

DWIGHT MARGARET HORN

A Journey to Ohio in 1810, as
Recorded in the Journal of
Margaret Van Horn Dwight

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INTRODUCTION

"If it be true that good wine needs no bush, 'tis true that a good play needs no epilogue;" and Rosalind might well have added that a good story needs no prologue. The present journal is complete in itself, and it is such a perfect gem, that it seems a pity to mar its beauty by giving it any but the simplest setting. There are many readers, however, with enough human interest to wish to know who Rosalind really was, and to be assured that she "married and lived happily ever after." That is the reason for this introduction.

Margaret Van Horn Dwight was born on December 29, 1790. She was the daughter of Doctor Maurice William Dwight, a brother of President Timothy Dwight of Yale, and Margaret (DeWitt) Dwight. The death of her father in 1796, and the subsequent marriage of her mother, was probably the reason for Margaret Dwight being taken by her grandmother, Mary Edwards Dwight, a daughter of Jonathan Edwards, who trained her as her own child in her family in Northampton. The death of her grandmother, February 7, 1807, was the occasion of her going to live in New Haven in the family of her aunt, Elizabeth Dwight, who had married William Walton Woolsey, and whose son was President Theodore Woolsey.

Three years later, in 1810, Margaret Dwight left New Haven to go to her cousins in Warren, Ohio. It was doubtless there that she met Mr. Bell, whom she married, December 17, 1811, a year after her arrival. William Bell, Jr., was born in Ireland, February 11, 1781, and after 1815 he was a wholesale merchant in Pittsburgh.

The family genealogy formally records that Margaret Dwight Bell became the mother of thirteen children, that she died on October 9, 1834, and that she was "a lady of remarkable sweetness and excellence, and devotedly religious." Family tradition adds a personal touch in relating that her home was a center of hospitality and that she herself was active and very vivacious.

The journal of the rough wagon trip to Ohio in 1810 was evidently kept by Margaret Dwight in fulfilment of a promise to her cousin, Elizabeth Woolsey, to whom it was sent as soon as the journey was over. A good many years later the journal was given to a son of the author, and the original is now in the possession of a granddaughter, Miss Katharine Reynolds Wishart of Waterford, Pennsylvania. It has been well cared for and is in excellent condition, except that the first two pages are missing. This is of less importance from the fact that two independent copies had been made. The text of the journal here printed is taken from the original manuscript, and is reproduced as accurately as typographical devices permit.

Max Farrand.

Milford Friday Eve. at Capt Pond's

Shall I commence my journal, my dear Elizabeth, with a description of the pain I felt at taking leave of all my friends, or shall I leave you to imagine? – The afternoon has been spent by me in the most painful reflections & in almost total silence by my companions- I have thought of a thousand things unsaid, a thousand kindnesses unpaid with thanks that I ought to have remembered more seasonably; and the neglect of which causes me many uneasy feelings- my neglecting to take leave of Sally, has had the same effect- I hope she did not feel hurt by it, for it proceeded from no want of gratitude for her kindness to me. I did not imagine parting with any friend could be so distressing as I found leaving your Mama. I did not know till then, how much I loved her & could I at that moment have retraced my steps! but it was too late to repent – Deacon Wolcott & his wife are very kind, obliging, people, & Miss Wolcott is a very pleasant companion, I do not know what I should do without her. We came on to Butler's this afternoon & I came immediately down to Uncle Pond's & drank tea. Miss W. came with me & both Uncle & Aunt invited her to stay and sleep with me, which she accordingly did. Cousin Patty has been with me, to say good bye, to all my friends, & tomorrow we proceed to Stamford.

