



Carrie Miner, seated in the center back row, is surrounded by other ladies from her Lowell, Mass. secretarial class.

The Saga of a Vermont Woman

By Miriam Herwig

She was born July 29, 1861 on a Vermont hillside farm, the eighth of nine children. Her two older brothers fought in the Civil War and by the time she was three her mother had died, after nursing the rest of the family through a typhoid epidemic. Her father never remarried, so the older sisters brought up little Caroline Elizabeth Miner.

Carrie attended the nearby one-room school and church, becoming very devout. In October 1880 she married an equally fervent young tinsmith, Lewis Farr, and began the traditional young matron's life, bearing a son and a daughter.

Then, suddenly, her life pattern changed drastically. She had her husband were divorced, because of in-law trouble, it was said. In those days, this was a rare and stigmatic event. Carrie was left with two preschool children to support, when alimony was unheard of. But she did have a loyal sister, Abby, who declared she would make a home for the three while the young mother sought work.

Recruiters from the Lowell mills had frequently come to Vermont, seeking able-bodied young women to work in the world's largest textile manufacturing city, so it was in this direction that Caroline headed. Lowell had been planned as an industrial utopia, with hospital,

church and cultural benefits for its working girls.

Here Carrie obtained a job paying \$5 weekly, more than teachers were getting then. Somehow in her spare time she learned the new skills of typing and shorthand, and became so proficient that she set a world record for typing speed.

But learning secretarial practice was not enough for this progressive girl from the Green Mountains. She began teaching demure-faced young ladies, corseted and bustled in the height of fashion, how to type and take shorthand.

At about this time she entered a field involving the outcasts of society — counseling unwed mothers. Work with these young pariahs led to the capturing of her heart by a little baby girl, who was brought up as a sister to her own children.

These experiences contributed to the literary career Carrie then pursued, along with her work. Serials about the girls she knew so well were published in "Purity and Light," and poems as well.

Meanwhile, her spirit was not satisfied with such achievements, and she enrolled at Gordon Missionary Institute, now Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Mass., to become a minister. She was pictured with the graduating class of 1901 and went on to preach and evangelize in Rhode Island, Ohio, Massachusetts, Maine and Vermont.

Although illness felled her many times, cancer sent her home to Waitsfield, Vt., where she died in May 1909, 11 years before women were allowed to vote. Against tremendous odds, Carrie Miner Farr had accomplished more in her 48 years than other women of her era had ever dreamed of.

She was my grandmother.

Author and poet Miriam Herwig lives in Randolph Center.

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