

McDONALD SCHOOL

District No. 1

Caledonia Twp., Alcona Co., Mich.

1922-1923

LOUISE OLSON, Teacher

PUPILS

As time flits by I'll think of you  
Observe you in Life's race  
Each feature still will come in view.  
Each well remembered face

But now the time has come about  
The closing words to say,  
The shadows fall and lengthen out  
And mark declining day

Until another term shall call  
You here, - Good Bye! - till then,  
May God be with you each and all  
Until we meet again

- |                   |                    |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| Leo Gauthier      | Ray Gauthier       |
| Goldie McGregor   | Walter Gierke      |
| Gertrude Alden    | Halley Tacia       |
| Minnie McColl     | Orville Gunderson  |
| Roy James         | Lillian Alstrom    |
| Gertrude Newberry | Helen Piper        |
| Wilson Gierke     | Mae Gauthier       |
| Omar Tacia        | Felix La Londe     |
| Alfred La Londe   | Irene Rasmusson    |
| William Graham    | Raymond Downie     |
| Irene Roberts     | Edward Alden       |
| Hilsen Henion     | Dorthea Snowden    |
| Adeline Roberts   | Adelaide Gunderson |
| Violet Gunderson  | Everette Downie    |
| Viola McGregor    | Alton Alstrom      |
| Lois Snowden      | Isabel Piper       |
| Maynard Gunderson | Louise La Londe    |
| Rosamond McGregor | Roy Rasmusson      |
| Marion Nelson     | Dorthea Downie     |
| Loyd Roberts      | Anna McGregor      |
| Jack McKinnon     | Alderic La Londe   |
| Ella Gierke       | Vivian Gierke      |

SCHOOL BOARD

- Samuel Piper, Director  
Gust Alstrom, Moderator  
Bernt Nelson, Treasurer



McDONALD SCHOOL  
DISTRICT NO. 1  
Spruce, Alcona Co., Michigan  
May 1924



Louise Olsen,  
Teacher

PUPILS

- |                    |                   |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| Halley Tacia       | Wilson Gierke     |
| Dorothea Snowden   | Adeline Roberts   |
| Goldie McGregor    | Carolyn Swett     |
| Helen Piper        | Lillian Alstrom   |
| Everett Downie     | Raymond Gauthier  |
| Adelaide Gunderson | Roy James         |
| Minnie McColl      | Walter Gierke     |
| Leo Gauthier       | Orville Gunderson |
| Alton Alstrom      | Violet Gunderson  |
| Viola McGregor     | Gertrude Newberry |
| Edward Alden       | Ella Gierke       |
| Lois Snowden       | Omar Tacia        |
| Raymond Downie     | Irene Roberts     |
| Maynard Gunderson  | Vivian Gierke     |
| Rosamond McGregor  | Jack McKinnon     |
| Isabel Piper       | Dorthea Downie    |
| Floyd Rasmusson    | Irene Rasmusson   |
| Roy Rasmusson      | Anna McGregor     |
| Lloyd Roberts      | Ruth Schuchard    |
| Alice Hanson       | Forrest Gauthier  |
| Charles Swett      | Mae Gauthier      |

School Officers

- |              |           |
|--------------|-----------|
| Samuel Piper | Director  |
| Gust Alstrom | Moderator |
| Bernt Nelson | Treasurer |

### Letters

Kathryn and I spent a lovely day with Aunt Helen last October, digging through Grandma Piper's trunk and reading aloud to one another some letters that had been tucked away, both by Grandma and by Aunt Helen. When the day was over, Kathryn remarked, "It was just like having them back for a little while."

Since reading a lot of duplicated handwriting is tiring, I've typed them out and added a comment or two when explanations might seem to help. I've also copied in some snippets of the originals, so the handwritten quality of them isn't totally lost.

-----  
One of the first items out of the trunk was a little packet with the certificate below and a red felt pennant of the Michigan State Fair. When our parents were young, graduating from the eighth grade was the important milestone. The eighth grade year was spent preparing for the county-wide Eighth Grade examination which determined whether or not a student would earn a diploma. In our Dad's family, he was the first and only to "graduate" from the eighth grade. That was not at all unusual and the diploma marked an important accomplishment. Alcona County awarded a trip to the State Fair in Detroit to the boy who scored the highest on the Eighth Grade examination. (There is no mention of a prize for girls.) Uncle Frank, the oldest Piper son earned the second highest score when he wrote for the exam. Aunt Helen points out that the boy who won, Larry Gunderson, was 16 and two years older than Frank. Two years later, Uncle John scored highest, but was a few months short of 14 and ineligible to go. Finally, in 1920, Uncle Elmer won the prize and went to the State Fair. Aunt Helen says that put a fair amount of pressure on Uncle Art, who wasn't the least bit interested.  
-----

### SCHOOL COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE ALCONA COUNTY



DEAR PUPIL:

Please allow me to congratulate you on having written a successful Eighth Grade examination. You will receive your diploma within a short time.

