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Genesis

Alice Elvira Freeman was born February 21, 1855, at Colesville, Broome County, New York. Colesville was a tiny community, not really a village, but simply a collection of farms in the Susquehanna River valley, not far from the Pennsylvania border. Binghamton was the nearest town of any size. The area was then, as it is today, beautiful, wooded, hilly, fertile country with the winding Susquehanna River providing, in the nineteenth century, both an avenue of travel and a source of ever-changing pastoral beauty. Vistas were both intimate and distant. Rain, fog, and sun, the varying light of morning, midday, and evening, the gradual but dramatic change of seasons, all added to the rich visual panorama the valley provided. Lumbering was the original industry. Oxen hauled the logs to mills that used waterpower to saw them. Some mills continued to exist into the late nineteenth century, but by the time Alice was born, much of the timber was gone, and dairy farming was the major occupation of the valley's people.

Alice's paternal grandfather, James Freeman, had been part of the first wave of New England migration that peopled west central New York late in the eighteenth century. Soon after the Revolutionary War he walked from Connecticut to take up land along the Susquehanna. The elder James Freeman was to marry a Knox, daughter of James Knox, a Scotsman and member of George Washington's Lifeguard who left his family's lands near Stockbridge, Connecticut, about the same time as Freeman. Both families became substantial landowners in the valley. [1](#)

Alice drew her physical characteristics from her father, James Warren Freeman. He was a large man, tall, red-headed, and the red lights in Alice's abundant dark hair were her father's legacy. Her husband also credited James with bestowing on Alice what he called her "moral beauty." [2](#)



Alice Freeman at age five. (Courtesy of Wellesley College Archives.)

Alice's mother, Elizabeth Josephine, was descended from Roswell Higley, another Revolutionary War veteran and early settler who acquired land in the Occanum area near Windsor. [3](#) She was one of five daughters, all reported beautiful, of Samuel Higley, a Colesville farmer, and Elvira Frost, a school teacher. From her mother's family, Alice acquired her dark hair and eyes. Her mother, like her father, was amply proportioned, and Alice was tall, nearly five feet ten when she graduated from college, but she was of slender build and weighed a mere hundred and eight pounds. [4](#)

Alice's mother was only seventeen when Alice was born. James Freeman was thirteen years her senior, twenty-nine at the time of his marriage, and Alice later saw herself and her mother growing up together. Certainly Alice was given heavy responsibilities as a small child. By the time she was five she had acquired a brother, Fred, and two sisters, Ella Louise and Roxie Estelle, usually called Stella. Her husband reports that from early childhood she carried her share

of household tasks. As the eldest daughter she was busy gathering eggs, making beds, dressing the three younger children, and drying dishes long before she started school. [5](#)

Not only did mother and child share farm and household tasks, they also shared a concern with public questions. Elizabeth Freeman taught briefly before her marriage, but her generation of educated middle-class women most often turned to reform causes rather than careers to expand women's sphere. She was an ardent worker in the temperance cause throughout her life, campaigned with equal zeal for protective legislation for women and children, and was the moving force behind the establishment of a hospital for women and children in Saginaw, Michigan, her residence during the latter half of her life. [6](#) Causes were important to Elizabeth Freeman, and even when she was ill, she continued her many public concerns. But during these early years Alice and her mother learned and worked together, almost like sisters, as the precocious, eldest child assumed more and more responsibilities. This closeness to her mother was to affect Alice's life in more than one way. Her activist mother may have provided a model for Alice as educator and advocate. Perhaps more importantly, Alice's insistence on the training that would make her financially independent and able to support herself was inspired in part by her mother's vulnerability to the vagaries of the family's fortunes.

