

Editor's Note: The following article is taken from the correspondence of Elizabeth Dearwater Brown to Mrs. Adella Lombardi of Loyalton. Mrs. Brown was born in Sierraville (she now lives in San Francisco) and recalls many interesting stories about her own family and incidents and people in Sierraville and Randolph. The article appears verbatim as written by Mrs. Brown.

#### DEARWATER FAMILY HISTORY AND YOUTHFUL INCIDENTS

##### Father's Parents:

John Durwachter-Elizabeth Harin Durwachter  
Married July 7, 1855 Children all born in Goodyear's Bar, Sierra County. Our father was Joseph Dearwater (changed from Durwachter), born March 4, 1862, died in Sierraville on March 14, 1934 of bronchial pneumonia which began with the flu.

##### Mother's Parents:

Charles Perry-Margaret Murphy Perry  
Married May 30, 1854 at Old Fort Hall (Now Pocatello, Idaho). They came to Sierra Valley August 1856 under the guidance of James Beckwourth who was a friend of Grandpa in the Rocky Mountains. Beckwourth is named after this man.  
Mama (Sophronia Elizabeth Perry Dearwater) born in Sierraville, Dec. 2, 1869, the 9th of 10 children. The Perry home still is occupied and is now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Gifford Webber. Perry Creek flows alongside of this lovely old house. Grandpa owned several hundred acres in Sierra Valley, and our grandparents were successful farmers, cattle raisers, and dairymen. They were always considered among the well-to-do residents of Sierra Valley. Their ranches helped to supply the mines then operating in Sierra City and Downieville. About 1895 they sold their interests in Sierra Valley and moved to Oak Park (now a suburb of Sacramento). But both returned to die in the Valley they loved so dearly; Grandma June 25, 1897 (she was 68 years old) and Grandpa on Nov. 7, 1905 (he was 81 years old). Both are buried in the Sierraville cemetery.

Papa (Joseph Dearwater) was orphaned at the age of 8 or 9 and was brought to the Protestant Orphanage in San Francisco, located at that time on Haight Street. It is now known as Edgewood and located on Vicente Street, S.F. He left the orphanage in 1875 or 1876 and went to live near Danville, Contra Costa Co. with a Captain Fitzgerald. He was brought to Sierraville by the murder of his older brother, John Dearwater, in Dec. 1884. This murder was committed on the ranch now owned by Kenneth Torri, and was at that time known as the Rowland Ranch. My uncle was shot to death by two gamblers who had come to rob him. These two murderers were captured, tried, found guilty and sentenced to prison, where both died years ago. Our parents were married on May 30, 1888. They were the parents of three children; two girls and a boy: Elizabeth, Barbara (Eatheland) and Everett, all born in Sierraville, and the latter two born in the Dearwater home in which we lived for 77 years. It was a happy home, and filled with much love and kindness.

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Mama was always called Nonie by everyone except her mother who called her Tuck, always. It was an endearing name which our grandmother brought with her from her native Ireland. Early in her life Mama learned the duties that are a part of living: she was taught to cook, sew, wash and iron, do housework, and help with the dairy chores. I have heard her tell that at age 3 she was given a small pail and taught to feed calves, and how they bunted her around pretty rough, until she would drop the pail and climb up on a fence where they could not reach her. A few years older (probably 6 or 7) she was given a few cows to milk twice daily. Later the string was increased to ten and there were 4 milkers. So it was a good sized dairy by any standard, and all to be milked by hand. Grandma milked some but it was her part to skim the milk all by hand and get the milk pans ready for the fresh milk. Those were the days when work was work, children (and lots of them were needed) and strong backs were a MUST. I have been told many times that Mama was a real beauty--one of the most beautiful ever raised in Sierraville, and we know that she was beautiful until God took her home on July 30, 1967, nearly 98 years of age. She had a happy nature and nothing could keep her down for long; she always found hidden depths within herself that carried her over the roughest roads, and life, for no one is ever a bed of roses. There are always thorns. Sierra Valley, today, can thank her and the late Grace Wilson for the electric power people now enjoy. These two devoted women, with Alden Johnson to do the letter writing, were the ones who got the Government to put REA into the Valley. That will always be a monument to them. Mama is also responsible for the telephone service which Sierraville has enjoyed for many years. At one time there were only 10 phones in the community. Mama went to the Railroad Commission and stated the need for phone service, and before too long the company had put in more phones so now everyone has this convenience. I remember that when anyone was sick she was the first to go to their help, cooking, washing, sitting up long nights with the sick person. Like other young persons she had a lot of fun, and I guess beaux. Her father was not too happy over her choice of a husband, but time proved that she was so right in marrying our good and wonderful Dad. There was none better. The Dearwaters were and are loyal friends, good Americans, and a devoted family.

I left the Valley when I was 15 to attend Sacramento High School so I was not home while brother Everett grew up. I was away 6 years and when I came back to teach in 1911 Everett was 15 years of age and many of his boyhood pranks I never knew. But I know he played his share of tricks and loved to tease and I can see his blue eyes twinkle now with devilment.

