

This is a labor of love, and I share it with you,
It represents long hours of work, but 'twas my pleasure to do,
A typist I'm not, and you'll soon agree,
Mistakes you'll find many, be easy on me!
But take pleasure in remembrance, and you'll soon decide,
We've a heritage to cherish with true family pride!

Ray B. Hudgens

PREFACE

I write this epistle with the full knowledge that I am lapsing into reminesence, wistfully, consciously, and with no hesitance whatever. Here in the first paragraph, I admit that I am indeed a sentimentalist. I always have been. As I grow older, I become more so. At my age, perhaps, this is permissable for I am of that generation which behavioral scientists and men of management like to call the 'pre-36ers.' I learned that we who are so dubbed, being born before 1936, have different ideologic outlooks on life, and different attitudinal approaches to it. I'm tempted to accept the theory, especially when I am provoked by my fifteen year old son, John Mark. Then I could swallow it 'hook, line, and sinker,' as we used to say in Southern Illinois. I am often out of step with the world today and, frankly, it bothers me not. So prepare yourself, my reader, for a sentimental journey into Nostalgia.

The things I put here in black and white are really meant for the younger members of my own family. Some day they may have questions about their forefathers and there won't be anyone who remembers enough to tell. I speak with some authority, for it has happened to me when I've made efforts to delve into my family's history. I so appreciate my Grandfather Fly's foresight in writing his thoughts on the fly leaves of the family Bible. I read them often, with pleasure. My own father, J. B. Hudgens, took the trouble to relate to me what he knew of our ancestry and helped me develop an interest in it.

This year, 1972-3, my father's youngest and only remaining brother passed away. Uncle Arthur was an inspiration to me in many ways. He esteemed the good name our family has maintained, and their contributions for the past hundred years toward making Illinois what she is today.

My mother's last living sister, Mrs. Eva Fly Harrison, also died. Suddenly, with no alternatives, I realized that I am now a part of the older generation. This is a shocking realization! The seriousness of it comes with quite an impact. It places one in a position of responsibility. Here a dichotomy begins. One must try to act his age, yet he must never give it away. In order to do that I've accepted the 'dry look' men embrace today, and have foregone the beard and mustache which denoted maturity when I was young. Hopefully, this will keep me somewhat 'with it.' Part of the responsibility I accept, then, is taking time to put into words some of my remembrances, experiences, and some of the stories I've learned from listening.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said: "There is nothing that solidifies and strengthens a nation like the reading of that nation's own history, whether it be history recorded in books or embodied in customs, institutions and monuments."

To a lesser degree this is true of the history of families. I wish that I could write a true genealogy. Unfortunately, I haven't enough information for that. What I have, I share with you. Someone has to start the family genealogy. Will you continue the work, once it is begun? Whether you read this now or after I am goin to join our ancestors, I recommend this most fascinating, time consuming, often disappointing pursuit. I warn, in advance, that a contagious intrigue soon captivates you. In this age of addiction

I have become an addict. I haunt the dark corners of public libraries, the dusty attics where old books are found, and any archive of antiquity available to me. Brickle, brown, tattered pages I find intoxicating, and I get 'high' on antiquarianism.

My children, Mark and Michael, refer to my childhood as having taken place in the 'olden days.' When I tell of the social life of our small town-- the social life we were forced to create for ourselves, I detect disbelief in their eyes. No electricity? No television? I hardly have time for answers. But my stories are appreciated. My youngest son will often say, "Dad, tell it again." This to me is the highest compliment. So now I tell it again for Michael and, perhaps, for his son, not yet born. If you are interested in hearing my story, come along--the more the merrier.

