Growing Up on the Roubidoux

The Autobiography of Ernest L. Christeson

Part Three

Ernest wrote his autobiography as he was nearing his sixtieth year in March of 1943. (Incidentally, a feature of early 20th century newspapers was the serial story. This is our serial.)

Part One of Ernest L. Christeson's autobiography appeared in the *2018 Old Settlers Gazette*. Ernest was born November 14, 1884, on the family homestead on Roubidoux Creek on what is now Fort Leonard Wood. He recounted his boyhood adventures and some shenanigans with his younger brothers, twins Emir and Edwin (1886), and Ansel (1888). A sister, Effie May, was born in 1894. Ernest began his schooling in rural Pulaski County schools, Mt. Gibson and Cedar Hill. Apparently, he was a precocious student.

In Part Two *(2019 Old Settlers Gazette)*, Ernest stayed at the Black Hotel while going to school in Waynesville. The next year, he took some Normal School teacher training and embarked on a series of teaching jobs in Hooker, Dixon, and Alton, Missouri.

In this final installment, Ernest travels to Oklahoma, Tennessee, Illinois, and finally to Mankato, Minnesota, where he fashions a career. Along the way, he finds the love of his life, Miss Sally Parchment.

We extend our appreciation to Mike Christeson of Little Rock, Arkansas, for sharing his family photographs and Ernest's autobiography with us.

I have been for the most part fortunate in not getting mixed up in politics. I was forced at one time to withdraw an application for a place in a public school system because the president of the board owned the only saloon in town. While this was not a political situation, yet it involved a local option election.

There had been a Local Option election held in the town, and under the law the public school was closed for the election day. Because I was free that day I was selected as one of the clerks of the election. The vote went overwhelmingly in favor of the Drys and the saloon-keeper seemed to think I had a hand in it. He told me flatly he would not vote for me for re-election. His bartender was another member of the board. The other four were for me solidly, but I withdrew my application rather than to receive a divided vote. Perhaps I was wrong to do it, but at least they were deprived of the privilege of voting against me.

While I was in Claremore, Oklahoma, I had a brief brush with politics, innocently enough on my part. As has been said, my work there in the bank was only temporary. There was a vacancy in one of the city offices in the Water Department.

I made application for the place and was appointed. There were two opposing political factions in the city and I, being a newcomer, didn't know about them. Shortly after I took over the new work a regular city election was held, and the faction that had appointed me was badly beaten. The new bunch that came in made a complete housecleaning and I was swept out with the rest of them. I learned then and there to watch out for all adverse political situations.

There was now nothing permanent for me there in Claremore so I was on the lookout for something else. I was registered with the Gem City school and they were keeping me in touch with various opportunities. One day in July I received a telegram from Draughon's Business College in Nashville, Tennessee, asking if I would be interested in coming to Nashville to teach in that school. There was that teaching bug again!!!

I was now confronted with the question as to whether I should again go back into the school work. However, this was in a different line, and with an entirely different set-up. Since the work in Claremore was only temporary, and I had no other connection right then for work, I got on the train and went to Nashville, stopping on the way home for another visit. It was while on this visit that I asked the Gem City Business College to send my examination papers down to the County Superintendent at Waynesville, and there took the full examination, passing successfully. On the basis of that examination I was awarded the degree of Bachelor of Accounts under the laws of the State of Illinois. Later, through the means of another examination, that was raised to the degree of Master of Accounts, the degree which I now hold, and my name was inscribed on the college Roll of Honor for high class standing.

I arrived in Nashville in August and immediately plunged into their work as Principal of their Bookkeeping Department. This was new work, and hard work, but I enjoyed it.

I think perhaps I should record here what might have been said earlier in this narrative; namely, my point of contact upon going into any new location. As a boy at home I had the advantage of a good religious training, and I was always taught the value of good associations. At an early age I became interested in Sunday School and Church work, and for a number of years taught Sunday School classes in the various places where I happened to be. I always made it a point, upon going into a new place to make my first social contacts in the Sunday School, the Young People's societies, etc., feeling that there I was sure of my associations. It has paid me big dividends, and there have been no regrets.