Elizabeth Freeman does not come through clearly as a person in Alice's surviving correspondence. I would hardly have guessed at the breadth of her interests had I not discovered them through other sources. She is someone Alice asks for a length of fabric or a bit of lace to remodel an old garment rather than as a confidant or source of support. Alice's interactions with her siblings, Stella, Ella, Fred, and with her father, are much more substantive. Later Alice often treated her mother's myriad demands as a confounded nuisance, although she always gave her the support she needed. She emulated her mother in many ways, but she also refused to identify with her completely. Her father could also annoy her, but she adored him despite his faults. Her feelings toward her mother were much more ambivalent. However, her mother had provided a model, a woman whose interests went far beyond the domestic sphere and who tried to make a difference in the public world. However, it was James Freeman whom Alice preferred as a friend and companion throughout her life rather than her mother. It was her father who in 1884 accompanied her to Europe the first time. After she left home it was the hours with her father that she most cherished on visits to the family. It was her father's interest in further education, in science, and in helping people in a personal, hands-on way that shaped the direction of her life rather than her mother's devotion to changing the world through reform causes. Alice took, as everyone does, from both her parents in shaping her own identity. But it was her father, despite his failures, who called forth her deepest love.

Alice influenced her siblings, but, as the eldest child, they seem to have had a relatively minor influence on her except to add to her cares and responsibilities. The older of her sisters was to a major extent dependent on her all of Alice's life. Her younger sister died as a young adult. Her brother was always a cherished companion and friend, someone she enjoyed, and she willingly helped to finance his education, but he was not someone she looked to for advice or support.

The Freemans, Knoxes, Higleys, and Frosts provided Alice with a sturdy, stable, and hardworking set of forebears. Nineteenth-century county histories show them as prosperous lumbering and farming families, but not taking political leadership in the county. They did not

become county officials or justices of the peace. Although all of these families had substantial landholdings, the young Freemans, while owning their own farm, seem not to have inherited money. ⁷ The family was not poor, although Alice's husband, George Palmer, liked to think of them that way. One of Alice's nieces was certain that James Freeman was "one of the wealthier members of the community." ⁸ In terms of his original land holdings this may well have been true. However, the James Freemans, like farm families generally, appear to have had few cash reserves, and in 1877, they lost their land and all their other property because of James Freeman's unwise investments of 1873 in a speculative mining venture which left him with a large burden of debt. ⁹ The rented house in Windsor where they lived during Alice's school days was a comfortable, tasteful ten- room Greek revival dwelling on Windsor's main street, but not markedly different from a number of other residences in the town. They were clearly middle class, but the family fortunes were highly volatile.

According to Alice Freeman, hers was a happy childhood. She loved the countryside and found sustenance in the quiet pleasures close contact with the earth provided: changing seasons, growing things, preserving the land's abundant bounty. As her husband wrote, "She knew the farmyard, the country road, the breeding cattle, the upturned soil." ¹⁰ Although she never again lived on a working farm, she always gloried in rural pursuits and the Susquehanna River valley was always home. Throughout her life Alice Freeman was the competent farm girl who could bottle the surplus crab apples, make jam from the uneaten peaches, or remodel and refashion a still-usable dress. Much of her early adult life was lived in institutional settings or in boarding houses at the University of Michigan, or in Wellesley's College Hall, and she seems to have eaten what was put in front of her without protest or much comment. Her University of Michigan student letters are remarkably free of the age-old student complaint about the food. But she was always quick to organize a celebratory feast in college rooms and never missed a church oyster supper. After her marriage servants helped her in her Cambridge house and the Botsford farm. She rarely participated directly in housekeeping chores except on visits to her parents where she would wallpaper a room, put up produce for the winter, or dig up a flowerbed. On the rare occasions she performed them, however, everyday tasks gave her great satisfaction. And her childhood experiences had left her with practical common sense and useful knowledge of the household arts that she used professionally in institutional management through her life.

