued, and its people seemed almost enchanted with the place. Rivers were full of fish; large and small game were found everywhere; cattle and rabbits and prairie chickens were plentiful. All the children were kept as busy as the adults in the wild country of northern Iowa, bringing in wood and picking up kindling and digging potatoes and hunting eggs and carrying milk pails and churning butter and cleaning dishes—it wasn't an easy existence by today's standards, but the pioneer communities that thrived were made up of such people.

[Eldest daughter, Florence, also wrote extensively as an adult about those early days in the once-primitive Algona… "There was hardship, to be sure. There was crudity of living conditions, deprivation, much loneliness, even peril. But also there was opportunity—and it was this which had brought them. Besides ability to break the sod, to combat the physical hazards and obstacles, to build and organize communities—to do all the things that energy and courage could do—there had to be vision. And many of the pioneers possessed it—the capacity to think, the talent for dreaming realizable dreams, the passion for education, the appreciation of culture, the persistent reaching toward the spiritual." And Ambrose himself wrote of his early co-settlers, "A little spice of danger seemed to be an incentive to them." By 1871, the *Algona Times* proclaimed, "This town has acquired an importance within the past two years that few towns can boast of. It is located in the center of one of the finest agricultural districts of Iowa and possesses natural facilities and advantages which in a few years will make it one of the best towns in the state." Already platted as a town back in 1856, Algona was finally incorporated in 1872 and a brand-new Courthouse was built—the population was then approximately 400 people.]

It wasn't long before Algona was truly a thriving community in northwest Iowa. Thanks to Asa's foresight regarding future transportation needs of their town, and to Ambrose's railway scouting expeditions that had begun many years before, a railroad line was finally built across the state of Iowa from east to west (and through the town of Algona) almost *fifteen years* after their initial efforts! [The full story of the Call brothers' ongoing work to bring a railroad through undeveloped northern Iowa is such an inspiring one, and could be a chapter in and of itself. It would include the details of these two enterprising young men first building their strong wagon, then procuring a telescope, a surveyor's compass, a tent, etc. There was the winter Asa spent in Washington, D.C. working to get a bill passed to grant Iowa sections of railroad, followed by his work with our state legislature to make Algona a stopping point on the railroad. Then there was the task of plotting out the eventual route of the network, etc., etc.]

My great-aunt, Florence, described her rail recollections this way, "…When the railroad was actually being built, the town was full of rough, whiskey-drinking men who were grading the road… At last there was the fascinating smell of the coal smoke from a puffing engine… we arose long before daybreak amidst much excitement and rode in a lumbering vehicle miles from our homes to 'the depot.' There we bought a ticket from Mr. Lantry and went on an excursion away off to Clear Lake [45 miles] … It would be difficult at this time for a young person to realize the intensity of delight we children of the early pioneers experienced when we took our first journey by rail."

By the fall of 1885, and likely in celebration of their own 25th wedding anniversary, my great-grandparents began excavation for a basement and foundation on which they would build a spacious Victorian mansion on their acreage. The home itself was finally erected on what is now the southwest corner of Hall and College Streets, and featured the 'Call Coat-of-Arms' on each of the facing sides of the large cupola that highlighted the third-floor ballroom with its balconies. When they undertook the building of their mansion, Ambrose was serving as President of the First National Bank (which he had founded as the 'Bank of Algona' five years before). A reporter at the time wrote of the soon-to-be home, "It is expected that Mr. Call will erect a residence which will be second in beauty and desirableness to no residence so far built among us. It will overlook the river and bluffs south of town, which form a magnificent view." And it really was quite fancy, with seven fireplaces (five of them finished in various hand-carved woods—mahogany, cherry, and oak—and two finished in marble believed to have been imported from Italy). The stairway to the second floor was of solid walnut with a hand-carved corner post. The floors were soundproof, built with three layers of flooring and a layer of filling. The 2" x 6" walls were back-plastered for insulating purposes (and I understand each wall had a diagonal 2 x 6 board placed every two feet).

The Call home remained intact throughout the lives of my great-grandparents and beyond [Nancy lived on the family homestead site 62 years, until her passing in 1922]. Their huge house eventually became the Kossuth Hospital from 1929 until 1949, after which it was used as a series of nursing homes until 1966. In the summer of 1973, plans were underway to demolish my great-grandparents' eighty-eight-year-old home. I flew some of my Des Moines cousins to Algona to join up with other family members in order to investigate the possibility of restoring the old structure, and also to

see if there were any items we wanted to salvage from the house. There wasn't anything much worth rescuing—even the beautiful handrails and ornate fireplace mantels had already been stolen or in some way removed from the place. We returned home empty-handed in that regard and had to finally make the difficult decision not to undertake such a long-distance and terribly expensive project (which would have required much more than just restoration, due to all the rotting wood, etc.). I know the town hoped that we great-grandchildren or some other group would rise to the challenge, but that was not to be… the stately and once-beautiful mansion was demolished in 1974.

