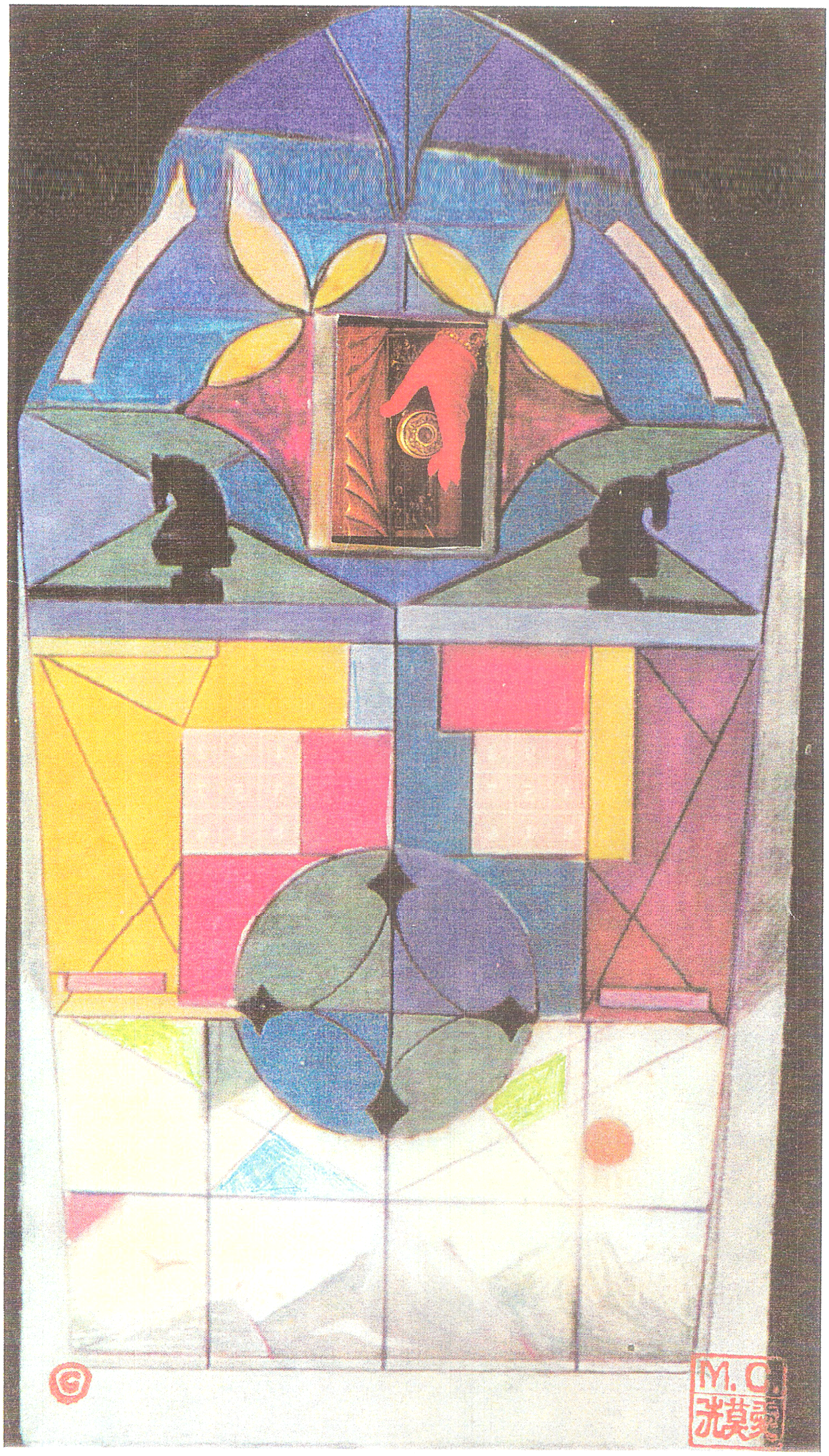
A Short Family History

By Clinton F. Cross



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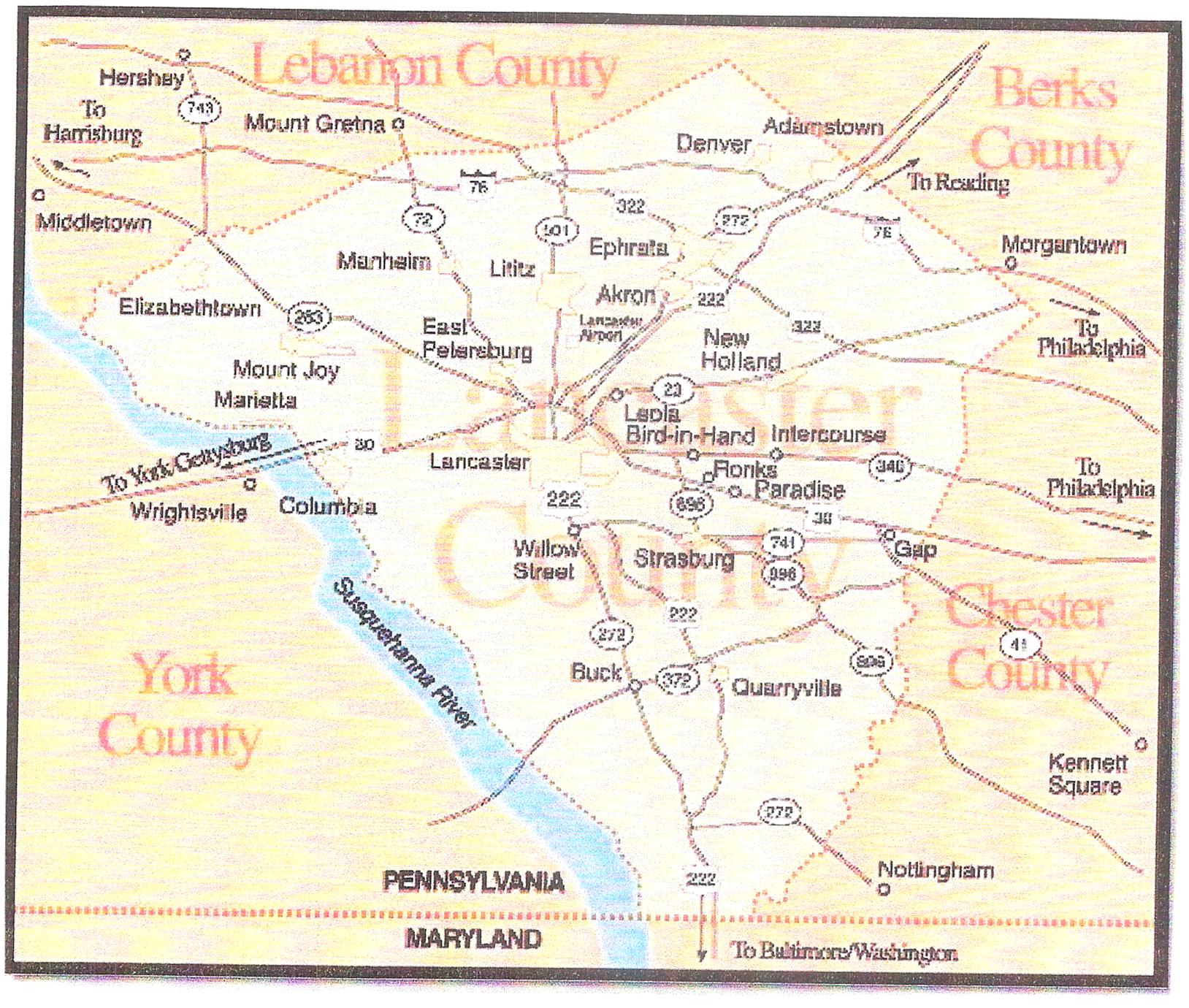
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Wrightsville
Columbia
To York, Gettysburg
Manheim
Lititz
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East Petersburg
Lancaster
Denver
Adamstown
To Reading
Morgantown
To Philadelphia
New Holland
Leola
Bird-in-Hand
Intercourse
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Willow Street
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Buck
Quarryville
Kennett Square
Nottingham
Susquehanna River
PENNSYLVANIA
MARYLAND
To Baltimore/Washington
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A SHORT FAMILY HISTORY

By Clinton Cross

This is a short history of my George and Eliza Robinson Hopkins Plattenburg ancestors. This history is a "work in progress." I can only tell the story as I know it as I sit down to write it.

Furthermore, in any short history much more is known than is reported.

In order to review the history of any family, it is important to try to understand the historical context of the story. This requires an appreciation for the times in which our ancestors lived, and the culture and events which took place during their lifetimes. In this history, I can only touch of a few of the external events and hope the reader takes the time to expand his or her understanding of the story.

Background

Johannes Blattenberger (1721-1794) and Barbara Palmer Blattenburger (d., 1758) came from Bavaria to America and arrived September 20, 1743. Johannes was probably born in Bavaria, and was baptized a Catholic. He married Barbara in the Rhineland. She was a Mennonite. When the couple came to America, they brought with them two children, Annamia and Philip, and lived in Warwick Township, Pennsylvania, near Lititz, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. In 1744, they had a son, Johannes Blattenberger. The next year they joined the Moravian church.