Some of the finest associations I have ever had were in the men's classes in some of the churches where I attended. Such was the case in Nashville, in the McKendree Methodist Church, where our class had a membership roll of over four hundred. I have never regretted my contacts made in that way, as might have been done otherwise. If any who read this are in doubt, let them try it. They will be greatly surprised. True, there are good contacts to be made otherwise, too, but none better than to be found through the influence of good religious teaching such as we had at home.

My going to Nashville at this time was a real turning point in my whole life outlook for it plunged me into a new field of experience which, apparently at least, I am to continue indefinitely. I arrived there in August, as has been said, taking up the work as Principal of the Bookkeeping Department.

True, the school room was not a new place for me, but this was new work, and hard work. Aside from my old home and its associations I made more lasting friends here than in any other place I had been. It was my first experience in the South, and I liked it, and I liked the people whom I met, from the first.

I recall that when I first went to Nashville I secured a room in a boarding house on Fifth Avenue, just off the main business street of the city. I was a stranger there, of course. There were several of the college boys there, one especially, a young Mexican from the city of Old Mexico. He had just recently come and was a stranger also. He would come to my room on Sunday afternoons and very courteously ask if he might come in and talk with me. He would in his smooth Castilian voice say, "I want to learn how you say these things in English."

We spent a good many afternoons that way. He also made rapid progress in his business training. Later he went to one of the larger colleges farther north, I think it was Notre Dame. We also learned later that he was the son of one of the cabinet members in the government of President Diaz, and that he had been sent into the United States to get him away from the revolution that the authorities could see coming.

As suggested, I was pretty much among strangers for a time here in Nashville. This was five hundred miles from my old home. But during my stay here my brother, Ed, who was at that time located in Orlando, Florida, came by on his way home and visited with me for a few days. The next year Ansel

McKendree Methodist Church in Nashville was founded in 1833. It was the largest antebellum Methodist church in the country and was the site of President James K. Polk's funeral in 1849. It served as a hospital during the Civil War. After several fires, this building, the fourth, was completed in 1910. Courtesy Jan and Terry Primas.

came down and worked in the city for a time. We thus had occasion for closer associations for a time. As a rule, however, it has been my bitter experience to be entirely removed from all of my folks in every place I have been.

One of my cousins, Dolf Christeson, who grew up with us back in Missouri, also came by while I was there. He was working in Richmond, Virginia, at the time and was making a visit home. He and his wife came by Nashville and stopped for a day or two with me and we all then went home together for our vacations. That was in 1913. I never saw Dolf again until in 1942.

While I was still in Nashville I had for a short time a roommate from Moose Jaw, Canada. I can't recall his name. He, too, was more or less interested in the educational activities about us. Vanderbilt University is located there and that year held its graduating exercises I think about the first week in July. My roommate and I attended the Baccalaureate services one Sunday, held in the University chapel on the campus. It was one of those hot July days peculiar to the south. Dr. Washington Gladden preached the sermon, and he talked for over two hours.

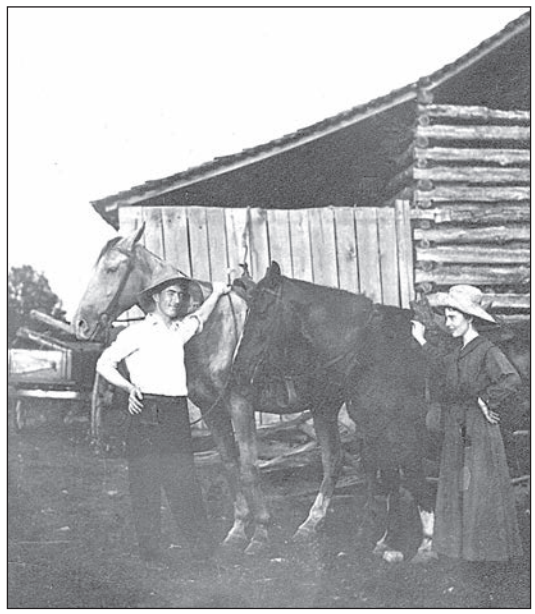
It was a scholarly discourse, well delivered, perhaps "over my head", and I never spent a more miserable two hours and a half than there in that chapel. Even to this day, whenever one of Dr. Gladden's songs is announced to be sung in church, I have a strong urge to get up and walk out, to hunt a cool spot.

