

Recollections of my life

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I began writing these recollections Dec 8th 1902 while confined in the Alexian Brothers Hospital cor Belden and Racine Ave's Chicago Ill. I was here for an operation on my left foot because of an injured nerve.

I write this for the information it may contain for the benefit of my family.

1 Ancestry

My ~~paternal~~ ^{ancestors} were of German ^{and on mother's Swiss} descent. I have been told that my great grandfather Nicholas Nibel came to this country from Germany when but a little boy. This must have been somewhere between the years 1725 and 1750. My grandfather was Rev. Henry Nibel. He was a Pennsylvania man and was one of the earliest ministers of the Evangelical Association. He was born March 16th 1784. When a young man he taught school in Union county Pa.

At this time he paid occasional visits at the home of Abraham Eyer at Winfield Pa. It was the custom of this Eyer to read portions of Scripture to his family on Sunday afternoons. Upon one of these occasions the young school master undertook to criticize him, whereupon he administered a rebuke. This led to grandfather's conversion. He afterwards married one of the daughters, Miss Mary Eyer. Grandfather entered the ministry in 1808. At this time there were but six preachers and 426 members in the entire Evangelical Association.

He spent as much of his life in the active ministry as his strength would permit. He is said to have been a

powerful preacher, preaching at times for two and one half hours until the assembly would be melted to tears under the power of the Word. He was no less a man of prayer. He would spend hours alone upon his knees with the open Bible before him, studying his sermons, so that his knee caps became flattened.

He was at ~~one time~~ ^{secretary of two} President of ² General Conferences, ~~and several times~~ ^{He was} President of ² annual conferences; and was many times the secretary of both these bodies.

He helped to compile the first hymn book used by the church, and was also one of the two revisers of the Discipline in 1816.

He and his brother-in-law, Rev. John Dreisbach (who also married a daughter of Abraham Eyer) were for many years the leaders in the work of the church.

He died at the home of his oldest son, Erns Niebel in Wyandot county Ohio in the month of May 1877 at the advanced age of over 43 years. I attended the funeral which was conducted by Rev. John Stull of the Ohio conference.

Grandmother Niebel died at the age of 70 yrs.

My grandfather's name on my mother's side was John Hershey. The Hersheys were of Swiss descent. Grandmother's maiden

name was Salome Graybill. Grandfather and grandmother Hershey came to this country from Pennsylvania. They lived within 12 miles of Niagara Falls. When I was a little boy I used to hear grandmother tell incidents of the war of 1812-14. Their house was at one time turned into a hospital for wounded soldiers. Grandfather Hershey was for a time also a preacher of the gospel in the Evangelical Association.

Their home was one of the first stopping places in Erie County Pa. for the ministers of our church. The old Hershey farm was located about eight miles south west of the city of Erie Pa. Grandfather died at the age of about 48 years from sickness brought on by exposure to bad weather.

I will have more to say about grandmother a little further along.

My father, Abraham Niebel was the third of a family of nine children. The following are the names and date of birth of each one of grandfather Niebel's children

Father was born in Dry valley Union County Pa, about four miles from New Berlin Dec 31st 1817. Grandfather after-
ward moved with his family to

McCutcheonville Wyandot county Ohio.
Grandfather being a poor man with a large family made it necessary for the children to work very hard. Father had very little opportunity to attend school, receiving only 14 months schooling all told.

He used to say to me that what he learned he "shook out of his sleeves". When a young man he was converted to God. His conversion was somewhat peculiar. I several times heard him relate it. He had for a long time sought the evidence of the pardon of his sins and his acceptance with God.

One day he went out into the woods to pray. While in prayer, he received the evidence which was marked, clear, and powerful, and he realized that he was a child of God. He had the undoubted evidence in his heart that his sins were forgiven. He said everything appeared changed and new to him. All nature seemed to rejoice. The trees seemed different, the song of the birds was sweeter - "all things were new". He never doubted his conversion.

