Out Of The Black Patch

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The Manuscript

The autobiography of Effie Carmack, covering a period of some eighty-seven years, was written as a gift to her children and grandchildren. She was driven to write her story out of a desire to leave them something of worth, an account of her unusual life experience. Having lost her mother at a young age, Effie learned the value of the written record. “How I do wish my mother had kept a diary, or a book of remembrance,” she wrote. “I realize now what a priceless thing they can be” (p. 105, herein). Her own autobiography reflects this valuation of family history. First printed under the title *Down Memory Lane*, it recounts her experiences as a young girl, adolescent, and adult woman and mother; it shows her persistence in establishing an identity and a place in her extended family lineage.

Effie did not, however, begin writing her story until her fifties. Even then, though decades had passed, Effie’s youth in rural Kentucky was more to her than a vague recollection. Her autobiography is a story rich with memories of childhood pastimes, rural domesticity, and folklife. With sharp detail, she recounts the day-to-day life of the Marquess family: Christmas gifts, the use of medicinal herbs, the steps taken in a typical housecleaning, the sad events of the typhoid epidemic of 1898–1899, the songs she and her family played and sang. Beyond brief references to her childhood schooling, she describes the benches, playtime games, spelling bees, and even what she took for lunch. She doesn’t simply allude to the fiddler’s contest; she describes the pieces that were played, who performed them, and the prizes they won.

Personal narratives, based on memory, are often laden with inaccuracies. Constructing believable characters and settings from real events can cause authors to depart from historical fact. Embellishment for the sake of a good story might easily have driven Effie’s work, but her story
seems to avoid such pitfalls. The strength of Effie’s writing lies in her unmistakable ability to recall specific events in detail. She dredged up the past and let it flow with ease, much like an oral telling or performance.

Effie’s desire to preserve such memories was an endeavor that spanned several decades. Beginning in the mid-1940s, she worked on her autobiography and other projects until the last months of her life. All told, she spent nearly thirty years writing and compiling her story for publication.

The literary success of her story may be due, in part, to its being carefully written in several installments. Although Down Memory Lane was printed in typescript format in 1973, the first half (or so) had actually been finished in 1948 and covered Effie’s life through that year. Simply called “Autobiography,” this earlier memoir was typed by her daughter, Hazel Carmack (Bruchman) Bushman, and then circulated privately in the family. Twenty years later, Effie added an update, for the most part leaving the 1948 version as originally written. Hazel Bushman was again the typist. Any small alterations were made for clarity (such as substituting a proper name for a pronoun) or to add details that were not included earlier. Effie aids the reader by parenthetically dating the various times she added to her document. A photocopy of this longer, combined typescript was privately printed by Atascadero News Press in 1973 and circulated among friends and family. It is this version from which the present edition is taken.

Editorial Methods

The usual practice in editing an autobiography is to preserve all spelling, usage, and punctuation of the original. However, the handwritten manuscripts from which Hazel Bushman typed the two installments of the journal no longer exist. Because Hazel had extensive training and experience as a secretary, her natural tendency was to amend and regularize any non-standard spelling or usage, especially because the family intended the second typed version to be photocopied and bound. Since for all practical purposes Effie’s writing had already been edited, the best choice for this edition seemed to be to normalize the few remaining instances of non-standard spelling and apostrophe use. A few colloquial pronoun cases and verb forms have been left as written as it seemed officious and unnecessary to change them. There are a few instances in which Effie, in keeping with southern folk speech, referred to her African American neighbors using racial slurs. Effie was sensitive to these offensive terms and tried to remove

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them from later versions of the text. The few that were overlooked, though, have been left unchanged by the editors.