Johannes Blattenberger (1744-1813) married Christiana Haines, and had a number of children including George Blattenberger. It is reported that all his children served in the Revolutionary War; certainly, George did.

George married Mary Young. Parson Mason Locke Weems performed the wedding ceremony. (Weems was an author as well as a parson, and around 1800 published the biography of George Washington containing the cherry tree story).

Mary Young was born in Maryland, but we know little more about her. George and Mary had thirteen children, Rachel, William, John, Jacob, George, Jr. (my ancestor), Perregrine, Wesley (whose house still stands in Selma, Alabama), Joshua Young, James Selby, Ann, Levi, Mary, and Isaac. George apparently changed the spelling of his name to Plattenburgh.

George and Eliza Plattenburg

George, Jr. (1798-1884) was born in Middletown, Dauphin County, Pennsylvania, December 24, 1798. His father moved to Wellsburgh, West Virginia when he was a small boy. At the time Wellsburgh was a frontier outpost, one of the

Mason Lock Weems (1759-1825)

first cities to be established on the banks of the Ohio River. George, Jr. learned the trade of tailoring and became a skilled workman.

George, Jr. moved to Mt. Pleasant, Ohio in 1822. Two years later he returned to Wellsburgh, and lived there until 1828. When in Wellsburgh he must have met his future wife, Eliza Robinson Hopkins.

Very little is known about Eliza's family. The 1980 United States Census reports that her mother was born in West Virginia, and that her father was born in Pennsylvania. If the census was correct in reporting her age at the time as 69, she must have been born in 1811.