Although that portion of Ambrose Call's land covered what is now several city blocks, a short brick condominium building (with a current address of 408 South Hall Street) sits on the old home site. There really is no longer a "magnificent view overlooking the river and bluffs south of town," as development has sprouted up all around the original land. It was meaningful for me to take another drive past the homesite this summer, and to again be reminded of that "magnificent view" it must have once had. I recall reading that the large (15' diameter x 22' high) cupola from the third story of the home was to be saved and placed in the Ambrose A. Call State Park, but I'm not sure that structure ever made it to the park—it certainly has not been there more in recent years.

Eight children were born to Ambrose and Nancy Call, and the kids were "inculcated with her high principles and sterling qualities," according to my great-grandmother's September 1922 obituary. Their eight children included the first four daughters (my grandmother, Bertha Angelina Call, was number four), followed by a rather lengthy gap before the last three children were born. A long-awaited first son, Ambrose Glen, had come along prior to those final three children, but he died unexpectedly at age 2½.

[The first children were Florence Maud (called "Flora"), Mary Edith (called "Edie" or "Eda"), Etta L., and Bertha Angelina. A newspaper obituary from 2/12/1873 gives no reason for the death of fifth child, son Ambrose Glen (called "Glen"), but apparently it was due to a sudden illness, describing "a robust, healthy child until within two days of his death," and the "bitter affliction" of his parents due to his passing. A few years after the death of little Glen, Ambrose and Nancy's final three children were born: Chester C., followed by twins Roscoe and Myrtle.]

Ambrose and Nan went to great lengths to educate their children at home from an early age, long prior to their attending school. And by the time they got a little older, Ambrose was willing to make financial sacrifices to ensure that they all continue to be well-educated, during and beyond the high school level. [The idea of upper education had been unusual for women until this time, but colleges began to be founded in order to educate women on how to become teachers—a noble profession that nicely complemented a woman's "true calling to be a good wife and mother."]

At that time, it was common and proper for women to be interested in painting and drawing, as were the Call daughters, but not to be studying art at a higher level. So, when eldest daughter, Florence, left home to study at the Chicago Art Institute, it must have been quite a big step for an Iowa pioneer family. [Women were often not even allowed in such institutions until the late 1800's; one hundred years later, 75% of all American art students were women.]

Florence first studied at the Art Institute and later graduated in 1884 from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois with a Bachelor's degree in Literature. Second daughter, Edith, who excelled greatly in the French language, was also educated at Northwestern and had become a teacher in Irvington, Iowa in 1883. Third daughter, Etta, attended St. Mary's Academy, a private Catholic school in Notre Dame, Indiana, from which she graduated with honors in 1885. And fourth daughter, Bertha (my grandmother) also graduated from Northwestern University in Evanston, where she was a member of the Alpha Phi sorority. By the time the three younger children eventually came of age, upper education in the Call family was quite routine!

Ambrose and Nan's daughters were well-educated young women, but they also eventually married well-educated (and well-to-do) men. And the Call sons put their own college degrees to good use too, as they climbed the corporate ladder to top rungs of a national life insurance company. [Florence married Gardner Cowles, the Algona school Superintendent and banker who eventually owned the *Des Moines Register and Tribune*; Edith married Archibald Hutchison, a graduate of Cornell College who became a real estate attorney and Justice of the Peace; Etta married William K. Ferguson, who became President (after Ambrose) of First National Bank in Algona; Bertha married the town doctor, F. E. V. Shore, moving to Des Moines to open a specialized practice after studying overseas; Myrtle married attorney Lester J. Dickinson, who later became a United States Representative and then a United States Senator; Chester graduated from Northwestern University like three of his sisters, and moved to Kirkwood, Missouri as the Chief Executive Officer of Kansas City Life Insurance Company; and Roscoe graduated from the law department of the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, after which he first became a dealer in investments and securities in Algona, then moved to Des Moines to run the offices of Kansas City Life Insurance Company there.]

On our automobile trips to and from Lake Okoboji over the decades, not only did we picnic in the Ambrose A. Call State Park, but also typically stopped to see our various relatives still living in Algona. I remember spending the night in my great-aunt Edie Hutchison's huge home there and playing in their big sandbox as a kid. The Call sisters all remained close, though third daughter Etta had passed away several years before I was born. [Etta Call Ferguson tragically died in Rochester, Minnesota on December 26, 1907, following surgery at the Mayo Clinic Hospital. She would have been 42-years-old the following month. Their only child, son Arthur, was 17-years-old when his mother passed. Etta's husband, William K. Ferguson, eventually remarried.]

