

## LYDIA LEAVITT ROWELL

Burlington, Vermont, Monday, September 20, 2004

My name is Lydia Leavitt Rowell. How lovely to have you all here, and how very kind of you to remember me, and my family. I thank you for coming. It is such a long time since my mother and my brothers and sisters and their families went away, so this seems a wondrous occasion, to be together again.

Perhaps you will allow me to share some memories with you, so that we can be better acquainted.

Our shared history goes back a very long way...before the Great War for Independence. My father, Jeremiah Leavitt, fought in that war, with his father and his brothers. And when the war was over, finally, we were a free people. But still there was a struggle for economic independence. And so we look northward for land upon which we could sustain ourselves.

I hardly remember our long journey from Grantham, New Hampshire to what was to be our new home in Lower Canada. We children who were old enough, walked along beside the oxen and the sleigh. Our father led the way through the dense and snowy forests. I just remember that we walked and walked, and when we got to place where Papa said, "Here we will make our pitch," Mama cried a little bit, because it was hard to see the sunlight through the thick trees and the cabin our father had built in preparation for our coming was so very small.

But we were not alone. Our friends were coming too. The Thomas Rowell family, the Joseph Fish family, the Chamberlains, and some of our Leavitt cousins were all coming to this new land.

We had a very congenial society in those early days. Everyone helped each other and we cleared away the forest and the sunlight did come in.

Thomas was the Rowell's oldest son, and I was the Leavitt's eldest daughter. Our families had been neighbors and friends for several generations. Everyone rather expected that Thomas and I would marry.

Caroline Elizabeth Leavitt Rowell  
Burlington, Vermont, Tuesday, September 21, 2004

My name is Caroline Elizabeth. I was the third child born to Nathaniel and Deborah Delano Leavitt. We lived in Hatley, Quebec. My older sisters, Salena, Roxana, and I were surrounded with a bundle of Leavitt cousins who lived nearby. Our Grandmother and Grandfather Delano lived just two day's journey, across the border in Albany, Vermont. There were a number of Delano cousins there too and so our families enjoyed pleasant times together, though survival meant hard requirements, even for children.

Our family grew quickly with three younger children, Nathaniel Jr. Flavilla Lucy and John. Then, when John had just turned two, our sadness began. Our mother died. She was just 36 years old. Our world turned from secure and happy to fearful and sad. Salena was 14, Roxana was 11, and I was 9. We did try to take care of each other, and we all helped with the baby. Our father was not only sad, but he was in need of help to care for us all.

The Leavitts had long had a friendship with the Thomas Rowell family. Two Rowell men had already married Leavitt girls. The Rowells had an unmarried granddaughter. She was only a little older than Salena. My father chose her to be his second wife. Her name was Betsy Bean. She was a good young woman and she tried to be a mother to us all. But it was hard for us to let her be our mother, when she was so nearly our own age, and she soon was having children of her own.

Over in Albany our Grandmother Delano was lonely and troubled. Our grandfather had died two years before our mother. Then only two months after my mother, her sister Achsa died and left four little children, one, only one month old. Grandmother Delano then had 10 motherless grandchildren and I was only one of them. So I went over to Albany to live. I was a good help and a comfort to my grandmother. I felt more needed there. I did miss Salena and Roxana and the little ones. I missed my father and my grandmother Leavitt. But there was plenty of need for my help.

When news filtered down to Albany about the religious excitement over in Hatley among the Leavitt families, I thought it would pass away. There were plenty of preachers everywhere, each expounding his own particular version of the Holy Word. But it did not pass away. My grandmother, Sarah Shannon Leavitt, though widowed and 72 years old, was among the first to embrace the idea of leaving their lands and homes to go in search of this strange new faith, and the people who espoused it. Then I learned that my father and Betsy were going to go. Even Roxana and Nathaniel and the little ones were swept away with their enthusiasm. I hadn't really heard much about it. But I was settled here in Albany. I was needed, and I made up my mind that I would stay.