We do know that George courted Eliza with diligence. I possess several letters written by George to Eliza in 1826. A namesake, one George Plattenburg, a retired minister living in St. Charles, Missouri, kindly mailed me copies of at least two more. Eliza may have appeared to ignore the letters, but saved them and her children's descendants still have some of them. In an undated letter, George declared his love for Eliza:

"To Mifs Eliza Hopkins,

"I presume my conduct in your company, has always been such as to evince something more than common friendship but, that this declarations will be somewhat unexpected, I have not the least doubt but, unexpected as it may appear, it never-the-less, the genuine sentiments of my heart; and I hope you are to well acquainted with me, to harbour the least suspition of my sincerity.

"Believe me Eliza; my attachment to you is not the impulse of a moment but, after a long acquaintance with you, and having been a great deal in your company, I find my heart inspired by an inexpressible something in your manners, and appearance; which forbids all Idea of happing without permifsion from that breast where my heart is lodged.

"Can I place such confidence in you, can I reveal the secrets of my heart to you: yes. I believe you are worthy my entire confidence. I Know, that when you reflect on this, your virtrous bosom cannot beat with indifference the passion you have excited in my breat, Seriously have I reflect on the subject, and after mature deliberation; I have resolved to make known my feelings towars you—and I this day, from the serious (depths) of my hear, <u>declare</u> to you …that my heart is yours, and you only can I love.

"Eliza, will this be congenial to your feelings, Oh how happy would I be to receive an affirmative answer, or will you refuse a return of affection, then, Oh then, how miserable will be my fate.

"I hope you will serisouls reflect on this; you know my character, perhaps better than I know myself, and remember when you see me, you see everything I am worth. If there is no merit in me or if it is your consideration to get a person whose circumstances in this world are affluent: Then, I have nothing to ask.

George and Eliza Plattenburg
Unknown Date

George Plattenburg
Unknown Date

"If love is your object, and you wish a person who sincerely loves you, and who will use every means to make you happy; then you know what I would ask, for nothing would induce me to alter my manner of life but something more dear to me, than silver or gold.

"I hope you will answer this as soon as pofsible, not in writing unlefs you choose.

"Eliza, notwithstanding you should reject this, you shall always have the good wishes of one who loves no other than…

"Eliza --------- Geo. Plattenburgh, Jur.

Reading George's letters, Eliza appeared reluctant to marry. On June 25, 1825, George wrote Eliza as follows:

"You are probably this day enjoying more agreeable company than mine, surrounded with pleasurable objects to arrest your attention, and occupy your thoughts; and perhaps have never thought of him, who loves you; since your departure.

"But, O!, how very different is my situation; here I am left without a comforter; no objects pofsess any charms for me without your presence: my…a deprefsed, deep melancholy sets brooding over my mind; my thoughts are wholly occupied by the object of my affection and, I set myself down, in a ruminating attitude, to reflect on past, and probable future events.

"….., our last conversation has caused much disquietude in my mind; can it be pofsible that my affections are excited to such a d….some encouragement fro….thing in your manner, looks, or conversation, which indicates a reciprocity of feeling. Can it be pofsible that I am so unfortunate; you say you have no such feeling for me; if so, my case is wretches in the extreme. All my pleasing anticipations of future happenifs in this word will be blasted forever, and those lovely smiles, which have so often delighted my heart, will add to my distrefs; reflect, …., on my situation. O! tell me not again that you don't feel any affection for me. How can I support myself in such a disappointment with you the only girl I ever loved in sincerity tell me you barely have a respect for me; is this all; Oh!....could you know the anguish of mine when you tell me this.

"I know your virtious and innocent heart must relent, and feel something more for me than for a person who only respects you;

"I yet hope this is not the case. O! tell me, …, that you feel interested in my happiness: or can you, without any emotions of heart, listen to the voice of that love, which you inspired; can you look indifferently on one, who would sacrifice his own happinefs, for yours: tell me no, for my happinefs depends on the hope, of yet receiving a return of the affection from you, without which it shall remain your…….sincere, unhappy, unfortunate, and rejected lover, Geo Plattenburgh, Jur."

Never-the-less, on October 23, 1826, in Jefferson County, Ohio, Eliza Robinson Hopkins consented and tied the knot with George. On July 25, 1776, fifty years later, Eliza wrote, "This day, though it seems long ago, was a day of feasting and merry making—a day to be remembered, pleasantly enjoyed by an unbroken family. All the loved ones were there and so many dear friends who have since passed away."

Eliza saved her wedding dress. My grandmother Mary Cross wore it as a young woman, perhaps when she married O.H. Cross.

In just a few weeks Eliza was pregnant. On June 10, 1827, she gave birth to Harriet Plattenburg—our ancestor, and the first of eight children. The other children were Dorcus, Caroline, Marcus, Mary, Adeline, Ella, and George S. Plattenburg. (Marcus was the ancestor of the George Plattenburg, the retired minister who sent me copies of George's correspondence to Eliza written in the 1830's).

Harriet's son, Wesley Platt Ferguson, reported that George moved to Fairview, Ohio in 1829.

