SAGINAW
ACROSS THE RIVER,
BACK IN TIME

by

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Tracing the Line
(Women who might have been)

Therese -(1815-1870) (Claude Bricault)

Marc Jean Heloise - (1844-1890)
(Andre Beauchamps)

Francoise - (1864-1944)
(Jacob Little)

Mary - (1890-1950)
(Louis Blondin)

Constance Eloise - (1915-1966)
(Francis Smith)

Jennifer Smith
(1944-)

I.
HELOISE BEAUCHAMPS, NEE BRICAULT  1844-1890

Heloise arrived in East Saginaw in 1852, at the age of eight. Her birth place was Montreal, Quebec where she lived until she was two years old. Her family relocated in up state New York, only to be struck with "Michigania Fever" six years later. Thus she moved to the city she would grow to love so well and so long. Her parents were Claude Bricault and Therese Bricault, nee Prevert. She was the third of four children and the only girl. She married Andre Beauchamps (more out of societal expectation than deep love) and had two children, Francoise and Jean. Jean was his father's son, and Heloise never established close ties with him as she did her daughter. She died of cancer in 1890, living just long enough to see Saginaw become one city.

FRANCOISE LITTLE, NEE BEAUCHAMPS  1864-1944

Francoise was born to adoring parents and grandparents the year that the Saginaws were united by the Genessee Street Bridge. She was a gifted child and intellectually nurtured by Anne Dupuis, her mother's best friend and teacher extraordinaire. Though she was only six years old when her grandmother Therese died, she seems to have been unmistakably influenced by her, not to mention very like her, temperamentally. Fran married Jacob Little, distant relative of Heloise's hero, Norman Little, founder of East Saginaw. Unlike her mother, she married for love, and indeed may not have married at all, if to marry merely meant a nod to social convention. She and Jacob were intellectually, politically and emotionally compatible. She had one child, a daughter, whose name, Mary, was quite a departure from the Francophilial names of the past, and coincidentally symbolic of Fran's directness. After a long and intense life, she died in 1944, shortly after the birth of Jennifer, her great granddaughter.

MARY BLONDIN, NEE LITTLE  1890-1950

Mary led the charmed life of a child born into a world of love and purpose. She was surrounded by people who were totally committed to creating a compassionate world, but she never suffered the misfortune of being forgotten in the midst of bigger concerns. Her life changed with her marriage to Louis Blondin, who was not opposed to but not enthusiastic about the main passions of her life, women's rights and the elimination of poverty. She had a daughter, Constance Eloise, in 1915, and three sons, John, Robert and Joshua every other
year thereafter. Mercifully, she was spared having to live through the 1950s which she would have despised.

CONSTANCE ELOISE SMITH, NEE BLONDIN   1915-1966

Constance Eloise came into a world of war and left a world still at the business of killing. But while she was here the world was a better place for her courage and laughter. She loved and married Francis Smith in 1942 and had nine children, the first of whom was Jennifer, in 1944. She was very like Heloise, and deserves a book of her own. She died too soon and is still painfully missed.

JENNIFER LOUISE SMITH   1944-

Ex-nun, teacher moderately radical feminist, who, as her great grandmother predicted, lived in a time when she would not have to marry. She is a little of each of her female ancestors, but is most like Francoise and her father.
From the 1850's to the 1890's, the Saginaw River Basin furnished millions of feet of fine-grained white pine lumber to Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York markets. Lumber huckers—schooners, steamers and barges carried the white pine over the stormy lakes—through the Erie Canal and on to the Atlantic.

The Saginaw River Basin
Rivers and streams suitable for log driving totaled 864 miles!
The Gazetteer was the tour book of the 1800's and was eagerly read by easterners from cover to cover before they headed west. Gazetteers contained maps and all the information about the mysterious western lands that the eastern speculator, adventurer or home-seeker wanted to know about.
Introduction

Rivers have ever been Janus-like; they nurture and ravage by turn. They are the essence of crystal calm or the prototype of dark rage. They have called people together and kept them apart throughout the ages. They so intrinsically create and so closely replicate human experience that we seem unable to resist the urge to personify them, to invest in them our trusts and our fears, our affection and our antipathy. Huck Finn found his Eden on the Mississippi and Achilles his near invincibility in the River Styx, but I grew up near a river, and my associations with it are complex and unfortunately less idyllic than those heroes of fiction and myth.

My river is the Saginaw River; its history speaks more of enmity than unity. In my lifetime it has acted as a kind of Mason Dixon line, like a railroad track in Maya Angelou's Stamps, Arkansas. Actually I did most of my growing up in Carrollton, a small town adjacent to Saginaw's north edge which nestles against the river and was traversed by the infamous Sixth Street Bridge. I say was advisedly, because that treacherous span is no more. It claimed its last victims in late fall of 1984. The Sixth Street Bridge was the oldest of Saginaw's eight bridges and had in fact been brought down the river from Genessee Street shortly after the turn of the century. It was narrow and was becoming increasingly frail from long years of hard service much before its demise in 1985. That a bridge built to accommodate traffic of the late 1800's was still functioning at all in the mid-eighties of the 1990s is a marvel.

I was reared in a white working class part of Carrollton, ethnically French and therefore dubbed Frogtown. Just across the river and down a ways was another world, an extremely poor world, a virtually all-black world. The accumulation of my impressions and experiences with this river and the disparate people who inhabit its banks has recently welled up in me and is prompting me to say something, one might fondly hope, of consequence, something about what this river has wrought, and maybe a little of why.

The method of presenting part of the story of the Saginaw River imposed itself on me a few months ago, and I seem unable to do other than comply with the wishes of the Muse.
Thus I offer a brief history of the home of my youth and the river that divides it, in the form of a historical fiction. An alter ego of mine will have a conversation with the journals and other memorabilia of her foremothers who have fortuitously, if sketchily, saved enough pieces of the past to embroider a modest version of the Tapestry at Bayeux.

Reflections of Jennifer Smith
on the past and present of the
Saginaw River, with hints from
journals of her forerunners,

Heloise Bricault - Great great grandmother
Francoise Beauchamps - Great grandmother
Mary Little - Grandmother
Constance E. Blondin - Mother

[JOURNAL - JENNIFER]
September 2, 1989

I bring my students to this river and ask them to look at it, to approach it as a discoverer, to be Cardenas finding himself on the edge of that wondrous precipice we now call the Grand Canyon. I ask them to experience it as symbol. How, I press them, does this river or any river connect us in space and time? What value does it have, what import to the civilization of the
world? They are of course only in the novitiate of life and wear innocence and apathy like a habit. Could I interest them in its fascinating and divisive history, I wonder? Should I nudge into their consciousness the fey notion that something akin to, but not as benign as, the Loch Ness monster swims in its depths, comes out on dark nights and spews an aura of discord on all its environs? A few of them might recognize the truth of it, for what are the envy of old and the prejudice of today if not brown breathed monsters of ill will?

So here I sit in the company of my foremothers, Heloise, Francoise, Mary and Constance Eloise. Would that I had more of them here than these few remnants of their lives. Still, they have left me a remarkable record, all things considered. Heloise, for example, started her journal at the age of ten. Consequently she is the only one I have come to know as a child. She did pass on to her daughter her sense of detail and her love affair with writing. She did bequeath a number of other significant traits to the women who followed her, such as a healthy ego, a hefty dose of anger when appropriate and the ability to laugh.

