

A Vermont Country Wedding in 1858

Edited by LOIS W. MARTIN

(My Grandmother, Ellen Lyon Wright, at age sixteen, tells of her sister Sylvia's wedding, when she was twenty-one years old, to Frank Gale at her parents' home, Mr. and Mrs. John Lyon, in Colchester, Vermont, on June 8, 1858. She writes the following letter on June 25, 1858 to her brother, John Lyon, who was in California.)

DEAR Brother,
... I made myself the promise before the wedding that I would write immediately to you all about it but failed to do it that day that they were married, because we went a piece with them on the cars. Melvin Freeman & his wife, Moseley & Viola, Ira & I went to Jonesville in the 8 o'clock train & came back in the 5 train. It is in Richmond a very pleasant place a nice hotel there & to Dartmouth College in N.H. They were gone 8 days only. Now I will begin to tell you about the wedding. We had about 50 here to the wedding. They were married at 8 in the morning & started right off on the cars. Syl- was dressed in plaid silk. It was low in the neck with a silk lace bertha a white rose & buds pinned before on her waist, a braid of her hair around her head & white flowers on each side & a white bow and long ends of ribbon, locket and chain on her neck & a plaid scarf around her waist. Frank had black clothes only a white vest & gloves. Moseley & Viola stood up with them. I can't stop to tell you how Viola was dressed only that she looked firstrate & had white gloves. Moseley you know looked well for he always does. He had a white vest. He looked as well if not better than Frank. And the cake, that was splendid. It is praised by *everyone*. Marian came up &

made it ' it was delicious. We had three kinds, Fruit, Delicate, & pound cake, A great *many* say it is the best they ever saw. I think it is better than ——'s for all they sent to Boston. They had five kinds. Ours tasted better but did not look as nice as theirs because their frosting was put on in a mold or something else that made it in flowers. We have some now & I would send you some if I thought it would pay but it would be dried when it reached you. Now for a list of the furniture. In the first place Frank had the house they live in all papered & painted wholesale before they went in. He gave Sylvia the money to get the paper & she got it to suit herself. It is all very handsome. All the rooms below are papered new, except the parlor bedroom that had good paper on before. The parlor is painted white & varnished & all the other rooms have a light lead-colored paint. Father got Sylvia 2 good tables a fall leaf stand & a washsink not a stand a nice bureau \$11.00 and 14 chairs 8 canebottomed 2 cane rocking chairs & 6 wooden ones 2 lookinglasses & 2 bedsteads 1 red & the other a dark colored one with little posts up & down in the foot board. I guess that is all the furniture & he got her a nice set of white dishes & a great deal of glassware & 6 large & 6 small spoons, & knives & a butter knife. She had a nice lot of quilts 1 white one with a great deal of work on it & a down comforter which is the nicest of all. She had 10 bed quilts in all. She had also a nice lot of sheets pillowcases towels tablecloths & wiping cloths & under clothes & outside clothes & O! Dear! a 1000 & 1 things to numerous to mention. It don't seem as if I had told you 1/2. She had a white bon-

net & a travelling bonnet mantilla parasol collars shoes duster. Now if you don't think we have had something to do this spring. It has put our sewing all behind hand. Mother and I are alone and we have to WORK. Saturday June 26th P.M. Father & Mother have gone over to Sylvia's to spend the day. They went about 8 this morning and will not be home till dark. She has fairly got settled & homesick too I guess . . . I should have liked the wedding and all the performances well enough if you had only been here. We miss you very much. I am having a new valencia(?) plaid and calico

dress made. I will send you some pieces of them . . . I will send some pieces of Sylvia's & my dress, those with the silk piece in are Sylvia's. The silk is her wedding dress. It looks *very much* handsomer made up than it does in the piece . . . I do not know but I shall send you some cake. If I do I want you should make all allowances for the carrying of it. I expect it will be all dried up. If it is I don't want you should taste of it. (Of course you will.) I can't stop to write any more . . . Good bye, from sister

Ellen

Notes continued from page 54.

College Archives, Baker Memorial Library, Hanover, New Hampshire).

²⁶ Bezenet, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

³¹ Williams, *op. cit.*, *Harvard Library Bulletin* 13 (1960); p. 55.

³² "Mountain View Hotel." *Academy Record* (Gilmanton Academy and Theological Seminary, Gilmanton, New Hampshire), October, 1890, p. 1.

³³ The author is gratefully indebted to Mr. David Bickford and the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Gilmanton, New Hampshire for assistance in using the Gilmanton Theological Seminary materials in the Town Archives.