

It was exciting to go with them to try it out, and we were fortunate that the piano had a good tone. We purchased it for ten dollars, a fair price during the depression.

Donella, a petite young musician, came to our home each week, encouraging us to become good pianists. We girls were impressed with her stylish clothes and high heels, so we did our best to please her. We made such good progress that she gave us special pieces to learn for the spring recital. We dreaded playing in public for fear we'd make mistakes.

Our sister Alice didn't want to perform, but Mom and Dad said she should. She bandaged a finger and said she'd hurt it; then pleaded to be excused. The ploy didn't work, but she surprised herself by playing well, even with that bandaged finger.

After the recital we eagerly enjoyed the waiting fruit punch and array of cookies while we relaxed in fits of unexplained giggles.

We took piano lessons for several years and enjoyed playing familiar melodies and popular tunes. A favorite piece of mine was the "Grand March," a powerful selection from Verdi's "Aida." It was meant to be played very loud; therefore I could play as loud as I wanted! Though we played dramatic music like "Aida," we were quite content to be doing so offstage.

Today I love listening to my grandchildren enjoy making music. I wish they could watch and hear their Great-Grandmother coax a tune from her old pump organ.

COLORADO BOUND!

Every summer we looked forward to a visit from Colorado by Uncle Sam and Aunt Jessie. They had no children of their own, so they "adopted" us. We had a lot of fun during their visits, playing games and listening to the stories they told us. They liked to tease us and tickle our ribs; we'd object, but secretly we loved it.

Uncle Sam loved to drive cars. He and Aunt Jessie took us on many rides to visit places and people they knew from their youth. We liked that because we usually played croquet with our cousins, Alan and Claudine Robb, and had cookies and iced tea before going home. Sometimes Uncle Sam took us on fast rides over the hilly back roads of Southern Iowa. Of course there were no seat belts to spoil the fun as we bounced up and down begging for more. Cresting a hill and feeling momentarily airborne was thrilling. Our squeals from the backseat were shrill and loud.

When he was younger, Uncle Sam delivered the mail along these roads in

his Model T. If the roads were muddy he used his horse and buggy. He didn't think the country roads had improved much since then.

Aunt Jessie played Tiddly Winks with us. I remember being frustrated because I couldn't snap the "wink" into the cup very often. I believe sometimes she just let us win. We learned to play Chinese Checkers by sitting with Aunt Jessie and Uncle Sam. We "helped" them make the moves. Chinese checkers was Grandpa's favorite game, and it became one we loved to play with him.



**Grandpa with Aunt Jessie
& Grandma in Knickers**

Too soon, it seemed that the time came for Uncle Sam and Aunt Jessie to return to Colorado. Grandpa and Grandma were going with them, camping on their way to Estes Park. Both Aunt Jessie and Grandma had purchased knickers for the trip. We thought they looked so smart in those knickers and tailored jackets, so different from the dresses they usually wore. Secretly we giggled at their outfits. In those days women never wore pants, even when working in the fields.

Grandma, Grandpa, Aunt Jessie, and Uncle Sam packed suitcases into the trunk of Grandpa's new Buick. The trunk also held food, camp cots, and a tent to drape over the car to sleep under.

None of us wanted them to leave, especially two-and-a-half-year old Alice. She clung to her "Aunt Sassie," crying and begging to go home with them. It took some coaxing and lots of hugs before she tearfully quieted down and waved good-bye.



**Checking Out
the Car Tent**



"Oh Aunt Sassie, please take me with you!"

We watched for the mail, and eagerly read each picture postcard they sent. Our bulletin board became filled with these unfamiliar scenes.

We were happy when Grandma and Grandpa finally returned with souvenirs for us. We loved the Indian doll with her papoose that they brought us. We tied our own dolls on our backs and pretended to be Indians as we squatted in a circle and ate popcorn.

Grandma also brought us a book by Elizabeth Gordon, *Wild Flower Children: Little Playmates of the Fairies*. We loved listening to Grandma read these poems to us.

WILD FLOWER CHILDREN



WILD COLUMBINE

[*Aquilegia Canadensis*]

“I keep my sweets,” said Columbine,
“For Humming Bird, a friend of mine;
He comes at sun-down every night,
And is so grateful and polite.”

Many times we pestered our grandparents for stories of their trip. We were wide-eyed over the pictures of Estes Park and The Garden of the Gods. The mountainous scenery was so very different from Iowa farmland. It didn't look as if one could grow corn there. We couldn't imagine how farmers could plow a field with all those rocks.

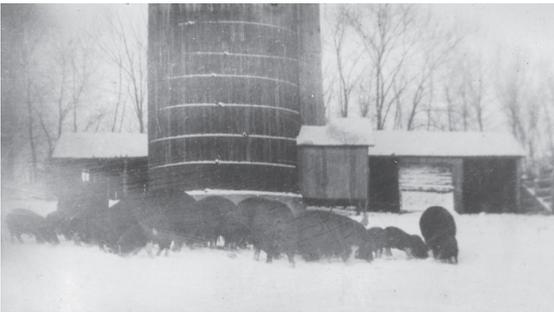
Hopes of traveling to Colorado and visiting Uncle Sam and Aunt Jessie filled our thoughts. Camping sounded like fun to us until we heard about the bugs that bothered them, and the pebbles underfoot. That dampened the charm of camping anywhere but our own back yard.

For the next several years, we were content to throw blankets over the clothesline for a tent and curl up with a favorite pillow, dreaming of faraway places.

PIGS ON OUR FARM

Before I was born, the major livestock on our farm was swine and short-horn cattle. As kids, we were fascinated by pictures of prize-winning Poland China swine. These images filled a series of leather-like volumes that were stored away in the upstairs bedroom. We'd stretch out on the bed while searching through the yearly volumes to find the biggest, the most handsome, the ugliest, and the meanest looking pigs. We had great times laughing at them.

Slopping the pigs was not a popular chore, but Margaret and I were often chosen for the honor. We would walk toward the pigpen, carefully clutching the handles of a tub, hoping the pig slop wouldn't spill. We needed to pour the mixture of vegetable scraps, broken ears of corn, and skimmed milk into the hogs' trough before they got underfoot. When they saw us coming, they hurried to the trough squealing, their noses snuffling for scraps of food as they shoved each other aside to be first. Their grunts and snorts as they slurped up their slop never failed to elicit giggles from us.



Mealtime