

**“Readers Refuge” article for January 20, 2010 meeting**

**This letter was written by Miriam Stoors Washburn and is included in *The Century Chest Letters of 1901*.**

*Colorado Springs from a Woman’s Standpoint with Greetings to the Year 2001*

1901

My dear Friends,

Sometimes I stand in great awe of you, but, at other times you are simply like any grandchildren to me – very interesting, no doubt, but very immature! One hundred years is only a breath, after all – but a good deep breath, to expand the lungs. I suppose your lungs will be immensely expanded in the year two thousand and one.

You will be inclined to wonder how we could have endured our present cramped existence, but we are very comfortable – Thank you!

Whatever changes may come, you can hardly enjoy Colorado Springs, and all of Colorado, more than we do. No matter what our condition in life may be, we all can “lift up our eyes” to the mountains above us, and we all can rejoice in the clear air, and the radiant sunshine.

I have a cousin, Frank Jenks of Brooklyn, N.Y., who says that I am such a devotee of “The Garden of the Gods” that I hurry my friends there, immediately upon their arrival by the morning train – “breakfast or no breakfast”! Surely the Mesa road, hung between earth and sky, is unique in the world, and when one reaches the sublime “Gateway”, breakfast is of no further importance!

Mr. Washburn and I came with our children from Massachusetts to Colorado Springs in 1893, when the children, three daughters, were little tots. The loyalty of these children to their new home is unsurpassed; they have had animated discussion about it, with one of their N.Y. cousins – little Richard Storrs Coe – and, one night, I heard one of them murmur in her sleep, “Colorado Springs!” – “Colorado Springs!” It is Paradise for children, - they can play out-of-doors from morning till night through almost the whole year. They dig up our back yard (at 1019 N. Nevada Ave.) and they dig it down again, playing that they are “miners,” – they play “camping out,” – and Indians – and hunting – and I often wish that some of the energy they expend could be stored up for future use. “Irrigation” days are fine for fishing parties! We, children of a larger growth, find it hard, too, to leave all the beauties of the outside world, and to set ourselves down to our mending-baskets.

Those dear, deserted “mending baskets” of our grandmother – I hope they never will rise up against us! – I hope that stockings and gloves and other articles of clothing will become so cheap, that you of the next century can afford to throw away the worn ones – some of us do this, even now. Colorado Springs is, I repeat, a Paradise for children, and it is almost that for their parents, and it is a difficult place for young people who have reached the age when they ought to be learning about the duties and responsibilities of life. Golf, polo, and other sports and social claims, are so exacting, that I fear there is a danger of our neglecting other things besides our mending baskets! – May the women from our time to yours and many centuries beyond never neglect the beautiful art of home making! – Among the pleasures of children, I ought not to forget the delights of “picnics”. This is, in some senses, “a picnic community”.

Dean Hart of St. John’s Cathedral, in Denver, once said, “But I’m not the dean of a parish, I’m the dean of a procession!” There is this sense of transient-ness, both in Denver and here, but each year seems to bring more stability, and by the year 2001 you will probably be as firm as Plymouth Rock! – But I hope you will still indulge in an occasional picnic. I met a teacher recently, (Miss Virginia Baughman) in one of our new trolley cars, (of which we are extremely proud), who was bound on her fourth picnic for that week, - she said a friend had advised her to advertise in the papers, “Picnics done by the day, week or month!” – and, by the way, we like our new trolleys so much that we are sad when the corners come, where we must get out. I imagine that you will have “Individual Trolleys” – you will pick up your electric cane, or umbrella from its stand in the hall, then you will step out from your front door, connect with the wire overhead, and go swiftly down town. At any rate, we leave flying-machines for you to invent, and seeing machines. Why should not electricity do as much for the eye as for the ear?

