

## **Corresponding Courtship**

**The letters of Maude Folger and Dick Freeman, 1891-1893**

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I picked up the pillow case and it fell apart revealing its contents. Mama and I were in the process of going through Aunt Susan's room in my grandparents' house. We were sorting and discarding. The house had been sold and was to be torn down so a gas station could be built on the property, yet another project of rural town renewal, or at least the renewal that had been taking place in my hometown over the years. There was little left on the landscape that had been there when I was a girl. The Norman Dutch colonial had been replaced with a Citgo, Aunt Lula's house had been replaced with a bank, the Kenlin Hotel had been replaced with a parking lot and now my grandparents' house was going down to finally be replaced by a drug store. (The oil company backed out of building a gas station when a bypass was planned to connect the two major highways outside of town, so traffic would not be coming through town as originally thought.) The only thing left from years past was the courthouse and it had been renovated in the 70s, so it no longer had a front with columns—just four identical sides.

The contents of that pillowcase would take me back to before my own past to a time when the people and the place were the stuff of stories I had heard, legends that had evolved, but nothing real I had ever touched before. The rotted pillowcase had held the letters of my grandparents written during 2 years of their courtship in the 1890s. Mama and I gathered up the letters off the floor to take home. It would be years before I would sort through them and read them to become acquainted with Granny and Grandpa Freeman, then dead nearly half a century or more.

Granny Freeman died when I was five. Grandpa had died 24 years before, a year before Mama and Daddy married. He was a portrait that was delivered to our house to be hung in the

courthouse. She was a vague memory lying in bed in her living room with Juicy Fruit gum available for the asking. When I asked Daddy if Grandpa Freeman would have liked me, he was reassuring. My daddy was like that.

Granny was the first dead person I ever saw and I couldn't understand why everyone was standing around watching her sleep in this house down the street from ours that wasn't hers. When the Methodist Church was remodeled with new windows put in, there was one dedicated to Granny. I knew we sat in the pew she had sat in and that we had the post office box that had been hers. Mama still does. I remember when I was a feminist-feeling post adolescent, Daddy once said that no one had ever said anything bad about Granny. I figured that meant she had never really done anything of consequence. At least I wasn't stupid enough to open my mouth with that opinion. I loved my daddy more than my politics.

The letters from the pillowcase sat in a box for years while I finished raising Rebecca and Aaron, got my fill of teaching, and rode horses until I couldn't any more. I figured the letters could wait until I didn't have anything better or more important to do. I had dusted them off and sorted them by month and year and there they sat in my study waiting a decade until they were 110 years old. I quit teaching in 2001 when Aaron went off to college and that's when I started reading the letters. I was slow, I was deliberate, I used a magnifying glass, I looked up names in the Surry County history book, and I took notes. I kept thinking maybe I would find a story. It took me two years to get through them all. By then, it was all fragments to me, not a story at all. I thought my granny was a whiner and my grandpa the most romantic man that ever walked this earth. Then, I went back and started going over my notes from the beginning of the letters in 1891 to the end in 1893. By then I had read a large number of letters that I found elsewhere

written between 30 and 50 years later from Granny to her daughter Susan. I knew from those that she wasn't really a whiner. She had raised 10 children by then, Grandpa died and she wasn't whining.

The first of the over 150 letters between my grandparents is from Maud and she asks Dick if she can write him every day. She didn't write every day during those two years, but about twice a week. Letter writing becomes a topic of their letters as time goes on: desire for more letters or longer letters, complaints about the tone of letters or the contents, apologies for the handwriting and the use of a pencil. There is even one letter in which Maud says she skips the parts of the letters that make her unhappy. "I find that is a good plan – to read what is sweet and good and forget the unpleasant." A month later she complains about not getting any letters, and he replies with pages specific to the topic of her complaints finally ending a letter with, "I have had more confidence in you than in the mail." By the time this bickering over letter writing takes place the two have not seen each other for three to four months, so that might explain their irritability with each other.

Maud was naturally left-handed, but according to Daddy had been forced to write with her right hand. He said that she always admired good penmanship and was ashamed of hers. Daddy and I were both left-handed too. Certainly, Dick's penmanship is beautiful and hers is not—hers often executed with a pencil, his never. She apologizes for the pencil and blames it for the writing being dim when he apparently complains about that. She once says a pencil is all she can find, but it seems to be her instrument of choice.

