

Rev. Thomas Stafford Fowler was born in England and came to America when he was 8 years old with his sister, brother and parents. He was a scholarly person and loved books, writing poetry and music.

His family settled in New York state. His middle name was his mother's maiden name. He enlisted in the American Civil War in 1863 and was part of the 77th regiment for the Union Army out of New York. He assisted President Lincoln during his various campaigns. He fought at Antidem, Gettysburg and Spottsylvania.

During the battle of Spottsylvania, he was shot in the right arm and operated on at a field hospital which was the Presbyterian Church in Spottsylvania. Instead of amputating the arm like they did so often with such injuries, they took out a three inch section of bone which left the arm to dangle. They tried three times to do a bone graph but neither one was successful. He wore a sling to support the affected arm for the rest of his life and got a military pension for his injuries which was \$18.00 a month for life.

Being disabled in this way left him without being able to do manual labor for a living. He attended Wesleyan Methodist College in New York and became a minister. He also learned fluent Greek and Hebrew.

At some point he met Mary Elizabeth Couch who was born in Tremont, Illinois. It is unknown where or when they married but they had a son named James Fowler who later also became a Methodist Minister and daughter Jesse Fowler who died at age 24 of an acute appendicitis. Their last child Grace was born July 24, 1883 in Roseville, Illinois. She was all of three pounds at birth and no one expected her to live. Her early days were spent in a shoe box on the door of the old wood stove to keep her warm round the clock. Ironically she lived to be twenty days short of one hundred and one years old.

Great grandfather had been preaching all over the Midwest and establishing new Methodist Churches. He was a devout man and instilled this devotion for Christ in his children. My grandmother Grace never forgot her father's teachings.

Rev. Fowler and his family came to Groton, South Dakota in 1888. He would replace the first pastor of the tiny Methodist Church in the prairie town. My grandmother Grace was six years old at that time.

Many stories were passed down regarding Indians, prairie life and how the small family managed in the small quarters in the second story of the church. There was no parsonage until later on.

Great grandfather was strict which fit the era. They were a close knit family. Rev. Fowler thought that "the worst that he would ever have to suffer were the memories accrued during his soldiering in the Civil War".

Mary Elizabeth Couch Fowler was a Mayflower descendant and 36th great granddaughter to David I of Scotland. Evenings after prayer were occupied in reciting the family lineage. She was

also a diabetic and started failing in late 1888. January 25, 1889 was when she died and was laid to rest in the town's prairie cemetery. This was also the year of South Dakota's statehood.

Rev. Fowler was now left with raising three children and also moving to Aberdeen, SC where he ministered for several years. His daughter Grace Fowler became a school teacher and Rev. Fowler married her and her new husband Frederick Percy Rawson who was a first generation American from Albany, New York in 1908.

Grace and Fred gave Rev. Fowler his first grandchild in 1909 in Aberdeen, S.D. A year later Fred, Grace and baby Sammy moved to Oregon to become homesteaders in central Oregon. It was in 1910 that Reverend Thomas Stafford Fowler traveled to Oregon to see his surviving daughter and grandchild. He became sick shortly after and went into a large boarding home in Portland, Oregon for care. He died in Portland in 1911. His death certificate states "heart failure and injuries suffered since the Civil War". He now lays to rest in Rose City Cemetery next to his daughter Grace and her husband Fred in Portland, Oregon. Baby Sammy is buried nearby with his wife Jennee.

Reverend Fowler's son went on in his ministry and followed his father's footsteps. He never had children as he was a hydrocephalic and believed it was passed on. He did marry. It is uncertain where he and his wife ended their final days.

Grace and Fred's second child was Grace Isabel Rawson. She was not born until 1923 so Rev. Fowler never got to meet her. Grace Isabel was my mother who was also raised on vast landscapes of the Oregon High Dessert like her mother on the prairie of South Dakota. She also played with the Indian children much like her mother and lived much of the life of the South Dakota family until she moved into the city in 1933.

I am grateful for the memories of my great grandparents. I cherish Rev. Fowler's Bible and Civil War medals. I am also grateful to be able after all these years to share a little piece of the story that graces my family.

Linda M. Pickering