

A Sketch of the Life of  
**A. P. And Lillias Johnson**

by

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History records that in 1658 the extreme Southern part of Sweden was released from Denmark by the Treaty of Roskelde. It is recorded that at this time numerous families of noble birth and breeding settled in the valleys, building their castle-like homes, cultivating their fertile fields and raising their sleek cattle. Here for hundreds of years the lives of these people were ordered and stable, filled with a sort of peace and assurance. As the years went on, generation after generation, the families intermarried and the population spread out. Many families later drifted to the seacoast towns. The towns grew into cities.

It was in the country where the great forests marched down to the placid lakes, abloom with water lilies, where stately beeches and feathery willows bordered the turbulent streams, that Andrew Peter Johnson was born. It was the year 1845, the date May 15. Perhaps the first sound he heard was the ecstatic twittering of birds which abounded in this land of lavender-tinted heather, rose-colored rhododendron, and sweet-scented yellow Honeysuckle. It may have been this beautiful environment where he first found himself that instilled in him the love so great for all nature that he always associated all things beautiful whether it be a perfect flower, or a wave dashing on the rocks, breaking into a shower of diamond-like drops, with the Infinite. It was the happy songs of the birds he loved, intermingled with the faint tinkle of his Chinese wind harp that were the last sounds he heard when he died at his home in Sacramento, California one day after his eighty-ninth birthday on May 16, 1934.

Eighty-nine years and one day is a long, long time, and it's a long, long way measured by miles, from Southern Sweden to Sacramento, with many events in between. A. P. was the second child in a family of five, the other members being two brothers and two sisters. I may say here, as a matter of convenience, that Andrew Peter in his later years was known almost entirely by his initials, A. P., so from now on I shall use these initials.

When he was still very young the family moved to Kungsbacka, which lies twenty English miles south of Gothenburg in the province of Hall and Kungsbacka is a seacoast city. Like all families of Sweden at that time who valued education of their youth, private teachers were brought into the home, so it was by this means that A. P. received his education, beginning at a very young age.

When school duties were over he loved to join his good friend, Emil Torkelstorp down on the wharf. There were many things there to intrigue and inspire the imagination of two young boys. Daily they watched the white sailed-ships flutter over the water like butterflies, finally becoming smaller and dimmer, disappearing into the far-away mystic places. Where did they go? What shores did they touch? The

fabulous rich land of America, the colorful shores of France--far away? With wide eyes and eager ears, they listened to returning sailors spin their unbelievable yarns. Great iron cranes like prehistoric monsters extended their hook-like necks over the water, at times grabbing up great mouthfuls of lumber and spewing it out on the waiting ships. Winches screeched, chains rattled. The air was filled with strange, tangy smells; of rancid hides, spicy lumber and salted fish.

For twenty-five years Sweden had been a peaceable country. However, as of today, powerful war-like countries hovered not far away. For this reason, when a boy reached fourteen, he must either begin to train in the army or he could embark on a sailing vessel and learn the intricacies of navigation. In case of war, the sailing vessels would be of great value to the nation.

A. P. heard the discussion of his future taking place between his father and mother. His father was in favor of the sea, but his mother favored the army. Land training would keep him closer to home. The sea was dangerous, the sailors sometimes rough, and once launched as a seafarer, always one. It meant the breaking up of the family were his mother's arguments. A. P.'s heart was set on the sea. He could scarcely sleep, hoping against hope that his father would win out. Emil's father owned a fleet of sailing vessels. There was no anxiety on his part, but with A. P. it was different. His mother nearly always had her way. He spent many a wakeful hour, hoping something would happen to sway her decision in favor of the sea.

One day his father said, "Mary, I've been talking to Gunnar Tockelstorf. He has a captain on one of his ships who is a very fine man. He is devout and strict. Most of his crew is young. He will tolerate no rough element. He not only teaches navigation, but he conducts services, being a Bible-reading man, He believes in teaching manners and morals as well as navigation. It will be fine training, for A. P. if he sails with Captain Nelson." So it was that the decision was made.

The next few weeks were busy. A. P.'s sisters, Matilda and Albertina, helped his mother get his clothes in order, putting the last stitches in knitted socks, embroidering initials on all his linen. His father made him a sturdy sea chest, covering it with a black oiled cloth, with a strong hasp and staple with padlock, and painted rope handles. The final day at home arrived. There were many tears shed by mother and sisters.

A. P.'s youngest brother John tried to look indifferent, but his older brother Martin was interested in his brother's coming adventure. He went down to the wharf with his father to see A. P. safely on board the sailing ship "Nelson".

It was twilight when the ship was loaded and the last sailor on board. A. P. kept watching the spot on the wharf where his father stood, until he could no longer make out the square shoulders and long beard. Then shyly he and Emil huddled on their sea chests among blankets and boxes and bundles of miscellaneous gear. Some of the crew was new, some were old hands. The main deck where the boys sat was dark. Only the rays of the ship's lanterns shining through the open doors of the forecastle made paths of occasional light, revealing the men hurrying hither and yon, making the ship ready for its voyage. The ship's carpenter grabbed up his maul and drove in the last wedge of the main hatch batten.

Experienced hands oiled the windlass and made ready to heave up the anchor. The clumsy tow rope lay like a huge serpent along the side of the main deck, one end hanging over the bows ready for the tug that would come to tow them out to open sea at dawn.

