

A Personal Note on the Stories

Visiting Aunt "Sate" in the old Benedict home in Vermontville is one of the most cherished memories of my childhood. Marian and Margaret, my sisters, and I would swing under the huge trees, slide down the cellar door, and ride in a horse and buggy to the old cemetery, relishing every moment. But best of all was playing with the wicker doll buggy and furniture that we hauled out from attic and granary, and gazing at the lovely French boudoir shown in Teen-Age Stories as Alma's bedroom. In it was a long chintz-covered box containing some twenty fascinating dolls. We loved every one, from the little dolls in national costume to the china headed doll with the kid body and the large, exquisite bisque doll brought from France. We used to wish that the train taking us back to Lansing would never come.

My grandmother's girlhood home was in Vermontville; she was a daughter of the Reverend William Uriah Benedict, the sister of Sara Benedict, and the Anna of "Sara and Anna" in Tales My Mother Told. She became Anna Benedict Marsh; she and her daughters, Mary and Edna, are mentioned in Teen-Age Stories. My mother, Mary Marsha Bishop, was the ribbon girl at Alma's wedding.

How my grandmother loved her "Sister Sate" and her niece, Alma! To my mother they were the beloved and respected aunt and cousin. After Aunt Sate's death Cousin Alma continued the close family contact with letters, visits, and kindnesses. At Christmas time the "box from Alma" was an important part of the season. There were always a plum pudding and many little gifts like greens and candleholders to brighten the holiday in our lean years. And it was to Cousin Alma's old mansion in Marquette that Mother went for solace after the death first of my sister, Marian, and later of my father. So we learned to love and revere her, and later, my husband and I with our children, Anne and Bill, spent many a pleasant day on the rocks of Lake Superior at her Middle Island Camp and in her Marquette home.

Tales My Mother Told are tales my grandmother also told as she bustled about our house during her active days and as she sat, blind, in her rocking chair when she was in her nineties. At those times I was a little bored and impatient to hear stories that seemed to bear so little relation to the days I lived in. But now I cherish them and am glad to have a part in preserving them, not only for Cousin Alma's family and friends, but for the children and grandchildren of Marian and Margaret as well as my own, hoping that they will treasure them as part of their heritage. I am grateful to Cousin Alma for telling them in the vigorous style which was so characteristic of her personality.

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