Heloise seemed absolutely fascinated with her new home, East Saginaw, where her family ended up in 1852. She was eight years old and remembered very little about Canada, the country of her birth. She apparently made an easy adjustment from her New York life to her life in the wild west. A birthday gift of a diary from her mother in 1854 offered her a medium for sharing her excitement and for passing on her story.

[JOURNAL - HELOISE]

July 5, 1854

Maman gave me this wonderful diary! I think I must put something very important in it to start out. Let me introduce myself. I am Heloise Marie Bricault de la Marsh, and I live in East Saginaw,
Michigan. My neighbor is Mr. Norman Little who started this town. (Gross 3, 15) That is important. My Father and Mother have a general store. That is important to me because I get to see most everyone in town - and I sometimes get free candy, although my Papa says it isn't truly free for him. I do not go to the new school because Maman says she can teach me better at home. Oh yes, I am ten years old today, and I had a tea party with my three best friends. Au revoir, mon amie.

Heloise B.

[JOURNAL - HELOISE]

July 7, 1854

Mon amie,

I got my first ride on the Davenport Ferry which was started in 1851, the year before we moved here. (Carlson, 22) Papa had some business at the court house and he took me and Henri with him. Henri is my little brother. I actually have three brothers, but no sisters. I am not very happy about that.

Anyway we went to Saginaw City and saw the grand houses. Mr. Little says one day our city will be far grander but I cannot imagine it. For one thing our city is built on a swamp so I think it will always be more muddy, which isn't very grand. But I must admit that it is growing fast. The people over there are really not too friendly. Maman says they act above themselves. I am not sure what that means, but I
know Maman is not bothered by it the way Papa is. If Maman thinks something is foolish, then you somehow do not think it is worth noticing anymore. I cannot explain it any better. People listen to Maman. Au revoir, Mon amie.

Heloise B.

[JOURNAL - JENNIFER]
September 30, 1989

Heloise, your mother sounds much like her great great-grand daughter, my mother. It always seemed to me that most of the world went around with their left eye covered, assuming they could see the whole picture, while my mother opened her left eye and saw a whole new side of things. There is a kind of presence some few women have that causes them to be taken seriously in this man's world. I've never known a man to have this kind of presence, which is completely free of arrogance.

I think of you at ten living in and finding exciting "the city that should never have been built." The swamp of East Saginaw was settled out of the frustration Norman Little felt in trying to deal with the west side businessmen. Due to what he saw as unreasonable demands and a stubborn lack of vision, he picked up his marbles and started his own game, with the backing of the Hoyt brothers, on the swampy east side of the river. According to Stuart Gross, Saginaw historian, the west side businessmen unrealistically inflated the price of land,
so that Norman Little and the Hoyts were effectively blocked from developing any business there. (Gross 2) One gets the sense that it was not greed so much as an attitude of exclusivity that sent Little and Hoyt packing, and thus created their own rival, East Saginaw, your home. It was a decidedly rough place in the mid 1800's, yet you found it exiting. Good for you.

[JOURNAL - HELOISE]
August 4, 1854

Mon Amie,

I always love it when Mr. Rankin comes to the store! He tells me stories about Saginaw City and things that happened before I was born. He even knows about things that happened before he was born. Some of the first white people to come here, he said, were French, just like me! And once a famous Frenchman, M. de Toqueville, came to explore here. (Gross 1, 25) I do not know what Monsieur is famous for, but Mr. Rankin does. The first soldiers came here about thirty years ago, but they only stayed for one year because of the mosquitoes. That is the only thing I do not like about this town, but I would not leave here because of it. Maybe the soldiers had some other reason for leaving. Maybe Mr. Rankin just does not know the whole story. Au revoir.

Heloise B.
Mon Amie,

Maman says I must learn to indent for paragraphs. She says my writing is very disorganized. Papa says at least it is lively, but Maman says I am too young to invent a new style.

Yesterday I told Mr. Little about the soldiers coming here and leaving because of the mosquitoes. He said it was true! Not only that, but he said they came here in 1822 (Coats, 1), the same year he first came here with his father! (Gross 1, 34) He said his father told him one day there would be a great city here, and that this was the time to buy land. So he did. But Major Baker and the soldiers got very sick, and Major Baker said the soldiers should leave because nothing but Indians, bull-frogs and muskrats could live here. (Coats, 1) I can hardly believe it! Mr. Little came back to stay in 1836. He said things went well for a while, but then everyone lost all their money. A few years ago he came back with some money from Mr. Hoyt and Mr. Hoyt to make some businesses in Saginaw city, but he called them a city of blind men. So he came across the river and started a brand new city!

It is a good thing Maman cannot see my diary. She might give me more lessons to do. Au revoir.

Heloise B.
Heloise, what you inadvertently relate here is the beginning of a long history of contention between the east side and the west side of the Saginaw River. More than a century after you learned about East Saginaw’s birth out of spite, Zada Cambridge authored an article in the Saginaw News entitled “East Side, West Side - The Saginaw Splits the Town.” In this article she quotes Henry Marsh, Saginaw’s first black mayor, as saying, ”The innocent Saginaw River, in the eyes of many, symbolizes the dividing line between safety and danger, good and bad, prosperity and poverty, high property values and unsafe houses, success and failure, black and white.” (Cambridge) We seem to have come full circle. The west-siders, incredulous of Little’s plan to build another city, openly scoffed at their sister across the river. (Mills 1, 238) But East Saginaw grew rapidly, in part because of the plank road Little coaxed into being that connected Flint and the east side of the river. (Gross 3, 23) Nor can it be ignored that Norman Little was a gifted promoter and a far-sighted businessman.

So, ma chere amie, for most of the rest of the century, your home on the east of the river was to become the envy of those who lived on the other side. For that brief span of time, it appears, the East Side had the upper hand. Truman B. Fox, your contemporary, lamented in 1858, ”Instead of the envious and bitter feelings that in too many instances pervade the sister towns upon the Saginaw River, nothing but unity and perfect good will toward each other should reign, for the interest of one town is also the interest of the other.” (Fox, 4) One gets the general impression from old histories that Saginaw City residents looked with envy and resentment across the river, while East-siders gazed back with something like the amused contempt the Great Dane might have for a yipping Toy Terrier. As Fox puts it, ”a village was rising as if by magic, out of the wilderness,”(Fox, 45) a fact that did not seem quite fair to the city that had endured so much to survive. And it is an observable truth that the taunts of the underdog have little real meaning to the powerful except that they provide some little
rationale for bigots who wish to justify their bigotry.

But your city was so new, Heloise, that probably many were like your father, who represented the superior attitude assumed by residents of that other world. By the year 1858 East Saginaw had apparently grown wealthy enough to invite the envy of its neighbor, and secure enough not to be devastated by it.

Yet here we come 'round again. As in the beginning, the West Side has what there is of power and money and status, and looks with disdain to the east, the boom town that went bust. The lumber industry had used up its forests and the auto industry used up its people. The forests were razed; the people, abandoned. And through it all one thing remains constant, the Saginaw River, cutting a fairly wide barrier, acts as an effective social, economic and political dividing line.