But there was another side to Alice, perhaps fostered by her parents or perhaps the result of her own talents and inclinations. Alice taught herself to read at three, and this in a household which, although literate and well informed, was certainly not a place of learning. From an early age she loved to read aloud, and like many of her generation, she continued to enjoy that favorite Victorian pastime for the rest of her life. Her husband, among others, commented on her beautiful voice and suggested that her devotion to reading to friends and family developed her skills in public speaking. ¹¹

Other than that she loved books and reading and was also a competent assistant with farm chores and household tasks, we know little of Alice as a child on the Susquehanna farm. A daguerreotype made when she was five shows a solemn, alert, thoughtful moppet, with masses of dark curly hair and enormous dark eyes. But already she was developing a public persona. The woman who later was much admired for her eloquent extemporaneous addresses was foreshadowed by the child attending a village festival who awoke from her nap, stood on a table,

recited a poem with fervor, and when the audience applauded, in sheer delight at her own success, clapped her hands along with them. [12](#)

She had a will of her own and a quick temper. Tantrums where she threw herself down and kicked her heels against the floor were not unknown. But she early learned to couple her determination with self-control. George Palmer included in his memoir of Alice an anecdote that was obviously a much-cherished family story. The Freemans, still on the farm, were at evening prayers. A June bug came through the open window and settled in Alice's thick hair. She kept quiet and attentive until the prayer was over and the family rose from its knees. Only then she burst out, "I wanted to scream, but I couldn't upset you and God!" [13](#)

All of this was family lore, affectionately recorded by George Herbert Palmer, but what really made this young woman tick we can only guess. Her competence was obvious. Everyone loved her, as testified to a hundred times over the years. She was always her father's favorite. Her students adored her, her colleagues were devoted. Men found her engaging. Her temper and determination remained with her throughout her life, but seldom out of control. She managed her feelings well. She was always optimistic, flexible, and could see the best way out of a tough situation. She faced, with aplomb and serenity, what to others would have seemed insurmountable frustrations: the interruption of her college years, the relinquishment of the presidency of Wellesley on her marriage, her bouts with tuberculosis and her family's penchant for poor health and financial crises. No doubt these frustrations inspired on occasion both anger and despair. But these emotions were always followed by determination to solve the problem in the most satisfying, efficient way possible. She never wasted time complaining; instead she managed. Otherwise God and those near to her might have been upset.



Alice Freeman as a young girl. (Courtesy of Wellesley College Archives.)

The family's financial affairs were complicated by James Freeman's decision in 1861, when Alice was six, to study medicine. He began by attaching himself to the physician in the next town as an apprentice, but the next year he entered the Albany Medical School, a proprietary school founded in the 1830s with some state assistance and from which he graduated in 1864. Freeman was following a common pattern in medical education. Medical schools replaced apprenticeship as the dominant form of training in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. By 1860 there were forty-seven such degree-granting institutions, sixteen of them in the Northeast. Most states treated an M.D. diploma as equivalent to a license. [14](#) Although requiring residence in Albany, the periods of instruction for James Freeman were fairly brief. Two four-month terms almost universally led to a degree. [15](#) However, during her husband's absences, Elizabeth Freeman not only cared for her four young children, but supported the family and her husband's schooling by managing the farm. [16](#)

What sent James Freeman off searching for a new career in 1861? No doubt he was a restless man. This was not the last major change in life patterns that he asked of his family. When he returned from Albany, the family moved to nearby Windsor, one of the oldest towns in the valley. Ten years later he shifted his scene of operations to Otego, New York, and only a few

years after that to Saginaw, Michigan. He found it hard to take root. However, his decision to train for a career in medicine coincided with the outbreak of the Civil War. Did he see himself in the army as a surgeon? He was thirty-three in 1861 and never used his newly acquired medical skills serving in the Union armies, but many his age and older did. Or had he decided that farming in the Susquehanna Valley would not provide his growing family with an adequate living and that medicine was a way to improve his fortunes? George Palmer implies that one of James Freeman's motives could have been to earn a better living, and reports that the family's income increased after he became a physician. [17](#) This may have been true in the long run. Perhaps he wanted another intellectual challenge, for in the last analysis, a country doctor in the mid-nineteenth century could not expect great prosperity. Medicine was neither the high-prestige or high-income profession that it became in the twentieth century.