I am enclosing a form for you to fill out and file with your school director on or before the fourth Monday in June: by doing so you will be entitled to High School tuition for the ensuing year.

Very truly yours,  
GEO. R. EMERICK, School Comm'r.

*Dear Elmer: - I wish to congratulate you a second time you have won the State Fair trip  
Sincerely yours  
Geo. R. Emerick*

1921

This letter was written by Uncle John Piper near the end of his studies at Ferris Institute. Ferris at that time was designed for students who had not been able to go to high school. They did high school and the beginning of college there. Uncle John graduated eighth grade at age 13 and worked at home for the next couple of years. That convinced him that he did not want to earn his living as a farmer. He began study at Ferris, washing dishes for his room and board and cleaning stables for his tuition. Every Tuesday a letter and his laundry box of dirty clothes arrived home. He finished his high-school courses in a year and a half and earned a teaching certificate. While there, Uncle John took voice lessons from Mrs. Ferris. You can see that some things (\$\$\$) about students haven't changed in a long time.

417 S. Mich. Ave.  
Big Rapids Mich.  
Feb. 8 1921

*Dear Papa*

Started this heading about a week ago.  
I'm glad I told you I might need another \$5. Guess Im eating too much. Be glad to get home tho I have many friends here I may never see again.  
Im going to a free lecture at the FL tonight.  
Well I guess this is all Im sending some pictures

*as ever*

*John Piper*

Guess I'll keep pictures till I get home

At age 17, with a teaching certificate from Ferris, Uncle John began teaching at the Barber School, a one-room school near Lincoln. He boarded with a family named Ferris. Then he taught at the Mt. Joy School, also near Lincoln, before moving to the Upper-Penninsula town of McMillan. The letter below must have been written during his last year there.

May 9th 1926  
Sunday morning

Dear Mother

This is Mother's Day. I have just returned from Bible Class where the services were devoted to thought of Mother and Motherhood. As I listened to the singer and to Mr. Masselink, there was again added to my ever growing realization of what manner of blessed Mother I have.

My mind travels back to the time when as little ones we flocked around you; how in our seemingly endless childish troubles, we came to you for that kiss and the, "There, there, it'll be all right now," in that soothing voice which smoothed away all our tribulations. That Mother love. But your love is more than the near-sighted, burning affection; it is a keen directive love which sees past the little hurts of childhood, past the lousy slaps of school days, past the struggles and disappointments of young manhood and young womanhood, past the toils and heartaches of maturity, right to the very Gates of Eternity. It is a love founded upon "Bring up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he shall not depart therefrom." At times it seems hard for us, yet how much harder must it have been for you. From anear one can see but ups and downs; but as years, elapsing, enlarge the field of vision, a beautiful plan has unfolded. Errors, few and insignificant, fade into oblivion.

You, with your equally worthy counterpart, were our counselors, our guides. The great words we brought home from school with the simple question, "Is that swearing, Ma?" must have helped turn to silver some of your hair. I don't remember what we asked; perchance, if I did I would not mention this. We followed your guide, not, of course, without some deviation. Until I found that not everyone had the same conception of

swearing, I used to pride myself on having never sworn aloud except on one occasion. Well do I remember the place and the person to whom the naughty word was directed. It was just before we crossed the culvert on the schoolhouse road. The recipient is now a much talked of young man. Imagine my horror when the boys told me that was a swear word!

But it is not my purpose to confess a host of errors. Our actions, our very characters were shaped by your untiring devotion. Seldom am I now in your presence, yet even your love is present to aid, to strengthen, and cheer when most I need it. I hope I may never become a discredit to your love and trust. It is my prayer that God may ever bless and bring joy to

*My Darling Mother*  
*Her son*  
*John*

Uncle John began his studies at Michigan State Normal College (now Eastern Michigan University) in fall 1926. Uncle John's Michigan State Normal College transcript is an impressive document. His love of Chemistry had clearly emerged by that time, with most of his courses elections in Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics. In his first year there (1926-7), he also took some Education courses, including Practice Teaching, and on March 25, 1927 was awarded a "Life Diploma -- Departmental". I suspect that was what we later called a "Permanent Teaching Certificate." He then went non-stop, including Spring and Summer, until he was awarded the A. B. Degree on June 17, 1929. The only grades on his transcript that were not "A's" were in two non-credit Physical Training courses and in Penmanship ("C"), also non-credit. The original of his transcript is in Grandma Piper's trunk. Had he wished to order additional copies, they would have cost \$1.00 each.

Uncle John met our dear Aunt Katy while at Ypsilanti. Our mother said he was a terrible romantic, so that one Christmas when she sent him her picture as a present, he paced up and down the living room floor with it clasped to his breast repeating, "my Katy's picture." I don't know if it was that Christmas or another that he taught his teenage sisters to dance the Lindy, the Two-Step and the Fox Trot.