She often finishes her letters by writing around the edges of the last page or sideways

across the top of the first page after she comes to the end of the last page. As she writes her letters she first writes on the front of the pages and then goes back to the first page to continue the letter on the backs. I found myself reading from the first to the last page and then starting all over on the back of the first page through the other backs of pages and then back to the front page to read the end of the letter on the top of the front page.

Fortunately there was little or no problem with the grammar or spelling in these letters, so I didn't have to struggle with that. Judy Cheatham asked me once if the letters were well written. My reply was no because at the time she asked I was in the midst of a string of love letters, which were tedious and uninformative. Later I thought she was probably asking about the grammar and spelling rather than the contents. On that score I would say they were good. Both Maud and Dick were teachers. She had been one of the first two women in Surry County to graduate from college. She was completely literate.

In 1891, when the first letters were written, Dick is up at Round Peak teaching and Maud is in their native Dobson teaching. Round Peak is about 10-15 miles away, a distance he walked once in the rain after a weekend visit. He boarded about 2½ miles from Fisher's Peak, which he was unable to look at without thinking of her and their memorable trip there. (Years later he bought a side of the mountain that is adjacent to Fisher's Peak and it is still in the family.) It is during this year that their impending marriage is first mentioned. She has said yes to his "last proposition" and he implores her to "remember the 18<sup>th</sup> day of January 1893."

It is at the end of '91 that Maud first demonstrates her horror at his drinking and that his conversion takes place, two topics that seem inextricably linked. After "all of Dobson was talking

of (his) having left drunk" she writes November 22<sup>nd</sup> that there must have been some foundation for the rumor. "Now you can not love me as you say you do and then do anything that makes me as miserable as your drinking does." The four-page letter is only concerned with his drinking and how it effects her. He answers by reassuring her, "My dear girl you know I am never again going to have you think I am drunk." It is not only her letter but what he saw Sunday night that gave him pause. Fannie had gone out after midnight in the cold to hunt for her drunk husband, Ben. "I just swore then that you should never feel uneasy about me if I could prevent it."

Less than 2 months later, his conversion is first mentioned in a letter by her. "Dear Heart I trust you have escaped the doubts and fears that so often come after conversion. Tis the enemy of our Lord trying to get us back under his banner. When I think of your conversion I can't be thankful enough." Apparently he converted at Christmas because in his January 7, 1892 letter, in which he hopes she has had a good meeting since he left, he is "feel(ing) better satisfied every day and you have no idea how changed I feel. I would not be as I was two weeks ago for anything, it is a frightful scene for me to look back over my past life as it presents itself to my imagination." She responds with happiness that he has no doubts about his conversion as so many people do. His baptism takes place the following month.

There is no more said about his conversion, but plenty more about drinking as their courtship goes on. Ten months after his conversion, she expresses her happiness over his not having "drank a drop" in ten months. "I used to be always afraid you might drink, or get hurt, or fight! Now I know you will do nothing that is not right." Two months later in December, a full year after his conversion, it is clear that she still worries about his drinking. Her grandpa, with whom she is living, talked very nice about their marrying after she let him read one of Dick's

letters, but later made her mad by insinuating that Dick might drink without her knowing.

In at least half a dozen more letters between Christmas '92 and August '93 the topic turns to drinking. Dick assures Maud that even though the Dutch people he spent Christmas with in Newton (where he is selling churns) were drinking whiskey that "nobody got drunk" and that he has not "drank since '91." In a letter to Maud (in Adley, Wilkes County with her grandpa) Sis describes Christmas in Dobson (which both Maud and Dick missed). "Perhaps I ought not to tell you but in the first place on Christmas day although it was Sunday, everything in Dobson got drunk. You will not wonder when I tell you that they made three dishpans full of eggnog in Gray's room." Additionally there had been "many sociables" during the holidays including a candy pulling, card playing, and a dance.

Apparently that winter was very cold. "It has been colder than it has ever been in the memory of any living Wilkes man." Maud has had hot bricks in her bed and she fears for him going further over the mountains because it's so cold. When she hears that he is sick she says she "was afraid (that his) going in the cold and sleeping in that old cold barn upstairs would make (him) sick." He had been to visit her and she blames his sickness on the trip. She mentions fear of consumption. In her next letter she concedes, "Dear love if the liquor helped your cold you know I am glad for you to take it - if it doesn't help you I am not so willing you may guess."

