

CHAPTER VIII
COLMAN INN

Did you ever see this nameplate on the big heavy front door with its glass panels at each side so you could see who was at the door before you opened it? Once inside, you could see the wide stairway of walnut wood that led to numerous bedrooms upstairs, you could turn to the left to the master bedroom, or go straight down the hall to the big living room. The main attraction in this room was the paper on the wall which was of samples bro't from Boston. It was a never ending game to try to see if you could find any two pieces alike. It was designed like a crazy quilt and was a master piece of its kind, for our Grandfather was a master paperhanger back in Massachusetts.

Out of this living room you went into a big kitchen with its big pantry where Grandmother prepared meals for the paying guests who had come to Kansas to look for a location and were sent out to Colman Inn to stay until they could find a place to settle.

The yard was landscaped with shrubs and trees, one of which was a silver maple tree whose wide spreading limbs made shade for the whole yard. There were lilacs, purple and white, roses and bridal wreath which in May were beautiful.

One reason they were arranged in clumps as they were, was that they marked the graves of the uncles and aunts who died in infancy. Here are names of 13 children. Charlie, who was killed on a battlefield in Arkansas, Cos, Loring, who was the peacemaker, Grandma said. There was Frank who was drowned in the Kaw while in swimming. Osgood No. 1, who died in infancy, Osgood II, our father, Alice, Mary, Will, and Minnie, who was buried out under the cedars on the north side of the house. Grandma Richardson had her body moved to Oak Hill after Grandpa Colman traded the farm for the 1313 Mass. St. house. Later Grandma Richardson deeded the place to Aunt Ollie.

I stayed with her the first year she and Guy were married, and I rode old gray Jim over to Grandma's to tell her and Aunt Met to come the day Baby Guy was born, then Guy took me home as he went for Mother and Mrs. Duffee. I had my playhouse out in the woodpile and would put my coffeepot on my play stove each night before I went to bed and in the morning it was always upset. The rest of the infants who were buried under the shrubs were: Sammy, Mandy, and Miranda. I think the first two were twins.

It was in this chip yard where our father buried the silver the day Quentrell burned Lawrence. Grandpa, Uncle Charlie and Uncle Cos went to town as soon as they got word and left Dad to take care of Grandma and the girls, and to guard the place, for they didn't know but what the raiders would come out their way.

There were many gatherings in this yard and in this big livingroom, but there's no one living that knows about them. I know the school was known as Colman school, so I suppose Grandfather had some part in organizing the District. I wonder if they were numbered as they were organized? If so, Siegel No 8 must have been before Kanwaka, No. 15.

Samuel Cabbot
Johnny and Annie

I remember the place where you went up into the attic where Uncle Cos said they hid the fugitives who were kept until they could be taken on to the next station in the Underground Railroad.

Grandfather planted big beds of asparagus which lasted as long as when Aunt Met and Uncle Herman lived there. He bro't the red raspberries from the east with him on one of his trips to Boston, as well as many varieties of apples. This I learned from the book Mrs. Cook loaned me.

The double row of hedge on the north line of the place was the road that led from the Santa Fe Trail to this Colman Inn, so travelers could find the place. Uncle Cos told me he used to scrub the kitchen floor and he had a unique way to do it. He would have one of the other children pump the buckets of water from the pump in the corner of the kitchen and throw the water on the floor. Then he would sweep the water from the door on the south side out the door on the north side. He said that after he got through, the kitchen was sure clean.

He also told me how he would line up the children in front of a large piece of paper with the words of "Battle Cry of Freedom" on it and would direct them, and how they would sing! Probably he got his idea from the Singing School that Samuel Reynolds held in the school house. He had the music and words written on sheets of white building paper which he would tack up on the walls. Mrs. Cook said that those rolls laid around the house a long time till one day her Mother wanted something to line her chicken house with and she used that. She and her sisters used to read the words when they went to gather eggs.

The house is torn down now, and a new one is built. Perhaps the trees are all gone. I know the black walnut grove is gone and the bed of yellow violets Dad said he bro't from the timber lot Grandfather owned over north of Seetins. New folks farm the fields with new methods of farming. Perhaps with contour farming and seeded waterways, it wouldn't have washed away. Who knows? Ambrose said his Dad asked Uncle Cos once why, when Grandfather had the choice of so many parts of Douglas County, he should have chosen such a poor place. I answered him that perhaps that farm looked like the farms in Massachusetts and Vermont and attracted our ancestors more than the big fertile fields of the Kaw Valley. I imagine that they were homesick and chose a place they felt would look more like the home they had left.

I suppose that if they had known of these new methods, they would have had a pond, or maybe a lake down in the southeast corner of the place. On many years, it would have been full of water and what a place it would have been for all those boys and girls to fish, swim, and go skating in the winter.

Well its been 77 years since Mother and Dad were married, and who's to say what some of the other ranches will be like in 77 more years?

CHAPTER IX
THE COLMAN FRUIT FARM

Why is it that farmers in Kansas today cannot have the variety of fresh fruit the year round that we had when we were children? We used to boast that from earliest spring until freezing weather came, we could always go out in the orchard and find fresh fruit.

The earliest we got was rhubaro. How good these first stalks tasted which we children bro't to the house and cooked in an enamel saucepan on the back of the stove. The tart flavor after our winter of canned fruit satisfied the urge for a tonic which supplied the iron we needed.