Salena had married Joseph Kezar and they had two little children. They would stay in Hatley. My grandmother Delano was 72. I would stay near to her and help all that I could.

And so, on that very sad day in July of 1837, I bade them all goodbye. Though I had no way of knowing that I would never see my father again, there was a heaviness in my heart, that I could call a foreboding.

Months after his death, we heard that he was gone, and that Betsy had made her way home with her babies. I did get letters from Roxana and Flavilla and John, but it took a very long time to hear from them. They had decided they wanted to stay with the Mormons, which was disheartening news to me. Then we learned that my Grandmother Sarah Shannon Leavitt had died in that wilderness, and two more of my uncles. It was clear to me that I had made a wise choice to stay in Albany. But oh the loneliness when I knew they were all gone!

My grandmother Delano lived to be 80 years old. She was a grand lady. When she no longer needed me, I could look to my own future. I had known Enoch Rowell for a long time. He was the nephew of my Uncle William Rowell. He had been very patient in our friendship. A few months after my grandmother passed away, I married Enoch Rowell, the son of Daniel and Mercy Johnson Rowell.

We were very blessed, Enoch and I. We didn't suffer the anguishing loss of our children, as many others had done. Two sons, Eugene Augustus and Willard Converse, and two daughters Mercy Philena and Carolina Viola. were born to us. We named the girls in honor of Aunt Sarah's daughters, Philena and Viola. Philena was exactly my age and was my friend, as well as my cousin. She died when she was just 29.

My husband's father died a few months after our first little boy was born. His mother came to live with us until she died, thirteen years later.

There is a kind of strange irony to the end of my story. When Carolina Viola was nine years old, exactly the age I was when my mother died, my own mortal life ended. Enoch married again, a good woman, and they had one daughter.

My heart is warmed, seeing all of you here. It is lovely to be remembered. It is important that every life be acknowledged.

Thank you for the honor you pay to me.

I was twenty and Thomas was twenty one when we married in 1817. It was a year of dramatic changes to our family. My father died that year. Then my brothers, Nathaniel, Jeremiah and I all married in 1817.

In the next five years my father's other children married, all except Josiah. Then, the family did grow, oh my. Our children came one after another. Soon my mother was the matriarch of a large and growing family.

When Thomas and I had been married almost fifteen years, and had six children, we found opportunity across the border in Newport, Vermont. From that vantage, we were somewhat removed from the startling changes about to occur in the families of my brothers and sisters, and in the life of my mother.

I shall never forget that day, when I bade them all goodbye for the last time. They were going, they said, to find Zion, to find the Church they had all accepted. Somehow I knew that I would not see them ever again.

Our little Sarah Marie was just a year old when their company came by that fateful July, 1837. There was much of weeping as they started off. It was wrenching to see them pull slowly away. But they seemed resolute and happy, for they believed they had found the truth. They believed they were going to embrace it.

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The message took a long time to arrive. But when it came it brought the news that my mother and three of my brothers had died. They had died of sickness that fell upon them in the wilderness into which they had gone. All three left children and wives alone. And our mother! She had left with such hope and joy. I supposed that Zion was not such a wonderful place after all.

My sister, Sarah, was in Albany, a few miles away. We clung to each other and mourned together.

Then, in the next year, opportunity beckoned my family to the St Lawrence Valley, to Lawrenceville. It was a place beginning to thrive, and with our large family of sons, we were drawn to just such a place. There were industries beginning there. There was fertile land, and people were urged to come to help in its settlement and development. Thomas's brother,

Kendrick and his family were coming Lawrenceville too, so we would not be entirely alone.

The rigors and challenges of such an undertaking took my mind from the sorrow of loss. I was busy with seven children. I stood at the edge of my frontier, facing a different direction than my siblings and my mother had faced. It was an ending and a beginning.

