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MORE ABOUT "PIONEER TRAILS" (Pioneer Trails written by  
Elsie Vardaman Corner)

by Olive Cram Dickie as told to her by her father Fred Cram  
( John Frederick, better known as Fred was  
a cousin of Elsie)

Samantha's grandfather was born in Nova Scotia in 1800 and her grandmother Mary Ann was born in 1810 in New York. So far we know nothing of their lives until they reached Ohio. We do not know where they settled in Ohio but we do know that they were there between 1833 and 1853 for all of their children were born in Ohio. There were five children - John, (Samantha's father) born Oct. 14, 1833, Martin b. 1837, Mary A. b. 1844, Nancy G. b. 1849 and little Lydia, Samantha's friend and companion, b. 1853.

Samantha's father was married twice. His first wife Eliza was chased by a wounded deer and she climbed onto a stump to save herself but fell. She was pregnant at the time and both she and the baby died. John and Eliza must have been very young for in May 1853 he was married to Harriet Garde who was born in Indiana 1835. In 1854 on March 11 little Samantha was born. She was only a year younger than little Lydia so we can see why they became such good friends. This leads us to believe that all of the family had moved to Indiana at one time. Samantha's mother told of traveling together in a covered wagon to Iowa.

When they left Indiana they traveled across Illinois and more than half way across Iowa to a little settled called Tilesville west of Des Moines. There was little there except a railway station and a little store. Here Samantha's grandfather bought 40 acres for \$350.00. (This is now the site of two huge gravel quarries). They arrived here in 1855 so little Samantha was only a baby at the time but she was soon to have a baby brother for on Feb. 9, 1856 George Washington Cram was born. Samantha's father and mother had a cabin of their own. Her grandfather and grandmother were not far away. Martin soon married Matilda Childers. They lived with Martin's parents and their son David was born in his grandfather's cabin.

The little town of Tilesville soon folded and a town started about 4 miles west called Winterset. Here was built the courthouse of Center Township. The deed for the 40 Acres bought by Samantha's grandfather is on record here.

It wasn't long before Samantha had another baby brother. On Nov. 29, 1858 William was born and then little Mary on April 6, 1861. Little Mary was called Doll. Later in Minnesota she became Aunt Doll byx to all the relative. On Feb. 13, 1867 another little brother came to join Samantha and the other little children. He was called John after his father and grandfather. At this time it is thought that John and his wife Harriet had moved their little family to Illinois. Where and for how long we do not know but we think that Mary and little John were born in Illinois. *Perhaps John was on their way to Minn.*

Samantha's grandfather had arthritis very badly. About 1866 he died and was buried in what was known as the Blair cemetery just ~~xx~~ east of the little farm to which they had come in 1855. The farm had been bought from a family named Blair. Mary Ann soon joined him in the little hillside cemetery. She died May 16, 1866. All that remains of this little cemetery of some 40 graves is the marble head-stone marking Mary Ann's grave. The owner of one of the quarries had every thing bull-dozed down so that later it could be used as a quarry.

All that saved the stone was a huge elm tree planted by Samantha's father at the head of his parents' graves. It lies between two large roots of the tree. and so was missed by the bull-dozer. It was later found by Olive Dickie and she had a wire fence erected around the grave and the tree. We hope that it has been spared.

At this time Samantha and her parents must have been back in Iowa. Little Lydia was now a young lady of 13. Her sisters were 17 and 22. Perhaps they were able to take care of themselves. Martin was married and had a family of his own. I do not think he cared to have Lydia with him. Fred says that his grandfather (Samantha's father) told him that Martin got what little money that their parents left and he was quite put-out with Martin for some time. So it seems that for a number of years Lydia became a member of her brother John's family. So Samantha had her play-mate back with her.

The story about the wolves chasing the sled must have happened in Iowa. Fred's grand-father said that his brother Martin saved him from the wolves. It seems that they had been to town for supplies and Fred's grandfather John had to make a stop by the road-side. The wolves appeared and Martin kept them off by throwing them some groceries until John could get back into the sled. I guess the wolves followed them all the way home.

In March 1869 Samantha's father bought 40 acres in LeSueur Co. Minnesota and moved his family to a large log cabin about 3 miles northwest of Waterville, Minnesota. I do not know whether Lydia came with them or not. But I think not. She was a young lady of 16 now. One of her sisters married and was living in Burlington, Iowa. Lydia married a young handsome pharmacist from Iowa and later moved to California where they owned a drug store. Her husband's name was Ray Lewis. They had two children - Ray and Pearl. I believe that the son Ray had the drug store for some years also.

Hattie Jones told of Lydia and her grand-mother riding horse back from Iowa to Minnesota to visit Lydia's brother. Hattie was under the impression that this grand-mother was Lydia's mother. But this could not have been for Lydia's mother died in 1866. Samantha speaks of the grandmother living at Waterville with the John Cram family as John's mother. But this was the mother of Harriet, Mary Jane Garde James. Fred remembered her well and said they all called her old grandma to tell her from their grandmother Harriet. Harriet's family may have lived near them in Iowa. Fred never knew I guess. Latter Harriet's brother Henry and two sisters ran a hotel in Norman, Okla. Mary Jane Garde James was born in 1808 and died 1886 and is buried on the Cram cemetery plot near John and Harriet (her daughter). Samantha was named after her mother's sister Samantha. The other sister was named Adeline.