Assessing developmental influences is at best a tricky business. The pitfalls of extrapolation are many. Evidence that Alice felt her father's departure as a traumatic experience would have to be secondhand either in a letter from her parents or contributed by Alice long after the fact in the form of reminiscence. No such letter or memoir is available. But given the lifelong relationship between Alice and her parents, it seems likely that this bright, sensitive, five-year-old felt her father's absence, which she only partly understood, as a deep deprivation and a dire threat to her security. Twice Alice was to lose her father as protector and guardian. His departure for medical school was the first time. The second was when his speculative ventures, during her last two years at college, left him bankrupt and broken and in acute need of rescue by her. We know she responded constructively and courageously in the second instance. She took charge of her own life, made heroic efforts to assist her family, and made it possible for her father eventually to rehabilitate himself. We know almost nothing about her experience of abandonment when she was five or the effect of his departure on her mother, but that trauma also may have contributed to her decision to pursue a career. [18](#)

Alice began attending the nearby rural district school when the family still lived on the farm. Before she was five, she was saying her lessons to a young woman who was paid two dollars a week to teach all grades and who boarded with the families of her pupils. Alice continued to attend that school until the Freemans left the farm when James Freeman completed medical school in 1864, and they moved to Windsor where Dr. Freeman set up his first practice.

The town of Windsor like the rest of the valley had been settled in the last decade of the eighteenth century, but the village itself, situated on the river, had a population of only 339 in 1860. However, it boasted three churches and an academy. [19](#) And it was at Windsor Academy, a private school founded in 1837, that Alice matriculated in the fall of 1865 when she was ten years old. Windsor Academy was quite unlike Troy, Ipswich, and Utica, the eastern women's seminaries, with their large proportion of boarders. Instead it provided an educational setting that more closely resembled the public union schools being organized during the same period in the newer states west of the Alleghenies. Most of its pupils lived in the community and it was coeducational. Alice lived at home, her school accepted both male and female students, and offered both sexes the same curriculum. Despite spending much of her professional career in a women's college, all of Alice Freeman's education was obtained in a coeducational setting, and she strongly believed that coeducation supplied the mode in which both men and women were best prepared for real life.

In 1860 Windsor Academy had two teachers and fifty-nine students, thirty-six of whom were in the classical curriculum. [20](#) Its physical plant was valued at slightly less than \$4,000, compared to Utica Female Seminary's generous \$23,000, and its annual expenditures (less than \$600) were among the lowest of any of the state's academies. [21](#) However, the principal since 1857 had been Joseph Eastman, a Dartmouth graduate who had attended both Harvard College and Andover Theological Seminary. [22](#) He was concurrently pastor of the Presbyterian church that the Freemans attended and where James was an elder. The other teacher had been trained at Monmouth College, Princeton, and Yale.

George Palmer called Windsor Academy "a school of superior rank," but he also consistently denigrated the quality of Alice's education and seemed to have had serious doubts about its adequacy. [23](#) When Windsor Academy's new building was dedicated in 1900 Alice herself said:

Many of us got our start to the life of today in the old Academy. Most of us formed our hopes, our ideals, twenty years or more back, in the old school; there was something more than mere friendship formed--we formed our ideals that were to change and make our life. Words do not properly express the thanks we owe the teachers who taught us--not mathematics, French, Latin and Greek, for we have forgotten a great deal of it; but who taught us truthfulness, to be honest and upright, and who enthused us with that feeling which went with us as we went out to other scenes and to other duties, which made us men and women. [24](#)

Although Windsor Academy was small and struggling, its teachers were relatively well trained, and it offered a classical preparatory curriculum including Latin, Greek, and mathematics. However, Alice's preparation was not sufficient to satisfactorily fulfill the entrance requirements of the University of Michigan when she matriculated there in 1872, and she had to make up some of the work. Hers was certainly not the best possible secondary education.