My father once said, as he looked at my youngest daughter, about three years old then, “How I wish we could keep her just as she is so as to show the people, fifty years hence, what our babies were like!” – You may improve upon a great many things, but I challenge you to improve upon our babies! – With rounded limbs and rosy cheeks, they are happy, gleeful children, full of individuality and expression. But I am obliged to confess that even some of our babies have been obliged to take “a rest cure”, - I hope your century will not get whirling around so fast that the babies will be thrown off entirely – I sometimes feel very anxious about you! – But, to return to the present babies, - they live almost altogether in the outdoors air and sunshine, as free as birds or little bossie-calves. Regularity is observed about their meals, but we have not reached the eastern standard in our care of them; baby-carriages in the east are sent out armed with clocks and thermometers, I hear, and the nurses, who attend them, are strictly forbidden to allow anyone to notice or speak to the baby inside! One admiring auntie, whom I know, could only look at her small niece through the tiny window in the back of the carriage.

There is one especial pleasure in Colorado for the parents of daughters, - I speak feelingly, - that is, Woman’s Suffrage. No matter how many daughters one may have – seven, eight or ten – each daughter counts just as much as a son. Perhaps we women, who are voters of such a recent date, have not fully appreciated our opportunities – perhaps we

have not fully lived up to our privileges, but I am sure the next generation will fight for this right, if it should ever be threatened. – My daughters are very proud of me on the days when I have to go “to vote.” – They keep me up to my duty about it.

I hope that the women of succeeding generations will unite in their efforts for wiser and better divorce laws; I heard a joker in a train recently, shout out from the conductor’s platform, “Fifteen minutes for divorces cases!” Of course this was only a joke, but “a straw may show which way the wind blows.”

My daughters are proud of me on election days and they are also proud of me on “Club” days. – They have their own little clubs, where they are learning already a great deal about concentration and management – about Parliamentary law, in fact. Their clubs are for Natural History – Current Topics – Art, music, and sometimes for games which teach children so much, I think. – They will be much better club-women than their mothers, because it will be second nature to them, and you will be well-nigh perfected in club life. – But with suffrage, and clubs, and with so many other rights and privileges, may women never neglect the beautiful art of home-making! – May it always be first in their minds and hearts!

Just here, I should like to speak of the cosmopolitan aspect of Colorado Springs, because it has meant so much to Mr. Washburn and me, personally; we spent the second year of our married life in Cambridge England, and we made some of the warmest friends of our life there. During the following years in Worcester, Massachusetts, and in Southampton, we were separated from these friends, except through such connection as can be kept up by writing, but, as soon as we came to Colorado, we felt in vital connection with England again, and in the St. Stephen’s Church we found so many friends of our Cambridge friends that it was like completing a circle. Dr. Solly (senior warden at St. Stephen’s) – our dear friend and physician – wrote after the celebration of the Queen’s Jubilee – in Colorado Springs – “And now, we Britishers, are very busy picking up our h’s!”

In the annals of Colorado Springs you cannot fail to read of the genial and delightful “Tom Parish,” as he was always affectionately called. His widow has painted portraits of him and of Dr. Solly for the El Paso Club, and she is just about to complete a portrait of Mr. Washburn for me. These three men have filled very different spheres, and have been very unlike, in many ways, but there has been a well-spring of humor in them all which has been very refreshing, on the dusty highway of life.

Besides the English element, in Colorado, there is an intermingling of people from all parts of our country, and from almost all parts of the world. – I think England, New England, and the southern states have the predominance, thus far. – This intermingling is certainly good for us all. – I know, when I, with some of the blood of Wendell Phillips (uncle of my mother, whose mother was Sarah Hurd Phillips) in my veins, found a granddaughter of Jefferson Davis (Varina Hayes) in my Sunday School class – I gave one mighty gasp and shook off all prejudices for the rest of my life!

I suppose this should not be a woman's letter, without some mention of dress. We are learning more and more, I think, to adapt our dress to our especial needs, but there is a remark in a novel of the present day, "The Visits of Elizabeth", which is a warning to us all. – The remark is something like this, - "Miss \_\_\_\_\_ was so masculine in her attire during the day, that it was almost a shock to see her in feminine garments, at night!" In the same line with this, I remember hearing my mother say, "I should call Mrs. So and So a very gentlemanly lady!"