Professor John F. Draughon who was at that time head of the school organization where I was teaching was a typical character of the Old South. He was an ardent fox hunter, and kept numbers of fine fox hounds. I had occasion a time or two while there to go on his fox hunts. But the sport did not appeal to me. I had always been accustomed whenever I went hunting to catch the quarry by the quickest means and thereby end the chase. I could not understand how they found sport merely in the chase. That, however, seemed to be the ultimate aim—to chase but not to catch.

All that Mr. Draughon wanted to do was to chase the fox for a time, listen to the bay of the hounds, and along about midnight to call off the hunt, eat a big lunch or indulge in drinks, and then go home. It was not sportsmanship to bag the fox. On one of these hunts where I accompanied him, the chase was out over the Tennessee State Prison property. This was done with special permission, though I did not know that, and this led to some excitement later on.

One Sunday afternoon a bunch of us young folks were to have a picnic and we decided, upon my suggestion, to go out on the prison grounds where I had been on the hunt. We went out to the main entrance to the grounds and found the gateway open with no guards around, not knowing that entrance was forbidden. Assuming it to be public ground, we went in unmolested and unseen, and spent the whole afternoon on some of the grounds where I had been.

It was a delightful afternoon in a southern autumn, with a pleasant breeze, and to us a secluded spot. Late in the afternoon we started home and came again to the main entrance gate. This time there were guards a plenty!! They were very much disturbed that we had been on the prison grounds at all, and for a time it looked as if the whole bunch of us might be arrested and detained for a time in the prison. I think all that saved us was the fact that they couldn't take us under arrest without having to explain for themselves just why the entrance was left unguarded that morning and afternoon. Some of the girls were crying for an hour as if their last hope had gone, and some of us boys didn't feel very much better. We learned then and there not to enter on other property without first having proper permission.



Cousin Dolf W. Christeson and wife Nettie visited Ernest in Nashville. Dolf taught in Richmond, Virginia, farmed in North Carolina, and returned to Pulaski County where he died in Dixon in 1957. Courtesy of Mike Christeson.

Strange instances and interesting events sometimes point the way to future occurrences. After I had been in Nashville for a short time I became tired of boarding house life and finally moved out into the residential section of the city in a private home, with a family by the name of Moore, and near a street car line. Mrs. Moore did sewing, and frequently had customers coming out for work, for fittings, etc. One Saturday afternoon I planned to go downtown by street car, and was waiting in my room for the car to come into the block. In a few minutes I heard it coming and made a dash for the outside, in order not to miss the car. I threw the screen door open with a bang as I went out and in so doing almost bowled over a young lady who happened to be sitting on the porch waiting for the same car. I will say that we were both fortunate in securing our transportation downtown.

I had seen the young lady before, but we had never met, and I was too "flabbergasted" to say anything after we both got on the car. That same young lady was destined to play an all-important part in my life, and hers, too, later on. I had occasion to meet her more conventionally later. But more of this later on in the story. I don't suppose Mrs. Moore ever knew that part she played in a new romance.

About the only serious illness I ever suffered away from home was here in Nashville. I had now moved into the home of a Mrs. Littlefield to room with a good friend of mine, J. Ben Thaxton. During September the weather was very warm and I was thoughtless enough to work for a time with the breezes of an electric fan striking across my shoulders and the back of my head. From this there followed a very bad cold, which later developed into pneumonia. I was very ill for about two weeks. I don't recommend that cooling to anyone now.

During my stay in Nashville I made, as has been suggested, some contacts that helped me to establish some wonderful friendships. There was at that time an organization operating in Nashville known as the Jeffersonian Debating Club, made up of some of the young business men of the city. The Club was operating under a charter from the State of Tennessee. I became interested in it, made application for membership, and was accepted. I'll never forget the initiation the night that I went in. If ever a fellow was "put over the coals" I was that fellow. During that season and the next we had some fine debates among ourselves, and also put on public programs in some of the city churches, in the high school, and once in one of the city parks. These programs all attracted some very fine crowds. That organization continued for a number of years and afforded its members some fine training.