Uncle John was Valedictorian of his Michigan State Normal graduating class. He typed out his valedictory address. [A copy of the original included after the letters.] The invitation to commencement exercises in Pease Auditorium (which still is EMU's major auditorium) includes calling cards from John D. Piper and M. Catherine Mook.

There is a little related story that Aunt Helen told me about this event. Grandma and Grandpa, who rarely traveled, left the farm in the care of Uncle Elmer, Uncle Art, Aunt Helen and our mother, Isabel, while they went to Ypsilanti for Uncle John's graduation. They asked the neighbors on the next farm, the MackKillips, to keep an eye on things. Mr. MackKillip, as I understand it, loved to find fault. The "Kids," led by Uncle Elmer, felt they should give him something to fuss about. They organized a few friends with about three cars among them to drive down the road past the MackKillips and swing into Grandpa's driveway with their lights blazing. Then they would turn off the lights, leave by the other direction and drive around the block (a square mile) and repeat the lighted trek past the MackKillips. They repeated this performance enough times to make it look as if a huge party was in full swing. Then after a suitable number of hours had passed, they did the whole thing again in reverse. The minute he saw that Grandma and Grandpa were home, Mr. MackKillip came over to report. Grandpa expressed great disappointment in his children's behavior and suggested that they might not be trustworthy enough to leave alone again.

Uncle John's public school teaching certificate was never used again. He went directly from his undergraduate degree to graduate

99.  
study at Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio. The letter below is typed on Ohio State University letterhead.

Department of Chemistry  
January 20, 1932

Mr. John D. Piper  
The Ohio State University

My Dear Mr. Piper:

It is a pleasure to inform you that at a meeting of the Department of Chemistry held Wednesday, January 20, it was unanimously agreed that you had fulfilled all of the written requirements for the preliminary examination for the Ph.D. degree.

May I ask you to report to the one under whom you are doing your thesis work at the earliest opportunity in order that the proper arrangements may be made for your oral examination.

Sincerely,  
Wm. Lloyd Evans  
Chairman, Department of Chemistry

On the bottom is this hand-written note:

Dear Mother,  
I thought you would like to have this. Now for the oral.

Love, John

Aunt Katy spent two years teaching in Traverse City, which she did not enjoy. In 1931, she and Uncle John were married and she joined him in Columbus until he took his Ph.D. in 1933. Throughout their married life, they wrote to their parents on Sunday night. Each would write a short letter to his or her own

parents; then they would switch letters and add a short greeting to their in-laws.

-----  
This letter from Grandma Piper to Aunt Helen was written in the fall of 1939, not too long after Aunt Helen and Uncle Claire were married and moved in with Uncle Claire's parents, Jesse and Lonnie Vicary.

Wednesday eve.

Dear Helen & Claire,

We had a letter from you today & a letter from Arthur. I'll enclose Arthur's. It's brief but we were glad to get it. All we had heard from him was a card with "Hello," & his name. Just like him, you know. Uncle John (Grandpa Piper's older brother, who visited frequently) is going back with him when he goes back Sunday or Monday. John & Katy are coming up Friday night & will stay till Tuesday morning when they will go to Midland when John has to be on business for the Company. We were hoping you were coming up with them, even Mr. Vincent asked if you were, but your letter doesn't sound as if you were. By the way, don't forget that Thanksgiving is a week earlier than we thought it would be.

We are so sorry Mr. Vicary had to go back to the hospital. I thought the cool weather would help him but of course you do not have it as cool as we do, especially the nights. According to the radio, the pollen count is over 300 & that is very high & of course bad for hay fever sufferers. Tell Mr. V. we hope to soon hear of him being home again. I feel so sorry for him having to spend so many lonely hours there in the hospital.

We don't see much of Isabel this week. Lena & girls are there. Mr. & Mrs. Bradow, Margaret & Mrs. Pierce were over here last night. Don't be surprised if Margaret appears at your place some Saturday. She asked me just where you live, etc. & said that had she know when you were being married she believed she would have come up but she didn't hear of it till she came up last Sunday. She was out to the Worlds Fair in San Francisco.

It is 9 p.m. & Dad has gone to bed. Uncle John is in his room getting ready for bed & singing or whistling "Smiling through." (A girl sang it over the radio tonight.) He was working on John's lot all day getting the dead stuff ready for burning. (This must be the lots the cottage is on.) Said he "raised heck" down there.

Ralph Burnham & his mother were here today for apples & I made arrangements with Ralph to come this fall & pick apples on shares. The trees are so heavily loaded I hold my breath every time the wind blows for fear the branches break. I have the plum tree branches propped up.

Oh yes, the plum jam. Wash & boil plums till soft in enough water so you can just see it. Drain off liquid for jelly. Put the plums through colander to take out pits & skins, measure or weigh pulp, add equal amount of sugar & boil till thick, stir often to prevent burning, put in jars & pour on the paraffin while jam is hot. Don't try to make too much at a time. If you want to use Certo or Sure-Jell, follow instructions that come with it. It takes less time, less heat, less patience.