Some of us think the shirt waist for women has come "to stay", - but others of us ardently hope that it hasn't! – After a morning struggle with a shirt waist – when one is already late for breakfast, - life is hardly worth living! – I believe that shirt waists have interfered with morning prayers, more than any other one thing! – A slender slip of a girl with no responsibilities in life may like a shirt waist, but no mother of a family ought to indulge in one!

There is a wide divergence of opinion about the attire of servants, as about the whole servant question. Mr. Washburn and I have always felt that we did not approve of any "badge of servitude", - although, of course, liveries add greatly to the picturesqueness of life. – There is great unrest about the whole servant question, - something good must come, - but the process of evolution is more or less painful. Wages are so very high in Colorado that many of us have to do things for ourselves, which we never have done before, - but there is a real satisfaction in the sense of independence which comes – we find that gas stoves are excellent concomitants!

This reminds me of a story of Abraham Lincoln, which may have escaped your notice; a French diplomat called upon Lincoln one morning and found him blacking his boots. "What!" said he – "Does the President of the United States black his own boots?" – Lincoln turned with a twinkle in his eye, and said, "Whose boots should he black?"

Some of us feel that we are beginning to see the glimmerings of a society founded upon an Exchange of Service, a service of love rather than of money. Cooperation is doing more and more for us, in all household labor, but it cannot do all. – May it never interfere with the sanctity of family life, in the family home!

With special services from special people, by the day, or even by the hour, the members of the family could care for their own, without interference, or intrusion, and those who came from the outside to render these special services would have their own homes to go back to. Under these circumstances, "sisters and cousins and aunts," and even brothers and uncles will live by the exchange of services (and friends too), and all will be founded upon love! A dear lady of my acquaintance (from Virginia, the widow of Dr. Beverley F. George Tucker, who was long a prominent physician in Colorado Springs, and who died in March, 1893) said with a sigh one day, "Oh! If we could only live without money!" She stands ready to assist anyone and everyone, at any time and at all times, and she is surely following in the footsteps of Him, who came to live among us, "The servant of all."

There are beautiful springs of life, and depths of mystery too, in the thought of service. May you of the next century enter into these springs of life, and these depths of mystery, more fully than we ever have!

I have not ventured to say much about Mr. Washburn, although Mr. Ehrick has asked me to do so, - but I wish to record his ardent love of Colorado Springs and its people, and his great hope for their future. - His life burned out quickly, after rather less than five years of work here, but the outdoor life necessary to him forced extemporaneous preaching upon him, and in it, he found his highest happiness. - One sermon, during the last winter of his life, was upon a line of thought suggested in the Life of Jowett - (I think.) It was the thought, "It is our turn now!" - It was a thrilling sermon. We have failed and faltered many, many times in "our turn" but we would pass the word along to you, - "It is your turn, now!"

We stand with our hands clasped warm in the hands of our ancestors, and we reach out our hands to you, too, hoping that their clasp may still be warm and living. We ask you to hand down through the centuries beyond you, the four great words - Love - Service - Christ and God.

(Note: Mr. Washburn and I built our house - 1019 N. Nevada Ave. - between Yampa and San Rafael Streets - opposite "The College Reservation" - in the summer of 1894, and took possession Sept. 1894.)

Miriam Storrs Washburn (1855 - 1903).

*Miriam Storrs Washburn, the wife of Reverend Phillip Washburn, arrived in Colorado Springs in 1893. Reverend Washburn, who suffered from tuberculosis, moved from a pastorate in Northampton, Massachusetts to become the minister-in-charge and later rector of the newly established St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. He was a trustee of Colorado College until his death in 1898; Washburn Field is named in his honor. Mrs. Washburn worked with her husband to build the membership and assure the success of St. Stephen's Church. Eleanor Emery, daughter of Reverend and Mrs. Washburn, wrote the following about her mother: "Any account of his (Mr. Washburn's) life should include the fact that his wife was an ideal minister's wife. Both of them loved people, and in spite of many sorrows and difficulties, never lost their wonderful sense of humor, their interest in people, and their love of the West." Miriam Washburn died on December 11, 1903 at her home, 1019 North Nevada.*