Life when we were children centered around the Home, Parents and Family. There is where much of our time was spent in homely pastimes. A trip to Sattley to us was a great treat; and to get to Loyalton was almost out of reach. In the winter of 1895 Mama took Eatheland and me to spend the winter in Sacramento with her parents. We were the big shots for sure. We had seen and ridden on the railroad, and could we tell tales of all that went on in the outer world! Nellie Bly had nothing on us, I can assure you. I have heard of one Sierraville girl (or rather I should have said a

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Randolph girl for we did not wish to be Sierraville) who did not get to Sierraville until she was 15 years of age. The school house and yard were the dividing line between the two communities. When we played ball Sierraville was one side; Randolph the other, and we battled like big leaguers do now. The same separation went on in any game where there was choosing sides: kick-the-wicket was one. There was in those days a good wide sidewalk snug up against the fence; said sidewalk extended from the Globe Hotel to the house where Kelso Dellera now lives. It was built and maintained by the residents. I have never reconciled to the present mode of walking in the highway. Sierraville and its appearance has certainly changed, and I am sorry to say, not for the better. We had a fine Primary teacher named Walter Kynoch, and one year at the end of school he gave an entertainment by the children and enough money was raised to buy a beautiful bell which summoned the school children each school day. It was the most beautiful toned bell I have ever heard. Say to say, one vacation day, I think in the early 30's, the school house and the dear bell were burned to the ground. The school house that burned was the one in which Mama and her sisters and brothers went to school taught by Mr. E.L. Case, and where Eatheland, Everett and I went, and where I taught for 6 years. So the old school house has many memories for us. Soon there will be no one left who remembers it or the teachers who gave us such good training. I now remember an incident Mama told us many times. It seems that the County Supt. of Schools was visiting and he had a catchy mathematics problem that he liked to try out. At that time young men and women who were ready to try for a Teacher's Certificate went to the school with babies just starting, and Mr. Case taught them well. As a teacher he never had a superior. Well, Mama was a smart mathematician so Mr. Case asked if she could get into this problem business with the older ones. So the Supt. said Yes, but she's pretty young for such a big problem because it is hard and catchy. So the young men and women (they were grown up) and little Miss Nonie got up to the blackboard and the example was read to them. All went to work with a right good will, and the Supt. sauntered from one to the other. When he got to Mama she had the example finished, and he said, "That is right. Erase it, quick!" Mr. Case was so astonished he could hardly realize what had happened so soon. No one else but Mama ever solved the problem so the Supt. said to her after all had given up, "Nonie, you can now explain how your worked the problem." She was The Queen Bee for that day, at least.

When we were growing up we could always get up a candy pull, popcorn pop, games such as fox and geese, kick-the-wicket played by the light of a bon fire; also everyone had stilt and some of them were pretty far off the ground. In the winter we skated on ice on the small creeks, slid down the small hill near the place now owned by Curley Wright, or bobbed behind any sleigh going up or down the road. Oh yes, we sometimes got a milk pan to sit in and we slid off barns. But we had no fancy rigs to have our fun in. We had home made sleds, skis, (we called them snowshoes), and we put on old overalls tied them around our ankles, wrapped our heads and necks, donned hand knitted mittens and we were off and into the

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world of snow and fun. How we loved the crust on the snow when it would freeze nice and hard. We could run for miles on it. And could we eat. It seems to me, now, that we ate our weight every day.

Everyone then raised a fine vegetable garden which kept the family supplied with fresh vegetables both summer and winter. Papa put apples, potatoes, cabbage, and all root vegetables in pits. First he covered the vegetables with sacks or blankets, then went on a layer of hay or straw and then about 8 or 10 inches of dirt to keep them from freezing. The cabbages were pitched with their roots upward so we could take out one at a time. Our folks also made a huge barrel of sauer kraut, and believe me, there has never been any like it. Every family had a cow, chickens, raised two pigs and a calf for winter's meat. The hog killing took place when freezing weather came and the moon was in the proper phase (everyone believed in the moon in those old times). Papa and Mr. Joy, our dear neighbor, always had this hog killing the same day. We kids got the bladders which we blew up and put white beans into and we had balloons for quite a while. On this day Mama made the best stew from the yeart, liver and I do not know what else she put into it, but boy it was so good. Later the feet were cleaned and made into pickled pigs' feet which were eaten during the cold days which have always marked the Valley. Lard for a year was rendered and so were were ready for anything that came along. Wood was obtained in great quantities. Logs were hauled in on sleds and later sawed up, split and piled. I never thought that the day would come when one could not obtain a stick of wood nor get a Christmas tree. But here it is! And it makes me sad, for I do not believe that as people we are a bit better off, and in many ways are worse. Also ice was cut on the ponds and buried in saw dust so there was ice for summer use. A meat safe built of wood and screen wire kept the flies away. Not even an ice box in those days. We did our washing with a wash board and in zinc tubs, and had irons that had to be heated on the faithful wood stoves. We had kerosene lamps and had to wash chimneys and trim wicks every Saturday. I do not think we regarded it as hard work, and we certainly did enjoy any leisure and recreation that came our way. Three times a year there was a Grand Ball (dances): Christmas, Feb. 22nd, and 4th of July. Everyone had new clothes and danced from about sundown until sun up with a huge midnight supper (which was needed). It was also a time for visiting with friends that came from out-of-town for the dances. Speaking of dances: Mama learned to dance when she was three years old. Nearly every Saturday night a crowd of young and old would gather at the Perry home, the chairs, tables, etc., were pushed out of the way, and Grandpa would get out his fiddle and the fun began. It would last until midnight and everyone had had a most wonderful time. Mama said many times that she was sure that everyone who learned to dance in Sierraville when she was a youngster did so at the Perry house on those Saturday nights.

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