In the early 1830's George worked on river boats on the Ohio River. The Cumberland Road was the first mass route to the West. This highway, begun in 1811, ran from mountainous Cumberland, Maryland, to Columbus in the Northwest Territory and, by the 1830's, westward to Vandalia, Illinois. It extended almost 600 miles—an 80-foot wide clearing with a 20-foot strip of macadamized paving running down the center. Here lumbered the Western mail coaches; here moved droves of cattle coming from east to market. Often, it was a crowded as the main street of a small town.

The Cumberland Road connected with the Ohio River at Wheeling. Here one could embark on a great river barge or on one of the slender, elegant keel-boats built for shallow waters, or on a Kentucky flat, little more than a raft with board sides. Most river men were a separate breed, rough-talking and hard-drinking. George, Jr. appears to have been a different kind of man.

In a letter to Eliza written at Marietta June 7, 1831, George gives us a glimpse of his life on the river boats:

"My Dear Eliza,

"I received intelligence two or three days ago there there was a letter in the office here for me which I was very indeed to have the happiness of reading It arrived here last night about nine and embraced the .... intelligence from your own hand of the health of yourself, and papa, but I am really sorry almost to tears that you should think I treated you with inattention or neglect in not writing to you sooner, but be assured Eliza, that

ding dress of her great-great-mothers; — Platenburgh —

Eliza Hopkins' wedding dress, as worn by her great-great granddaughter Mary Watt Cross

although compelled by business to forgo the pleasure of your society for a season it is my constant Desire to preserve that sweet intercourse of sentiment and feeling un-embittered by the most Distant thought calculated to mar or interrupt that mutual union of affections on which our our happiness so vitally Depends. The reason I did not write sooner was that I wanted to receive an answer when I did write, and to inform you where to Direct to. I had to stop at two or three offices and order your letter sent on, we having passed by before it arrived. I have been very well since I wrote to you; I felt a little unwell last evening but your letter cured me.

"We have been in company with Roses(?) for the last four or five Days, it leaves here for home on Thursday, I shall send by Papi (?) Haines 2 pair venison, hams, and a jug of molasses which be left at Mrs. Roses, but probably you will be in Mount Pleasant before the boat arrives however if you at home you can get them, if not, I can get them when I come.

"You must do as you think proper about going to Mount Pleasant, but I am very sorry indeed to giving your father and mother so much trouble; but it cannot be avoided—perhaps you could get a trusty girl.

"I suppose we shall be on the river all summer, but I shall be at home (the Lord willing) in the course of 16 or 18 Days—if I thought you would need any money before I came, I would send some but if you need anything, you…where I told you to get it.

"We had a fine chase after a Deer in the River since I wrote you and we lived a few Days on fresh venison.

"I made myself a very pretty pair of mochasins the other Day.

"I believe I have nothing more but I remain your affectionate and tender Husband, Geo. Plattenburgh, Jun.

"If you go to Mt. Pleasant, I wish you would send word to Wheeling before I get there and it may be I shall hear it and come from there."

On August 7, 1831, George, Jr. wrote Eliza as follows:

"Peetart Falls, Aug. 7 1831….My Dear Eliza,

"I am all alone tonight. There is quarterly meeting here yesterday and to Day and Jim is at meeting, and I am here thinking of you and Harriet. I am well, and would have written earlier, but the mail goes but once a week which on Monday, and you will not be likely to get this until tomarrow week. I left Wheeling at 10 and on Thursday at twelve landed at the boat . George Rine (sp?) lives right opposite here and they will harrdley let me eat a meal in the boat. Rosan Corym (sp.?) lives with them and teaches school on this side in Ohio. She is first class here, doing well.

"Eliza, I sold Landis enough of that meat to get you a pair of shoes tif you want them, and father says he will sell the balance for you. Peggy got another piece of bacon. She has now had three pieces amount to $3.29cts. there is now but two hams left for you.

"I have nothing more very particular to write about. For you will have to anticipate my thoughts and feelings, when absent from the manifestations of my very great affection for yourself and my Dear little Harriet when present.

"Give my respects to those to whom you think I bear respects, and my love to the family.

"Wright to me at Point Pleasant, mouth of Kenhawa. Yours Affectionately,

"C.B. Plattenburgh .....George Plattenburgh"

I don't know how long George Plattenburgh, Jr. worked on the river boats. By 1840, steam boats and railroads began to change the dynamic of the river boat trade. I suspect he did not ride the river boats for very long. My guess is he probably earned his living as a tailor. He learned the trade as a young man in Wellsburgh. And no more than a month before he died, he completed a suit of clothes for David West of Fairview, an 85 year old neighbor of his, a suit made and complete in every detail. He was buried in a suit made by his own hands.

There is some evidence that the marriage was not always blissful. In an undated note, George wrote Eliza:

"I know addrefs you, perhaps for the last time, for I almost despair of ever spending another moment in your company. Permit me to tell you that your conduct towards me lately is not such as I should expect from a girl who ever intended to make me happy. If this is the case and your mind is st against me my company must become tiresome to you. I have therefore thought proper to discontinue my visits.

"I have thought we never should be separate and on this was all my hope of happinefs in this world founded. My hopes of pappinefs are almost extinct and I view my future life with horror...will you ruin me...? I am wrong I hope you will forgive me...but has not good friends been talking to you on the subject, some perhaps who have not the least acquaintance with me whatever. Eliza, listen to your parents."

I also don't know how long George continued to use the name Plattenburgh, but at some point he dropped the final "h" and began to spell his name "Plattenburg."

