
Chapter 3

Dora Dobson's Letters

Letters and information from Cal Bivens

Apparently, Great Grandpa was catching up with some of the cousins he hadn't seen in years. Dora sent several letters in addition to what she wrote. I have tried to make the transcriptions a little more readable by adding punctuation (almost non-existent in the letters) and capitalization. The original spelling I have left alone—anything in brackets [] is my addition.—Cal Bivens

About the Letter Writer:

Dora Dobson Crabtree Sheldon (1856–1946)

Dora's parents were Dr. Abram Dobson and Rebecca "Becky" Fillmore from New Brunswick. Dora married her cousin, Silas Judson Crabtree in 1875.

Silas, born in 1855, was the son of George W. Crabtree, the youngest son of Richard and Mary Crabtree, brother of Arnold Crabtree, and uncle to my great Grandpa John Crabtree. So Silas was John Crabtree's cousin, and Dora his wife sent the letters.

Silas died in Wright County, Iowa, three years after he and Dora were married. Their daughter Violet died in 1877 and their son was born after his father's death in October 1878.

Dora married Newton Brewer Sheldon in 1880, and lived in Pierce, De Kalb County, Illinois. Newton had three children from a prior marriage and Dora had her son Silas. Dora's younger brother, Frank, 18, lived with them and worked as a farm hand.

Dora and Newton had four children: Elsie May, Winifred Dora, Fern, and Maurice Sheldon.

Newton died at the age of 79, on November 17, 1915, in Scranton, Greene County, Iowa. He was buried in the Scranton Township Cemetery there.

Dora died in Fort Dodge, Iowa, April 26, 1946.

Cover Letter

Nov. 10, 1918

Dear Cousins,

I am sending you some letters I have received that may be of interest to you. Sad days have come to us, our baby passed away of heart failure the 7th and yesterday his father took him back to Scranton, Iowa to bury him in the same grave with his mother. I am sad and lonely without him he would have been 19 mo. old the 16. All of Guy Huffmans are lying sick with it [flu] but all are better I hope you folks do not have it. One letter is from Phil Crabtree, Ceaphus second son, he is in the insane asylum. Was kicked by a horse and while he is rational enough at times still he is bad at times. It is more than a year ago he was hurt and left a wife and child and her expecting again, on a claim in Dak. Mima heard from her she did not know what to do. That was a year ago. Aunt Cynthia still wants children to worry her life out. Frank is one she has raised but he has been a good boy. This little girl that has gon with her married sister she has had 3 years and is 6 years old now. Anna is Mima's sister. Irvie is Fanny's son, she has two sons and a daughter has been helpless cripple & invalid for 14 years—

I must close and trust you are all well

Lovingly

Dora

This first letter was from "Mima." Jemima Crabtree Smith was George W. and Sara Crabtree's daughter. George W. Crabtree was the youngest son of Richard Arnold and Mary Giggey Crabtree.

**Lynden Wash
Sept. 22, 1918**

Dear Sister

Will write a few lines, am as well as usual and hope this will find you the same. Tom has gone with Clifford to yacama [Yakima] to the fair and I wish I had gon too but I was foolish and staid at home to see to things.

Sep 30, will try and finish this letter. Am so busy I dont get time to write much. I help in the red cross one day and in the driers rooms one day, so that is too [2] days a week and the caning [canning] at home to. It keeps one pretty busy. I have about ten pounds of apples dried for you. Well, I don't know what to write about. Well, the crops are pretty poor this year it has bin so dry. The oats crop went about 20 + 25 bushels to the acre, the hay was fair but not good. Every thing is high, eggs are 55 cents a dozen butter is 65 [cents] a pound. Fruit is in good demand this year, the canry has run all summer. They pay 25 cents an hour for work. Well, this is tuesday have bin washing and canning tomatoes and am tired so will try and rest. Tom is gon most of the time working for Ray. We have a car now so it dont take him long to goe and come. I want to learn to run it but don't get much chance, but I am glad we have it. Did I tell you we got a new rug for the Dining room this spring? Sold the old one for six dollars, took it to the second hand store and sold it at auction. I like the new one very well. Well, I wish you could come and make us a visit this winter if your boys have gone to ware [war] you don't have to stay there. Did Abies folks all goe away? You wrote they were going. Did Ferns man goe to the ware yet, and Elsie's man goe? Harry Crabtree is married now. About three weeks ago he Married Henrietta Bliss the folks are all well as usual as far as I know. Hermans rented a place out in the suburbs of Seattle and are keeping chickens. Rays folks bought them a house. They had to Moove and could not rent one so they bought one just building. I have not seen it yet. Well, if I could see you I could think of lots to say but I cant seem to think of mutch now so will close for this time. I want to write to Fill Crabtree and Cephas, so goodby, love to you and baby Mima.