This is Dick's excuse six months later when rumors reach Maud by way of her brother of his drinking. He explains in July that he drank blackberry brandy and beer when he was sick. Then he goes on to admit that he has been drinking on cool mornings (in July, remember) when he gets to the factory (in Copeland) to prevent colds. He continues his confession, "I might have drank a little when it did me no good but as for what you heard tis false. There is not a word of

truth in it. Though my love I should have written you about it as I promised. I fully intended doing so-but-would delay it from one letter till the next until I thought it best to wait and tell you. I want you to be easy about it dear -- you surely don't can't think I would get drunk -- Maud I will write you every time I take a drop after this. You are so foolish about it why do you listen to anything..."

In Maud's letter preceding this confession she defends herself against her brother telling Dick that he had made her drink wine. She does not like wine and if she did she certainly would not drink it for she knows it to be a sin. She pleads with Dick for several pages and prays God will help him. "May God bless you and help you to be better somewhat each day."

In this same letter she asks if he reads his bible every day and says she wants him to read the 103<sup>rd</sup> Psalm. Apparently they agreed to read the same Psalm each day while they were apart. Psalms reading is mentioned several times during '93. Three months before on March 23, 1893 she has read Psalms 4 and on the 28<sup>th</sup> she read Psalms 8 and wonders if he read the same. By the end of June when she reads the 103<sup>rd</sup>, about that many days have passed.

- 2) *Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:*
- 3) *Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;*
- 4) *Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies.*

Psalms 103, verses 2-4

The night Maud heard the rumors about Dick being drunk she "went to bed to get away from every body and cried and tried to pray." That is the same night she read those words which must have been comforting when she was so upset about Dick's drinking.

Drinking is an issue that preys on Maud's mind not only as a young woman, but throughout life as she worries about her sons' drinking many years later. There are letters to her



daughter 50 years later that deal with her concerns. After reading Stephen Ambrose's Undaunted Courage about the Lewis and Clark expedition, I wondered if every man of their time was an alcoholic. It was not unusual to drink throughout the day from breakfast till bed time. Lewis made sure there was enough whiskey on the expedition to get the men past the point of no return, so they would not leave the expedition when the whiskey ran out. Lewis himself was apparently an alcoholic and that sorely affected his life as well as his death. The time of my grandparents' courtship was 90 years later, but reading Ambrose's book put the history of alcohol in my family into a perspective I could understand.

There is a curve in the old road that leads from Dobson to Mount Airy where Allison Tree is located. Allison Tree was a service station when I was growing up in Dobson; now it is a produce market. Allison Tree gets its name from a lynching that took place there during my grandpa's day. I knew that all my life and even remember my daddy telling me that Grandpa had tried to stop the lynching. Recently, a man was arrested for stopping at a convenience store at the Dobson exit off the interstate and murdering the cashier and a customer. The culprit had earlier in the day committed a murder in South Carolina as well. The sheriff of Surry County, where Dobson is located, stated that the locals should bring back the Allen(sic) tree for the murderer, of course referring to the Allison tree, a tree that has long been gone but the location of which is well known at least to Dobsonites. That dumb comment brought protests from the NAACP and I hope an apology from the county.

Allison was not a black man, so his lynching doesn't really fit the stereotype of a Southern lynching though it took place during the same time in history. I've always heard he was a white

man accused of rape. Did my grandpa really try to stop the lynching? No.

I had read over 50 letters that my grandparents had written each other when I came to the one of September 14, 1892 from Dick to Maud that was 26 pages long. I almost felt despair because I had muddled through so many love letters and didn't think I could take 26 pages of how many ways "I love you" can be said. The first half of the letter is about the lynching of Tom Allison, so I knew early on that this was not Dick's average letter. I was excited to finally be discovering what part my grandpa had played in this drama and in awe of having a personal account of that locally historic and legendary happening. The account of that night starts on page 3 of his letter and runs through page 15. I know of no better way to tell the story than the way he tells it.