It should also be noted that before the Civil War Mt. Pleasant was a center of Quaker activity, and many of its citizens were very active in the underground railroad. George Plattenburg was a Methodist, active in his church and politics. He was a Republican and opposed to slavery.

As reported by Wesley Platt Ferguson (George Plattenburg's grandson), Wesley paid George a visit in 1848 or '49, after an absence of more than eighteen

Wesley Plattenburg's Home
Selma, Alabama, 2001

Bench made by George S. and/or Marcus Plattenburg

years. Although most of the Plattenburg family had moved to West Virginia or the Ohio valley, Wesley had traveled South and settled in Selma, Alabama.

According to John Hardy, author of "Selma: Her Institutions and Her Men (1879)," Wesley located in Selma in 1829. He was born in Anne Arundal County, Maryland on April 18, 1803. His parents moved to Maryland, then Brooke County, Virginia. Upon arrival in Selma, he engaged in business as a merchant tailor. He was for many, many years before the Civil War an active member of the City Council. The 1860 U.S. census reflects indicates that at that time Wesley was 50; his wife Ann, 36; and that he had six children, Ellen (16), Mary (14), William (12), Sallie (10), Fred (9), and Kate(1). In the 1870's Wesley moved to Giles County, Tennessee, where he died.

While visiting his brother in Fairview, Ohio, Wesley Plattenburg met George's daughter Harriet and he liked her. He invited her to visit Selma. Against her parent's advice, she made the trip.

There Harriet met James Ferguson. James was living with his cousin Hugh, whose home was located a few blocks away from Wesley's. A relationship developed.

Harriet married James in Fairview, Ohio on July 22, 185l. She bore him two children, Wesley Platt Ferguson, born June 30, 1851, and Augusta Melina Ferguson, born June 12, 1854. According to my grandmother, Augusta (her mother) was born in the Hugh Ferguson home. Wesley Ferguson claims she was born in the Plattenburg home.

Harriet died June 30, 1855. Years later her son Wesley Ferguson reported that in 1855, while in route with her two children from Mobile, Alabama (where she was living with James), Harriet contracted Cholera—probably after leaving Louisville by boat. After arriving at Cincinnati she was carried to the home of her cousin Alfred Plattenburg, where she passed away. (I believe Alfred was a cabinet and furniture maker who lived in Brooke County, W. Virginia). Harriet was taken to Fairview where she was buried in the Methodist Cemetery on July 3, 1855.

After her death, George and Eliza raised their grandchildren where they remained until 1872.

James did not fight for the South during the Civil War, but made his way to Texas when the war was over.

By the 1870's James Ferguson and W.T. Watt (my great-grandfather) were working in Port Sullivan, Texas. Shortly thereafter, both moved to Hearne, Texas.

In September, 1872 Augusta and Wesley Ferguson left their grandparents home in Fairview for Hearne, Texas, stopping in Tennessee to visit Uncle Wesley

Mr. James Ferguson,

At Home

PORT SULLIVAN, TEXAS,

Wednesday Evening, May 6th. 1874

at 8 o'clock.

MISS AUGUSTA M. FERGUSON, familiarly known as "Tickie," formerly of Fairview, this county, was married on the 6th instant at Port Sullivan, Texas, to Mr. W. C. Watt, of that city. We acknowledge the compliment of an invitation and extend our heartiest good wishes. Miss Ferguson was reared under the grand-parental roof of Mr. George Plattenburg and returned with her father to the South on his last visit to this county, having finished her education at Springfield, this State.

and Aunt Ann Plattenburg and according to Wesley Ferguson they gave them a "most kind and gracious reception and shed many tears when they left."

Thereafter, Augusta and Wesley arrived in Hearne. When Augusta got off the train, James Ferguson and W.T. Watt were at the station. Wesley Ferguson reported, "On arrival in Hearne your father first saw your Mother & according to John N. Sailors (1832-1899) said 'This is a girl I am going to marry if she will have me' & she would for they were married in May, 1874."

Wesley also explained how Augusta got her nickname 'Tickie.' "Because of my inability to say 'Sister,' the nearest attempt being 'Tickie,' she was called 'Tickie' by everyone and that name was universally known & there were several babies in Fairview so called after her. Her education was obtained at the little old school house on the hill & at the Female Seminary, Springfield, Ohio."

