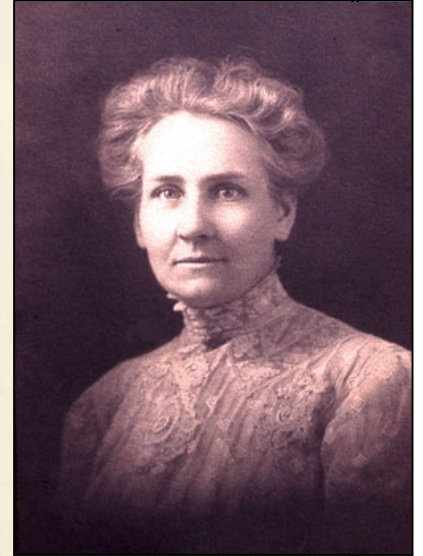


Reminiscences

A Collection of Poems and Writings



by Nellie Irene Bates Thomas
1861-1948



Prepared by her great-granddaughters
Karen Elizabeth Read Wolfson
Patricia Irene O'Brien Hellmers

About Nellie's Poems
August 2008

Karen Wolfson and Pat Hellmers first talked about this poetry project in the summer of 1990. The Hellmers were visiting the Wolfsons in Atlantic Beach, Florida. We discovered that we each had been given copies of poetry written by our great-grandmother, Nellie Irene Thomas. We thought it would be nice to put her poems into a booklet.

When we combined our copies of the poems, we were surprised by the number and variety. Some were original handwritten copies, some were typed, some were newspaper clippings, and some were photocopies. A few were in poor condition with the paper disintegrating, but most were in fairly good condition considering their age. For some of the poems, there was more than one version, where changes had been made to the title or some of the words. Many of the poems were signed by Nellie, but some were not. In some cases we knew the poems were hers by her handwriting and in some cases by the style or content of the poem. We decided to present each poem as closely as possible to the way Nellie wrote it. For clarification purposes, a few changes were made in spelling or punctuation.

Both of us have enjoyed reading these poems and the fascinating variety of topics that Nellie wrote about. We were also humbled by the fact that in some cases we were actually holding the very paper that she wrote on so many years ago. Although a remarkable number of Nellie's poems have been preserved, we are hoping that others will be "discovered" in the future. If any new poems are found, we hope you will let us know.

Patricia Irene O'Brien Hellmers
904 Institute Street
Valparaiso, Indiana 46383
(219) 462-6222

Karen Elizabeth Read Wolfson
2308 Fiddlers Lane
Atlantic Beach, Florida 32233
(904) 246-0847

C O N T E N T S

Autobiographical	<i>A Tiny Bit of Girl</i>
Birthdays	<i>Milestones of Life</i>
Anniversaries	<i>Ring Out Ye Wedding Bells</i>
Family	<i>We're Quite a Family</i>
Friends	<i>Neighbors We Meet</i>
Religion	<i>On the Wings of Faith</i>
Places	<i>God's Great Out-of-Doors</i>
Things	<i>Pleasures to Share</i>
Opinion/Advice	<i>I Protest . . . I Plead</i>

Biography of Nellie Irene Bates Thomas

This biography is based on Nellie's poem, "A Brief History of My Life, 1861-1944," and other information.

Nellie Irene Thomas was born on October 3, 1861, in Sharon Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan. Her parents were Hosea Bates and Matilda Moore. Nellie had an older sister, Mary Catherine ("Matie"), born in 1859. Their mother, Matilda, died on September 8, 1863. Because their father, Hosea, felt that he could not care for his two young daughters, they were sent to live with relatives. Matie went to live with Hosea's side of the family and Nellie went to live with Matilda's sister, Caroline (Moore) Lamson and her husband, Valorus. They lived in nearby Manchester, Michigan.

Nellie lived with this family and their three children for approximately three years. In 1866, the father, Valorus Lamson, died, leaving Caroline to care for all of the children. She felt she could not continue to take care of Nellie, as well as her own three children, so Nellie was sent to live with another relative, Norman Eaton (brother to Hosea Bates' mother) and his wife, Katharine (McQuigg) Eaton. They lived in Springfield Township, Oakland County, Michigan, and had no children of their own. This family was recorded in the 1870 federal census as follows:

1870 Michigan, Oakland County, Springfield Township	
Eaton, Norman	age 42 born New York
Eaton, Catherine	age 44 born New York
Eaton, Nellie	age 8 born Michigan

Soon after this census was taken, in January 1871, Norman Eaton died, leaving Katharine and Nellie alone. Katharine was a nurse and was able to support herself and Nellie while living in Springfield for several years. Later, they moved to Pontiac, Michigan, so that Nellie could attend school there. It is not clear when or how Katharine Eaton met John D. Thomas, a widower, of Genesee County, Michigan. But, in 1879, eight years following the death of her husband, Katharine Eaton married John D. Thomas, and Katharine and Nellie moved to Genesee County. John Thomas had two children living with him from his first marriage to Ellen (Farmer) Thomas. Another child, Mary Elizabeth, was already married. This new household was recorded in the 1880 federal census as follows:

1880 Michigan, Genesee County, Genesee Township	
Thomas, John	age 52 born Wales
Thomas, Katharine	age 53 born New York
Thomas, Edith	age 10 born Michigan
Eaton, Nellie	age 18 born Michigan
Thomas, William	age 22 born Michigan

During the next two years, a romance developed between Nellie Eaton and John Thomas's son, William; and they were married on January 25, 1882. These two families then lived

together and operated a 200-acre farm on Lapeer Road near Flint, Michigan. William and Nellie's first two children were born on this farm, Katharine Ellen ("Kate"), born November 11, 1882, and John William, born June 5, 1885. Around 1889, William and Nellie bought and moved to their own 25-acre farm, also on Lapeer Road, but closer to Flint. Their third child, Roy Cresswell, was born there on September 27, 1891. Unhappiness struck the family the spring before Roy was born when Nellie's husband, William, left home. (William went west and eventually lived in Spokane, Washington. He did not return to the family until six months before his death in 1936.)

Without William's help, his father could not manage the large farm alone, and Nellie needed someone to help her with the other farm, so they all moved back together again on the 25-acre farm and rented out the larger one. The 1900 federal census shows the family as it was then:

1900 Michigan, Genesee County, Burton Township

Thomas, John	age 74 born New York
Thomas, Katherine	age 73 born New York
Thomas, Nellie	age 38 born Michigan
Thomas, Kate	age 17 born Michigan
Thomas, John	age 14 born Michigan
Thomas, Roy	age 9 born Michigan
Crawford, Irene	age 12 born Michigan

(Irene Crawford was a granddaughter of John Thomas from his first marriage. She was apparently living with them at the time of the census.)

Shortly after the 1900 census was taken, Katherine (McQuigg/Eaton) Thomas, who had been Nellie's adopted mother since she was five years old, and with whom she had lived most of her adult life, passed away. Within a year, Nellie's adopted father, John Thomas, also died. In time, Nellie's children married and began families of their own, Kate in 1901, John in 1908, and Roy in 1912. By the 1910 census Nellie and her son, Roy, were living with Nellie's daughter Kate and her husband, Levi Roat and their first three Roat children.

Nellie spent the last years of her life enjoying visits with her family and living either in her summer home in Bay View, Michigan, or her winter home in New Smyrna Beach, Florida. She loved to travel and made several trips with family members to the western United States. She enjoyed her grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and they all loved being around her because she was always full of fun.

Nellie Irene Thomas died at the age of 86 on February 6, 1948, in her home on Flagler Avenue in New Smyrna Beach, Florida. She is buried in Avondale Cemetery, Flint, Michigan.

Other notes of interest:

The Thomas family heard from Nellie's husband, William, from time to time, while he was living in Spokane, Washington. William's daughter Kate corresponded with her father through the years and visited him in Spokane at least once. Nothing much is known about his life there, but it is believed that he may have worked in a sawmill in Spokane. In early 1936, Kate was contacted by William's doctor to let her know that her father's health was failing. She went to Spokane to see him and brought him back to her home in Flint, Michigan. He died there on December 20, 1936, and is buried in Avondale Cemetery.

Little is known about Nellie's sister, Matie. She was married three times and lived and died in San Rafael, California. She had at least one child, Mira Vining, who lived in Florida and who had an unmarried daughter, Hester Vining. They kept in touch with the Thomas family through the years.

Nellie's father, Hosea Bates, enlisted in the Civil War following the death of his wife, Matilda. He was a private in Co. G, First Division, First Brigade, of the Fifth Michigan Volunteer Cavalry. He fought in approximately 25 battles, including those at Cold Harbor, Winchester, and Appomattox Court House, all in Virginia. Following the war, he may have lived near his home in Sharon Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan or perhaps in Saginaw, Michigan where his wife's parents had moved. Later, he may have lived in Ionia County, Michigan near or with his sister. It was there that he met Charlotte VanWick, a widow. In 1878 they were married and Hosea Bates lived the rest of his life in West Sebewa, Ionia County, Michigan. On several occasions, Nellie and her children went to visit Hosea. He died there in 1901, and is buried in the West Cemetery in Sebewa, Michigan.

During her lifetime, Nellie was close to three of her aunts, sisters of her deceased mother. They were Caroline (Moore) Lamson, with whom she had lived for several years immediately following her mother's death, and her mother's twin sisters, Cornelia (Moore) Cresswell and Cordelia (Moore) McCullen, all of whom lived in Saginaw, Michigan.

Nellie was fortunate to know her grandparents on her mother's side, Joseph Moore and Catherine (House) Moore. They lived first in Sharon Township, Michigan, and later in Saginaw, Michigan. Her grandfather died when Nellie was 18 years old, and her grandmother died six years after Nellie was married. Nellie was not quite so fortunate with her grandparents on her father's side of the family. Her grandfather, Joseph Bates, died in New York before the Bates family moved to Michigan, so Nellie never knew him. Her grandmother, Mary Ann (Eaton) Bates, lived near Nellie in Sharon Township, Michigan, but because Nellie left there to live in Oakland County, Michigan, at the age of five or six, she may not have seen her grandmother much after that. Mary Ann Bates died in 1869, when Nellie was only 8 years old.

The biography of Nellie Irene (Bates/Eaton) Thomas reveals that she did not have an easy life, and yet all of her poems reflect a very positive attitude. May this collection of her feelings and thoughts reflect not only on Nellie's life and times, but on her strong feelings of the importance of family, friends, and faith, and may her words inspire readers for years to come.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL

A Tiny Bit of Girl

Nellie Irene Bates Thomas
1861-1948



I thank thee for the answered prayers
When problems I did face,
For thou dost ever heed our call,
What ere the time or place.

1st

I dedicate this little book to my Children,
Grandchildren, and Great-Grandchildren—
hoping that in reading it, it may sometime
bring a kind thought of one who loved them
all very much.

2nd

One of my favorite Psalms is the one that is
called "The Traveler's Psalm" and as we are all
travelers from the time we enter this life until
its close, what a fine thing for us to commit and
use as a comfort and guide. It is the 121st Psalm.

3rd

My favorite book is "The Bible"; favorite occupation
"Home Keeper"; favorite amusement "Games." I love
my Church—and what it stands for, also Home, Reading,
Poetry, Music, and Children.

Nellie Irene Thomas

Editor's note:

At one time, Nellie gathered some of her poems in a "little
book," which apparently no longer exists. This may have
been the first page in that book.

Hopefully her wish that succeeding generations would read
her poems and "have a kind thought of one who loved them
all very much" has come true with this collection of her poems.

A Brief History of My Life – 1861 to 1944

Just eighty-three years ago, they say,
A baby girl saw first the light of day—
In Sharon, Michigan, October third, eighteen sixty-one,
When a war to free the slaves had just begun;
And candle-light was giving place to lamp of kerosene,
Which meant to all the greatest light, ever had been seen:
A tiny bit of girl, no warrior was she,
Gladly welcomed to her home in this land of the free.

Two years she stayed near where the mill-wheels turned,
'Ere the grim reaper took the one for whom this babe did yearn.
Then a dear aunt, with heart filled with love and care,
Ope'd wide her door, her busy home to share.
One year of this new home was hers to cherish
With love, and cousins dear, and food to nourish;
Then sorrow came, and heavy burdens pressed,
This baby girl must go to find another nest.
Long miles were traveled e'er they reached the goal:
A childless home, so filled with mother's soul
Of love and yearning over empty arms,
That life took on new beauty, added charms,
As she gathered this wee girlie to her breast
And asked her God for strength to do the rest.

And what a home, though humble, filled with all
That makes a child's life happy; a pretty dish, a big rag doll;
Rocked to sleep with song e'er placing in her trundle bed.
And as she older grew, all Nature was her playground:
The hills, the woods, the lake where the wintergreens were found.
Not a tree she could not climb or did not know their name
From mighty Oak to Hazelbush that grew on hill and plain.
Her playmates were the lambs that skipped on meadows wide,
And then came in, from storm or play, to rest at eventide;
Or watching birdies build their nests with things that they could bring—
Then count the eggs and "take a peek" until they found their wings.
In nutting time 'twas her delight to roam the country o'er,
And vie with squirrels, in their task—to lay in Winter's store.
One of the things she loved the best—be it sunshine there or rain
Was to go and get the cows and drive them up the lane.

The church—it was her pride and joy—the Sunday School, too,
Where she traveled every Sunday, her lessons there to do:
With her teachers, oh, so fine, and music and sweet song,
That taught her more about her God and how to shun the wrong.

And as time passed on, and those wonderful days—
There was a song in her soul that made music always!
To school this young miss went a mile a half each way—
Sunbonnet worn on the back of her neck every day.
Another change: the dear father passed on
To mingle his voice with the Heavenly throng.
The sad mother and child, who was still only nine,
Must seek a new home, at least for a time.
Several years quickly passed; another school must be found,
So to Pontiac they moved, 'twas the finest around.

E'er long came a man, the dear mother to claim,
And so, very soon they were moving again.
So many great changes as the years glided by:
The telephone entered, bringing neighbors so nigh.
Electric light soon stepped in with its power for our need,
To help lighten our labors, and heal the sick as decreed.

It was not very long e'er this maiden was grown—
Found a mate to her liking and they formed a new home.
From the fruits of that union, and welcomed with love,
Three blessings there came—sent from heaven above.
A girl and two boys, what treasures were they
Come to gladden their home along life's busy way.

Soon Henry Ford's horseless carriage made its bow, not a jest,
But a God-given need, sent all nations to bless.
Time passes as always with many changes to make;
For from weddings and death there is no escape.
The father and help-mate e'er long passed away—
He rests on the hillside in the sunshine's soft ray.
And the songs that in the soul of the woman did surge
Were still there, but sometimes they turned into a dirge.
At this period the Spanish War came
And gave us the slogan, "Remember the Maine!"
Soon travel took wings and decided to fly,
And made a great thoroughfare out of the sky.

The beloved mother then to her reward passed one day,
And soon the daughter to her own home went to stay;
It was lonely for those left to share in their home
When vacant chairs a mute language spoke all of their own.
To the mother life meant a round of duties to bear,
As she patiently worked for those placed in her care.
The burdens were heavy, the boys' needs must be met,
So they moved to the city more education to get.

The farm home was rented, to their sorrow they learned,
For 'twas not many seasons e'er their homestead was burned.
The place where they stood always empty will stand,
But the memories it holds are enshrined in the land.
In a few years, the radio, so welcome to all,
With its news of the world and sweet music on call.
Moving pictures were also another great treat
As we glimpse foreign countries and cities so neat.
Not many years passed and the boys were well grown,
And decided to make themselves homes of their own.
The daughter then offered her home she would share
A place of contentment free from worry and care.
And the music in her soul still kept the refrain
And filled her with peace again and again.
Weeks and years rolled by. God took one dear son,
But left one to comfort and help till her life work was done.

But darkness soon spread all over our land
As World War number one, decided to stand
And fight for a peace that never did come,
But instead, took our brave fathers, brothers, and sons.
In time, the Flu swept the country taking people so quick
The mother went to the hospital to help care for the sick.
A few months there, then an appointment to keep:
She left for Bay View, a new home there to seek.
They were happy years, with new friends, education, and pleasure,
With some travel thrown in to fill out the measure.

And now after nations filled with discord and pain
A great war is raging, in hopes to regain
The long looked-for Peace, to help make the world
A place of God's choosing with flags of victory unfurled.
The mother still spends summers in her own northern home,
But the winters will find her where'er she may roam.
Many years mark the changes since that babe's appearing;
As a great-grandmother now her body is wearying
But the music still singing in her soul is God-given,
And will abide till the gates open wide into Heaven.

Nellie I. Thomas,
Age eighty-three

Nellie and Her Blanket

You came to me at Xmas
With your lovely soft gray folds
To protect me from the rigors
Of the Winter waves of cold.

I patted you and hugged you
And showed you to my friends
Folded you gently into shape
So to your needs I'd tend.

I hung you nicely on a chair
Where I'd behold you ever
Then thought—I cannot leave you there
For dust you must get never.

So into the suitcase I bestowed
My pride and joy so dear
For if I couldn't see you there
I knew that you were near.

Then comes a letter from the giver
With instructions very clear,
Must keep you near me where I am,
For of harm I need not fear.