Fred knew his aunt Samantha's story very well. After Samantha's husband died and little Albert went to live with his grand-parents, Fred used to stay there also and go to school. Samantha's brother George married the school teacher Jennie Pumphrey in 1874 and they moved to a little cabin several miles north of Geo.'s parents home and quite some distance from school. From what Fred said of his grandparents and from what I know when was a child, they were dearly beloved by children. Fred said that Albert his dear play-mate. He told how they used to swing across the road hanging to branches of a huge willow tree. Little Albert's father was in a little country cemetery near the Crams and what is State Hwy. now. The ~~sax~~ stone is still there. The cemetery has long been ~~ed~~. It grew up to brush and weed. Some years ago Fred had it cleared now Fred's grandson tries to get it mowed at least once a year so it look too badly.

Hattie must have been born at Waterville to Samantha and her second husband John Vardaman in 1881. They must still have been in Minnesota in 1887 for they had a little son George born Feb. 1, 1887 and who died a few days later on Feb. 17, 1887. He is buried in Sakata cemetery on the Cram lot at the foot of his great grand mother Mary Jane's grave. A little marble slab marks the spot.

Samantha and her husband John Vardaman must have moved at or about the same time as her parents to Norman, Oklahoma. They bought farms not too far apart. *Moved shortly after parents went to Oklahoma, May 8, 1891. All children born in Minn. except Elsie who was born Nov. 26, 1890*

Fred used to tell how his grand-father used to like to move on to greener pastures. He didn't like to live where it was too densely settled. He wanted to go farther west. Grand-mother said No! She had had enough moving to last her for a while. So it is said grand-father hitched up his team of mules and he and another man drove west to where there was a gold strike. This was near Pikes Peak and while there they said that they drove to the top.

The Jesse James story took place when Fred was a year old. The place his father George bought was on the Cannon River where there was a ford. The story goes that some neighbors of George's were cutting wood near the ford when several horsemen stopped to water their horses. The robbery at Northfield was the great news right then. One of the wood cutters remarked to one of the horsemen that he sure would like to get a look at one of the robbers. The man said, "Take a good look for you are looking at them right now." Samantha's father was one of the posse that went looking for the robbers.

*Dec. 30, 1890*  
In 1891 Samantha's father sold his farm to Charles Volkman whose daughter Augusta later became Fred's wife and the mother of Olive. They moved to Oklahoma and I believe Samantha and her family with them. It was a country newly opened to settlement and much to Samantha's father's liking. Perhaps Samantha's mother didn't take too much urging to move this time as her brother and sisters had a hotel at Norman. Fred said that his grandfather used to get very put out with Henry and his sisters. They came to the farm often and loaded up with produce for the hotel free for nothing. Grandfather thought this being the case he and his family should be given a free meal at the hotel once in a while. Guess this was not the case and he said he was sick and tired of Henry lousing around the farm.

After 20 years in Oklahoma, Samantha's father and mother moved back to Waterville to spend their remaining years. He died in 1914 the same year as his son George. She died in 1922.

I dearly loved to visit them. They were both so full of fun, especially Oklahoma grandma, as I called her. I had two other grandmothers living so had to distinguish them in some way.

There is a story about a number of Crams going to a fair. Great-grandfather and great-grandmother, my father and mother and others. Everyone was tired and wanted to go home. All but great-grandmother. John, Samantha's father said, "Harriet, why do you always want to stay until the last dog is hung?"

"Well," she said, "they might just hang another." That became quite a saying in our family. If anyone was a little late coming home, someone was sure to say, "what's the matter? Did they hang another dog?" I even hear it from my husband once in a while. Shouldn't have told him the story.

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Fred said that while his grandfather lived in Oklahoma , they got a barrel of peanuts every fall which grandfather raised. If he sent each of the children that many peanuts that would have been four barrels. A lot of peanuts. They roasted them in the oven.

I visited the old farm on which they lived at Norman once and saw where my father Fred and his brothers had carved their names on rocks in a ravine near the house. Guess they all had their turn visiting down there. They used to tell of the wonderful fruit orchard their grandfather had. Also about the hot bread Samantha spoke about. Fred called them saleratus biscuits. Another name for soda biscuits I guess. I don't believe Great-grand mother ever made regular bread. Hot bread was made for every meal. When they moved back to Waterville they brought back over 500 quarts of canned fruit which they had raised and grandmother had canned.

Grandfather had another team of mules during his last days of which he thought the world. Guess I could go on forever with stories that keep coming to mind. Just thought this might be a little to add to Elsie's interesting story of Pioneer Days. The dates I picked up at De Moines, Ia. from the census books. Some time I hope we can add to the history that took place between Nova Scotia and Ohio.