

In 1933, Nora Ruth Bates, wife of Harold, wrote up an account of her parents-in-law, LaMott George and Hannah Amanda (Sickels) Bates, called Amanda or “Mandy”. The account was illustrated with photographs, some of them taken when sons Bion and Clare accompanied their father back to Oberlin in 1908 and 1915. Unfortunately, the photographs have become separated from the text. Accordingly, I have edited out the picture captions. I have also edited the text to remove some unnecessary verbiage.

Richard C. Bates
November 12, 1994

[Bracketed text below are additions by Richard Bates. An extracted and condensed version of this was used by Richard for the text of “The Bates Family” portion of the Blue Book.]

RECOUNTING THE LIVES OF LAMOTT GEORGE AND AMANDA BATES

LaMott George Bates was born at Richfield, Summit Co., Ohio, October 13, 1847.

When almost eight years of age, he went with his parents to Michigan, arriving there October 12, 1855. His father had taken up government land in Fairfield Township, Shiawassee County, about three miles north east of what is now the village of Elsie. This was to be their new home.

The family left from Oberlin, Ohio for Cleveland on the train. In Cleveland, they boarded a ship for Detroit. The Grand Trunk Railroad being under construction, they could go only as far as Fenton. They took a stage from there to Byron where they stayed the night, and the next day hired a man with two horses and a double buggy to take them through the woods to Elsie [about 30 miles]. They left their household goods in storage in Fenton. Later, when the railroad had been extended to Linden, Step-grandfather Linman and Uncle Abram Hobbs* went there with ox teams to bring the goods home.

All about them was native wildness. Roads were little more than trails through the woods, often following river banks. Houses and barns were all built of logs. Elsie consisted of four log houses, each on a cross road called “The Corners” [still

the main crossroad of Elsie]. One house was on the farm of J.D. Sickels, one on that of Frank Tilotsson, one on Ira Allen’s farm, and a fourth that of Jonathan Hicks.† Staple goods were expensive. Wild animals and game – largely deer and raccoon – were the main sources of meat. One summer the corn froze in the field so that people resorted to acorns for pig feed. When the bacon was cooked, it fried away to little but rind.

The work of cutting down the trees and clearing them away was a slow and laborious process. As LaMott saw his father at this work, day after day, he suddenly remarked, “I wish there was a rushing machine that would cut all these trees down at once.” This desire to have something done and done quickly characterized his entire life and contributed largely to his wonderful success in whatever he undertook.

His only opportunity to continue his studies in school was during the winter months. He first went to a school held in an unoccupied room in the newly-built home of Ralph Van Deusen. A log schoolhouse was later built. Harriet Crow‡ was

* - An “honorary” uncle. Abraham Hobbs was married to Laura Linman, who was daughter of Andrew Linman and Susannah Potter, Andrews first wife, who died in 1837, eighteen years before LaMott’s family moved to Elsie. Andrew’s second wife was Lovina (Pelton) Bates, LaMott’s paternal grandfather.

† - Jonathan Hicks was the older brother of Susan Hicks. Susan must have moved to Elsie or was visiting her brother when she met Lyman Cobb (my 1st cousin, 4x removed), because they were married there in 1853.

‡ - Harriet’s husband (married 1860), Phillip Finch, was Aaron Sickels’s brother-in-law. Aaron, of course, was Hanna Amanda Sickels’s uncle, so Harriet, the Finches and Aaron would all eventually be related to LaMott by marriage.

one of his teachers. As the distance was too great for his sister Lizzie to walk, he had a large sled driven by a yoke of steers,* and together they rode to school. LaMott then drove them back home and returned on foot to school. This surely afforded them much pleasure to take this daily ride in so fine a conveyance. The yoke used on these little twin steers was made by Andrew Rockwell and is now in the attic of his (LaMott's) home among the other treasures and reminders of pioneer life.†

His summers were spent on the farm. He drove two yokes of young steers in clearing logs from a piece of land, thistles and other weeds torturing his bare feet. For this strenuous work, he received 18¢ a day. The work was for Abraham Hobbs.

His father soon after left the Fairfield farm, moving to one about 1½ miles north of Elsie on the State road. LaMott attended school in the village of Elsie, remembering with pleasure (as all her pupils did) a Miss Healey, one of the teachers.

One unceasing source of regret to LaMott during his entire life (as it has been with other pioneers) was his limited opportunities for education.

It can be said, however, that he so far overcame this seeming handicap in later years that he became an efficient business man, held offices of trust and responsibility in the village and township

and was also well-qualified to give counsel and advice to the many who came to him for help.