[JOURNAL - HELOISE]

September 15, 1855

Mon Amie,

I visited the Union School with my maman last week. Maman said I would learn bad things if I went there. I heard her tell Papa that something ought to be done about that teacher. Someone was whispering while we were there and the teacher moved her seat next the negro boy in the back. He told my mother that one way to punish children who did not behave was to sit them next to "the little African." (Ruffin, 29) Maman is an abolitionist. She was so upset! Papa told her that nothing would be done, even if she did report it, because most people in town shared the teacher's opinion. I hope he is wrong, but
he probably isn't. He reminded her that in 1850 when she tried to get the right to vote for negroes in Michigan she couldn't do it. (Rubenstein, 108) He said just because the north does not like slavery is no sign that it likes negroes. When I told Maman that I did not understand prejudice she said that was a sign that she and Papa were doing something right. Au revoir.

Heloise B.

[JOURNAL - JENNIFER]
February 4, 1990

I once heard, in regard to prejudice, that Southerners did not care how close blacks got as long as they didn't get too high, while Northerners didn't care how high they got as long as they didn't get too close. That the North abhorred slavery as an institution and as part of a competing economic reality speaks not at all to issues of justice and compassion. Even after participating in the Civil War on behalf of the Union, Michigan only narrowly passed a law for black enfranchisement in 1870. (Rubenstein, 108) Your Maman was not destined to change her world, Heloise, but as with all people of conscience, she kept it from changing her. That, I am convinced, is all that has saved this fragile planet. As Lillian Hellman implied to the Committee on Unamerican Activities, people of conscience do not cut the fabric of their morals according to this year's fashion. The tapestry of human history is only held together by a few enduring threads of decency.
Mon Amie,

Maman gave me a history assignment that is so exciting! She said that because I loved to talk to people so much I may as well put the gossip to good use. I am writing a history of the Saginaws! Mr. Little and Mr Fox are my best sources, but I mostly love the stories of Marshal Rankin, who became our first officer of the law on May 7 of this year. (Coats, 4) I learned that in 1838 Sheriff Elijah Davenport of Saginaw City arrested a man but had no jail to put him in. The city had to rent space in the old fort for a jail. (Coats, 2)

The first trial in the city was in 1841 when Willard Bunnell stole $800.00 in silver coins with the help of two men from a trading ship. They confessed and Mr. Bunnell tried to run away in the ice and snow. He didn't have time to put his shoes on, so his feet were bleeding and he was caught. His father was a doctor and he fixed his feet. But then his family tricked Sheriff Pratt and escaped to Wisconsin. (Coats, 2)

Then a few years later a family was found murdered in their home. The only one they could not find was the man, Mr. Glass. At first everyone thought the Indians did it, but then they suspected Mr. Glass himself. Many years later someone from here wrote that he saw Mr. Glass in San Francisco. (Report, 243-4) Nobody went and arrested him, though. I do not think that the men in those days were as good at their job as Marshal Rankin.

More tomorrow. Au revoir.

Heloise B.
Mon Amie,

I have been so busy! Every day there have been horse races on the frozen river. (Gross 1, 90) The boys from Saginaw City boast all the time that they can beat any east side nag there is. But Papa said they were going home with their tails between their legs yesterday. They hate to lose even more than Papa likes to win. Maman says men waste so much time and energy trying to out do each other. I must confess that I really, really wanted us to win the contests too. I do not understand why they seem to hate us so much, but it would have been awful if they had won.

Well, I am still working on my History of the Saginaws. Writing a book is quite hard work. You would not think so probably but it is.

Back in 1815 there was a man named Edward Tiffin who was sent to Michigan to find good land for the soldiers. He wrote a report called the Tiffin Report which said many bad things about this state (which wasn't a state yet) and the people from the east decided not to come here. (Foehl, 2)

Maman says that proves the power of the individual to influence the world. Papa said Mr. Tiffin did him a favor and saved a place for us.

Saginaw means land of the Sauks, the Indians who used to live here. The other tribes in Michigan did not like them and decided to make war on them. The Sauks got away in canoes to the other side of the river, but then they had bad luck. The river froze and the other
Indians crossed over on the ice and killed all the Sauks. (Carlson, 5-6) I must go. There is a celebration tonight at Mr. Little's house because we won the races! Au revoir.

Heloise B.

[JOURNAL - JENNIFER]
February 28, 1990

The Saginaw River as betrayer. One might wonder if Henry Marsh were right in calling the river innocent. It turned on the Sauks as it would turn on Norman Little.

The Treaty of Saginaw, negotiated by Jacob Smith in 1819, meant the transfer of 6,000,000 acres of land (Carlson, 9), most of north-eastern Michigan, from the Indians to the United States government. The first payment to the Indians was to be the sum of $3,000.00, half of which the Indians already owed to Smith's business rival, Louis Campau. On the day of payment Smith convinced the Indians to refuse payment to Campau in order to have more money to purchase his goods. There ensued a celebration well lubricated by whiskey. Campau was so angered at being cheated that he decided to get even. He broke open ten barrels of his own whiskey and gave it to the already intoxicated Indians. What followed was a near riot. The government representative, Governor Cass, begged Campau to stop the liquor. Campau replied that the governor started it by allowing him to be cheated, but he agreed to give no more liquor to the Indians. He reportedly said, "I lost my money; I lost my fight; I lost my liquor; but I got good satisfaction."(Dunbar, 236-7) I wonder if you ever heard that story, Heloise. How you would have loved it if you had. Your mother, on the other hand, would probably see it as fitting the pattern of contention woven into the history of Saginaw.

The area we now call the west side of Saginaw was purchased by Samuel Dexter in 1825,
and in 1830 he had it surveyed and platted and named it Saginaw City (Gross 1, 36), perhaps a bit pretentious in that there really was no city there. He was a speculator, whereas Norman Little was a man with a vision of what Saginaw could become and he wanted to be a part of it. And except for the Depression of 1838 (Gross 3, 13), all of his creative energies may well have been poured into Saginaw City; he may never have felt compelled to cross the river and establish a new village. Had it happened that way, Heloise, you may not have come to this saucer we call the Saginaw Valley. The river may never have acquired its divisive reputation. And actually, of its twenty-two miles, only that little stretch that splits Saginaw spreads its aura of rancor.

[JOURNAL - HELOISE]

November 8, 1859

Mon Amie,

This is a tragic day in the lives of the people of East Saginaw. This morning my father found the body of Mr. Norman Little in the Saginaw River. (Carlson, 20) The river he loved so ardently took his life. The only consolation we can seem to find is that he lived long enough to see his beloved village become a city this year. The Ferry will be making many trips to our fair city, as many people from Saginaw City are coming here to pay their respects to a truly great man. Though they were jealous of him they held him in deep respect.

Requiescat in pacem.

I shall miss him.

