

Doctor charges \$8 for delivering baby in 1896

By BARBARA BENSON

This is the 12th in a series of Barrington Courier-Review articles which began in May of 1982, based on the collection of letters written by the occupants of Barrington's Octagon House between 1889 and 1904. Authors of the letters were Emaline Hawley Brown and her daughter Hattie Brown Porter, and the recipient was Emaline's other daughter, Laura, who had married Joseph Nightingale in 1889.

The letters which Laura wrote back to Barrington have not been found, and therefore it has not been possible to make a comparison of styles as it is in the case of those written by Emaline and Hattie, but it is possible to infer from many of Hattie's responses to her sister, that Laura was perhaps a much gentler and less rebellious character than Hattie.

Laura had two sons before Hattie had her first child. Little Arthur, who was born

she don't know.

Now what I want is instructions. I went up to Mamie's one afternoon and took a lesson but there are so many things I don't know and then Mamie isn't a bit particular but she is ever so good. She lent me her patterns, set no. 6782 in "Mother and Babe." I have that pamphlet. Now here are some of the questions I want to fire at the head of someone that knows something about kids for I don't.

How wide do you make the petticoats? I can't just tell by the skirt pattern. And are the skirts made longer than the dresses and if so how much longer? They look and measure longer. How wide did you make the bands and are the skirt bands as wide? Will you make cotton shirts if I make three flannel ones and will three of each of underclothes be enough. Napkins excepted of course. And would you advise making little sacks for house wear? I am going to

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in April, 1891, and Roscoe, who was born in May of 1896. Emaline had gone to Minnesota for Arthur's birth, but when Roscoe was born she was very ill and confined to bed in the Octagon House with what Dr. Richardson described as a "cattarrhal inflammation of the stomach." She apparently weighed about 82 lbs. As Hattie wrote to Laura during a letter which spanned the week of May 15, 1896:

Pa went downtown this morning and got your letter. Ma clapped her hands over your feeling so well.

Possibly a letter is missing because this seems to be the only reference at that time to Emaline and Joe becoming grandparents for the second time. It is in marked contrast to the excitement and furor which had surrounded Arthur's birth.

About the same time that Roscoe was born, Hattie finally had some important news to share with her sister:

Barrington, Ills. May 18, '96

Dear Sis: Private: I will write a letter by itself because I usually read my letters to the folks before sending them. I just as soon Ma wouldn't know this if she wasn't sick, but she worries over her "children" so much that I have said nothing although she must see it.

Its a KID! yes, terrible isn't it? Yours? Ah no! mine. No "ourn" as Billy Collins says. I shouldn't have tried to bluff you off when you accused me a while ago (and I

Yes, Cook County went republican by a rousing majority, and just think of York State and New York City going republican, they have always been the stronghold of the democrats.

probably didn't succeed) if you had said it to me instead of in their letter but I was mad...

After a long discourse with her sister to the effect that the child was planned, to make Ren finally happy, although Hattie wouldn't have been the least upset if she never had any children, Laura is told:

I don't want the Aunties to know when, for they are telegraph wires you know. Addie was down one Saturday and Ma told her you were to have one and Meal was out the next Wednesday and she knew all about it, they can't keep anything. Addie rubbed me down and twitted me of it but

Chicago before long to get the stuff but shall await your advice.

Do you buy the socks ready knit, and what is a fair price for white woolen ones? I never knew how little I did know. The dresses measure a little less than a yard long from the neck down. Is that about the same as you make them? If ma gets better I shall tell her about it, but am well satisfied that she knows.