At the age of 21 years he entered the ministry preaching his first sermon between Christmas and New Year in 1835. He remained in the active work continuously with the exception of two years until a

stroke of apoplexy broke down his health to such an extent that he was compelled to give up the active work. Foster was physically a powerful man, being very muscular and quick in his movements. He weighed at his best 225 pounds. He had great endurance and could withstand hardships remarkably well. In his early ministry he traveled circuits with 30 appointments, one round necessitating between 200 and 300 miles travel, preaching three times each Sunday and every day during the week excepting Saturday. In his early ministry he received about \$75-00 per year as salary. He preached in both German and English languages.

He was a man of faith, and was fervent and fearless in the discharge of his duties. He was attractive in his personality, and friendly in his intercourse with the people so that his ministry was generally acceptable, and his friends were many. He was devoted in every part of his life and work. As a man, a father, a husband, a minister he was always faithful. He would allow nothing to deter him from the faithful discharge of all his duties. He would serve his appointments rain or shine, in cold or heat, through storm or calm, always doing his duty. He was just as

faithful in the discharge of his religious duties in the home life as he was in public life.

Speaking of his official life I might say that he was a member of the first delegated General conference of the Evangelical Association in 1843 serving as alternate in the place of his father Henry Nichol.

He was four times elected Presiding Elder and six or seven times as delegate to the General Conference. He also served as member of the Board of Publication. The greater part of his life he was a member of the Pittsburg conference, the only exception being when he was in the Illinois conference from 1865 to 1870 and the later years of his life after he had retired from the ministry. He died at Sycamore Ill.

Oct 11 1901 aged 83 yrs 7 mos 11 days.

Of him it can truly be said in the language of the psalm:

"Servant of God well done,
Rest from thy loved employ.
The labor done, the victory won
Enter thy Master's joy".

My mother's name was Salome. So far as I know she had three brothers, viz; John, Samuel and Benjamin, and one

sister whose name I do not recollect. of my mother I remembered nothing as she died when I was but a little more than two years of age. She was a little less than 30 years of age at the time of her death. Grandmother and grandfather Hershey and mother are all buried at the same place at Sulem Church West Milcreek township, Erie county Pa. I have made inquiry of several persons who know my mother and the testimony was that she was a devoted Christian woman.

2. My birth and childhood.

I was born August 10th 1854 in Pittsburg Pa. I have heard it said that I was an exceedingly puny infant and that my chances for any great length of time in this world were rather slim. An old farm hand of my grandfather Hershey made the remark on first seeing me - "Hier den deht ich keh welskorn krentze yeve" - For him I would not give a corn cob. But in the wisdom and mercy of God my life was prolonged, I believe for no other reason than that I might serve him. My father soon moved to Erie county Pa. where my grandmother

lived. Here, as already stated, my mother died. She being sickly from the time of my birth could not do much in caring for me. My dear old grandmother Heershey cared for me until I was 10 years of age. I had an only brother Abner of whom I have some faint recollection who died when I was about 3 years old, and he was 12.

I was named for my mother's youngest brother, Benjamin Heershey. With this name I was consecrated to God in Holy Baptism, Rev Joseph Truly administering the service. Mrs Truly held me at the time, and was consequently my god-mother. She afterwards became my step-mother.

My boyhood days with my dear old grandmother were days of great pleasure to me. They were days of happiness un-mixed with care and sorrow. I was grandmother's pet, and how tenderly she did care for me. There was always a crock more or less filled with cookies to which I had free access. Smearecase and molasses which I liked so well I had to the full. Then I had a dog to play with and a great variety of toys for indoor sport. My dog I used to hitch up in a sled I remember of drilling at oil wells with

a long sharp stick, and of making boats to sail in the ditch along the road where heavy rains would furnish water for the ditch.