Heloise
18.
Heloise, you sound all grown up at fifteen. I wonder if the town was ever the same to you after his death. Something of the spirit must have departed with him. But he left a legacy of progressive thinking and his city continued to grow and prosper. The next year your city constructed the Bancroft House. Managed by Mr. Henry Hobbs, it enjoyed the reputation as the best hotel in all of Michigan. (Carlson, 26) Quite a coup for the city that had only one resident a decade before. The 1850 census, according to John Moore, a prominent West-sider, estimated that between four and five hundred people live in Saginaw City (Davis, 56). While the east side of the river was inhabited by trader, Leon Snay. (Coats, 4) Michigan, passed over in the first rush to the west, was coming into its own. Michigania Fever had struck the east. (Foehl, 1)

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Mon Amie,

What a comfort you have been to me all these years. Tomorrow is my wedding day and only to you would I admit my fears for the future. Andre is handsome and steady and has what Papa calls a promising future. But do I want to become Heloise Beauchamps? The name is beautiful, but is it who I am? Maman said something very strange to me last month. She asked me if I had ever consid-

19.
ered not marrying at all. When I asked why she said that she just looked far off and said, "I don't know. I guess I was just thinking of Miss Anthony."

I wonder if my mother loved my father. Somehow I feel frightened to ask. And anyway she would surely say yes and I would never know if she was telling the truth. I must go.

For the last time.

Heloise Bricault
de la Marsh

[JOURNAL - HELOISE]

September 2, 1864

Mon Amie,

I have a daughter now. So I think this will be the last message I write to you. From now on I shall write to my child, Francoise Louise Beauchamps. Perhaps I shall teach her to read by sharing these last ten years of memories with her. In any case you will be my gift to her someday. I hope she will love this place as I have loved it.

In keeping with my tradition of informing you of all civic improvements, I must tell you about our new bridge! It is ever so grand and makes crossing the river so much easier and of course faster. Andre works in Saginaw City now, so it is particularly convenient for him. He has been trying to persuade me to resettle over there, but I am still holding out. So far he has not insisted. I wonder what I shall do if he does.

The new bridge spans the river at Genessee Street (Carlson, 22),
and soon I shall cross it with Francoise who will be the perfect ambassador of good will and harmony to our western rival. No one can resist a baby, it seems, least of all the most perfect little girl ever created. Perhaps one day she will make some Saginaw history; my task appears to be that of recording it.

Well, good-bye dear friend. You have served me well these last ten years. Indeed you have helped me grow up. I expect that you will be treasured by my daughter and my daughter's daughter unto the third and fourth generation...and beyond. Adieu.

Heloise B.

[JOURNAL HELOISE TO FRAN]

September 2, 1864

Child of my Heart,

Bienvenu, ma chere. I feel as though I have been waiting a lifetime for you. It is, I'm sure, a good omen that you were born in the year of the bridge. You bring me such hope for the future, as well as an interesting connection with the past. Since my marriage Maman and I have been somehow distant, though we live only four houses apart. She and your father ...are uncomfortable with each other. But you seem to bring them together as no one else could. They both dote on you and finally have something on which they can agree - that you are the most beautiful child in the world. Maman acts quite pleased with me that I was able to produce a girl. She always was just a little out of step with the rest of the world.

21.
You will like to know someday that your grandmother and your mother were ardent suffragists. (Your grandmother being the more ardent of the two.) This is in part the difficulty between her and your father. Because he takes her more seriously than he takes me, he seems more bothered by what he calls her anarchist views. People do tend to take my mother very seriously.

Francoise, I admire her more than anyone I've ever known, and my most fervent prayer for you is that you become like her, a woman that men take seriously.

Je t'aime,

Your mother

{JOURNAL - JENNIFER}

April 1, 1990

Heloise, you lived in New York in 1848. Did your mother attend the Seneca Falls Convention, I wonder? You never mention your father in connection with the suffragist movement. I could guess that he was somewhat indifferent to it, in that his opposition or support would probably have elicited some comment from you. And also I suspect that his silence on the subject was a sadness to you, one you found perilous or painful to reveal.

I wrote a poem for your mother, an answer really to all those who were threatened by her truth.
It's just my way of saying things.
No one's more surprised than I
  When mountains fold in upon themselves.
I can only assume
  the hollow, hungry
  inside of you
grew weary as Atlas
  of the burden.

(I'm not easy.
  I won't play Hercules and
  hold your world for you.)

I'm careful, but I say things,
  and you collapse in rage.

(But I'm not easy.
  They are your sins
  and I won't die for them.)

It's just my way of saying things.
And somewhere in the sinkholes of your ego
  You know
    that I am innocent.
So strange a feeling to say out loud something that seems axiomatic and to have it met with fury. In a former life I once suggested to the nuns of my convent that we start a revolution of joy. Just my way of saying things. I suggested that we tell someone that we loved them each day. In order to be an effective force for love in the world, I felt that we needed to begin at home. It is hard to remember what kind of reaction I expected, but it certainly bore no relationship to the one I got. The forces of repression understood far better than I the real power of the word. Saying "I love you" is a truly revolutionary act. It opens up all kinds of possibilities, not the least of which is the recognition of a whole new dimension of human interaction, that dangerous realm of feelings. For celibates it is an area not to be taken lightly. The fears of one hundred women found expression in fist-hard anger. The attack at first devastated me, but by the next day I had gained enough perspective to realize that I had tripped on a land mine of compressed emotion and an explosion was inevitable. As I said to one sister who apologized for the hostility of the night before, I just hadn't realized how much they needed to risk all the processes of logic for that millionth chance at love.

But, as they say, I digress.

[JOURNAL - HELOISE TO FRAN]
December 8, 1866

Child of my Heart,

I have made a new friend who lives in the newly organized town of Carrollton. (Mills 2, 371) I tell you this because it is occurring to me that I never really had a close friend before. Also I expect her to be in my life and yours for some time to come, and it feels important to record its beginning.

Her name is Anne Dupuis and she is about to open a school for girls
in Florence (Gross 1, 46), just across the river from us. Though you are only two, my darling, I already have plans for you to attend her school. She thinks you are almost ready now. (I suspect she is joking about that; I am not emotionally ready for you to be that grown up.)

Your father is doing extremely well in the salt business and has become fast friends with John Moore who was Saginaw City's mayor two years ago (Mills 2, 213) and has considerable influence in this part of the state. He seems a bit stuffy to me, and he does not appear to favor Anne's school, but he is more rational than most of the other businessmen and civic leaders on the west side. He is a gentleman of the first order. Next to Curt Emerson he is Prince Albert.

People still talk about how insulted Curt was when he was not invited to the grand opening of Bancroft House in 1859. There is a story circulating that he appeared at the function, jumped up on the table and strode the length of it, kicking china and crystal as he went. (Gross 1, 75) I do remember some kind of scene he staged, but I think the story has grown with time.

The Morley brothers who settled here a few years ago opened what is now a thriving retail store last year. (Mills 2, 240) They seem to love East Saginaw in the same way I do. They believe in it.

Oh, yes, two other brothers, William and John Gallagher, settled south of the bayou and named their settlement South Saginaw (Gross 1, 46). Now there are three! Maman commented that perhaps three Saginaws were a bit de trop. I have never quite understood her sentiments about Saginaw. She once referred to it as leather-rough malevolence. She, by the way, admires John Moore because of his
support of Mr. Lincoln during the terrible war. And she is bitter about the treatment of the negroes that have immigrated.

Sometimes, Fran, my writing is as jumbled as when I began this journal in 1854. Maman would despair of me if she were to read this. I wonder if I shall ever let her.