"Please put it on the back of chair
Whenever you sit down,
Or throw around your shoulders
So from cold you need not frown."

Just carry when you move around
For it is light you see,
You cannot injure—come what may
As it is good for years to be."

And then to cap it all, you know
What do you think she said
That I must lovingly unfold
And put you on my bed.

And now alas, what shall I do
These laws I must obey,
For when they are so kindly sent
I cannot say them nay.

So out of all those folds you come,
Into the light to stay,
To be my own safe bodyguard
From colds that come this way.

I never thought to be so rich
To have a guard "thrown round me"
I fear I'll be so puffed up
Others I'll scarcely see.

But dear old blanket, I do love you,
And the ones from which you came
And whether you are off or on
I'll always cherish just the same.

Bay View Nellie I. Thomas

Talk about surprises,

This surely was a gem,
I cannot really say how much
With just a feeble pen.
When someone said—a package
Was sure 'twas not for me
Until I saw the address
As plain as plain could be.

I worked with shaking fingers
To get the string untied
So finally got the scissors
And opened it up wide.
But when I saw the contents
Imagine my delight:
(Something I've always wanted
But couldn't reach it quite).

I took it from its wrappings
Its beauty I could see
I really felt like crying
It's far too nice for me.
So, when I come to use it
On my life's giddy stage
I'll not proclaim its beauties
But "trip and act my age."

When to the Church I take it
(For fear my mind will float
And shock our worthy speaker)
I'll slip it 'neath my coat,
So I won't prove the saying
Handed down to all
And given as a warning,
"Pride comes before a fall."

And so my dear, I thank you
For your "happy thought" to me
And hope that some kind friend
Will pass it on to thee
And may you find the cottage
With roses o'er the door
Contentment on the hearth—
With peace and love in store.

Editor's note:

A note written at the bottom of this poem,
not in Nellie's handwriting, says:
"To Miss Dickerman after sending purse."

My Thanks

I thank you more than I can say,
For that fine poem sent today.
I'd like to take you by the hand;
And tell you how I think it grand,
That you with all your busy days
Of writing verse—and hymns of praise
Should deign to spend some time on me
Who's getting old, and hard to see,
The cause I think might be in part,
The love for Grandmothers in your heart,
Or part perhaps you're full of thanks
That you are soon to join our ranks,
But be that as it may, my dear,
You've filled one heart with grateful cheer.
And I shall pray that many years,
Filled full of joys—not many tears,
Be granted in this work of love,
And crowned with blessings from above.

Editor's note:

About May 17, 1944, Anne Campbell of WWJ, a Detroit radio station, sent Nellie the poem printed below. The envelope was addressed to: Mrs. Nellie I. Thomas, 2209 Mackin, Flint, Michigan. In response, Nellie wrote the above poem, *My Thanks*.

"Grandma Goes to a Party"

By *Anne Campbell*

All of the children are fast asleep;
Tomorrow is school, and they keep good hours.
Father and mother are slumbering deep,
And the twins are as rosy as Grandma's flowers.
We're snug in our beds when there comes a din,
And I must get up to let Grandma in!

Grandma is eighty-five, and she
Has been gossiping over a cup of tea.
When you are old, there's so much to say
Of many a glamorous yesterday!
So many stories of kith and kin,
So I must get up to let Grandma in!

It's difficult when you're eighty-five
To see that the key gets into the door.
And when you're so happy to be alive,
You can sit up till midnight and even more
And feel it is just the right time to begin!
So I must get up to let Grandma in!

I Thank Thee

Another Birthday? Thank thee Lord
For care, and strength, and homes;
For guidance that I did not see;
And all the blessings known.

I thank thee for the answered prayers
When problems I did face,
For thou dost ever heed our call,
What'ere the time or place.

And so dear Lord, to thee I come
And heartfelt praises bring,
For all thy blessings—great and small
Thank thee, for everything.

Nellie I. Thomas

Editor's note:

At the bottom of this poem, Nellie wrote:
"Written on her 82nd birthday, Oct. 3^d 1943."

My Birthday–October 3, 1945

Yes, I'm twenty-five that is sure
And I'd hate to say just how many more
Am trying to celebrate in a quite unique way
For I'm flat on my back, and here I must stay.

I am usually hostess to friends great and small
With laughter and music and pleasure on call
Also cakes and candles and flowers so dear
You really would think old Santa was here.

My pastime today is the hurrying feet
As they pass up and down o'er the corridor neat.
My music, the cries of the little ones cute
As they enter their protests to the things that don't suit.

As to flowers, this is war time–takes too many to please,
So I watch the tree tops as they wave in the breeze.
Don't think I'm unhappy, I am thankful to God
That he still kept me safe through the rain and the fog.

Then there's Dr. Parks with his fine kindly face,
He's a sight for bad eyes on the gloomiest of days,
And we'll welcome his presence for the well or the sick,
But just make up your mind he'll have his way quick.

Yes, I'm 25 today and I leave you to guess
How many more added on will make up for the rest.

Grandmother

Editor's note:

A second copy of this poem is titled *My Birthday Letter to Marguerite*,
Lockwood Hospital, Age 84

BIRTHDAYS

Milestones of Life



Four generations
Nellie Bates Thomas, holding Suzanne Gillam
Katharine Thomas Roat (left) and Marguerite Roat Gillam

To My Son, John

A new milestone you've reached in your journey
Along life's great rugged highway,
But you swiftly pass on in your hurry
Remembering you've no time to stay.

But Old Father Time keeps the record
And holds in his hand the Hour Glass
He stands very firm and unyielding
And marks another year gone—as you pass.

This year the road has been harder,
Many pitfalls and snares for your feet
Sometimes you've been weary and troubled,
But felt that life's waters were deep.

But when it passed through quiet valleys,
With Sunshine and Flowers by the way,
Your soul would rise up with new vigor,
New strength for the needs of the day.

And you turn your face toward attainment,
Knowing not what the future may hold,
Content to press on in your effort—
Eyes steadfastly fixed on the goal.

And so my dear son, may you ever,
Push forward toward the high mark,
Until at the end of your journey
When you're called upon to embark.

May the guide who has ever been with you,
Take gently your hand and say, come
The long weary journey is over
You have now reached your Heavenly home.

Mother

Editor's note:

Written for John William Thomas, Nellie's son.
He was born June 5, 1886, in Genesee Co., Michigan.
He died of heart trouble April 17, 1918, at the age of 32.

Jack's Birthday Wishes

So you've found another birthday,
However that could be,
Strange how they seem to find you,
Whether on land or sea.

And each one a little older,
And they come to stay with you,
Knowing you cannot stop them,
No matter what you do.

But they are rather nice you know,
They always bring some token,
From those you hold so very dear,
Of love, and promises unbroken.

And so, God bless you my dear Jack,
Work hard, and make the old War boom,
For after all these old hard months,
There always comes a June.

Grandmother

Editor's note:

Since this poem is signed *Grandmother*,
it was probably written for one of the birthdays
of John "Jack" Thomas, who served in World War II.

Beautiful babe, How welcome are you

With your silky brown locks and your eyes of true blue,
Your sweet baby presence, that gladdens the home
Like a great benediction from Heaven sent down.

We welcome you here with hearts full of praise
And pray for safekeeping and great length of days
That you grow to strong manhood, stand for right unafraid
Ever following the footsteps of the Bethlehem Babe.

Great-Grandmother

*Ralph Herbert Gillam was baptized by Dr. W. R. Fruit, April 17, 1927.
The service was the regular Easter afternoon baptismal children's meeting
held in Court St. Church.*

Editor's note:

This poem and the baptism information appear in Ralph Gillam's baby book. Ralph Herbert Gillam was born October 24, 1926. The poem was written by Nellie, but the copy that is in Ralph's baby book is not in her handwriting.

Contentment

Why he's a real baby
With little pink toes
Pretty bright eyes
And a cute little nose.

A nice little face
With nary a care
Just filled with content
No burdens to bear.

A Mother to love
Doting Aunties so near
A proud happy Daddy
And Uncle so dear.

With Grandmothers "great"
And Grandmothers small
A nice little Cousin
Just within call.

No longer a "Pee Wee"
A baby full grown
Right in the midst
Of a dear happy home.

Could anything more
His young heart desire
This God-given baby
The miracle child.

Editor's note:

Nellie did not sign this poem, but
it is written in her handwriting.

Editor's note:

A note, not in Nellie's handwriting, says:
"Jack Lee, after incubator." Jack Lee Stevens
was Nellie's grandson, born May 30, 1935.

Our Baby

God sent us a bit of sunshine
Into our home one day,
We welcomed her with gladness
And hope she's come to stay.

Her middle name is Frances
Now beat it, if you can,
But as it seemed so very short
We christened her Suzanne.

To Ralph 'twas not so pleasing
So what did he there do,
But put on a real short cut-off
And called her "Sister Sue."

She's just the finest baby
To us in all the world,
And God knew when He sent her
How we longed for a little girl.

She has stolen our hearts already
With her innocent baby ways,
As she lies with eyes full of wonder
At things here where she stays.

And we pray the good Father to guide her
As she travels her journey of life,
May she scatter the blessings of sunshine
And help banish sorrow and strife.

Editor's note:

Written about Suzanne Frances Gillam
who was born April 16, 1941. Nellie did not sign
this poem, but it is written in her handwriting.

A Problem

Another birthday, that is true,
They come too fast for me and you,
In spite of all that has been said,
You seem to keep one day ahead,
Which makes you older, sure as fun,
And tends to make me feel quite young.
Please tell me why is all this haste,
I'm trailing on at my slow pace.
You rush to eat, and rush to play,
And rush to get at things, all day,
You rush to fish soon as it's light,
And rush to play the game at night,
But rushing doesn't change a fact
That I am still, – a lagging back.
You can't stop time, you plainly see
For you're yet one day ahead of me.

Mother Thomas
Petoskey, Oct. 2nd, 1940

Editor's note:

Nellie wrote this to her son-in-law, Jesse Roat.
His birthdate was October 2; Nellie's was October 3.

Welcome Little Stranger

Have you seen the new baby?
She's a darling they say,
Come to brighten the home
And shed Sunshine always.

A dear little cherub
Sent down from above
How they welcomed her coming
With hearts full of love.

Her cheeks are so pink,
And her eyes that's so blue
Must have caught the sky color
As she came through.

She is just what was wanted,
An angel of light
Though no wings are started
At least not in sight.

She was sent by the Father
To this earthly home
To bring joy and comfort
For ages to come.

May she grow in wisdom,
And in beauty arrayed;
May God shower blessings on
This dear sweet little maid.

Great Grandmother
Nellie I. Thomas

Editor's note:

Written about Patricia Irene O'Brien,
born April 14, 1944.

Five Years Old Today

Another birthday dear Suzanne
A most important one,
Five big round years you've been with us
And had such lots of fun.

But now you soon must start to learn
And to the School must go,
With other little girls and boys
Who would their lessons know.

You'll have to learn to read and spell
And write your name so neat
And draw some figures on your slate
And sing your songs so sweet.

So that is why your fifth birthday
Is the most important yet
To start you learning all good things
God meant for you to get.

Great-Grandmother Thomas
Age 84

Editor's note:

Written for Suzanne Gillam's 5th birthday,
April 16, 1946.

Dear Ralph

You have reached another milestone
On this busy road of life,
May it prove to be the greatest
In this unsettled world of strife.

May you set your goal the highest
For the coming months and years;
Trusting in God's strength to help you
You can never know a fear.

It will not be easy traveling
Past the many signs you'll see;
For the pleasures of the idlers,
Who do not care great men to be.

But with patience keep on plodding,
Hold on high your banner neat;
For t'will show to those who love you,
You will never know defeat.

For God's grace is all sufficient,
If you only trust in Him;
As you travel on this highway,
Be it bright or be it dim.

And so my dear, I wish for you
Many years of usefulness;
Each crowned with wisdom, love and peace
As you press on to win success.

Great Grandmother Thomas
Age 85 years

Written at Bay View, Michigan
October 24, 1946

Editor's note:

Written for Ralph Gillam's 20th birthday.
Also titled *Joining in Their Songs of Praise*.

Welcome J. D.

And so J. D. the third has come
We hope to stay
And may he bring both joy and peace
To you all way.
We all have longed for this event
When news so welcome could be sent;
And to our God our Prayers went
In grateful praise.

We wish for him a fearless life,
A soldier brave,
One who will work for God and man
The weak to save,
His footsteps may you help to guide
As he journeys through this world so wide;
That all may point and say with pride
There goes a Man.

Bay View

Nellie I. Thomas

Editor's note:

It is not known for whom or for what occasion
this poem was written.

Dear Friend,

You have reached another milestone
Along life's rugged way,
And the path is worn by travel
For their passing night and day.

But your footsteps are not weary
And your heart is ever light,
For you've been upheld and guided
All along in paths of right.

When you started on this journey,
You were very frail and small,
And the way was all so wondrous,
Trying, you would surely fall.

But the Mother's hands were ready
And the voice with loving words,
Breathing confidence and courage
That only her wee baby heard.

And the Father ever mindful
Of the dear ones sent to him,
Thoughtful, careful, working, planning
Until the weary eye grew dim.

So from babyhood, to girlhood,
Without a fear or care,
Plucking all along your pathway
Sweetest flowers growing there.

School days passed in quick succession,
And you find a Maiden now,
Very fair, with cheeks like roses,
Virtue stamped upon her brow.

Like the bee that sips the honey,
Like the flower that drinks the dew,
Came the man with step unfaltering,
This fair maiden then to woo.

Happy was their wedding morning,
Pure the words and golden band
That bound those true hearts together
To tread life's pathway hand in hand.

Never tired they of that journey
As the years rolled on a pace,
For love, the great enchanter,
At their fireside had a place.

But the way for one grew rugged,
Strength gave out and weakness came,
And he so weary gladly rested
Knowing well they'd meet again.

Years pass on, some clouds are lifted,
Over all a peaceful calm,
And each day brings sweetest promise
Of glad reunions yet to come.

But the waiting time's not wasted,
Life's too full for idlers here,
So you come with deeds of kindness
And your loving words of cheer.

And the future holds no terror
On either side of the strand,
For you're walking close and clinging
To your Heavenly Father's hand.

And so dear friend, glad wishes
I bring to you today,
Of happiness and joy and peace
And many years to stay
Where God has given so much to you,
Of blessings, tempered and true.

Editor's note:

Nellie did not sign this poem, but
it is written in her handwriting.

Editor's note:

Nellie did not indicate for whom she wrote this poem,
but it is possible that it was for her close friend,
Frances Case, usually called "Mrs. Dr. Case," or simply,
"Mrs. Case." She was the wife of Dr. Henry Case,
who died in 1908 in Flint, Michigan. Mrs. Case's
birthday was March 18. In Nellie's diary on March 9, 1931,
she wrote: "Got Mrs. Case's card and poem off today."

A Birthday

Ninety years old today
What a wonderful journey of life
On past the years allotted to man
In this world of struggle and strife.

And you still seem to be pushing ahead
And what is your goal? we have wondered,
I really believe you are planning to go,
Till you reach the good age of one hundred.

We all wish that the rest of your days
Be filled with contentment, comfort and peace,
And that showers of blessings enfold you
Until time brings the longed-for release.

Nellie I. Thomas

Editor's note:

It is not known for whom this poem was written.

Another glad milestone of life reached today

That marks the swift passing of years,
And time's-page as it slowly unrolls
Finds many joys, and perhaps a few tears.

Backward, you scarce see the first markers
For the haze of the distance is there
Gently spreading a soft filmy mantle
Over pleasures, and troubles, and cares,

But ahead, many milestones yet standing
Shine out in the path fair and bright
A promise of comfort and blessing
Contentment, and peace from the strife.

But it's not from the sunset they're gleaming,
But from the light of the glorious dawn,
That tells of the mansion in waiting,
And the Father to welcome you home.

So walk on, dear friend, down this pathway,
Sip all the sweets as you go,
For the Lord in his infinite wisdom,
Has surely intended it so.

Nellie I. Thomas

Editor's note:

A note, not in Nellie's handwriting, says:

"Mr. Durfee – 80th birthday."

He and Mrs. Durfee are mentioned many times in Nellie's diaries.

One diary entry gives an address as follows:

"Mrs. F. E. Durfee, Descanso Drive, Los Angelas, Calif."

ANNIVERSARIES

Ring Out, Ye Wedding Bells



Roat family at Jess and Kate's 50th wedding anniversary
Bob, Eleanor, Marguerite, Jess, Kate, Geraldine, Katharine, Betty

Silver Wedding Anniversary

Dearly beloved, we are gathered together here, in the sight of God and in the presence of these loved ones and friends, to celebrate the Silver Wedding Anniversary of Mr. and Mrs. Jesse L. Roat and to thank God for the twenty-five years of life together which He has vouchsafed unto them. We here reaffirm our confidence in the statement which they heard twenty-five years ago: that matrimony is an honorable estate, instituted of God in the time of man's innocency, signifying unto us the mystical union that exists between Christ and His Church; which holy estate he adorned and beautified with His presence, and the first miracle that he wrought, at the wedding in Cana of Galilee; and therefore is not to be entered into by any unadvisedly, but reverently, discreetly, and in the fear of God. Into this holy estate these two persons were joined, April 3, 1901.