A. P. and Emil sat shivering in the cool of the evening, feeling very lonesome. Under the light of the cabin's lantern the first mate summoned the crew. They filed past, the old hands with an air of confidence, the new ones with downcast eyes and shuffling gait. As the chief mate called out a name, the owner answered "Yes, sir," or "Here." He would come forward, be visible in the circle of light cast by the ship's lantern, then quietly pass into the darkness of the port side of the quarterdeck. It came A. P. and Emil's turn at last, and very soon they found themselves in the forecabin. Night closed down, and from the two rows of bunks came sounds of deep breathing and snores. The ship's occupants were sleeping. There was no sleep for A. P. He had looked forward to this day with anticipation. Now all he could think of was his mother's and sisters' tears, and the light cast on his father's long beard, as he stood on the wharf long after dark, peering at the ship that was to bear his son into the far unknown.

At dawn the "Nelson" sailed. The harbor was calm, white clouds floated in towards land, the sea beyond was smooth as polished steel. A dingy-colored tug paddled in like an aggravated duck, giving a quick pull at the rope attached to the ship, then stood still as if treading water for a moment to see what result her efforts had produced. The ship, responding, moved slowly under top sails lowered. A sudden breeze caught at the loosened upper canvases, billowing them like small balloons. Willing, trained hands hauled home the sheets, the yards were skillfully hoisted, and the ship, independent and proud, skimmed gracefully out of the harbor into the sea. The tug turned and paddled away like a satisfied duck. The land gradually faded away. At first a few birds followed the ship as if trying by main force to hold ship and land together, but finally gave up and disappeared.

There was nothing but the overpowering solitude of the ocean, the constant sound of sloshing waves against the ship and the wind sighing mournfully aloft. The journey had begun and A. P. was homesick. What was he sailing into--what changes were ahead? The ship, a mere dot in the vast expanse, sailed on, lonely and swift. Above, the sky like an inverted bowl, met the sea at an elusive horizon. Occasionally the sails of a like ship went sailing past, so intent on her own business and destination that she seemed almost rude in her indifference.

The infinite magnitude of the sea seemed to contract the extent of time, days went by, they merged into weeks, and months, and years. A. P., under the faithful tutorship of Captain Nelson, learned each phase of good navigation. He knew the meaning of the half-hourly bells that called men to their duties; he learned the intricacies of tying complicated knots and mending sails; he learned to help man the weather braces and square the foreyards. He knew what it was to battle the wild wind in the riggings, and how to protect himself from the mountainous waves that broke over the deck in frightening storms. For fifteen years he followed the sea and tied up at nearly every seaport in existence at that time. He visited lands of opulence and plenty, he touched on shores where hollow-eyed, starving children with abdomens distended with starvation came down to the wharf in hopes of finding a discarded hardtack or

sea biscuit. Every calm and every storm and every port left its imprint on his consciousness. At last he came to sail on the Great Lakes.

In the years that he had been sailing he learned that the ships he saw afar were not indifferent as he first thought. He learned that every ship had a personality of its own. He got so he could identify them at a great distance. Moreover, he got so he knew many a seafaring man and knew which ship carried what man. Among the many friends he made was one Thomas Thompson, a man of small stature, with big blue eyes, black hair and very fair skin. Thomas was always called Tommie, perhaps because he was a small man. Tommie was of Scotch-Norwegian descent. His main characteristic was his devoutness. He blessed and gave thanks for every mouthful of food that passed his lips, he spent much time reading his Bible, and often burst into song, singing "Jesus, Lover of My Soul" or "Nearer, My God, To Thee".

A. P. liked to visit with Tommie. Very often when they arrived at Cleveland they would go to a large hotel called The Bethel, which was a sanctuary for sailors. Here A. P. would order the spicy cill, of which Tommie would have none, for cill is pickled fish with onions, and Tommie never could eat onions. He sometimes shared the delicate lute fish served with mealy potatoes, of which A. P. was so fond.

It was at one of these meetings that Tommie was so excited he almost forgot to give blessings. Tommie had recently returned from a visit to the place of his birth, the Shetland Islands. While there he had met again one of his boyhood girl friends, Janet Tomson, fallen in love and now was planning on marriage. A. P. heard the story of the Tomson family of six girls and their widowed mother, as he and Tommie lingered over their meal.

Janet's father was Scotch. Born in the Southern part of Scotland, he had fled to the Shetland Islands to escape being drafted into the English army. He had felt no lack of patriotism by being unwilling to fight for the English cause, as at that time Scotland felt very bitter toward England. While there he had met Phillias Moffet, a girl from a very wealthy and aristocratic family. One of Phillias' uncles was a member of Parliament and an owner of a fleet of sailing vessels. During the sailing vessel days, a family was judged by how many captains they had in their family, for it took brains, integrity, and long years of work and a thorough understanding of navigation (which had to be learned the hard way) before one would be trusted with a precious sailing vessel and its valuable cargo.

Phillias Moffat's family boasted thirty captains--uncles, cousins, nephews, fathers--and they were very proud. It wasn't recorded how Phillias and the modest George T. Tomson met, or whether the wealthy family had objections to a boy who had acquired a modest dairy farm and also did some commercial fishing, but as from the beginning of time, love will find a way, and Phillias Moffat and George Tomson were married. One son, Robert and six girls, Janet, Mary, Margaret, Helen, Lillias and Phillias, were the result of this marriage. The son, Robert, when grown to young manhood, was stricken with pneumonia at sea and died. The family never saw him, only his clothes were returned. At the age of forty-eight, the father, George, died from what the family many years afterward recognized as appendicitis. At the time, the disease wasn't known, but his terrible pain, the sudden relief from agony, the hope that he was better, and then his sudden death, all indicated appendicitis was the probable killer.