Je t'aime,
Your Mother

[JOURNAL - JENNIFER]
April 10, 1990

"And still they come!" That was the cry of the fifties in East Saginaw, especially after the plank road from Flint was completed. When the road was first proposed by Norman Little, however, the legislators thought it was a joke. They said one might as well propose building a road to the moon as to build one through that swamp between Flint and the Saginaws. These same legislators, Heloise, scoffed at the prospect of mining the salt your husband made his near fortune on. Upon being petitioned to offer a bounty of ten cents a barrel for the mining of the salt, they mockingly raised the bounty to ten cents a bushel, a whopping fifty cents a barrel, so certain were they that they would never have to pay it. They stopped laughing long enough in 1861 to repeal the bounty, and forced men like your husband to go to the Michigan Supreme Court for recompense.(Gross 1, 167)

When in 1862 the Flint and Pere Marquette Railroad connected East Saginaw to Monroe more people came in and more lumber went out - by rail. (Carlson, 26)

Your remark about the decided lack of rational men in Saginaw City is a sentiment expressed many years later by the Saginaw historian, James Cooke Mills, who published his History of Saginaw County Michigan in 1918. He calls what amounted to the driving out of
Jesse Hoyt in 1850 "a monumental blunder" which left the village "in the hands of irrational men." (Mills 1, 235) I suspect his allegiance was to the East Side.

Also many years later, in 1978, Dr. Ruffin, in his book, Black Presence in Saginaw, Michigan, tells us that some of the blacks who moved to Saginaw, east and west, became prosperous, but that the Atwoods, The Goodridges, The Reynos, the Footes and the Van Dykes "could not totally escape the insults and disrespect which dotted the pages of the press and built on the layer of prejudicial crust worn by their white fellow citizens." (Ruffin, 25)

Perhaps that is an example of what your mother meant by leather-rough malevolence. It is sad to report to you that there has been little smoothing of the leather even to this day. At least that is my truth. Like your mother I could find many who would vehemently disagree with me. But there are some who see what I see.

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[JOURNAL - HELOISE TO FRAN]

April 18, 1870

Child of my Heart,

I am in no way prepared for the tragedy that befell me today. My brave and beautiful mother died at noon. For Papa I must be strong; for you I must be wise, wise enough to explain to a six year old the death of her beloved Grandmaman. But here in this journal I can be the little girl who lost her precious mother.

I simply cannot imagine a world without her in it. I count on her to make sense of the inexplicable. And now the most inexplicable thing
of all happens and she is not here to make things clear for me.

All I am clinging to at this moment is the faith that she will live on in you who adored and emulated her. I am not much like her, much as I always wanted to be, but you are, my darling. I do not to bestow on you a burden of living up to her image, but rather the honor of knowing that all that was best in her exists also in you.

Maman, I do not have enough tears to cry for you.

Avec la triste et l’amour,

Heloise

[JOURNAL - JENNIFER]

May 1, 1990
CONSOLIDATION

Let us move ahead twenty years to the mid-1880s. You are still writing to your daughter, Heloise, and she by your example, is now writing too. You continue your love affair with your city, while she seems to have been imbued with some of your mother’s skepticism.

[JOURNAL - HELOISE TO FRAN]

July 5, 1884

Child of my Heart,

Incredible that I am forty years old today, and even more incredible that you are nearly twenty. Today is a day for reflecting, appreciating and perhaps even regretting a little.
The Saginaw River is approximately twenty miles long with tributaries branching off it. All these tributaries (totaling 864 miles) powered logs into the Saginaw.

The Saginaw River banks were dotted with sawmills during the lumbering era. By 1854, there were twenty-five mills and nine more were being constructed along the river. By the 1860's there were over one hundred mills running at full blast, night and day. Sawmills, lumber partnerships and companies were constantly being organized, reorganized, and went out of business. Mills burned down and were rebuilt and refitted. Almost overnight new sawmills suddenly appeared. Some sawmills were giant complexes of millrooms, water derricks, and company boarding houses, barracks, and stores, mill hand houses, cooper shops, offices, salt blocks, saw and belt repair shops—shingle and lath mills. One mill, built by Wellington & Bros., was said to be the largest in Zilwaukee, even having its own schooner and library. Some lumbermen owned whole fleets of schooners, tugs and steamers, and owned and operated lumber camps and mills in northern Michigan and southern Great Lake states, and in Canada as well as in the Saginaw Valley.

1882 was the peak year for lumber manufactured on the Saginaw—but the mills did not begin to disappear until the 1900's.
What would you have become if your father had sense enough to send you away to collage? You do not appear to resent him for that shortsightedness as much as I do, and my anger pales in comparison to Anne's. We have had a woman doctor in this city since 1874 (Gross 2), a fact which did not please him, but he is beginning to be more receptive since becoming friends with the Hanchetts. I think he genuinely likes Molly and respects the fact that she was the second woman to become a physician in the United States (Mills 2, 176). I hate to think ill of your father, but I wonder if their rather high social status tempers his view. I do wish he were not so conscious of class. Not only are we divided east and west, but we separate ourselves from those who work to create our wealth.

What will you become in any event? Because of your natural intelligence and Anne's guidance you are more than qualified to enter any College that will admit women. Your father in fact claims that you are becoming too blue to attract men. While he adores you and will find no fault in you, he has little difficulty placing blame on Anne or me. I shudder to think what Maman would be saying to him were she here - or he to her. Only at her death did I learn for certain that he cared deeply for her, though he did not approve of her. Of course she would have found the notion of his approval ludicrous.

All I really want for you is that you live beneath the surface. You have a great capacity for thought and feeling. Please do not settle for less than you are and can be.

Je t'aime,

Mother

Post script: I cannot at times help but wonder if you approve of me.
To someone some day,

Today is Mother's birthday. How she delights in it. Father teases her every year about her childlike attitude about birthdays but I find it rather charming.

Odd to feel older than your mother, but I have for some time now. That makes it sound as though she were shallow and childish, which is not at all the case. She is just so incredibly innocent. Anne once told me that was what she found so appealing about her. Not to mention her unmistakable goodness that does not impose itself on others.

My mother has been writing a journal for as long as I can remember but I have never read a page of it. She tells me it will be mine some day, and that implies to me that I shall not see it until after her death. There is something in me that wants to read it while it can do some good to our relationship. I want to know her better.

I do know that she loves this city. As father talks more and more about consolidation, she grows increasingly nostalgic. It looks to be inevitable that the Saginaws will be united soon, and Mother in her whimsy claims it was a fait accompli from the day she took me to the west side across the new Genessee Bridge as a talisman of unity. But still so much of her soul is bound up in the growing up of East Saginaw. What a grand party she gave when South Saginaw merged with East Saginaw in 1873. (Gross 1, 46) She has always resented

31.
Father's greater allegiance to the west side. Father can be a bit of a snob.

I must go now and prepare for tonight's gala event. I do not remember ever enjoying my birthday as much as my mother enjoys both hers and mine.

Fran

To someone some day,

Father and I have had some strained moments this year. Though we have always been poles apart on almost all issues, political and social, it has not come between us really. He has often claimed that I was just like my grandmother, but there seemed more pride in his voice than exasperation. The strike, however, is the river that has divided us. That the lumberjacks want a ten hour day is outrageous to business on the east and west sides alike. At last a point of unity!

Anne once told me that when the old Athenian was asked when justice would come to Athens, he replied that it would only come when the oppressors were as outraged as the oppressed. Well, they
certainly are, but unfortunately not about the same things.