Aside from the experiences we had in these programs, and the educational value they had, we also formed some of the best friendships I have ever known. It was my ill-fortune in that respect to have to leave there within another year. However, during some of our spare time when we were not working on some debate program, several of us got together and formed a Law Club. We met once a week in the down-town offices where one of the young men was employed, a lawyer's office, and read Law. By this cooperative method of study we were able to do some valuable work. Out of this club some became lawyers, while others have drifted into other fields. I have been able to use that experience in the teaching of Commercial Law. I was able during the two and one-half years I was in Nashville to make two good visits home. Father and mother were getting up in years and we always tried to go back when we could. We never regretted it. They are both gone from us now.

I recall a bitter experience I had on one of these trips home. I had some baggage that a neighbor had agreed to bring out and to dump it at the fork of the road near home where I could get it. Just about the time he was due a terrific thunderstorm came up, one of those peculiar to the Ozarks, and I hurried down with some means to protect the baggage from the rain. The storm was so severe that I was afraid to go back through the bottoms and timber until it was over, but sat out there in the open in all that rain with the lightning playing about my feet. In order to return it was necessary to pass through some heavy sycamore, elm, and oak timber.

Left Draughon Business College in Nashville was the headquarters for what became by 1921 a chain of 38 business schools throughout the southern and western states. Both pictures courtesy of Jan and Terry Primas.

Below Photograph taken in front of Prof. John. F. Draughon's residence, four miles from Nashville, Tenn. The vehicle attached to his automobile for hauling Prof. Draughon's fox hounds to and from the hunting grounds was his own invention. Prof. Draughon stands at the side of his auto.

When I did dare to go home, there were two or three large trees along the way that had been destroyed by lightning. I was glad that I had not ventured through. When I did finally get home I found them all anxiously waiting for me.

There was a family living two miles out in the hills by the name of Paddy—Joe Paddy, the father. As the storm subsided, one of my brothers in a spirit of fun took down the telephone receiver and spoke into the phone. Immediately there came a reply, a call for help. It was from the Paddy family. We boys hurried out there as fast as we could by walking, and when we reached the Paddy home we found it had been struck by lightning and four of the family were dead, the father, the oldest boy, the oldest girl, and the baby. It was a terrible night we spent there, with others, trying to take care of that family.

One day early in November of 1914, I listened again to the Siren's voice. J. Lee Porter, promoter for the Draughon-Porter Business College in Evansville, Ind., came in to see me. How he happened to come I do not know.

Before he left, he had made me an offer, if I would join their organization, that looked much better than what I was doing in Nashville. An old saying has it that distant fields look greener. I didn't say "yes" at the time, but the seed had been planted. I had some letters later. Again I let myself in for a change without sufficient investigation, even to investing some money. That, in all probability, is what they wanted. Anyway I resigned from my work with Draughon's in Nashville and went to Evansville in December of that year. All went well for a time, but I soon found out that the school was on the rocks. They could not pay my salary, and for a time I found it pretty hard to keep going. Had it not been for the fine family that I happened to get in with, I don't know what I might have done. They were a Mr. & Mrs. C. J. Nenneker.

Mrs. Nenneker was like a mother to me and I enjoyed my stay with them the best of all the places I ever boarded. I have been back there a time or two to see them. Mrs. Nenneker has since passed on to her reward.

In spite of the difficulties I felt in Evansville, financially, I enjoyed my stay there very much. I formed some very pleasant friendships and associations. I had many times read of the Ohio river, its steamboats, its floods, etc., so naturally was interested there. While here I had occasion to go on several steamer excursions, one especially to Henderson, Ky., to spend the day. Other times we went on excursions by moonlight and had enjoyable times. As I recall them they were all Sunday School and similar parties. I enjoyed one excursion picking pecans. I had occasion also to see the old Ohio river at one of its flood times. It is not a pleasant sight.

It was about this time that the "jitney" craze struck Evansville, a ride in any car for a nickel. People having cars would pick up fares most anywhere and carry them downtown for a nickel, until it was finally stopped. One morning as I started to work I thought I saw my usual "jitney" coming along, so several of us hailed the car after quite a sprint, and piled into it. When we got downtown we offered our nickels only to have them refused and to be told that he was just an ordinary business man on the way down town to his office. We had practically appropriated his car!! Were our faces red!!

