

Documents

A Letter from Hudson, 1848

Edited by WILLIS H. MILLER

MARTHA FULLER ANDREWS (1812-50) wrote the following letter from the village of Willow River, now Hudson, Wisconsin, in 1848. Her husband, Ammah Andrews (1801-88) was born in New York State, but came west to Commerce, Oakland County, Michigan, in 1829, and then in the spring of 1847, migrated to St. Croix County, in the territory of Wisconsin, where he was one of the early members of the St. Croix County Board of Supervisors. Ammah Andrews and Martha Fuller were married in Michigan on April 3, 1843.

Ammah Andrews and his twin brother, Amasa Andrews (1801-80), who came to Hudson in 1853, were both contractors and housebuilders by occupation, and many of the fine old Hudson residences were built by the Andrews brothers in the early days.

The original manuscript of the letter here presented, once the property of Eddy A. Harding, a grandson of Ammah and Martha Andrews, seems to have disappeared. In the search for the original document a careful check of the manuscripts in the Andrews and John Comstock papers in the WISCONSIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY Library has proved fruitless. The letter used here, however, is a typewritten copy made from the original a number of years ago by the late Ella Hoyt King (1850-1934).

Correct spelling and punctuation, along with the paragraphing, have been supplied by the editor. The letter is addressed to Samuel

WILLIS H. MILLER is the assistant editor of the *Hudson Star-Observer*, who occasionally contributes articles to this Magazine. Readers will recall his entertaining sketch of "The Octagon House at Hudson," which was printed in the September, 1944, Magazine.

Fuller (an uncle of Martha Fuller Andrews), Commerce, Michigan, who later moved to Hudson.

Martha Andrews died in Hudson on August 22, 1850, and is buried in the old Willow River Cemetery, overlooking the St. Croix River. Her simple tombstone is the oldest standing marker in that burying ground. The land for the cemetery was platted in 1849, and was given for that purpose by Ammah Andrews, her husband.

Village Willow River
St. Croix (County)
Dec. 12, 1848.

Dear Friends and Han.[nah],

You requested me to write the particulars of this Village, and so I thought if I did not commence when you left here, there would not be news to fill so large a sheet. . . .

Laura A.,¹ you know, just waked up and she missed you and worried until I went to bed with her at seven. The next morning it was very pleasant with fair wind for Ammah [Andrews] to come home, but about noon it changed up stream. I waited until six in the evening then ate supper without him. At seven it blew so hard that I gave up his coming, and sent for Kit [Thompson?] to stay with me. Sis wanted to go to bed, so we all went to bed—the rest to sleep and I to worry. A[mmah] up stream, and you down.

Such a hurricane we haven't had this fall! I expected the shanty must blow down and Ammah drown, but the Lord preserved us all and at 11 he came home. He left the boat most up to Stillwater [Minnesota], on this shore and walked all the way over, to home through river and all. The next morning he started again although the wind still blew up, and after three days hard toil, he got his supplies. We had fine weather until Sat., then it commenced raining and rained all the next day. The next week it snowed and was very cold for three days. We thought winter had come, but it cleared up and we have had fine weather since.

¹ Refers to Laura Adelaide Andrews (1847-1906), later Mrs. Frank Dwight Harding, who was one of the first white children born in the St. Croix Valley.

The "Prairie Bird" stayed up here until the next Monday, and Friday morning before daylight we heard the puff of the "Sentinel." She stopped on the other shore and left her barge, and Emory² and the Esq. had business that day to find out the news and so it happened that Mr. [James] Perrington³ was on her and the next two days there was plenty of travel uptown and across the lake. Sat. Doct. Aldridge⁴ moved to Town. He has gone into the [William] Streets house to winter. Mr. Page⁵ has given up going down this fall and he has banked his house and got a stove and as usual there are men there plenty.

Monday Perrington and Page went to the Falls;⁶ Philbrick and Webster commenced work on Tuesday; Fisher and Northrup⁷ forbid their working. They all worked until Thursday when they found Fisher and Northrup up there to their camp and when the other party had gone to their dinner, they put their things outdoors and took possession, which is law here, so business is stopped for this week.

