

Century Chest transcription 26

To any living descendants of William Alexander Platt and Julie Hankinson Platt

August 3, 1901
No. 1438 Wood Ave

To any descendants of mine who may be alive in 2001,

Greeting:

I don't feel like a great-great-grandfather; but I may be yet, for we have two big boys who may perpetuate the name.

I am the son of James McClure Pratt (1826-84), the son of Isaac Matts (1755-1858), the son of Ebenezer (1754-1839), the son of Zophar (1705-92), the son of Epenetus (1674-1744), the son of Epenetus (1640-93), the son of Richard (ob. 1684) who came from England & settled at New Haven, 1638. Orville H. Platt, now WS. Senator from Conn. is a descendant of this Richard, and so probably is Thomas C. Platt, Senator from New York.

My father was a Presbyterian minister, as was his father. Our branch, from Epenetus down, was settled at Huntington, LI, where are still the graves of many of them.

I was born Jan. 21, 1855 at Zanesville, Ohio; was taught at house by my mother till 9 yrs old, & when I started in school was 2 yrs ahead of the majority of my age. In 1867 we moved to Edgeworth, 13.7 miles below Pittsburg on the river; and in 1869 to Bath, Stanbeer Co. N.Y., where my grandfather had once been pastor of the same church. There I finished my schooling preparatory to College; but my eyes having given out, I had to stop studying for a year, after which I took my Freshman year studies in the State Model School at Trenton, N.J. afterward entering Williams College as a Sophomore [sic]. Was graduated in 1876, P.B.K. and the 5th in my class. Was a member of [Delta Thau] College fraternity. Won some walking races- the best being the intercollegiate 1-mile at Saratoga in 1875, time 7 min. 50 sec. Was then 6 ft. high & weighed (stripped) 128 lbs. and am of the same size & weight now, not having varied 10 lbs. since.

After graduation I was at home- in Bath- a year, my mother being sick (Typhoid fever) much of the time, and I acting a great part of the time as nurse. And right here I may say that my mother was a very remarkable woman. Smile if you will - every man's mother is remarkable; but she was the level-headed woman I ever saw. She was fair - had good judgment-would have made a good jurywoman- the only woman I have ever know who would. My father was a big man, 6 ft. 4, about 275 lbs, and fine-looking. Mother was 5ft 2 1/4, and rather plain of features. He was impulsive, imaginative, sensitive, fond of books, a genuine poet, not good a business affairs, hasty of temper naturally, like his father before him. She was practical, business like steady, yet withal appreciative of all good things, fond of books, deeply religious (not superficially - never made a speech in

writing [?] in her life, I believe) quick in intellectual perception, with a good sense of humor (as had my father also), fond of young people, interested in society of the day, a reader of newspapers as well as books, a good “mixer” with all sorts of people (which father was not, by nature).

She was the daughter of Hiram Upson- a Connecticut family, and he, my “grandpa”, is on of my earliest & fondest recollections. Mother was like him.

While at school at Trenton I met your mother-supply as many “grands” as is necessary- and that is the only reason I am glad I went to that school instead of taking my Freshman year in College. We did not fall in love at first sight, but she was very attractive, and I became acquainted well enough to get her permission to write to her. I saw her in College vacations at times- they lived in Hoboken there, as her mother does still; and we met at Mt. Morris, Wy., at the McNairs, mutual friends- in 1877; but really my courtship was mostly done by letter, which was probably lucky for me, as I could always write better than I could talk.

We became engaged in 1878-July 15- and were married Dec 24, 1879. My father performed the ceremony, and we went to Bath for the week after. We have lived: in Sewickley, Allegheny Co. Pa. Where I was Principal of the Academy 1871-80- the same academy I attended when a boy; of Tidioute Public School one year; of Babylon, L.I., Public School 1 yr; and there, through my friend Ed. Field, son of Cyrus W. – who was in my class & society at college- I got a start on The Mail and Express, a New York evening paper owned by Mr. Fields then, and I stayed with it ten years- 1882-92. Major Jonas M. Bundy was the editor, and was very kind to me, and I grew to love him. I started at \$20 a week, and when I left was getting \$60, besides doing other work on The Press, Harpers Weekly, and other publications.

In 1892 I had the Grip badly, and my physician advised me to seek a better climate. I heard through a friend of the Colorado Springs Gazette, and after getting into communication with General Palmer, I came here as editor on a Salary. After a year - and after the panic of 1893- Gen. Palmer was moved to discontinue the Gazette, which had lost money. I plead with him not to do it, and he proposed to lease it to me- an offer gladly accepted. I had it on lease from Oct. 31, '93 to Jan 1, '97, and made a good living out of it and \$3000 besides. Gen. Palmer wanted to sell the paper in the fall of 1896. I had first option but could not raise the money in the scarce of the first Bryon campaign. It was sold to others, and I was out. I rested awhile – went to California on a visit with my wife, and wrote some lectures on US. Political History- There I acted as Secretary of the Flower Carnival ('97), ad Chairman of the Republican County Central Committee, and then undertook to revive the defunct Chamber of Commerce & became its Secretary.