"Monday evening a crowd of us, Reece, Leo Snow myself and others had concluded to go to Elkin Tuesday morning. and in order to get to Elkin in the morning early we thought it expedient for Leo Snow to set the alarm to his clock -- to awake him at 3.30 a.m. and he was to arouse the other parties so that we could get off at 5. I retired at 10:30 couldn't go to sleep for some time, finally I went to sleep and had not been that way long until I was aroused by a pistol shot. When I had gotten entirely awake I heard the court house bell ringing-- The first thought that entered my mind was that Leo Snow was ringing the bell for us to get up and be ready to start to Elkin. I got up struck a match and looked at the watch and I thought 'twas 5 minutes after four. I hurried to get ready thinking I would be late when I had prepared to go I look at the watch again before I put out the light and found that I was mistaken about the time and that it was 20 minutes after one insted(sic) of 5 minutes after four as I thought thought(sic) I would go down and see Leo & Reece anyway. The bell had ceased ringing and everything was still as death. As I stepped out the gate at Aunt Vic's I heard 8 or 10 reports from revolvers in rapid succession. The sound came from toward Mt. Airy. it seemed to be about a mile off. I thought 'twas probably a crowd drinking and gambling and walked up toward the court house steps. About the time I had gotten to the C.H. fence I heard John Bullin speak and then Mrs. Vic Cooper asked about Mr. John C. I then asked John Bullin what was up he said there was a crowd at the jail or that a crowd had taken Tom Allison out. About that time Nath Creed came up to where we were standing I told them to go with me to the jail They refused to go. I then started by myself -- told them to come that they were not after us. They followed. When we arrived at the jail Tom Folger, Reece & Harmon Freeman were standing in the yard Price came up. Reid said about one o'clock he was aroused by

some one wrapping on the door he went to the door and asked who was there a man said he had a prisoner. Reid peeped out and saw to(sic) men standing on the steps of the front door he then opened the door and that instant he was covered with pistols They demanded the keys he asked them what they wanted with them. They finally told him they wanted Tom Allison – made him get there and go to the cell with them. About that time Harmon Freeman came out of the room where he and Price were sleeping They marched him out into the yard & guarded him while a few of the party went up after Allison. They took Reid with them and bashed (unlocked has been struck out) one of the locks & made Reid unfasten the other They then went in took Allison out of bed and started down the steps with him. Reid said to them the blood of this man is upon you. I am clear. They told him the least he said the better 'twould be for him. Allison said Men this is awful as they started with him & Price heard him as he got to the foot of the stairs appealing to them Pray men don't do this. O God & c. As he passed Harmon in the yard he said men don't hurt me They went down the Mt. Airy road with him They were walking. When they came to the jail, all masked but two or three. Well by the time I had learned all this a great many citizens had collected in front of the jail Some one suggested that we go down the road and see what they had done with him a great many were afraid to go and said we would better wait till day light it was then about 2.10 a.m. Gray F. was anxious to go and said we must go now Mort Snow said the same so Price Mort & I started, asked Gray to come but he laughed and said he believed he would go to bed, which he did. Harmon F. Got a lantern and we started had'nt gone far until H.F. began to get a little uneasy and urge that we wait till morning, but Reece and Dick Robertson joined us Then Uncle Luther and Milt Davis followed. Mort Price & I were about fifty yards ahead and stopped at Dave Snows to learn what he knew about them he had only heard the C House bell ringing so we went on and waited for the crowd at John Nance's. We asked J. Nance what he had seen. He said that he saw about fifteen or twenty men on horses pass going towards Dobson and thought they were going to the show at Elkin until he heard them coming back he then suspected they had been to the jail for Allison or McNight. We left Nances and proceeded down toward Mt. Airy Price and I in advance of the others we went until we came to the Poor house fork of the road and saw a light at Dillard Mitchel's barn. You remember where it is. We then went to the barn and found Dillard and his wife curing tobacco. I asked Mitchell where those revolvers were fired he said about two hundred yards down the Mt. Airy road or about the place where the path or cart way leads from the Mt. Airy Road to the poor House road. Well Price and I cut across through the wood to the Mt. Airy road in the dark and called the crowd that were behind us telling them what Dillard Mitchell had said we were there about 30 or 40 yds ahead of the crowd with the light. We were in the dark and if you remember the trees are very thick on either side of the road after you have passed the poor house road going toward Mt. Airy I told Price we had better be cautious That we might run against him that he might be hanging in the road or shot to pieces and in the road it was very dark and about 30 yds before me on the left side of road I saw something white I remarked to Price that I saw something he made no reply (he said he was scared) we walked up within three or four yards of the object and I called the crowd to come on with the light that we had found

him I can see him now in my imagination as he appeared when the light flashed on him with his hands bound behind him he was hanged with a cotton roap about 7 ft to an oak limb with his toes in two or three inch of the ground. The roap was well tied a hangman's knot We went back to town. I went to Elkin The coroner held an inquest and there is a jury in session now investigating it Allison's body has been sent to his relatives. So you have the particulars of the Lynching. I don't know whether you have been interes(ed) by it or not hope you have"

