

# 1889: A new teacher and a new newspaper

This is the fourth in a series of articles based on the history of Barrington's only National Landmark structure, the Octagon House on West Main Street, and the collection of letters written from that house by members of the Joseph Brown family, during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Much of the material used in researching these articles is now in the collections of the Barrington Historical Museum.

By BARBARA BENSON

As Joseph Putnam Brown moved around Barrington and Cuba townships on the 1860s and 1870s, the only document recording his activities is his own ledger, which he had brought with him from Massachusetts. The census for 1860 and 1870 (which can be seen at the Barrington Area Library) are quite specific that he was in Cuba Township in 1860, and Barrington Township in 1870. But where in Barrington Township is not clear, although the preceding and following names listed in the census report would indicate that he was on a farm, assuming that there was a certain consecutive method of house to house recording. Brown's father-in-law William Hawley owned considerable acreage in the vicinity of Goose Lake, and many of the original documents of Hawley's land transactions in Barrington Township still exist. In some of the letters, Joseph Brown's wife, Emaline Hawley Brown, and daughter Hattie, mention visiting their old farm and the Wessels who were now living on it.

Perhaps the most fascinating entries from the point of view of research into the origins of the Octagon House, are those during 1869, 1870 and 1871 which indicate the purchase of building materials. On March 15, 1869 for instance, he bought:

3 six-panel doors at	\$9.75
700 feet of lath at	\$2.45
383 ditto lumber at	\$7.47
nails at	\$1.00

On the 16th of April, he bought 330 feet of lumber and 1650 feet of siding, and on the 20th, five doors, on the 29th, twelve windows. He also entered "fair" to

Chicago and "frait" on boxes. In August, 1869, he bought 1000 feet of lumber for \$17 and in September, 2,000 shingles for \$5 with an additional 300 feet of lumber. By the end of September he added barrels of lime "for plastering", and many pounds of horsehair, lime and sand. On Oct. 27, he bought a stove and pipe, and on Nov. 8, three door locks and five door catches. Similar entries continue throughout 1870 and 1871, although by mid-1870, the volumes decrease.

Throughout the ledger, when another party has been involved in a transaction, the name has been noted. In these entries, no other names appear, and the conclusion must be that Joe Brown was building something for himself. But what, and where?

Family lore of the Nightingales is contradictory because one story is that Laura Brown Nightingale remembered attending the wake for her 3-year-old brother, Arthur, in 1863, in the front parlor of the Octagon House, and the other, already noted, is that Brown added the second level to the house. Since the current restoration shows that a major renovation, including the addition of a second level, and the porch took place in the 1880s, nothing ties together here, unless memory and lore are a little hazy about that 1863 date. In that case, it is conceivable that the ledger entries refer to construction of the first level, but the fact remains that Chicago Title and Trust records indicate that Brown did not take title to that parcel until 1882.

Some indication of the Browns' whereabouts in 1863, might be gained from their son Arthur's burial site, but that is another grave which has not been found. The letters make occasional mention of visiting the cemetery up at "the Center", and William Hawley was buried there in 1878, but there is no reference to tending Arthur's grave.

Laura was six at the time of his death, and Hattie was born four years later in 1867. And so the Browns brought up two daughters who were 10 years apart, and both of whom became school teachers. Of Laura's teaching days little is known, but



Hattie Brown...schoolteacher.

Hattie's career in both the town and country schools of Barrington was well documented in her own words, and in the observations of her mother.

## The School Teacher

In the spring of 1889, Hattie was teaching at the "Village school" which was presumably the then-Hough Street School, and she was evidently a substitute teacher, for there are comments of her dread at being called for the next day, because she preferred and looked forward to being in the county schools. She took an examination which she failed, according to Emaline's letter of July 3:

*"It was a great deal harder than the one two years ago. Her average was 66 in the common branches and he only gave her 36 in methods. She has a school in Lake County and in the Porter District. Ren is one of the directors (I wonder if he wishes he was all three) he is clerk so of course he is the one. He hired her for the winter and spring term both, he said he would rather hire that way, they pay her thirty dollars a month the four winter months and twenty five dollars a month for two spring months, and they hire her fires built. She intends to go to the Lake County Institute"*

The Porter School was on Buckley Road, about midway along the eastside, and the Elliot Porter farm covered an area at the intersection with the present Oak Knoll Road. The Porter farmhouse is still there, just west of Buckley on the south side of Oak Knoll. Lorenzo "Ren" Porter was Elliot's son, and Hattie's future husband.