In 1842 our last child, Nathan Leavitt Rowell was born, in Lawrenceville, New York. I was forty six years old. We had been remarkably blessed that all our children were all growing to maturity. All of them lived to marry and to have children of their own. We had the joy of seeing grandchildren born. Not many families were so fortunate. But our sons grew strong and able. Our daughters married well. Their children were a joy to us.

It had been a long circuitous walk. But this St. Lawrence Valley became our home. We lived our lives here. We absorbed the place and these people into the fiber of ourselves.

But still, in the quiet moments, my mind returns again and again to the loved ones to whom we bade goodbye, those long years ago.

Seeing you now is a symbol of the eternal circle that binds us all. It is a precursor of a day when we will truly reunite and rejoice together.

Thank you, that you did not forget. Until we meet again.

## SARAH LEAVITT ROWELL

Burlington, Vermont, Tuesday, September 21, 2004

I am Sarah Leavitt. But always they called me Sally. I was a very little girl when I made the long journey with my family from New Hampshire, as we became early settlers of Lower Canada. I was so small that I have very little memory of the journey. I do remember our lives in the wilderness, and that each bit of progress was a cause to rejoice. When our small cabin had windows, we were proud. When our neighborhood had a school we were eager to attend. When a new neighbor made his pitch it was a little less lonely and we were glad!

Our family had known the Enoch Rowell families in New Hampshire. William was six years older than I, and he and his brothers came up to Vermont a few years after we had come to Canada. The Rowell brothers prospered there, and William was considered a very fortunate match for me! I was almost 23 and William was 29, so our families were glad to have us marry.

My father, Jeremiah Leavitt, had died just a year before I married, so it was hard for me to leave my mother and all my brothers and sisters. But I was well received in Albany and quite proud of William. He was a born leader, and he willingly worked to build the new town. He served as Selectman and Constable. He served in the Legislature and in almost every other office.

The year after we married Philena was born, and the year after that, our Mary. Though I missed my own people, I was occupied with being the wife of a prominent man and the mother of two little girls.

But our happiness was not to be undisturbed. Before little Mary was five, she took sick and died. We grieved, terribly, for our child, so it seemed a gentle gift that a few days after Mary's fifth birthday, our only son was born. Wallace William Rowell, born October 16, 1825. We rejoiced at his coming, but the hole in our hearts remained raw and real.

For a long time no more children came. Then, when Philena was fourteen and William Wallace, eight, Sarah Jane was born. Four years later, in 1837, Viola was born. By then I was 42, and no more children were born to us.

I was happy when my sister Lydia and Thomas Rowell moved to the nearby village of Newport. Her Thomas was a distant cousin to my William. We were a strength to each other when alarming news filtered down from Quebec. At first we could not believe our ears. But finally it became clear that our mother, our five brothers and three sisters, with their families had decided upon a startling course. They were leaving Hatley, Quebec, where our family had lived for 37 years. They were bound for Kirtland, Ohio, and who knew what other untamed country? They had embraced a strange new faith, of which we had never heard. They called the people "Mormons."

Telling them goodbye wrenched me to the core. The hard times almost never ceased again, after that. First we learned of Nathaniel's death along the uncharted trail. His daughter, Caroline Elizabeth had come to Albany to live, after her mother died and her father married again. Now her father, too, was dead and she was truly orphaned. Our misfortune intensified when we heard of our mother, Sarah Shannon's death and our brothers Weare and Josiah. Oh how we sorrowed when we knew.

Philena married a good young man, Martin C. Chamberlain. Our first grandchild was their little William Henry Chamberlin, born in March of 1847. But then, the worst blow of all! William Henry was only a year and a half old when his mother, our Philena died, and William Henry, her little boy, one month later.

Our sorrows were not yet over. Two years from the death of Philena and her child, our strong young son, William Wallace, in the flower of young manhood, died at age 25. We thought we could not ever recover.