It should be pointed out, however, that there is no reason to conclude that any regularized version would be very different from Effie’s original. Although her formal schooling ended by the eighth grade, Effie was an excellent student. She tells of being spelling champion, of playing word and map games with her family, of reading and studying, and of “memorizing whole chapters of the Bible”; and she comments frequently on the “perfect” (or less than perfect) English of various relatives or friends. She was interested in language and writing her entire life, and various handwritten documents that do exist show that she was a competent writer of standard English. Thus, the reader can be confident that this is not a radically different autobiography from the one that came from Effie’s pen.

It is our intention to present the document as faithfully to the copytext source as possible. We have sought to keep emendations to a minimum. However, to provide meaningful breaks in the text, we have divided the narrative into six numbered chapters and an epilogue. Each chapter has been given a title and epigraph. Some items printed with the post-1948 additions were in fact family updates or newsletters written by people other than Effie. Because these family news items hold more significance for friends and relatives than the general reader, they have been omitted in this edition. Effie’s own writing in the post-1948 section tends to be more fragmented; as various topics came to mind, she would simply introduce them by adding a subtitle. We have chosen to eliminate these subtitles to allow more continuity and uniformity in the narrative. Substantial selections from this post-1948 portion appear as the epilogue. Each omission is noted by bracketed ellipses and a note describing the omitted material.

Although Down Memory Lane appeared in typescript format, it was printed with a number of hand corrections and additions. In several instances, Effie added words or names to spaces she left blank. Considering such emendations, it was necessary to devise a clear editorial method and use standardized apparatus. To best provide an honest representation of Effie’s emendations in the final document, the following methods were employed:

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2. The standard by which this copy-text was edited is Mary-Jo Kline’s A Guide to Documentary Editing, 2d ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998). For a pioneering work on editorial method, the reader should consult G. Thomas Tanselle, “The Editing of Historical Documents,” in Textual Criticism and Scholarly Editing (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1990), 218–73.
1. Clarifications, identifications, and other editorial expansions of the original text appear in square brackets in roman type: driv[ing].
2. Editorial comments, in the editors' voice, appear in italics between brackets: [The autobiowaphy does not include this picture].
3. Canceled material is shown with a strikeout as in the original: good.
4. Material underlined for emphasis has been standardized to italics.
5. Interlined words are enclosed in carets at the place of insertion: ^gone^ Their placement in the original is indicated in a note.
6. Portions of text repeated elsewhere in the document are enclosed in angle brackets and described in a note.
7. Editorially omitted material is indicated by three ellipses enclosed in brackets: [ . . . ]. The substance of the edited material is described in a note.
8. Biographical references to individuals are noted at the first appearances of their names in the text or when an individual is most conspicuous in the narrative. When possible, biographical references include a full name with years of birth and death. In many cases, only an estimated birth date, based on census returns, is provided. Unidentifiable persons are left unnoted.

Annotations and Sources

In order to clarify or add insight to obscure references, we have used explanatory notes. We have avoided extensive interpretation of the writing to allow the text to stand on its own, affording an unencumbered reading of the document. The length or brevity of a note usually depends upon the availability of relevant sources. Standard biographical dictionaries and reference works are rarely cited. If a source adds meaningful insight to the text, it is discussed at reasonable length. Otherwise, the reader is supplied a brief comment and directed to other sources for further study.3

Attempting to provide biographical information for all individuals mentioned by Effie would be painstaking, if not impossible. Many names have been left undocumented, but where available, birth and death years have been supplied in a note. Luckily, Effie was a dedicated genealogist. She collected photographs, scraps of family lore, histories, and vital records. She is to be credited for much of the information provided in this edited work. A number of general historical sources proved helpful nonetheless, including recently published biographical works by the

Christian County Genealogical Society and indexed county census returns for 1870, 1880, and 1900. Genealogical records preserved at the Family History Library of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were also invaluable sources of biographical information. A chart is provided to better identify Effie’s family members and her place among them. For additional sources, the reader should consult the bibliography.

Acknowledgments

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Last of all, we appreciate the opportunity to have been a part of Effie’s story. Our lives, like many others, have been enriched by learning a little bit more about her.