Phillias (Moffat) Tomson, left a widow with six helpless girls who only knew how to sit on a cushion and sew a fine seam, had a very, great problem on her hands. Not long after this, her brother Thomas Moffat died, leaving a large fortune to his sister and her daughters. Now the worry seemed to be lessened. Phillias sold her little dairy farm, and it was about this time when Tommie Thompson came into the picture. Tommie was anxious to study for the ministry in Oberlin, Ohio, and he wished Janet to accompany him. Phillias (Moffat) Tomson, who had always longed to educate her daughters, and realizing the facilities in the Shetland Islands were not to her girls' advantage, decided to go to America and settle near the Oberlin College, where later she hoped to enroll at least some of her girls. However, while she was getting her plans adjusted, Mary met a widower with two children by the name of Thomas Coutts, who was supposed to be very wealthy and was going out to the new and unsettled land of New Zealand. He and Mary were married and sailed away. The parting with the family was related many times as being very sad, for Mary, realizing she'd probably never see any of her family again, fainted. Mary never did see any of her sisters or her mother again. Phillias (Moffat) Tomson still wasn't quite ready to depart for the United States, so Lillias accompanied Janet and Thomas to America.

Tommie, in some way, contracted a vicious case of smallpox which developed as soon as they reached America. He was immediately marched away from the two frightened and homesick girls and put in a pesthouse. Janet and Lillias found their way to Connecticut, where they stayed with friends. It was here that Lillias, who had always been a healthy girl, became subject to severe asthma attacks. She always blamed it onto the fact that it was so unbearably hot that she would go stand in the Icehouse to cool off, for in those days people cut ice blocks in winter to store in houses for the hot days to come. Lillias caught a severe cold and from then on had a struggle with asthma.

Tommie finally recovered from the smallpox, but he was badly scarred for the rest of his life. Some time after Tommie and Janet were settled in Oberlin, Phillias Moffat Tomson came over to America, accompanied by her daughters, Helen, Margaret and Phillias. They were constantly hoping to hear from and receive their fortune which had been left them by Thomas Moffat, and which was then in chancery, which means the same as when we say in Court. Margaret contracted a case of scarlet fever and diphtheria and died. Helen met and married Thomas Walton who had relatives living in Colusa County, California, and Phillias married Thomas Petch.

There was a minister by the name of Lawrence Jones who knew the family very well and he often visited with Tommie and Janet Thompson, and Lillias who made her home with the Thompsons. Lawrence Jones and wife had two little girls and often they invited Lillias to be their guest. Lillias knew how to make the beautiful and intricate shirred and ruffled dresses that were so popular for tiny folks at that time, and she was always very welcome because of her exquisite handwork.

It was about this time when Reverend Jones, while visiting the Bethel Hotel for sailors, ran into A. P. Johnson. They had been friends for years, but now in their visits A. P. began to tell his friend his problems. He had been offered the command of a vessel, something that he had worked for all the fifteen years he had been at sea. To accept the command had become almost an obsession. To have in his

command a ship; to know that the ship would be his responsibility; it would be unable to move, just an inanimate thing, until he took possession; they would be indissolubly united as one-ship and man to the end of his days--to sail the seven seas; or go down together. It was a proud thing to be captain of a ship, and he had learned all the secrets of navigation. Note: Mr. Matson of the Matson Steamship Lines once said that "A. P. was the cleverest navigator of his time."

But for the past few years he had been thinking seriously of giving up the sea, finding a girl suitable as a wife and establishing a home. He felt that the sea was too dangerous, there were many widows who looked in vain for the return of their husbands, and besides, the love of home and home life had been deeply instilled in his youth. He longed for a home of his own. Since he'd been on the sea he'd had few chances to return. Once when he was sixteen he had made a trip home. At that time his mother was expecting her sixth child. That trip was marked with grief, his mother died in childbirth, and the baby was never born.

He had no sooner told his tale to the Reverend Lawrence Jones than his friend said, "I know just the girl for you. You are now getting near to thirty years of age and although you feel the great attraction of the sea, it is high time to quit and settle down." The Reverend Jones lost no time in getting in touch with the curly black haired, blue eyed Lillias Thomson and extolling to the skies the virtues, the integrity, the thrift and good looks of A. P. He and his wife planned to have the young, folks meet, and so, due to the influence and scheming of Reverend Lawrence Jones, A. P. and Lillias Tomson met, and some time later were married in the home of the Tommie Waltons. They spent their honeymoon at Niagara Falls.

Back in Cleveland, A. P. found a comfortable flat where they set up housekeeping. A. P. turned his back on the sea and began to look for something to busy himself with until he would finally find his life's work. He had saved all the money he had earned in his fifteen years at sea, and had nothing to worry about from that quarter. Finally his skilled hands won for him a position where wires were spun for pianos. At that time wire was spun by hand and it was something of an art to spin wire deftly, keeping it uniform and tempered just right, He soon learned the knack and because it was something not everyone could do, he was paid what was considered at that time a very fine salary.

Within the next few years, a great many changes took place in AP's and Lillias' life. Helen and Thomas Walton who had relatives in California, moved out west to Colusa County in the Sacramento valley. They settled on a farm one mile south of Arbuckle, which is now known as the Dan Kissling farm, Tommie and Janet Thompson went west and made their home in Woodland, Yolo County. Tommie became associated with the gas company and made his living in their employ for many years, Phillias and her husband, Thomas Petch, also went to California. The mother, Phillias Moffat Tomson, made her home with Phillias, her youngest daughter. The Petches first came to Woodland, but finally settled in Eureka, Humboldt County, where Thomas became superintendent of the gas and electric light company and for many years was considered very prosperous, and he built a very imposing home for his family.