I once used the term working class in an argument with him and for the first time I saw him become livid. He shouted that he ought to forbid me to see Anne anymore, as I must be getting these dangerous ideas from her. I reminded him that I was no longer a child and had been thinking for myself for some time. I did not tell him that Anne had in fact met Karl Marx in London some years ago and had shared some of his writings with me. Anne has been for me an invaluable source of information but she has never done my thinking for me. That to her is educational heresy.

Father thinks the class system is good and inevitable; Anne thinks it is evil and destined to fail. I think it is inevitable, but that need not deter us from addressing its gross inequities. Mother is so fundamentally egalitarian as to be simplistic about it all.

As the jacks went through the streets shouting, "Ten hours or no more sawdust!" the mill owners and those who do business with them (like my father) were proving that money and might make right by calling in the troops. (Gross 1, 62) All ended with more of a whimper than a roar, however. Some mills reopened with a ten hour day, others with the old eleven hour one, and the legislature settled the problem by enacting a statute for a ten hour day. (Gross 1, 65)

Our other point of contention was the upkeep of the bridge. When it collapsed, drowning a number of people who were standing on it to watch a great fire (Mills 1, 246) (that nearly incinerated our home) Father blamed it on the stupidity of the people for crowding onto it,
while I pointed out that the business community who owns it and most profits by it ought to have kept it in good repair. This time he did not blame Anne for my heretical notions, but instead denounced "that young firebrand" Jacob Little, my fiance, whose only acceptability in so far as Father is concerned is his social standing. His radical political views are, according to Father only a phase he is going through. I certainly hope that is not the case, because if his views become what both our fathers consider orthodox, I shall have to divorce him and cause great shame to my Catholic heritage.

Must go.

Fran

[JOURNAL - HELOISE TO FRAN]

November 22, 1885

Child of my heart,

You asked me yesterday why I chose to marry your father since we hold such different outlooks on life and so many disparate values. I have come to realize the answer, after much pondering, and it is simply that I did not choose him. he, rather chose me and I acquiesced. Some day when you read this, be kind. I know that it is not the kind
of answer you would respect. It is as though the granite in the soul skipped one generation. Strange that I find it so much easier to discuss these things with Anne than with you. Then again, not so strange. She is not my daughter, and she has lived long enough to be tolerant of the less radical.

When you marry next week, I think I will have no need to fear for your future. Jacob is so like a partner to you that Anne almost doesn't mind your marriage. There is no question but that even if he does change, you will hold your own. He is nearly good enough for you, darling. And you have been all grown up for some time now.

Je t'aime,

Mother

---

To someone some day,

There are few things more emblematic of the entrepreneurial mentality of the Saginaw valley than what is happening in Meredith. Jim Carr may have been the most evil of the proprietors of houses of ill repute, but my father cannot see that he has only taken to its logical conclusion what all the local panderers have been doing for years. If
women are a commodity then logically (if not legally or morally) they can be snatched from the streets and used for profit. Carr is in prison, but his wife, Maggie isn't. (Gross 3, 50) Nor are those who have stolen the labor of the poor or plundered the forests. Grandmother saw clearly the level of greed that pervaded this valley. Mother blinds herself to much of it, and concentrates on the adventure of making a city.

I want for Father to see how it all relates. When will I have done with trying to convert him? Somehow it seems imperative to his humanity that he learn before he die that justice and compassion ultimately count for more than property. How can one respect and hold dear anything that can be reduced to a price?

Meanwhile he is spending his energy making up for the Mayor Benjamin blunder of vetoing an electric plant on the west side. I doubt that he would care much about the issue, except that East Saginaw has had electric street lighting since 1881 (Gross 1, 45), so he feels competitive. We've come full circle.

Wearily,

Fran

36.
As James Cooke Mills put it in 1918, Fran, the public improvements of East Saginaw during the 1880s, "excited the envy of the backward city on the other side of the river."(Mills 1, 238) Though your father lived on the east side, he was most definitely a west sider in spirit. Mills is a rather overt partisan for the city on the east. While he speaks of it as the city that had "no logical or practical excuse for being," one senses all the more pride in its many accomplishments, in large part due to the very fact of its improbable beginning. He tells us further that the west siders had "a keen hatred of all persons in any way identified with the remarkable progress of East Saginaw."(Mills 1, 238)

When interviewing Stuart Gross On March 7, 1990, I asked him to characterize the rivalry between east and west sides in the 1800's. His judgement was that at that time it was normal, healthy and inevitable. That it was inevitable (Gross 2), considering the human condition, is most likely true, but Fox and Mills allude to an enmity that goes beyond healthy competition. I submit that the present attitudes of hostility and mistrust are come by honestly, that they are indeed a legacy of the past.

A note about the law of supply and demand. With such a heavy supply of men working in the wilderness, there came to be a great demand for women. Saginaw and its surrounding areas catered to the demand by supplying many houses of prostitution. None were as infamous as Jim and Maggie Carr's Devil Ranch in Meredith, west of Saginaw. Carr eliminated his competition by the expedient process of murder. He often obtained his working girls by simply kidnapping them from the streets of Saginaw and other cities in the area. Tracking dogs were used to recapture runaways. He beat one of his girls with brass knuckles so severely that she died as a result. In 1885, after a change of venue, he was convicted and sentenced to fifteen years in prison, only to be released in one year when his conviction was
overturned. Fortunately for the young women of Saginaw he and Maggie were hounded out of business and died, drunken and penniless in 1887. (Gross 3, 49-50) I wonder how much of this unsavory side of life you were aware of, in as much as you were a young lady of some social standing. I suspect you were fairly well informed. How much rage and impotence you must have felt.

[JOURNAL - HELOISE TO FRAN]

June 1, 1889

Child of my Heart,

I think I shall live to see Saginaw as one city. News is expected any day now that the legislature is about to perform a shot gun marriage of the two cities, and my feelings about it are extremely mixed. On the one hand I have always favored unity over division, harmony over discord. Yet to gain one thing one must always give up another. And what seems to be bothering me most at this time is giving up the name of East Saginaw. It is much akin to the sense of loss I felt when I gave up my birth name at my wedding. Silly perhaps... but perhaps not.

I am going to give you all my journals tonight, darling, because the doctor told me that I only have a short time left on this earth; the cancer is winning. It occurred to me that if I leave them to you after I pass on, you may have questions I would not be here to answer. There were so many things I never asked my mother.

My life has not been particularly long, nor did I accomplish much.
else of significance, but I did give the world you, Fran. That alone ought to earn my salvation.

May your life be long and happy, but most of all, may it be a life that makes a difference.

Je t'aime,

Your proud mother

[JOURNAL - FRAN TO HELOISE]

March 10, 1890

Mother,

Here is a poem Anne wrote for you last night, as you lay dying.

Tracing with a fingertip
the long forgotten lines of love
on quiet tombs,
I wonder
which of these women
missed
a chance to change the world
a little.

39.
Loving wives and mothers,
sweet and pure
devoted daughters and
beloved sisters,
described and circumscribed
by destiny.

I would like to ask each one
what she would like
to have read there.

And this from me:

You were so like the sea
when the center
of its soul is
moved,
and it heaves awareness,
never quite spilling
over
until it reaches
a quiet, thirsty shore.

Mother, we had nearly a year of truly knowing each other. Thank you.