I sure do love this Call family picture, taken in front of their five-year-old mansion in the late summer/early fall of 1890. The picture includes my great-grandparents and all of their children, sons-in-law, and grandchildren—already an extended family of fifteen.

Standing, from left to right: **Dr. F. E. V. Shore** ***(my grandfather)***, Chester Call, **Bertha Call Shore** ***(my grandmother)***, young Myrtle Call (Dickinson), Edith Call (Hutchison), Florence Call (Cowles), Gardner Cowles, and William K. Ferguson. Seated from left to right: Roscoe Call (twin brother of Myrtle), **Nancy Henderson Call** ***(my great-grandmother)***, little Russell Cowles, **Ambrose A. Call** ***(my great-grandfather)***, Helen Cowles (LeCron), Etta Call (Ferguson), and baby Arthur Ferguson.

Though I never met my great-grandparents or stayed in their family mansion in Algona, my mother talked of how her grandma and grandpa's neat and clean house always smelled so good—she remembered breakfasts of pork chops with fried apples and fried potatoes, a fire in the living room, and a maid named Lollie. And I know that my great-grandfather

paid close attention to dressing smartly… It is recorded that one time he came home after being with the local tailor for a fitting, and reported to Nancy that the tailor told him one of his shoulders was higher than the other. My spunky great-grandmother responded with something like, "Well, did you hit him?" That particular story is not only cute, but is especially interesting to me because my own tailor told me the same thing recently after I took him my ill-fitting vests and sport coats needing to be adjusted (only to learn it was for the same darn reason!)

Ambrose Call stayed personally involved in so many things that helped grow his community, including erecting the Call Opera House in town by 1893. 'The Call' was intended to be a hall of culture and entertainment, and became the site of all the crowd events in Algona for the next forty-four years, including stage plays and high school class plays, and movies (the first 'talking pictures'). Though Ambrose certainly wanted to bring culture and entertainment to his new town, the overriding incentive for such opera houses springing up around the country was economic—a worthy lure for new residents. [Promoters of opera houses had to contend with the more rigid settlers, however, who felt that new cultural centers might lower moral standards in the community.] Completed at a cost of $25,000, the theater had 600 seats, with one balcony and two boxes. People came from all towns within a 35-mile radius to see its first play, "Gloriana" by the Chas. Frohman Company, on February 16, 1893—gross receipts totaled $1,000 for opening night. One newspaper article stated that The Call was quite a progressive step for the town… "The good people of Algona are to be congratulated upon the possession of such a perfect playhouse." Sadly, on April 18, 1937, The Call burned to the ground, with flames fed in part by the barrels of oil stored in the stage area to supply the popular lobby popcorn machine. Nevertheless, the fine facility had a wonderful run for nearly four-and-a-half decades.

As already detailed earlier, Ambrose had worked with his brother to establish the first newspaper in the county, editing it before selling it three years later due to his many other involvements. He was elected the first County Supervisor when that office came into existence and was appointed Assistant Assessor of Internal Revenue for several years. Not only did he have the banking interests reported earlier, but he also spent four decades as a government mail contractor with one of the most extensive routes in the west, continuing in that capacity until the 'Star Route' business in the mail service was abandoned. I understand that his work actually took him to every state [45 at the time] in the Union. Ambrose explained his decision to finally lease and then sell the paper, journaling, "In the spring of 1863 I found myself with more work on my hands than I could attend to:

the government had awarded me several long mail routes beyond the frontier, which I had to stock up; I had accepted the appointment of internal revenue assessor with eight counties in my division…" My great-grandfather remained such a busy man throughout his entire life. He was a prominent Mason and, though declining repeated requests to run for various political offices, represented his town and his county as a staunch Republican at several meetings and conventions. I understand that he always claimed to be a farmer and was often dealing in real estate, owning property in other states too (like a large rice plantation in Louisiana!) as well as a considerable portion of the best farming land in the county. Ambrose was known as a generous man, "never turning a deaf ear to a worthy subject soliciting charity." Oh, and in his spare time, my great-grandfather additionally founded the nearby town of Bancroft, 15 miles north of Algona.