Because A. P. was so closely associated with Lillias' family it may be interesting to tell a little more of their background here. All the girls were born in the Shetland Islands. The islands originally

belonged to the Norsemen and most of the islanders are direct descendants of those hardy mariners; however the family of Phillias Moffat Tomson were pure Scotch. As related previously, George Tomson fled from Scotland so as not to be forced to join the British army. He settled in Lerwick in the Shetland Islands (Lerwick is pronounced Lerrick). Lerwick was and is a great fishing center. It has been said that during the herring season in years gone by, the fishing boats were so thick that it would have been possible to walk on them from one small island to another. There were cod, ling, halibut and winter haddock when the herring season was over. Thousands of persons were employed in one way or another in the fishing industry in Lerwick. George Tomson owned a dairy farm also. Phillias Moffat whom he married (Lillias' mother) was born in Scotland. One of her brothers had gone to the Shetland Islands and become immensely wealthy in the shipping industry.

(I was under the impression it was her brother who was serving in parliament who later left her six daughters a fortune, but older members of the family claim it was her brother in Lerwick) It was while Phillias Moffat was visiting this brother that she met and married George Tomson.

Like the little hardy Shetland ponies, the Shetland sheep are unsheltered during the winter. They eat heather tops and sea weed. The conditions under which they live give them fine wool. So sensitive is its fiber that it alters with the seasons. The famous lace work shawls were made from the finest wool from these sheep's necks. These shawls were of such fine texture that they could be drawn through a finger ring. The shawls are now almost extinct as the art of weaving them is all but lost. Queen Elizabeth was presented one on her twenty-first birthday. It was exquisite hand work like weaving these shawls that the Tomson girls learned, along with intricate needle work so popular of one hundred years ago. Janet Thompson was especially clever in weaving these shawls. After her father's death, she wove and sold some of them which was considered a very lady-like way for a girl to make spending money in those days when girls weren't supposed to work. After coming to America, Janet often told of making these shawls. It was the great desire of the younger generation to learn this rare art, but it was impossible to get any of the proper wool. The art was lost to the family after her death.

The Tomson girls were ever hopeful that their uncle's estate would be settled. Each year they received the same word, "Your money is held in chancery". When they did get a smattering of it, it came to each one in small payments. It had been eaten up in "chancery." I may say here there was some difference of opinion of the spelling of the name--sometimes it appears as Thompson--sometimes Tomson.

When all of Lillias' sisters with their husbands and her mother departed for California, Lillias found herself the only remaining member in the original city of their first settlement. At the end of the first year of A. P.'s and Lillias' marriage, their first daughter was born. They named her Albertina Lillian, the Albertina after one of A. P.'s sisters. Eighteen months after Albertina's birth, their first son arrived. He was named George Andrew after his maternal grandfather George Tomson and his own father.

A. P. and Lillias thinking that Cleveland was to be their future home bought a lot and planned to build. With the birth of her two children Lillias' health got worse. Her asthma became so alarming doctors

said she would die of consumption if she didn't move to some warmer climate. They recommended California. At that time many persons were dying of consumption and any disease of the respiratory tract was immediately suspected as the dread killer.

A. P. gave up his position and, disposing of the goods they had acquired, they too came out to California with their children. They both looked forward to a speedy cure of Lillias' malady as soon as they reached sunny California. Not knowing anything about the nature of the climate, they settled in San Francisco. The fog rolled in, the weather was damp and Lillias got more choked up than ever. It was a keen disappointment to find that after all California offered no help. They again rented an apartment. A. P. found employment in a company very similar to the one he had worked for in Cleveland, and he was soon spinning piano wire again.

They hadn't lived in San Francisco very long before they met a Peter Wilson and wife who owned a big ranch up near French Camp, just outside the town of Stockton. At the same time A. P. met a real estate man who had a tract of land for sale across the bay from San Francisco. A. P. was considering investing in this land which was near the then infant city of Berkeley. The real estate agent assured him that a very young and promising university was just getting started and that the land would eventually be valuable.

At just this time the Peter Wilsons invited Lillias and her two children to visit them at French Camp in the San Joaquin Valley. As soon as Lillias arrived in the warm dry valley, her asthma cleared up. For the first time since she'd come to America she was able to breathe and felt well. She immediately wrote to A. P. telling him she was cured. When he met her at the Ferry Building a few days later, she was as choked up and as seriously sick as ever. They surmised that it was the warm, dry air of the upper valley that had proved beneficial. A. P. made arrangements for her and the children to board with friends in the valley. The experiment worked. As long as Lillias stayed in the warm dry air she was free of her difficulty in breathing. It was this that influenced A. P. in his future plans.

Instead of investing the money he had so diligently saved in real estate in Berkeley, he decided he would have to find some work that would take his family away from the fog and dampness of San Francisco. He'd had no experience in farming. He and Lillias talked it over and decided to ask their friend Peter Wilson if he knew of any position or work in the San Joaquin valley that A. P. might do. Mr. Wilson who owned a great tract of farming land offered to let them rent a little cottage on his land and also rented him a piece of grain land to farm. It was a weighty decision. It meant giving up a good paying job and going into something he knew nothing about. It meant the expense of moving. He also learned from Mr. Wilson much of the chance one took in farming. He had to buy a team of mules, for all farming was done at that time with eight mule teams. He also had to spend more of his long saved up cash for plows and a wagon and what was known as a header-bed. The thing that was most trying was to buy seed grain. He learned from Mr. Wilson it was best to sow the grain early in the fall, but if it should happen to rain and sprout the seed and if there should come a long dry period, the grain would dry up and be lost. Sometimes too, after the grain sprouted, if the weather remained cold, the seed rotted. Thinking about it,



he felt he would rather have taken a chance of a high wind at sea than risk precious seed in uncertain conditions. He had never thought about the risks of farming before. It is interesting to note here that the tract of land he was about to buy in Berkeley is at the present time the grounds of the University of California.