Sat. night, D. Nash's Inn. Middlesex-

We had a cold, unsociable ride today, each one of us being occupied in thinking of the friends we had left behind & of the distance, which was every moment increasing, between them & us. Mrs W has left an aged father in the last stages of consumption, that was a sufficient excuse for silence on her part. Mr W. made several attempts to dispel & by kind words & *phebeish*¹ looks but without success; he appears to be a very fond husband. We stopt to *eat oats* at a Tavern in Fairfield, West Farms, an old Lady came into the room where Miss W. (whose name, by the way, is Susan, not Hannah, Sally, or Abby) & we were sitting. "Well! Gals where are you going?" "To New Connecticut" "You bant tho- To New Connecticut? Why what a long journey! do you ever expect to get there? How far is it?" "Near 600 miles" "Well Gals, you Gals & your husbands with you?" "No Ma'am" – "Not got your husbands! Well I don't know- they say there's wild Indians there!" The poor woman was then call'd out to her daughter (the mistress of the house) who she told us has been ill five months with a swelling & she had come that afternoon to see it *launch'd* by the Physicians who were then in the house – She went out but soon return'd & told us they were "cutting her poor child all to pieces" – She did not know but she should as lieve see a wild Indian as to see that scene over again – I felt very sorry for the poor old Lady- I could not help smiling at the comparison. The country we pass thro' till we are beyond N. York, I need not describe to you, nor indeed could I; for I am attended by a very unpleasant tho' not uncommon, companion- one to whom I have bow'd in subjection ever since I left you-Pride – It has entirely prevented my seeing the country lest I should be known – You will cry "for shame" & so did I but it did no good- I could neither shame nor reason it away, & so I suppose it will attend me to the mountains, then I am sure it will bid me adieu- "for you know the proverb" 'pride dwelleth not among the mountains' – I don't certainly know where this proverb is to be found, but Julia can tell you- for if I mistake not it is on the next page to "There is nothing sweet" &c- I do not find it so unpleasant riding in a waggon as I expected-nor am I very much fatigued with it- but four weeks to ride all the time, is fatiguing to think of- We came on to Nash's tavern where we found no company excepting one gentleman who looks like a Dr Susannah (Mr Nash's granddaughter) says he is a "particular bit" one who likes good eating & a great deal of waiting upon, better than he likes to pay for it- Here we stay over the Sabbath.

¹ For the description at the word *Phebeish*, the reader is referred to Miss Julia.

Sunday eve —

This morning Susannah came & invited us to attend meeting- we at first refused but I afterwards chang'd my mind, & "took a notion" (as Susannah told her friends to whom she did me the honour to introduce me) to go- so taking an apple to eat on the road we set out for the church- It was "situated on an eminence" but was a small old wooden building-The minister; who I found was brother to Mr Fisher, Susannah told me was not very well liked by some "he hadn't so good a gait to deliver his sermons as some," but she believ'd he was a very serious good man- She then gave me his history but I cannot spend time to give it to you- The sermon had nothing very striking in it but if I had time I would write you the text heads &c. just to let you see I remember it, though I fear it has done me no good for I heard it like a stranger and did not realize that I was interested in it *at all*- I was entirely of Susannah's opinion respecting the preacher, for I thought his "gait to deliver" was better than his voice, for he has a most terrible *nasal twang* – Before we got home at noon, I had found out the squire & half the parish, Susannah's history & many other *interesting* things which I have almost forgotten – I saw 4 or 5 well dress'd good looking girls, & as many young men answering the first part of the description, one of whom was chorister- & another, from the resemblance he bears them, I imagine must be brother to Miss Haines or the N York Sexton – I went all day to meeting & am now very tir'd, for our walk was a very long one, I should think almost 2 miles each way which would make almost 4 miles for one poor sermon —