Then I would go to the "run" (a little stream) in grandmother's pasture, and try to construct a dam. I delighted to play horse, to climb trees, to drag a brush along the road for the purpose of raising a dust. Occasionally my cousins, Misses Celestia and Susie Hershey would come on a visit from Erie Pa. and then we would have a great time playing. My winter delights were to roll up great snow balls, make snow men and snow houses. At times grandmother would permit me to go to play with the neighbor's boys. My favorites were George and Frank Schluruff. It seems but a little while since those boyhood days. They are gone all too soon.

When about seven years of age I was started to school. It was a little, old, dilapidated building about 30 or 40 rods south of grandmother's house. Afterwards a new house was built perhaps a half mile from home. I learned easily, and was soon in classes with boys a good deal "bigger" than I. The multiplication table and problems in mental arithmetic were easily mastered. Spelling also went well.

I was soon in the Fifth Reader. It was the old McGuffey's series. Town's speller was used and Stoddard's Arithmetic. I was no less interested and delighted in my plays than my study. When play time came I left all other things and played with all possible delight. When school hours came it was a delight to take up my tasks. Our principal games were "Hide and seek", "Pomp-pomp-pull-away", "Horse" and "ball". There was a large shady Walnut tree right at the old school house, and a Wild-cherry between the school house and grand-mothers which desirable places for our horse stables. When we got into the new school house which was right by a large piece of woods we often went into the woods at noon hours. There was a steep place where we would slide down hill in icy times. This was great fun. As this was during the time of the great Civil war, we would "play war". We would choose sides and then pitch battle with snow balls. We would also build snow forts. If one would get "hit" he would have to go to the side that hit him. The side that got all the men from the other side was of course the winning side. On Saturdays we often went into the woods to hunt gum. We gathered spruce gum from the trees. In Walnut creek I took my first lessons in swimming. Thus my happy childhood years passed, etc.

too quickly. Once in a while I had the privilege of a visit to the city of Erie. Upon one of these occasions my father took me to camp to see the soldiers. It was the immortally famous 83 Pa volunteers infantry of which the brave McLean was colonel. I think less than ^{only about 80} 100 of them came back from war. The colonel himself was shot.

In early part of 1864 my father married Mrs Hannah G Inby widow of Rev Joseph Inby. Father moved onto a farm in Crawford Co. Pa. Here I spent the fall and winter of that year. We had many chestnut trees on the place, and gathered nuts by the bushel. This was in what was known as the Lehr settlement.

The time came when I must take leave of my good old grandmother Kershney. Father having property in the state of Illinois concluded to move to that state. It was early in 1865. I will never forget the last night with grandmother. It was a severe ordeal for both of us. While she gathered up my clothes, I followed her everywhere and clung to her and wept. I begged of her not to let father take me. In the morning goodbye was said and I never saw her afterwards. She died I think in 1870 aged 76 years. A better woman never lived. She was a saint indeed. A most devoted Christian. A very hard ^{worker} hand.

She toiled incessantly. In her garden, in the ^{house} it was work, work from morning until night. She was said to be one of the best cooks to be found anywhere. Besides the care of myself she also had the care of a helpless son - ^{my uncle Samuel's son John died in the army near Atlanta} my uncle Samuel. His daughter Mary also lived with us. During this time my father was Presiding Elder of a district in the Pittsburg conference and paid us occasional visits. Dear, good old grandmother, I am sure to meet her in Heaven. She wrote her first letter (which is still in my possession) after I left her when she was 70 years of age.

Starting on our trip west, we first went to Venango county to visit my step mother's people - the Kings. This was in the noted oil country. We arranged to go to Pittsburg per boat on the Allegheny river. When it came to leave, the river had risen to such proportions that boats could not run. We were compelled to wait at a hotel in Emlenton nearly a week. It was the largest flood ever known in that vicinity. Much property was destroyed. Hundreds of thousands of barrels of oil floated down the river, beside houses, trees, piles of lumber &c. We finally got started, going on the steamer "Wilda". It was a pleasant ride. From Pittsburg we took the Pitts. & W. and Erie