Ring out, ye wedding bells, ring out,

For there is joy today:
A wedding twenty-five years old
Ye celebrate this day.
Friends pause a while to wish you joy
And for your blessing pray.

May all the Summer's fragrance
And all the Winter's cheer
And all the joys of life be lived
In this one day so dear;
Bring memories sweet, while time is kind,
With precious loved ones here.

Yes, ring the wedding bells today,
And let them joyous ring,
And drive all sadness far away;
For life is on the wing.
Oft times the Summer's flowering
Is sweeter than the Spring.

Prayer

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, who didst institute the holy estate of matrimony for the mutual help and comfort of thy children; we thank thee that thou hast preserved these, thy servants, through twenty-five years of married life until this . . .

Editor's note:

This text was used at the 25th wedding anniversary of Jesse and Katharine Roat on April 3, 1926. The service was given by Frank Fields at the Roats' Avon Street home. The poem for this celebration is in the handwriting of Nellie I. Thomas. This text was used again at their 50th anniversary in 1951. A note in Katharine Roat's handwriting indicates that the rest of the text was lost at that time.

I.

It's thirty-four years since they started together
By an old winding creek that ran hither and thither.
Then a year it slipped by, then opened the sky
And sweet Marguerite bid the angels goodbye.
She had dark curly hair and her eyes fairly shone
And her cheeks were as fair as the dresses in tone.

II.

Three summers skipped past and in May so 'tis said
Their girlie Geraldine poked in her dark head.
Although she was only a girl, and not a curl,
Yet her parents they took her without a cross word.

III.

Three times the leaves turned
And most had been burned
When Kitty Marie flew home to her tree.
She also was dark, And oh! how she did cry
You'd think they were having a storm in the sky.

IV.

And three winters they flew
The snow it sure blew
Then Eleanor the blonde came home to the nest.
Her blue eyes they did snap and her hair was all curls,
She sure was our idea of a sweet baby girl.

V.

Soon five falls had gone by
And the good stork, Oh my!
Came and tapped on their door
And shouted out loud, I've brought you one more.

VI.

These two they were shocked
Cause they now had a flock,
But poor Mary Eliz. was put in her crib
And there she grew big, till she now dances a jig.

VII.

Oh dear! My dad sighed
Take a peak at that sky
There's a foul flying west.
Though I hope for the best
I'm sure he is heading right for our front door.
We can take just one more, if it's only a boy,
Brown-eyed Robert had come, that just fulfilled his joy.

VIII.

Some years have gone swiftly
Since the last stork arrived,
And our grandmas and aunts
Have all nicely survived.

IX.

Poor mamma and dad have curbed every tide
They've mended our toys
And they've shared all our joys.
A cut thumb was taken to sweet mamma dear
While daddy pap helped us, from the lake, the fishes to clear.

X.

Now some years have passed
And their family grown fast.
They've met the best beaus
And they've walked down the aisle,
They've even gone South and helped sight crocodiles.

XI.

As I said from the start, it's been thirty-four years
And now is the time they should not have a fear.
Yet the banks they are closed,
And twice more they must go
And watch a proud senior receive a small roll
(Just something I think to paper the room).

XII.

Though their life's had some trials,
Yet I'm pretty darn sure
That we'll all lead a life
That's true-blue and more.

Editor's note:

This poem may not have been written by Nellie I. Thomas, however, it is included here due to the nature of the subject. The handwriting is not hers, and it is written from the viewpoint of one of the children of Jesse Levi Roat and Katharine Ellen Thomas in honor of their 34th wedding anniversary, April 3, 1935. It was found among Nellie's poems.

A Reminiscent

Just fifty years ago today
I brought you, a blushing bride
To the old home that stood on this very spot,
Where you and I would reside.
You were young and gay and full of life
While I was mature and strong,
But we seemed flying on golden wings
And all time was a happy song.

We started life's work with a cheerful view,
Together to stand or fall,
Determined what followed of good or ill
To cheerfully bear it all.
But times in those days were harder to share,
For the forests stood rugged and strong,
And the thing you heard most in pioneer life
Was the saw and the ax, all day long.

But soon fields came out where forests had stood
And the face of the old farm was changed,
For in place of the trees, came the hay and the grass
And acres of ripe golden grain.
There were long weary hours of struggle and toil
For the work was heavy the while,
But you always were there, a strong helping hand
And your bright encouraging smile.

Then the dear babies came, four in all, to our home
To add to our cares, and our joys,
Two wee little girls to meet mother's needs,
And for me, He sent the two boys.
For a while all was well, then God called one away,
How we missed him we never could tell,
But life ever flows on regardless of pain
Or of happenings—for good or for ill.

The years brought us changes, prosperity dawned,
Our children had left the home nest,
They had gone out as we did to build for themselves,
But we had to lay one more 'way to rest.
Then followed the fire, but that is all past,
Life's hardships are many and great,
The rush and the hurry are finished for us,
And we'll just bide our time while we wait.

The ancient "bellcon" has long since disappeared
As logging bees, quilting parties, and sugaring off,
The kerosene lamp, and the old tallow dip
Have given place to brilliant beams from aloft,
And to think, fifty years we've traveled this road
And all that time not been parted,
For we're resting today in the same dear old home
Where our own married life first was started.

It doesn't seem fifty years, how time has flown by,
Surely, these are not all yesterdays,
For our hearts are as young, and our feelings as true,
If these forms are Decembers, not Mays,
And you've been by my side all the way through, my dear,
And the best wife that ever was given,
And we'll go hand in hand all the rest of the way,
Till God calls us on up to Heaven.

Nellie I. Thomas

Editor's note:

This poem was written for the golden anniversary of
Levi Havilla Roat and Fanny Evelyn Coles, September 17, 1928.
It was apparently published in a Flint-area newspaper.

Sixty Years of Married Life
Dedicated to Mr. and Mrs. Levi H. Roat

Ten years have passed since last we gathered here
To celebrate the lives of these two loyal friends,
Ten years together, mid all the stress and toil,
That life has given, that duties well done send.

These years have brought their problems, and their joys,
Their times of sorrow, which none can ere escape,
But hand in hand they've traveled on together
With courage brave to muster any fate.

They have not journeyed all this way alone
For children, God's greatest gift to man
Have lingered ever near in love and tender care
Ready to give a needed helping hand.

So many changes have been met in passing,
Grandchildren great have gathered 'round their knees
To bring their baby smiles in happiness to greet them,
And little baby ways which never fail to please.

Changes that come to many have been kind to them
For they're still living in the same old spot
Where one of them was born, mid nature's wilds,
And brought to this his mate to share his lot.

Some friends have gone, but others filled the ranks
To gather 'round the fire with words of love to greet,
While modern modes of travel, took them many a mile,
New sights to see, keeping their spirits gay and sweet.

And so dear friends, we're glad to know you've reached
This milestone rare of sixty years together,
And wish to speed you on your way for many more,
Till God in his great love, calls you to Him forever.

Nellie I. Thomas

Editor's note:

Levi Havilla Roat and Fannie Evelyn (Coles) Roat celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on September 17, 1938.

Congratulations

Fifty years together
In calm and stormy weather
Ever pressing forward
 Day by day
Sometimes on the mountain
Drinking at the fountain
Of life's many blessings
 On your way.

Sometimes in the Valley
Where you tried to rally
From the shadows falling
 O'er your feet,
Hoping for the sunlight
To chase away the dark night
And bring once more the victories
 That were sweet.

And so you've journeyed on
As years have come and gone
Trusting to the hand
 That ever guides
Always hoping, working,
Never time for shirking,
Knowing that with Him,
 No ill betides.

And now I bring my greeting.
May years add to your keeping
As you sail on together
 Blessings anew—
Of peace and sweet content,
To join the many sent:
And so my friends may
 God speed you.

Editor's note:

Nellie did not sign this poem, but it is written in her handwriting. It is not known for whom Nellie wrote this poem.

A Reminiscence

Far into the years gone by when Mother Nature had her will,
And landscapes all were dotted with lakes, rivers, and the hills,
Where mighty great oaks raised their arms in defiance, so 'tis said,
While they flung on mossy blankets, their acorns green and red,
The Hickory and the Maple, Dogwood and stately Spruce
Each growing in the forests for some very special use,
Where bears, foxes, and the coons, the great recesses stirred;
With the whoo-whoop of the Owl, and the sweet song of the Bird
The notes of the wild Turkey's early echoes waked, and late,
As they gobbled out a message to their absent, wandering mates.
The drumming of the Partridge, the Whip-poor-will's clear call,
Were placed here in the woodland by the Father of us all.
Blazed trees throughout the forest, a pathway there did trace,
Where the lonely Circuit-Rider, filled with courage and much grace,
Took his way to lonely dwellers, to give them each the call;
Christ died for all the people, the greatest and the small.
And the axes of the wood-man were heard by wandering bands,
As they laid low some bee tree, or cleared the forest land.
Privations, they were many, but up-rose from out the ground
Through the throes of their endurance, the birth of a town
And how the place was needed, both for comforts and for trade,
And peopled with the finest stock our God has ever made.
There were two churches and a school, some stores and a mill,
A nice big pond for fishing, or grinding at their will,
A railroad passing through, with a few lone trains a day
Both a wonder and a joy as they traveled on their way.
Today upon a high hill, a homestead's standing still,
A reminder and a tribute to the parents by whose will
This home was made a haven and a help for all good work;
With its spacious doors wide open for the uses of the church.
There were meetings, and some suppers of old New England lore,
With pork and beans, and doughnuts, and pumpkin pies, and more,
And singing schools and music, donation parties, too,
Where they filled the parsonage pantry with the best that they could do.
And when the times were hardest, no money, or good notes,
There might have been some clothing and perhaps a nice warm coat.
A homestead without children doesn't always seem the best,
But in these, those loyal people had surely been most blessed.
There was Harve, and John, and Hiram, and little sister Mate,
With George and Joe, to write their names upon the family slate,
Oh yes! and there was Dan, who taught the public school:
And did not fear to use the stick when ere they broke the rule.

This was no modern family for there was work to do,
From early morn till milking time each did the task they knew.
One summer pastime that was theirs and they felt rather harsh,
Was to go and fill their pails in old huckleberry marsh.
The pranks these sturdy youngsters played, there surely was no end,
While the good old-fashioned games many pleasant hours did lend.
There were merry skating parties, Ducks and Geese played in the snow,
Then all piled on the home-made sleds and down the hills they'd go.
But those days have long since vanished and the dear ones scattered far,
Some have gone to join the parents where the many mansions are,
Others, various ways did journey, many miles did roam,
Ere they found the spot ideal 'round which their dreams had grown.
One there was who sought the city, seeking for his homing mate,
There to build their own foundations for the good of church and state.
In a royal home he found her, one lone bird in family nest:
But with parents, in whose keeping, she was one among the blessed.
Always shielded, counseled, guided, into paths of right and truth;
She was fitted for a help-mate, lovingly she gave her youth.
Time passed on, God blessed their union with one daughter and two sons,
Filled anew their hearts with gladness, binding closer to each one.
A half century has passed by, a golden marker reached,
Since they 'stablished them a home down on the city streets,
Now they're going on together, (for their children, ere too late
Have gone out new fields to conquer, new environments to make).
They have prospered on their journey, flowers have bloomed along their way,
From God's storehouse they have gathered, faith and hope to meet each day.
And the counsel and traditions of that early Christian home,
Are still upheld and followed, no matter where they roam.
Most kindly and most thoughtful are they in word and deed;
And ready with a helping hand to bring to those in need.
And so we wish them Godspeed, for many days and long—
As they travel toward the sunset, may they always "Carry on."

Nellie I. Thomas

Editor's note:

This poem was written by Nellie for the 50th wedding anniversary of her friends Harvey and Lillie Davis. She mentioned them many times in her diaries as Harve and Lil. On May 4 and May 9, 1932, she recorded that she was writing a poem for their Golden Wedding anniversary. On May 11th she said she had the poem back from the printers and had mailed it. Harvey and Lillie Davis lived in Detroit, Michigan.

FAMILY

We're Quite a Family



Roat family reunion at Lake Fenton, Michigan, May 31, 1953
Standing in back, left to right: Eleanor Roat O'Brien, Gordon Read, Roy Thomas, (hidden behind Roy, probably Jack Lee Stevens), Jesse Roat, Harold O'Brien, Lewis Gillam, Jack Stevens. Middle row: Mary Cooley Gillam, Lee Lannin Roat, Marty Read (behind Lee), Katharine "Kate" Thomas Roat, Geraldine Roat Yates, Suzanne Gillam, Celia Thomas (wife of Roy), Nancy Yates. Seated in front: Ralph Gillam holding daughter Linda, Karen Read, Robin Roat, Patricia O'Brien, Bob Roat.

Our Home Lodge Family

We miss our dear ones in this new and pleasant home
For they are far away where their Christmas fires they tend,
But we are happy in the thought no matter where they stay,
The roots of friendship twine around the hearts of new-found friends.

And so we're going to laugh and sing, and ring the Christmas bells,
And gather round the Christmas tree, as in the days of yore,
And lift our hearts in thankfulness that we live in a land
Where peace and love and Christian faith shall stand forever more.

We're quite a family you see
That gathers round our table
From busy Marguerite's kindly ways,
As she serves the food that's stable.

To Mrs. Bathrick's cheery smile
That we all hold so dear
Who'll gently raise the flag of peace,
Whenever clouds appear.

Here comes our Mrs. Newberry.
What luscious fruit her name suggests
And brings you thoughts of summer time
When things are at their best.

Then Mrs. Foster steps in next,
She gives a helping hand,
And carries trays and fixes flowers,
And covers water bottles grand.

Pa Gillam is a busy man
He's up and off so steady
You scarcely see him through the day,
Except when lunch is ready.

And as for Ralph, why he's our baby,
The youngest of the flock.
The whole house he must supervise
And fill in time with talk.

Livingston is a modest man
From him there's no self-praise
He doesn't even tell us
When he gets a good big raise.

Poor Bill, he has his troubles
So many lassies to attend
I don't know how he's coming out
Unless his ways he mends.

Of Jamerson I warn you all
Be careful as you can.
If into mischief you should get
He'd sure report to Uncle Sam.

Of Grandma may I say a word
She's really not much good
At wiping dishes she might shine,
But would she? if she could.

Last but not least comes Blanche,
With her ever-helping hand
She likes to have her little chats
As she serves the family band.

Now this little celebration brings back memories so dear
Of what we used to be and do with loved ones round the hearth
Of stories told and games we played, and mistletoe hung low
Of jingling sleigh bells as we rode, and filled with joy and mirth.

Ages have gone for some of us, but still we're moving on.
While younger travelers on life's path press forward without fears,
To them we'll gladly say "Godspeed, push onward to your goal,
With many a Merry Christmas, and life blessed with happy years."

Mrs. Nellie I. Thomas
502 East Lake Street
Petoskey, Michigan
Christmas 1940

Editor's note:

"Home Lodge" was the boarding house owned and operated by Lewis and Marguerite Gillam. It was located at 502 East Lake Street in Petoskey, Michigan. The poem was typed on stationery with this letterhead:

War Department
Jeffersonville Quartermaster Depot
Jeffersonville, Indiana

Flint Aug 22-1895

My Dear Kate,

It seems a long time since you went away,
But to you, I suppose, it seems only a day.
I hope you arrived at your journey's end safe,
And found Uncle Henry, with smile on his face,
At the Depot, awaiting, with turnout so neat,
To take you to his home on Mt. Clemens St.
I thought of you much, through that long hot, afternoon,
And hoped from the heat, you would both get there soon.
I wondered if you were at ease in the car,
And if you lost your ticket, or occasioned a jar,
For you know you felt sure, something wrong would occur
If you rode on the cars, for what if there were
People riding all day and all night on their fare,
They surely were safe if you were not there.
How have I got along since you left that day?
In just about the same old sort of a way,
With dishes to wash, and scrubbing to do,
And Churning, and washing, and Ironing too.
Then baking the bread, and the cakes and the pies,
And half the time trying to keep out the flies.
The same afternoon that you went away,
Irene was real sick, and had to give up her play.
The chills and the fever both did her up quite,
And I had to take care of her, all through the night.
But with "Sage tea" and "Quinine" and things good for ills,
I soon stopped the fever, and broke up the chills.
And now she is playing as happy as ever
With first Johnie, then Roy, then all three together.
To Church, Sunday morning, Father, Johnie and Roy
Went, and left Irene and I with none to annoy,
But to Sunday school he would not let the boys stay,
As Mr. Lyons talked too long to suit him that day.
But next Sunday we vowed, that we'd all go and leave him
And let him get the dinner and keep house, for that reason.
On Monday, a letter I got from aunt Nean.
She has been out to Ithaca, and Sadie has seen.
She has a beautiful home, and most elegant gifts,
And now they are living in wonderful bliss.
Tonight your aunt Mary called for a short time,
And we discussed weather, and all that was fine.
Mrs. Rockwood tomorrow will start on her journey,
And Ed will return to his Dr.'s quite early.