October 22- Monday- Cook's inn — County West Chester —

I never will go to New Connecticut with a *Deacon* again, for we put up at every byeplace in the country to *save expence* – It is very grating to my pride to go into a tavern & furnish & cook my own provision- to ride in a wagon &c. &c- but that I can possibly get along with- but to be oblig'd to pass the night in such a place as we are now in, just because it is a little cheaper, is more than I am willing to do- I should even rather drink clear rum out of the wooden bottle after the deacon has drank & wip'd it over with his band, than to stay here another night – The house is very small & very dirty- it serves for a tavern, a store, & I should imagine hog's pen stable & every thing else- The air is so impure I have scarcely been able to swallow since I enter'd the house- The landlady is a fat, dirty, ugly looking creature, yet I must confess very obliging- She has a very suspicious countenance & I am very afraid of her- She seems to be master, as well as mistress & storekeeper, & from the great noise she has been making directly under me for this half hour, I suspect she has been "stoning the raisins & watering the rum" – All the evening there has been a store full of noisy drunken fellows, yet Mr Wolcott could not be persuaded to bring in but a small part of the baggage, & has left it in the waggon before the door, as handy as possible- Miss W's trunk is in the bar-room unlock'd the key being broken today- it contains a bag of money of her father's, yet she could not persuade him to bring it up stairs – I feel so uneasy I cannot sleep & had therefore rather write than not this hour- some one has just gone below stairs after being as I suppos'd in bed this some time- for what purpose I know not-unless to go to our trunks or waggon- the old woman, (for it was her who went down,) tells me I must put out my candle so good night – Tuesday Morn – I went to bed last night with fear & trembling, & feel truly glad to wake up & find myself alive & well- if our property is all safe, we shall have double cause to be thankful – The old woman kept walking about after I was in bed, & I then heard her in close confab with her husband a long time – Our room is just large enough to contain a bed a chair & a very small stand- our bed has one brown sheet & one pillow- the sheet however appear'd to be clean, which was more than we got at Nash's- there we were all oblig'd to sleep in the same room without curtains or any other screen- & our sheets there were so dirty I felt afraid to sleep in them- We were not much in favor at our first arrival there; but before we left them, they appear'd quite to like us- & I don't know why they should not, for we were all very clever, notwithstanding we rode in a waggon – Mrs Nash said she should reckon on't to see us again (Miss W & me) so I told her that in 3 years she might expect to see me – She said I should never come back alone, that I would certainly be married in a little while- but I am now more than ever determin'd not to oblige myself to spend my days there, by marrying should I even have an oppority – I am oblig'd to write every way so you must not wonder at the badness of the writing- I am now in bed & writing in my lap- Susan has gone to see if our baggage is in order – I hear the old woman's voice talking to the good deacon- & an "I beg your pardon" comes out at every breath almost – Oh I cannot bear to see her again she is such a disgusting object – The men have been swearing & laughing in the store under me this hour- & the air of my room is so intolerable, that I must quit my writing to go in search of some that is *breathable* – I don't know how far I shall be oblig'd to go for it- but there is none very near I am certain – Having a few moments more to spare before we set out, with my book still in my lap, I hasten to tell you we found everything perfectly safe, & I believe I wrong'd them all by suspicions – The house by day light looks worse then ever- every kind of thing in the room where they live- a chicken half pick'd hangs over the door- & pots, kettles, dirty dishes, potatoe barrels- & every thing else- & the old woman- it is beyond my power to describe her- but she & her husband & both very kind & obliging- it is as much as a body's life is worth to go near them – The air has already had a medicinal effect upon me – I feel as if I had taken an emetic- & should stay till night I most certainly should be oblig'd to take

my bed, & that would be certain death – I did not think I could eat in the house- but I did not dare refuse- the good deacon nor his wife did not mind it, so I thought I must not – The old creature sits by eating, & we are just going to my great joy so good bye, good bye till to-night —

Tuesday Noon- Ferry House near State Prison-

It has been very cold & dusty riding to day – We have met with no adventure yet, of any kind – We are now waiting at the ferry house to cross the river as soon as wind & tide serve- The white waves foam terribly how we shall get across I know not, but I am in great fear- If we drown there will be an end of my journal —