Folks are laughing at me because I'm canning same as usual & they ask what I'm going to do with it, but I can't see things go to waste. I have 20 qts of sweet corn. May or may not do any more. Mazie told me her beans are blossoming again. If I have time, I'll can some more for you. I wish I could be with you for a few days. We'd make the grapes disappear. I can still see Claire's puckered up face. I haven't made much jam but have the fruit put down ready to add the sugar & boil -- when the cream checks get bigger.

Donna was so delighted over getting a letter from you. Elmer was out this week. Went back today. They haven't been at rifle practice yet. May have it at Grayling this year but not sure.

[Uncle Elmer was in the Coast Guard]  
Our S.S. attendance last Sunday was 84. The summer people are leaving soon & that will make a difference but it certainly has helped to have them & I hope they enjoyed coming.

And now I have news that isn't so good. Ruth Anne [Clark] has infantile paralysis. Has been ill since Saturday but didn't know what it was till yesterday. However, it is considered a light case & Dr. Miller feels sure there will be no paralysis afterward unless there are some complications. She has to stay

quietly in bed and that isn't easy. They are quarantined. We are all anxiously waiting results. Dr. Miller & another Dr. are coming there in the morning. Elise said to tell you not to worry for they feel Ruth will be alright.

Jim Murphy, Love to Mother,  
Along the edge of the front page is We are out of envelopes. Have to make one.

Below is the letter from Uncle Art Piper, which Grandma promised to enclose. He and Johnny Mud were building log cabins across the state. "Johnny Mud" is John DeRosa, who grew up in Spruce right next to Gillard's General Store.

Dear Mother  
Shaw + Stearns Jr.

But I can eat tomatoes and call them food. I was going to do my washing tonight but a fellow got stuck in the sand so didn't get time. Things shure get dirty out here.

I didn't send for Uncle John. No use of him driving his car out here theres no place to park it. Will collect him next weekend.  
We're getting along pretty well Johnny Mud is getting pretty good on log.  
We went out to see the Hartwick Pines Sunday Nice big timber The largest fifty inches on the stump.

We have to go to the Post Office for our mail (General delivery) havn't been out during office hrs since Thursday so haven't heard from anyone yet. I'm going out tomorrow a.m. So have hopes. Guess I should buy a mail box. the route goes by here.

Sleepy so

*Dear Helen,*

On the bottom of the letter and upside down, Grandma has written, "Oh I wish you could see my gorgeous dahlias & gladiolas !!!!!"

A little memory of Uncle Arthur's brief letter-writing style: He became engaged to Aunt Margaret (Bageley) during WWII, while he was in the Navy. Everyone knew that they planned to marry when his ship came into port in New York City. But when that would be was unpredictable and we knew that Aunt Margaret would probably go to NYC on short notice. Then one day a hotel door "Do Not Disturb" sign, complete with string and addressed right on the sign itself, arrived in the mail. Mother grinned and said, "Art's married."

Aunt Helen found it difficult living in two rooms of Uncle Claire's parents' home. Her mother-in-law was accustomed to giving the orders to such a degree that she ordered Aunt Helen not to drink her favorite beverage, water, because she didn't think drinking

water was healthy. As the year after her marriage passed it became apparent to her family in Spruce that she was homesick and they missed her. This letter was written in late spring 1940 by our mother, Isabel, to her sister Helen.

Sunday night

*Dear Helen,  
Seems a guess Sunday that  
we don't go to church.*

Both children [Kathryn and Sonny. I was around, too, but probably was still considered the baby.] are sick with a kind of cold that's been going around. They were both complaining this morning of a sore throat but went to S.S. and for a walk this P.M. with Mother and I, but got feverish and couldn't eat supper. It's a form of flu, I suppose, but seems of very short duration. They had intended to write you and send their pictures but I'll send them anyway.

Mother and I were discussing you today. You've been so obviously homesick to be home when Spring bursts forth. John will be coming up this next weekend or the next. Why don't you come up then and stay until Decoration day. You could be twice as nice to Claire for the next two weeks while you both get ready to come up on your second honey-moon. You know, to me yours was a story-book romance. You know because our marriage, out of necessity has to be almost a business arrangement. I've almost envied you that romance. Jack represents to me security and devotion but certainly not romance. He's very practical and I have adjusted my habits and even my thoughts until I have found happiness. And I'm really happy too. The children contribute so much to the happiness of both of us and act as a balance between our very different personalities.