That same year, William's brother, Samuel Duncan Rowell, died down in Plainfield, New Hampshire. He left eight children with their widowed mother. So one of their sons came up to live with us. William needed the help and he would educate and care for the boy. His name was Enoch Converse Rowell. So now our home sheltered three half grown children. Sarah Jane was 18, Enoch Converse was 15 and Viola was 14.

William's spirit seemed a bit broken after all these deaths. He didn't hold a public office anymore, though he remained active in business and he taught Enoch Converse, as though he had been his son.

When Sarah Jane married David Simpson, we hoped for happiness for them, and indeed it seemed within their reach. Five lovely children came quickly. But then David died, and Sarah Jane was left a widow. Then, one after another four of the five children were also taken in death. My Sarah Jane was destined to suffer the same sorrows her father and I had endured.

Viola and Enoch Converse Rowell had lived in the same household for almost 15 years. It was not a surprise that they decided to marry. When their three children came I was almost afraid for them, but their children did not suffer the same misfortunes that had earlier plagued our family. All three, William Wallace, Jennie Clover and Mary Viola, lived and flourished, and William and I had a few years to enjoy these cherished children, before our lives were finished.

It is surprising, looking back, our futures had seemed so promising. We enjoyed economic prosperity far beyond the usual for our time. But somehow the vicissitudes of mortality seem to even out, and everyone experiences a taste of sorrow.

It is joyful tonight, to look into your faces and know that after all these years, there is a re-connection, though symbolic, with the children of my siblings. It makes the circle of life and family seem again complete. May I thank you for the honor that you do us. Thank you.



## EPHRAIM SAMUEL AND MARY JANE LEAVITT

Newport, Vermont, Thursday, September 22, 2004

Esther Young, Presenter

My name is Mary Jane Leavitt Hodges. I suppose I am the one to tell our story. Though I'm not the eldest. Rosilla was eldest, but she went off to Kansas with her family and lived a story of her own.

Because you have gathered here tonight to consider our lives, I'd like you to know us a little better. Tomorrow, when you do us the very nice honor, into your minds will come an image of Nathaniel and Betsy Bean and their three little ones. You will know something of our trials, and how we depended upon our half siblings and our friends, at a time when our lives were filled with so much sadness.

I was very small. I was only five, that summer of 1837, when my parents began the journey that was to change so many lives forever. I only remember that I was excited to ride upon the wagon. Rosilla was seven, and she helped to care for our baby brother, Wire, when our mother and the older children, Nathaniel Jr., Flavilla and John, helped to gather wood or helped our father in other ways.

When we reached Michigan, we stopped for a time. We thought we'd rest up and grow a crop to see us onward. When my father died, my mother seemed like a wounded child...with a broken heart and even worse, a broken spirit. The older children tried to help, but they wanted to go on and find our other Leavitt relatives. Our mother could only think of home, where we had people who loved us and could gather us in.

I don't know, really, how we made it back to Hatley. There were other people traveling this way, and some brought us a little way along, and some another little distance, until finally we reached home.

Our mother was so worn from the sorrow and the trials of the travel, that she was very ill. Rosilla went to live with the Hodges family. They had an ample home and ample hearts. They cared for Rosilla. Wire went to live with the Abbotts. They were happy to care for him. Their own three babies had died, one by one, and so they were glad to have Wire. My older sister, Salena, had married Joseph Kezar. They had two children of their own, but they helped care for me.

Our mother was never very strong again. When she died I was only 12. Rosilla was 14. But Wire was only 7.

For many years we depended upon a lot of people for our sustenance. But those who came to our aid were good and gentle people. They taught us well, and they sheltered and cared for us. They loved us.

Ephraim Samuel Hodges was the most handsome young man in our village. But he was six years older than I, and lots of girls hoped he'd notice them. Rosilla lived with their family, so when I went to visit her I had plenty of chances to see him, but I was always tongue-tied when he was around. Then Rosilla married John McConnell. She was only eighteen and he was seven years older than she! I began to hope!