Hobuck, Wednesday Morn-Buskirck's Inn —

After waiting 3 or 4 hours at the ferry house, we with great difficulty cross'd the ferry & I, standing brac'd against one side of the boat involuntarily endeavouring to balance it with my weight & groaning at every fresh breeze as I watch'd the side which almost dipt in the water- & the ferrymen swearing at every breath- Mr, Mrs & Miss Wolcott viewing the city and vainly wishing they had improv'd the time of our delay to take a nearer view – At length we reach'd this shore almost frozen- The Ferry is a mile & an half wide – I was too fatigued to write last night & soon after we came retired to bed- We were again oblig'd all to sleep in one room & in dirty sheets- but pass'd the night very comfortably – If good wishes have any influence, we shall reach our journey's end in peace- for we obtain them from everyone – The morning is pleasant & we are soon to ride – Mrs Buskirck the landlady, I should imagine is about 60 years of age & she sits by with a three year old child in her lap- She wears a long ear'd cap & looks so old I thought she must be Grandmother till I enquir'd —

Springfield-New Jersey- Pierson's Inn-Wedy-PM 4 oclock-

"What is every body's business is no body's" for instance- it is nobody's business where we are going, yet every body enquires- every toll gatherer & child that sees us – I am almost discouraged- we shall never get to New Connecticut or any where else, at the rate we go on- We went but eleven miles yesterday & 15 to day – Our Waggon wants repairing & we were oblig'd to put up for the night at about 3 oclock. – I think the country so far, much pleasanter than any part of Connecticut we pass'd thro'-but the Turnpike roads are not half as good- The Deacon & his family complain most bitterly of the gates & toll bridges- tho' the former is very good-natur'd with his complaints – Also the tavern expenses are a great trouble- As I said before I will never go with a Deacon again- for we go so slow & so cheap, that I am almost tir'd to death. The horses walk, walk hour after hour while Mr W sits *reckoning his expenses* & forgetting to drive till some of us ask when we shall get there? – then he remembers the longer we are on the road the more *expensive* it will be, & whips up his horses – and when Erastus the son, drives, we go still slower for fear of hurting the horses – Since I left you I have conceived such an aversion for Doctors & the words, expense, expensive, cheap & expect, that I do not desire ever to see the one (at least to need them) or hear the others again, in my life – I have just found out that Elizabeth Town is but 5 miles off & have been to the landlord to enquire if I cannot possibly get there & he encourages me a little, I cannot write more till I am certain- Oh if I can but see my brother! After a long crying spell, I once more take up my pen to tell you I cannot go, – there is no chair or side saddle to be got, & I will, by supposing him at New York, try to content myself- to describe my disappointment would be impossible – it is such an agravation of my pain, to know myself so near & then not see him – I have the greater part of the time till now, felt in better spirits than I expected-my journal has been of use to me in that respect – I did not know but I should meet with the same fate that a cousin of Mr Hall's did, who like me, was journeying to a new, if not a western country- She was married on her way & prevented from proceeding to her journey's end- There was a man to day in Camptown where we stopt to eat, not oats but gingerbread, who enquired, or rather *expected* we were going to the Hio- we told him yes & he at once concluded it was to get husbands- He said winter was coming on & he wanted a wife & believ'd he must go there to get him one- I concluded of course the next thing would be, a proposal to Miss W or me to stay behind to save trouble for us both; but nothing would suit him but a rich widow, so our hopes were soon at an end- Disappointment is the lot of man & we may as well bear them with a good grace- this thought restrain'd my tears at that time, but has not been able to since – What shall I do? My companions say they shall insist upon seeing my journal & I certainly will not show it to them, so I told them I would bring it with me the first time I came to Henshaw (the place where they live) & read it to them; but I shall do my utmost to send it to you before I go- that would be a sufficient excuse for not performing my promise which must be conditional – I will not insist upon your reading this thro' my dear Elizabeth & I suspect by this time you feel quite willing to leave it unread further- I wish I could make it more interesting – I write just as I feel & think at the moment & I feel as much in haste to write every thing that occurs, as if you could know it the moment it was written- I must now leave you to write to my brother, for if I cannot see him I will at least write him- I cannot bear the idea of leaving the state without once more seeing him – I hope next to write you from 30 miles hence at least – Poor Susan feels worse to night than me, & Mrs Wolcott to cheer us, tells us what we have yet to expect- this you may be sure has the desir'd effect & raises our spirits at once —