When LaMott was about fifteen years of age he made arrangements to return to Richfield, Ohio, to live with an Aunt Abbie Baldwin,‡ where he was to work for his board with the privilege of attending school. After about a year he went to live with Mr. and Mrs. Allen in Richfield,§ for the purpose of learning the harness trade of Mr. Allen. He stayed there three years. The first year he received, beside his board, the sum of \$50.00, the second year \$65.00, the third year \$85.00. If he needed extra money, he worked evenings to help out. The association with Mr. and Mrs. Allen during the three years that he lived there was so pleasant that a lasting friendship was formed. Whenever he returned to Richfield later, he always visited them. To LaMott, they were always "Ma and Pa Allen"; he was big brother to their children, May and Allen.**

At about age 20, he returned to Elsie where he and his father [George Washington Bates, Jr.], now a resident of the village, operated a harness making shop together for several years.

In 1868, at the age of 21, he joined Elsie Lodge #238, Free and Accepted Masons.

In October, 1872 Mr. J.F. Hasty, owner of a barrel factory in the village, invited LaMott to enter partnership with him in a store he was about to open, he furnishing the capital and LaMott being the manager. LaMott accepted, and the store opened October 19.

It was remarked by some that "Mott was lucky", but Mr. Hasty did not pick his partner at random. He knew of LaMott's honesty, his application to the work ethic and his ability to carry any project to success. He was not disappointed, and LaMott, in turn, was always grateful to Mr. Hasty for the placement of such trust.

* - See <http://rockwell-johnson-genealogy.blogspot.com/2009/05/ox-yoke-following-was-text-with-ox-yoke.html>.

† - See preceding footnote. The yoke is now in the Elsie Historical Society Museum, with this note written by Bion Bates:

This ox yoke was built about 1857 for my father, LaMott George Bates by Mr. Andrew Rockwell at Elsie, Michigan. It seems that Grandpa Bates had given his son LaMott a pair of steers so with the aid of the yoke the boy was able to train the animals to be a good driving team. He told of taking his sister Lizzie to school on a bob-sled then driving back home, putting out the animals and wading alone through the snow to his classes. But what was a son's young steers turned out to be a father's oxen as poverty decreed. Father often wondered what became of the yoke. Then years later a farmer friend delighted father by bringing him the treasured keepsake.

‡ - Abbie (or "Abby") (Robinson) Baldwin, LaMott's mother's sister. The entire Robinson line has been impossible to trace

§ - Peter L. Allen and Marietta (Seeley) Allen. We have photos of both of them, plus two of their grandchildren, Emma and Ruth Whitney.

** - More likely Elmer Allen.

On May 28, 1873 he married Hannah Amanda Sickels whom he first met in one of the four log cabins of Elsie as a boy of eight or so. The wedding took place in the Methodist Church.* A reception followed at the home of the bride's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Job Durfee Sickels. A new home was built in the west end of the village, and the young couple set up housekeeping there on July 27, 1873.

The store prospered, but after a year or more LaMott was asked to leave. [Family legend holds that Mrs. Hasty didn't like him, and persuaded her husband to let him go.]

Few people escape disappointments, especially the young. LaMott had married, built a new home and anticipated a bright future on the basis of his employment. Now, he and his bride faced poverty.

They closed the home; Mandy went into her father's store again as a clerk [The Sickels had a general store, competing, down by the river], and LaMott went to Ohio to sell books. After three successful months at that, he returned to Elsie.

He now exchanged his home free from debt as partial payment on a farm southwest of Elsie. The only place of residence on the farm was a log house, prettily located on the bank of the Maple River. An unusual feature, and one highly prized, was a spring of running water in the "cellar" which served as a "refrigerator", with a half-barrel sunk in it. Another spring was on the bank near the house. The change from the pretty home where so recently they had spent their honeymoon to the primitive log house, a half-mile from neighbors, heavy farm labor by inexperienced methods, taxed their courage. They remained here, however, a year when Mr. Bates accidentally broke his leg. This meant long weeks of suffering when it would be impossible to do any work, all of which helped in a decision that he had been trying to make for some time, that it was best to sell. He found a ready buyer for the place and returned to Elsie, a strange chain of circumstances making it possible for them to occupy their for-

mer home. They rented the place temporarily, until they could again make plans.

An opportunity soon opened to enter the cheese business. He was one of the Association and helped to make Elsie Cheese become famous.