Your present distressed state of mind apparently is caused by homesickness, partly from being so far from home and more, I think, from Claire's long hours at work and school, coupled with that bug-bear of all marriages, financial worries. The homesick

7

part will leave you once you begin to call your own place home. The financial part is harder. We Pipeys are an impatient lot. We do not mean to be mercenary (Goodness, ask Claire how to spell that word) but we delight in accomplishing something. Jack could never understand that in me at first. We started married life with \$125 in debts, no income and a baby on the way. At the end of three years, we had two babies, \$150 indebtedness, and \$200 in furniture. Oh, yes, we did have \$100 in Life insurance, and once again No income. You know that hectic winter that followed when our marriage would have collapsed but that I'd never let a man down when he's broke and when he's earning it would be senseless. (I say this last humorously because it seems so ridiculous that I could have been so childish only five years ago.) [She is referring to the time when Daddy's enlistment with the Coast Guard was over and he wound up out of work right in the middle of the depression. For a while, she and Kathryn and Sonny lived with her parents and Dad lived with his, because no one could afford to keep them all. They realized their marriage couldn't last long that way, so they moved to the drafty old house that our Grandma Karen owned on the Alpena County Line. Dad literally picked berries to put food on the table. Mother was 20 years old at that time.] I remember when we got our first furniture. We sent to Mont. Wards. \$42.85 worth -- 5.00 down, 5.00 a month and after we'd sent the order we remembered we'd forgot to save out money for the freight. Paydays were only once a month, you know, so we had to borrow that. It's funny now but it wasn't then.

Mother and I have your two rooms furnished mentally and the funny part of it is that we both hit on the same plan. Gee, what a length of letter. I meant to talk about you and Claire and instead talked about myself. Please bear with me -- a natural chatterbox. Speaking of that, the Young Peoples is sponsoring a Mother-Daughter banquet on the 10th of May and what do you suppose. They've asked me to speak. I should think everyone around here has heard me enough without asking me. As usual I haven't enough sense to say no. That's why I'm president of the Ladies Aid and gotten into lots of other trouble I can think of. I might add that it's a preliminary rather than the main speech I have.

Wilma was at S.S in a new suit which was most becoming but she had a bright red off the face hat on the back of her head which if anything was most begoing.

It was Margaret Olson's birthday, she brought marshmallows. Last Sunday Sonny Carlson brought a birthday cake. Honey and Little Bob MacKinnon were most impressed. Saw Laura Pierce today. Her baby is due any day she said. I'm so anxious for Hazel to get one. I hope she'll not be disappointed again.

The high school will open next week in the Memorial hall, a store building and part of the garment factory. I was in town the night of the fire. I really felt awfully bad. Had a lot of nice memories connected with that building. Such is life, isn't it? [Alpena General High School, which Mother attended, had burned to the ground only a short while before. Mother often mentioned this fire and seemed to have been quite affected by the loss of her school. Sonny, Kathryn and I later attended the new Alpena High School build on the same site. It was bulldozed this year and I think we understand a little how Mother felt. John was among the first students in the new Alpena County High School.]

Now to end this rambling.  
 Goodnite, see, come home  
 when you can and  
 will be seeing you.  
 Love,  
 See.



Mother must have written this to Aunt Helen in the spring of 1941.

Wednesday Nite

Dear Helen,

10:45 after a busy day. I looked around this morning and felt panicky. Iron? I should, big washing yesterday besides part of last weeks. Garden? The ground is exactly right for planting. Houseclean? I took down curtains yesterday and washed slip covers, and the rest of the house was a mess too. Clean the basement? I've wanted to do that for weeks. Oh me. A perfectly grand day to do any of them but only one me. You guessed. The dirt-farmer in me always wins. soothing my conscience with the assurance that the housework can be done while the garden grows. I worked in the garden until noon. After that I washed the living room ceiling. Ever wash casein paint. It's not quite a bad as Kalcimine, but messy. Guess I was too enthusiastic. The coal smoke came off, also the paint, of which I'll have to buy some tomorrow. It's clean anyway. By the way, Did Claire ever get the second coat on the margin of your living room floor? Speaking of Claire, I did not mean to be so long in explaining about the rope. I can't return it on account of my Son making a swing out of it. I didn't realize it was of any value. I bought them a rope last year for their swing but Jack took it to lead the cow over home and left it there. Somy found this other rope in the trunk and I, forgetting the rope from the garage, told him he'd better put the swing up before the rope got lost. I'd take it down and send it but can't untie it, besides he cut about four feet off. A new one will cost between 35 c and 50c so it would hardly pay to mail it. That's at Sears. Hope you got the smock. I've had it made a week. Do you want a wrap around skirt from the rest of the material. The boat [Daddy worked on the Conneaut, a coal and limestone freighter] has been in every other day this week. They couldn't get coal on account of the strike so are just hauling limestone.

Thursday Nite

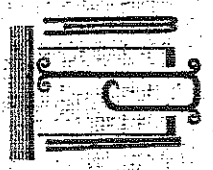
I can think of better places to write than a purse on a steering wheel. I've been going to town all day. Mom and I came in the A.M. to get the impression for her teeth and pay the bills, etc. We got home at three. Now (10:30) I'm back here waiting for the boat. Mother and Dad are laying the dining room linoleum. I should have stayed to help finish but couldn't. My it sure is pretty. That just about winds up Mother's housecleaning. Wish I was through. I just started. Tomorrow I'll paint my living room ceiling -- What fun!