Finally he paid me some attention. And when I was 20, and he was 26, Ephraim Samuel Hodges and I were married. Life began for me then. Ephraim was strong and kind. He was apt and wise in his business affairs. He was prominent in our village and I was very proud of him. We were happy in our community and in our church. I was often called upon to read the service. I sang in the choir.

Our children came, one after another. Flora Mary, Caroline Carrie, William Andrew, George Leslie, Mary, Ephraim Alpheus, Albert Leavitt and Ellen Gertrude. Eight of them! They were handsome children, and good. We were a happy family.

You can imagine how hard it was for me to leave them. My little Albert Leavitt Hodges was barely two, and Ellen Gertrude a babe of four days old, when measles swept our village, and took me away.

Ephraim Samuel's sister, Diantha, had not married and lived with us. She helped him care for our brood. He suffered through the deaths of two of our children and lived to see only one grandchild born.

Then he joined me. Together we watched from our new vantage point. We saw that our children were noble and good. That their children learned their upright values. We anguished with them for their losses. We were wrenched when two strong grandsons, Ben and Ray, paid the ultimate sacrifice for

freedom. But we were proud too, that our families carried on and became strong.

Life is short for all of us. Families are the only real treasure. Though I knew my mother's people, I had no memory of my father's family. I only know they went away and were lost to us for the rest of time. So I thank you for this honor, given to me and to mine. Most of all I thank you for this symbolic tying up again of the eternal cord that binds us all.

Thank you.

Wire Leavitt Tribute  
Newport Vermont, Wednesday, September 22, 2004

Good evening. I am Wire Leavitt. I am the third child of Nathaniel and Betsy Bean Leavitt. I was just four months old when my parents left Hatley in July, 1837. I was nine months old when my mother returned, alone. My sister, Mary Jane, has told you something of our lives, for I was just an infant when so many of these dramatic event occurred.

Still, my life has been a life filled with all the drama that life is designed to hold. Though my story is a bit complicated, I want to tell that story, for I want you to know of me and mine.

Betsy Bean, who was the wife of Hiram Abbott, was my mother's first cousin. They not only shared their name, Betsy Bean, but they shared each other's trials and sorrows.

Hiram and Betsy Bean Abbott had married in 1828, and were living a happy life at Abbott's Corner in Hatley. A year after their marriage, their first little boy was born. They called their child Moses Abbott after Betsy's father, Moses Bean. He was the joy of their lives.

Two years later, a second little boy, born. They called him John. But John died a month after his birth.

A year later, a little girl was born to them. They called her Lydia. But with tragically identical timing, in a month, death took their little girl. Only Moses remained.

Four years later, September, 1836, when their hearts had only begun to heal, seven year old Moses Abbott died. Hiram and Betsy Abbott were left childless. My mother and father, indeed all the family mourned their agonizing loss with them.

When my mother returned to Hatley, with her bedraggled little band, young Moses Abbott had been gone for a year. My mother, heartbroken from her own loss, diminished in health, and destitute for resource, reached out to these good Abbott cousins for help. And they reached out to her, and to me. I became their child, for as long as they lived. They nourished and taught me, they loved me as their own.

When I became a young man, I fell in love with the beautiful daughter of Walter and Mary Wilcock Dustin. She was 20 years old. She was the tenth of their twelve children. She was all I could ever dream of for my wife. She was Harriet, and she returned my affection and accepted me!

As the time for our marriage approached, I began to think of the children who would come to us. What was to be their name? I knew only a few members of my Leavitt family. We had been nourished by the cousins who had not gone west. I had no memory at all of my father, Nathaniel Leavitt.

Still, these children who would come would be his posterity. I struggled with the decision, for I loved my Abbott father and mother. But in the end the heritage of my unborn children seemed to require me to begin to be called Wire Leavitt. I prayed that Betsy and Hiram Abbott would understand.