Clare George Bates was born Nov. 8, 1876 at Elsie, Michigan. In 1877, Mr. Bates bought a farm on the southwest border of the village, comprising at first about 50 acres. By additions from adjoining property it was increased to about 150 acres. In the autumn of that year (1877) J.F. Hasty left Elsie for Detroit. He asked Mr. Bates to renew the partnership in the store under the firm name of J.F. Hasty and Co. as before. Mr. Bates accepted the offer.

In the summer of 1878, Mr. Bates bought Mr. Hasty's interest in the business, continuing it under the name of L.G. Bates.

Clyde Durfee Bates was born Oct. 14, 1878, at Elsie, Michigan.

The contract price of the goods bought from Mr. Hasty was about \$5800. The time allowed for its payment was 8 years. It was paid in five.

There are only five words in that sentence but each word is a chapter in the story of the payment of the debt. Those five years brought into action every energy. Brain and muscle did double duty. All the resources of the farm were used to help lessen the debt. Outside investments that brought quick returns were made. Mr. Bates held village and township offices to swell the fund. 1883 saw the debt paid. He was 36 years old, his wife was 31.

Throughout the five years, Mr. Bates, as well as the children that later blessed the home, acknowledged the part taken by the wife and mother. Without her help, it could not have been accomplished. Her untiring faithfulness, her economy, self-denial, cheerfulness -all these and much more in her quiet way, proved her ability to be the true help-meet she has ever been in their home.

Bion LaMott Bates was born October 4, 1884 at Elsie, Michigan. In 1890 LaMott built a brick store to satisfy the demands of his increasing trade. Harold Percy Bates was born October 5, 1892, also in Elsie. Clare G. Bates graduated from

* - Actually more properly referred to as the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Elsie High School in June, 1894. During the summer of 1894, the old house was moved back on the lot to make room for a larger house.

Clare entered the dental school at the University of Michigan in the fall of 1894. [The course took three years; no preliminary college training was required.] He graduated in June and opened practice in Durand on August 1, 1897. On January 1, 1900, he married Lyda Fair in a home newly built in Durand. [A home in which they lived all their lives, in which their funerals were held, and in which their son, DeLoss, lived until his death.]

Ruth Emily Bates was born May 10, 1895. Clyde D. Bates graduated from high school in June, 1896. He spent a year in the store with his father, then attended Albion College 1897-1898. In 1900 he visited the Paris Exposition and traveled into other parts of Europe. On October 2, 1902 he married Retta Woodard.

Bion Bates graduated from high school in June, 1901. He attended Albion in 1901-02, then entered the Dental School at the U. of M. in the fall of 1902. He graduated in dentistry in 1905, practiced in Elsie for a year and a half, then moved his office to Ovid, six miles south, in 1907.

In 1902, Gertrude Martyn, age 14, came from her country home to live in the LaMott Bates home. [This was a common practice in the days before school buses to allow girls to attend high school, paying their room and board by helping in the home.] "Gertie" remained until her marriage ten years later to Claude Allen, January 1, 1912. She was so companionable to Baby Ruth and the family that she was considered to be a foster daughter. She was married in the Bates home, and attended family reunions the rest of the Bates's lives. [Gertrude, Claude and their three children appear in the large family picture taken on LaMott's and Amanda's 60th wedding anniversary in 1933.]*

The senior Bateses spent the winter of 1905-6 in California, traveling by train through Chicago,

Arizona, and back through Washington, visiting friends along the way. In the winter of 1909-10, they repeated, this time accompanied by daughter Ruth, age 14.

Bion married Wilma Jackson of that city in Ovid on July 21, 1909.

LaMott decided that the work and care of the farm in addition to minding the store was too burdensome, especially since the boys were no longer around to help. So, in the fall of 1910, after 33 years of love and labor, they sold the farm, including their beloved carriage horse, Kitty, and a Jersey cow, and went to Florida. Upon their return, they bought a house on West Main Street in Elsie where they lived until their deaths. A little later they built a cottage in Wilbur-by-the-Sea, just south of Daytona Beach, and wintered there for the next 22 years with the exception of the winter of 1927-28. That year, they visited son Harold and wife in Arizona, joined. Amanda's sister Jennie and husband in Los Angeles for six weeks, returned to Arizona for the rest of the winter and stopped in Kansas City to visit the widow of Amanda's brother, John Whitney Sickels, on the way home.

Harold P. Bates after having attended the Elsie High School, desired to stress his business education. He went to the McLachlan Business University in Grand Rapids, 1911-1912.