Ella, Alice, and Estelle Freeman. Alice was about twelve years old when this photo was taken. (Courtesy of Wellesley College Archives.)

Perhaps the critical factor is not whether Windsor Academy provided Alice Freeman with adequate training. More important was that it was close at hand and that she was there at all. In 1870 only 2 percent of American seventeen-year-olds were graduates of secondary schools. And although more girls than boys were enrolled, secondary education was beyond the scope of most young people, male or female. [25](#) Graduation from Windsor Academy inducted Alice Freeman into a small elite group of educated women.

Alice was a leader at the academy. She won the prizes for elocution and composition. She led the Windsor delegation to regional oratorical contests. She excelled at her studies. She made the very most she could of her seven years within its doors. Church, school, and family were by necessity the center of her life during the Windsor years, for little Windsor could provide nothing else. But clearly Alice saw herself as a leader and acted as one in that circumscribed community.

Alice's opportunities for exploring the world outside her immediate environs were few. But during the winter of her sixteenth year, Anna Dickinson, popular Civil War orator and lyceum lecturer, spoke in Binghamton, and Alice persuaded her father to take her there by sleigh. It was the first time she had ever heard a woman speak, and she was deeply moved. [26](#) No doubt this experience emphasized for her the new opportunities opening for women. That same winter she took upon herself a community service quite beyond what would be usual in a young girl. Her church was poorly lit, and she decided to remedy the situation herself. During her last year at the academy she went without a coat and purchased, out of the meager sum she was saving for college, a chandelier for the sanctuary. [27](#)

Young Alice Freeman took her religious beliefs very seriously. During her last year at Windsor Academy, she joined the Presbyterian church. [28](#) Alice's religious life for the next decade was not untypical of young mid-nineteenth-century women. She saw conversion and the conscious pledging of oneself to a personal savior as well as formal membership in a church as necessary to leading a Christian life. She also associated Christian practice with good works and governed her daily behavior and her relationships with others by what she saw as Christian principles. In 1876, in a typical letter to her most intimate friend, she wrote:

You know some of the things I have to do for my friends before this earthly life of mine is over, and that may not be long as the great mystery of sin and sorrow and disappointment is everywhere about me. You are asking Heaven and earth, Lucy, why the curse is upon us. . . . My little one, we must not expect that the cup of sorrow will not be pressed to our pale lips, if He drank it to the bitter dregs for His friends. . . . I feel that my Father has given me and gives me all the time something so infinitely great and good-- Himself--and such a beautifully strong hope for the "city that hath foundations" (isn't that a wonderful expression?) that I cannot help longing and trying to give some of it to hopeless hearts. . . . " [29](#)

There are many such early letters in Alice Freeman's papers. They show how real was her faith in the Christian Trinity, how unquestioning her acceptance of biblical truth, how truly she believed in a life after death.

At this point in her life religious faith was an emotional commitment as well as something society expected of her. She was to continue this approach to religion through her college years when she taught Sunday school and was a leader in the Student Christian Association, and it continued into her teaching career at Wellesley. Although her religious faith became less rigid with the years, in many ways this combination of conformity and commitment continued to be her approach to religion through her life. Alice Freeman was both a sincere believer and a secularizer. She loved this world as she loved her religion. Eventually she was able to further her goals in tandem. But Alice Freeman as a young woman was not a nonconformist or religious liberal. Nor was she attracted, as were some of the women leaders of her generation, to new byways in religious experience and thought such as Swedenborgianism, spiritualism, or later, Christian Science. Only her determined quest for higher education set her apart from the mainstream of her peers as a young woman.

While she attended Windsor Academy, Alice was involved in her first romantic attachment. A young man, Thomas D. Barclay, came to the academy to teach in 1866 hoping to earn enough to repay some of his college debts and finance the remainder of his theological studies. Barclay was a Monmouth College graduate who had also attended Union College and Princeton Theological Seminary, which meant that he was probably a Presbyterian like the Freemans. He remained on the Windsor faculty for four years, and Alice, as star pupil, of course attracted his attention. Although she was only fourteen, he fell in love with her, as many men were to do later, and persuaded her to consent to an engagement. [30](#) Her mother had married when not much older, and committing herself to an older man would not have seemed strange to her. She was following a family pattern.