Under the supervision of Mr. Wilson, A. P. sowed his seed barley in October. He had spent a lot of his money. He now had a family to support. A grain crop was of great importance. Not a drop of rain fell in October. All the neighboring farmers began to cry "dry year." He had seen the results of droughts in foreign countries and the starving children as its result. For the first time in his life he felt anxiety. He watched the skies anxiously. In November almost two inches of rain fell. The grain sprouted and to him it was a beautiful sight. Then again there was a long dry spell. Worry and anxiety took possession of him as he saw the tender stalks begin to wilt, but December brought almost three inches and once more the grain got green and A. P. and Lillias were happy. But as if to show them just how uncertain farming can be, January was a cold dry month and again their crop was threatened. There were weeks of worry, watching the skies, wondering just what next step they should take. March came in with welcome showers which turned to a lifesaving rain and their first crop was assured.

By the time their grain crop was harvested, Lillias knew that her third child would arrive some time near Christmas. Lillias' sister, Helen Walton, and her husband Tom had bought a farm about a mile south of Arbuckle in Colusa County. Three miles east of Arbuckle was the very attractive and thriving town of College City. One of the first settlers in Colusa County who had made a fortune in raising sheep left a large sum of money with which to build a school for advanced education. This man's name was Pierce and the school was named Pierce Christian College in his honor. There were practically no high schools outside large cities at that time. The town of College City boasted a large brick hotel and many good size boarding houses, as well as livery stables, houses of business and every lot had a neat home, many of them well built and attractive. The country surrounding College City was very fertile. Farmers were beginning to plant vineyards of grapes and orchards.

Sometime during the year A. P. and Lillias had been farming at French Camp, they had made a journey to visit the Waltons. A. P. was very much pleased by the surrounding country. He decided he'd like to settle in these parts. Being a very conservative person, it seemed wise to him to first move to the town of College City and spend the following winter looking for a suitable piece of land to either rent or buy.

The College which had a good reputation was also a drawing card for both A. P. and Lillias believed in improving one's mind. A. P. who had traveled all over the world had finally chosen America because he knew one's children would have a better chance to get an education than in any other land. Lillias' mother also had brought her daughters out from Scotland and settled in Oberlin, Ohio, hoping to put her daughters into the first co-educational institution in the U. S. So with an eye to the future, A. P. and Lillias once more gathered up their possessions and settled in a house in College City, just south of the grammar school. The house has since burned down. During Christmas week Lillias went to visit her

sister, Janet Thompson, in Woodland. It was there on the 23rd of December, 1883, her second daughter was born. She was named Myrtle Mae.

A. P. not only had a growing family to think about now, but he had acquired a number of mules. There were no feed yards where he could buy hay. The farmers who had come to that part of the country fifteen or twenty years before and bought up great tracts of land did all their farming with stock. They filled their barns with hay for their own stock or for stock they hired to farm their land and they could spare none for sale.

A. P. hit upon the plan of hiring out his team and equipment to these big land owners. He, himself, drove his team, so he therefore was assured of having feed for his stock and at the same time he was paid for their work, his equipment and for his services. This helped him in that he didn't have to use his cash on hand for living expenses.

There were no wood yards, but the owners of the John's timber land south of town were glad to have anyone gather wood on their property. On Sundays A. P. always came home to get in supplies, gather wood and look around for some place to buy, It was while he was getting wood from the John's wood land that he saw a "For Sale" sign on a forty acre farm just north of the John's timber land. This farm was owned by a Mr. Wimple. A. P. said as he stood looking at this farm and hoping he could buy it that he thought it was the most beautiful place he'd ever seen. Under a great canopy of five spreading oaks was a six room, white farm house. It stood off the ground on a green lattice work foundation and had green shutters. It was built in the style now known as the Early California farm house, the big living room in the middle of the house, a fireplace at one end, a good size kitchen and dining room at one end of the living room and three bedrooms at the other. The farm also had a windmill which was a luxury at that time. There were also chicken houses, a smoke house, barns for stock and many oak trees around the corrals, shade for living creatures. After speaking to Mr. Wimple, he was very much excited and hurried home to talk over the possibility of buying it with Lillias.

It wasn't something they could do easily. They'd had to spend a big part of A. P.'s savings buying stock, equipment and seed in the San Joaquin. They hadn't cleared much money on their crop. They decided to buy the farm even though they would have to borrow money. In the spring they moved to their new home. The fortune of the Tomson sisters was still being held in chancery in England. It was about this time that Lillias got a small installment on her share. It helped A. P. to buy one of the first combined harvesters in the country. Up to this time, ripe grain had been cut like hay, and a stationary harvester had later threshed it. A combined harvester was a great improvement, and A. P.'s harvester was much in demand by farmers with big acreages.

The first child born on this farm was a little blond boy whom they named Lawrence after a member of the Rev. Jones family, whom they'd known in Cleveland. The Johnsons stocked the farm with chickens, a cow and hogs. The northwest ten acres were put into prunes. The northeast ten was planted to muscatel grapes. There was also a family orchard of apricots, peaches and almonds. A. P. came in one day with a bag of black walnuts. Instead of permitting the children to eat them, he saved the precious

nuts and planted them. They still exist, some having been grafted to English walnuts, others in their original state. The remaining farm land on the south side of the farm was put into barley. It furnished hay for the stock. Some of it was rolled for dry feed and the remainder of the grain was sold.