[note on the backside of the page: Thank God for peace]

Apparently, this is the letter from Phil Crabtree. Phil was the son of Cephas Crabtree, and grandson of George W. Crabtree.

**Yankton S.D.
Sept. 22, 1918**

Dear Aunt.

It has been so long since I have written to you or heard from you. I guess I will try and write a few lines again today.

I am feeling so much better in every way since I wrote to you. In fact I did not think I could ever feel quite so good. I hear from father about once a month. Daisy is staying with him.

Myma is staying with Bob in Denver. I received a letter from John last spring and wrote him a couple of times, but have not heard since. I also received a letter from the Superintendent of the Nevada Hospital, he says mother is quite contented and healthy but very delusional, she thinks she is some one else. Did I tell you that grandma and uncle Tom Richards live at Montgomery, Iowa on a small farm? They still own their place in Dows. and I got a letter from uncle Tom. Isn't it strange how a fellow will commence to look around when he gets up against it? I do not have any idea when I will get out of here, but am thinking strongly of going down near where mother is so I can see her once in a while. I do not hear from my wife any more. The probability is we will agree to part. I have about two hours work to do every day. The rest of the time I read, play cards, smoke, sit on the porch and loaf around. This is quite a large town of itself, with a big farm attached. But I am not allowed to go out side. There are quite a number who are. It is a very pretty place in the summertime nice buildings trees etc.

We have had so many vegetables and melons we hardly get in the Hills. It makes this part of the state seem like an Eden. Do you ever hear from Floyd Fillmore or any of his folks? I often wonder where they are and how they are getting along. I hope you and all the family are well and getting good crops, enjoying life etc. I am just about out of anything to write about now, so will close with love and best regards to all. If you see Bert Stuart tell him hellow for me, and mention me to Ray & Herman. Do you ever hear from Reginald Stuart? We have many nationalities and professions represented here. Well again I will close with love.

Your Nephew, P. J. Crabtree
Yankton, S.D.

P.S. I suppose you know I am still in the hospital.

Philomas Oregon, October 7, 1918

Dear Mima,

How are you? I havent heard from any of you for so long. I lost dear Annies Adress so I couldnt write to her. I was so in hopes Colbies folks would come to see us this fall and bring you and Anna with them. How is your health now? Is Anna living where she did when I was there? Do you think she would let me have her Annia to live with me? I would clothe her and send her to school and learn her to work and do all I could for her. I let my little girl go live with her mered [married] sister so I am alone. Mr Palmer & I, we are lonely for some one. She said I could have her when I was there if I did not have little Cynth. Tell her I would pay her way to come out here if she will let her come. How is all your children? Have you heard from Dora lately? I havent for a long time. How is Mrs Stuart and her children? And Purl and Ben Crabtree and Henrys folks? I didnt get to see them when I was out east. Did Doras suninlaw inlist? She talked as thoe he was going to and that she would go east to live if he did inlist. Fannies Irving and my Frank are solgiers boys but they can go to college for six months yet. Frank is a comersary sargent, has 45 men to get food for & rooms so he is pretty buisey. He came home last satarday and staid till Sunday evening went back to Eugene Oregon. Has any of Annies boys or Charleys boys went yet? Please write me a good long letter. I dream of you dear girl oftain and old times. How is Toms health? Give my love to all the friends tell them I oftain think of my good visit with them. Now be sure and write soon and give me Annies Adress.

Your ever loving Aunt,

Cynthia M. Palmer

[marginal note upside down—anything you want to ask me write again Mrs Dora L. Sheldon]

About Cynthia Fillmore Wallace Palmer

Cynthia Matilda Fillmore (1842–1934) was a daughter of John Fillmore and Sarah Reed. Cynthia married Arnold Basset Hughet Wallace (1840–1885) in Kane County, Illinois. Arnold was the son of Edmund Hay Wallace and Frances Crabtree, and grandson of Richard Arnold Crabtree and Mary Giggey. Cynthia Wallace wrote a letter for Mary Higginson when she was in Iowa. (See Part III).