During the summer of 1915, after I realized what I was up against financially, I began to look about for other employment. I had prepared a letter of application with some pertinent personal data, and had mailed this material to a number of what I considered to be the best private Commercial Schools. One of these happened to be the Mankato Commercial College of Mankato, Minnesota.

I had replies from several of these schools, but none from Mankato, and none of them offered me anything interesting. I was then practically out of employment and did not know which way to turn next. Then, in the latter part of November, like a bolt out of a clear sky for I had forgotten writing them, I received a telegram from Mankato asking me on what terms and conditions I would come. It was like manna from heaven. I immediately wired back my proposition, making it what I thought to be good and strong, even including the cost of my transportation to Mankato. However, I was not very optimistic. But immediately there came back the wire, "Proposition accepted. Come at once." I broke off connections in Evansville as soon as I could and made arrangements to leave as soon as possible. I had completed these arrangements within a few days and had a few hours to wait before train time. That was on the afternoon of December 10, 1915. Everything was packed and ready for my leaving.

Having, as I said, a few hours to wait I went downtown for the afternoon, and when I returned to my room there was a telegram from Mankato stuck under the door which read, "Do not come. Our building burned down this morning." It was signed by Brandrup & Nettleton, proprietors of the school.

That was a blow sure enough. Now I was out definitely. So I got on the train and went back to my old home in Missouri. Nothing like going back home when one is in a tight spot. Spent the next few days, through the Christmas season, and up into January with father and mother, sister, and youngest brother. Then on the morning of January 6, 1916, I received another wire from Mankato saying, "Come at once. We can use you." I immediately went back via St. Louis to Evansville, finished packing my things, picked up my transportation, and headed for Mankato via Chicago.

Front Street in Mankato, Minnesota, ca. 1910. The very large Mankato Commercial College building that burned in December of 1915 is in the right foreground. Courtesy of Jan and Terry Primas.

That is the story of how I happened to come to Mankato. As our train on the morning of January 12 was pulling into the city, the porter stopped to brush dust off my clothes. In a casual sort of way I asked him what kind it might be. "Oh, say, boss," he said under his breath, "Mankato sho' is a live town. Dey's got twenty-seven saloons dere." That was my introduction to my new stopping place. I wonder what he might say now if he could come back and see the old town once again.

I arrived in Mankato shortly after noon and after cleaning up and eating dinner went up to the college office and met Mr. Brandrup and Mr. Nettleton. The school, though well organized after the fire, had quarters in three different buildings. I then learned that my employment was to be for only four or five months. Enough to say, however, that I went to work immediately in the bookkeeping department and worked to the middle of June.

Knowing that my employment was to be only temporary, I began at once to look about for some other connection. During this time I made connection with the Pierson Business College in Chicago and contracted to go to work for them in July. I left Mankato never thinking that I might again come back to work. My brother Emir now owned a bank in Osceola, Mo., and Ed was there with him. My sister was going to school in Springfield, and my youngest brother was at home. So I went via Omaha and Kansas City and visited my brothers and sister on the way and then on home for a few days. Father was quite feeble and I was destined never to see him alive again. Such as that is not for us to know.

I went to work for Mr. Pierson July 1, one of the finest men I ever worked for. The work I had to do was something I had been doing in other places and was more or less familiar to me. I had charge of the bookkeeping department.

During that first summer that I was in Chicago the school opened at eight o'clock each morning and continued to 1:00 p.m. with no intermission. We

then had the whole afternoon off. This gave me a fine opportunity to see some of the sights of the Windy City. It was quite a thrill even at this point in my experience to go through some of the big retail stores and industrial establishments, or even to stroll along near State street or Michigan boulevard. I spent hours Sunday after Sunday in the Field Museum located then on the old Exposition grounds on the south side. The parks also came in for their share of visitation.

When I first went there I had a room on Racine avenue near the college, but later moved out to the Y. M. C. A. on Wilson avenue. Here I was able to come into contact with a fine bunch of fellows, and we had some very enjoyable times. Ravenwood Methodist Church was only a block away so I became interested there at once.