Of your friends from the Court St. I've not had a sight,
But Rena was down a few minutes last night.
I've not had time to play one game of Croquet,
The grass has grown on the lawn since you went away.
The mixed flowers are fading, they'll soon go to seed,
The Verbenas are lovely, there's one a bright red.
More beautiful Morning glories, 'twould be hard to find,
There were forty this morning, and six different kinds.
The Mignonette holds up its head high as ever,
And the Pansys stand modestly by in their cover.
The "dear little Trilby" has learned something sweet,
For when she wants milk, I have taught her to speak.
Pluck, Patience, and Push, get along quite the same,
But Patience will crowd, in spite of her name.
I think I have written now, more than I ought
And will draw to a close, but oh; I forgot,
Give my love to all who would like to see me,
But tell them if they do, they must come where I be.
All the mistakes you find, when this you peruse,
Please remember who wrote it, and kindly excuse.
I received from you one letter, and now look for another,
So write it up quick and oblige—Your own Mother.

Nellie I. Thomas

Editor's note:

Irene - Refers to Irene Crawford, who at the time was about 8 years old. She was the daughter of Edith Thomas and Frank Crawford. Edith Thomas was the sister of Nellie's husband, William Isaac Thomas.

Johnie & Roy - Refers to Nellie's sons, and Kate's brothers, John William Thomas about age 9 and Roy Cresswell Thomas about age 5.

Aunt Nean - Refers to Nellie's aunt, Cornelia Moore, wife of Thomas Cresswell. They lived in Saginaw, Michigan.

Sadie - Refers to Sarah "Sadie" Cresswell, Nellie's 1st cousin, wife of Warren Altenburg. Sarah was the daughter of Cornelia Moore Cresswell. They lived in Ithaca, Michigan.

Aunt Mary - Refers to Mary Thomas, wife of Harvey Steegar. Mary Thomas was the sister of Nellie's husband, William Isaac Thomas.

A School Episode—An Apology

This afternoon in English class
My lessons I allowed to pass,
And for this foolishness of mine
I had to stay a longer time.

She gave me fifteen lines to learn
Before our meeting did adjourn,
It surely caused me much dismay,
Was sure 'twould take me half a day.

I did not like this plan at all
So to the others I did call
And laughed and whistled half the time
Instead of studying on the lines.

When this poor conduct I did use
I quickly found myself excused
My absence from my room to seek
And not return again that week.

For this my teacher I didn't blame
She's just as lovely all the same
For actions bad up to the last
She had to send me from the class.

For this I s'pose I'll 'pologize
For that's the thing that's good and wise
So please consider this just now
And with that done I'll make my bow.

Editor's note:

Nellie did not sign this poem, but it is written in her handwriting. Also, across the edge of this poem, is the name *John W. Thomas* in her handwriting. That probably referred to either her son or her grandson.

Yes, the house on the homestead is gone, my dear

The place that to us was so grand,
There's naught but a pile of ashes
Where the dear old home used to stand.

We can enter in at the doorway
And pass through its rooms no more
Or hear the patter of footsteps
As they pass o'er the oaken floor.

Where G-pa and G-ma were welcome
And loved by us, one and all
Until they left, so near together
To answer the Master's call.

Where goodwill and hospitality centered
And the stranger was welcomed and fed
And if need be was sheltered and cheered
And given a good comfortable bed.

The school teachers loved our old homestead
As a refuge at the close of the day
After lessons and problems and questions
They could leave all behind and there stay.

There was music—perhaps not the greatest
But 'twas sweet to our listening ears
As they raised happy voices in singing
To the sweet tones of the organ.

Editor's note:

This poem was written about Nellie's home on Lapeer Road, which was destroyed by fire sometime after 1901. Jesse Roat and Katharine Thomas were married there on April 3, 1901. "G-pa and G-ma" refers to Catherine (McQuigg) Thomas, Kate's step-grandmother, who died December 16, 1900, and John D. Thomas, Kate's grandfather, who died May 27, 1901. Although she did not sign her name, it is in her handwriting.

My Dear Granddaughter

Your brief epistle I received
And sure was pleased to hear,
So glad to know you think of me
As I do you, my dear.

There was one thought that gave me pain
Among the things you told,
To know that you "Had need of me,"
And also "Had a cold."

Just now you see I could not come,
I'm sure that's what you mean,
To hold your head, and wash your face
And keep your kerchiefs clean.
Please do not let yourself infer
I do not wish to do,
That in itself would grieve me much
And add more care to you.

You say "You need some blessed sleep"
That "Studying" takes your time,
You find your classes "Interesting"
But "Tiresome for their kind."

The meals are "Nourishing," Oh, yes.
You thank me for the "Gift,"
"Sorry I am not with you,"
Sure, and has it come to this,
That out of all your glorious life
Of health, and strength, and joy,
There is one need that you can find,
One part mixed with alloy?

But that is a delusion, dear,
For I am old-passé,
You've simply put me in the place
Of someone young and gay.
One who will come with stalwart tread
With head held high, and brave,
With conscience clear and morals clean,
No simpering fool or knave.
Perhaps he will be one of those
Who in "Athletics" shine
And can the lusty football kick
And get it home on time.

They tell me "Music hath its charms"
And "Soothes the weary breast"
It may be some musician fine
Will lull your heart to rest.

But when that hero doth appear
To which you twain will cleave,
Make sure he finds the very best
It is your power to give.

The gift I sent I hope you like
Life is a traveled road,
Some miss the way and do not know
They cannot go alone.
Christ walked to Emmaus on the way
With two disciples dear,
He wants to walk that way with you
To guide, uphold, and cheer.

I had a lovely treat last night
For which I know you'd long,
'Twas Freda Hemple gave it us
In Classic and Folk song.
In costume, she was Jenny Lind
Gave her "Bird" and "Echo" songs,
A "Joyous Easter Hymn" poured forth
In voice clear, sweet, and strong.
One reason I wished her to hear,
(I know I made a horrid din)
But when a girl I always sang
And Uncle called me Jenny Lind.

You say, "When ere your ship comes in"
"You'll come and see me," Oh, how fine,
I hope it won't get lost at sea
And never reach you, same as mine.

Last night we had a fall of snow,
It covered every bush and tree,
A sight so very beautiful,
I only wished that you could see.
Your sight would farther reach than mine,
(For youth you know is always boasting),
"A battle royal with snowballs,"
"And such a lovely time for coasting."

Well, dear, I haven't any news,
A very quiet family we,
My patient now is doing fine
A fact we're all so glad to see.

Don't let your parties, frats, and teas,
Take all your time from "string and bow,"
Tell Mr. Poz to push you hard,
I wish you to play "first" you know.
And now I feel it's time that I
Should quench this rhythmic spirit, lover,
So with best wishes and much love
I sign myself—Your Own Grandmother.

Saginaw, February 19, 1926

Editor's note:

An envelope with this poem dated February 19, 1926, is addressed to:

Geraldine Frances Roat
Olivet College
Olivet, Michigan

The return address is:

1931 South Washington Avenue
Saginaw, Michigan

Nellie's diary for February 17, 1926, said:
"Finished my poetic letter to Gerry today."

Miss Geraldine F. Roat
S. S. Duchess of York
Supposedly on the Ocean

Bay View June 16, 1929

Dearest Granddaughter Geraldine,

I am back in Bay View, as you already know,
Where the birds sing sweet songs and the shrill whistles blow.
You'd love it this morning, if you only were here,
For the sun's warm and bright and the air is so clear.
Mr. Robin is singing just outside the door,
And you hear the waves humming as they lap on the shore.
The grass is so green, the flowers so sweet,
Your heart sings for joy, your spirit rises to meet
The Great Father of all, with thanksgiving and praise
That He gave us these blessings to brighten our days.

You should see the cottage, it looks very fine,
And I wonder sometimes if it really is mine,
With its dress of cream-white touched with ribbons of green,
Tan brown on the porches and steps to be seen.
I feel very clean and enjoy honest pride
In the rooms painted white upon the inside.

This is the Sabbath, a glorious day,
My plans were to rise early, and then wend my way
To the church in Petoskey and worship a while
With the saints and the sinners, some from many a mile.
And join with them there in song and in prayer
To the dear Heavenly Father for his wonderful care,
But how weak is the flesh, how unsettled the will,
I rose at six thirty, went downstairs very still,

To be continued

Synopsis

Have already mentioned my arrival in Bay View,
The beauties of the place, including the cottage at Bk. 22,
Lot 8, and my intentions for the Sabbath day,
And started to state how I failed...

Part II.

And with orange juice promptly to myself did I cater,
Then back up to bed with pencil and paper,
And started this letter, for fear I'd forget,
With this mountain of work, so much to do yet,
The things I would say, and freshen your mind,
On dear old Bay View, where the streets crook and wind

Through the trees and the shadows and sunshine so bright,
We all love it dearly and think it's just right.

We have two times this summer from which we can choose,
Petoskey the fast time, in Bay View we lose
Just one precious hour as we travel the mile
To go to the city and stay there a while,
And if to some function we might be invited
We'd have to get there, before we were started.
There's one grand thing about it, I'd sure have you know,
I go to bed by the fast time, and get up by the slow.
That sounds rather lazy, but it's hours enough quite,
To weary the body, long ere it comes night,
For with scrubbing and cleaning and painting, and all
That there is to be done, and making some calls,
Fixing my flower bed and setting out plants,
Starting the window box, and mending my pants.

To be continued

I am just as busy as busy as busy can be
Till there's aches in my bones so I hardly can see.
Then there's baking and cooking, and building the fires,
And sweeping and dusting, all a person desires
To keep them from mischief, and very sedate,
Not too modernistic, Oh my! What a fate.
So you see I'm kept busy, yes that is the rub,
For I'm talking of joining the Shuffle Board Club.

Part III.

The Post Office is open, so is also the store,
And the vendors are coming around to the door.
Next week we have preaching, and the library soon,
Our S. S. Superintendent will be young Allen McCune,
The one in the office with the black hair, you know,
Who keeps the newspapers and tells folks where to go.
Yes, Bay View is all ready for another fine year
With its lectures, and concerts and music so dear,
Its golf and its tennis, its schools and the rest,
We hope of all seasons, this will sure be the best.

I take it for granted all went as you planned,
Your trip a success as you passed through the land,
With your hands on the wheel, Claude by your side,
Your heart filled with joy, it sure was some ride.
I would like to have been there to see you embark,

Or better still to my liking, in your trip take a part,
But as that cannot happen, we'll have to agree.

To be continued

I believe the family heroine of this letter,
After having been duly informed of the beauties,
The prospects, and some of the current news of Bay View,
Had arrived at the place where she was to embark
And was about to make some agreement with the writer.

Conclusion

That she observe for both, and describe it to me,
For from me you inherit this traveling emotion.
It's always been my desire to cross over the ocean
And when flying machines take you 'cross for a dime,
I expect to indulge this great craving of mine.
I imagine I see you, and my heart's all a quiver,
As you go proudly sailing down the St. Lawrence River
To the great ocean, where you're caught on the crest
Of the waves that come rolling from the great mother's breast.
And I fancy your being is thrilled, and in awe
You stand watching, and think of the wonderful law
Made by our Father, who ne'er slumbers nor sleeps,
And is caring for those on the face of the deep.
And you feel some like Noah with the water all 'round,
You look for the dove—long for land to be found.
You think of the centuries that are gone, one by one,
That has brought man these changes, to show what can be done
As time moves ever onward—such is the decree,
To discover new wonders, more blessings to be.

But I must pass on, time presses me close,
I see the scene changing, as things change at most,
The ocean grows boisterous, high wind prevails,
Your limbs feel unsteady—your heart in you quails.
Gone for now is the romance, to the berth is the wish,
Oh! I never knew such misery was in "feeding the fish,"
But there's one thankful thought, though you did come to grief,
Be glad that you didn't have to wear the false teeth.
With this I must leave you as my letter grows long,
Hoping much time will be spent in laughter and song.
May good health cheer you onward, trust God's love divine,
Bon voyage to you dear, is the best wish of mine.

Grandmother
Nellie I. Thomas

FRIENDS

Neighbors We Meet



Nellie Bates Thomas with Mrs. Dr. Case.

Nellie spent much time with her friend, Frances A. Case of Flint, Michigan. They enjoyed traveling together, including places in Florida and the West. Frances was the widow of Dr. Henry R. Case and she was known, at least to the Roat family, as "Mrs. Dr. Case."

Our Community Sing

Oh, that is the place where we all like to be,
Where neighbors we meet, and many strangers we see,
Where we have such an evening of frolic and fun,
The meeting is over before it's fairly begun.
Where the Newells, and Deals, and lots I don't know,
Help keep the ball rolling and make it a go
With Mrs. Covert and Tryon who sure do their part
To charm all the audience when their music they start.

Then Mrs. Norton, so busy, who handles with care
The many announcements for others to share,
Our Pastor and wife, by their presence do grace
Through their smiles and their help, sweet charm to this place.
The Zeiglers and Browns we welcome and love,
Their ladies so fine were sure sent from above,
The men a benediction, with long years of praise,
May we follow in their steps to pattern our ways.

And the young people, how fine, we need every one,
As we need sunshine and flowers, a days work well done.
How they brighten the place, how their voices do ring,
As they vie with the birds in the songs that they sing.
There are many more friends, but we can't name them all,
Some large, some medium, some short and some tall,
And they all lend their help in ways they best may,
To aid in these pleasures at the close of the day.

There is one more I should mention, and he's not so slow,
For he starts us all off with his greeting, "Hello"–
"Hurry up, get the key, start right on the dot"
"You can't run to catch up" and "'twill help us a lot,"
"For the more we get together, the happier are we,"
"It helps me to know you, and you to know me."
He's a great entertainer, for he takes us all out
To visit the Country, on a nice rural route,
To McDonald's old farm, where they keep lots of chicks,
With turkeys and ducks, plenty of hay in the ricks,
And "Three big fat crows," sitting round on a tree
Flapped their wings and cried, you sure can't get me.

Then we "Follow the Gleam" to "Solomon Levi's Store"
But "Keep in de Middle ob de Road," "Now the Day is O'er,"
For "Day is Dying in the West," the "Lower Lights Be Burning"
"I've Been Working on De Railroad" and to "Home Sweet Home" we're turning.
Then "In the Gloaming," with his "Darling Nellie Gray"
He'll have "Loves Old Sweet Song," and "Dixie Land" Look-a-Way.
Then bring "Dem Golden Slippers," "I'se a Singing Sweet and Low"
When "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep" I "Lightly Row."
"A Mighty Fortress is Our God" and says "Abide With Me,"
"So Carry Your Cross With a Smile" and wave, "Flag of the Free."
Now like Columbus, I surely could "Sail On"
But like "Uncle Ned" I'll "Steal Away" or it will soon be dawn.
To our leader, "Smile the While," you've served us grandly here,
"Going Away" won't be so long, your return, we'll greet with a cheer.
"Blest be the Tie" that binds him, "If Your Heart Keeps Right"
It's "Auld Lang Syne" to you friend, and to all a hearty "Good Night."

Editor's note:

This poem is in Nellie's handwriting and she wrote the title as
Our Community Sing. She or someone else wrote the word Coronado
under the word Community. This may have referred to Coronado
Methodist Church in New Smyrna Beach, Florida.

The Travelers

I know a couple, strange to say
She drives her husband every day
To first one thing and then another
And he takes it like a great big brother.
Now don't misunderstand me please
And I'll proceed your mind to ease;
For they're the finest couple ever
And would not disagree—no never.
For traveling is their pleasure fete
And with their outfit all so neat,
He is in sweet accord and pleasure real
For he knows his Sally's at the wheel.

They've wandered 'round this country grand
O'er mountain peaks and through low land.
Three times they've crossed the Rockies high
And feasted their eyes on the ocean so nigh.
Passed great groves whose fragrant blooms
Gave promise of luscious fruit coming so soon.
Through cities great they'd wend their way,
Where 'twould be pleasant for them to stay.
'Cross rivers deep and o'er lonesome trail,
Where, if they wish it, no friendly hail.
But serene and calm through "woe or weal"
Sits unafraid, this Pal—for his Sally's at the wheel.

But sometimes comes trouble and they need some repairs,
Things are not always easy in this old world of ours.
So they choose a rare climate near children and friends
Where new life and vigor in the elements blend,
And they tarry a while for quiet and rest,
Where the anglers find pleasure in all that is best.
But after a while they'll start out once more
To try out new trails, see sights they'll adore.
And we wish them "Godspeed" on their way ideal
And feel they'll be safe—for Sally'll be at the wheel.

Nellie I. Thomas
Age 84

Tom Brenneman

A very helpful way is this
To make my call on you
But seeing you are so far away
It's the best that I can do.

You like the people and the homage
That you receive each day,
After breakfasting at Sardies
To put on your little play.

I like your jolly pleasant puns
They put to flight the old man blues
For good clean fun is always wholesome,
And things like that the people choose.

I listen to your unique program
With mind that is sometimes vexed
And then I wonder to myself
What are you saying next.

Be kind to the aged, their journey is long,
To see you they come full of hope
Say something nice to fill them with cheer
For life isn't all a big joke.

As for kisses, methinks your supply would wear out,
You are giving so many away.
Some seem to think they would be a great treat
But everyone to his taste I would say.