Friday morn- Chester N J

We left Springfield yesterday about nine o'clock & came on to Chester about 22 miles from Springfield – Patience & perseverance will get us to N C in time-but I fear we shall winter on our way there, for instead of four weeks, I fear we shall be four times four – We found an excellent tavern here compar'd with any we have yet found, & we had for the first time clean sheets to sleep in- We pass'd thro' Morristown yesterday, & 3 small villages- one called Chatham I do not know the names of the others – It is very hilly in N Jersey, & what is very strange, we appear almost always to be going up hill, but like the squirrel, never rise 2 inches higher- The hills look very handsomely at a little distance, – but none of them are very high – Mr & Mrs Wolcott, after telling us every thing dreadful, they could think of, began encouraging us by changing sides & relating the good as well as the bad- They are sure I shall like Warren better than I expect & think I shall not regret going in the least – The weather yesterday was very pleasant, & is this morning also- We wish to reach Easton to day, but I am sure we shall not, for it is 32 miles distant- 5 or 600 hundred miles appears like a short journey to me now- indeed I feel as if I could go almost any distance- My courage & spirits & both very good – one week is already gone of the 4 – I wish I could fly back to you a few minutes while we are waiting —

Mansfield-N J-Sat-morn October 27-

We yesterday travell'd the worst road you can imagine- over mountains & thro' vallies- We have not I believe, had 20 rods of level ground the whole day- and the road some part of it so intolerably bad on every account, so rocky & so gullied, as to be almost impassable- 15 miles this side Morristown, we cross'd a mountain call'd Schyler or something like it- We walk'd up it, & Mrs W told us it was a little like some of the mountains only not half so bad – indeed every difficulty we meet with is compar'd to something worse that we have yet to expect- We found a house built in the heart of the mountain near some springs- in a romantic place-Whether the springs are medicinal or not, I do not know- but I suspect they are, & that the house is built for the accommodation of those who go to them- for no human creature, I am sure, would wish to live there- Opposite the house are stairs on the side of the mountain & a small house resembling a bathing house, at the head of them – Soon after we cross'd the mountain, we took a wrong road, owing to the neglect of those whose duty it is to erect guide boards, & to some awkward directions given – This gave us a great deal of trouble, for we were oblig'd in order to get right again, to go across a field where the stones were so large & so thick that we scarcely touch'd the ground the whole distance- At last the road seem'd to end in a hogs pen, but we found it possible to get round it, & once more found ourselves right again- We met very few people, yet the road seem'd to have been a great deal travelled- One young man came along & caus'd us some diversion, for he eyed us very closely & then enter'd into conversation with Mr W who was walking a little forward-He told him he should himself set out next week for Pittsburg- & we expect to see him again before we get there – Erastus enquir'd the road of him & he said we must go the same way he did; so we follow'd on till we put up for the night; he walking his horse all the way & looking back at the waggon-As soon as we came to the inn he sat on his horse at the door till he saw us all quietly seated in the house & then rode off- Which of us made a conquest I know not, but I am sure one of us did – We have pass'd thro' but 2 towns in N J- but several small villages- Dutch valley, between some high hills & the Mountain- Batestown, where we stopt to *bait*-& some others- all too small to deserve a name- At last we stopt at Mansfield at an Inn kept by Philip fits (a little f). We found it kept by 2 young women, whom I thought *amazoons* – for they swore & flew about "like *witches*" they talk & laugh'd about their sparks &c. &c. till it made us laugh so as almost to affront them- There was a young woman visiting them who reminded me of Lady Di Spanker-for sprung from the ground to her horse with as much agility as that Lady could have done – They all took their pipes before tea – one of them appears to be very unhappy- I believe she has a very cross husband if she is married- She has a baby & a pretty one – Their manners soften'd down after a while & they appear to be obliging & good natur'd —

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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