Thanksgiving Day that year (1916) in Chicago was a dreary, cloudy, cold, disagreeable day. I suppose I felt homesick anyway, but I recall that I wandered alone down to the lake in the afternoon, walked along some of the docks and along the breakwater, but the wind made it a disagreeable venture. That night in the "Y" a bunch of us sat about the piano and near a crackling fire in the grate, singing songs, telling stories, etc. But somehow I had a feeling of depression and loneliness that I couldn't shake off. However, we all went to bed feeling somewhat uplifted by our social hour together, those of us who could not go home that holiday season.

The next morning about four o'clock I was awakened by a knock at the door and upon opening it was handed a message, the kind of message that

The Field Museum, when Ernest spent hours there, was the only remaining building from the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Jackson Park. The large building had been the Palace of Fine Arts. The Field Museum relocated in 1921 and the building now houses the Museum of Science and Industry. Courtesy of Jan and Terry Primas.

every home-loving boy dreads to hear at some time or other. My father had passed away on that Thanksgiving Day.

That, of course, took me home for the funeral. I left the train at Crocker with a friend of our family, who was able to take me within a half-mile of the old home place, the top of the hill above the house. It was about 3:30 a.m. when we reached there. I'll never forget my feelings as I walked that last half-mile alone through the darkness over ground so close to all of our hearts, and realizing that now for the first time our home circle had forever been broken.

When I arrived I found mother seriously ill, partly due to the shock, and partly due to the fact that she was never strong. She never recovered, so after two weeks of fear and uncertainty we had to give her up also. I need not write of their passing here. Mr. Pierson was very kind to me and permitted me to stay and to close up the estate. My brothers and my sister wanted me to undertake the task, so I set about it as best I could under the circumstances. Someone had to do it.

It was a task for I had not been on the farm for years, and it was very cold, at one time eighteen below, with a foot of snow on the grounds. It meant much hard work and exposure. Ed was then in Nebraska, Emir in Osceola, Effie teaching away from home, and Ansel was married and living in St. Louis. With the help of a hired man I set about getting things together for a public sale. Understand that this was on a farm. My father had not been able to get in all the crop by this time. Farm machinery had not been brought in. Everything was badly scattered and there was no one to give me any help. I knew very little of father's financial affairs, and there were very few records. I advertised in the local paper for statements of any claims that might be held against the estate and there were none reported. Some minor claims were located and these were paid at once.

There was the livestock to inventory and to get together and to feed. A large flock of sheep was loose in the hills and we had some difficulty in finding them. These, together with the chickens, turkeys, etc., were sold by private sale. Everything else, including crops, machinery, livestock, household goods, etc., I got together and offered them at public sale December 28, 1916. There was a large crowd and everything brought fairly good prices.

This was the end. Our old home was desolated and gone. I left within the next day or two never to return except as a casual visitor. Before leaving I rented out the farm, for we still owned that, and now there was no business interest to hold me. I stopped in St. Louis for a brief visit with my youngest brother Ansel and his wife, and a cousin, Edgar Christeson. It was to be twenty-five years before seeing Ansel again, and Edgar I have not seen since then.

Leaving St. Louis I arrived in Chicago in time for the opening of the winter term at Pierson's, but after that I could not reconcile myself to the big city and its loneliness, even though by now I knew some very fine folks. My sister, Effie, came up in the spring and we kept house for a time, but she had to go back in the fall to teach. That left me alone again and I found no pleasure in staying there. I went to Mr. Pierson and explained to him my feelings and inclinations, and asked to be relieved. There was nothing wrong with the school, and my work was pleasant. But I was too much a "stranger in a strange land." I did not like the big city, but felt that I wanted to get into smaller places

and out in the wide open spaces, where there was not so much rush and hurry with so little regard for others. I wanted the clear blue sky over me, and the feel of the earth beneath my feet.

Mr. Pierson was very considerate and agreed to let me go. My idea then was to locate in some smaller city either at teaching or in office work. I immediately made application to several places, giving references. One of these references must have written Mr. Brandrup in Mankato for in due time I received a letter from him suggesting that if I was contemplating a change I might consider coming back to Mankato. I had not considered Mankato as a possible connection. However, I knew the set-up there and the kind of work that would be expected of me, and I also knew that the school ranked as one of the best of its kind in the country. Since the fire in 1915 and during the year that I was gone they had erected a fine new four-story building and had it fully equipped with all modern school requirements. I wrote Mr. Brandrup at once expressing a willingness to come.

