

Transcribed by Nancy Roberts Gaynor from a handwritten letter from Adam Oberlin to his youngest child Edith Oberlin. (NOTE: <<>> indicates words from the original that I could not decipher.)

A note in Edith Oberlin's handwriting at top of the page indicating the letter was "Probably written 1918-19 or thereabouts".

The Oberlin's

John Oberlin my father was a good man good to his wife, good to his children a good and active citizen and a good christian at least once a week and sometimes oftener he would gather the children together in the evening and also the strangers such as hired help and others who happened to be with us and hold a song and prayer service. In his younger days he was choir leader in the Brickerville Church Lancaster Co. Pa. We sang with out books. We had no song book at that time that I remember. Father would quote the lines and then lead the singing and the rest would join in. The singing however was spirited and good I still remember several of the hymns although I don't remember of ever seeing them in print. Of course the singing was all in German that much despised and abused language. I shall quote two of the most popular songs The first one being one especial favorite

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Father used to tell a story of how three brothers, the original Oberlins, came to this country I fail to remember just exactly from what part of Europe they came from. But at any rate they were German and according to present day conceptions they were a little lower down the scale than cannibals and just a little higher than orangatang and monkeys. I think though that they came either from Alsace or Switzerland I remember that one time we had a coal miner by the name of Oberlin who had just recently come across the water and who told about many Oberlins in the section of Switzerland near the French border the section from where he had come. As I mentioned before my father was pretty well versed in the family history and I am sure that he could have given a complete narrative of the family from the time that the first ancestors landed in America But at that time I was not interested in matters of chronology and hence paid little attention to his stories much to my regret later on after his life had been sealed forever by the cold and icy hand of death. At one time when the interest in the Albright Oberlin reunion was at its highest M.W. Oberlin and myself as a committee had gathered quite a large amount of statistics about the family

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He was born in Lancaster Co. Pa in Sep 1813 his fathers name also being John Oberlin and his mother Susie Millinger(?) Oberlin

I heard much of his boy hood life and also much about our ancestors but at that time I was but little concerned about such things and so fail to remember very much and now when I fain would ask him about such things he is gone away and I may never see him again

Lancaster Co or rather the part of it where father was born was a completely "Pennsylvania dutch" settlement at that time. So much so that father told of how his people would lock the doors and hide when they saw an irishman cattle buyer coming who could talk no german and they no english. My fathers boy hood days were uneventful as far as I know until the age of about 21 years However when I first visited Pa. in 1876 some people told me that he was pretty much like other boys

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But they all had a good word for him and he was well thought of and looked up to as a leader in many things pertaining to citizenship and morality. At the age of 21 - he cut his knee with a corn chopper while cutting corn. The cut was not serious and he paid little attention to it. But later it became sore and came near to costing his life for the neglect. After a long and serious illness he recovered but lost the use of his knee the joint having become stiff permanently.

This no doubt was the turning point in his life and changed his whole career. His father told him that he would be no good as a farmer on account of his stiff knee and so he concluded to educate him for a school teacher. He sent him to a school at Columbia a place near Harrisburg Pa if I recollect rightly. Father stayed there for about six weeks when his money gave out and when he wrote home for more money his father sent him \$6.50 which seemed too small.

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a sum for an extended course at college and as many of the students had the ague and father no doubt was homesick himself he concluded to invest the magnificent sum in an English German dictionary and then go home which he did. The dictionary remained in the family and was used by myself when attending the Avery Academy. I always meant to preserve it but the last I saw of it it was pretty dilapidated and I am not sure whether it still remains with the old books in the attic or not. However with this thorough education father began to teach school and the school house in which he taught is still standing at least I saw it the last time we were in Pa 3 or 4 years ago. I meant to have a picture of it and wish Fred's plan of a trip to Pa might have materialized when we could have taken a number of pictures of historic places of interest to the Oberlins. My trips to Pa had aroused my interest and I had become acquainted with many interesting spots -

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But ah me how many blasted hopes there are in a life time. It surely is sad. I felt very gloomy this morning it takes courage to live with so many disappointments and blasted hopes and cares and sorrows. But the end is nearing each day and then an eternity of peace and quiet.

Later grandfather concluded to make a mill out of father and so he bought the old stone mill at the head of the "Injun town creek" in Clay township Lancaster Co Pa and put father into the mill. The mill is very interesting to see and upon my first visit I made a sketch of it much to the curiosity of the neighbors. As this purchase indicates grandfather was a man of some little means as I remember the purchase price was \$10,000 he also owned a farm near the mill where on he raised his family much of this farm was reclaimed land by digging out the stone on it and building stone fences the last time I saw it it still had several acres of virgin soil only the soil was out of sight on account of the thick cover of stone on it.

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About this time father married Nancy Wenger and started up housekeeping at the mill. For thirteen

years they lived at the mill. Mother often helped to work at the mill. Seven children were born here the three oldest being boys the other four girls John, Samuel, Isaac, Sarah, Eliza, Susan, Kate

As early as 1836 father and his brother Obed walk out west as Ohio then was known. At this time two of fathers uncles were living in Stark Co O Mike Oberlin near the Warstler Church and Jacob Oberlin near McDonaldsville. The two boys went to work for their uncle Jacob and helped to grub 18 acres of timber. The timber their was small but has since grown quite large. Every thing was quite primitive at that time as I remember of hearing father tell that they had left stump stand where the house had been built and used them for seats, and ate off an old chest for a table. A large chest in which they had brought their belongings