That is just the way he wrote it -- with little punctuation and no paragraphing. I haven't noticed that his other letters lack those mechanics. This was a story that was rolling out of him without pause. It is one that effects him, for he later expresses sympathy for McNight, the lone prisoner left in the jail. McNight prays and sings all the time as he expects to be taken at any time and lynched. Dick feels very sorry for him. The lynching has effected the whole town. Every woman and nearly all the men are afraid to stay by themselves. Aunt Vic sleeps with her lamp burning all night. Dick will be glad when McNight's case is disposed of in some way and the jail is empty. (His letter three and a half weeks later states, "There was a very large crowd in town Friday some of them came to see McKnight hanged." I assume this is the lone prisoner left in the jail after the lynching though he spells his name differently and probably finally correctly. Apparently McKnight's hanging was legal. Would that have made him less fearful?)

There were rumors that some of the lynching crowd had been identified but in less than a week the jury of six had "adjourned without ascertaining anything as usual." There is no more said about the lynching, but their letters seem to turn to more accounts of violence than previous or later ones. There is a short account of a fight between Samuel and Col. John Waugh in the same letter about the lynching. It tells of throwing each other in the mud and choking before John is pulled off of Samuel.

In October Dick tells of an attempted murder-suicide. It was a case of revenge against one's prosecutor. The attempt at murder was unsuccessful but the suicide worked. In his next letter he talks about a murder at a distillery and the subsequent hanging to be scheduled. In his next he goes into a detailed description of how he broke up a fight. Then Maud gets in the act of telling violent episodes with an account of a scaffold falling in North Wilkesboro killing one and wounding others. Next Dick mentions a murder at Ice Snow's; then a letter follows explaining that the shooting was Mort Snow shooting his father Boss. (Mort subsequently is out on bail.) A letter between those two letters relates that Luther Snow told him that his papa whipped his mother and had drawn a knife several times and told her he would kill her.

I wonder if the lynching whets the appetite of Dobsonites for violence, or if this is normal for the place and time and the lynching whets the appetite for relating such episodes. All of them occur within a month's time. Of six letters from Dick, five include these tales of violence. In one letter written on large paper he seems to apologize after the story of his breaking up the fight. "I imagine this is very interesting to you. You see that my paper is so large that I have to put in such as this to fill up space." His paper has not been so large for the other letters relating such acts, so that excuse doesn't really fly.

The letter about Allison's lynching was written by Dick while he was living back in Dobson. From his first letters written from Round Peak in 1891 and hers from Dobson, they had corresponded from a variety of locales and would continue to move around before the letters come to an end. He had a variety of occupations. I know my grandfather was finally a lawyer but that is certainly not what he was up to during his courtship with my grandmother. First he was

teaching in Round Peak and she was teaching in Dobson. In early 1892 he was back in Dobson, but she had moved to Bliss to teach from February to June. Though I cannot locate Bliss in any current atlas or map or by asking my mother, I think it must have been near Mount Airy because Maud says in her March 14, 1892 letter, "When will you go to Mt. Airy? I shall feel like you are not so far away then." Bliss held the appropriate name for Maud because in later letters she looked back on her time there with nostalgia. She talked of spending a Sunday there with him as one of the happiest days of her life.

In April of 1892 while she remained in Bliss teaching he went 100 miles away to Catawba County to sell churns. There only about two weeks, he was not successful and left with plans to return in the fall when the cotton of that area was put on the market and the economy was better. She wrote encouraging letters to him during this time trying to raise his hopes since they had been dashed. Back in Dobson, he received a letter from her at the end of her teaching term in June talking of plans for him to pick her up in Mt. Airy.

By July she had moved to Yadkinville for the rest of the summer. Apparently they were together in Dobson for a month after which it was hard to part from one another. He wrote on July 9, 1892, "This world is made up of hope and expectations for disappointments, but I can still hope that all will come right after a while but I am becoming very impatient at times."

In September Maud went to stay with her grandpa in Adley, Wilkes County. In November Dick returned to Newton, Catawba County to sell churns as he had planned. There is no indication that he had any occupation those intervening months in Dobson. She seemed to be spending her time keeping her grandfather company and caring for him in Adley for she did not want to leave him alone. The churn selling business went better this time, but Dick said in one of

his letters that he was a little ashamed and when he got out of the business he would stay out. It seems he got out the end of January. Letters after that are from Dobson.

