



Joseph Nightingale, son-in-law of Emaline and Joseph Brown.

This same letter of June 4th, 1898 then refers again to the Comstock family, who are featured regularly in Emaline's life, frequently because of the outrageous behaviour of young George Comstock. Now another son is causing concern.

"There was a circus here not long ago and Lewis Comstock went off with them. He went with the man that goes ahead and advertises, his father was gone to Kansas so he thought it was a good time to skip. I think he will be a scapegoat like young George, his father wants him to go to school but he is determined he will not. Young George is down south somewhere. He dare not come back here and his wife is in Chicago flirting around. She is a hard case, their little boy is with her mother."

The remainder of this letter is on more pleasant topics, including one of the descriptions which were an annual event about the gardens around the Octagon House. She has left us word pictures of a colorful almost bucolic scene, which, given the number of large lots and beautiful trees which still exist along that part of West Main Street, it is quite easy to imagine.

"Hattie and Ren and of course Howard came up town last evening, Howard felt so cute he could hardly hold himself. Hattie said she got along first-rate last week housecleaning. Ren's bees swarmed three times last week, he has seven swarms now. I wish you could see our lovely roses and peonies, our yellow rose bush is covered with blossoms and it is a large bush—one small pink rose bush not over a foot high has over one hundred blossoms and buds on it and our climbing rose is full of lovely roses—one red peony bush has thirty blossoms and I have picked off quite a number they are as large as a quart bowl seems as if they never were so nice as they are this year. The large red poppies are in blossom now and the easter lillies are coming on fast—both of our white lilac bushes blossomed this spring. Pa is not done painting yet. New potatoes are \$1.60 a

bushel, old ones \$1.00. Are you going to have a carpet wove this summer—Love to all Ma."

In November 1898, Emaline received the news that Laura and her two sons Arthur and Roscoe were coming home to Barrington for Christmas.

Barrington, Nov. 23, 1898.

"Dear Laura, Rec'd your letter Monday, am glad you are coming home, had begun to think you had given it up, and what a nice letter Arthur wrote to Uncle Ren. He and Hattie were up here yesterday she got the paper for her little room they have just plastered—real pretty paper for five cents a double roll. This is the coldest day this Fall; 10 above zero, the roads are fearful rough. It has been terribly muddy all the Fall we have had such a sight of rain everyone says we have had the worst roads this Fall we have had for twenty five years. It has been so wet, the farmers have done only a little plowing.

Sunday 27th. Only two above zero this morning. It was a nice day Thanksgiving. Ren brought his family up here the day before as the teacher wanted to go home. (The Porters were boarding a teacher at the Porter School on Buckley Road.) Hattie and Howard stayed here all night as Hattie wanted to go to Chicago on Friday, she went on the seven o'clock train. Howard seemed to feel all right the morning she went, until about nine o'clock and then he complained of being hurt and would cry and had a fever come on, and felt so bad pa went down and had Hobert come up, he said he had a very high fever (Dr. Hobert Richardson lived on the northwest corner of Hough and Main)—he was better in the evening. Ren came up in the evening expecting to take Hattie and Howard home but did not as Howard was not well enough to go. Ren felt pretty bad to go home and leave his little boy sick but knew of course he could not go, but Howard was a good deal better next day so that he played. I think he ate too much sweet stuff Thanksgiving, they went home last night."



Believed to be Bertha Colby Horner, a niece of Emaline Brown.

In her letter of Dec. 1, Emaline, besides commenting on her own health, was once more concerned with other peoples' troubles:

"Dear Laura, Rec'd your letter this morning, I think you did have a snowstorm. We have a little snow on the ground and it is snowing today. The thermometer has not been below zero yet this fall. No I have not got over the effects of the shingles. I itch awfully sometimes and it hurts by spells where the sores were, I feel pretty well most of the time.

Yes I think Addie and Meal have their hearts and hands full in attending to Franks folks, Nuck too is full of trouble. Fanny's husband is a good for nothing shiftless lazy fellow. Bertha says Fan don't have enough to eat, and would have nothing to wear if it were not for Addie and Meal. (Bertha Horner was Emaline's niece through her sister Amelia Colby—who Fan was is not clear from the geneologies.) When Bertha was down there this fall, Fan was nearly barefooted. Bertha had a nice pair of four dollar shoes that Addie had given her but had not worn them yet and gave them to Fan, and when she came home she told her Aunt Addie she gave those shoes to Fanny and Addie told her that was all right. Frank and Minnie want Fanny to leave him and come home and sometimes she thinks she will, he is not good to her. They say Fanny is so changed. Bertha says she will sit and have such a vacant look; never sings or laughs anymore, she is just broken hearted. I wish she would go to her father and mother. Frank has to furnish somethings for them to live on now but they don't want to support that lazy lout. I don't blame them either.

Your cousin Fred and his wife get along finely. He gets good wages and they save their money. Addie Johnson has had to postpone her wedding on account of her sickness. Last Sunday she had three doctors in council—some say she has dropsy, there is a sack of water gathered

in her side and they think she will have to have an operation. Her health has been poor for a long time.

"Kate Runyan and her girls have left Len and have gone to live in Elgin. She says she is going to take boarders, Myrtle and Effie are working in a shirt factory and will board at home. Len and Kate have not got along very well together for a long time and according to all accounts, she don't intend to live with him any more. Arthur is staying with his father they will probably stay on Johnson's farm this winter and perhaps another summer. It is a strange proceeding I think. Effie has taught school three or four years on a permit but the superintendent wont give her one anymore, so she has got to go work at something else. Jim Sizer said he would not agree to pay Runyan's debts right here in town for one thousand dollars. That is the way they have got a living is by running in debt and never paying. Alice Runyan has never got married I hear. Charlie is going to be soon. John is up there and boards with Alice."

The balance of the letter contained better news, including that of Howard's complete recovery, and there was a postscript.

"I think that the new story that is commenced in the Barrington paper is a good one—Mother."

On Nov. 26, 1898, the Barrington Review began a story entitled "My Poor Wife" by J.P. Smith. It was a Victorian melodrama of love, deceit and disappointment, set in England and Ireland. It was serialized until Feb. 4, 1899, on the second page of the newspaper. The story can be read on the newspaper microfilm at the Barrington Area Library.

In the next installment: Into the twentieth century—around Barrington as observed through the letters and the newspapers of the time.