Now as for hats, there are all types,
On them they nothing lack
And people always do enjoy
When you put on the monkey act.

I am not writing for an orchid,
Nor can I try for a wishing ring new
So we'll leave it for just what it is
A friendly call by letter, on you.

And now I expect the time has arrived
For to you my age to confess,
In Sharon, Michigan, 1861, I was born,
I am sure you can guess the rest.

Now I think it's time I said goodbye
In the words that memory brings
As a dear old friend meant to say farewell
"Success to you in all good things."

Don't let the public make you think
A president you might be
For your place is making others happy
And brings joy and contentment as you see.

Editor's note:

Nellie did not sign this poem, but it is written in her handwriting. Part of this poem may be missing. It was pieced together from separate handwritten notes. Two lines on the bottom of the second page were not transcribed as they are believed to be extraneous.

Tom Breneman hosted a popular morning radio show called "Breakfast in Hollywood" from 1941 to 1948. The audience-participation show, broadcast from Sardi's Hollywood Restaurant, had a mostly female audience, some of whom wore outlandish hats, seeking to be interviewed. Breneman was known for his sarcastic comments, especially about the age of his guests. Nellie misspelled Breneman and Sardi's, but otherwise apparently captured the style of the program and its host Tom Breneman.

Ode to the Doctor

He comes when pain lays its hot hand on our brow
And our bodies are racked till we moan,
We find that all our best efforts have failed,
And we can not endure it alone.

How we list for his coming; we hardly can wait,
For the sound of his car in the drive,
Till he opens the door, walks in with a smile,
And we're thankful once more we're alive.

How selfless a life a Doctor must lead,
As he gives, till he cannot give more
Of his strength and his skill and talent to aid,
And he would not turn one from his door.

They worked for this goal, long years of their time,
Through hardships and struggles severe,
They "boned" through the night till the "wee small hours"
Put aside many things that were dear.

It took moral courage to press ever on,
With pleasures and charm to allure,
Ere reaching the place where they sought to begin
With "Powder and pill box" to cure.

A friend of the family, our doctors should be,
They help carry our lives in their hands,
Their presence is soothing, companionship dear,
Bound to us through afflictions strong bands.

So may God bless the Doctors, wherever they are,
And fill them with reverence and grace,
Equip them with patience and strength as they serve,
With their best, the great human race.

Nellie I. Thomas

I Wonder Who He Is

There is a man in Durham town,
Of very goodly size,
He's rather slender, to be sure,
But over six feet high.

This is a very busy man.
He works from morn till night,
By waiting on the passers by,
And satisfies them quite.

He deals out tea, and coffee too,
With a very willing hand,
Along with beans and sauerkraut,
And many things that's canned.

He smiles so sweetly if you buy,
But just be hanging round,
And not a single purchase make,
He'll pass you with a frown.

He loves to wait on pretty girls,
And chat with them a while,
He never would look cross at them
But greets them with a smile.

Still, he must very modest be,
As time would indicate,
For he's let several years slip by
Without choosing him a mate.

Perhaps that's on his mind just now,
As he plays those tuneful strains,
His heart speaks through the witching bow
The things his lips refrain.

Some day this man will waken up,
And he'll surprise you all.
For when he starts to do a thing,
His actions are not small.

So now my friend, I'll say no more,
For surely you need rest,
But who this Durham man can be,
I'll leave with you to guess.

Editor's note:

In Nellie's handwriting are two comments regarding this poem:
"Written on behalf of the young people of The Progressive Club
in California," and "Written for a social in California. The
young man was trying to take me out. I laughed at him."

A letter written to a friend in California

I wonder if for a letter your looking,
Well, here it is prompt to a day,
I try not to keep you long waiting
Although I have not much to say,
But true friends like to get an epistle
That comes from a loved one 'tis true,
For if there isn't much in it,
It's a token from that one, to you.

I wonder, is California now sunny
And warm with the flowers blooming sweet,
And does the rain come in showers,
For your climate is sure hard to beat.
Much different is our State, at present
She is wrapped in a mantle of white,
Is closely tucked round the grasses and tree trunks,
Of the earth you get never a sight.

The lakes and the rivers are covered
With a beautiful floor made of ice
So shiny and bright and so tempting
To those who think skating is nice.
And I wish you could see those bright youngsters
With heads high and cheeks all aglow,
Muffled up to the chin in big sweaters
As away down the smooth ice they go.

It makes us most wish we were younger,
Then we too could join in their play,
And it turns our thoughts backward, far backward,
To the times when we, many a day
Have romped with the lads and lassies,
Gone after the cows down the lane,
Chased the squirrels, climbed the trees up in the yard,
And looked after the lambs when they came.

But we wouldn't care to always stay that way,
Our lives are too short for all play,
Father Time stands with beckoning finger
But allows us to pause on our way.
So we are moving along life's great pathway
Which sometimes with flowers is strewn,
And we pluck a few blossoms in passing,
Softly singing some gay little tune.

Or perhaps the flowers are all vanished
And the song long since gone from our life,
And our hearts, and all earth seems so dreary
As we face disappointment and strife,
But the good God who keeps us from falling,
Holds us close in a loving embrace,
And we still feel that life is worth living
And the best we must do in our place.

But there I must stop looking backward
For no news have I told you as yet,
It has started to raining this evening
And everything outside is quite wet.
There's a birthday surprise in Jess father,
And daughter and husband have gone,
So I'm all alone with the children
And they can't go out in the throng.

So you see I'm improving the quiet
And writing this letter to you,
Although I suppose you're so busy,
You would rather there be but a few.
There's a Missionary meeting this P.M.,
Home and Foreign and all Flint combined,
To decorate the Church was Kate's mission,
Act as usher and all things of that kind.

I'm not feeling as well as I might be
But when Spring comes, hope soon to revive,
Rather think I'm a good deal like Nature,
The warm weather makes all things alive.
I do hope you are feeling much better
But really don't work too hard dear,
You know you're so very ambitious,
You'll overdo and get sick I much fear.

I suppose that poor sister's quite lonesome
With Papa [?]* gone so far far from home,
She tells me she's been very busy
And most of the time stays alone.
Well it's time I had finished this message,
I think I have quite had my say,
So good night, when I get your next letter,
Will start this one out on it's way.

***Editor's note:**

This word or name is not legible.

If you need something warm to cover your hands
Or ties to make you look pretty,
A nightshirt to put on for your modesty's sake
Or a dayshirt to make you more fitly,
Just take these few dimes and make your own choice
Of whatever you think you'd like best
It will please me far better than trying myself
For to me 'twould be Timothy's Quest.

Editor's note:

Nellie did not sign this poem, but it is written in her handwriting.
The poem was apparently enclosed with a gift of money
to someone. It is not known what "Timothy's Quest" meant.

RELIGION

On the Wings of Faith

My Faith -

I see but one step ahead
As I enter the coming year
But what seems dark in the distance
May brighten as I draw near.

For the one who cares for his children
Will watch as the Shepherd of old
To guide and direct their foot steps
As the days and the weeks unfold,

So I press on with faith unshaken
That out of the dark and unrest
Which my hand held fast in my father's
He will guide me to all that is best.

Bay View Nellie S. Thomas
Age 85.

Poem "My Faith"
when Nellie was 85
Bay View, Michigan

Nellie Bates Thomas
at Trinity Church
St. Petersburg, Florida



My Faith

I see but one step ahead
As I enter the coming year,
But what seems dark in the distance
May brighten as I draw near.

For the one who cares for his children
Will watch as the Shepherd of old,
To guide and direct their footsteps
As the days and the weeks unfold.

So I press on with faith unshaken
That out of the dark and unrest,
With my hand held fast in my Father's
He will guide me to all that is best.

Bay View
Age 85

Nellie I. Thomas

Editor's note:

A second copy of this poem is typed and says:
"1947 Coronado Beach, Florida," and "West Branch, Michigan."

A Morning Prayer

There comes a time in the early morn
When we from sleep are free,
Our thoughts go out in praise and prayer
On the wings of faith to Thee.

In praise, that Thou as ever
Did'st guard us through the night,
And hold us in Thy keeping
Until the morning light.

In prayer, that Thou will guide us
Throughout the coming day,
To walk as Thou would have us
In the straight and narrow way.

Nellie I. Thomas

Our Shepherd

We cannot walk alone,
We need God's hand to guide;
He's promised shelter from the storm
If we in His love abide.

For He is our Shepherd dear
And knows our every need;
Better than we can understand,
If we will only heed.

We cannot, without help,
Hope any goal to make,
It is too great a burden
For us alone to undertake.

For to many pastures green
He will turn our weary feet,
To rest beside the waters still,
New courage there to seek.

And so no evil can we fear
For we'll not go alone;
Through the valley and the shadow
To our eternal home.

For His goodness and His mercy
Has kept us all our days,
And in God's house we'll dwell forever
Joining in the songs of praise.

Bay View Nellie I. Thomas

Editor's note:

This poem was pasted on the back of a newspaper article which said that a poem, "The Good Shepherd," was read by Mrs. Lewis Gillam at an event and had been written by her grandmother, Mrs. Nellie I. Thomas. Another copy of the poem was stapled to a letter dated March 3, 1947, to Nellie in Coronado Beach, Florida, from William O. Moulton, who was pastor of the Court Street Methodist Church in Flint, Michigan. When Nellie signed the poem she wrote "Bay View" which referred to Bay View, Michigan. The titles "The Good Shepherd," and "Our Shepherd" appear to be the same poem.

My Mites

My mites you see are very small,
But I just love to give
To help the little Indian babes
And show them how to live.

For many moons ago, they had
No home, or church, or school
So that is why we come to-day
To learn the Golden Rule.

Written April 25, 1933
By Great-Grandmother
Mrs. Nellie I. Thomas

Spoken at Home Guard Meeting
Mrs. Claude L. Yates - Leader

Spoken at Flint District Convention
Junior Hour, May 16, 1933

W.H.M.S. Court Street Church
May 23, 1933
[Women's Home Missionary Society]

My Easter Offering

"Now Junior," Mother said one day
"Your birthday is quite near
I have a little gift for you
That may seem rather queer.
I have six lovely fowls
And I shall give you these
The income shall be all your own
To do with as you please."

I fed those hens all winter
And listened day by day
To hear them give the warning
That they'd begun to lay.
I hunted in the hay loft
And underneath the barn
And looked in almost every place
Around that little farm.

But find an egg I couldn't
And I discouraged grew
The price was sailing upward
And I got pretty blue.
'Twas nearly time for marbles
My jackknife I had lost
And then I wanted roller skates
But my! How they did cost.

I coaxed them and I petted
And called each one by name
And gave them all the dainty bits
But it was just the same.
For they just proudly strutted
And looked so very nice
As if they thought of all the fowls
They'd surely take the prize.

Well, just three weeks 'fore Easter
One morning I awoke
With such a racket in my ear
I scarce could make it out.
When all at once I shouted
"Those hens, they sure have laid"
I hustled then into my clothes
And down the stairs I made.

Nor stopped until I reached the barn
And there upon the hay
I saw the nicest great big eggs
That any hens could lay.
I tell you I was thankful
And I could almost fly
To think of all the jolly things
Those eggs were going to buy.

And as I sat there thinking
Some way it came to me
Of what our minister had said
About our Easter day.
How we should save our money
And bring it in to pay
To send the gospel message
To children far away.

For they were sick and starving
And couldn't read or write
Or didn't have the Bible
To tell them what was right.
No one to tell of Jesus
And how He died to save
Or how He loved the children
And made them strong and brave.

And so I just decided
All eggs to save until that week
And sell them to the store man
For all that I could get
And take the money Sunday
My! That just made me sing
And that is how I came to get
My Easter Offering.

Editor's note:

Nellie did not sign this poem,
but it is written in her handwriting.

The Answer
A true incident

A little boy sat thinking
Quite forgetful of his play
His head was resting on his hand
His look intent, and far away.

We watched him closely for a while,
Not saying any word,
Wondering what could be his thoughts;
Yet not caring to disturb.

At last he turned to Mother,
And met her look most kind,
"I don't see when I get to Heaven
How ever you I'll find."

"For there'll be such lots of people
I'll get lost before—Oh, well,
(A happy thought had struck him)
I'll ask Jesus, He can tell."

Nellie I. Thomas

Editor's note:

A note, written in Nellie's handwriting, says:
"Published in Michigan Christian Adv. over 40 years ago."

A Soliloquy

I stood on the sands of the ocean beach,
And watched the tides come in;
Some with a calm and stately roll
And some with a crash and a din.

And I thought, how long have they been on their way
And what of the place whence they came
Was it a land of sunshine and flowers
Or one of depression and pain.

And I wondered if they brought us a message
From our neighbors across the waves,
Would it be a friendly greeting
Or a call from their country brave.

Would they tell of starving children,
And plead for the help we can give,
And pray us to hasten our coming
That their poor dying babies may live.

For the Father has wonderfully blest us
With lands for production and thrift
And God-fearing people who labored
As stewards, to work and not drift.

And so we must listen as brothers
To the calls that come to our land,
From the poor, the sick, and the needy
If we would have peace that will stand.

For our God said "Do unto others
Even as we would they do unto us"
And in so doing we oft get the Blessing
When trying in our Father to trust.

And so we will send back a message
On the deep ever restless waves
Of Jesus our Savior and Friend
Who died that the world He might save.

And He will bless our efforts to help
As we work all together for peace.
And the world has been conquered for Christ
And wars shall eternally cease.

*Written in Florida sitting on the beach at Coronado
looking out over the Atlantic Ocean, 1947.*

Nellie I. Thomas

Christmas Everywhere

This is Christmas in the world
Christmas made for all
For the poor and lowly ones
For the great and small.

Christmas in the mansions
Yuletide fires and silken frocks
It's Christmas in the cottage
Santa filling little socks.

Christmas in the foreign lands
Where there is no toy
But the story of the Christ child
Fills their hearts with joy.

There is Christmas in the Southland
Where there is no ice and snow
But thoughts about the shepherds
Sets all their hearts aglow.

And it's Christmas on the highway
In the thronging busy mart
But the dearest truest Christmas
Is the Christmas in the heart.

It is Christmas in the Northland
Where the snow and cold are driven
But what I would like to know is
Is it Christmas up in Heaven?

Nellie I. Thomas, 1944

Editor's note:

There is a handwritten copy of this poem which says:
"by Nellie I. Thomas," but the handwriting is not hers.
However, the fourth verse has a correction that does
look like Nellie's handwriting. There is also a typed
copy which says: "by Nellie I. Thomas, 1944."

The Legend of the Merrygold

When the three Wise men followed
the Star to where the Christ child lay,
a little homeless boy heard them talking
and followed along after,
and when they came to the C-child
and saw the beautiful presents they gave him,
his heart was very sad
that he had nothing to give him.
So he ran outside
and gathered up a handful of snow
and took in and gave into Mary's hand,
and as she took it, the snow disappeared
and in her hand was a beautiful rose.
He just gazed entranced
but said nothing to anyone.
Years passed, the boy grew into a bad wicked man.
The next time he saw Mary
they had crucified her Son
and taken Him down off the cross and the . . .

Editor's note:

The rest of this poem was apparently lost, so it is not known if Nellie signed it, but it is written in her handwriting. The poem is in prose form, but transcribed in poetry style for easier reading.

A Reverie
Nellie I. Thomas

If Jesus were present, what would He have us do.
And what would He say to us all,
Would He bid us go hence, we"ar no children of His,
That we did not respond to His call.

Would He pass us on by where we proffered ourselves,
To help in His work day by day,
Or scornfully say as we afford our goods,
To be out of His sight, and away.

Would He still use the lash, as in days long ago,
When people the Temple defiled
If He came to our church, and sat in our pews,
To list to the sermon so mild?

Oh no! not our God, the Savior of all,
Who loved, and died, and has risen,
Who blessed little children the multitudes brought,
Said, Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.

He will not bid us "go hence," for did He not say
Come to me all ye weary and rest,
Take upon you my yoke, I'll teach you the way,
To do everything that is best.

How He praised the poor widow who brought in her all,
Said our tenth unto Him did belong,
To carry the message, God so loved the world,
To help save the people from wrong.

The Good Book teaches—that our God is love
He is full of forgiveness and peace,
He would shelter us all right under His wings,
And share in our joys and our griefs,

And so in our lives may we hallow His name
And help that His kingdom may come
And throughout all the world in these troublesome days
May we pray that His will may be done.

Editor's note:

At the bottom of this poem, Nellie wrote:
"Written in Florida after listening to a sermon that didn't just please me."

A Verse for Infant Department

We thank Thee, dear Father for Sundays,

We thank Thee for Sunshine and play,

We thank Thee for Daddies and Mothers,

To help us do right every day.

Editor's note:

Nellie did not sign this poem,
but it is written in her handwriting.

The Little Primitive Church

We found the little struggling church
For which we'd started out in search.
Upon a corner it did stand
Right in a bed of deep white sand.
We'd left the City quite far back--
Our feelings said, if not the fact,
For visit it we thought we must
If covered were our clothes with dust.
When we arrived--so very still,
And found so few of places filled,
We could not think that those were all
'Twould listen to the bells sweet call.
A little band at first appears
They call themselves the Volunteers.
Each one was doing what he could
By Scripture verse, and lesson good
The Young People there to bring,
For Bible study and to sing.