The month of March, Maud was back in Yadkinville but returned to her grandfather's in Adley April through July 1893. At the end of April Dick was in Copeland expecting to be there through the summer. He worked in a factory in charge of about 40 hands, responsible for all that was done in the stemming room," opening at 5 and closing at 7. Mama says that a factory with such a room would be a tobacco factory. At the beginning of August Maud went back to Yadkinville, where she helped Mr. Jim in the store. She told Dick that she was glad he got his office. This might refer to the office of Deputy Marshall because he wrote about applying for the job and thinking he had a good chance. His last letter from Copeland, dated September 28, 1893 from Doss factory said that he had orders from the Marshall to take charge of the factory. I don't know what that means. There is one more letter from Maud stating that she felt she never wanted to go to Grandpa's again. She had spent most of a year there. In a letter dated the very next day her friend Lizzie Lawrence, who had visited her there, hoped she wouldn't continue to live with her grandfather, that if she did she would bury herself alive there on the red hill.

Though there was no indication that he had a job in Dobson during the autumn of 1892, there is clearly evidence that Dick was involved in politics that election year. He was concerned about the campaigns, the nominations, the election and finally the appointments following the election. This is the same spirit of politics that I grew up with in Dobson 70 years later. Life revolved around politics and the church(which interested my granny, Maud so much). In my childhood, my daddy ran for political office and was chairman of the Democratic Party. There

was even a barber shop that the Democrats went to and another that the Republicans used. That might make sense because barber shops are places where lots of talk occurs, but Democratic and Republican funeral homes too? Yes, we had them. I might marry outside my faith, but never outside the Democratic Party. I see from Grandpa's letters of 1892 that the interest in politics ran even deeper than I had experienced.

Dick planned to stay in Dobson rather than go to Catawba to sell churns until after the election. He got angry when Stack, who was a candidate, quit canvassing to go home and marry the night before the election. On the eve of the election he reported that the town was afloat with liquor. ( I remember at age 12, I heard rumors that my daddy's opponent bought votes with liquor.) The election result looked good for the Democrats, even at the national level. Grover Cleveland, who was the first Democratic President after the Civil War was elected for a second term (that did not immediately follow his first. He had lost a consecutive term to Benjamin Harrison in 1888.). With the Democrats in power "to the victors belong the spoils," Dick wrote Maud November 13<sup>th</sup>, "and you have never heard of such a rush as there will be for the spots this time." He predicted that there would be a great fight over the post office since it was said that it paid five or six hundred per year, hence a very desirable office. He named four people who wanted the position for themselves or someone in their families. An 1888 letter to Maud from her father when she was at Greensboro College had been registered by her mother, B.G. Folger. My great grandmother after whom I was named, Betsy Gray Folger must have been postmaster during Cleveland's first administration. In a letter the March after the 1892 election, Dick explained that Cleveland's policy in the new term was not to appoint anyone who had served during his first term and not to turn out postmasters until their terms expired as long as they were



conducting business right. So if Maud's mother wanted that position back, she could not have it.

In one letter that November election month Dick mentioned that he was "to have something" meaning some political appointment. In April he reported that the U.S. Marshall had sent Jim to ask him if he would accept the job of Deputy Marshall in the county. One week later a receipt acknowledging Dick's application came from the U.S. Marshall, T.J. Allison. Dick had explained to Maud that the office paid in proportion to the work done: arresting illicit distillers and blockaders, summoning witnesses, and though not required assisting in cutting stills at an extra \$6 per day. There are two more letters that mention his appointment, one in July saying he got it and was glad. I assume this refers to the job as Deputy Marshall.

Since I am not privy to what was said when my grandparents were together however infrequently that might have been, and there is always the possibility that some letters are missing, I cannot be sure about what the appointment was. That is true of other holes left in their letter writing story, but please be assured I indicate where those holes are while making the best assumptions I can. Mama says Grandpa was Deputy Marshall.

There was a financial panic 2 months after Grover Cleveland became President in 1893. Dick mentioned it in his June 11<sup>th</sup> letter, "the country will be almost ruined if money matters continue as they now are." That is the last I read of this concern in their letters. I don't know how the panic played out personally or locally for my grandparents and Dobson. I know only what I read in published history that Cleveland, who felt a cause was the Sherman Silver Purchase Act of Harrison's administration, called a special session of Congress the month of Dick's letter to repeal the act. The following year there was a march on Washington by unemployed men demanding that the government create jobs. By then my grandparents were married and my

grandpa seemed to be installed in a government job, Deputy Marshall.