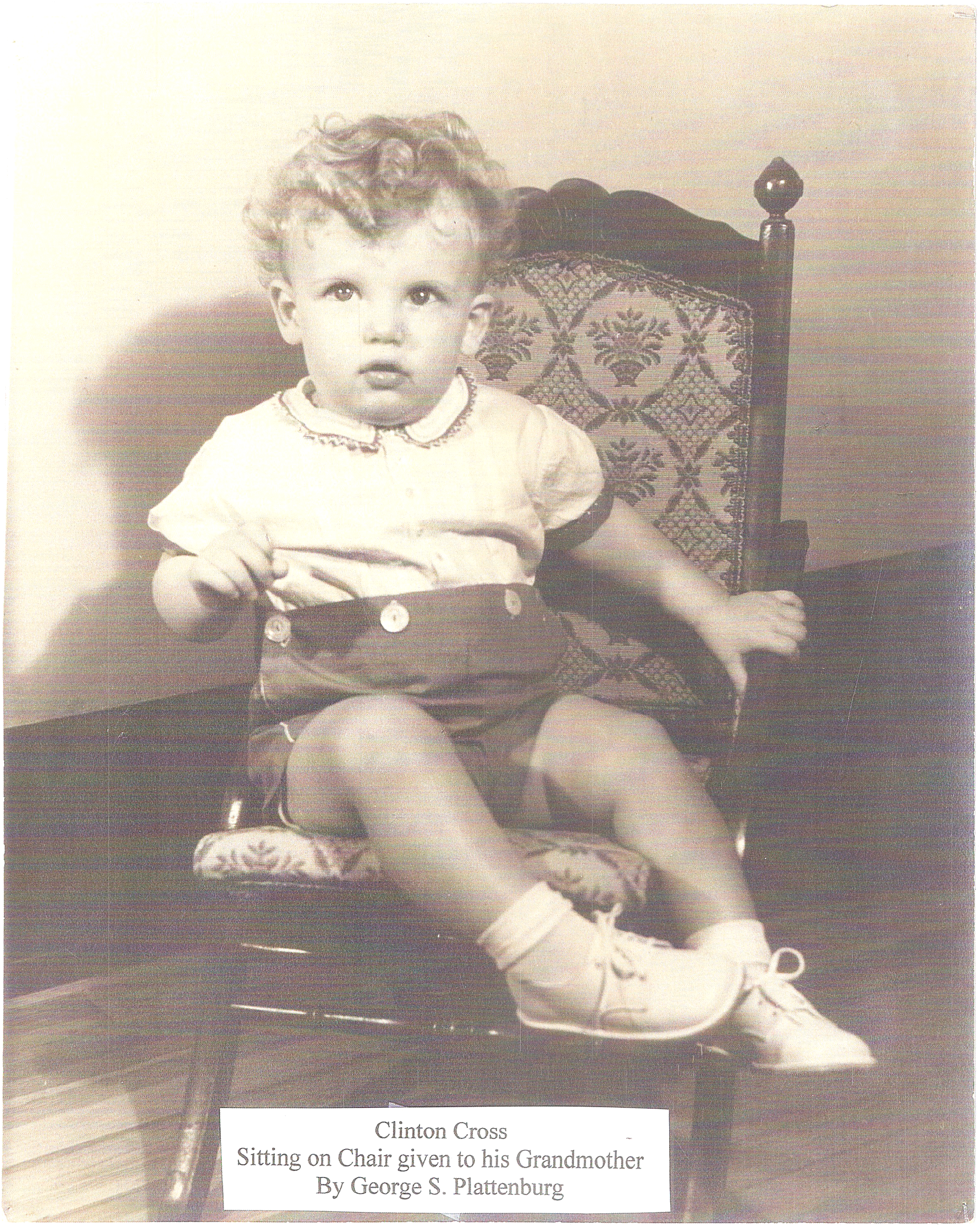
George and Eliza wrote their grandchildren often. The letters are usually long and difficult to read. They provide, however, an interesting glimpse into the daily life and culture of the time.

On March 19, 1878, Eliza wrote "Tickie," reporting that she had found it necessary to go to Springfield, Ohio to assist in the care of William Plattenburg, whose wife Lyda was very ill. As a result of financial distress, William had rented the back part of his house to a Mr. Graham. William had to care for his wife, as well as his son. He fixed his own ham and cheese sandwiches for lunch which he ate at work, etc.

After their marriage, W.T. Watt and Augusta had three children, Charles, Mary, and Anne Hale Watt. In August, 1881, Mary wrote her "grandpa" (George, Jr.) the following letter:

"Dear GrandPa,

"I have no card & Aunt Mary is busy & can't find time to write me one to you. So MaMa can do it. I have been playing all day. All morning at Grandma's playing festival. GrandPa I have a sore heel, & the cat scratched my leg & it hurts too, and my arm itches like poison. One day I blacked my face & played "Black Man" and all the folks laughed 'cause I look like a "nigar." I can get some peaches here, and some plumbs, and lots of sweet apples, and grapes are beginning to ripen. Corn…at Aunt Mary's and good…I am getting fat, and Annie is too. When Platt Barnes was here we all had fun playing, and am a pretty good girl. GrandPa give us Butternuts. I went to the reunion & ever so many folks were there. I got ice cream, & peanuts, & there were watermelons for sale there too. I fell down when I was out there & bruised my leg. Grace is ever so much larger than I am, and I am older & want to see you GrandPa and Papa & Uncle P. I grinned when MaMa read your card to me, but didn't have many things to say. Uncle Geo



Clinton Cross
Sitting on Chair given to his Grandmother
By George S. Plattenburg

& Aunt Maggie give me the prettiest folding chair when he left Springfield. I placed with Lottie all the time when I was well. MaMa got me a shash & lace coller with the money you give me & Charlie stockings and collers. Charlie don't play with us much. Well good by for this time.

"Your loving granddaughter, Mary F. Watt"

Mary Watt's reference to "Uncle Geo and Aunt Maggie" is to George S. Plattenburg and his wife Margaret. George S. and Marcus were at one time in the furniture business in Springfield, Ohio and I believe they made the folding chair.

On July 24, 1884, George Plattenburg, Jr. died. The paper reported on his life at length. I quote portions of the obituary:

"Up to the present month he possessed the use of his faculties in a remarkable degree and apparently much physical strength. On the third of July he left for Wellsburgh, W.V., to spend a few days once more among the scenes of his early manhood accompanied by his little granddaughter "Ticca" Rodecker (Mary Plattenburg—Cross). He started away cheerfully and in good spirits and in good spirits. Just the week before he left, he had completed a suit of clothes for David West, of Fairview, an 85 year old neighbor of his made complete and finished in every detail, and it may be worth remarking here that the suit he was buried in was made by his own hands.