40.
I shall always treasure your memoirs and your grand daughter will have a chance to know you now.

In love and respect,

Your daughter

[JOURNAL - FRAN TO MARY]

July 5, 1890

Mary,

Six whole months you have been in this world! So much to share with you, Dear One. What an adventure this is going to be!

I think your grandmother's spirit is haunting me, as I have an uncontrollable urge to save some kind of record of this place of your birth for you. In fact I bought a copy of a slim book about Michigan history that came out in 1886. (Report) In it, Judge Albert Miller, one of the earliest white people to find his way here, tells some interesting tales about traveling to the wilds of Saginaw. When he first came here there was only one family living in Carrollton. (Report, 229) I mention that because I was just yesterday visiting Anne and commented on how busy Carrollton seems these days. She said that quite a number of French Canadians were settling around her. I met her new neighbors, the Blondins, who have the most darling four year old boy, Louis. Anne says when she looks at him she considers opening her school to boys.

41.
Heavens, I am even writing like Mother!

Your father is working in the law firm of Mr. George Weadock, who was elected mayor of the newly consolidated city of Saginaw last March. (Gross 1, 47) Wouldn't Grandmother be proud that an East sider and a Catholic was chosen as the first mayor of the new city! (Mills 2, 107)

I am trying to organize a group that will sponsor Miss Susan B. Anthony's visit when she comes to Michigan on her speaking tour. Anne introduced me to her when we traveled to New York two years ago. I was too awed to speak beyond a greeting. How old will you be, I wonder, by the time we win this battle? It is only a matter of time, but how much? Jacob feels certain we will be able to vote by the arrival of the new century. Jacob is always so optimistic. I hold my position as cynic of the house.

Sleep well, little one.

Mother Fran

[JOURNAL - JENNIFER]

August 1, 1990

A new daughter is born. You were born the year of the bridge, Fran, and she with the consolidation of the Saginaws. A good deal has happened in nearly forty years, not the least of which is the nearly complete eradication of the white pine in Michigan. We so often underestimate our power for destruction. The lumberjacks predicted that it would take a
hundred years to cut the pine in the Saginaw Valley, but it took them fewer than fifty years. (Gross 1, 48) The Red Sash Brigade and other crews of jacks could raise hell and raze forests with alacrity.

Bruce Carlson informs us that all was not well just because the Michigan Legislature created a city by edict. He reports that there was intense rivalry over nearly every public decision. There were fights over the location of the courthouse, railroad terminals and all manner of public improvements. Exemplifying the expression "cutting off one's nose to spite one's face," we have the battle of the city hall. After much bickering the city fathers decided to build it in the geographical center of the city. Unfortunately the center of the city was not near either of the business districts, and therefore equally inconvenient to everyone. (Carlson, 31) What would Saginaw have chosen to do if Solomon had posed his famous "who gets the baby" question?

But eventually the cities became accustomed to the marriage, and rivalries seem to have become less bitter. For a while Saginaw was a city with a river in the middle and prosperity on both sides. That is not to suggest that east and west siders did not find ample opportunity to play out their residual feelings of rivalry. The business community, with men like Ezra Rust, Aaron Bliss (who became Governor of Michigan in 1900) (Mills 2, 25) and George Weadock, to mention only a few needed a united city for economic growth, so a united city came to be.

Politics and business were the main orders of the day, but life did have a lighter side. Saginaw was hit with "footlight fever" in the late 1800's and early 1900s and was proud to offer the world the talents of some of their progeny. Officer Timothy McCoy's son Tim left Saginaw to become a very early star of western movies; George Lavigne punched his way to the heavy weight championship of the world from 1893 to 1899, and was known professionally as The Saginaw Kid. And Leila Koerber, who attended Hoyt Grade School, blossomed into the famous actress, Marie Dressier. (Gross 1, 73-74) When the citizens of a city pass
those exacting and all-consuming pioneer days, they seem naturally to turn to arts and leisure.

A New Century

[JOURNAL - JENNIFER]

August 4, 1990

As I live out the last decade of this turbulent century, I look back into the lives of Fran and Mary as they enter it with hope. They are experiencing a world exploding with new and wondrous technology, which began with the telegraph of Heloise's day and the telephone of Francoise's. It is difficult to be part of a world of computers and space flight and to be able to appreciate what those two inventions did to alter the reality of distance, which in turn had so great an impact on our perception of time. In virtually no time the once vast and far-flung world will become a neighborhood. Sad that technology should bring us so close together before we learned each other's words and ways.

In 1911 Mary Little married little Louis Blondin, the boy her mother had found so adorable twenty-one years earlier. Later that year Anne Dupuis, friend to Heloise and friend and mentor to Francoise, died peacefully at the age of seventy-five.

[JOURNAL FRAN TO MARY]

September 17, 1911

Mary,

This has been a year of losses for me. First I lost you to Louis. How
ironic that you came to marry that darling little boy that I met the year you were born, especially since you detested him most of the years of your growing up. Somehow your feelings for each other changed without my noticing. Perhaps it is just as well. I may have tried something foolish, such as attempting to discourage the match. As that usually fails to do anything but create hard feelings, I can only hope for the best. In terms of enlightened thinking, Louis is somewhere between my father and your father. But people change - sometimes. By the time you read this many years from now, we may well laugh at this apprehension.

I also lost my second mother, mentor, sage and confidant. To lose a mother once is all anyone should have to bear. A second time is devastating. I cling to the happy memories of Anne - clinging for dear life. At seventy-three she had the enthusiasm of a seven year old when we visited the Brooks Aeroplane Company in late 1909. (Barfknecht, 165) She was as proud as Heloise would have been that Michigan's first aeroplane manufacturer opened for business in Saginaw. How she laughed when her friend Tom White dug up all his plumbing last year, only to find it clogged with seven inch fish. (Barfknecht, 86) He had often complained to her that the river, once full of many kinds of fish, was becoming barren. She told him that since he couldn't catch them in the river, they felt sorry for him and tried to swim into his home. He did get the last laugh, though by leaving some of the smelly fish on her stoop. Anne living is what I hold on to; Anne dead I cannot fathom. And she never got to vote.

Mother

45.
Governor Osborn was the guest of my parents tonight. Louis reluctantly went to dinner with me to welcome him. Mother suspects the reluctance is because he dislikes the politics of the Governor, but it is really that he dislikes politics in general.

We had a hopeful discussion about the real possibility of passing women's suffrage in Michigan next year. It so narrowly went down to defeat this year! (Rubenstein, 194) Mother was the only skeptic in the group. She feels this was our best chance and that next year the forces of evil will have organized and gained strength. Father and Louis think it will easily pass next year, while the Governor and I hold that nothing about this fight has been easy so far and it would be a mistake to take the win for granted.

Louis and I visited Anne's grave yesterday. I cannot help but think how she would have loved to give her views on the subject tonight. To Anne the right to vote held great symbolic value, but she always cautioned us that it was not a panacea, that women would vote as their fathers had until they more clearly understood how often that meant voting against their own best interests. That realization, she told me once, would not come in my lifetime.

C'est tout.

