Out Of The Black Patch

Davidson, Karen, Carmack, Noel

Published by Utah State University Press

Davidson, Karen and Noel Carmack.
Project MUSE. muse.jhu.edu/book/9337.

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/9337

For content related to this chapter
https://muse.jhu.edu/related_content?type=book&id=202564
APPENDIX THREE

Henry Edgar Carmack

The following biographical sketch appeared in the post-1948 portion of Down Memory Lane. The sketch is published here in its entirety.

Edgar’s Story

Henry Edgar Carmack was born July 17, 1884, [the year was 1883] in Hopkins County, Kentucky, after his father and mother had separated. His life had a sad and tragic background. His mother had been left an orphan early in life. In the Gunn record it states that his mother’s father, Abner Gunn, died about 1848, but it doesn’t say when her mother, Susan Smith Gunn died.\(^5\) Anyway, she was an orphan when she and Thomas G. Carmack married, about 1883. Quite a bit of property had been left to this orphan girl by her parents, the old Sol Smith place and the Frank Fuller farm. Solomon Smith, her uncle, had the reputation of being a selfish, greedy man, and he coveted the property of this orphaned niece, and schemed how he could get it. I think he was living on the place (which he afterward acquired) when this niece Parilla Gunn and Thomas Carmack were married, and she was living with them.\(^6\)

One night shortly after they were married, there was a dance in the neighborhood, and Sol suggested they go. The women didn’t want to go, as they had something else they had planned to do, so Sol and Thomas went alone. When the dance was about half over, Sol said he was tired and sleepy and was going home, and for Tom to stay as long as he wanted to. When he got home he told Parilla a sordid tale of Tom flirting with some

---

5. Susan A. Smith Gunn (1826–1882), daughter of Austin P. Smith and Elmira Sisk, died on February 12, 1882.
6. Parilla (Parlee or Pairlee) Gunn (1870–1887) and Thomas Green Carmack were married on June 8, 1883.
special girl; that he felt she had sure made a wrong move in marrying him, and from the start he was making, he was sure he would never be a good husband. But he made her promise she would not tell Tom what he had said. Next morning when the men started to work, Tom was cutting stove wood for his wife to cook with, and she came out and said she wouldn’t need it, as she was leaving. Tom couldn’t believe it, as they had not even had a cross word. He asked her where she was going, and why, but since she had promised Sol not to tell, she wouldn’t say. When he came home in the evening she was gone, and neither Sol nor Aunt Caroline would tell him why.\footnote{I think she went to a sister’s home in Hopkins County, Sol providing her a way to go.}

Sometime later he got a letter from her, saying she was going to have a baby, and she thought they had better go back together, and for him to come down there for her. But Tom was stubborn and told her that since she was the one who left she could come back if she wanted to, but he was not coming after her. But Pairlee could be stubborn too, and she didn’t come. Mr. Carmack told me one day when he was telling me of this that he had wished many a time that he had gone when she sent for him, because she later married a man who was worthless and was mean to Edgar, their baby boy, and that life with the second husband was miserable. She died when Edgar was three or four years old; I could never find exactly the date she died, but Edgar said he could remember his cruel stepfather, and how afraid he was of him. He said he remembered his mother putting her hand on his head before she died and telling him that Aunt Bettie and Uncle Moses McIntosh would come and take him to their place, where Bud Childers (the stepfather) could never lay his hand on him again.\footnote{She had a little daughter by Childers, named Vivian, but I don’t know who took care of her after the mother died. Edgar and I went to visit Vivian when Cecil was a baby; she was married to Elgin Sisko. She looked like Edgar, so they must have looked like their mother, as Edgar did not resemble his father very much.}

7. This presumably refers to Solomon Smith mentioned earlier in the autobiography and possibly a first spouse, Caroline [Gunn?].
8. According to Effie’s research, Moses McIntosh was born May 13, 1850 in Hopkins County. However, three other LDS genealogists have recorded Moses McIntosh born on May 22, 1856 at Turkey Creek, Breathitt County to Henry (Henly?) McIntosh and Rachel Mays; or on October 27, 1856 at Turkey Creek, Breathitt County to William Martin McIntosh (b. ca. 1835) and Sarah (Sally?) Mays (b. ca. 1840). According to one of the researchers, Moses was married to Elizabeth Griffith (b. ca. 1853). O. A. “Bud” Childers was born in 1864.
Tom had also married again by this time, to a beautiful girl named Mattie Olivia Hale. She said when the news came that Pairlee had died that Tom felt terrible, and she knew then that he still loved her.