Besides the Democratic Party, the Methodist Church was a parameter of life in my family when I was growing up. Just as there were two political parties, in Dobson there were two churches, the one we belonged to, Methodist and the one we didn't belong to, Baptist. We had friends and even a few cousins in the Baptist church and we even attended Vacation Bible School there, but that's not where we belonged and we knew it with a vengeance. We rooted for Duke, the Methodist endowed university, never Wake Forest, the Baptist one. I looked askance at baptism by submersion as not as civilized as christenings. Wasn't that just a step from foot washings and not much further from holy rollers? According to their letters my grandparents held the same prejudices. Grandpa in particular makes disparaging remarks about the Baptists. My guess is that the Baptists were planning to build a large church and had cut down on the projected size when he wrote the following:

"The big ideas of the Baptist have fallen considerably. I think they have concluded to content themselves with a church exactly the size of the Methodist Church. I think they have come down since the Prevett boom don't you? I understand that Maze wants to be back in the Methodist church said the Baptist were too selfish for her she would withdraw she says but she is afraid the Baptist will get angry at her."

In a letter three days later, Dick reports that J.R.L.(Jim) says the Baptists keep the minutes of their Sunday School in a brandy distiller's book. I presume that this would horrify Maud in particular.

When I was a girl Vacation Bible School at the Baptist church was more fun than at the Methodist. There were more kids and the refreshments were better. Apparently, Sunday school in the 1890s reflected the same trend. Dick wrote from Dobson in April 1892, "There is no news

in this place it is just as you left it. The Sunday Schools are the same as they have been. Baptist still leading." I think this competition for members and especially young ones is still as one-sided.

In his June 5, 1892 letter Dick wrote derisively about such competition:

"There were but three grown people at S.S. this morning, W - S (Walter, Sal) and myself That good for nothing weak Rosco attends the Baptist and is taking part - which he never did at the M.S.S. Don't you think it as shallow as the song of a sparrow? I just know as well as I love you (and I do love you more than he is capable of loving) that I wouldn't follow you to the B.S.S. I did follow you to the M. though didn't I love?"

Grandma was more intent on using positive means to build the church. She attended sermons (once three in the same day) and meetings, and worked on procuring a loan and getting donations for the church organ. She praised preachers and their numbers of conversions. Of course, Dick had been one of those converts. She was devout in her daily life. She thought drinking was a sin, she was disappointed when she read that he worked tobacco on a Sunday, and she read Psalms every day and encouraged him to do so.

The original proposed wedding date of January 18, 1893 came and went with no marriage. They had both written about that date as a reminder of hope to hang onto in their separations. In May of 1892 they had been apart three weeks, the longest time in two years. That separation included the two weeks he first spent in Catawba. Apart at Christmas of that year she mentioned that they had spent the last four Christmases together and it had been four months since seeing each other. In January 1893, Dick came from Catawba to visit her at her grandpa's in Adley, Wilkes County but they did not marry. There is no statement as to why the marriage was postponed. They had kept their plans a secret, though early on Maud's mother had heard rumors

of their plans and had objected. Dick had expressed reservations about visiting her in Adley because he thought her grandpa did not approve, and though she finally convinced him that it was okay to visit and Grandpa would welcome him, she hadn't long been confident of her grandpa's approval. There had been questions about Dick's financial situation with comments from both her grandpa and people back in Dobson that upset them both. Her letter of January 19, 1893 states that she thought of him so much the day before, the planned date of their marriage, but there is no indication in any of the letters why it didn't take place. December 1<sup>st</sup> he said that it was "just 49 days until the time," but later in the month(?) he "can't tell when (they) will marry but just as soon as possible." After he visits again in February they do not see each other for half a year. It seems that each separation gets longer.

It is during this six month separation, especially in the spring that their letters sometimes turn to fussing-fussing about not getting expected letters, about how he treats some individuals, about jealousies(even her jealousy of his horse and his of her grandpa). She expressed doubts about whether she would be a hardship to him rather than a help. Finally in June there was discussion of setting their marriage date in the fall.

The first half of August there are four letters and then no more until the end of September. She had left her grandpa's after 11 months and was in Yadkinville when she wrote during those two months. My guess is that Maud was where she could see Dick the end of August and most of September since there are no letters and in her first letter of September, on the 24<sup>th</sup> she described her return trip to Yadkinville.:

"I reached this city about ten o'clock Friday night...  
We crossed the river in the moonlight with Bro Tom's horse cutting up and the river about up to the seat. I had to hold my feet on the dash all the way

across and then got wet...