The gooseberries, also supplied that tart taste. These grew on a row of bushes at the edge of the asparagus bed. Eaten raw (setting our teeth on edge), or cooked in a sauce, or in pies --- Nothing tasted better.

Next came the strawberries. There were the plump Senator Dunlops, and the long necked Colonel Parkers which were so easy to stem. Both were huge and required only a few to fill a box. We always had plenty to pick and sell, but if and when there came a rain, all hands must pick and stem them, because we couldn't sell them, but Mother could make preserves from them.

Then came cherries which were always ripe at Commencement time at K.U. The two always came at the same time, and cherries or no, Mother must go to Commencement. I remember once Mr. Stanley cut down a tree and invited us to come and pick all we wanted. All of us went down and picked buckets full of them.

Next came raspberries, black caps, reas, (old fashioned ones bro't from Grandpa Colman's farm which he, in turn, had bro't from Boston. And there were the Cardinals, a later variety larger, but not so sweet as the old ones.

Then there were blackberries. No matter how many we had in the patch, we always went to pick those that grew in the hedge rows along the sides of the west meadow. Does anyone remember a patch we had just at the bottom of the hill north of the barn?

We always wore rubber boots to go pick along the hedges for fear of snakes. It didn't matter if they were old boots and they leaked. I can hear the noise the water from the dew made in them yet. I can hear it but I can't spell it. "Swich, swatch", comes as near as I can get, but anyone who ever heard it would remember. We often would get up early and go with Mrs. Duffee down the hedge row on the north edge of Lacy field, to beat Mrs. Hill, a black lady who came from Bloomington and thought she had as much right to the fruit as we did. Mrs. Duffee argued and jawed them, but we just had to get there first!. Such great bunches of very ripe fruit as we'd find!

About this time the red June apples were ripe and Cooper's Early Whites, Strawberry apples and Red Astrakhan. All these were on the first row of the orchard on the south. Then there were Maiden Blush and Old Red, so good for pies or to take to the hay fields. Best of all were High Top Sweets, which we could eat by the milkpail full. I remember one Sunday afternoon Clarence and Bessie Smith were coming home from Ray's where they had been guests for dinner. Clarence came dashing into the house, asking if they could have some of the sweet apples. He said he'd promised Bessie some. He said later he didn't know what he would have done if we had said there weren't any apples left, for he was suffering from an attack of diarrhea and used this as an excuse to stop at our house on the way home. So we felt we saved him from an embarrassing situation.

All summer we enjoyed these apples until Sept. when Jonathans were ripe, then Winesaps and Missouri Pippins, and Ben Davis, which weren't so good. The last were Genetians which were picked and sorted and put in the cellar for winter use. These were the ones we had to sort on Saturdays and those beginning to spoil were set aside to be made into sauce and pies.

From Fourth of July on, we had peaches, (which in Calif. they said were nothing but sunshine and ditch water). Nevertheless, we thought them just grand. Dad never ate a peach he liked but that he brought the pit home and planted it. Consequently we had seedlings of many kinds and were they ever good! We had some Elbertas and budded peaches, but none as good flavor as the seedlings.

Then the row of plums on the north edge of the calf pasture. They were red on the outside and yellow inside. These were never picked, just picked up every day as they dropped. This was one of Mother's favorite fruits.

We had pears, Bartlett, not the sugar pears like Mrs. Duffees, nor sickle pears like Grandma Richardson always made into sweet pickles. We had planted two pear trees at the same time, one was tall and beautiful, but had no fruit, the other was short and wide spread with lots of fruit. Only one year in many did the tall tree ever bear, and that saved its life. Dad was always threatening to cut it down, but Mother liked it, for it was such a beautiful tree and gave so much shade on the southwest of the house just beyond the Sopora Japonica.

Now it is Sept. and the grapes are ripe. First the Moores' Earllys and Drakes Ambers., and a white grape, and then Concord which are bearing grapes to this day. These lasted till October. We used to gather wild grapes too, at the "gap" where great hedge trees were covered with vines. Also there were some elderberries to put with them to make the jelly jell. Wish we had had Surejell and pectin then, don't you?

It should have been enough to keep us busy at home, but we went to other farms to pick berries too. There were raspberries at Knapps, who lived in the old stone house on Calif. Road, just east of the church.

Remember that washtub full of berries they had covered with water and left to ferment for wine? Let's hope they strained out the flies, gnats, and sour flies. We picked berries at Saylor's some, and at Strahans. Minnie was with us there one day, and she got old Bill so interested in conversation, he forgot to yell at us, "Pick them a little 'closter', boys." We always had to stop at the window and talk to Matt Lac ey, the same sister of Mrs. Strahan. How we marveled how anyone could eat so many ears of corn for dinner, but maybe that was all she had. Minnie's tactics were to get Old Bill to explain why the "Kittycimmies" were the best raspberries to grow instead of some other variety.

The last fruit we had was a Quince tree Dad brought in later years because Mother used to talk about Quince preserves she had as a child in Wisconsin. We also had a few current bushes for the same reason. Mother told of current jelly their neighbor, Mrs. Bingham raised her family on.

Ralph has done wonders to keep the Colman Fruit Farm producing. Many trees died in the drought and cyclone years, and many died of old age and he has replaced them with newer and better varieties, but in my mind's eye, I can still draw a diagram and locate each one of every variety, can you?