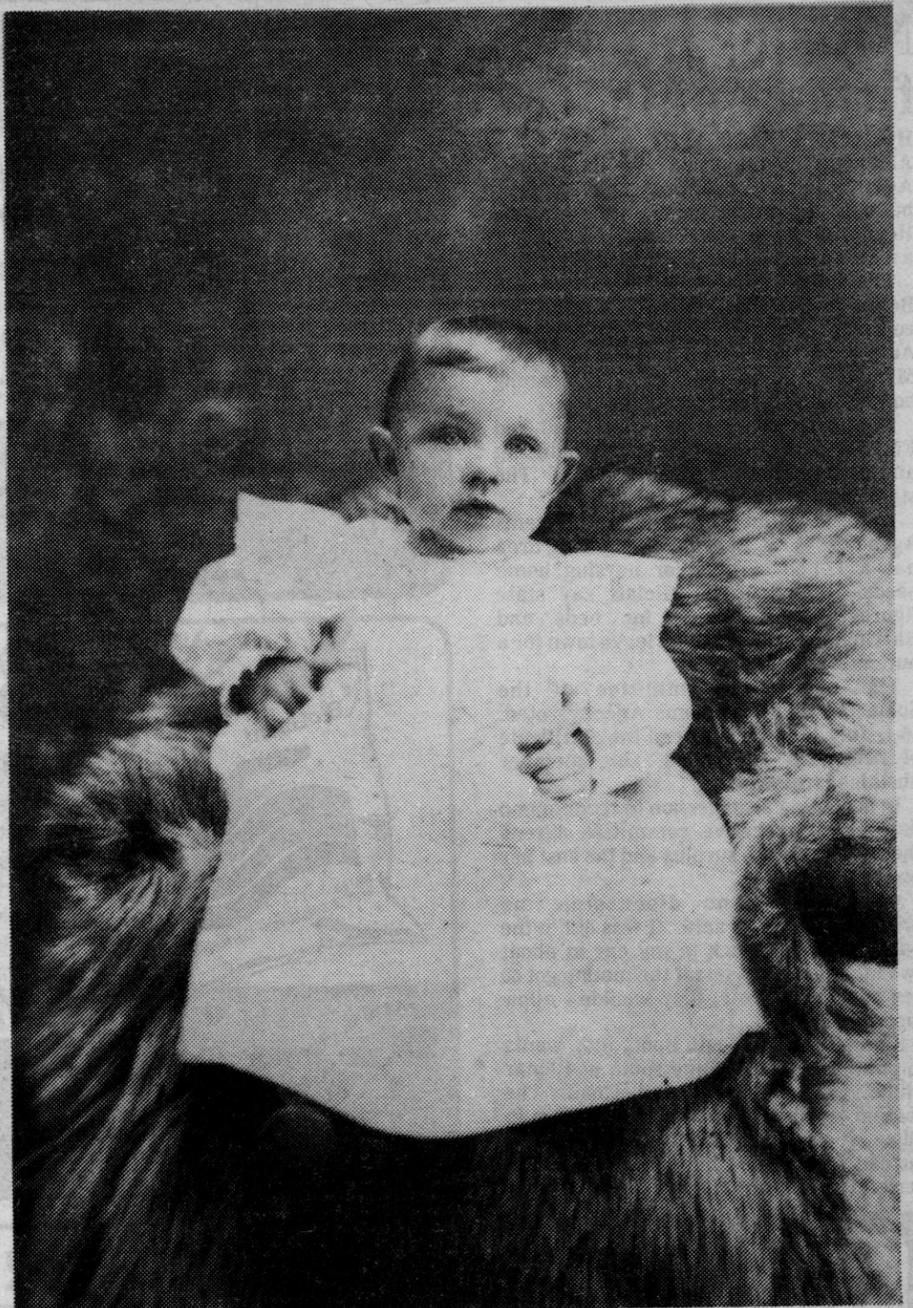
Wed. Noon: I am going to town this afternoon and will mail this as I'd like an answer as soon as convenient and any further instructions you deem helpful to a maman full of preg Nancy (Ren says) will be thankfully accepted. Will send you another regular letter the last of the week. Till then goodbye with love. Sister. P.S. Of course you may tell Joe.