There were several letters passed between us relative to the work, and we finally reached an agreement that seemed to be satisfactory to both of us. To make a long story short, I came back to Mankato on September 1, 1917 and have been here ever since.

I must relate a curious event that occurred that last summer in Chicago, while sister Effie was still there with me. I had a friend in Milwaukee, so after a little correspondence we arranged to visit with him there on a Sunday. We were to go on one of the excursion steamers running between Milwaukee and Chicago. However, the afternoon before we were to go we received a wire from my friend saying that he had been called out of the city and for us not to come at that time but at a later date. Of course that changed our plans somewhat but we didn't mind that. It was only a matter of an excursion trip anyway.

That Sunday afternoon that we had intended to make the trip, the boat on which we would have gone, as it was warping out of the docks in Milwaukee for the return trip in some manner struck the supports of a huge tower of some kind near the dock, causing it to fall. That tower fell across the deck of the steamer killing two or three of the passengers and injuring several others. It perhaps was a luck thing for us that we did not go as we had intended.

In August, before returning to Mankato, I made another trip to Nashville, for I was still very much interested in the young lady of the swinging door and the street car episode, a Miss Sally Parchment. In fact, we had come to know each other quite well by this time. So before I came away from Nashville it was all settled that she was to become Mrs. Christeson and that the wedding was to be at Christmas time that coming winter.

Sally Parchment
courtesy Mike Christeson

I went back to Nashville at Christmas time and we were married in the parlors of the Y. W. C. A. at five o'clock on Christmas Eve. We spent the next day at her old home at Cumberland City, Tenn., and then came back to her aunt's, Mrs. D. M. Bayer where a big wedding and Christmas dinner was waiting for us. From there we headed for our new home in Mankato, stopping in Chicago for the National Confederation of Commercial Teachers that was in session there at that time.

Mr. Brandrup was at the convention. And so were J. W. Baker of the South-Western Publishing Co., and a number of other well-known school men. Mr. Baker invited eight or ten of these men, including Mr. Brandrup, to be his guests at dinner that first evening we were there. When Mr. Baker learned that there were some newly-weds in the group he insisted that we join the dinner party also.

The Y. W. C. A, building in Nashville, Tennesee, where Ernest and Sally Parchment were wed in 1917. Courtesy of Jan and Terry Primas.

At the dinner the waitresses learned that they were entertaining a bridal couple but didn't know who they were. Sally happened to be sitting near Mr. Brandrup, and from something that was said they got the idea that he was the groom, no one putting them wise. He was then subjected to all the attention and good-natured banter for the whole evening, all of the others keeping up the joke. I am sure he got more "kick" out of it than I did for I was the forgotten member for a time of the whole dinner party. I believe everyone enjoyed the dinner. Even I got a "kick" out of it, though Mr. Brandrup enjoyed the honors.

Upon leaving Chicago we came via St. Paul and Minneapolis to Mankato. The day we changed trains in St. Paul it was thirty degrees below zero. Sally had always lived in the south where such temperatures are only read about and not understood. I think she was ready to return at once.

When we reached Mankato it wasn't any warmer, with more snow than she had ever seen in her life. I had rented temporary living quarters at 533 Belgrade Avenue in North Mankato so we took possession there at once. I recall that shortly after coming here we had occasion to visit some friends on State St., over in Mankato, and not being acquainted with that part of town we had some difficulty in finding the place. We wandered about for some time over the streets, like two children, completely lost until both of us were almost frozen.

Shortly after we moved into the new home, a delegation of friends from over town planned to make a surprise visit for Sally one evening. In order to give her a chance to prepare for them I suggested that she get ready and we would go to a show downtown. She responded more readily than I had anticipated and I had to diplomatically stall for time.

But my diplomacy came near to being a failure, and I had a storm on my hands. The folks did not come on schedule and I had to use all the diplomacy and tact that I could muster to appease her and to delay until the guests came. Somewhat later they came and thereby saved the day for me.

We lived here at this location for nearly three years. And it was while we were still here that our oldest daughter, Marian, was born. And it was while we were still here that Sally made her first visit home. And during this period both Ed and Effie made us visits of several days, at separate times.