"He spent the Fourth of July and the time until the following Saturday in Wellsburg, renewing old associations and revisiting ancient scenes. Saturday he went to Moundsville and spent Sunday on the campground. That day he was taken with a cholera morbus that induced him to hasten home. He and his granddaughter came to Flushing on the 16th, stopping there intending to stay with Mrs. Holloway his niece on the homeward way. But he was destined never to see his home. His trouble grew worse and so prostrated him that he saw his days were numbered and so said to his friends about him. His children were summoned and came at once.

"With those he loved around him, his life slipped away into eternity just as a placid river glides into the silvery shadows of the evening; and there was no agony or inconsolable grief in that chamber, for this was the ending of a good man, crowned with the fullness of years, one who had fought a good fight and conquered and to whom death was victory.

"Conscious until the very minute when the shadowy hand touched his pulse and stilled it, he prayed with them and for them, his children, and bade them the last good-byes. His voice reached all in the chamber on the evening before he died as he thankfully, fervently said, 'The Lord witnesses our faithfulness to one another,' and then as the midnight came on he prayed that after the conflicts of life were ended for all, they might meet together again over there, repeating at the close in an articulate voice the Lord's Prayer. Thus he lingered; at nine the next morning he signed for his

George Plattenburg
Unknown Date
but
as remembered by his great-great granddaughter Mary Watt Cross

spectacles and they were adjusted that he might see them at once again. He recognized each one, though he could not speak. They turned his head to his life-long partner, the wife of his youth and age, who sat beside him, and with his gaze bent full upon her, the mists of death filled his eyes and he was no more."

On August 24, 1884, Augusta Ferguson Watt wrote Eliza Plattenburg. She regreted not being able to go to the "reunion," and wrote of many other things.

Augusta then received news of George's death, and she wrote Eliza again. She wondered whether or not Eliza would wear black; said she wouldn't for anyone except "Mr. Watt." She reported that Platt (Wesley Platt Ferguson) didn't like the part of the obituary that said James Ferguson visited George during the War, as he would not have done so. According to Platt, he shouldn't have injected politics into the piece; but then again George was a loyal Republican. Augusta thought that on the whole the obituary was well written.

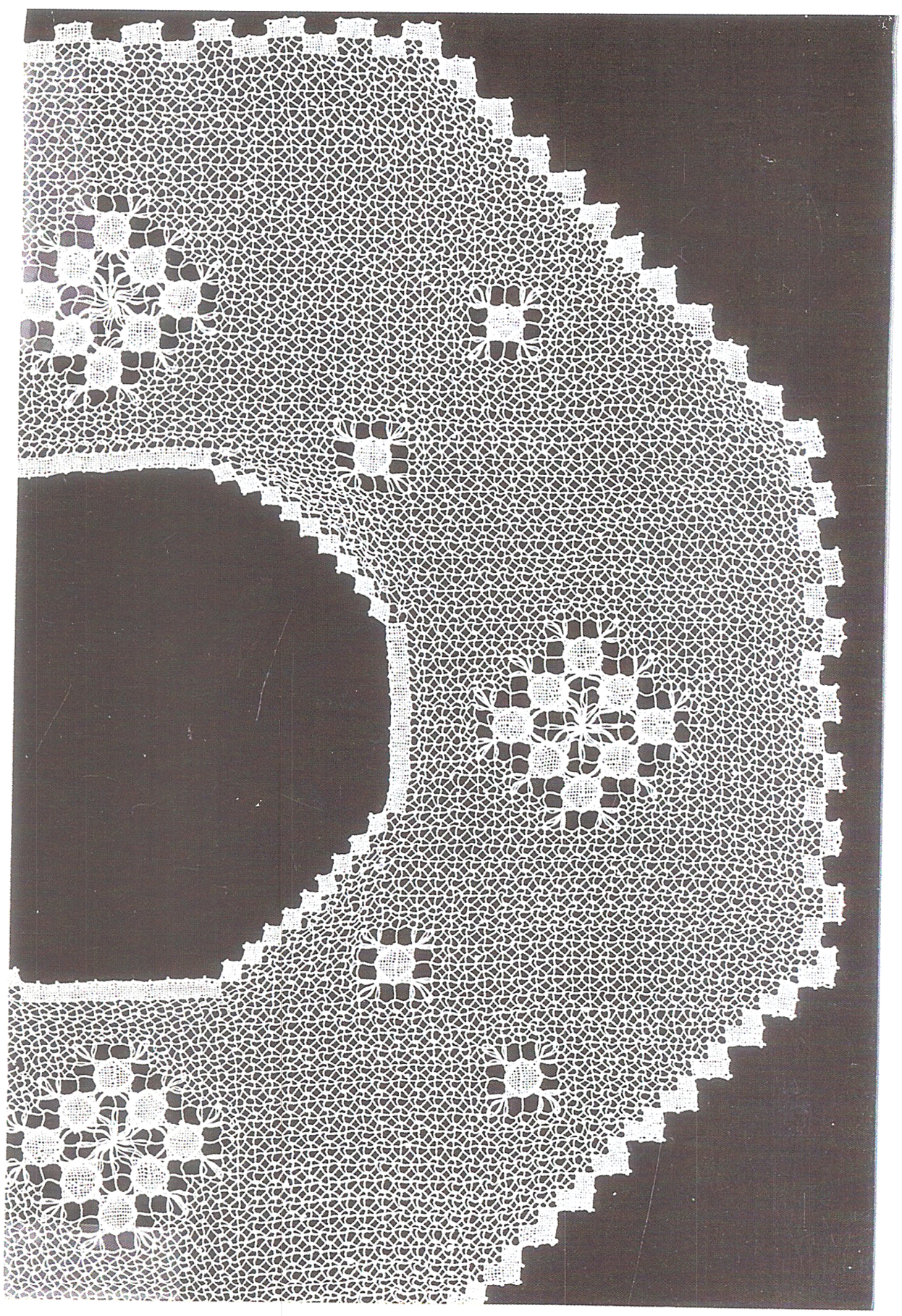
Eliza Plattenburg died July 4, 1890.