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The two boys got very sore hands from the grubbing so sore that they had to button each others pants when getting up in the morning This was due to their not understanding the work and in getting their hands wet and dirty. They would strike their maddox too deep or miss the roots and then take their hands to extricate them something an expert grubber would not do. The work was divided into strip of 18 feet and two men would take one strip and of course their would be rivalry to see who could finish his strip first and so these two fresh Pennsylvania boys tried their skill against veterans at the <<>>. They kept up their <<>> but at the expense of much suffering In the fall they went back to Pa. each rode a horse which they had purchased with their earnings, which they sold upon to Pa. at a profit. If remember right it took them 4 weeks to walk out

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In 1839 or three years later father visited Ohio again. This time however he traveled on the palatial canal boats plying the Juniata Canal to the Blue Mountains when an incline took the boats up one side and down the other of the mountain from where the boats descend by water through various streams until they reached Wellsville Ohio on the Ohio River from whence he traveled by stage coach through Lisbon Columbiana Co to Canton O. on this stage trip the roads were quite bad and several times the passengers were ordered out and asked to help to extricate the stage coach out of mud holes in which it had become mired Father however stuck to his seat together with an old lady But at Lisbon several of the passengers concluded to start on foot and walk for a while until the stage should catch up with them. But the stage never caught

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up and so they walked all the way to Canton. The stage driver met them there and was quite angry and said that they had walked simply to beat him out of his fares but they denied this and payed their fares even though they had walked all the way So father when he saw his family growing had visions of a home or farm in the far west where his children would have a chance to grow and become worthy citizens. He began to realize that the mill was no place to raise a family as there was not enough for boys to do to keep them out of mischief, one of the boys, John I believe had hung himself on the picket fence by accident and was nearly dead when discovered this with other incidents decided father to move west and so in the fall of 1852 they moved to Ohio father mother seven children The Fort Wayne R.R. was then completed as far as Massillon so they came by rail

to Canton. Where the family was divided amongst friends until

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a house could be found where in they could live. Mother and the girls stayed with her uncle a Mr. Wenger on the Georgetown road about 4 miles east of Canton while father and the boys stayed with his uncle Adam Oberlin on the Fulton Road one mile west of Canton. This reminds me that father had three uncles in Ohio upon his first trip in 1886(?) I don't know just how early the uncles of father came to Ohio but I think they were among the early pioneers at least they came before 1820 if my memory serves me right

Finally a house was found. A log house on the South East corner of the crossroad at the Warstler Church and here the happy united family gathered and started in on their Ohio career which father had planned with so much trouble and labor and which he thought should bring much success and happiness to him and his wife and family especially the boys. The boys were the chief object and cause for fathers removal to Ohio It was for their

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sakes and for their benefits that all this planning and moving about had been done. How little father realized that in a few years he would have no boys to worry about we make many plans here but they are insignificant and purely visionary some higher power rules and our plans and desires although they be of the purest and best motives go alee. And so fathers plans for his boys were all for naught. For soon the three boys were in their graves They were fine boys too I have this not from father or other members of the family but from the neighbors who all spoke words of praise for the boys. John although only 16 yr old was a teacher in Sunday school and well liked which was attested by gifts given him by his class Samuel died a few months after living in the house at the church The school house then stood on the opposite side of the Middle Branch Road from the house in which they were living and where the horse sheds now stand

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Mother said one day Sammy came <<>> home feeling sick which turned out to be scarlet fever and in a few days he was dead so hope number one had flown in 1859 the year in which I was born and when I was two week old Father and his remaining two boys went out to the woods to bring in a saw log. It was a church holiday which the family always observed but the boys wanted to bring in this one log and then cease work for the day. How very fateful. I can't help but think of Mark Twains book the title of which I don't remember but in which he relates a story about two boys who met such a wonderful companion who could provide things and then destroy them at his will with ease and when the boys were told of things that would happen to their friends they asked him to change their course so as to avoid the danger which the friend

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readily agreed to do and so instead of turning to the right at a certain corner this powerful friend had them turn to left and so they avoided the one danger but walked blindly into another much worse.

So John with a song on his lips went out into the woods that fateful June morning 1859 little thinking that his father would have to carry him home in his arms unconscious never again to see his mother or sister. But so it was a break in the chain while loading a sawed log. The log rolled back The two boys were behind the log father had the team. Isaac stepped aside but poor John was caught and knocked over and a stub of limb about 6 inches long just touched him on the temple and crushed his skull. How very fateful This happened in the N.W. corner of our home farm and father carried their boy in his arms and brought him home to this mother I can hardly see how he could do it

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So hope number two had flown forever They buried him on June 4-1859 it was quite cold on the evening of the funeral so cold that wet wash rags at the pump were frozen and the next morning June 5-1859 a severe frost had destroyed everything, wheat and corn totally destroyed a sad blow to poor father. But father still had Isaac left. Soon the civil war began Father was an ardent supporter of the war He was operating a mill at the time. This grist mill and also a saw mill was located on the farm on the opposite side of the road from the house. This mill heard many a heated argument during the war. Father being a great talker and the mill being a great place at that time for farmers to meet and exchange experiences. Father belong to a secret society at this time which pledged life and means for the prosecution of the war I remember of hearing him tell how one evening when the Secret

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order was in <<>> session a rap was heard at the outer door. The guard was asked who was there. He replied Isaac Oberlin and seeks admission Father jumped up and said "He is too young" But the order said "No" "he will do" and let him in. Later he enlisted in the 162 <<>> O.V.1 He was gone but a short while when he was brought home a corpse having died with the measles So hope number three a promising boy of nineteen years was sacrificed to the god of war. After all the ancient heathen were wiser than they seemed the laid their infants into the red hot arms of their God Mulock which was much more sensible than to raise them to manhood and then to set them up for cannon fodder or to send them to the trench the vestibule of Hell. But so poor father had lost his three promising boys for whose welfare he had labored and planned so much

This is my last sheet of paper so my story must break off. Excuse mistake I am writing without glasses