Arnold Wallace died in Wright County, Iowa and was brought back to Iowa Falls, Hardin County, Iowa to be buried. Cynthia later married George H. Palmer.

Oct. 11, 1918

Mr John Crabtree

Dear cousin,

I received both of your letter, but, I was in Iowa on a visit. So you are the only one left of the once large family. How strange it is. Well Father Crabtree & wife died long ago in Washington where they had made their home. I visited there a year ago. Jemima Smith with 4 sons & a daughter all married live in Lynden or in Wash. all married and doing well. Two of her sons are Supt of schools in Seattle fine smart men. Colby Crabtree is a rich farmer living near Lynden with two married sons and two daughters at home. Anna has a large family, several sons in the army. Her husband died 6 mo. Ago. A half sister lives in Oregon. Henry is at Dows, Iowa on a farm doing fine. Charley's wife lives near Lynden on a farm with her children, he has been dead for years. Ceaphus is in Kansas City. He had a large family, has been married twice, the first wife he divorسد the last one divorسد him.

I married a man 20 years older than myself with 3 children, a girl of 14, boy 9, and girl 2 1/2 years, while my boy was a year and a half old. We had 3 girls and a boy. Silas died when he was 25 and his son at 30. Neather married, all our girls are married. The daughter that lived here at Caspar died when her boy was 6 days old and I have taken care of him and kept house for my son in law since. My husband was sick with Rheu for many years, 7 years on crutches, 7 years in a wheel chair and 8 1/2 years on the bed helpless as a babe. He has been gone 3 years come the 17 of Nov. The boy 18 is in the army. My son in law here will go soon and also another, his wife my youngest daughter is with me here now. So you see my life has been full.

Dora

Nov. 2, 1918

Dear Sister,

Will try and write a few lines to day. We are as well as usual have not had the flu yet but now betting how soon it will come it is very bad around Belingham and Seattle lots of deaths. It is raining to day, it rains quite often now. Rays folks are up to the farm the schools are all closed and churches, and [they] are talking of closing the stores part of the time but we hope for the best that it may not be for long.

This is sunday and o dear what a day it is with out church to go to. You have a baby to help pass the time a way so it will not seem so long to you. Hope you and your family are well. Had hoped you might visit us this winter, but if Fern and family are there you won't feel like leaving them I suppose. It looks as thoe they won't need many more men to finish the ware [she means war] and I hope not but hope they will whip the Germans to a finish before they quit so they will not want to try it again.

I was over to Bells a week ago and staid too [2] days her girls were gon. Fern is in Oakland, Cal going to the University. Ruth had gon to Winatcha [Wenatchee] to pick apples, was gon six or seven weeks, got home last Friday. I dont know how much she maid while gon, have not seen her yet. Bert is working in Belingham in the cort-house. Belle and the boys run the paper with Bert's help at night —for he comes home nights. They are getting along all right. Haermans I have not heard from them for several weeks they live in the outer Edge of Seattle,—[marginal note: will send Bills letter] have a chicken ranch there. Now the schools are closed he has the time to help Grace with the work. I saw by the paper that the teacher will get their pay the same as thoe they taught. Rays went to Seattle to day to be there to vote, will come back after if the schools dont open soon and I dont think they will. Well, I will send the apples when I send this letter. Will send it by parcel post there are 16 teen pounds of them. The Postag will be about 55 cents. I dont know what it is worth to drie them.

Love to all
Mima Smith

Alden Cemetery, Hardin Co., IA

Alden Cemetery lies on the west edge of Alden about 80 rods above the Iowa River.

Crabtree, Sarah Jane

Died June 15, 1872;

Wife of George W.

Crabtree, Silas J.

Died October 11, 1878; 23y 3m 3d

Crabtree, Violet M.

Died November 6, 1877;

Daughter of Silas J. & Dora

1870 Census index for Wright Co.

Crabtree, George 40 M W Cana Vernon twp.

Wright Co., Marriages

Crabtree, George m. Martha Hill Dec. 20, 1873

Crabtree, Silas J. m. Dora Dobson Oct. 13, 1875

Wright Co., births

Crabtree, _____ 7-4-1882 Vernon Twp.

son of Emma Richards/ Cephas