But soon the place was running o'er,
With Tourists front, and 'round the door,
And we began to think about,
Their own folks being crowded out.
But soon someone began to read
Regardless of our Church or creed.
The hymn, two lines the Pastor read,
So they'd remember what was said.
Then how they sang, short meter, long,
Was joined together in that song.
Their bodies swayed, their groans were deep,
And time kept beating with their feet.
They clapped their hands and closed their eyes,
Sang as if working for a prize.

Up got one brother by the desk,
"All things are good but dis am best,
Our Parson poah, de Church am small,
A good collection now from all,
For you am rich, yes, eb'ry one,
And twenty dollars am de sum
That we mus' have, to las' a month,
Out ob de pockets ob dis bunch.
I'd lock de doah, an take de key,
And ne'er de outside would you see,

Until dat money we hab got.
But don't you see, dares sich a lot,
Fo' our Church am so mighty thin,
Jes' half the people can get in.

So while we pass de hat in heah,
Some odder brudder'll pass it dare."
Mid songs and groans the hat went round,
And money counted--all 'twas found,
Then once again he faced the crowd,
"Only foah-fifty you've allowed.
Once moah around da hat mus' go.
You all can help, and will, I know,
We's mighty poah, dare now, I've said it,
We's sing for cash, but preach our credit."
At last the sum desired was raised,
Mid groans, and shouts, and songs of praise.

Up rose the Preacher then to teach,
Finding his text, began to preach.
He talked to them of duties many,
And they must leave undone, not any,
His exhortation was most clear,
"That each should do the duty near,
And only those who did partake
Of bread and wine, their souls to wake,
Could take the long white towel neat,
And humbly wash each other's feet.
For that to them was saving power,
That o'er all other things did tower."

The sermon was not very long,
For work was there as well as song.
The Sacrament was ready spread
Soon all did taste the wine and bread.
One bench was turned for privacy,
And in two rows sat, modestly
The ladies of the favored few
Who would this worship now go through.
One man and woman then were placed,
With towels girded 'round each waist,
And each one to their kind was sent,
That they might know what service meant.

As soon as each was done, he rose
And to another one transposed
His outfit small of cloth and water,
Unto the next--for son or daughter.
And all the while they labored so
Great songs were sung--no one would know.
There came announcements, Rally Day
Would be observed and all may pay,
The men two dollars, sure must come,
While ladies were let off at one.
The visitors their help could lend
By any number up to ten.

A Shoe Social there would be
To help raise the Pastor's salary,
And they were urged to heed the call,
'Twas at the Parsonage held for all,
One cent a number for each size.
If some wore tens, 'twould be a prize
And greatly help their needs so many,
When added to their pile of pennies.

"Now one more thing and den we go,
So please all line up in a row,
And gib de hand ob fellowship,
To eb'ry one, with good strong grip."
The music started, so did they,
And circled round and round the way
Led by one brother black and tall,
Whose voice was heard above them all.
Over and over the songs he sang,
Louder and louder their voices rang,
As they danced and stamped and felt the Power,
Swayed by the spirit of the hour.
The Preacher standing back, looked on
With shining face, demeanor calm,
But when he thought time to postpone it,
They all were quiet in a moment.
They were sinners and earnest quite
Their motives strong to do the right.
And as they left, they felt that day
They'd worshiped in the proper way.

Nellie I. Thomas

Editor's note:

At the bottom, believed to be the handwriting of Katharine (Thomas) Roat,
is the word "Florida."

Welcome, thrice welcome, dear friends one and all.

So glad you are with us, that you answered the call,
And show by your presence so loyal and true
That "Court St." and its pastor still mean much to you.

We treasure you in our church, boys and girls just grown older.
You have fought a good fight, like all Christian soldiers,
And like all good soldiers who welcome no pause,
You are still ready to fight, for God and the cause.

It is your work and your prayers along life's highway
That has helped in the past and has brought us today
To this greater equipment for service and praise,
To lead others to walk in the dear Master's ways.

All battles must end and the soldiers so blest,
Are granted a furlough—to go home and rest,
Our furlough is coming, oh, what joy us awaits
For our journey will end at the Heavenly Gates.

So welcome, thrice welcome, we're glad you are here,
With your hearts full of love, and your smile full of cheer,
An inspiration to all, a blessing always,
And may God bless and keep you, forever and aye.

Nellie Irene Thomas

Editor's note:

According to Nellie's diary entry on January 28, 1930, she was asked by Dr. Fruit, pastor of Court Street Methodist Church, Flint, Michigan, to write a poem for the Old Peoples Day, which she did and read it at the event on February 5, 1930, per her diary. It may have been this poem.

Dedication of the Church House

Yes, we really have a church house, after all the years of thought;
And of fussing and of fretting, and of knowing that we ought.
We've put our shoulder to the wheel, and pushed with all our might,
Until the thing we couldn't see, soon dawned upon our sight.
We counseled, and we labored, and prayed both day and night;
To get the project started, and make it come just right;
More room we surely had to have, we felt the need each day,
More space to do our training, and a place where we could play.

Our boys and girls are just as fine as any to be found,
But where to give them space, was a question most profound.
The Master says, "To bring the children, all, into the fold,"
Into the sunshine of His love, where none are lost or cold,
For there are many little ones that we should gather in
And many many girls and boys whose souls we hope to win,
And there are poor, and out of work, who have no Christian faith;
No blessed promises of help, and in no Church a place,
But Christ has said, "Unto the least" of all this human tide,
Now let us show that unto them, our doors are open wide.
And so we come with grateful hearts, to those who heard the call,
For we have a new church house, and room enough for all.

To many it meant sacrifice, and give until it hurt,
And all their energies and time, were put into the work.
Many had no time to give, but worked while yet 't'was light;
And brought their income of the toil, e'en to the widow's mite;
And placed it on the altar, along with all the rest—
To be worked into the building of "The house that God loves best."

I'm glad that in the changes, our Church was left to stand,
For we love its very presence, and the thoughts on every hand;
Of the dear ones who have worshiped, and have passed from out the door,
Not lost to those remaining, only just gone on before.
And we think, what a reunion it will be, when we all meet—
And recall our sweetest memories from our blessed old Court Street.
How the bride, who at the altar, plighted vows of love and troth,
E'er they traveled on together, to experience farther off,
And the precious little babies, whom the parents love so much,
Brought to get a taste of Heaven in that pure baptismal touch.
Best of all, was when our loved ones, kneeling, found their sins forgiven,
And went out like Christian soldiers, to lead others on to Heaven.
So you see, with all the memories twined around these sacred walls,
How we welcome this addition, for it means more answered calls;
To the tasks that we are doing as we strive from day to day;
Working in the Master's vineyard, pointing to the Heavenly way.

But the struggle is not over, there are still more heights to climb,
More of sacrifice and trials, more of energy and time.
We must aid our much-loved pastor, and help uphold his hands,
In all his undertakings as he leads this Court Street band.
For, "By their Fruits," ye know them, means more to us today;
As we see the load they've carried in a brave and cheerful way.

To all the members of our church, a challenge he has given,
As in the past—to "carry on" with cheerful mien, and not be driven—
By stress of progress to be made, in things, both difficult and nice,
To lose ourselves and thus crowd out the spirit of the Christ,
To live aright, and do our best, this is the lesson taught.
Then we would show, the "In His Name," in the pattern we have wrought.

Nellie I. Thomas

Editor's note:

In 1929, Court Street Methodist Church undertook an ambitious remodeling and construction program. According to a history of the church, the work included "remodeling the Sunday School room or Chapel and building a new unit and a five-room bungalow for the caretaker." The new building was known as the "Church House." The typed copy with Nellie's signature has no title at the top. A second typed copy says: "The peoma [sic] I am going to read was rote [sic] for this occasion by me, written for Dedication of the Church House."

I belong to the Ladies Aid

Of the Oak Park M. E. Church,
And if you find a better one
For it you'll have to search.

We had a meeting not long since
As most aids have to do
If they're going to keep the spirit up
And the dollars and cents up too.

And at that meeting it was agreed
Some money we'd have to earn
To keep our machinery running smooth
And give the wheels a turn.

And so we decided, we had best
An Experience Social try—
When every lady a dollar should earn,
To help on the work, by and by.

And then I tell you, my troubles began,
For what in the world could I do.
I racked my poor brain, from morning till night
And in the meantime, time flew,

Till all of a sudden I awoke to the fact
That something right soon, must be done.
So I declared war, and hoisted the flag,
And pushed to the front on the run.

My Son-in-law said, he would give me ten cents.
Would I get out of bed, when he spoke
But he didn't know how in earnest I was,
So 'twas my first money—no joke.

But from that time on, the family have learned,
And to their very great dismay,
Extra services rendered, which then was a joy
They nearly all now have to pay.

For the boarder, all buttons and rips to be sewed
Meant a few cents for them out of pocket
Or perhaps extra washing, or errands to do.
Why, you never saw any thing like it.

When once I got started, the money I'd earn,
For first one thing, and then for another,
The car fares I saved, where I once used to ride,
But still I confess,—'twas a bother."

Then yesterday morning, some cookies I baked,
And peddled them out, 'mong the neighbors,
And smiled to myself as the pennies I took,
Mine while I acknowledged the favors.

My last earnings came at a party last eve,
The Hostess was then very tired.
I did all the dishes from glasses to pan
And was glad of a chance to be hired.

For the Aid, there is one thing I have to regret,
In tendering my services to her,
That I didn't start and push into the work
And be earning those pennies, much sooner.

But then, don't you know, I never had tried,
And didn't know I could be so thrifty
For here, upon counting, instead of one dollar,
I find I have One dollar fifty.

Editor's note:

This poem is written in the handwriting of Nellie I. Thomas
on stationery that says,

*Jesse L. Roat, Dealer in Staple and Fancy Groceries,
Flint, Mich., 801 Newall Street, Bell 'Phone 930 - L.*

Based on city directory information in 1909 and 1910,
the Roats operated a grocery at 801 Newall Street.

A few questions on Bible characters taken alphabetically

=A=

The first man: Adam

The first high priest: Aaron

Charming widow, David's 2nd wife: Abigail

Handsome prince who lost his life because he needed a haircut: Absalom

=B=

False prophet whose ass rebuked him: Balaam

Beautiful woman who lost her soldier husband by exposing her charms while bathing and seen by David: Bath-sheba

Eligible bachelor who married a lovely widow who literally threw herself at his feet—not his head: Boaz

Who was their famous great-grandson: David

=C=

The first fratricide, his heartless question to the Lord, "Am I my brother's keeper?": Cain

One of the two spies who entered Canaan: Caleb

=D=

Who was thrown into the lion's den: Daniel

Who slew the giant, Goliath: David

What woman was a judge of Israel: Deborah

Who gave her husband a haircut as a piece of treachery: Delilah

=E=

Our first ancestress who did not have a mother-in-law, (No criticism here): Eve

Who went to Heaven in a fiery chariot: Elijah

Who sold his birthright for a bowl of good smelling soup: Esau

Lovely Jewess who married the great Persian King Ahasuerus: Esther (Hadassah)

[Note: Apparently nothing written for F]

=G=

Who conquered the Midianites with three hundred soldiers, broke their pitchers with lamps inside, shouting: Gideon

Name one of the two archangels who appeared to Daniel and later to the Virgin Mary: Gabriel

=H=

One of Noah's sons: Ham

Ancestor of an Egyptian King of Lyre who furnished material to King Solomon for the Temple: Hiram

What woman was a Prophetess: Huldah

Name the great enemy of the Jews in Persia: Haman

=I=

One of the major prophets: Isaiah
Son of Hagar, Abraham's bondmaid: Ishmael
His son of promise by Sarah: Isaac

=J=

One of the first twins born: Jacob
Wicked queen of Israel: Jezebel
One of David's generals, his nephew: Joab
A patient sufferer from boils: Job
A temporary lodger in a big fish: Jonah
A synonym for a virtuous man, he was sold by his eleven jealous brothers: Joseph

=K=

Father of Saul, first King of Israel: Kish
Abraham's second wife: Keturah
One of Job's lovely daughters: Keren-happuch

=L=

One of Jacob's twelve sons: Levi
Father of Leah and Rachel: Laban
Abraham's nephew whose wife turned into a pillar of salt: Lot

=M=

Who was called the great lawgiver: Moses
Last prophet in the Old Testament: Malachi
The oldest man, great-grandfather of Noah: Methuselah
Queen Esther's cousin, her foster father: Mordecai

=N=

The leprous Syrian general who Elisha cured: Naaman
A mighty hunter: Nimrod
An obedient man who built the ark: Noah
How old was he when he began and finished it: 500 years when he began,
600 years when he finished. How many were saved in it: Eight souls
The prophet who reproved King David: Nathan

=O=

Son of Boaz and Ruth: Obed
Another daughter-in-law of Naomi: Orpah

=P=

Name of Joseph's master whose wife enticed Joseph to sin: Potiphar
Son of Judah and Tamar, his daughter-in-law: Pharez

[Note: Apparently nothing written for Q]

=R=

Name of the woman innkeeper who led the two spies sent by Joshua to Jericho: Rahab - ancestress of Jesus, as she later married Salmon, prince of Judah
Beloved wife of Jacob: Rachel
Eldest son of Jacob and Leah: Reuben
Son and successor of Solomon under whom the kingdom was divided: Rehoboam

=S=

First king of Israel: Saul
A judge of Israel who was the strongest man in body: Samson
Hannah's son, last of the judges: Samuel
Meaning of his name, "Asked of God," the wisest man: Solomon
How many proverbs did Solomon write: 1000
What other books: Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon
How many wives and concubines did his harem contain: 700 wives, 300 concubines, not counting his latest love, Queen of Sheba
Name of Adam and Eve's third son: Seth
Name of Noah's son, ancestor of the Jews: Shem

=T=

Father of Abraham: Terah
A judge of Israel: Tola

=U=

Name of husband of Bathsheba whom David perfidiously had killed, one of his thirty mighty men: Uriah the Hittite
David was a man after God's own heart, save in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.
When the Ark of the Covenant was being brought back to Israel from the Philistines on a cart drawn by lowing cows, who stumbled, who steadied it, and was struck dead by God: Uzzah

=V=

Name of Ahasuerus' queen who refused to display her beauty to the 1000 drunken lords and captains at the great Persian banquet in the Palace of Susa: Vashti

[Note: Apparently nothing written for W, X, and Y]

=Z=

High priest in David's reign: Zadok
Son of Jacob and Leah: Zebulun
Wife of Moses: Zipporah
Wife of Haman: Zeresh
Leah's maid given to Jacob and the mother of Gad and Asher: Zilpah.
"Asher" means happy. "Gad" means fortune
Name of the prince of Judah who led the Israelites back to Judah from Babylon: Zerubbabel
Last king of Judah: Zedekiah

PLACES

God's Great Out-of-Doors



Nellie I. Thomas and her granddaughter, Eleanor Roat
In the summer of 1920, the Roat family traveled to California and stayed a year. Eleanor initially stayed behind with Nellie because of illness. In December 1920, Nellie and Eleanor took the train to join the rest of the family. In California, as in Michigan, the Roat family enjoyed the great outdoors.

Our Bay View Sunsets

Oh beautiful sunset, how radiantly bright,
As you gather the twilights to bid them good night
We are charmed with the pictures you weave in the west,
In your visions of splendor—ere going to rest,
For you catch here a shimmer of azure and gold,
Then with it the white fleecy cloud you will hold,
You call to the sunbeams to give of their best
Ere nature enfolds them in her bosom to rest,
And the sun fairies dance on the shadows of night
Flinging back fleeting moments of glorious light
In the darts of the Sun God whose quiver is filled
With the drops of her glory by cupids distilled,
Till the gates swing ajar, and you seem to behold,
Bright glimpses of mansions and streets of pure gold,
The river of life, the great angelic throng,
A radiant Christ on the heavenly throne.
And you gaze on entranced, lost in wonder so deep,
Till the dusk shadows gently and quietly creep
O'er the face of the waters, and your vision grows dim
As night draws her curtain—all earth seems a hymn,
And you reverently bow in the hush of the day,
In God's great out of doors—with all nature—to pray.

April 20-1925

Nellie I. Thomas, Bay View

Editor's note:

A second copy is from a printing in the *Bay View Bulletin*, Bay View, Michigan, page 7. The date is handwritten at the top as May 1927, written by either Nellie or perhaps her daughter, Kate Thomas Roat.

Ode To Our State

Oh could I paint the landscape o'er
With brush inspired by beauties Queen,
Or try to add by magic touch
New grandeurs yet to us unseen.

My brush would fail thus to portray
Things I would try to do,
While magic art would lose its power
To waken things anew.

For never was a touch so great,
Or painting, home, abroad,
As that of nature's great out-doors,
Inspired by nature's God.

And you may wander where you will,
Where shines the silv'ry moon,
And you'll find nothing to surpass
Our Michigan in June.