After a few years, by hiring out his equipment and stock and by harvesting for outsiders, the debt on the forty was reduced to the place where the Johnsons felt they could take on the extra burden of buying sixty-six acres of land which was directly a mile west of their original forty, bordered by the Southern Pacific tracks on its west. There were twenty acres of timber land on this property. A. P. kept Chinese woodchoppers constantly living here, chopping wood, clearing the land. Now with his own wood, with milk, butter, eggs, chickens, curing his own bacon, hams, sausage and lard, with apricots and peaches beginning to produce, and by raising tomatoes in summer, much of the food was produced on the farm.

It may be interesting to note that A. P. paid as much for the sixty-six as it was sold for forty-eight years later. He didn't have the easy time of the early comers who sometimes bought up great tracts of land from the government for a very small amount per acre.

When Lawrence was about three and a half years old, Agnes Romie made her appearance. Lillias had become very friendly with a charming woman, a Mrs. James Shearer. Mrs. Shearer had a beautiful daughter by the name of Agnes. Agnes was a family name also. Romie was after a school teacher by the name of Romietta Brasfielde. Agnes later, while in San Jose Normal, thought the name Roma sounded more glamorous, so she spelled it R-o-m-a, but the true name is Ro-m-i-e.

The next eighteen months brought tragedy to the Johnsons. (Note: Albertina was at that time called Tina by her family. Later her friends called her Alberta, so from now on Alberta will be used.) When Agnes Romie was just sixteen months old, Alberta returned from school and announced that the little girl on the adjoining farm had a terrible sore throat. In a few days Alberta, George, Myrtle and Lawrence were all down with vicious attacks of diphtheria. Agnes Romie was the only one who escaped being desperately sick with diphtheria. When A. P. and Lillias tried to get a doctor, all three doctors in the community were not to be found. Every family had one or more children down with the dreaded disease. There was no known cure and no shots to be given. The Johnsons worked frantically over their dying children. For two weeks they didn't take their day clothes off to rest. Lillias often said the children were so desperately sick she wondered which would die first. Finally little five year old Lawrence passed away. There was no way to get an undertaker for he was too busy. Every family in the community lost a child. Some families lost two. A Mr. Brown, Sally Shearer's father, came to help Lillias and A. P. dress the little boy. There was no funeral. They dared not leave the other stricken children. A neighbor, Herman Schutz, came in a lumber wagon and A. P. and Lillias watched the little casket unattended trundled off to the graveyard in College City.

Lillias often told the pathetic little story of how just before this disaster hit them, Little Laurie, as they called Lawrence, was trotting along with her when she was setting eggs under a broody hen. He was very much interested in the process and Lillias explained that when the mother hen had kept the eggs

warm for three weeks, baby chickens would be inside the eggs, that they would break the shell and be little, pretty, fluffy chickens. Laurie was enchanted and asked.., "Can I have them for my chickens when they get out?" His mother promised him he could have them. When the chickens hatched, Laurie was gone.

The following spring Phillias Moffatt Tomson, who was making her home with her youngest daughter, Phillias Petch, in Eureka passed away. She'd always been a very fine character, very devout, beloved by her children, her sons-in-law and friends. Her body was brought down from Eureka, and she was buried in the cemetery in Woodland.., where many years later, her youngest daughter, Phillias Petch, and her oldest daughter, Janet Thompson, were buried in the same plot. Tommie Thompson, too, is buried there.

The eighteen months that followed the two deaths brought forth more important events. A little daughter was born to A. P. and Lillias. She proved to be their last child. She was named Ruth. Later when she met an older women whom she admired and whose name was Mabel, Ruth called herself Mabel Ruth.

The second event which took place but didn't bring the satisfaction and pleasure that the birth of little Ruthie brought was the lapsing of Pierce Christian College. The Johnsons had counted so highly on having an advanced school to send their children to after they'd finished the grades that its folding up was a keen disappointment. The grammar grades at that time consisted of ten grades. Some of the subjects taught in the present day high schools were taught in the ninth and tenth grades, such as algebra, physics, advanced literature and history. The students were nearly always sixteen or seventeen years old when they were graduated. Alberta went one year to Pierce College before it lapsed and was in her 17th year. A. P. was still paying for the sixty-six acres, and he had a large family now to support. There had been both deaths and births so it was impossible to send Alberta away to school. However, there was a law at that time which permitted anyone graduated from grammar school, who could pass a very stiff Teacher's Examination, to teach on a special certificate. Alberta, who was a very fine student, asked permission to take it. There was much discussion in the family. It meant she had to have a new outfit, there was a fee, and she had to board in Colusa the week during the examinations. Even that amount of ready cash to be raised was a problem. She also had to tell, perhaps her one and only, white lie, that she was eighteen in order to be permitted to take it. When she was just seventeen, she made the then long journey to Colusa and took the Teacher's Examination. There was much worry and wondering at home whether she'd be able to pass successfully. The long-looked-for day came when she was notified she had passed and she was granted a certificate to teach.

Her first school was in the Winship district on Grand Island some miles south of Grimes. She boarded with the Winship family. After teaching two years there, she taught in the Woodland Business College. At the same time, she took certain subjects there. Later she went to a private teacher's training school in Stockton. Her method was to teach and earn, and then use what she earned to get more of the

desired teacher's training. After graduating from the private school, she taught first in Woodland and later in Stockton.

The next in line was George. His parents had been very desirous for him to go on to school, but the lapsing of the Pierce College ended that hope. About two years after George graduated from grammar school, the Pierce Joint Union High School was established. Now his parents wished him to enter high school, but he was about eighteen at this time and felt that he was getting too old for a four year course, and after that have to go four years more to college before he'd be prepared for any profession or business. He asked to be permitted to attend the Western School of Commerce. This school had a very fine reputation. It was a boarding school and was well conducted under the able leadership of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsey.