It is now 40 years since L.G. Bates entered the mercantile business in Elsie. Except for a few years previous to 1877, he has continued his untiring efforts to supply the needs of the village and vicinity. He and his son, Clyde, who has been a partner 14 years, thought it fitting to commemorate in some way so unusual an event. An invitation was sent out to every one to come to their store on Oct. 19, 1912, to help them celebrate the day, aid also to receive a small token, in the form of a paper weight — Mr. Bates's portrait on one side and a mirror on the other — as a souvenir of the occasion, a slight expression of gratitude for their loyal support, and patronage. Over 500 were given out and the supply was exhausted before night. The store was crowded constantly, over 1000 people attending. Each person was served with ice cream and cake. Mr. Bates and Clyde

* - An Allen family portrait may be seen at [http://www.shaynes.com/EJH/images/photos_miscellaneous/pages/Gertie Allen & family - undated-27.htm](http://www.shaynes.com/EJH/images/photos_miscellaneous/pages/Gertie%20Allen%20&%20family%20-%20undated-27.htm).

were kept busy all day shaking hands and visiting with old friends.

Cycle had arranged two fine displays in the front windows which every one admired. One window showed ladies' apparel of 40 years ago. In the other window was a display of old relics of all kinds, the ox-bows LaMott used when he took his sister Lizzie to school with the twin steers, irons and many utensils of 4 decades past.

Clyde, now 36 years of age, is assuming almost entire responsibility of a large and growing trade, much of his father's time being taken with other matters.

On July 30, 1913, Retta Woodard Bates, wife of Clyde D. Bates, dearly loved by everyone, passed away.

In June 1914, Ruth Emily Bates graduated from the Elsie High School. The winter of 1914-1915 was spent in Florida. She entered Albion College Sept. 1915 but was compelled to return home at Christmas on account of ill health.

Marriage, Clyde D. Bates and Blanche Deuel of Elsie, Feb. 7, 1916.

Ruth spent 1916-1917 in Florida. In the Fall of 1917 she entered the Michigan State College, and was there 1917-18 and one-half of the next year.

In 1917, L.G. Bates sold his interest in the store to his son C.D. Bates and George Carter. Later

(1921) Benjamin Steere bought Clyde's interest, which closed the connection of the Bates family with the store established in 1872.

Harold entered military service April 15, 1918. After six months of training, he sailed from Newport News on October 7 and reached France on the 21st, two months before the war ended. He repaired roads and railroads in the 50th Coast Artillery. Walks of 10 miles, exposure to cold and rain, poor food, coupled with influenza in the great pandemic led to pneumonia with pleural effusion. He spent three months in hospitals in France, then returned to New York in April, 1919 and was discharged May 3rd.

Glen Oren married Ruth Bates September 10, 1919.

Harold opened a grocery business in Elsie April 11, 1921 and married Nora Ruth Holmes in Detroit on July 31, 1921.

The Senior Bateses celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on May 28, 1923. The house was decorated in yellow and white, and matching cake and ice cream were served guests in the afternoon. The church Ladies' Aid Society served supper in the church parlors at six, and the guests then went back to the house for the evening's program:

Song, "When You and I Were Young, Maggie"
Four sons, with daughter at the piano

Original Poem, "A Sentiment"
Bion

Solo, "A Song of Long Ago"
Harold

Original Poem, "Their First Meeting"
Wilma Bates, recited by daughter Emily*

"History of the Wedding of 50 Years Ago"
Mrs. DeWitt E. Andrews

Instrumental Duet
Florence Bates and Barbara Deuel

* - To be found at [http://www.shaynes.com/EJH/history/Their First Meeting.pdf](http://www.shaynes.com/EJH/history/Their%20First%20Meeting.pdf).

Poem
Mrs. Cross of Boston, read by Mrs. Rankin

Poem
Ellen Sexton, read by Emma Hall

Poem
Edgar Guest, read by Glen Oren

Song, "An Old-fashioned Garden"
Emily and Barbara Bates, in costume

Original Poem
Mrs. F. G. Thiers

Talk, "Reminiscences"
Clare G. Bates

Talk, "Congratulations"
Reverend W. M. Jones

Song, "A Perfect Day"
The Bates Children

Remarks of Appreciation
Mr. and Mrs. Bates

On doctor's advice, Harold and Nora moved to a poultry farm south of Phoenix, Arizona June, 1925. After five years, they returned to Elsie.

On his 80th birthday, Mrs. Alvah Sickels gave LaMott a surprise card shower at his home; he received 91 cards.

In the summer of 1928, Clare and Lyda toured Europe, Northern Africa, England and Scotland.

