

[This is the extant part of a narrative by Minnie Eells (1851-af 1880) transcribed from a typewritten copy of the original, probably made in the early 1900's, by Gary S. Collins. Original spelling was preserved.]

Account of a Trip up the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers on the Great Republic, the finest ever like a palace after the war, by Aunt Minnie Euls

About her residence in Keachi, LA, where her father had a church (he had four in that region which he served).

My baby brother was born July 11, 1861, just after the Battle of Bull Run, so you see we were beginning to know something about it. The young men were being enlisted and formed into companies, and the women were meeting together to sew and help them all they could, and my mother was among them.

One of the greatest battles of the war, Point Pleasant, was only thirty-five miles from Keachi, and there was great excitement there, I can tell you. People were all packed up to move on to Texas as refugees if the "Yankees" should win, and our house was overrun with things our friends had asked us to take care of. The rebels were cistorious [sic; prob. 'victorious'], and the Yankees had to retreat, so all we saw of them was as prisoners being taken right by our house to Texas. I remember they stopped and were given water from our well of cold water. The College was turned into a hospital and the wounded that could be brought so far were, until it was full. There was another hospital in the College of Mansfield, which was only ten miles from the battlefield, where the worst cases were taken. It was at this time that I met some of the dearest friends of my life. Dr. Collins, who was surgeon in charge of the hospital brought his family with him, consisting of wife and three daughters. The first time I met them was when I went with my mother one morning to the hospital to prepare lint for the wounded soldiers. The women took their old wornout table linen and towels and it would be ravelled and scraped to make lint. There was no gauze or other prepared things such as are used now, and I am sure they knew nothing about sterilizing, and no doubt many of our poor soldiers died of it.

I fell in love with the whole Collins family, but especially the two younger daughters, Jesie and Rosalie. I was between the two in age, but nearer Rossie's (this was what she was called). She came to my mother's school, and Jessie came to my father for special studies. Rossie and I became almost inseparable, even spent several nights a week together. We also rode horseback a great deal and when we went out into the country, PaD, as his children called him, insisted upon sending his coachman with us, who followed behind to protect us from danger.

One day we were riding a read with trees on both sides, I looked up and saw a big coach-whip snake in one of the trees, just ready to spring. I showed it to Rossie, and we finally decided to gallop by as quickly as possible, as we were too near to turn around. This we did, no doubt frightening the snake as much as ourselves.

Among the refugees from Mississippi was a lovely family of Farrara, -- two brothers. One of the brothers had three sons. The second son, Howard, both Rossie and I fell in love with, but as Howard was reserved and shy, he never let us know which he liked best, so it made no difference. We were all chessplayers, our family, the Collinses and Farrars. Rossie had an aunt only a little older than Leila, whom we all called Aunt Sweet and loved very dearly. One of my pleasantest recollections is our readings together. We read McCaukey's history of England, and several of Dickens' books. I remember especially the fun we had reading Pickwick papers.

(Here the malaria almost everybody had in summer).

After the dreadful war was over, that is, the fighting part, we still had soldiers camped near us, and a commissary department in the town. There was an epidemic of measles among the soldiers, and as the hospital was closed, the ladies of the town had to take care of them. My mother being one, she brought it home in her clothes to the younger children. Being then away at the Methodist "College" at Mansfield, I escaped. That year after the war was a fearsome time. My father almost lost his life because he would preach to the negroes on Sunday afternoons. Some of the wild young men came with guns to the church and threatened him if he did not stop his service, which of course he did not. I can remember how Annie and I used to love to go with papa when it was in Keachie. We used to sit in the pulpit. We liked to hear the negroes sing. Late in the war, when the South needed more men, and older and married were called for, my father joined a company of "greybeards". He was, though a Northerner, a sympathizer with the South. But his company was never called into action.

Plantation party, where all the young folks went in a coach and four belonging to the gay and fashionable Mrs. Fullilove...Evelyn's mother, and did not return till daylight. Passing Loveletters for Evelyn and her beau.

[End of extant narrative]

Notes:

Many individuals were members of a group of about five families from Henderson Co., Kentucky, who, in support of the War of Secession, journeyed south to Arkansas and Louisiana in the period from about 1861 to 1866. The "trek" was headed by John Dillard Collins, a medical officer and surgeon in the Confederate Army who may also have directed field hospitals in Arkansas, including near Pine Bluff, and Keachi, Louisiana. The group included families of sisters Virginia, Cornelia and Marianna of his wife, Elvira Hatchett. Their father, John Avohard Hatchett (1798-1861), appears also to have made the trek south, but died in Pleasant Hill, LA in 1861.

Specific identifications:

- Author "Minnie Euls" was Minnie Eells (1851-aft 1880), daughter of Rev. Edward Eells, Presbyterian Minister to a number of churches in the Keachie area between 1859 and 1866. A description of his ministry and census records for the families of Edward Eells and his progeny can be found at <http://freepages.history.rootsweb.com/~garyscottcollins/Edward-Eells.pdf>
 - "PaD", probably pronounced "Pah Dee", was John Dillard Collins (1823-aft 1881).
 - Leila (1846-aft 1920), Jessie (1849-76), and Rosalie or "Rossie" (1852-aft 1907) were J.D. Collins's three daughters.
 - "Aunt Sweet" was almost certainly Cornelia Hatchett (1841-aft 1929), an unmarried aunt.
 - "Annie" was a sister of Minnie Eells two years younger.
 - Mansfield was and is the government seat of De Soto Parish, about 15 miles south-east of Keachie.
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Red River Campaign:

The Battles of Mansfield and Pleasant Hill in 1864 were part of an incursion by Union troops along the Red River. Links that set the context for Minnie Eells's narrative are given below.

Civilian reaction to the Red River Campaign 1864, by Vicki Betts. A compelling description of the horrors of war. <http://www.rootsweb.com/~ladesoto/civreac.htm>

Battles of Mansfield and Pleasant Hill, LA; list of links
<http://www.rootsweb.com/~ladesoto/battle.htm>

Colleges in Keachie and Mansfield

Minnie attended Mansfield Female College about 1863-4. All area schools closed during 1864 and many were used as field hospitals.

Mansfield Female College, history by Judy Baugh

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~ladesoto/college.htm>

Keachi College, history by Dr. Rodney Cline

<http://ftp.rootsweb.com/pub/usgenweb/la/desoto/misc/schools/boardman.txt>

Keachi College, history by Grady Sparkman

<http://ftp.rootsweb.com/pub/usgenweb/la/desoto/misc/schools/messeng.txt>

Louisiana Female College, Keachi, history by Laura Pickett

<http://ftp.rootsweb.com/pub/usgenweb/la/desoto/misc/schools/college.txt>