At the end of a year, a little girl was born to Harriet and me. We named her Betsy, of course, for I had been blessed by two Betsys, and we would remember them both, as our little girl grew.

We were so happy. Life was full of promise and so very good. Betsy was two and a half years old, such a delightful age. Then my Harriet became very ill. We did everything that people in those days knew how to do. But she grew increasingly worse. Harriet knew that she must leave us. Our joy turned to sorrow.

It was not the first sorrow the Dustin family had suffered. Just a year before our marriage, Harriet's older sister, Mary, had been widowed. Her young husband, Leavitt Corey, had died at age 25, leaving Mary to bear their only child, five months later. Mary had borne the child, a boy she named Neal Leavitt Corey, who was by this time, four years old.

Harriet asked from me and from Mary, a promise. She asked that when she was gone, we would marry and rear our children together. Harriet died August 5, 1864. And notwithstanding our sorrowing, before the month was over, we formed a new family and vowed we would rear our children to be strong and happy.

Mary was a remarkable woman. She made a very good mother and a very good wife. To us were born five more children, making seven in all.

The sorrows of the early years seemed to have been our share. For our children, remarkably, all lived to maturity. All except Mary's first son, Neal Leavitt Corey, married. All who married had children.

Mary was a handsome woman. She was, in fact, a rather elegant woman. I didn't ever let on that I knew that her lovely hair was made red by washing it in water in which she had boiled rusty nails. I thought it was rather clever of her. I thought it was amazingly ingenious of her to rub her cheeks with the rosy dyed flowers from her hat. And I didn't reveal that secret either

Mary's cheerful disposition never failed her. Her children adored her, and like the Proverbial virtuous woman, they rise up and call her blessed.

Though I had to leave this earth, suddenly, at age fifty, though I left Mary still with three under-aged children at home, her exuberant spirit gave her strength to carry her heavy responsibility. Her remarkable spirit carried her until she was ninety two, still with all her children and their children, cherishing the time they had with her.

If wealth is measured by ones children, then I was a wealthy man, for my posterity is large. If wealth is measured by having loved and have been loved, then I was a wealthy man. If wealth is measured by all that mortal experience teaches, then I am wealthy, too, by that scale. And I have gratitude to express.

I am thankful to know of my strong heritage. I am thankful for two wonderful women who loved me and bore me children. I am thankful for our children and their children.

And now, I am thankful for you, who have come to do us honor. You do us honor with your presence. We, all those who bade goodbye, that long ago day, thank you that you did not forget.

*Anna's Farewell*

Newport, Vermont, Thursday September 23, 2004

Shirley Carmack, Presenter

Good evening. My name is Anna Leavitt Rowell. I am the eldest grandchild of all the posterity of Jeremiah and Sarah Shannon Leavitt.

Today you have honored us with your presence. You have nourished us with your remembrance. Because I am the eldest, it is my privilege to express gratitude for us all.

May I tell you why it matters so much that you have come?

You see, we were accustomed to doing everything as a family. When my great-grandparents, Nathaniel and Lydia Sanborn Leavitt, moved from Chester to Grantham, it was a family migration. When the Leavitt family moved further north to take up land in Canada, several families came together. My grandfather's brother, Jonathan and Rebecca Ring Leavitt brought their large family. The Wadleigh Leavitt family came.

We were not casual about our relationships or our dependence upon each other. Though I was just a child when we came into Lower Canada, my earliest recollection is that there were always cousins and aunts and uncles nearby. Ours was a congenial society, mutually supportive of everyone. Our family was our identity. We lived in neighborhoods together. Everyone had cousins near to the same age.

Grandmother Sarah and Grandfather Jeremiah Leavitt were the center of our family. Our activities revolved around them. I was only five years old when my grandfather died. But I still remember that we gravitated to our Grandmother Sarah Shannon Leavitt. She then became our center. She was strong and not yet old.

