



tougher mettle if she was able to get through the school year.

Hattie Brown's reasons for giving up the Porter School after one year were personal, she made it clear in her letters that she enjoyed her students, and that they were exceptionally good. But still she appears to have filled her days very satisfyingly although she wasn't working. Between keeping house, meeting friends, visits from Ren, writing letters, going to church and Sunday School, sewing and crocheting, the impression is there that the winter of 1891-92 simply flew by. Hattie and Laura exchanged letters that year about a Christmas present for their mother. On Dec. 12, 1891, Hattie writes:

"Everything for the dress was but \$4.81."

I have been thinking in regard to Ma's Xmas present I suggested, that if you think that will be alright by getting a Butterick pattern I can make the dress as well as to hire it made. Ma and I are both well pleased with the fit of a garment made after their patterns. I made my cloak and this last dress after their patterns and they both fit nicely.

"If we want to get a better piece of cloth instead of hiring it made we could ask Carrie Kingsley to get it in the city if we have a sample of the color. There is no better grade here as I know of. I did but go to two stores. When you let me know what to do, I'll do it if I can." In a letter which was a continuation of one begun on Christmas Eve, Hattie tells Laura: "Thursday forenoon went downtown and bought Ma's dress and a white linen handkerchief for Pa. I bought everything for the dress except buttons. Those brown buttons I had on the brown flannel ma bought for me in Chicago looked good with the goods, and as I had heard her say a number of times she thought them so pretty, I gave them to her. Everything for the dress was but \$4.81.

9 yds. flannel at .45 was \$4.05.
6 1/2 yds. cambric at .05 was \$.32.
2 yds. drilling at .10 was \$.20.
1 yd. facing was \$.15.
1 yd. braid was \$.05.
1 spool twist was \$.04.

The total amount was \$4.81.

I thought it would be more than that, but as I knew no other way to do, I gave the three dollars you sent and paid the balance myself.

She likes the dress ever so much, and it seemed quite a surprise to her that we bought such a large article. Of course she knew something was going on, but neither she nor Pa guessed what. She said right away she didn't want it made up yet. Not until a prettier style comes out for a skirt. Maybe this cold spell will make her sing a new tune. Thursday afternoon didn't do much of anything, had our Xmas then. I believe Ma told you Pa gave me five

dollars when he sold the land; then he gave me (2) two of his pictures, one framed. Ma gave me (3) a picture frame like the one Pa's picture was in, (4) a pair of stays, (5) cotton flannel skirt, (6) handkerchief, (7) box of paper and envelopes, (8) six thimbles that August (Meyer) gave her (9) Pa bought a bag of Brazil nuts and English walnuts. Went to afternoon meeting. In the evening while writing to you Pa brought home your letter-always a welcome guest.

"This time he brought a bag of figs, and each of us a silk handkerchief for Xmas.

By then contemporary gift-giving standards, Hattie received a munificent collection of presents, elsewhere in writing of Christmas and birthday gifts, the tokens are usually more modest. But undoubtedly the grandest gift of all, was the arrival the day after Christmas of a long anticipated picture from Minnesota featuring "Little Arthur."

We are in love with baby's picture, even to Grandpa. We put his picture in the red plush frame you gave me one Xmas a long time ago, and have set it on the table in the front room." Later in the letter: "Friday night Ren came up. This time he brought a bag of figs, and each of us a silk handkerchief for Xmas. Pa laughingly said Ren was trying to buy him and Ma. Pa knows better than that for Ren has won them both long ago. Pa seems to think everything of him, and Ren new long ago that our little Ma was the best woman in the world. We all sat and ate and visited till nine then the folks went to bed. I showed him the matchesafe and told him you said he should tune it. He laughed and said he guessed he better not try to tighten the wires. He hadn't been here ten minutes before he spied Arthur's picture. It most took his breath away. He said, "Hey, who is that? Can that be that baby? Oh! you little pet! Then he sat down and gazed at it. As Ma said, he looked and looked and looked, and would have looked longer if I had not called his attention to something else." Ren went home comparatively early (not one yet) and after his usual goodbye to me he stood looking at the picture and said he wished he could kiss him goodbye too. I told him to do so then. He didn't wait for a second asking but picked up the picture and kissed it with as serious a face and as much real affection as I ever saw anyone bestow on their own child. It really surprises me to see how real his love for Arthur is. He said once, "what would Laura say if she knew how I talked." I admire his loving heart and wish we could all see you all.

The next article will be about Hattie's visit to Minnesota, her marriage, and the 1893 World's Fair.

Writer, researchers uncover cache of 1890 to 1920 Barrington photos

There is no doubt about the richness of materials relating to the history of the Octagon House, and the existence of the letter collection alone, would be treasure enough. But fortune continues to smile on those of us who share a closeness of fascination about this unique building and its past occupants.

Three weeks ago, Ruth Munson, Bob Kosin and I, made several trips to Elgin, to visit Hazel Porter, who is Hattie Brown Porter's daughter-in-law. On the last visit, Hazel gave us some incredible photographs, about 175 of them, taken in the 1890's and into the early 1920's. Most of them were of the Octagon House, some outside, some in Minnesota, and some at the Porter farm on Oak Knoll Road. It is possible that many of the photographs were taken by Hattie Brown Porter, because Bill Klingenberg has told us that she was a great photographer, and in her later years could often be seen with her

tripod set up on Main Street.

Some of the most intriguing ones are the tintypes of Joseph Brown's New England ancestors, including his parents, John and Sarah Thayer Brown. Alas! there is no complete photograph of the Octagon House, although the earliest picture we have of the house was given by Hazel Porter to Bob Kosin some time ago and used in an early article. That photograph was possibly taken by Hattie Porter.

The collection is presently being copied, negatives and contact prints are being made by Joe Rush at Langdon's of Barrington, and the originals will be returned to Hazel Porter. But these images are priceless beyond our dreams, and add an additional human dimension for those of us at the Museum, who are beginning to feel like members of the family that lived in the Octagon House those many years ago.

—Barbara Benson



The above illustration and the pictures of hats on this page are illustrative of styles on which turn-of-the-century patterns were based. Trimmings and fabrics used in a country town like Barrington might have been less elaborate for every day wear. The illustrations are from the book, Victorian Fashions from Harper's Bazaar. The Barrington Historical Museum currently has an exhibit, The Belles of Barrington, featuring Victorian costumes.