The biggest gathering of the Bates family came each Thanksgiving. In the beginning, the parents planned and prepared the feast with help from Mrs. Bates's family living nearby. Activities began as early as Monday. Turkey was dressed, vegetables prepared, mince and pumpkin pies were baked, fruit cakes were in abundance, tables set in anticipation.

In 1928, daughter Ruth and the four daughters-in-law, watchful of their mother's failing strength, took upon themselves much of the responsibility and labor. Instead of one turkey, there were now three plus two chickens. Blanche roasted one turkey, Wilma another, while the third, the chickens, and the potatoes are still done in Amanda's kitchen under her supervision. Salads, cakes, other vegetables are divided up and prepared in other homes according to choice. Pies are replaced by

the more simple ice cream. The tables are decorated with Dr. Bion's chrysanthemums, a yearly tribute to his mother that he started in college days.

When all are present, including Gertrude Allen and her family, there will be 35. At the start, there will be a benediction: once they repeated the Lord's Prayer, at another time "Blest Be the Tie that Binds" was sung. In attendance may be: 7 mothers and fathers, 9 housewives, 2 dentists, 1 MD, 2 bankers, 1 merchant, 1 jeweler [Claude Allen], 3 real-estate dealers, 1 bank teller, several pianists, vocal soloists of reputation, 4 graduates of normal colleges (one holding a BA degree), 1 graduate of a business college, 4 graduates of the University of Michigan (one with an "all-A" record), 4 with partial credits from colleges or universities, 5 students in grade schools and 4 little ones with an unwritten history.

Before they leave for home, there must be the "Bates Sing" that usually concludes every family gathering. Everyone joins in for an hour or more. College songs, popular airs, patriotic numbers and gospel hymns make a joyful time.

LaMott became a Mason at the age of 21; each of his four sons joined at the same age. Daughter Ruth joined the Order of Eastern Star. LaMott

was Worshipful Master of the Elsie Lodge for 10 years. This permitted him to induct each of his sons, and each son in turn to participate in the induction of his younger brothers.

On five occasions, LaMott and his relatives occupied all of the chairs for the ceremony. On November 1, 1922 grandson LaMott Fair Bates was made a Master Mason at such a ceremony in Durand.*

A similar occasion followed in 1927 when the second grandson, DeLoss, was made Master Mason. His grandfather, now 81 years old, presided.

LaMott was Supervisor of Duplain Township 15 years, Clerk and President of the school Board, President of the Village Council and of the Elsie Bank.

Hannah Amanda Sickels was the second of seven children of Job Durfee and Sarah Cobb Sickels of Elsie, Michigan. She was born amid pioneer surroundings. At night the barking of wolves, the hooting of owls and the shrill cries of nighthawks were common sounds. Forest fires came alarmingly near; there was no equipment to drive them back. She exemplified her heritage of Quaker integrity, patience, industry, neatness and discipline.

At age four, she began piecing a "four-patch" quilt, aided by her mother who threaded the needle for her. She finished it at age seven.

When she was about 15 she attended a private school in Maple Rapids, and at 17 another in Fenton. She then taught school and helped her father in the post office. At age 21 she married LaMott Bates on May 28, 1873.

She was treasurer of the church Ladies' Aid Society for 15 years, treasurer of the Elsie Cemetery Association for 26 years and was Worthy Matron of the Eastern Star Chapter for two years.

LaMott and Amanda's 60th anniversary was announced on the "Cheerio" program of the National Broadcasting Company, and in the "Detroit Free Press".

A dinner was given at noon in the church parlors across the street, after which Dr. Bion with his big camera [borrowed from his father-in-law, Chester Jackson] assembled the group on the lawn and photographed them. As he was the photographer, he could not be included in the picture, which we all regretted. Dr. LaMott slyly concealed his moving-picture camera and secured a reel of films recording the proceedings.

The company gathered again in the church parlors for the following program:

Recitation

Kay Bates, age 4

"Mother and Me"

Jeanette Allen

Piano solo, "Long, Long Ago"

Jeanne Peters, age 7

Piano solo, "To a Wild Rose"

Frances Bates, age 15

Original Poem, "The First Meeting"

Wilma Bates, recited by Richard
Bates, age 12

Flute solos, "Barcarolle" and "Somewhere
a Voice is Calling"

Jackson Bates, age 16

Recitation "Jesus Loves Me"

William Peters, almost 4

Poem by Edward Guest

Winona Oren, 12

Description of the Wedding

Alice Sickels Andrews.

* - Photos of the events will be found at
http://www.shaynes.com/EJH/images/photos_bates-sickels/bates/index_7.htm.