We hadn't agreed on a church as a family. Some went to one church, some to another. Some didn't go at all. It didn't matter so much who went where to church. Our family was the entity that mattered.

So it was disturbing when this new religion became such an important issue with our families. Our grandmother entered into the discussion. That, in itself, made it an important consideration, because everyone respected her

opinion. She seemed really energized by the ideas that were presented in the writings of these people. The doctrines resonated with Grandmother, and with some of the others. Especially some of my aunts were eager to persuade us to accept them.

My father, Wear Leavitt, was the eldest son. He hungered to learn more of these new doctrines. Uncle Nathaniel, Uncle John, Uncle Josiah and Uncle Jeremiah all seemed to be gripped by the excitement, and much exercised by the discussions that now permeated our family gatherings.

Nathan and I had been married three years and had one little girl. Our Abigail was two, and we were expecting our second child. The discussion penetrated both our families. My uncle John had married Nathan's sister Lucy. They were embracing the faith. Nathan's brother, Thomas Rowell, was married to my aunt Lydia Leavitt. Their large family was moving over to Newport, Vermont, with their six children. They were looking for opportunities for their growing sons.

The dilemma was deciding what was right. We wondered if we should join with those who were leaving their homes in Hatley. Either way, we were facing separation. There was to be an exodus of some of our families, and some had determined to remain here. In the end we chose to stay with those who remained behind.

It was a very dark day when I bade goodbye to my father and stepmother, Wear and Phoebe Cowles Leavitt, my brothers and sisters, my grandmother, my uncles and aunts and so many of my cousins. I really believed that they would come back when they discovered that the promises of this gospel they believed could not be realized. I thought the hardships of the frontier would turn them homeward again.

But they did not come back. Only Uncle Nathaniel's Betsy, with her three little ones. She brought the awful news that my uncles, Nathaniel and Josiah had both died. Over the next few months word filtered back to us of other deaths. The worst was my father, Wear Leavitt, and my brother, Jeremiah. They died in the same unfriendly place as my grandmother, Sarah Shannon Leavitt. All the strength that had existed in my family, seemed to have been dissolved.



The unaccustomed loneliness of being so few, when we had been so many, bound those of us who had remained into a cohesive group. We cared for Uncle Nathaniel's little ones, we nourished Betsy. But the joyousness of former days did not return for a long time.

Eight children were born to us. Two little boys died very young. The others grew and we found joy watching them become men and women. One by one they married and left our home. Grandchildren came and with them the happiness of seeing the continuation of ones own.

Nathan died when he was 76 years old. We buried him in the Old North Cemetery, beside our little boys. We had been married 45 years. Now I was very much alone. Though my children and their children were close by, my thoughts turned again and again to the loved ones so long ago gone away. I hungered for the sight of them.

Today, when you came, it seemed as though they had returned. You came, their grandchildren, and it said to all of us who had remained here, "We could not forget you!"

I thank you, for all of us, that you have come so far to gather us in. We feel reclaimed. It is as though the loneliness of separation has been only for a day, and now, all is well...all is well.

Thank you.

Salena's Farewell  
Massawippi Cemetery, Canada, Thursday, September 23, 2004

My name is Salena. I am the eldest of Nathaniel's children.

I wish that I could describe for you, our feelings, as we saw our families disappear in the dust of their caravan that July day in 1837. I remember, I had a profound sense of being abandoned...again.

I had felt bereft when my mother, Deborah Delano, died and left all six of us children and our father. She had been so young and so alive and she encircled us all in the safety of her arms. Then, suddenly, she was gone. I remember being angry with everyone. I was fourteen, and nothing seemed fair or that anything good would be possible again.

I have looked back sadly that Betsy's wedding, which should have been a happy time for her, was tainted by our sorrow. She tried so hard to be our mother. But she was very young, and we were wounded. She must have been discouraged many times with the task she had taken on.

