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AUNT LOTTIE (LOTTIE MITCHELL SHEPHERD)

Written by Thelma Warrington Shaw 1993

Some times those who die young(comparatively young in our culture of 1993) are forgotten. But such is not the case in my life's association with Lottie Mitchell Shepherd, or

Aunt Lottie, as she was known to me for she was the wife of Glen Shepherd who was a brother of my mother, Mabel Shepherd Warrington. (Wife of Simon Warrington).

Aunt Lottie was an intrepid lady who was born in the frontier town of Fort Benton, Montana (was in 1893?). (I somehow remember she was born the same year as my mother but I am not sure at this point.) She was the daughter of a Montana Pioneer. Perhaps much of her personality and adaptability was molded by the fact that she matured in the company of three half brothers and three full brothers with her only sister dying at the age of six. Moving to the Marias River in 1895 (this according to Harley Mitchell story in the Liberty County HERITAGE BOOK) Lottie somehow was given the opportunity to take piano lessons for she learned to play and following her wedding day, according to some of the Shepherds, Uncle Glen brought her personal possessions and the piano to their homestead home. I do not know if the piano was taken to the first homestead house (shack) which was located on the east side of Cottonwood Creek on the Plank road. However, as long as I am able to remember the piano was in the tiny living room of the "red house" in the coulee west of the Creek on the main road to the Circle Crossing (Now Highway 223).

One mile west of the "red house" in the coulee was the homestead of my parents. The mile between the two was a well worn road for in 1916 George and Addie Shepherd with their children Mary, Mildred, Gladys, Wayne, and Loyd came to Chester. The George Shepherds were first located north of Tiber and Grandmother Addie Shepherd was postmistress there at Tiber for a while. Tiber once consisted of several houses and buildings and was known as the 'White City'. Before long the George Shepherd family moved to another place located about one mile south and west of my parents' homestead.

Poor Aunt Lottie! Here came, to surround her, a mob of Methodists molded in the society and conventions of Iowa society that had all the imprints of a Victorian culture. Addie Barbara Bell's were upper middle class for John Bell was descended from Iowa pioneers and was fairly affluent if the stories of his two story brick house and his place were indicative. Addie Bell grew up where the "colored folks" walked out and worked for fifty cents a day. Addie Barbara Bell was not "allowed to dance" she once told me but they could do "party plays" (which she described as rather sedate square dances). She also told me that she could play the organ. I believe that the piano that was left at the Mills once belonged to the George Shepherds. But I am not sure of this. Perhaps a homestead "shack" seemed not the place for a piano, perhaps there was a problem with space in the "immigrant car" or perhaps there was a matter of money owed. Lucille, Florence, or Jeanette Mills might recall something about this. My mother remembers ascending the stairs in the brick house and sleeping there. She also remembered the smell of the apples

that were stored in a cold room upstairs so they would keep over the winter. She also told of walking home from school in Iowa with Glen and Veda and their stopping to jump on a watermelon in the field. At a selling price of five or ten cents each for a big melon, they could eat only the heart and then hurry on home. The Bells were Presbyterians as were the Mitchells and Presbyterians in those areas considered themselves a notch higher in the Christian order than Methodists. The Presbyterian Church in Chester was there before the Methodist Church. Where were services held? I do not know. I only know where the manse was located.

So, Aunt Lottie was thrust into the midst of rather stately Methodaism. She loved the outdoors much better than any roofed house and housekeeping. She could pick chokecherries and buffalo berries faster than any Indian and she could run like a deer. I remember someone telling (was it Mother?) about her winning the women's foot race at the July 4 celebration held at the Helf Farm in 1916. Of course, I donot remember this but Mother also related how I (six months old) was handed about and cared for much of the day by Mrs. Gibson, mother of Neva Gibson Heimbigner (wife of Ben Heimbigner later). On July 4, 1916, Glen and Lottie Shepherd would have been celebrating their third anniversary plus one day.

Mother also told the story about how she and Aunt Lottie were going to town on day (single horse and buggy transportation). They discovered when they had the three small children (Ralph, Carrie, and I) ready in addition to themselves the driving horse was some ways down in the pasture. Weighing the distance and the fact that one of them would have to walk and get the horse and bring it back, they decided to put Ralph in the seat of the buggy and the two babies in the bottom and load in the harness and each pick up a shaft and pull the buggy to the horse. They must have laughed at what anyone seeing them would have thought (in such a flat country and in such isolation sometimes it was purprising what they did see in the distance!)