Nellie I. Thomas

Editor's note:

A second copy is titled, "*To Michigan.*"

Our Michigan

When GOD created this "Old World",
With the part called Michigan,
HE smiled, and thought HE would surprise
The human race again.
And so HE formed the hills with strength,
Made prettiest valleys ever seen,
And grew upon them mighty oaks,
White birch, and lovely evergreen.
With lakes that shimmer in the Sun,
Where fishing is so neat,
And rivers winding in and out
And many flowers sweet;
And then to make it more complete,
Place Ozone in the air for food—
To build frail bodies, steady nerves,
And then, pronounced it, "GOOD".

Nellie I. Thomas
Bay View

Editor's note:

There is a handwritten copy that has some differences.
It titles the poem "Michigan." A typed copy, titles
the poem "Our Michigan," used for the above text.

"Ma Goes To Florida"

Nellie I. Thomas

Now Ma, you go git busy,
A fixin' up your clothes.
We're goin' to take you to the South,
Past where the cotton grows.
You're shakin' and a shiverin';
And hangin' round the heat,
You'll surely git the rheumatiz-
Or ague in your feet.
And soon the snow'll be comin'
As you know it allers do,
And that will shet you in the house,
Where you'll likely have the flu.

And so they kept a urgin',
And a pleadin' that 'twas best,
Till I thot I better do it,
Jest to give myself a rest.
So I got my things around me,
When a voice come up the stair,
"Now Ma, don't take a lot of junk,
Cos we're goin' in the car."

Well, that kinder got me fussin',
To know what I best leave out-
For there's my old red flannels,
I sure couldn't do with-out,
And them over-shoes, and woolen socks,
And outing night gowns, I can't spare,
(I'd cut them high falutin' things
The girls all like to wear).
There's my big coat for rainy days,
Oh! sakes, What shall I do?
Tryin' to put a lot of things,
Where there's only room for few.

Well, we finally got started,
Folks and luggage piled in tight-
Scared I couldn't shet my eyes,
Fer fear I'd tumble something lite,
Then I thot I'd heered it said:
"Don't borry trouble, if you do;
You give as your scurity
Your peace of mind, "and that's shure true."

So I sot still—I couldn't stir,
And watched what I could see.
As we jumped along them 'cadam roads
As frisky as could be.
When I saw them folks a workin',
Where there uster be a drouth—
I jest felt kinder sorry
'Cause they wasn't going south.

And them thar cities we went in,
I knew we'd ne'er get out,
For folks kept holdin' up their hands,
I don't know what 'twere all about.
But when I seen them mountains,
I shore did hold my breath.
We went up and down, and round and through,
Till I thot, and still we're left.
And them big things a standin' there,
Since God had built this Globe,
I just knew Noah couldn't drown,
When there on top he rode.

And then, came along them cabins,
With not a winder for the light,
And littled ragged younguns;
Oh, Lord, it can't be right.
And I a goin' to Florida:
To have peace and heart-content,
I'd oughter think more 'bout them folks
'Fore all my money's spent.
Then when we druv 'mong all them trees,
It sure gave me a stumpins,
With fruit just lyin' on the ground,
Some looked as big as pumpkins.
But they told me it was Grapefruit
Jist like I et at home.
Lands, I never did expect to see
Right where they had them sown
And then, smellin' them there flowers,
Orange blossoms too, they said,
I don't wonder all them weddeners
Likes to wear 'em on their heads.

We jest kept right on a goin'
'Till I was plum done out,
A watchin' all them pretty sights
I'd never even dreamed about.
I wondered when they'd ever stop
And if the ocean we could see,
'Till sudden, come the likenest place
I said, this here's good enough for me.
Fer I see'd a great big 'banner,
It said, "Welcome", when we come,
And 'twas mighty nice of them,
For it made us feel to-hum.
Then we see'd the finest folks—
Saw the churches all around,
I jest thought I'd most struck Heaven
'Cos 'twas such a pretty town.
They said, I'd find "Florida Crackers"
But I declare it was just corn pone.
For I can't see no difference
From those I'd et right home.
I think the Lord, when He made this arth,
Thot He'd fix this State some better
So he growed all these flowers and trees
And made it a little mite wetter,
And then told the sun to keep it all warm
So people could caper and play
Where they don't slip on the ice and snow
And I tell yer, here's where I'se 'er plannin' to stay!

A Triple City Lyric

Fair Triple Cities of the South,
Sun Kissed and Ocean sprayed,
Lulled by the murmur of its waves
By God's own hand obeyed.

You rear your lofty Oaks on high,
Mist beautiful to view,
Festooned with mosses, limb and branch,
And Kissed by Heaven's dew.

Your Palms so grand, wave in the breeze,
Or stand in stately pride,
While over yonder past its banks,
You watch the river glide.

You offer quietude and rest
To those who seek your shore,
Unnumbered beauties everywhere,
To see, is to adore.

Great bridges span your river wide,
Yachts on her bosom float,
Swift white-winged Planes invade the air
Its progress to denote.

Each Triple City has its charm,
By Nature given, or man endowed,
The salt breeze floating over all,
And over all the sun and cloud.

We wander through the shady streets,
Or join the idle passing throng,
Watching the beauties of the hour,
Or listening to the birds' sweet song.

But best of all your charms to me,
Placed by the Father's hand,
Is great Old Ocean rolling in
Wave upon wave, upon the sand.

I care not what its mood may be,
Whether of calm or storm it tells,
My heart is stirred by God's great power.
I know "He doeth all things well."

Nellie I. Thomas

Editor's note:

The Triple Cities mentioned refers to the Florida cities of St. Petersburg, Tampa, and Clearwater.

Editor's note:

The following poem was apparently published in a St. Petersburg, Florida, newspaper.
The headline and introduction read:

LAF-A-LOT CLUB HOLDS MEETING
POEM EXTOLLING CHARMS OF ST. PETERSBURG IS ONE OF THE FEATURES

St. Petersburg has a new club with an odd name. It is called "Laf-a-Lot" and is composed mainly of Michigan visitors who have been here all winter. The club held a meeting this week at the home of Miss Gussie Turner and the following poem, written by Mrs. Nellie I. Thomas, was read:

We love our own fair Michigan,
With stately trees and sun-kissed hills,
The winding rivers, crystal lakes,
Its great broad acres where man tills
With modern helps or ways that're crude
The soil that gives its children food.

We're charmed with nature's varied hues,
The green of spring, blue skies of June,
The smiling clovers, yellow grains,
And autumn, following on so soon,
That sheds with all its colors fair
A golden radiance everywhere.

But when the cold and snow comes on
And spreads its mantle o'er the earth,
We're prone to seek the corners warm,
Or gather round the fire-lit hearth
And feel, when "Jack Frost" paints the pane
That old King Winter's come again.

'Tis then our thoughts will drift away,
And linger there in sweet content,
To where the Sunny Southland lies
With all its store of riches sent
To make glad hearts, with comforts rare,
With room for all, and some to spare.

We're fascinated with the thought,
And as we dream the lure grows stronger,
Until we find our fate is fixed,
We can content ourselves no longer,
For down there where the grapefruit grows,
Is where the "Winter Tourist" goes.

And that, you see, is why we're here,
Although for others there might be

Some different motive they would give,
But I'm sure all agree with me
That be their reason what it may,
They do enjoy their chance to play.

And what a round of things we find
To entertain the live-long day;
Books, lectures, schools, to train the mind;
Excursions, picnics, or what may
You not find here to fill with pleasure
The long glad days in fullest measure.

Some choose the park, where many games
Entice the old and young alike;
It stirs their blood, and cheers the heart,
And fills them all with zest, that quite
Renews their youth, makes light the load,
And sends them happy on their road.

Then there's the dear old Tampa Bay.
Oh, how we love its many moods,
Its restless beating to and fro,
Enticing, luring, how it woos
With all its charms when at its best
The pleasure-seekers to its breast.

The churches stand as towers of strength,
In stately grandeur, firm and true,
Inviting all who wish to hear
The story old, yet ever new,
And rest in peace and quiet there,
Praising the Father for his care.

We could "sail on" like one of old,
When looking for the great new world,
For there are pleasures yet untold
That keep the traveler in a whirl
Of changes, as they go and come
From early morn till set of sun.

And so we seek the Sunny South
With flowers, palms, and pine tree grand,
That those in need of rest and strength
Can come to her from every land
And bask in nature's gifts so free,
Placed there by God for you and me.

Nellie I. Thomas
Kentucky Inn

Good Bye to the Rock

For the God who gave us life
And food and raiment too,
Did not forget in His great works
The wonderful and new.
And so He made the rocks to rise
And rear their heads on high,
And painted pictures of His love
In flower and tree and sky.

Editor's note:

Nellie did not sign this poem,
but it is written in her handwriting.

THE SLEIGH SIDE

The evening was fair, and the cold, bracing air,
A zest to our spirits did lend,
As we came, one from here, and another from there,
To meet at the home of a friend.
For the sleigh would be there with the horses, two pair,
With necks arched, and eyes shining bright,
To give us a ride to the far city's side,
Over hills and through valleys that night.

The moon it shone bright, and its silvery light
Over all shed a radiance serene,
And the stars twinkled, too, till it seemed that they knew
That none quite so happy had been.
As we glided along, we filled the air with our song,
Nor stopped when some traveler we met,
For with spirits so gay, as we sped on our way,
We sometimes did others forget.

The orchards stood back, quite away from our track,
And lifted their arms brown and bare;
The farm homes, too, with their lights flashing through,
All came to our sight, plain and clear.
Then the great barns were near, which meant warmth and good cheer
To the horses, and cattle and sheep,
And the straw stacks stood nigh, with the hay ricks hard by,
And corn cribs, and granaries of wheat.

Next a school-house we passed, where the lads and the lass
Go, some for work, some on mischief intent;
You could trace in the snow, where their young feet did go,
As on their way came and went.
The big hill sloped back with its long slippery track
Where the children a-coasting had been,
And the great man of snow, without eyes, ears or nose,
And the castles and forts without end.

On we passed through some lanes, and lo, what a change!
For there stood a mansion so neat,
And it seemed in the night, to be one flood of light,
And the music came out clear and sweet.
They thought we had come to partake of their fun—
And they threw the hall door open wide,
But we gave them a cheer which would ring far and near,
And passed right along on our ride.

Now our ride was most o'er, for we reached a church door,
And stilled were our voices at last,
For a few were in there, and a voice raised in prayer,
And we bowed our heads low as we passed.
Soon the city we reached, and a supper we ate
Which warmed and rested us, quite;
Then homeward we faced, and soon reached the place,
When we wished one and all a good night.

NELLIE IRENE

Editor's note:

This poem, saved as a newspaper clipping, was printed in an unknown publication on an unknown date. An advertisement on the back says: "Send for 1896 catalogue of Northern Grown Seed Potatoes, catalogue free, Hooker Grover & Co., Rochester, N. Y." The title is given as: "The Sleigh Side," but perhaps it was supposed to be "The Sleigh Ride."

THINGS

Pleasures to Share



Children in rowboat at Log Cabin Point, Lake Fenton
Left to right: Unidentified girl, Betty Roat, unidentified girl, Bill Thomas, Jack Thomas, and Bob Roat. The Thomas twins, Jack and Bill, were first cousins of the Roat children.

My Mocking Bird

He comes each morn to my window
And perched high on a Loquat tree
He begins his beautiful carols
Bringing joy and comfort to me.

So modest and trim is he coated,
In his Quakerish garb of gray,
You scarcely can think as you view him,
Of the wonderful things he can say.

But at peep of the earliest dawning
His glad notes ring out loud and clear,
In a paean of praise to his maker
That it Heavenward lifts you to hear.

Then the notes take a soft sweeter cadence,
And you're thrilled with the melody sweet,
As he whistles and trills and warbles,
His songs so rich, full, and complete.

He teaches us lessons of gladness
To sing down our troubles and cares
Praise God for all of His blessings
And with others our pleasures to share.

Do you wonder I list for his coming
And will grieve when his warblings cease,
For the choicest of birds we have with us,
Is the Mocking Bird, God's masterpiece.

Editor's note:

A newspaper clipping of this poem lists
Nellie I. Thomas, Michigan, as the author.
A handwritten copy is on stationery imprinted with
St. Petersburg, Florida, the "Sunshine City."

October

October is a glorious month,
All decked in colors gay;
It comes to say the summer's gone,
And fall is on the way.

We have been blessed with luscious fruits
And flowers of every hue,
With all the needs for man and beast
To last the whole year through.

October's child is not "born to woe
Unless decked in opals" bright
For God hath given each a chance
To choose his way aright.

For we need no greater brightness
Than the gold of truth and love
And the merry precious jewels
Woven in our crown above.

All the months have some great meaning,
Filled with plans for peace and rest;
They will whisper merry secrets
As they try to do their best.

Even March is full of wisdom
As she sways this world of ours,
Saying, April soon will bring us
The much needed cleansing showers.

Then comes May with sun and brightness
Warming ground from April showers
Coaxing earth to bring her offering
And to decorate with flowers.

I could still go on and mention
Lovely June and all the rest,
But I know that we are thinking
We still love our month the best.

So we're glad who marked the making
Must have had a clever hunch,
When he placed the name October
In the calendar of the months.

Bay View Nellie I. Thomas
1945, Age 84

Editor's note:

Nellie may have been referring to her birth month,
as she was born October 3, 1861.

The Tangerine

Sometimes they're good
Sometimes they're bad
Sometimes they're scarce
And can't be had.
The children love them
Best of all
They are so cute
And sweet and small.

Nellie I. Thomas

Old Faithful

It stands upon the mantle
Its face calm and serene,
We love its merry tick tock
And its hands are always clean.

'Tis the tireless family mentor
Calling us at break of day,
To arise, be up and doing
For time flies in many ways.

Time to feed the hungry baby
Get the breakfast for the men
Who must rise to face the day's work,
Be it college, store, or fen.

Time to get the children coming
From their beds, that is their rule
"Rise you little sleepy heads
You must soon be off to school."

But there is no time for resting
'Tis Old Faithful tells us so,
Many cares are pressing o'er us
As we hurry to and fro.

Tells us when to get our dinner
Put the chicken on to cook,
When to meet the train for grandma
And at the Circle take a look.

When to start for Church on Sunday,
When to ring the bell for prayer,
Time to listen on the radio,
For the news from everywhere.

Time to give the healing tonic
To the sick or ailing one,
Time to send the family bedward
When another day is done.

So we say to thee Old Faithful
For your favors—great and small,
May you ever keep on ticking
From your mantle on the wall.

Always guiding us to duties
And reminding us each day,
To be thoughtful, kind and loving
As our lives are ticked away.

Nellie I. Thomas

My First Lesson

I am taking my first lesson
On this little type machine .
And I leave out all the commas
And the spaces in between .

If could talk, 'twould cry for mercy ,
From such blundering as I give ,
But I mean to keep on trying ,
Just as surely as I live .

So here goes another effort ;
Twords the goal I would attain .
For if I keep on persevering ,
I soon can surely write my name .

Nellie I Thomas .

Editor's note:

This poem is reproduced exactly as Nellie typed it.
A handwritten note adds the title, and also says,
"Written in 1913 on my first visit to California."

The Evolution of the Apron

Of course I do like nice aprons
And can say that I always did
For I really have worn them most gladly
Since I left off my small baby bib.

My mother used to say to me often
Put on your apron Nellie Irene
For my little girl you know
Must always be dainty and clean.

And from that day to the present
Many, many aprons I've worn
Almost I've felt undressed without them
Which would make me feel so forlorn.

But aprons are much like people
Many changes must be made
From the tough old heavy homespun
For the bouncing little maid.

To the housewife neat and tidy
In gingham apron for her use
They go on making changes
All our arts can introduce.

Till they make them very lovely
Both in shape and in design
They are only fit for idlers
Who have mostly served their time.

Many thanks dear for your gift to me
Its texture so fine and trimmings so dainty
But more for the giver's kind thought
To one who appreciates greatly.

And for all the many great-grandmothers
Whose eyesight is now growing dim
And the hearing, best not to say much
For it's hard on the company they're in.

But they all like the feel of the aprons
It makes them look tidy and clean
And they thank the good Lord for all blessings
As they sit in their corner and dream.

Grandmother's Chair

It's not tucked away in the corner,
But stands at the side of the room
Where the nice warm breath of the furnace
Makes her cozy and warm so soon.
It's not such a grand chair to look at
With its green modest cover so fine,
But it's comfort and rest and a refuge
For Grandmother, at most any time.

To the family, it seems rather sacred,
Set apart as a sort of a shrine,
And they pass by to some other resting,
Whatever the needs, or the time.
Even Duke, the big pet of the family,
Stands gazing with expression so meek,
For he knows that in finding his pleasure
Some other place he must seek.

To Grandmother, it means quiet and ease
And rest when her spirits are low
A chance to recall all her blessings
For there always are many you know.
So she sits there in peace and contentment
And does what her hands find to do,
For she feels in the sunset of life,
His grace will carry her through.
And she knows that this seat she loves
Was placed by hands of tenderest care
And will say when called on to leave it
God bless that old over-stuffed chair.

Nellie I. Thomas
April 1943

Heart-Room

"Where there's heart-room there's house room"
A wise man once said,
And our house has spanned
O'er a new trundle bed.

