

March 1954

Wachter
FILE
COPY

Dear Evelyn,

You have asked me, as the last of my generation of the Peter Wachter family, to write down what I know or can remember hearing of relatives and happenings of the family.

Peter Wachter was the son of Peter Waechter (who was born 1798, d. 1847) and Susanna Tysinger Waechter (b. 1807, d. 1897). They lived in Cronenberg, near Lauterecken, in Bavaria, Germany. There were 5 children, William, Peter, Frederick, Kate and Dora. William and Peter came to this country, after finding living difficult in the tiny hilltop village. When they were well established, they sent for their mother and other three children, who arrived in New York in 1859 after a 39-day trip on a sailing vessel. They lived in Massillon, Ohio, at first, while William and Peter had a tailoring shop in ~~Ligonier~~ ^{Ligonier} ~~Segonier~~, Ind. Later the three boys came to Toledo and founded Wachter Bros. Shoe Store. I have already written something of the families of these other Wachters.

You are interested in Peter (b. 1842 in Cronenberg). He was a man of medium height, wiry build, nearly black hair, hazel eyes. Clean shaven as a young man, he later wore a beard of prevailing style. He was of an even temperament, and a steady worker, no matter what he did.

His mother was a tiny woman. She lived with Dora in Massillon in a German community, and never learned to speak much English. She wore black dresses, little silk aprons and black lace caps with little bows of ribbon. She lived to be ninety.

Mary Jane Wachter was the daughter of Henry Willcox (b. 1802, d. 1880) and Matilda Millard (b. 1821, d. 1845) and was born in Toledo,

Ohio, Oct. 8, 1845. Her mother died three days after her birth. Mr. and Mrs. Brockbank, English friends of her father, had just lost a baby and they brought her up, on their farm. They were always like own family to her. She acquired Hester ^uBaxton of Bath, England, as a stepmother in 1849. A Brockbank daughter married a Wright, and their descendants now operate Wright Bros. greenhouses, growing cucumbers and melons on the old farm, now bordering Ottawa Park.

Mary Jane went to public school and graduated from the old Toledo High School in one of the early classes to be graduated there. She taught school in a little town down the bay shore known as Manhattan and lived around with school families, as she was so far from home! which was at Madison and 14th Street. This home was rather gloomy. It faced 14th Street, had a good-sized lawn, with picket fence. The back parlor had a bay window, rather close to street on Madison. The front parlor faced 14th St. and opened onto a long narrow porch, with flower beds in front of it. At 15th St. was the town cemetery where many people were buried who died from an epidemic of cholera. Harriet Cornwall Willcox and Matilda Millard Willcox were buried here, and were later moved to Forest Cemetery and interred in same grave.

Mary Jane was only about 5 feet in height, almost plump figure, had nice gray eyes and brown hair. She was a good housekeeper, a fine needlewoman, and quite artistic. She made a copy of Raphael's "Madonna of the Chair" in charcoal. It had been framed, and was a family possession for years.

Henry Willcox was born in Wookey Hole, near Bath, England. He came to this country in 1829, stayed with friends in Skaneateles, N. Y. for a while, but soon went further west, and tried clearing land in Michigan. But it was such a wilderness, he came to Toledo, a strug-

gling village at the mouth of the Maumee River and tried farming on the east side of the river. To show his excitable nature, there is a bit of a story handed down. The farmers had been troubled with a chicken thief and had made a pact to shoot off a gun, if molested. An owl had irritated the family with its hoots, and he ran out one night and shot at it and clapped it in a rain barrel. When help arrived, he shouted, "I've got him! Right here in the rain barrel!"

He decided that farming was not his forte and bought a lot on Summit Street, near Monroe, and opened a Boot and Shoe Shop. The family lived directly back of the store on St. Clair St. He had married Harriet Cornwall in 1831. She died in 1838, leaving one daughter, Charlotte. In 1840 he married Matilda Millard, a Canadian of whom little is known, except that she had a brother, Mortimer, much younger than she was. They had three children: a son, John, died in infancy; Matilda, and Mary Jane. The shoe shop prospered, with its handmade boots and shoes, and more property was purchased on Summit near Jefferson, and later the home on Madison and 14th, which was beyond the canal that went through town.

When Peter Wachter and Mary Jane Willcox were married in Feb. 1868, they went to live in a double house on Oliver Street, that was off Broadway leading to the present Union R. R. station. Harry was born there Dec. 27, the same year. Then they moved to a house on Huron St., near Adams. Years afterward this property was sold and was part of land on which LaSalle's store now stands.