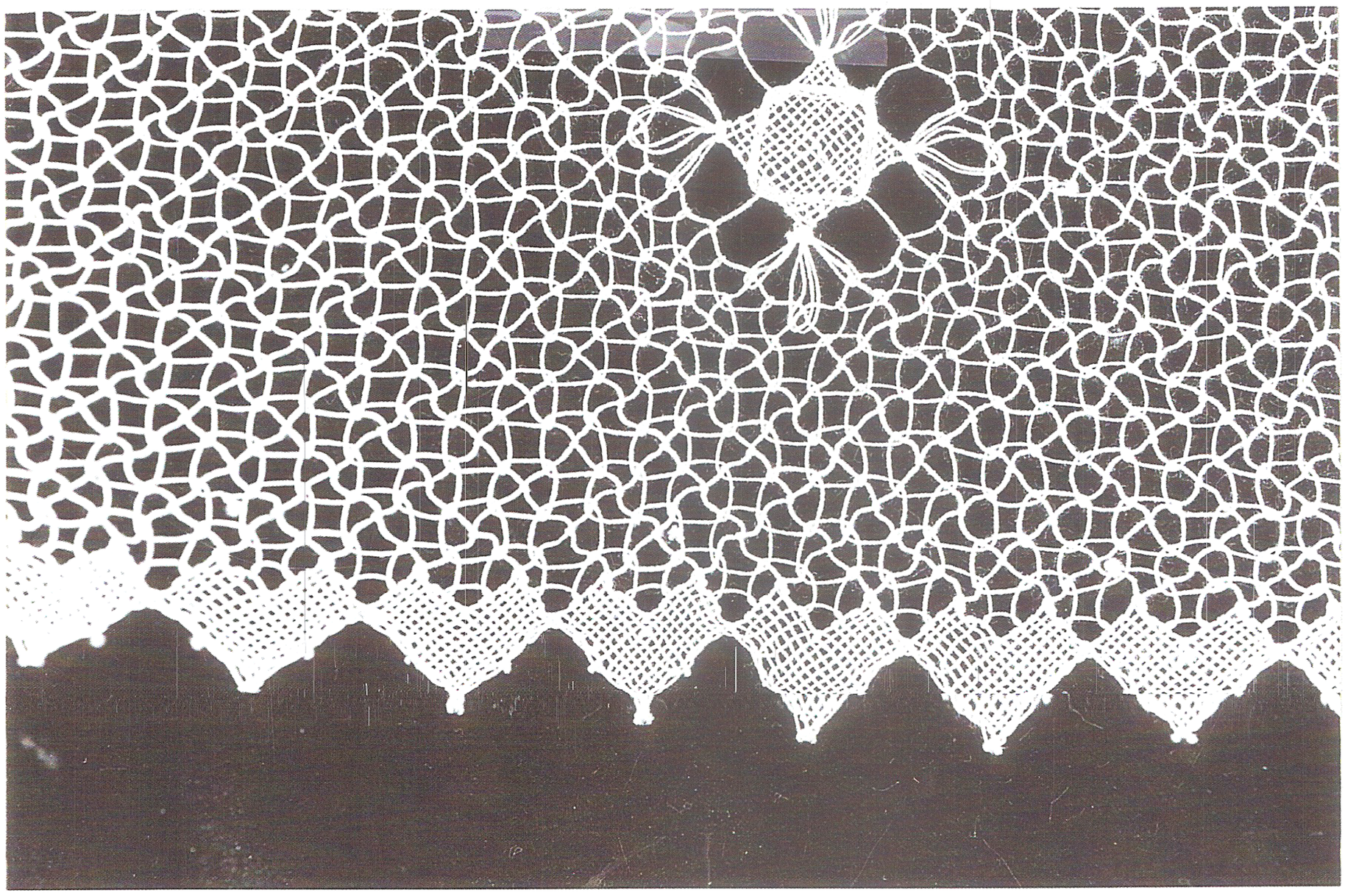
Harriet, George and Eliza are all buried in the Methodist Cemetery in Fairview, Ohio.

Conclusion

I conclude this short history with George and Eliza Plattenburg's death. Of course, much more could be said. Much is known, but much more is not known. I hold in my hands an undated note from Eliza to Augusta. It says:

"Read this to your Pa. If you think you had best not send it just burn it. Be sure to burn this half sheet to you. Also the ones I sent to you yesterday."





Needlework by Eliza Robinson Hopkins Plattenburg