This is tomorrow, so ---

Bye,

Jackie

As with most women from her generation, Grandma Piper's life did not have a lot of time in it just for herself. Life on a farm was always dictated by a schedule that meant getting the chores done on time and running a busy household. Trips "to town" usually were rushed affairs with Grandma doing whatever shopping she needed to do for the household while Grandpa bought whatever he needed for the farm. We were delighted with this letter written on December 7, 1947, in which Grandma describes a day she had for herself.



Spruce, Michigan

Dec. 7th

Dear Mother & Claire,

What beautiful

sunshiny weather!! My love

Florida but not in Michigan. I'm glad you had last weekend at home instead of this one for this one is decidedly wet.

Before I forget it, Margaret says to ask you which one of you were to send in the subscription to the magazine for Sonny. The job wasn't finished that night you two studied the catalog.

Dad & I went to town last Tuesday, he to the Presbytery meeting and me to Christmas shop. I had such a good time going from one place to another, taking my time to look at things. When I had several packages I'd go to the car & empty my shopping bag & start out again. Having my own set of car-keys means a lot to peace of mind. I went to a restaurant & got a hot dinner & rested my feet which really were behaving very well since I could walk around and take my time. Finally I did my grocery shopping & was coming along towards the car when I met Dad just out from the meeting. We started for home, stopped at the Dairy & had maleds, then got home in time to do chores. I was tired but so satisfied. Didn't get anything expensive but didn't expect to.

Helen, I told you I wanted to get sweaters for everyday wear for the children. I got one for Arthur, the only one I could find that was suitable and could not find anything in that style for Margaret so I got a little striped one with long sleeves for everyday wear. I'm afraid she won't like it but it is only cotton & maybe later I can find a prettier one. Arthur's is a jacket style with fronts in figured & back plain, light brown. If you like, you can open the pkg. I'll wrap it separately. I also got 3/4 length stockings for them, which I will wrap with the sweaters & a book apiece. So do as you please about opening, only keep the books out of sight till Christmas.  
Margaret just told me you left a pair of stockings which I will send.

Love to all  
Mother

This letter was written by Grandma Piper to Aunt Helen's family after Christmas 1947. It's a little glimpse of Spruce life. The decoration went up the side of the first page of Grandma's stationery.

Dec. 29th

Dear Helen, Claire & family,

I'm sure we have the most wonderful family in the whole world, always thinking of things to make life easier for we old folks up here. That lovely Mixer is a wonderful gift and I feel that the most of you are doing more than you should have but I do thank you and so does Dad for his gift from you four. It has been a lovely and a wonderful Christmas for us. As you know, Johns' gave us an electric churn, not one container but two, so if I want to make a little butter or a lot it is OK.

We've had a fine time. Was at Arthur's for Christmas breakfast, at home with Chili & pumpkin pie for dinner and at Isabels' for Buffet supper. The Sunday school Christmas program was held last evening & went off fine. The younger children had recitations & the older & middle ones gave a pageant that was so nice & went through without a flaw. We were so proud of them all but especially the boys, Donald T, Donald McK, Dean, Frank, Arnold & Kenny. The girls were Donna, Ruth & Barbara as angels, Donna Bartlett as Mary with Honey's doll as the Baby in the doll bed. Kathryn, Carol, Elise & Christina were the singers & Eleanor read the Scripture for each scene. Dean, Frank & Donald T. were the Wise Men & Arnold was Joseph. The other boys were shepherds. Earl Pierce did not expect to be here for Christmas but he was so he managed the lights & curtains. Of course we had drawn names & there were those gifts & some others & the usual candy boxes.



This may not be so interesting to you Claire, but maybe it is for you know a lot of the kids.

I have asked the family here for New Years dinner. I'm not quite through housecleaning but will be by then. I'm also having Aid on the 15th, Nellie S. as co-hostess. Our road hasn't been blocked this winter as we haven't much snow yet. The snow is all over on the Atlantic coast, so the radio said. We aren't anxious to have it here. We had enough of it last winter. I expect this letter will cross with one from you. I'll write again for there's something I want to talk over with you. Dad is in for dinner & I must stop.

Best wishes to all for the coming 1948 and love from  
Mama & Dad.

From it's context, I think this letter must have been written in January 1948.

Sunday, 10:45 a.m.

Dear Helen & Claire,  
It is a lovely day to look out. The temperature was 12 below 0 at 6 a.m. and now it is even 0 on the north side of our house but there is no wind & the sky is clear.

Well the Aid is over. [The Ladies Aid met once a month with members taking turns hosting. Getting ready for Aid was always a mighty task that included lots of cleaning, occasional painting and the like and lots of cooking.] The forenoon weather was quite cold & blustery but there were 20 for dinner & then Clara & Hazel come in the afternoon so that was not so bad for our house. The road wasn't

10

drifted. The snowplow had been thru early that morning. We sure have had real winter weather since it began.

We certainly enjoyed your nice fat letter and I am glad you had such a nice Christmas. I think Mamma & daddy like that "lectric" train as well as Arthur. You enjoy seeing him & also run it yourselves. Katy told us about Margaret's train.