There's room there for laughter,
For lullabies, too,
In Mother's old chair
With a cargo that's new.

There'll be a story-book corner
For make-believe dreams,
A cookie-jar setting
For small pirates' dreams.

There'll be heart-room and house room
For honor and truth,
And love and concern
For the whirlwinds of youth.

Our rafters are spreading,
The beams now are wide—
What a feat of design
For the wee one inside!

OPINION/ADVICE

I Protest . . . I Plead



Some of Nellie's great-grandchildren
at Lake Fenton cottage
Nancy Yates, Jack Stevens, Bob O'Brien, Jim O'Brien

I Protest

Why send the Doctors to the War
Who specialize in babies,
They're needed not among the men,
They work among the ladies.
And babies do not go to War
And fight for UNCLE SAM,
They're left to keep the home front warm
And grow into big men.
And how can they, I'd like to know,
With all their pains and bubbles,
If they don't have their Doctors here
To straighten out their troubles.
For ever since the Lord made Eve
And placed her in the garden,
There's trouble on the infant front
And they sure need a warden.
They're not born on the battle front
Or on the "Burma" Way,
And so I plead for Nature's sake
Let baby doctors stay.

Nellie I. Thomas

Editor's note:

Another copy of this poem is signed, "Grandmother,"
and includes the following handwritten note:

*"Marguerite, will you please bring me
if you can, ½ bushell or more of fruit,
a few grapefruit and the rest oranges.
Will pay you when you get home.
Oranges, 45 cts a dozen and more.
Also G-fruit very high. Roy saw a Robin
today—up in a tree, said he had heard
them for a week."*

A Friendly Greeting

I don't like to say "Good-bye"
I'd rather say "Hello"
There is such a different feeling
Whether you come, or go.

"Good-bye" means we are parting
Sometimes the tears will start,
A pain flits 'cross the vision;
And centers 'round the heart.

It may not mean for always,
Maybe a little while
But just a thought goes with it;
That takes away the smile.

Now "Hello," oh, that is precious,
It plain just warms you through,
It sends a smile of welcome;
That lights the face anew.

"Hello," Oh, what vast meaning
Of friendship, that contains.
It speaks of pleasures past,
And many to remain.

It cheers the heart; oh, yes
The day is brighter too,
The birds are singing sweeter;
Just because of you.

But we are only folks
We're using both, you know
For we can't always come,
And we can't always go.

Then when we go, let's think;
We'll try and come again,
And when we come, how fine
To say, "Hello," my friend.

contributed by
Nellie I. Thomas

Editor's note:

Published in *The Bay View*, Bay View,
Michigan, date unknown.

The Problem

"Don't never swap your horse
In the middle of the stream."
That surely is an old one
And for some it is their theme.

To this I really do not think
David Harum would agree,
For when he ran a bargain
His heart was filled with glee.

For he quickly noted all good points
And that would set him chuckling,
And he would surely "swap that hoss"
E'en though he got a ducking.

Perhaps he wasn't quite as slow
As some would like to make him,
Their horse had failed in many ways
And his sight was growing dim.

He'd been a full blood racer
Along this troubled road,
But you can't expect a trotting horse
To draw a heavy load.

But the stream was getting broader
And his mount was "old and cross,"
And he needed a new leader
To carry them across.

I'm sure David would not falter
As he thought the problem through,
Better just try the younger horse
And see what he can do.

Nellie I. Thomas

The Soldiers' Battle Song

[First verse]

We have gathered from the highways,
And the byways of the land,
From the mountains and the valleys,
And the hills and plains so grand,
From the city's busy centers,
From the village small and fair,
In our grand old U.S.A.
We are here from everywhere.

Chorus

And we'll march, march, march,
A brave united band,
And we'll fight, fight, fight,
For GOD and native land,
And we'll all pull together,
Wherever we may roam,
Till with Victory on our banners,
We will all come marching home.

[Second verse]

We are leaving home and loved ones,
To protect them every one,
We are facing grief and danger,
To bring peace when War is done.
We'll work and pray for liberty,
To help banish sin and woe,
So we'll fight till War is over,
And we've conquered every foe. YES YES

Nellie I. Thomas

**A Memory
The Outcast**

A poor sheep came to the hospital gate,
And stood in its trouble and pain,
And patiently waited for succor and help,
But patiently waited—in vain.

The Northwind blew cold and it shivered and shook,
The frost seized with fingers of ice,
The darkness descended its form to enfold,
And gripped its poor heart as a vise.
Afar it had strayed from its sheltering fold,
Away from the pastures and flocks,
Unnoticed, uncared for, so sick and forlorn,
Climbing over the hills and the rocks,

Until it had reached this haven of rest,
Where the sick and the suffering aid find.
But throughout the long night not a hand was outstretched
T'ward relief—not an effort was made.
In the morn, three shy maidens with caps on their heads,
With aprons and kerchiefs so light
Filed timidly out, where the poor sheep still stood,
With faces all pleading and white.

"Come sheepy, come sheepy, we're here with you now,
We'll attend to your wants and your needs,
A nice cot you can have in some sheltered nook
And we'll tuck you up warm and bring feed."
But the poor sheep gazed mutely, reproach in her eye,
Then silently turned her own way,
But there on the ground where she'd waited and watched,
A poor little dead "lammie" lay.

A silent procession of maidens marched back,
With bowed heads, and hearts full of pain,
Resolved, that hereafter when duty should call,
They'd neglect it, no—never again.

Affectionately dedicated to the three maidens.

Nellie I. Thomas

An unasked advice

Take your wife and off you go
Down where the poinsettias grow.
Sit on the pier, salty breezes inhale,
Watching the pelicans and boats as they sail
Enjoying the rest, inhaling pure air
From over the waters, so bracing and rare,
Forgetting there ever were patients to call,
Or nurses to worry, or babies to bawl,
Just bask in the sunshine, make love to your wife,
And you'll soon be declaring, this, is new life.
Soon back home you'll come, feeling fit as a king
And ready for whatever life's duties may bring.

Editor's note:

A note, not in Nellie's handwriting, says: "Written for Dr. Hutinson in Saginaw." A note at the bottom of the page in Nellie's handwriting says: "Miss B. J. Bailey, Champaign, Ill – a possible tenant, but not probable." This note is unrelated to the poem.

A bit of advice

Oh! Celia dear, a family
You have to care for now.
I hope you keep them well behaved
And flirting don't allow.
If they don't care to listen
To things you'd have them do,
Why, you might try the method
Of the woman in the shoe.
Perhaps you might be doubtful
Of the issue, if you should,
Just try some other tactics,
For I think that they'll be good.
So just treat them very kindly,
As Christmas time draws near,
And I send you all a greeting
For a successful, happy year.

Editor's note:

Nellie did not sign this poem, but it is written in her handwriting. A note, not in Nellie's handwriting, says, "When Celia was keeping house for Marjory and Mildred." Celia was Nellie's daughter-in-law, the wife of Roy Thomas. It is unknown who Marjory and Mildred were.

Campaign Against Tongue

The tongue is a trifle unruly
And ought to be curbed on its way
So I'll try in my very best manner
To take care how I use it each day.
I won't say "shut-up" to my elders
Or "I won't" when some task I must do
Or "cry" when things don't go to suit me
And "holler" and "stomp round" so—would you.
I'm going to be ever as careful
And always the truth I will speak
Then I'll grow up noble and manly
Instead of so thoughtless and weak.
Then when I am a good doctor
And my hospital built on its site
I'll know it's because I was careful
And ruled my tongue for the right.

Editor's note:

A note in Nellie's handwriting says: "Campaign against tongue, 716 East Street." There is a 716 East Street in Flint, Michigan. A note in a different handwriting says: "Written to Ralph."

Starting into High School

Here's to the memory of this great book
The learning of which I just undertook.
Of the History of England it is composed,
With great men of letters and Kings that're deposed
If you like good hard study, take this with a will
And I'll bet you a fifty you'll sure get your fill.

Little scraps of paper, little crumbs of food
Puts our little Mary in a serious mood,
If you sharpen pencils, ever on the floor
She'll have Wade to get you, if you do it more.
Can you blame our teacher if she looks severe
Cause we always do such things when she isn't near.
So my friends take warning, no more trouble please
Then you'll find our Mary, isn't hard to please.

Editor's note:

A note in Nellie's handwriting says: "I think the teacher was Mary Gould." Also, the following verse appears at the bottom of the page: "*As the sun deepens in the Western sky
Choose your own Valentine and with her fly.*"

With Apologies to Newlyweds

If I were newly married
And wished to take a "tower"
To magnify my happiness
Every blessed hour.
I'd dress like common people
With coat and hat subdued,
And just omit the fussings
And frills, so many hued;
Also, I'd use the column
Where in the spine is found.
To hold myself more upright
And not be lolling 'round
Upon my Hubby's shoulder,
Or cuddling in his arms,
Patting him gently on the cheek,
Admiring all his charms;
'Circling my arms about his neck
Like some young school-girl miss,
Thinking perhaps no one will see
If I just stole a kiss.
Holding his hand so lovingly
Pressing it gently too.
Dropping my head on his shoulder dear
With whispers that I'll be true
Smiling so sweetly in his eyes,
Tenderly brushing his hair;
Sure there was never such bliss before
And never a man so fair,
Just fussing and fussing the time away
In the most unromantic style
Quite forgetting the troublesome fact
There were people across the aisle,
Ignoring the many beauties outside
And watching the "movies" within;
With varied expressions of wonder and shame
Combined with disgust—and a grin,
Until the whole car was convinced of the fact
Although not a word had been said,
That they were enjoying the honeymoon trip
Of these two dear newlyweds.

And so, if I were newly married
And wished to take a tower
If I couldn't be more civilized
In those all absorbing hours,
I'd off to nature's byways
And travel on afar
Just our own two blessed selves
In an old Ford car.

Editor's note:

Nellie did not sign this poem,
but it is written in her handwriting.
A note not in Nellie's handwriting says:
"Thoughts inspired by observing newlyweds
across the aisle in the train."

An Ode To Mothers

Where in the world is a word so dear,
A word so filled with love and cheer,
A word that brings our heaven so near,
As the beautiful word of Mother.

She carried us first 'neath her heart so warm,
She endured the pain that we might be born,
She watched o'er our childhood to keep us from harm,
Our precious, loving Mother.

She taught us our prayer when night's curtain was drawn,
She guided our minds to the right, from the wrong,
She bade us face life brave in spirit and song,
Our courageous, untiring Mother.

She watched us with care as our footsteps were turned
Toward the highway of learning, and over us yearned
As we conned the great lessons our forefathers learned,
Our wise, discerning, Mother.

She watched o'er our lives through sickness and pain,
Was our prop and our guide through shadows and rain,
Brought us into the sunshine again and again,
Our patient, encouraging Mother.

And so do you wonder we herald a day,
Our tribute of love and affection to pay,
To those who have traveled this beautiful way,
As devoted, wonderful, Mothers.

We bring them our homage of love and esteem,
A wealth of good wishes and reverence, I ween,
And God's many blessings with no shadows between,
For these loyal, steadfast, Mothers.

Nellie Irene Thomas

Editor's note:

Per Nellie's diary of Jan. 28, 1930, Dr. Fruit, pastor of Court Street Methodist Church in Flint, Michigan, asked her to write a poem for the Old Peoples Day, Feb. 5, which she did and read it at the event. In her diary on Feb. 7th, she wrote: "got my mothers poem off" [perhaps to have it printed].

Saint Patrick's Day

Strange as it may seem, St. Patrick was not an Irishman at all, but was by birth a Scotchman, having been born in Scotland about 372. When he was sixteen or seventeen years old he was stolen by Pirates and taken to Ireland and made to work at herding swine. He was a very studious boy and in the seven years that he remained a swineherd[er] he learned the Irish language and the customs of the people.

He then made up his mind that swineherding was not the right sort of occupation for a bright-minded youth like himself, so he escaped to the Continent, where after more years of study he was ordained by Pope Celestine and sent back to Ireland to preach Christianity to the people.

But the priests did not like him. He was very likely too bright for them, and they persecuted him, and made things very uncomfortable [uncomfortable] for him. Finally he was obliged to leave there, but before he went he cursed the lands of the other priests so that they would not bear crops, just to even up things.

St. Patrick performed many miracles, and when the scourge of snakes came he was sent for and begged to disperse the reptiles. He said that that would be easy, if they would bring him a drum. A drum was brought and he began beating it with such vim and vigor that he broke its head, and it looked for a time as though the trick would fail. But just then an angel came and mended the drum and the snakes were forever banished. Just to prove it they kept the drum for many centuries.

These and other miracles St. Patrick performed. He lived to be 121 years old, dying on his birthday, March 17th, 492.

Historians have relegated many stories about Saint Patrick to the realm of [of] myth, but the shamrock remains the emblem of Ireland, proudly worn by Irishmen the world over on Saint Patrick's Day, March 17th. The true shamrock is the hop clover, which much resembles our common white clover, except that the flower is yellow instead of blue-green. Large shipments of shamrocks are brought to the United States for Saint Patrick's Day.

So the shamrock is the National emblem of Irish people, and it is said that no snake can live where it grows.

Perhaps if one will take the trouble to think it out, he may find in that belief the idea of faith and loyalty and love of the country for which the Irish people are noted, and that emblematically it means that no traitor to Ireland can live near the Shamrock.

Editor's note:

Nellie Thomas did not sign her name to this story of St. Patrick's Day. However, in her diary on March 13, 1930, she wrote: "Went to another S. S. [Sunday school] clas [class] potluck tonight, had a fine time. Had a St. Patrick's programme [program]. I gave a sketch of his life and a reading."

The Privilege of Being a Great-Grandmother

Webster, in defining the word Great, says "Elevated sentiment," "High minded," "Dignified in manner." The poet Dryden, "Amidst the crowd she walks serenely great," and quoting again, "Nothing can be great which is not right." Adding the definition of Grandmother, to which you have just listened, with the word great, it places us as great-grandmothers into a circle all our own and where but few attain to that high honor.

I wish to speak first of the great-grandmothers of earlier days, who met the hardships and privations of their generation in such a courageous spirit, laboring from dawn into the night with only the most crude necessities, straining their eyes by candle light that the family might be clothed. Is it any wonder the great-grandmothers—if they lived to attain that distinction—lost their youth in their earlier years, and were relegated to the rocking chair in a warm corner, that the click of the knitting needles would sometimes cease and the tired hands lay idly folded in her lap, while the mind would wander back. Those were days when the lace cap with lavender ribbons seemed to be an outward symbol of age, and always worn by mothers and great-grandmothers. A Doctor's wife in Saginaw told me that her earliest recollection of her great-grandmother was when she stood by her deathbed with her mother and wept because her mother wept. This same great-grandmother was the mother of a very large family, and by the way was a Canadian. When she reached her 40th milestone, the children all came home to help her celebrate, but they said to each other, "Now mother is 40 years old, she is an old lady; we must do all we can to take the responsibilities and hard work off from her shoulders, and make life easy for her."

Very few—if any—of our modern great-grandmothers have been called to pass through similar earlier experiences, although many have endured and bravely met great hardships. I suppose we as great-grandmothers are expected to have passed the cookie jar and peppermint candy stage, and should be occupying the warm corner, but we are "just girls a little older grown," our hearts keep young, but we are taught by experience to believe in the old adage "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

We have passed through all the generations represented here— Daughters, Mothers, Grandmothers, and now what a privilege to be a great-grandmother in this modern age, to have seen and experienced the advent of the Telephone, Electric lighting, the comfort of the Automobile, the wonders of the Radio, and many other great achievements. One young lady of 90 years—I do not know if she was a great-grandmother—but old enough to be, even tried flying—and liked it.

A great evangelist, J. Wilber Chapman, while he was conducting a question box, was asked, "When should a mother begin governing her baby"? and he replied, "Begin with the great-grandmother." Another privilege is to see how the little ones of today, whom we all love, are safe-guarded and protected from birth up to young

womanhood. Yes, you can look at the dear little thing, if you won't disturb it, but no more cuddling or singing to sleep with the good old Methodist hymns." Imagine a modern mother thinking a great-grandmother could tell them anything about her baby. And that is all right, but our influence in the generations to come will help mold their characters.

We of today are one of the family, enjoying their pleasures, sympathizing in their time of trouble, having a place in our Church and Sunday School, and even being able to attend a gathering such as we have here tonight. I never liked the saying, "Going down the journey of life." I don't like that direction. I like to think we are coming up through the years, for we are so much nearer Heaven than when we started.

It has been said of we older ones—we are "in our second childhood." Well, why not? If we can see again through the clear, pure eyes of childhood, catch some of their enthusiasm to enjoy the many blessings that come our way, and, as children look forward to the making of their earthly home, so may we, from our more mature years, anticipate entering the beautiful home "just beyond" that has been prepared for God's children. I think we can say with Browning:

"Grow old along with me,
The best is yet to come."

Editor's note:

A note in Nellie's handwriting says: "I wrote this when I was asked to represent the great-grandmothers for a homecoming at Court Street Church."

A note not in Nellie's handwriting says: "Read at Mother-Daughter Banquet."

This poem is written on stationery with fancy initials at the top, *N J J*, which stood for Nellie Irene Thomas.