Mary

46.
Mary,

They did it. The twin evils of social discrimination and demon alcohol conspired to keep women in bondage for yet a while longer. What an inspired campaign they ran. They got every arrogant male in the state to fear the potential power of the proletariat by convincing them that all the common, uneducated women of Michigan would be a grave threat to our stability if they obtained the vote. Then, by emphasizing the suffrage movement's link to the Temperance Forces, they got the vote of every man who feared for his inalienable right to be a drunk. An overwhelming victory for them. (Rubenstein, 194)

Last year's near victory for us was a mirage.

I am sorry, darling, I wish it were a more sane world that I had brought you into.

This town is going mad.

The object of its affections is the automobile. There is a good deal of talk about making Saginaw the capital of this new industry. What havoc will it wreak, I wonder?

Mother
Fran, your daughter calls you a skeptic, but you were really more a realist. And this last query of yours perhaps even qualifies you as prophet. What havoc indeed would the auto industry wreak? Well, in many ways, of course, it could be seen as a boon rather than a bane on life in Saginaw. Though she never became the car capital of the world, as some early enthusiasts predicted, her role in creating parts for that industry brought a good deal of prosperity our way - for a while. Though Blacks had been part of the Saginaw citizenry since 1855, promise of good jobs in the new Saginaw factories drew many southern poor up north to the Saginaw Valley. Many of those poor were black. Thus, a once tiny minority became a sizable portion of the population.

Saginaw also came to have a large Hispanic population, due in part to the agri-business so integral to this fertile saucer. These new members of Saginaw were primarily settled on the east side of the river, along with the blacks who come north for factory work. It must have seemed like a practical arrangement to build make-shift housing on the north-east side near the factories. No doubt a thoughtful gesture. Was it an accident of history that as the minority population grew, virtually none of those looking for homes chose to look on the west side of the river? Instead, the boundaries of the ghetto simply expanded to include all of the east and south east side.

So here we have the history of the Saginaw River after the Indians left it to the white man. The west side is settled in the 1830s, the east side is established in 1850 and the river divides them. The cities become consolidated in 1889-1890 as the legislature unites them. The lumber industry disappears in the late 1890s to be replaced relatively soon by the auto industry, which changes the racial composition of the city, which eventually becomes a west side
of white people and an east side of people of color. And the river divides them. The west side first scoffed at the east side, then envied it bitterly, then engaged it in a fairly healthy rivalry. Now it reasserts its sense of superiority and looks across the water with derision and fear.

[JOURNAL - JENNIFER]
August 11, 1990

A quote from today's Saginaw news: (as we rush toward equality)

"An entrenched color barrier that stood 155 years in Saginaw County's judicial system fell at 4:12 p.m. Friday when Terry L. Clark was sworn as the county's first black judge."
(Solt, 1)

[JOURNAL - CONSTANCE TO JENNIFER]
July 6, 1944

Dear Jennifer,

You changed my life yesterday. I thought I loved you all while I was carrying you, but having you presented to me by Dr. Harvey at 10:00 AM on July 5th altered my world considerably. All of a sudden I feel responsible for curing every social ill and have an uncontrollable urge to demand world peace. Your grandmother, Mary, informs me that we were destined to meet, as our family has a long and sacred tradition of close mother-daughter relationships. Your great grand-
mother, Fran, says I did very well to have you on the hundredth anniversary of her mother's birth. I don't have the heart to tell her that if I had been able to choose, you would have arrived at least a day sooner.

I wonder how long you will have to know Gran, as she is almost eighty years old and not in the best of health. She said an odd thing when she first looked down upon you today. She said, "This one may never have to marry." Then she asked me to give you a form of her mother's name, ( just as she had asked my mother to do with me ) Hence, child, you are to be called Jennifer Louise Smith, next in a long line of proud women.

I must get some sleep, dear heart, to be ready for you soon.

Thrilled to be
Your Mother
Constance Eloise

[JOURNAL - JENNIFER]
August 15, 1990

You and grandmother never wrote as much as Heloise and Fran did, but you both gave me the gift of much oral history. More than that you gave me rock solid values about honoring diversity and abhorring prejudice. From Dad I got a sense of fair play and standing up for the underdog, but from you I learned what was really obscene in this world.
I remember that when I was in high school I had a history teacher who was a bigot, and I felt morally obligated to counteract his message in a three-year on-going argument. The school was small (and Catholic) and one tended to have some teachers over and over.

In 1967 I was teaching in Detroit. That summer all hell broke loose. I remember feeling so proud that so many of the people in my family were engaged in the fight for justice. Leo, then Father Leo, had been organizing groups to raise social consciousness for several years, and he told me about the radical action of taking a racially integrated group to all-white St Stephen's for Sunday Mass in 1965. Rosa Parks had long ago refused to go to the back of the bus, but this was west side Saginaw. He recalls vehement and negative reactions, the most ironic of which was probably a remark of one of the parishioners who said he had to hurry to Communion "before the niggers dirtied the host." (Lynch)

Saginaw Realtors engaged in the particularly vicious practice of "block busting" whereby they would sell one house in a neighborhood to a black family, and then visit all the white neighbors, warning them to sell while they could still get some return for their property. All too often these scare tactics worked. White flight from east to west side spread rapidly. In a march to protest the racist practice, my cousin Peter carried a sign that read, "Would you want your daughter to marry a Realtor?"

As the boiling pot of frustration spilled over onto other Michigan cities from Detroit, in the summer of 1967, the Saginaw news ran the headline, "4 HURT IN OUTBREAK HERE." How true were the words of the editor of the news four days later."No question can exist that the most basic fact is that Saginaw came through far better than most." The editor further offers an explanation for the relative good fortune."The reason this is true is very simple: Sincere and dedicated leadership, both from official city quarters and from militant Negro organizations." ("Militants")

I happen to know a number of the people from the "militant" organizations, and I suspect they would have been surprised at that characterization of themselves. Certainly as they look
back they see themselves as a bit more than mildly liberal. (Lynch)

The mayor of Saginaw at that time was Henry Marsh, the first black mayor the city ever had. He was being accused of not being responsive to the needs of the black community and responded by calling a meeting "composed of people who have been most strongly critical of this city as well as representatives of business, government and the news media." Many people construed that to mean the meeting was open, especially those who had been strongly critical. When many were turned away from the meeting, not having been invited, grass roots leaders quickly organized a sit-down strike in the middle of Genessee and Washington, the center of the east side business district. They did this to channel the crowd's energy in a direction other than violence, and miraculously it worked. Saginaw did not have a riot that year, a great deal of tension, a few violent incidents, but no riot. As I recollect the keeping of the peace had more to do with the "militant" leadership than with the responsiveness of the City Fathers. ("Misunderstanding")

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So what truth do I tell my students when I bring them here? Do I tell them that the river is innocent? Do I pretend it is nothing more than a harmless arm of water reaching through the city? Or do I tell of its turbulent history, through the eager and kind eyes of Heloise and the jaundiced ones of Francoise. Can I be totally honest with them about the Saginaw I know, an unkind city rent through the middle by a once vibrant, now polluted river? Do I dare ask them to become complicitous in the plot of Heloise when she carried her infant daughter,
Francoise, across the dividing line as a talisman of unity? They ought to know that political action is imperative to improve this city. Its only salvation is integration - unity. And that always begins on a personal level. I want to tell them to cross the river, actually and symbolically, and spend time making friends. It is time to build more bridges and kill a little time with a friend. In the words of Constance Eloise

Time
killed
in ways of friendship
has died
a martyr's death,
making holy.
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