Both Sally and I had a longing to own our own home where we could concentrate our personal interests in its development. Accordingly, in the summer of 1920, we bought the new house just being built at 512 Belgrade Avenue, and moved in there in August. We were now in a position to enjoy things that were really our own, and to build it into a real home.

From this point on a continuation of the story would involve a history of the Mankato Commercial College, for my work and my time have been closely tied up with that institution for these nearly thirty years, a story that would require all too long in the telling.

It has been my pleasure to make several visits back to the old home place during the past few years. The old home is empty now, and the buildings gone the way of the world. And those of our neighbors whom we knew so well too are gone. The hills perhaps are just as rugged and just as steep as in years gone by but they don't seem so tall now. Nor is the creek where we waded or swam so wide or deep. I can shut my eyes and envision the glories of childhood but when I open them again all is gone. The world as I knew it then is gone and in its place a new generation and a new background have come. And new problems have to be met.

It has been a wonderful experience to me, this transition from childhood to man's estate. I have had many hard knocks, and have known some disappointments, but through it all have been able to keep my eyes on the better things of life. Would I go back and live it all over again? Would I do that if it were nature's gift? Possibly yes, for there have been pleasures and satisfaction, hopes and joys, some little accomplishments and acquirements that have more than compensated for the disappointments I have known. The balance of the

ledger is on my side, physically, financially, and spiritually. But life could never again reach the supreme joys that I knew there at home in my childhood, for there have been too many changes and things could never be the same again.

I later had occasion to sell the old farm home and to break every physical tie that bound me there. There was nothing there now to hold me except the memories, and some of our family relations that are still left.

The old Roller Mills of the Kerrs' have gone, vanished away, and the old home and its associations that had their beginnings in the early eighties have also gone with the passing of time. The mulberry trees and the sycamores that we used to climb have gone, and so have old friends disappeared. Waynesville still stands, but it is not the same anymore. A broad highway linking the east and the west now traverses its main street *[Route 66]* where only a generation ago a few horses lazily stood at the hitching posts while their riders idly loafed on the sidewalks or sat in the sheds.

The hills and valleys where I used to work and to play, where I went to school in boyhood, and which hold so many hallowed memories for me, now resound to the tramp of the soldier's feet. Our old home and those of our forefathers, are now a part of Fort Leonard Wood, where thousands of soldiers are stationed and where the quietness and the seclusion of the hills are not felt anymore.

Even our old family cemetery near the old Cedar Hill school, where father and mother and others of our families are at rest, is by precaution protected by heavy cement walls from the ceaseless gunfire from the rifle ranges in the valley and from the heavy cannonading that goes on. The "forest primeval" is gone and all has had to give way to the tempo of the times.

Of our own family from the hills, only three of us are left; Ed, of Denver, Colo., Ansel, of Las Animas, Colo., and myself. Emir J. passed away in Kansas City November 18, 1933 and my sister, Effie, who had been married for several years and living in Denver also passed away January 9, 1933. And so marks the passing of a family that though in a small way has left its mark on the stage of the world passes the scepter down to future generations, a family that has been proud of its record and of chances to fill a place in the world.

And so goes the passing of time. And history repeats itself. Our family of the hills appeared in their appointed places for a time and then scattered. Now a new family here in Mankato rises to take their places, with the same ideals and ambitions, and with some of the same problems, and new ones, to face, though perhaps under different environment and different conditions. Life is that way—a stage where each must act his part, to be acclaimed a success in his manner of living, or else hissed down by those who expect greater things of him. Our oldest daughter, Marian, was born February 14, 1919; Harris, on November 1, 1921; Sara on April 5, 1924; and Ruth on June 30, 1925.

And so pauseth the story. I may take it up again some time. Who knows!!!

As far as we know, this pause was the end of Ernest's autobiography. Ernest died in Mankato, Minnesota, in 1972 at the age of 87 years. Sally preceded Ernest in death on November 6, 1959, at the age of 70 years.

For more than three decades, Ernest Christeson was engaged in teaching and the management of the Mankato Commercial College in its new building (1916). The business school, which was "extremely well-regarded," remained in operation until 1979. Courtesy of Jan and Terry Primas.