The Huron St. home was one of a block of three-storey basement houses. The basement was below street level, having an entrance hall, dining room, kitchen and bedroom. The first floor was above street level, with a flight of steps outside leading to front door. It had a

front parlor, a back parlor, and bedroom. Three bedrooms on third floor. I came into being in this home April 1877, eight years and four months after Harry was born. I was always little sister to him, and he seemed to feel a responsibility to look after me. He was always a wonderful brother.

My recollections of the Huron St. house are few, but those I have are quite vivid. One, was falling down the stone steps leading to the basement door. I had gone to the top to see Mother off to do her marketing, and when I turned to go down, I fell the whole length. Annie McLaughlin, who was washing windows, thought I was done for, screamed until Mother came running back. I carry the bump on my skull to this day. I remember the way the basement looked when it was flooded once. I saw muddy water all over the floor, and some of my playthings floating about. Another recollection of the basement is the time I was playing behind the rack of ironed clothes in the kitchen. I had found a can of shelled popcorn. I thought the kernels would be nice for earrings, but they would not stay put. A few days later I had an ear-ache. The ear doctor found three kernels in one ear, and two in the other, and the drums much inflamed. I did not like the treatment. This may have been the beginning of my deafness, though I was in high school before it was realized I was not hearing as I should.

Uncle Fred Wachter and family lived next door. When we moved out to the new house on Monroe St., we made visits back to them. So, when I was older, I can remember how the street looked. On the corner of Madison and Huron, there was a vacant lot with high billboards and in behind them people threw their rubbish. Sometimes Freddy Wachter and I would poke around in this stuff for treasure. The Spitzer building now stands on that lot. There was another block of houses across from us on Huron.

I think I was about five years old, when we moved to 2433 Monroe St. It was out in the country, although the Hudson house next door, the Cray and Norton were already there.

Our house was brick, stone trim, two stories and dormer attic. It was much too large for us. The first floor had a good size hall, with wide stairway; a niche in wall near upper landing; a carved walnut bannister with a fancy gas lamp on the newel post. The vestibule had red and white glass windows on inner side. The front parlor was square, with double sliding doors to back parlor, which had a bay window and a side entrance. There was a large dining room with a big china closet; a small back hall, with stairs to second floor. A huge kitchen, with alcoved sink, had an oak floor which had to be scrubbed on hands and knees every Saturday. Off of kitchen was a small room which served as pantry, with a place for a barrel of flour, fifty pounds of sugar, cans of coffee beans (which had to be ground) and other supplies in quantity. There was also a bedroom on the first floor, and a bathroom. All the ceilings were high; tall windows with inside wooden shutters, a marble mantelpiece in every room.

The front parlor had heavy Brussels net lace curtains to the floor; velvet carpet with roses on a black background; marble-topped table with family Bible, and a big photograph album. The parlor set of furniture was black walnut, upholstered in black horsehair. It surely did prick, and so easy to slide off of! In the back parlor there was a large center table, well covered with a felt cloth, on which stood a coal oil lamp and piles of books. A square piano filled part of one side of the room. On the other side was a desk with book shelves above almost to the ceiling. A plant stand filled up the bay window, and of course there were several rockers, spring and otherwise. I forgot to mention that gas fixtures throughout the house ~~and~~ were quite ornamental, and hard to light.

Upstairs there were five bedrooms and one bathroom, but there was a washstand in every room, with running water. The ceilings were not quite so high. The attic was over the whole house, and a deep stone foundation gave a five-room basement. The attic held a huge rain water tank. It was my father's job to clean it out once a year. It got so black from matted leaves and dirt in the gutters. It was drained, and he climbed in and scrubbed it clean. This tank was a guesome thing to me. Harry inhabited the second floor by himself. I slept on a cot in Mother's room downstairs. I was always taking cold, and had to be watched at night. Once I had inflammation of the lungs (pneumonia?) and was very sick. The bay window room was his workshop. Once while he was cleaning his shot gun, it went off, and peppered the mantelpiece. That mantel was pockmarked until the house was made into three apartments and tile fireplaces put in.

We had a horse and canopy-top buggys in those days, also a cutter, or sleigh, which was used a lot. I guess there was more snow then. I remember the racing out on Franklin Ave., when that street was first opened. It was exciting, to say the least, with many a spill onto the hard-packed snow.