Pairlee’s sister, Elizabeth McIntosh kept her word and took Edgar, and she and her husband Moses were like a mother and father to him. He always spoke of Uncle Mosie an Aunt Bettie as if he loved them dearly. They had two girls near Edgar’s age, Rilla and Lenora, that he loved as if they were his own sisters. We visited them also, and they are the ones that have helped me find the records of the family, all I have been able to get. I could still get marriage records from county seats, I think. We also visited the old McIntosh home in Mannington, a big old comfortable house with huge fireplaces, upstairs rooms and a big old kitchen.

When Edgar was seven or eight years old, his father came and took him to live with them, and I am sure Mrs. Carmack was a good stepmother. She seemed to think as much of him as she did her own children. This is where he grew up.

Evert Holt and my sister Sadie bought the old Sol Smith home when they married, and Edgar and I were married there also. Later, Mr. Carmack told us that when we were married we stood on almost exactly the same spot that he and Pairlee had stood on when they were married. And Aunt Helen Marquess said the dress I wore for our wedding was almost exactly like my mother's wedding dress. It was of thin white silk with a round shirred yoke, full sleeves shirred at the wrist, leaving a narrow ruffle, and the full skirt was shirred around the hips. It seems that history really did repeat itself in our case.

---


10. Near the end of her life, Mattie Hale Carmack wrote the following: “O i have 7 living children. O yes i am thankful for them, and they are good to me, but they cant fill his [Tom’s] place. I have a nice little home and have all kinds if improvement, but thair is a empty chair, a vacant place at the table. Yes and in my hart thair is a empty spot that cant ever bee fild. He was near and dear to me, he was liked by everyone who new him. And i hope to meet him someday over on the Promised Land then thair is no partin and no more tears. Thair never to part any more. Amen and amen. Written by Mattie Hale Carmack,” from Mattie Olivia Hale Carmack, My Story, 79. See also Down Memory Lane, 208.
After we married, Edgar worked on the farm with Evert for a while, and then we moved to the old Ferrell farm where my father had died. Cecil was born at that place. Then Edgar started working for Mr. Galloway at a sawmill in the Williams Hollow. We were the only two families working and living there. Then the mill was moved out in the hills east of Crofton, and we moved with it. We and the Galloways lived together in an old school house till they got our houses built. We ordered them built close together, as we were the only ones living there, and it was wild rugged country. Edgar and Hol Boyd hauled the logs for the mill. They called it "Happy Hollow." It was while we lived at this place that Cecil had pneumonia, and Dr. Croft said he had died, (about 4 o’clock one bitter cold day in February, 1906). But I kept bathing him with hot water and massaging him all over, without a letup, and I made the Lord some solemn promises if He would let him come back to us; and about twenty minutes after midnight, as I rubbed down his sides, I thought I felt a slight warmth. Up until then he had stayed as cold as clay. I told Mrs. Galloway to listen and see if his heart was beating, and it was, though very weak. I continued to rub him till about four o’clock, when I fell asleep. Mary Galloway came in with a piece of bread and butter in her hand, and Cecil opened his eyes and said “bite.” He wanted a bite of her bread. It was the first time he had noticed anything for days. Edgar was not a member of the Church at that time. But we started having get-togethers, mostly at our place—the Galloways, Hol Boyd, Rick Worthington, the Boss, and others. 

We left the mill not long after that; Evert and Sadie and Mr. Holt’s folks went to Imperial Valley, California, where Judge Holt, Evert’s Uncle, had a big ranch, and we moved to the old Sol Smith place they had vacated. Then we moved various places, Violet was born, and on a momentous day in 1908 Edgar was baptized. Three years later, when Noel was a baby, we went to Utah. We lived on Frank McDonald’s place in Holiday [Holladay], right at the foot of Twin Peaks. Edgar got a job with Joseph Andrus, putting up hay in Park City, where they had a big hay ranch. While Edgar was gone, I took care of the garden, picked fruit, and walked the two miles to the meeting house with the children every Sunday, carrying Noel, who by this time was as big as a calf, but I enjoyed it. I picked currants (the black variety) and irrigated [the] garden with Howard, the McDonald’s teen age boy, who later became President of the Salt Lake Temple. 

After the haying at the Park City ranch was over, Edgar went up the canyon to help dig a pipeline for water. It took longer than they had planned, and their food supply ran low; all they had for the last ten days was white bread, bacon and potatoes. On the way home the men were

11. This incident was already told in detail, beginning on page 287.
Henry Edgar Carmack

riding in the back of an open truck, got drenched with a cold rain, and the wind chilled them to the bone.