We had such a good time here on New Years Day and the rest of the week. John really played about as much as he worked. Now he is planning on Washington's Birthday which happens on a Sunday but he will have the next day. If the roads & weather are favorable, they will be up.

I've used the churn twice. The last time I did not churn so much & it worked better. The big old churn looks lonesome down cellar but I won't discard it. Might be glad of it some time.

Our floors look quite nice now with the new rug in the living room, new linoleum in the dining room & the kitchen floor emameled. We had a great time hopping around the kitchen but the 2nd coat dried as quickly as the first. I got the housecleaning all done but I had neither time nor strength to do much needed painting to the woodwork. I hope to get it done by spring but will not try to do any of it before March, I think. I have some sewing to do anyhow. As usual, I have a lot of plans but don't know if I can get all done.

We are going over to Olsons this afternoon so I'll finish after we come home. Right now I must get dinner. My other half is sleeping on the couch & Boy, is he snoring!!!

Well, we went but didn't have a very long visit. When Dad went out for the car it just wouldn't start. He finally went over to Arthur's & got the long extension cord, plugged it in at the granary & to the bathroom heater which he put under the car for a while. In the meantime Arthur tried to start his car but no go so they towed it down the road a half-mile & back to his own yard. Then he put the charger on the battery for 2 hours & it is OK now. Dad & I went over to Isabel's for about an hour but that was better than nothings.

It is now nearly 10 p.m. We went to church tonight but it was 5 below when we left & not very many were out, just 17. [Services in Spruce were at 8:00 p.m. because it was part of a three-church circuit.] The minister was late. His car had balked & he had to get

Mr. Erickson to bring him up. The Olsons weren't there either so maybe their car got balky though it was alright this afternoon. I left your last letter with Isabel so if I have forgotten any questions you asked, just ask them again.

Now, what I wanted to talk to you about is about the Mixer. Last Mother's Day you sent me \$5 to go towards a Mixer or whatever I wanted. I still have it but now I want you to take it back, together with \$5 from me, to be applied to a fund for a Mixer for yourself. Please do this. I wish I could talk to you about it, it is so much easier but my voice won't carry that far. You really need one worse than I did for you do more baking than I do but I certainly appreciate mine & also the thoughtfulness behind the gift.

We were down to Lincoln last Friday and we stopped in at the Herald Office & renewed your paper. Was going to renew Rasmussons too but R. M. had written them that he wanted it stopped. Said it had been so long since they lived here they didn't know very many here now.

Must stop now. Love to All. Mother & Dad

This letter was also written in 1948, probably in the late spring. Rev. Freeman has been a former pastor of the Spruce, Hayes and Harrisville churches and was coming to visit, planning to stay with Grandpa and Grandpa. They were excited about the visit and a flurry of activity went on getting the house ready.

Sunday eve.

Dear Helen,

You'll wonder why Mom hasn't written but the time has just flew. We've just got home from church but we had to drive over to the Sayers' before we came home.

Dad, Margaret & Peggy are leaving

tomorrow morning for Detroit. Everett Alstrom is going with them as far as Birmingham & Nellie Sayers is going with them as far as Flint. Everett is the delegate from the Saginaw Presbyterian to the National Assembly at Seattle, Wash. and will be away nearly 2 weeks. The rest of the "party" will be back on

Wednesday. Everett will miss Rev. Freeman's visit but it is quite an honor to be chosen as the delegate to the Assembly.

The Freemans had to postpone their visit for a week but it couldn't be helped. We expect them late on June 1 or sometime on the 2nd. Rose [Mackinnon, later Bushy] came & papered the living room on Monday so that's done. The weather has been rather cold except for a couple of days and it has also been raining or foggy. We haven't put in any more garden but I hope we can very soon and also get my glads planted. Isabel has her new strawberry patch planted, 2000 plants and she did near all herself in three days. Had to dig the plants, too. They have a new puppy now. [This must be our beagle, Oie.] Johnny told me while I was reading the S.S. lesson to the kids.

We went down to the "open house" at the manse last Friday eve. Our choir was to be there in the entertainment & we took Don & Eleanor [Tacial]. The manse is very nicely finished inside but it is such a huge thing, especially for two people. They [Rev. & Mrs. Webster] have a lot of furniture and it looks as if the building was designed to furnish room for all of it.

Donna got along fine from the operation. She was in the hospital a week, was discharged last Monday & went back to school on Tuesday. Has a small bandage on now but went to school with one right around her head. [Donna had mastoid surgery.] It is nearly 11 p.m. & I must stop.