Howard Eugene Porter, the only child of Hattie and Ren, was born on October 19, 1896. Emaline Brown wrote to Laura immediately:

Dear Laura, Pa and I are with Hattie. This morning, about three o'clock an eleven pound boy arrived, fat, plump and pretty. She commenced to have pains last evening. She did not make much fuss over having such a bouncer. Eva is here, and the hired girl, Hattie feels quite comfortable. Hobert (Dr. Richardson) was here on time, and he weighed the baby, said he wished he had such a nice boy, he would be proud of him. Hattie is delighted that baby's ears are not like hers they are all right, and he has blue eyes and

quite a lot of brown hair. Ed and Hattie (Ren's brother-in-law and sister) came down yesterday and picked about four barrels of apples that Ren gave them. Well I do not think of any more to write this time, will mail this the first chance I have, lots of love to all. Your loving Ma. You will have to explain to Arthur that Uncle Ren has a little boy now. My, but what a big fellow he is.

Most of the letters to Laura at this time were from Ma, who stayed for weeks at the Porter farm while Pa went back and forth into Barrington to take care of their home in the Octagon House. Emaline thought of this time, as "rusticating in the country;"



Howard Porter, age one

she was only about three miles from the village, and the route is such as easy one to follow today, the County Line Road to Old Hart Road, and then all along Oak Knoll to the junction of Buckley Road and the Porter farm. Of course the roads were yet to be named then, and they were but rutted wagon trails, dry, dusty and uneven; or muddy and treacherous, icy or snow-packed; mostly spring or early fall would be the pleasantist times to travel, although a lot of fun was experienced by sleigh riding in the gentler of the winter snows.

Hattie's second letter to Laura after the birth of her son indicates that Hattie is making every effort to return the household to normal, the birth of this baby has been anything but quiet, and although everyone was there to help her out, every room must have been filled with Ma and Pa, the nurse, and Eva the hired girl, as she was constantly referred to, evidently all staying at the Porter farm.

Barrington, Illinois, November 9th, 1896

Dear Sister...I'll try my luck at writing again and I hope I'll be able to finish this letter, and I guess I will for I can use my eyes with my glasses first rate now. I have made me an underwaist since I got up, and done quite a lot of housework. I want to work into the housework as fast as I can for I am tired of a hired girl although she is alright. Do not intend to keep her after this week. I am nearly as well as ever only weak in the back. Pa and Ma will stay with me a while yet.

Ma is holding Howard, Pa has been helping Ren...

Howard had a bad spell of colic all yesterday forenoon, the worst he has had, but today he has been unusually good. He sleeps pretty good nights, but there is music if I don't get up about five o'clock

every morning. I haven't written for so long, I hardly know how any more. I have cloth to put a ruffle on my red wrapper, as it shrunk terribly. Have quite lot of sewing laid out to do as fast as I can get at it. We have had quite a snowstorm so the men had to shovel paths all around. Ren intends to go to town tomorrow and the next day to mill at Wauconda as we are almost out of flour.

Dr. Richardson only charged us eight dollars, as Ren went after him and took him home. He came down once after to see me, and once to see Howard for all that price. Eva only charged three dollars a week, but we all agreed that she earned five and we paid her that for she needs it so bad. She did everything that could be expected of a nurse. I went outdoors for the first time today. Mr. Johnson (a near neighbor) comes up every few days to inquire after McKinley as he calls Howard.

Tuesday morning, it is snowy but did not snow last night. We all slept pretty good. Howard was determined to get up at five this morning, but has had a nap since. Now he is fussing in the cradle, so I'll close, with lots of love, Sister.

And Ma added a page to this letter:

Dear Laura,

Now we can hurrah for McKinley, and we have a republican governor too, what a glorious victory for the republican party. Your uncle Will Johnson voted, the men helped him into a low buggy and took him downtown. He can walk alone but they do not dare to let him try unless someone is by his side. Can use his fingers a little. Ren saved six barrels of apples, and only had two of potatoes, they are all such small ones it is a job to pare them. The men are