In August 1889, Hattie went to Libertyville, to the Lake County Institute, and lost no time in writing to Pa and Ma. She had travelled from Barrington with the Harrower family by horse and wagon. Their son Will was also going to the Institute. Her comments about her teachers and classes were all extremely favorable after the first two days. She noted:

*I am getting my money's worth here I tell you. In the first place the Institute is just what I needed and I am getting interested in it I tell you. I think I am going through cheaper than I expected. I have five nice books which only cost me \$1.40. That book I was telling you about in town which cost \$1.25 only cost 90 cents here. We board with Mrs. Pelton, we like her very*

*much. She gets everything she can think of for us to eat; watermelon, cucumber, onions, peaches, pears, apples and tomatoes. She is a great talker and wants us to feel at home. There are only herself and husband and niece in the family. She bought a hammock for us, I am enjoying it very much, and shall bring home my notebook and others so you can see what we do here. I am getting deeply interested in botany. I haven't heard much of psychology yet, but expect to the last of this week. I have a splendid book on civil government entitled "Illinois and our Nation". Goodnight, it is twelve minutes past eleven, I didn't think it so late.*  
Yours, Hattie".

By the time Hattie came home after a week in Libertyville, her mother had written two letters to Laura, mentioning that Hattie didn't know where she would board yet, and also providing some insight into the state of education at that time:

*"Cora (Klueck?) has taken the Schaumburg school, she gets thirty seven dollars a month, they pay pretty high over there for teachers, for it is such an outlandish place no one wants to teach there if they can get a school anywhere else. They have been after George Barnett to teach in the White Schoolhouse (on West Cuba Road) the school has got to be such a terror that a lady teacher cannot manage them, the last three teachers have had a hard time with the school. Zoia Sizer has her same school another year"*

In a letter to Laura on Aug. 28, Emaline further notes that:

*"Charlie Dodge has got a city certificate but could not get a school in there this fall. Our new schoolma'am is not at all handsome. Mamie Whitney is going to teach in the same place she taught last winter. Nora Donley in the same place she had last spring, and Nelly Donley has a school at Kelsey's Corners"*

Donley was Donlea, Mamie Whitney was at the Honey Lake Schoolhouse, which may have been the same building which is now part of a residence on Honey Lake Road. The Kelsey's Corners school still exists also as a residence at the corner of Kelsey and Route 22.

On Sept. 4, Hattie begins what is to be a 13 page letter to Laura:

*"Dear Little Sister;-received your letter this morning and I have been thinking about you ever since, so concluded I'd write. I feel as if I would like to get my arms around you and hug you so tight you could just breathe. I am so loney this morning, yet I am so happy for we are having a lovely rain..."*

The letter is then filled with Hattie's thoughts about the various beaus that she has been flirting with, a walk to the River near Carpentersville, during which Ma has lectured her terribly about her behavior, and her future plans when school begins:

*"Mr. Marvin intends to put us into the work for the next three years. He don't like it because Cook County is so far ahead. He is working hard to improve the schools. I like him real well now but at first I thought he was too big feeling. Next year the institute is at Waukegan and we can probably go up on the new railroad. After this we must pass our examination in civil government and psychology beside the other branches. We must also stand sixty or above in everything and average seventy. In Cook County it is only fifty and seventy. Mrs. Harnden is a little provoked at me for not coming to teacher's meetings, but she will be obliged to stand*



The Porter one-room schoolhouse on Buckley Road was purchased in the 1940s and moved to the Mead property on Ridge Road. It was destroyed in the 1967 tornado.