If our sorrow eclipsed the joy of her marriage, her babies took some of the luster from mine. By the time Joseph and I were married in 1834, Betsy and my father had added two little girls of their own to our already crowded household. Rosilla was born in 1830, Mary Jane came in 1832. With a household bursting at the seams as ours was, they didn't really mind that I would be leaving to make a home of my own.

Joseph Kezar was considered a fortunate marriage for me. His family had come to Hatley, among the very earliest of settlers. The Kezars were known to be among the most enterprising of the settlers of Hatley. Everyone was happy for me, when I was Joseph's choice. We married in 1834. I was 19 and Joseph was 23.

Massawippi was Kezar territory, and we began our lives together here. In a year our first-born, Eleanor arrived. Eighteen months later George William Kezar was born. But our serenity was disturbed by the upheaval in my Leavitt family. So many of them had embraced a strange new faith, and a fervent enthusiasm encompassed almost all of them.

Joseph and I listened, but we did not hear. We were content with our possibilities. Still I felt an awful anxiety when I learned that my father and Betsy and my siblings were going to follow this faith. My uncles and aunts and most of my cousins were leaving to go to the States. Little wonder that I felt abandoned.

But we were busy! Every two years a new baby came, until there were nine! It was a happy time. We worked hard, and that kept me from mourning so much the unhappy fate of my father and my uncles and so many of my family who died along their ill-fated journey.

Then our own sorrows began. When little Alexander was only two and a half, five year old Ruth, became ill and died. It was a terrible blow to our family.

The same year that Ruth died, a son was born to us. We named him Ailwyn. But we kept him only 22 months. Our delightful little boy followed Ruth in death.

When another little boy was born, we gave him Ailwyn's name. We called him Ailwyn II. But he too lived only 22 months. We were still reeling with the anguish of his death, March 6, 1861, when Florence became ill, and by the end of that month, she too was gone. She was 16. A beautiful and joyous child!

We did not believe that we could heal from such anguish. Then, a year later our 19 year old son, Nimrod died! How could it possibly have happened to us again? Five of our beloved children gone!

Two of the older girls had married. Eleanor had married and had two little girls. Roxanna married, and had a baby girl.

But Eleanor died in 1864, leaving her two little girls. She was only 29. In 1871, Roxanna died at 32. She left three year old Lena, motherless.

I longed for the comforting strength of my mother. I longed for the consolation of my brothers, my sisters. Joseph diminished in vitality, slowly dying of his broken heart. In March of 1875, while the snows still lay deep in this place, Joseph, age 65, joined our eight children, now lying in here, in Massawippi Cemetery.

George William had married. They had four children who seemed to be thriving. They would eventually have six. Alexander, Lee and Gardner were left at home with me.

It was a time when we were hearing tales of the wonders of the great American West. I had no kind thoughts toward that place. Everyone who had gone there from my world had been lost to me. But Lee and Gardner were restless, and the call of land and liberty and wealth called to them from that place they called Colorado.

So they went there. Young and adventuresome, handsome and daring, feeling invincible. But they were not invincible. They succeeded somewhat in Colorado. They accumulated. But Lee died first, in the town they founded, they called Kezar, Colorado. Then Gardner died. A dramatic death it was... with all the tragic color of that wild land.

How do I know about his death? I had a different vantage by then. My 69 years on earth came to an end just 25 days before he died. He was surprised to see me there!

Alexander, the last living of my 12 children, married finally. A lovely girl. Their two baby boys died as infants. They lie here in this quiet spot, with all the others.

And so you see, why it is so important that you have come back. After all the unshared moments, the disappointments, the anguished loneliness, after all the longing and the wondering about all of them and all of you, it is good that you have come to this place to think of us, to know of us, and to leave with us your blessing. It is a benediction upon our lives, and it will tell the passersby that we were, that we lived, and that we matter.

Thank you, that you did not forget.