LIFE SKETCH

I was born, September 6, 1835 in the town of Lisbon, Conn., the son of Douglas and Sarah B. Tracy. Am a lineal descendant of Lieut. Thomas Tracy who settled in Norwich, Conn. in 1660, and who was one of two witnesses to the deed given by Uncas, the Mohigan chief. Am also a direct descendant of Governor Wm. Bradford of the Mayflower, and second Governor of Plymouth.

My boyhood was spent on a farm at work during the farming season as was the custom with boys in the country at that period, with about four months schooling in winter in an old-fashion District school when the Elementary branches--reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar and geography were taught, the teacher making the pens for writing from goose quills furnished by the pupils taken from the geese in the backyard.

Spent a few weeks at the Normal School at Norwich Town during the close of my 18th. year under the management of the Rev. Timothy D. P. Stone; also some weeks the next year at the Broadway grammar school at Norwich, under the instructions of John Allen. Still later, three or four terms at the Plainfield Academy under the efficient instruction of the Rev. Lucian Burleigh.

Began teaching school at the age of nineteen in the town in which I was born in Newent Society and taught nearly twelve years in the leading Grammar Schools in Eastern Connecticut, Pachaug, Jewett City, Killingly, Willimantic, Brooklyn, Danielson, Dayville and Putnam at a period when the Grammar Schools served in the place of High Schools of today; and number many among those in business and professional life, as having been under my instruction, among the number, an eminent college professor of mathematics and Dean of the Graduate Department of Yale University, Dr. Andrews W. Phillips, also a United States Senator, Hon. Dwight May Sabin.

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

LIFE SKETCH (continued)

In August 1862 under President Lincoln's first call for 300,000 volunteers to suppress the Rebellion and preserve the American Union, I enlisted into military service of my country as private in Company C, 18th. Tegiment, Connecticut Volunteer Infantry doing Garrison duty at Fort McHenry near Baltimore, but was soon placed on detached service as clerk at General John E. Wool's Headquarters--Middle Department, 8th Army Corps Baltimore, Maryland--subsequently under General Robert C. Schenck, who succeeded General Wool in command. Later, on June 13, 1863, was transferred by order of the Secretary of War to the War Department, where I served as clerk five years in the Adjutant General's office, War Department in the General Service United States Army, with the rank and pay of First Serjeant.

While engaged in clerical duties in the War Department, it was my privilege to see President Lincoln almost daily, was present at the second Inauguration of Mr. Lincoln on March 4th, 1865, witnessed the President receive a delegation of Indians from the West with exchange of greetings and speeches by the aid of an Interpreter, was in church, and sat near President and Mrs. Lincoln when they were in attendance, saw, and heard President Lincoln, as he stood at the second story window, north front of the Executive Mansion, deliver his last speech on the evening of April 11, 1865, and finally in great sorrow of heart, viewed his remains in the East room of the Executive Mansion on Tuesday, April 18th with others of the War Department as they lay in state on a heavily draped catafalque surrounded by a military guard--a most solemn and impressive occasion.

Upon retiring from my duties in the War Department, I bought the Leavens farm near Putnam, Connecticut, and turned my attention to farming. This farm was settled by Justice Joseph Leavens, the pioneer, in 1707, or 1708 and mostly covered with forest-pine and oak. It continued

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

in the hands of the family for five or six generations, until I bought it. I put in some strenous labor in tillage and improvements and by my thrift and frugality, greatly aided by a prudent and economical wife, was able to send one daughter to Wellesley College.

Have been elected several times Justice of the Peace, but did not serve. Was elected a member of the School Board of Killingly several terms serving in that position several years. Was married November 17, 1864 to Miss Mary Leavens of Killingly, Connecticut, and have a family of four children, two sons and two daughters. While engaged in farming, I was invited to become the local correspondent of "The New England Homestead" in which I served from 1882-1894, a period of twelve years; later wrote brief articles occasionally for a local paper and "The Boston Transcript". Made genealogical research in various branches of the Tracy family, assisting Drs. Evert E. and Dwight Tracy in their compilation of the great family of Tracy.

Became an enthusiastic Lincoln student and admirer while reading Miss Tarbell's Early Life of Lincoln, collecting biographies, eulogies, addresses, and recollections of him spending time and money in the fascinating avocation, It afforded me great pleasure and delight in studying this unique and pre-eminently great man and statesman. I have published three valuable brochures of Lincoln literature exhumed from the files of old newspapers, and have devoted time, money and travel in collecting copies of unpublished letters written by Mr. Lincoln, after a thorough search had been made in all directions by the publisher of Lincoln's "Complete Works", Gettysburg edition. The editor foraged and gleaned everywhere for the last scrap written by Mr. Lincoln; yet subsequently to the publication of the Complete Works, many letters have come to light and I have succeeded in collecting copies of over 340

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

original holograph letters and notes, fifty of which are of the first rank; and one hundred and fifty that will not fall much below in interest and importance. Miss Ida M. Tarbell, the eminent biographer of Lincoln has written the introduction and Houghton Mifflin Co. will publish them. This labor of collecting these valuable letters cover a period of nearly ten years commencing in earnest in 1908, and I consider it my greatest and most important literary achievement and the one of which I am the proudest as it connects my name with the most illustrious name in the annals of time.

I was a staunch friend and ardent admirer of the brilliant Theodore Tilton, the accomplished journalist, gifted poet and peerless orator. Believed in him and loved him. Have collected his writings, and books including many folios in manuscript in Mr. Tilton's autograph, and have erected to his memory a handsome memorial made of the finest Westerly granite in three sections, a cenotaph to express my high appreciation of his intellectual gifts and to perpetuate his memory.

In addition to the preceding, I have erected another beautiful memorial to the beloved and accomplished author of the popular ballad, "Rock Me To Sleep". Mrs. Elizabeth Akers, who was my devoted personal friend for a long period of years commencing in the Civil War days, when she was on the staff of General Meigs in the Quarter Master General's Department.

Gilbert A. Tracy.

Oct. 1917.

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.