R.R. to Chicago. This was my first ride in a sleeping car. From Chicago we went to Harreston Illinois which was to be our new home. I now had new companions. Mrs - my step mother had two sons, Samuel H. and Nathaniel G. We first lived in a rented house while father had one of his own built. Father had a farm of 200 acres ~~at~~ about five miles from Harreston. Our own home in town was a beautiful home. We remained at Harreston but one year. I recollect one of the first things after coming to Harreston which impressed me much was the news of the assassination of President Lincoln the 14th of April 1865. While living in Harreston Saml and Nathl truly both started to learn the harness trade. In the spring of 1866 we moved to Spring creek in Stephenson county, now known as Afolkey, near the village of Dakota. Here I had my first experience at farm work. I rode the lead horse to a reaper in harvest time, getting therefor 50 cts per day. I was at Daniel Keck's. The day I was twelve years old when I came home in the evening father hastily grabbed me as I came into the house. I did not suspect what he proposed to do with me nor what it was for until he put me under the table when it dawned upon me that it was my birthday. I also have some pleasant recollections about school at this place.

I often enjoyed going to old grandfather Rasswiler's and watch him weave carpets and coverlets with beautiful designs. Hatter had a big revival at this appointment during the winter. We lived in the parsonage. Our predecessor had left a hen on a nest hatching. That summer she hatched out three broods of chickens. I might mention almost innumerable little incidents did time and space permit. Albert Hoofnagle was one of my favorite playmates.

In the spring of 1867 we moved to the village of Davis, Stephenson county Illinois. Here father bought property and built a nice house and barn. While here father traded his farm of 200 acres in Ogle county for an old mill property in a little village called Eppleyann about two miles from Davis. He and Rev C. Lindeman went in partnership.

This was a great financial mistake and through it father lost all that he had. The water being scarce, a boiler and engine had to be bought. It was more expense than profit, and the result was a continual loss.

Hatter also went into the furniture business in Davis with Jesse Marty. We lived here three years. During one of these years father served this charge, one year he was without a charge, and one year he served the Shunnon

cherys. One summer while he had the mill
 I hauled flour to the stores. I also took peo-
 ples grists to mill and hauled them back again.
 Faithful old "Kali" was my team. Father also
 had a "Barney". He ran away from me once
 because of a broken single tree. I rather en-
 joyed the teaming. I also worked in the furni-
 ture store some at varnishing furniture. For
 a time I clerked in the General store of "Barloga
 and Wendt". One summer I work in harvest
 at a Mr Serf's (father of Rev J W Serf of the
 Platte River conference) driving horses in the
 reaper. At this time one person drove while
 another raked off the grain. In the winters
 I went to school. One winter the principal, a
 Mr Fry from Freeport Ill boarded with us.
 One winter we had a tyrant for a teacher.
 His name was McCreary. He punished some
 of the children severely, beating them shameful-
 ly. I delighted to ride down a steep hill on
 my little sleigh. It was prettily painted and
 was named "Geil Grant". The little girls
 liked to ride along and I didn't object. I
 forgot to mention that while we lived at Harrester
 my sister Ida was born, so she was quite an
 interesting little girl when we lived in Davis.
 I had the Marty boys for my principal play-
 mates. They lived directly across the street
 from us. This was a happy part of my life.

About the 30th of August 1869 I started for Plainfield Ill to attend the Northwestern college. At the same time father and mother started to Pennsylvania for a visit. We went together as far as Freeport. From there I went alone by way of Mendota to Aurora. Here I had to take the stage 16 miles across the country as there was no railway at Plainfield. I was quite a young boy (only 15) to start to college. I was quite small for my age too. I was a stranger in a strange place.

3. Religious teaching and impressions

I will turn from the narrative to write something of religious training ⁱⁿ up to this time.

I received my first teaching and impressions from my grandmother. In earliest childhood she taught me to pray. She taught me a number of little prayers, some of them German and some English. Amongst them were these;

"Gottes brünlein hat wasser die filbe, Amen
Uwotten:

"Now I lay me down to sleep,

I pray thee Lord my soul to keep.