Sat. evening Mr. A. and myself visited at Doct. Aldridges, had a pleasant visit. Laura in particular was much delighted with the supper for she is a great eater and grows so fast you would hardly know her and she grows more rude everyday.

Dec. 28—You will see it has been some time since I commenced to write and many things have transpired since, which I shall have to omit for want of room and time to write.

We received yours the day before Christmas and were very glad you arrived safe and found all so well. We are all well at present and have been in our new house 4 weeks today without windows or inside doors but it is very comfortable.

Mr. Pretman stayed with us the first night and left on appointment for next Saturday and we had plenty of company at Christmas. Mr. Traisey's were down and Wm. Nobles⁸ and Mrs. Williamson.

² Emory Andrews, born in 1836, was the son of Ammah Andrews and his first wife Laura.

³ Perrington in 1847-48 began the erection of a dam at the mouth of the Willow River.

⁴ Dr. Philip Aldrich (1792-1857) came to the St. Croix Valley in 1840 and was a permanent settler in Hudson in 1847.

⁵ John B. Page (1800-1865) a native of Maine, came to this region in 1844 as a lumberman.

⁶ Doubtless refers to the falls of the Willow River.

⁷ Anson Northrup, an early Valley Lumberman.

⁸ William H. Nobles (1816-76), son of the Rev. Lemuel Nobles, later became a member of the Fifth Minnesota Territorial Legislature. Nobles County in Minnesota is named for him.

There was a ball at Stillwater. Milton [Nobles] and wife were there and Jerome waited on Kath. I have not called there yet. Two weeks ago was the first time I was to Mrs. [John B.] Page's since you left and she has not been here yet, so you can guess how much time we run about. She is well, but her babe⁹ has been sick this some time. Laura A. weighs as much as three pounds more than she does. You would be surprised to look at her big square face, and her father tells her mother to write to Aunt Hannah, to come and manage her; she is getting ungovernable but she laughs the louder when he tells her so. She sits alone and handles spoon, knife, and cup very handy.

Mr. Perrington was here last Sabbath and thinks he shall [be] through up there in six weeks, and come to work on the mill—Mr. Philbrick has been up there ever since the trouble to work. Mr. Perry [Perrington?] says there are 200 families from Maine coming in the spring. He is going to build a large boarding house for himself in the spring and designs this place as a home for his family. . . . There is one family on the other side of the river now. Now when this all happens I will let you know.

Doct. Aldridge is going to have both of his houses here and the other building with counters and shelves in it. He has bought out McKnight. The taver[n] at Stillwater was burnt last week and that widow that came up in the fall lost all of her things and what is still worse, her little girl was burnt to death.

Mrs. [William B.] Dibble and Mrs. Lockwood at the mouth¹⁰ are both dead, and two children at the falls were poisoned. Eli was here last week. He had sent \$10 to his folks in a letter. He and another man had taken a job of chopping for \$2.80. He thought it would take till April. I wrote him today. We hope Samuel [Fuller] will come and as many more as can. We have one boarder and if you should see how the house looks you would think I had not better take any more. My sheet is full so I must close. We all send love to mother and all the rest of the folks and to all friends at Commerce. Sis sends her[s] to little Ammah and wants to go and see him.

We have had no rain since you left and but very little snow and this week a thaw, and it is more pleasant than it was in the summer. The weather has been no colder than it was in Mich. So far I think

⁹ The baby in that instance was Abigail Page, later Mrs. George Bailey, the first white child born in Hudson (on April 15, 1847). She died in California in December, 1945.

¹⁰ The mouth of the St. Croix River, where the present city of Prescott is located.

if you had not been obliged to go home, you would have enjoyed it here much this winter. I have had the blues about once a week.

Emory got a sled and L. A. a high chair for Christmas. I write with L. A. in my lap, abegging to go to bed. We have a new justice elected for this precinct—Doct. Aldridge. Mr. [Rev. W. T.] Boutwell and his family were at this place last week. Mr. Payne says he is sure L. A. will be a dancer as Sis has a jumping pole. We have bought a cow and a hog of Mr. Busby. She gives 5 pts. a day, and I make butter. 5 chickens are alive. Mrs. Kennedy has a son.

AMMAH AND MARTHA ANDREWS.