It was about this time that A. P. rented a thousand acres of land. Part of it was rented from the Shearer family and adjoined the Johnson ranch. The other ranch was the Sander's ranch, now the property of Oscar Peterson, just south of College City. A. P. had hoped that since George did not want to spend years in high school and college that he would take up farming, He offered to let him have the Sander's ranch to farm, but George had set his heart on being a business man. Owners of stores before the chain stores came into being were always most prosperous men in towns and cities, so the time he spent in the Western School of Commerce was very profitable and happy. He met friends there that he kept for many years. Afterwards he got practice in his line of business for a few years with S. Patton in Arbuckle. He then went to Dunsmuir to work for a lumbering company who owned a large store. When this store was destroyed by fire, he took over the management of Mr. Hall's store in Gridley. Mr. Hall was Dr. George Joyce Hall's father. It was while working for Mr. Hall that he met and married Ila McCurry. Later he went into business and partnership with his brother-in-law, Jute Toffy, in Lincoln.

A. P. now having a larger acreage of land with prunes and grapes and hogs, and with George and Alberta supporting themselves, had the chance to buy one hundred and sixty acres of the Hannum ranch. (Claude Houchin's mother was a Hannum.) He made this purchase in 1903. Once again he was in debt. He still did harvesting for outsiders if their grain was ready to harvest before his was.

Harvest was a busy time. Horse drawn butcher wagons dashed into the driveway and stews, roasts and steaks could be bought at the front gate- -the meat carefully spread out on brown butcher paper, refrigerated by chunks of ice in the covered wagon. Chinese vegetable peddlers, their horses heads hanging low, jogged by to sell lettuce, carrot, turnip, tomato and cucumber, cabbichy and spuds. Lard came up from the cellar to make apricot and grape and peach pies.

Everyone prayed for the wind to blow hard enough for the windmill to pump water for all the stock, It took any where from twenty-six to thirty-two mules to draw a combined harvester. If the wind didn't blow, then water had to be pumped by hand, and A. P., with Agnes and Ruth each helping to pump a hundred strokes, made a game of it until the horse troughs were full of water.

When harvest moved to the Shearer ranch where there were no cooking facilities, roasts, potatoes, vegetables, desserts and coffee were prepared at home, loaded in their original pots and kettles and taken down to the cabin where they were spread out on a long table for the hungry men.

The harvest crews were always neighbor men of fine character and family who owned stock and were glad to hire them out to A. P. For many years Hiram Spicer, the father of Mrs. Henry Olin and Mrs. Mace, and Bill Bailey, the father of the large Bailey-Clark family worked with A. P. George drove a harvester as long as he was at home, while his father attended to the machinery. The other two men sowed sacks and tended header. What perhaps few know is that harvesters were so constructed that they could only turn a round corner (A. P. invented something that permitted them to turn square corners. He also invented a little contraption that jolted the sacks. The whole country adopted his inventions without many knowing where they originated. He never attempted to have them patented.)

The water at the Shearer ranch was furnished by horse power. This was a mechanism where the horse was put in a sort of triangle and went round and round in a circle. As he did so, a shaft connected with a pump caused the water to come to the surface. Although the horse was always blindfolded, he could never be fooled. The minute the little girls whose job it was to make him go around and around thought to sneak off and get in some play of one kind or another, the old horse stopped dead in his tracks; so it was around and around until one was dizzy that anyone assigned to pumping water had to go in order to supply enough water for the hot and thirsty mules. Hardly a harvest passed but what one or more mules died of the heat. The men would come in very perturbed and unhappy and announce that a mule was bleeding at the nose. It always meant that the mule would die.

The new land was finally paid for! After Myrtle graduated from high school, she went to The College of Pacific which was at that time located on the outskirts of San Jose, Santa Clara County, While in high school she'd become engaged to Russell West. While waiting for him to get his degree in dentistry, she specialized in music and spent some time in Stockton with Alberta, giving music lessons.

A. P. was still farming grain land, but at the same time he was looking to the future. He planted ten more acres of Thompson seedless grapes on the home forty, also twenty acres of seedless on his new land. About the year Agnes was midway in high school, A. P. decided to build a new home. The big living room of the original farm house, as well as the three bedrooms, was kept intact. They were turned around and moved back under the sheltering huge black walnut trees. These trees had grown from the little bag of black walnuts A. P. had brought in years before. The still beautiful oaks were cut down as they were getting to the stage where they were brittle and dangerous. A large cottage type four rooms with bath was built onto the original farm house. The original dining room and kitchen were disposed of.

The first important event that took place in the new home was Myrtle's marriage to Russell West who was now a dentist. The following year Agnes was graduated from high school. After staying home one year, she attended the San Jose Normal. After graduating from that institution, she taught one year in Santa Clara County on what was then called the San Martin ranch. This ranch was one of the old Spanish grants which had been subdivided. It consisted of small prune orchards and wine grape vineyards. The

locality is still famous for its superior quality of wine known as San Martin wines. In June of that year, 1912, Alberta was married to Ben Perkins of Stockton and in July, the following month, Agnes was married to Fred Meckfessel. Ruth was still in the University of California at Berkeley. After graduating she substituted in the school at Arbuckle and taught one year in Lincoln, Placer County. At college, she met George Caswell of Los Angeles whom she married in 1917.