If I die before I wake

I pray thee Lord my soul to take.

This I ask for Jesus' sake. Amen"

She would put me to bed, and tuck the covers nicely about me, then a last prayer, then

"goodnight". She taught me to be honest, trustful and obedient. I am glad for this.

In early childhood she took me to Sunday school. It was a little church about half mile west of her home. It was German. I was put into an A. B. C. class and taught the German language. I learned the letters, German spelling and reading. My first teacher was George Doll. I think he was a good man, but I do not remember that he ever said anything to me about the way of salvation. The whole object seems to have been to teach us German. While I am glad that I learned to read German, yet I think it a great mistake to sacrifice the religious teaching a child needs for the sake of teaching it another language. I remember with pleasure the sweet-spirited religious character of my grandmother Hershey.

I received my first impression of a need of conversion when about eleven years of age while we lived at Harreston Ill. It was at this time that my two step brothers were converted.

Nathaniel spoke to me about it and asked me to make a start, but for some reason, I cannot tell why, I did not do so. I regret that I was not led to Christ at this time. It was seldom that anyone talked to me personally. I believe if someone had taken a personal interest in me, I would have become a

Christian long before I did.

When we lived at Davis, over our Sunday school was German. We put in most of our time reciting verses from tickets. I however also went to an English M.E. Sunday school in the afternoon. My teacher was a devoted Christian and took a personal interest in the members of her class. Her name was Miss Herrinway. She was not attractive in her personal appearance, but she had love in her soul. I was 15 years old and yet not a Christian, though I was not outrageously wicked. I would not be dishonest, I would not lie. I would not swear. Yet I had not accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour.

I have no criticism to offer against anyone, but I am free to say from my own experience and from observation that there is altogether too much backwardness upon the part of parents and others regarding personal conversation with children and young people upon the subject of religion.

4. From Fifteen to Twenty one.

On arriving at Plainfield, the only person I knew was Prof. C. F. Rassweiler who found me a boarding place and got me started in school. I board with a family by the name of Hahn. My roommate was Henry Stroh from Indiana. He was considerably older than I. I boarded with this family two terms. It was a good place.

I arrived at Plainfield on Friday. On Sunday I was somewhat sick, but this did not discourage me. The studies I pursued at this time were English Grammar, Higher Arithmetic, Elocution, Algebra, Physical Geography, Music and Geometry.

I took a delight in all of them. I also liked my teachers. Pres A. H. Smith made Eng. Grammar and Elocution very clear to me. Profs. H. H. and C. F. Rassweiler were unexcelled in their departments, the former in Phys. Geography and Geometry, and the latter in Arithmetic and Algebra. I took great delight in my studies and was apt to learn. I was particularly fond of mathematics all the way through. With all my delight in study, I made it a point never to study during recreation hours. At play time I played. I also spent the greater part of Saturdays in recreation. Often two or more of us would take long walks, to Joliet, Lockport, once to Aurora. Sometimes we went hunting. I also took gymnastics,

exercising a good deal on the turning pole. We had one in Hahn's back yard from which I fell at one time and nearly broke my neck. I think it was good for me that I took a great deal of exercise for I needed physical development. I was small for my age, but grew quite rapidly while at Plainfield. During the spring term I roomed on the third floor of the college building. My roommate this term was Wesley Hummel. We boarded ourselves. Hummel was a very mischievous fellow.

Amongst my favorite associates was Eddie Carbin. Miss Carbin was my music teacher. My days at Plainfield were pleasant days for me. Of course I attended our own Sunday school and church.

While I was at Plainfield my parents moved to Ohio. I never got back to Davis again. When school closed I went to Ohio to join them. They then lived at East Liberty (Cleveland) Summit county. I have met only a few of those who attended Northwestern whom I did since that time. Amongst these are Mr and Mrs J. L. Haines of Chicago, F B Rainey of Rockwell City, and Martin Luther, county supt of schools of Geneseo Ill.