A highlight of homestead days for the kids were the "family dinners." (how the women cooked, baked and slaved). Among the Shepherds sometimes there were three ice cream freezers-- one vanilla, one chocolate, and one pineapple sherbert which was a spocialty of Aunt Lottie. Then, the fried chicken and potato salad!

Then, of course, well went to certain neighbors. We often went to the Fred Schneiders who lived south of Tiber. The Glen Shepherds and us often went to Leonard Planks (althought not usually on the same Sunday-- those homestead houses were too small.) At the Planks, after dinner we could sit around the piano there in that samll living room and hear a homesteader, also a graduate of the Boston Conservatory of music, play the piano. What another world! Leonard's mother and stepfather lived there in the earliest days, also. Leonard's wife, Stella, had a distinctive sort of laugh-giggle which I remember very well. The Glen Shepherds house

was a true house of Western hospitality-- much more than many of the Shepherds/ Uncle Glen would invite anyone to "come right on in." This, I am sure, tested Aunt Lottie's patience and strength on many occasions. Especially glad for a stop were some of those people from the Marias Rivewr and beyond who rode behind two and four horse teams with perhaps some wheat or rye or oats to sell for some grocery money, and coal. No one locked doors and often people would stop by and come in, whether you were home or not. I remember Mrs. Fred Schneider telling about coming home and finding that someone had lunched in her kitchen. She was a Swiss German and her house was immaculate. Afterwards, in telling about the incident she said, "I didn't care if they helped themselves to some thing to eat but they scattered brown sugar all over my kitchen floor."

Aunt Lottie loved to garden and usually she had some flowers-- usually sweet peas for I remember the smell so well. I wrote Leo that I think she must have stolen water from the cistern to water them for some of those years were so dry.

One July 4, the Glen Shepherds and Dad and I went to Chester to a Fourth of July. This may have been the year Wilda was born in October as we left from the homestead and neither Mother or Helen went along. We followed the Glen Shepherds into town and Carrie and I were together much of the day. Dad gave me some money to buy Carrie and I some lemonade (where would he get two nickels). Perhaps the Methodists Ladies had a stand and I gave my money and the two glasses were set down. But Carrie was gone! So I drank mine and the lady said, "you had better drink this other glass, too." And I remember very well saying, "I can't because it is Carrie's." (Did I drink it? I can't remember.) On the way home that night we had to pick up a barrel we had left at the Glen Shepherds and go on to Frank Eggers for water to take on home. Darkness came on and when we reached the homestead "shack" I had such a leg ache. I remember Dad rubbed and rubbed my leg. I also remember that on this day Carrie either started out in or wore a coat or dress with a crocheted collar which I associated with Grandmother Mitchell.

Unlike my mother, who often languished at home, Aunt Lottie was always ready to go anywhere anytime. Uncle Glen and Aunt Lottie took Helen and I to our first circus with their family in Great Falls. We stayed all night at the red house and were awakened to start for Great Falls as Uncle Glen said that seeing the animals unloaded was half the circus. The car was their first car, that Buick touring car, and we all piled in and started for Great Falls over what would not have been much of a road. As we neared Great Falls Aunt Lottie turned to us in the back seat and said, "Look, there is the smokestack in Great Falls." I could not see anything that looked like a hay stack or a straw stack with smoke coming out of it. Later we would go by the "smokestack" which was a huge "stove pipe" pouring smoke out the top. Leonard and Stella Plank were also at

the circus and while we just had food for sort of a picnic they also had a jar of milk and some corn flakes(?) in the car. I think we had lunch in what is now Gibson Park. Of the circus, I remember the lady in white ostrich feathers who rode a huge elephant around the circus tent the most of all the sights. Then we drove home and I only remember that someone in the back seat rolled into the bottom and did not waken. (I remember in as Harold but I am not sure.)

Aunt Lottie Mitchell Shepherd was a lady of spirit but also a true homestead wife--a slave to hard work both inside and out, a victim of hot, m hot days with hours of cooking and baking, days of deep snow and cold, and worry over sick children without medical attention. But her ever ready disposition to do and help and her special ability to play the piano brightened so many days of the Shepherd clan. Not only did she play so many years for the Methodist Sunday School but she always was willing (how tired she must have been!) to play the piano after she had had the "family dinner" at their house. One of her favorite was "Let the Rest of the World Go By." But I am happy to say that many of the memories associated with her have never gone by me.

Obituary

By Thelma Warrington Shaw 1993