Not long after they returned, Edgar complained of his foot hurting, especially a big toe. It became swollen and red, and he finally had to lay off work, as he could not wear his shoe. Then one night he had a high temperature, and a hip also started hurting. Joseph Andrus came and said we had better call a doctor, and when he came he told us Edgar had inflammatory rheumatism. That was the first day of October, and he was not able to even sit up until January, when he was up part of one week.

He then had to go back to bed, and did not get up any more till March. Someone suggested hot baths with something in the water (I can't recall what it was). He was too weak to walk, so I carried him to the bathtub and bathed him every day for a long time. He was not very heavy then, and I was young and strong, and it seemed to help him. The doctor left big bottles of tablets to make him sweat. He drank gallons of water and orange juice, and the sweat poured. The washing and drying his clothing and the bedclothes was the biggest job of all, because it was winter, and very cold.

The good people of the Ward were wonderful, doing everything they could do to help. They offered to help me take care of Edgar, but he would not let anyone do anything for him but me. When he was able to be up, we moved to Burnett’s fruit ranch, where he could do light work. The rheumatism and the pills to make him sweat had caused heart trouble, and the doctor said he would never be able to do hard work any more, and advised us to go where the altitude was lower. So in the fall we went back to Kentucky. I certainly hated to leave Utah, but Bishop Larsen consoled us by saying maybe we could do more good in Kentucky than we could in Utah.

We arrived just in time for the hog-killing season, and just as the gardens and fruit was all gone. We had been used to all the fruit and green vegetables we could use, and that was mostly what we had lived on, as the doctor had recommended such a diet for Edgar. The backbones and spareribs and the sagey sausage and hot biscuits for breakfast tasted good, but I was starved for fruit, and even scratched around under the apple trees trying to find a stray apple. It never occurred to me to tell someone I wanted some fruit, or to send someone to buy it; we usually accepted what came along uncomplainingly.

I must not forget that while we were in Utah, we took our three children and went to the temple in Salt Lake.¹² Edgar often recalled how

¹². This took place on June 6, 1912. “Went to the temple” specifically for the ordinances of sealing (marriage) for eternity; husband and wife are sealed to each other and the children to their parents. Thus Grace was the first child to be “born under the covenant” of eternal family sealing, and no such ordinance would be necessary to seal her or any subsequent children.
sweet the children looked, waiting in the sealing room for us, all dressed in white. I was expecting another baby (Grace) in the spring, the first of our children to be born under the covenant.

John had started a new house between the old Holt place and the Sol Smith place. He painted it red, and they called it the Red Bungalow. We moved to this Red House before it was entirely finished, and Grace and Hazel and Bernice were born there. While we were living there, a new meeting house was finished also. Two missionaries were appointed to help on it: Orvil Udy and Elmer Brundage. We had happy times getting this church built; Edgar and John and Evert had the brunt of the expense to bear, but it was a great blessing to all when it was finished.

The Simmons family, whose farm joined the Red House farm on the north, joined the Church, and were a great help in the new branch, called the Woodland Branch. It took all of us to keep things going, and a bond of love and fellowship was formed that I am sure will last through Eternity.

Later we moved to the old Holt place where we were living when our youngest child, Harold, died from burns. That was an awful year for
all of us (1922);¹³ Edgar had put his tobacco crop in the Association, and got nothing for it, became discouraged and sad.¹⁴ Then Violet ran away from High School and got married, when we were almost ready to go to Arizona. That, on top of all the other worries, was almost more than we could bear. But her marriage did not work out, and she came back home before we left, and came to Arizona with us in February. Little Rebecca was born that fall. We have often wondered how we could have done without Becky, she was the joy of our lives, and a choice spirit. She was an unusually smart baby, a beautiful and talented girl, and is now Relief Society President in one of the Wards in the Hawaiian Islands. So that first marriage for Violet proved a blessing after all, though at the time we certainly couldn’t see it.

My brother John and Cecil had gone to Joseph City, Arizona, ahead of us, and Cecil had a house tent with furniture, groceries and everything ready for the children and me to go to housekeeping. Edgar had to stay a while in Kentucky to collect bills, sell a few things that were left, and to try to get something for the tobacco crop. He came later in the spring, and raised a truck garden on John Bushman’s place. I taught an art class in school, and Noel and I did the janitor work at the school. David always helped his dad after he started in the dairy business, driving cows, washing bottles, and general flunky—there’s plenty to do when you start operating a dairy.