Love to all,  
Mother

In the winter of 1948, Grandpa Piper developed a cancerous tumor in his intestine. As was the case at that time, the tumor wasn't discovered until it was very large. I remember Grandpa describing it as "the size of my two fists together." She had insisted on seeing it after his surgery. Complicated surgery wasn't performed in Alpena and he was taken to Henry Ford Hospital in Dearborn probably because it was near Uncle John and Aunt Katy's where Grandpa could stay. The Spruce church held a fervent prayer meeting to pray for Grandpa's recovery. This was not typical Presbyterian behavior and our mother struggled with whether or not it was appropriate to ask favors of God. Other

members had no such reservations, saying that the church simply could not get along with out Grandpa's leadership.

For the second time, we Olsons moved over to run the farm as chores had to be done twice a day no matter what. I think that was the stay when Mom sent Sonny and Kathryn out to shake the rugs. They did the upstairs hall rug, which was a woven rag rug, by Kathryn sitting in it and Sonny swinging her around. They came in with the rug in two pieces. Mother was not pleased and spent quite a while on the floor sewing it back together. Grandpa's recovery was speedier than anyone had anticipated.

Monday a.m.  
Dear Helen,

I've been up home over the weekend and just got back in time to get down to see Dad Sunday evening.

Dad is doing fine, improving every day and is beginning to look like himself again. Can get up & walk around for a few minutes and sit in a chair for quite a little while. He says he is always glad then to get into bed & go to sleep. He certainly made rapid strides but still gets shots of something every 3 hours so we don't know how long he will be in the hospital.

I found things OK up home. Didn't see any one outside of the family except Elise & children because we left at 11 a.m. yesterday & I was busy all day Saturday digging out glads & dahlias, etc. etc. & the day just flew by. My shoulders still ache but I enjoyed it all knowing that Dad was getting better and that we would take the next trip north together. I'd like to have stopped to Sunday School even for a few minutes but knowing I couldn't I sent a note to them all.

I expect you are getting yourselves settled in their new house in Brooklyn but I bet you haven't found everything yet. I remember how it goes and like you, I hope we never move again. You will miss the bathroom but never mind, you will have one of your own some day.  
We got the bill for Dad's operation. It was \$250. We were all surprised it wasn't more and we have money enough with

us to pay it. John paid the special nurses as soo as they were through and our hospital insurance will help out a lot.

I feel that

"God is his heaven, all in all with the world"

I need some out of part three

Love to all,  
Mother

Writing our Christmas "thank you" notes was a ritual we can all remember. Most of us can relate to Nellie's style in the note below in which the letter was filled by listing everyone's gift. (One year a young brother Johnny tore is presents open so fast that we couldn't sort out who had given what and his notes all had to say, "Thank you for the nice present.") Nell's letter was probably written around 1952.

Tuesday  
Dear Aunt Helen,

Thanks ever so much for the pretty jewel box. I got two necklaces for Christmas and I can put them right in there. Tell Margaret her picture is really cute, and I have it on my dresser. I got a lot of nice things for Christmas. My mother got me a cotton batiste blouse and made me a red flannel nightie. She

bought me a navy blue school sweater, but it hasn't arrived yet. Daddy bought me a Bible with my name in gold letters and gave me ten dollars to buy my graduation dress with.

From my girlfriends I got a tan neck scarf, a pink silk babuska, yellow gloves, a red corduroy purse, and pearls.

Kathryn and Helen gave me a green and blue silk babuska. Grandma Piper made me some maroon mittens and William some gray and blue ones. Grandma Mook gave me a brush and comb set. I also got a set from Santa Claus. Peggy gave me a pair of real beautiful nylon anklets. I also got some perfume from the girl next door. William gave me a gold necklace.

William got a rifle that shoots ping pong balls. Mama got a glass shelf for her plants in the dining room, a light for her bed & some other things. William made her a waste basket out of the potato chip can.

Daddy got a pen, which I'm writing with, necktie, alarm clock, & other things. I wish it would hurry up and snow. It has rained most of the this week.

Last night two boys I know came over and watched television. They're coming over Wednesday too. I have to eat now.

*William*

13

The letter below must have been written by our Mom (Isabel) to Aunt Helen shortly after Uncle John died in the summer of 1958 because Grandpa Piper died in September of 1959. Grandpa was nearly blind; his cataract surgery had not been very successful and his health was failing. Mom had the habit of writing to everyone on Sunday night.

Sun. Nite

Dear Folks,

Another Sunday has passed. We went to S.S. and church as usual. Had a guest preacher who looked like Mr. Harle but taller. Kathryn and the kids are here for the week. I am working but the rest of the folks can visit with them daytimes. Lloyd will be up next week for his vacation.

I have worked off and on since I went back. No full weeks yet. Life moves on at it's usual rate. Johnny works every day. Jack is on 35-hr weeks but that is not too bad as long as I work.

Mother and Dad are doing well both physically and emotionally. They went to see Dr. Riker who advised against the surgery on his eye. Dad now is convinced that the Detroit Doctor only wanted to make \$300. I do not feel that way but we had best leave well enough alone. Katy spends a lot of time with them. We were over tonite so they could play with Sonja a while -- Dad gets such a bang out of her antics.

*I would get off to bed.*

*Love,  
Isabel*