Harry took care of the horse. One was called Nellie. He also had a good-sized garden, as well as a lot of chickens. He built the house for them himself. He raised incubator chicks. When they were first hatched, the incubator stood behind the kitchen stove! Later they lived in the laundry for a time. He also made a long table to store eggs, in drawers fixed so the eggs stood upright, not touching each other. This table stood in the laundry, as did the icebox, a stove to boil clothes, and three stationary tubs. The icebox held 100-pound cakes of ice. This icebox was some convenience! We had to go down an open flight of stairs from the kitchen with

everything that needed refrigeration. Down and up three times a day. My father came home at noon.

It was shady out by the barn, and often in vacation time, when Harry took time off from his garden work, Mother would read to us out there, so many chapters a day, from Scott or Dickens. Our dog's name was Nero. His picture is in the family album with Harry and me. I was sick the day it was taken, but insisted on being in the picture. Harry had been to a party out in Sylvania, and when he put the horse and buggy away, Nero jumped from the blanket where he had stolen a ride. I was delighted next morning to find a dog in the house.

The lot next door was vacant, but fenced in, and Nellie was put to pasture there sometimes. Three old apple trees grew near our fence. The apples were small and runty, but urchins from across the commons back of us, often came to poach. For some reason, I felt they had no right to the apples, and did my best to keep them away, by turning the hose on them. I usually got the worst of it, with apples thrown at me, sometimes rotten and often a hit scored.

Amusements were scarce. One of mine was to watch for the man to come and light the gas lamps on either side of the street. He would put up his little ladder against the lamp post, open the glass door on one side of the lamp, turn on the gas, and light up. I don't remember what he carried to touch off the gas. There were three lamps I could see. What fun!

Another excitement was a trip downtown on the horse car, which went from the Wagon Works, called Auburndale now, down Monroe, to Summit Street. There it turned on a turntable and took its leisurely way back. The car was not much larger than a present-day limousine. It ran on a narrow track down the center of the road, which was paved on one side with planks at right angle to track. The other side was dirt, real sticky mud when it rained. Sometimes the planks

became loose and flopped up when driven over, or even up-ended into the ditch.

About once each summer, we had a real outing, of a whole day, usually with the Lloyds from Maumee. Lunch was packed, and we went down to Water St. and boarded the big steamer for Put-in-Bay. I remember the first time I saw Lake Erie from the water's edge. I was so frightened. The water had not bothered me when we were on the boat, but at the beach it seemed to be coming right at me. Another pleasure for me was a stay at the Brockbank farm, way out in the country. I could hardly wait, until the big farm wagon, which had brought the vegetables to market before daylight, stopped for me, and Royal, the hired man, helped to pull me up on the high seat, beside him. I was very fond of Royal, even though he would laugh at me when a huge garter snake would slide across the path in front of me. But he would see to it that I got by safely.

I did not go to school until I was seven. I had to go to Washington school, which is nearly over to Dorr St. in a section populated by colored people. In nice weather I could go across the commons back of us and save quite a walk. Sometimes I took my lunch. I remember the crowded stuffy basement where we ate, with benches to sit on. Once when the bell rang, I jumped up, and in my hurry not to be late, fell against the sharp corner of one of these benches, and cut a gash in my eyebrow, just missing my eye. I was taken to my teacher, Miss Bangs, bleeding profusely. She was very old, or so I thought, and really fat. She did a good job, bathing the cut, and tied up my head. One of the older boys took me home on his sled. When I went to school by way of Collingwood Ave., I loved to stop at a little shop on the way when I could scrape up a penny or two. It was kept by a little old

lady, in the front room of her cottage. Such a wonderful place to buy a stick of candy, a slate pencil, a bit of ribbon or lace for my doll. Children of this generation don't consider a penny as money. It won't buy anything.

Uncle Fred's oldest child, Nellie, died when she was ten, and not long after, Aunt Addie, his wife, passed away. He was frantic in his grief, and utterly unable to plan how to care for his four boys. Robbie was less than a year old. So Mother took the five of them for a while. Freddie was my age. Harvey was younger. Charlie was older. I had a grand time while they were with us, as I had no playmates. One day a heavy rain came up and Freddie and I climbed into an empty flour barrel which had just been put out near the barn. The umbrella which we had thoughtfully taken with us, would not open properly, and it was easier to get into the barrel than out of it. It is needless to say that we were a doughy mess when our yells brought help.