By this time, A. P. had his farm lands paid for and his children married. Lillias' asthma was always under control as long as she stayed in the valley. Now that they were in a position to turn their ranch over to Alberta and Ben Perkins to farm and take a long needed rest, they decided to move to Sacramento. After living there for a year, they bought a home consisting of two flats at 1611 24th Street. A. P. now had a comfortable income. His thoughts turned to his homeland and his sisters and brother who still were living in Sweden.

He had lived on the ranch almost thirty-five years. From the time he moved on the ranch, he was either buying land, improving that land by planting prunes, grapes and almonds, or educating one or other of his children by sending them away to school. He had arrived when the country was still new. It was necessary to clear some of the land he farmed of its primeval woods. There was no such thing as gas motors; every sort of machine was run by horses and mules. The method of getting water was uncertain and sometimes difficult.

He farmed at one time what was then called the Whiskey ranch, which is now owned by Bentley Matthews. Eleanor Cain Matthews, Fred Meckfessel's niece, now lives in a cottage in the exact spot where there was a cabin. A. P. and his brother John who came out from Sweden for some time stayed in this cabin while summer following. They told how they would put a pot of beans with a savory chunk of ham on the wood stove and build up the fire before they started to plow around the field in early morning. It would take an hour or more to plow around the field. Each time they came even with the house, they would add more water to the beans, put another chunk of wood in the fire box, and by noon the ham and beans would be cooked. A pot of coffee and home made bread furnished a wholesome lunch. There was no water on this ranch at this time. It was necessary to haul water in a huge wooden tank on wheels for both household use and for the stock.

There were very few families in the country at that time who owned anything as up-to-date as a buggy. Nearly all farmers used two-wheeled carts to go to town for groceries. Later buck-boards were quite common as utility vehicles. The buckboard probably was the mother of our pickup trucks of today. It was an all day trip for Lillias to go to Arbuckle, load up with beans, potatoes, flour, sugar, coffee and dried fruit, and having brought eggs, canned fruit and home made bread from home, jog through foot deep dust from Arbuckle to the Whiskey ranch. She generally took one of the little girls along to apply the whip to the gentle driving horse.

As the years went on the family acquired a spring wagon, a buggy, later a surrey with a fringe on top--and a car in 1914. A. P. was never a person to do things in a big way. He could always see his way clear before venturing into any new project. He was highly respected by all the business men in the

county. It was said by the banker from whom he borrowed to finance some project that his word was as good as his signature. He was trustee of the school for many years and was always figuring some way to improve the school, gladly seeing that any improvement or repairs to the buildings were accomplished. He took the responsibility of selecting good teachers very seriously and tried to see that the most efficient teachers were hired.

He was always shocked by any member of the community who permitted his women folks to do outside work. Unless some great emergency arose like a sudden rain storm where something was in danger of being destroyed, he never asked any of his women folks to do outside work. Of course, there were the early pioneering days, when he was away harvesting, when the livestock on the ranch had to be fed and watered.

When he moved to Sacramento in 1917, he began planning on going to Sweden to see his two sisters and brother and many nieces and nephews, as well as cousins, who still lived there. However, it was the spring of 1923 before he was finally on his way. The death of his sister, Albertina, helped him to make up his mind to undertake the long trip. He was now seventy-eight years old and had been suffering from attacks of angina pectoris for several years. The doctors predicted he would never return alive, but he went in spite of their dire warnings.

If ever a person could have a little taste of what some folks think heaven is, then A. P. went to heaven while still alive. He hadn't been to his birthplace for fifty years. He stayed in the very comfortable and charming home of his sister, Matilda. Once again they went hand in hand to the markets, bringing home the groceries and ever-beloved flowers which are so essential to Swedish happiness. He and his brother, John, once more fished in lakes and rivers. He visited the church where he was confirmed many years before. He heard again the singing of the birds and walked the paths bordered with rhododendron and honeysuckle. He marveled at the hospital cleanness of the Swedish home and the well-dressed, tailored-looking people. He wondered at the knowledge the people had of America, her customs and scenery. He told of the insect and vermin-proof laundry room, generally in the basement, where household linen scarcely soiled was whisked, and how a laundry woman came in perhaps only once in two weeks to spend all day washing and ironing. Even the table linens were used only once, then sent to the laundry. After every meal the kitchen floor was mopped just as faithfully as the dishes were washed. He spent all summer visiting relatives and being entertained.

He returned to his home in September. He defied the doctors in going in spite of their prediction he wouldn't live to get home. He lived for eleven years to dream and recall and tell of his delightful trip to the home of his birth and childhood. In January 1932, Lillias suddenly passed away with a heart attack. Her death was a great shock to him. He lived on in his flat at 1611 24th Street, his daughter, Myrtle West, living in the flat above to see that he was cared for. In September 1933, he suffered a stroke which affected his speech, but not his mind or body. The Fred Meckfessels who were conducting a milk business in Sacramento at that time came to live with and care for him.



He was never well again. He was always lonesome for Lillias and his people far away. His happiness was that he had his daughter, Agnes, in his home and he was always appreciative of every little act, no matter how small, that was done for him. He passed away May 16th, one day after his eighty-ninth birthday, just as dawn was breaking. He had spent the night in great pain and Agnes had been up all night with him. At five a.m. Myrtle West came downstairs, and it was decided to call a nurse. After the nurse arrived and was preparing a hypodermic, he asked, "What time is it?" Myrtle said, "It is just dawn; don't you hear the birds singing?" He listened. The birds were chattering gayly in the garden and his Chinese wind harp was tinkling faintly. He smiled, then looking at Agnes said, "You've been up all night you haven't had a bit of sleep."

The hypodermic eased his pain and he never regained consciousness.