I found quite a town at Copeland. They stared at me as you said they would.”

Her brother Frank was with her on this return trip and she wished it was Dick instead. Frank was scared at the ford because she was with him. Since Dick worked in Copeland, I assume the people there were curious about her and that’s why they stared as he had told her they would.

There is only one letter in October, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> from Dick to Maud. He is in Greensboro for 3-4 days . He wants her to go back to Dobson as soon as she can. That is the end of the correspondence. It is fall, the season for marriage that they had discussed in June.

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It has been nearly a year since I completed the above telling of my grandparents’ corresponding courtship. I have only sent this out to one cousin, so she could read it while recovering from surgery. The love expressed outright in these letters was not included in my telling because that was not what interested me in the reading of the letters. In fact, in the reading I would get impatient with all the love-making in my efforts to find a story or discover information about a person I had heard about as a child. I don’t feel like I can put this to rest without quoting some of the love messages that were written especially by Dick, who as I said before, appeared to be the most romantic man in the world. In the first letter of the correspondence on October 22, 1891, he writes about being near Fisher’s Peak.

“Maybe you don’t have any idea how I feel when I look at that mountain. I can’t look at it without thinking of our memorable trip and especially of you, how I have loved you all the time. I never knew how well I loved you until I came up here. Maude I am here by myself now and nothing to prevent me from thinking soberly and seriously and I tell you this for the truth that I love you and none but you. I may have admired for a while some other girl or may have had a wild fancy for some other woman but you are the only woman I ever

sincerely truly(2 underlines) and purely(3 underlines) loved in my life now this is the truth.”

The following month after a visit with Maude in Dobson, he writes on November 3, 1891.

“My dear you can’t imagine how I enjoyed my visit to Dobson. I know I was the happiest I have ever been on this earth in all my life. I knew I loved you and only you before I went but I had never before realized how much. In my imagination I can see you as we sat in the school house door, the sweetest purest looking thing to me on earth. Maude I have never been able to tell you how I love you and I can’t write it as it is.”

A couple of weeks later, apparently after proposing, Dick writes on November 17, 1891.

“ While I try to write I feel that my whole heart has gone out to you, and that my future happiness and almost earthly existence depends on you. I feel so different toward you to any feeling I ever had before since you said yes to my last proposition.”

The first letter I have from Maude is an answer to Dick’s. Her love for him is a tortured one because of his drinking, which upsets her so much.

“ You said you felt very different to what you did when you last wrote. I also feel different, so much so that I do not know how to write. Since last Monday evening I have in my mind written about twenty five letters to you.

When you left me Sunday night I had no thought that I would ever feel as I have felt this week. When I came home from school Monday I heard that all of Dobson was talking of you having left here that morning drunk—how can I write that word about you—but nevertheless tis true, true at least that it was told to me. You can never understand just how I felt. If I could have written you then I should have told you that all was at an end between us forever unless you could say that it was untrue...

... You surely do not know how I feel about it. At times it seems to me that I would rather have this rain falling on my grave than be married to you, as much as I love you, and have you drink liquor. Dear Heart you surely do not understand that you are making me feel that this life is not worth living if it is to go on this. Please tell me that I need never feel any fear again— never so long as I live have occasion to write to you this way. I am afraid you will never read this—

Lovingly,  
M. Folger

These are examples of why I first thought my granny was a whiner and my grandpa the most romantic man that ever walked this earth. I am quite sure modern day psychologists/counselors would have a different interpretation of things, but it is not my wish to analyze or have my

grandparents analyzed over a hundred years later. As I mentioned before, my estimation of my granny changed as I read more and from different times in her life.

The reading of these letters was laborious, but I felt their very presence demanded that they be read. This is just one reading by one grandchild and these are the things I have brought from them. I know there are so many other things that could be brought forth. For example, I cannot leave without mentioning Grandpa writing that his landlady would be getting a new set of teeth put in by Roscoe, Granny's nephew, a dentist. Roscoe had pulled 16 teeth for her the day before.

Ouch!

The dust was brushed off the letters by my son Aaron and me one afternoon on the kitchen table. Then I sorted them by year and month and finally day. I read them and then stored them in baggies by month and placed them in a metal box. I pull them out now one by one if I want to go back and read a part of one to use here. I think I am through with them now. Aaron has heard some of this and thinks it's interesting. Perhaps some day he or someone else will read these letters again. Meanwhile Maud and Dick's correspondence can return to rest.