Hetty Lloyd, a few weeks older than I, would have been my pal, except that they lived in Maumee, which was a long day's trip up and back, by horse and buggy. They lived near Fort Miami, scene of Indian wars. It is reported how Turkey Foot, an Indian brave, climbed a tree near a great rock (now bearing his name) and did much havoc with his ~~kn~~ bow and arrow, until he was spotted and brought down. We have a water color of Turkey Foot rock. I don't know where that rock is now that the highway has been built to Waterville.

When I was eight or nine, Mother and Father and my step-grandmother, Hester Willcox, went with the Knights Templar to a convention held in San Francisco. I was impressed by their stories of Chinatown and gifts from there. I also remember about Mother sitting on a bag of ripe peaches. At that time, bustles were in style. They

were covered by many yards of material bunched up on them. All Mother had to do was rearrange the cloth to hide the yellow stain. For some reason, they stopped at Leadville, Colo., a mining town before Cripple Creek. Mother had a bad cold, and it disappeared like magic!

While they were gone, Harry was head of the house. Sam Rohr came to sleep nights, and Sophia looked after the house and me. Sophia had been with us since I was a baby. I called her Boppy. We did not have "maids" in those days, just hired girls. They did everything from washing, cooking, to baby-sitting--only that term was not known then. Two or three dollars a week, sometimes five! was their pay. Boppy married, and for seventy years we lost track of her. Then Sibil took her watch for repair to a man who, when she gave her name, said that his mother had worked for a Mrs. Wachter. I went to see her at her daughter's home. She was 92, and she knew me instantly. Was as spry as could be.

When Harry went to high school, which was on Madison between Michigan and 10th, he rode a bicycle, one of the big wheel kind, only his was a new model with the little wheel in front. It was tricky to steer. He fell off his, and broke his arm. In vacation and after school, he worked in D. L. Stine's architectural office.

I have a very clear picture of my father. It must have been just before he died. I was over at the Hudsons' next door, looking through one of their windows directly across from our bay window, maybe fifty feet away. I saw him standing in front of the fireplace, with his back to the fire, his favorite way of getting warm. His hair was still dark and plentiful. It was the seeing him, framed by the window, that has remained in my memory all these years.

Most of the time he wore a black cutaway coat, and he had beautiful leather boots, worn inside his trousers, so they did not

not show off. On Sundays and holidays he wore a Prince Albert and a "plug hat," which was of shiny black beaver. I used to smooth it, but once in a while could not resist rubbing it the wrongway, and making designs. Of course, he wore a heavy gold watch chain across his vest, with a masonic charm.

I don't remember much about Mother's clothes, except one dress, which was of heavy black silk, with many puffs and heavily adorned with jet trimming. I liked her bonnets. They were made to order by Le Baron, a man milliner from Paris. One was of fine Milan straw, bound with black velvet ribbon~~s~~ and trimmed with rosebuds. It was lovely! ^{she} and/let me cut it up for a doll hat!

Mother made most of my clothes. A warm wool for winter, a lighter weight for spring and fall, and summer cottons of gingham or lawn. But always I was enveloped in a white apron, except on Sunday

Life was quiet for most people in the late 1880's and early 1890's. Harry had class parties and friends too old for me. One thing I did enjoy was going out on the river in a rowboat with a couple of boys from lower town, the otherside of Cherry St. We would go to Eagle Point, land, and have a picnic supper. Once we did not get started back very early. It was beautiful, with moonlight on the river. It was a long row back, and when we reached the foot of Monroe St., the last car had gone, about 11:30. One of the boys walked me home, and that was the last row I had up the river.

Of course, we could take street car rides. Monroe St. had been paved with cedar blocks, and the car line had been extended along Summit Street out Adams and Ashland, Central, past Woodlawn Cemetery, back to Auburndale, making a Long Belt line. In summer there were open cars, with seats crosswise, the entire width of the car,, so

the conductor had to navigate the ~~x~~ top step from end to end to collect his nickel fares.. Getting on and off these cars ~~x~~ was quite a feat. Climb up two steps, grab a handle on upright of seat, climb over everyone already seated to any vacant seat you had to spot before getting on. When it rained, a canvas curtain was let down, which helped some, not much, to keep people on end seats from getting wet. There were no taxis to help one to his destination, so it was street car or walk.

There were dancing assemblies, conducted by Miss Ada Ritchie. She was a fine teacher in high school: tall, muscular, nice gray moustache, very outspoken. She used to say that she earned her living by the "sweat of her feet...as well as by the sweat of her brow."