[Ambrose's older brother, Asa, was elected a Judge in 1855, which certainly helped him accomplish so very much for their community and the county as well. Asa lived in Algona for 33 years and died at the early age of 62 while visiting in San Francisco, California, on a trip that was hoped to help strengthen his ailing body. He had been born on September 2, 1825, and left this earthly journey on January 6, 1888. His capable wife, Sarah Heckert Call, had passed away during childbirth at only 40 years of age, leaving Asa a widower for his final twelve years of life. They were parents of seven children. John R. Call's edition of his great-great-grandfather Asa's diaries, as bracketed earlier, pays proper tribute to the monumental contributions made in such a short lifetime by this utterly amazing man—details on that publication can be found in the Appendix to this book.]

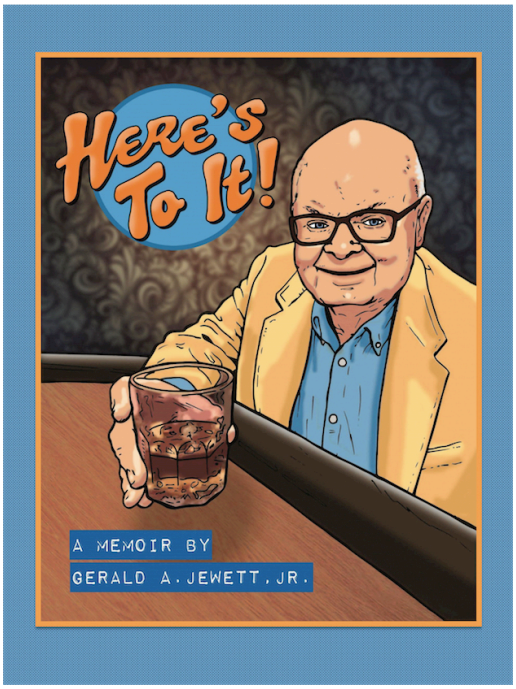
Ambrose Adolphus Call lived out his life in the first town he founded, and still owned over 2,000 acres of Iowa land at the time of his death in 1908—he had come a long way since proudly digging the first crop of potatoes next to his little log cabin. People said of him that his word was his bond—and that's the best compliment a guy can receive, in my opinion. My great-grandfather was only 75 when he died of "old age," according to one newspaper account. I guess 75 might be considered old when compared with his brother's death at age 62. In reality, Ambrose had heart disease and had been ill for about a year before passing. [Ambrose had been born on June 9, 1833, in Huron County, Ohio, and died on October 22, 1908, in Algona, Iowa.]

As was customary for the time, his funeral service was held in their mansion. After Ambrose's death, their youngest son Roscoe (and his wife) moved into the Call mansion to care for his mother, Nancy. A few years after that, Nan fell and broke her hip, necessitating the use of a crutch to get around. Two years later her crutch slipped and she again broke the same hip, causing her to live the rest of her life more or less as an invalid; the ongoing presence and assistance of Roscoe was of great consolation to her, of course. My great-grandmother, Nancy Henderson Call, died in her own bed after suffering a "stroke of paralysis" in September of 1922, three months before her 79th birthday.

At the time of her passing, Nan was still survived by most of her children, as well as by nineteen grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren. [Nancy had been born in Clark County, Illinois on December 14, 1843, and died on September 11, 1922, in Algona. Cerebral hemorrhage was listed as the official cause of death.] My great-grandparents are both buried in the Ambrose Call family plot, located in the Riverview Cemetery at the north end of Algona.

As an interesting side story, the first settler to have been buried at Riverview Cemetery was the maternal uncle of Asa's wife, Sarah [Michael Fisher, who had come to Algona with the rest of Sarah's Heckert family in May of 1856]. By 1891, Asa and Sarah's son, George Casper Call, built a family vault into the cemetery hill—inside were twelve crypts, created for the purpose of transferring and housing the remains of his parents and other members of Asa and Sarah's immediate family (including Asa and Ambrose's mother, Mary "Polly" Metcalf Call Finch). In 1972, vandals broke into the Asa Call family hillside vault, using crowbars and drills to bust through the massive metal door on the outside, then prying loose and damaging the very heavy marble faces of the crypts.

I wish I'd personally met my great-grandparents [Nancy Eliza Henderson Call, left, and Ambrose Adolphus Call, right], as well as my great-great-grandparents too—people with such vision and stamina. But it really does feel as if I've gotten to know them because of their terrific journals and photos and tales passed down through the years. (Now I'm thankful to keep their stories alive in this book about me!)



Hop on board for the delightful life journey of this 92-year-young author. From trikes and bikes to cars and trains (and yes, there were airplanes!), the road is also full of breathtaking overlooks into the ancestral lives of those who have helped drive him. A most unusual 'bio-mentary.'

Here's To It!

by Gerald A. Jewett, Jr.