Cecil was called on a mission to the Southern States from the Joseph City ward, but by the time he was released from the mission, Edgar had sold his dairy business to Irvin Tanner, and we had moved to Winslow, and were living at the rock house. What a joy to have a son return from a mission. I am sorry for any parents that have not experienced it. I forgot to say that when we first came to Winslow the only

¹³ Actually the date was April 10, 1923.
¹⁴ Here, Effie is referring to what most black patch farmers called the “Association.” The “Association,” or Planters’ Protective Association (PPA), was an organized group of farmers who, in response to the monopolistic practices of the Italian tobacco trust (Regie) and the American Tobacco Company sought to maintain and control the prices of tobacco above the cost of production. See Christopher Waldrep, “Planters and the Planters’ Protective Association in Kentucky and Tennessee,” Journal of Southern History 52 (November 1986): 565-88. See also Tracy Campbell, “Organizing the Black Patch,” chap. 3 in The Politics of Despair: Power and Resistance in the Tobacco Wars (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1993), 30–52. The economic stresses of Black Patch farming were often too much to bear. Some farmers chose to leave the district rather than endure the pressures and uncertainty of the tobacco market. This was especially true during the height of the Black Patch wars in Kentucky. See Suzanne Marshall Hall, “Breaking Trust: The Black Patch Tobacco Culture of Kentucky and Tennessee, 1900–1940,” 364–66.
place we could find was a little house up west of the ice plant. The noise from the plant, and from the railroad where they loaded ice into the boxcars was awful at first, but we soon grew accustomed to it, and it seemed to lull us to sleep.

Later Edgar bought a house from Bishop Campbell, out in Mahoney Addition, on the North edge of town, and again we helped in building a new chapel, which was not many blocks south of us. Noel and Hazel both went on missions from this place, Noel to the Southern States, and Hazel to the East Central States. Edgar was still in the dairy business, with David helping him.

There was a time between the sale of this dairy, and the time he started working at the Wholesale Produce Company, that he went with a group of men that were excavating the Keet Seel Indian ruins, under the supervision of John Weatherall [Wetherill], who was one of the men that discovered these ruins. He enjoyed his stay out there; it was a new and interesting experience, and he liked the men he worked with. His letters were always interesting, and we enjoyed the pictures he sent home.

He worked for the Babbit Brothers for a while, and then for Marley’s Wholesale Produce Co. He lifted heavy loads of meat and produce, and finally had a bad heart attack. The doctors advised him to move to a lower altitude again, and this time we came to California, as three of our children were already out here. The doctors said again that he would never be able to work again, but by taking food supplements...
and plenty of vitamin E, he gradually regained his strength, until before he died, he drove to a chicken plant down by Santa Maria every day, and handled as much as three thousand chickens a day, for months. Some time after the plant closed, he had another bad attack, and was never able to do hard work after that, though he still had his rabbits and chickens here at home and enjoyed working with them. And he doggedly kept cutting weeds and mowing grass and cleaning the yard when he really wasn't able to do anything.

One evening he came in tired, and when he tried to lie down, a sharp pain would cut his breath off. But he felt very well as long as he sat up. I had received a letter from a man and his wife in the midwest that were interested in the same family name as mine, and they said if I had a certain October issue of the Saturday Evening Post,19 they had a story in it. Edgar asked me to find it and read it to him, which I did, and we enjoyed the story and read their letter again. He said I must not forget to answer it and tell them how we enjoyed their story. We sat by the fire till eleven o'clock, talking. He said now that it was too late he realized that if he had done as I asked him to do and continued with the vitamins he had

19. It is nearly impossible to determine which article of the Saturday Evening Post is referred to here.
been taking, that he might still be working. I put some pillows on one end of the couch and fixed it so he could rest without lying down. He said he felt comfortable and thought he could sleep. I waited until he had gone to sleep, and then I also went to bed, but couldn’t go to sleep for a long time. I looked in on him occasionally, and he seemed to be sleeping sound. The last time I looked, he had taken part of the pillows from under his head and was lower, and still asleep. At early dawn I awoke with a start, a noise had awakened me. I hurried in to the living room, but he was not on the couch. I found him slumped on the back kitchen step, with his head in his hands, trying to call me. I tried to help him up, but couldn’t. He said, “Mama, this time this is it.” I ran for Bill Schleuter (living in the cottage) to come and help me, and we got him on the couch and called Dr. Walters. When he came, he said, “Take him to the hospital.” Edgar didn’t want to go, said he would not live to get there, to please just let him rest. But the Doctor insisted, and we took him, and he was just breathing his last as they took him in the hospital. That was early morning of February 12, 1952.

He is buried in the Atascadero, California, cemetery, beside Bernice.