In Jan. 1890, there was an epidemic of what was called "La Grippe" (probably flu). Father came down with a hard cold, which old Dr. Coldham (an Englishman) treated for a few days, then gave him a prescription for a tonic and said he could go back to the store on the following Monday. Mother and Harry drove to town to get the tonic. Right after they left, Father had a heavy chill. Katie, our hired girl, and I did not not know what to do, except pile blankets on him. When Mother and Harry returned, Harry started right out to get the doctor, but he was out, and did not get around until next morning. Father passed away in a few days, Jan. 18. His last words to Harry were: "Straight ahead." Sarah Wright, granddaughter to the Brockbanks came to help take care of him. He is buried in Woodlawn Cemetery.

Harry became head of our family, and assumed responsibility for Mother and me.

I graduated from Toledo High School in 1895. It was the last class to graduate there. It was built in 1853. Mother graduated from

there in 1853, and Harry in 1886. It burned down at night, in the spring, and the end of school year was difficult. Some classes were held in a nearby church; some in the Scott Manual Training School, which had been added to the High School on the Adams St. side and which had not been damaged. The big fire door saved it. My seat was next to this door, in the big study hall, and I was able to get to my desk, and rescued my song book. This book was scorched, but I have kept it all these years. The big bell in the tower of High School always tolled for fires. That night it rang until it fell. When Central High School was built on the site of the old building, it stood in front of Manual Training, and is now enshrined in front of Scott High School.

I had taken clay modeling from Mr. Armstrong, who encouraged me to go to the Art Students League on W. 57th St., New York. I worked a few months under Daniel Chester French, and soon discovered that my talent was limited.

In 1903 Charley Mandler and I were married. A few years later, when Mother's health began to fail, we moved back to Monroe St. house, which Harry had made into three apartments after he built at 650 Lincoln and moved there.

Mary Alice was a little over a year old, when we took the first floor apartment, so I could care for Mother. She was nearly helpless (hardening of the arteries) and confined to a wheel chair. Miss Edith Capp, a trained nurse, cared for her the last year of her life. I could not do much for her, except take her for a ride every nice day in my little Hupp-Yeats electric coupe. She died in November, 1913, and lies beside Father at Woodlawn.

I don't remember when the Valentine Theater was built. It

was very beautiful. The boxes were always filled with society people to see the great actors of those days. I saw Joe Jefferson at the opening in "Rip Van Winkle," Sarah Bernhardt in "L'Aiglon," Sir Henry Irving and Ellen Terry, Otis Skinner, Mrs. Fiske, all the great ones came to Valentine. It is now a movie theater, but still shows what it must have been like.

I realize that many of the things of which I have written are not pertinent to the Wachter family alone, but perhaps gives a glimpse of that time. I can hardly believe some of these things were so. Such a change from then to now.

Imagine life without a phone. No longer need we wait for the grocery boy to bring ~~xxxx~~ our groceries, so as to give him the next day's order.

I saw one of the first "cinemas" on 14th St., New York. Just short shorts, of no particular interest. Just the wonder of seeing pictures in motion. But now we see a queen crowned, on the other side of the ocean, even as it happens. We had one of the first radios and listened to Lindbergh's arrival in Paris, instead of having to wait for newspaper reports. His "33 hours to Paris," recently published, makes that memory very real.

How many people, before radio and T.V., ever heard and saw a president of the U.S. give his inaugural address? We are right there, at great events. We see and hear of the wonders of the world.

Can one imagine a crowd of people running after a horseless carriage, just to see the wonder of it? Now a carriage with a horse is quite a sight. Red and green traffic lights were unthought of, would have meant nothing to anyone. How did we live without electricity and all it does for us? I don't remember having toast very often. It

was so hard to make on top of our wood range. Now a toaster is in every home.

A hot air furnace (tons of coal in a bin in the cellar), a pump ~~in~~ at the kitchen sink, maybe a bath room and an indoor toilet. Those were the extravagant conveniences.

To get ~~back~~ back to the family. Harry became a prominent architect in Toledo, Horace following in his footsteps. Harry Lloyd was a judge in Common Pleas Court. John Turner Rohr is President of Toledo Trust, the only bank to weather depression. He is the son of Sam Rohr, my favorite cousin.

I have a feeling that maybe the sturdy stock of the Wachters and Willcoxes may help a bit to produce some celebrities in future generations. It seems right now there will be some.

It is time for me to close. Past time.

(sgd.) Aunt Bessie Horton Wachter Mandler

Note: The Horton comes from Mother's friendship with Mary E. Horton, a teacher in Toledo High School. Later she went as instructor to Wellesley. Her home there is known as Horton House.