

Introduction to the Balloch Diaries

HOW DID THEY END UP IN TEXAS? In the early 1950's Elaine & Kesari Dandh, Massachusetts residents at the time, were enjoying a Sunday drive around New Hampshire. Spotting a SALE sign on a country road, they stopped and purchased some glass items. Elaine spotted a barrel with a sign on it that said ANYTHING 25 CENTS. From it she took 16 small books. 8 of these are diaries spanning 1869-1888. The other 8 are selectman's notes, account books, and one telephone directory from George Richardson dated 1904.

Elaine & Ed (the writer) met as residents of Guadalajara, Mexico in the early 1990's, and became friends. A dozen years later they encountered each other in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas, and eventually became neighbors. Elaine, now 90 years of age, had read the books close to 60 years ago, shortly after she had purchased them. Now she asked Ed if he was interested in having them. He accepted.

And so, for the past 2 months, Ed, possessed of pitiful typing skills, began transcribing the diaries. They are written in pencil, so the time-fading of ink was not a problem. William Balloch wrote in a very readable hand, so most of his entries are quite readable. The project has required about 120 hours of effort, but it has been a journey worth taking.

Ed observed that, as you follow a person's life, day after day, after day, you easily slip into the routine of their lives, and, as years flow into years, one can easily predict what is coming next, such as the intense work of haying in July, The frantic pace of sugaring in March, the muscle straining chopping, sawing, and splitting almost daily through the Winter months.

1869 - When the diaries commence, William Balloch is 49 years of age. His Wife's name is Nancy, and she is 45 years old. They have four living children. Ellen is 20. Emily is 15. Willie is 13, and Mary Luisa (always called Minnie) is 8.

1888 - this is the last of the diaries. William is now 68, Mrs. B. is 64. The farm is prosperous. Ellen is 39, has married Dr. Leslie, and after practicing in Windsor, Dr. Leslie has moved the family to Clyde, Kansas. They have two children, Willie & Alice. Emily, 34, has married William Bugbee, they also have two children, and live in Bridgewater Vermont. Son Willie is 32 and has taken over much of the heavy duty work on the farm. Min is 27, single, lives at home.

So then, these are the characters in the 19 year odyssey recorded in 8 of William Balloch's diaries. I hope you may enjoy them as much as I did.

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Weslaco, Texas. July 2014
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