In March 1898, through Senator Wolcott’s influence, and as a reward fro political services, I was appointed Receiver of the German and the Commercial National Banks of Denver, which had failed in the panic of '93.

At the close of the Receivership, I came back to Colorado Springs and became editor of the Mail, investing \$1000 in it, and using my influence to place bonds to buy a plant.

Our first son was born Aug 24, 1881, at Bath, and we named him William Wallis, after an uncle of my wife. Our second son was born Feb 13, 1883, in Elizabeth, New Jersey, and we named him James McClure, after my father. They have grown up now- Wallis is 6 ft. 3 and Jamie 6 ft 2. They have always been good boys. We taught them to obey when they were babies, and they have done it ever since. They are quick at their books, both being about 2 yrs ahead of ordinary boy at their age in school. Wallis is now a Yale Senior, and Jamie is working in the Suregon General's Office in Denver, to lay up some money of his own. He expects to go the State School of Mines at Golden.

I haven't said much of my wife as yet. She was Julia Hankinson, descended through Dunhams and Fullers from a Mayflower immigrant. On the other side, thorough Remsens and Bertines, she has Dutch & French blood. She looks like her father- dark completion, dark brown eyes and hair. She is 5 ft 6, and weighs about 115 to 120 lbs. People say we look alike, but we don't see it. Julia is a woman of great executive ability and tact in handling people. She has a low, sweet voice and a very frank, engaging manner and sweet expression. She has a pretty good disposition- perhaps as good as my own. We have our tiffs, but we always make up. I am proud of her as well as fond, and I guess the feeling is mutual- wives will have changed a good deal in the next century if they are not proud of their husbands, with or with out cause.

In my life I have had good friends, both men and women. My oldest and best woman friends of my own age or near are Nora Hull, of Bath, Jean Patterson of Sewickley, Jeannette McCready of Sewickley; and of older women Mrs. Robert Patterson. Her son, Tom, is my nearest friend. He is a lawyer in Pittsburg. Many more friends I have and some pretty close to me in mind and spirit. I have the faculty, they tell me of going on just where I left off with an old friend – no matter what year or distance separate us meanwhile.

The boys are like both of us. Wallis has my shape & size of head- 7 3/4 hat, about 24 inches circumference, & Jamie has the Platt profile. Wallis's Features are more like his mother's & so is his disposition in some respect. Jamie is more like me in being optimistic. Both are more like their mother is being careful of money. Both are fond of their mother, of course; but what is not always of course, both are fond of me, & like to be with me. Wallis especially has tagged around after me ever since he could walk. It is the keenest and purest delight of my life that my boys are so fond of me.

There is no good place to end a paper like this, so I will simply quit. If any of my descendants are alive in 2001, they will like to have these personal details; if there are none, this can easily be burned.

You have had some good people among your ancestors. Most of them have feared God and not man. Some of them had some knack for money, but most of them thought little of money compared with intellectual, social or spiritual enjoyment and attainment. I don't

know of one of them, on either my side or Julia's, who has not had the respect of his or her neighbors and acquaintances. I think our boys will keep up this tradition, and I hope their descendants will.

Lastly I will say a word about religious matters. My people were religious, I had a decided bent toward theology, and I joined my father's church in 1872. Julia joined the Episcopal Church in 1875. We have attended the Presbyterian Church until 1898 when we went to Denver we joined the Plymouth Congregational, and now attend Dr. Gregg's church here.

In theology proper, I am a Calvinist. In real working belief, about the only creed I have now is: "I believe in God the Father Almighty." When you come to think of it, and act on it, that is a large and comprehensive creed.

Fare ye well, far off heirs of my body! And goodbye!

William Alexander Platt

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It occurs to me that some personal characteristics may be mentioned that would be interesting to you, even if apparently trivial.

I am fond of all games of skill- used to play a game of croquet that would entitle me to play in the second class in the national tournaments, and pitch quoits especially well. Tennis I didn't learn young enough to excel in. Never shot or fish or rode horseback. Chess is my best game. I am now champion of the Denver club. Pillsbury can't give me more than pardon [?] and two moves. I like billiards, whist, bridge, & backgammon & play a better than average game- likewise of halves [?], and all sorts of games involving use of letters and words. I can't play checkers well, or pool. I am fond of good eating and drinking, and have a fairly good taste in clarets, which I seldom gratify, for financial reasons.

I am an omnivorous reader - own about 2200 books and read at something all the time. A newspaper man has to know a little of a great many things. My taste in reading is for fiction, philosophy, philology, political history, rhetoric, theology. I have some facility in writing, and can hammer out on the typewriter anywhere from 1000 to 3000 words a day of fairly readable stuff. I am sociable, and used to go with the girls a great deal from 14 yrs of age upward. I like politics, and believe I can really do some good and serve my country by using what influence I have in the Republican Party.