In 1870 Barclay returned to school to complete his ministerial training at Yale Divinity School. As he looked forward to his first pastorate, he urged Alice to marry him and join him in his work. But on February 16, 1871, Alice wrote in her journal that she broke the engagement. Although she added that it was terminated by mutual consent, she probably meant that the break was amicable. [31](#) Barclay soon married a minister's daughter. However, he seemed not to have quite forgotten his early love, for he named his first daughter Alice. And Alice in turn had been deeply influenced by Barclay. Not only had he been an inspiring teacher, he had lent her books and encouraged her intellectual curiosity. He was the first young college graduate she had known intimately, and he unleashed educational ambitions in Alice that resulted in his losing her. Both her diary and George Palmer imply that Alice broke the engagement not because her affections had changed, but because she was determined to attend college.

The possibility of a college education had probably not occurred to her until she met Barclay. Most likely she had known no woman who harbored that ambition. Her family could hardly be expected to encourage her. Even her sympathetic father who amiably transported her fifteen miles to Binghamton so that she could hear Anna Dickinson was distressed that she should want to pursue so expensive and demanding a course.

Nonetheless her father had unwittingly contributed to her decision. Alice had always been very close to her father. When she was a small child she no doubt followed him around the farm, attempting to help with the chores. She accompanied him on his round of house calls, holding his horse while he made his professional visits, after he began the practice of medicine. [32](#) She must also have identified deeply with his desire for professional education and absorbed some of his enthusiasm for learning a new body of knowledge.

One can also speculate that her father's long absences from home attending medical school influenced Alice Freeman in another way. She was witness to her young mother, already burdened with four small children, having to cope with a man's responsibilities and become an economic mainstay of the family in terms of managing the farm. This may unconsciously have motivated Alice to prepare herself for the possibility that she too might have to earn her own living. More than one woman who either sought or fostered higher education in the nineteenth century saw education as necessary professional training. [33](#)

The father of Mary Lyon was a pious farmer who died when she was seven, leaving Lyon's mother to run the farm and support the family. [34](#) Lyon, the founder of Mount Holyoke, early

recognized how necessary and useful vocational training was for women. And from the time her mother remarried, when she was thirteen, Lyon had to support herself. [35](#) Zilpah Grant, the first head of Ipswich Academy and an early colleague of Lyon, lost her father at two. Her mother also had to run the farm. [36](#) Mary Woolley, president of Mount Holyoke, did not lose her father, but she was in high school when his career as a Congregational minister was traumatically interrupted by deep conflict with his congregation over social issues, and the family's livelihood cut off. [37](#) Vida Scudder, a distinguished Wellesley professor, was the daughter of a Congregational missionary in India who drowned when she was a small baby, and her mother was forced to return to her family. [38](#) Katharine Lee Bates, another early Wellesley professor, was born just one month before her father, a Congregational minister, died, leaving his widow with five little children to support. [39](#)

Alice Freeman Palmer, as a prominent late-nineteenth-century educator, always honored service as the primary goal of women's education, but also saw college training as "life insurance for a girl," a pledge that she can "earn a living for herself and others in case of need." [40](#) Just because women's proper sphere was thought to be home and family did not mean that in the nineteenth century women were spared assuming responsibility for family support.

For whatever reasons Alice Freeman chose to go to college, her decision was not accepted by her family without some reservations. Her parents had practical grounds for opposing her plans. Although James Freeman seems initially to have been successful in his new calling and acquired a large practice, fees were small and much of a physician's work was done for those who could not pay. He also may have been an inept, albeit ambitious, businessman. The family, possibly better off than it had been on the farm, was still pressed for ready cash. It seemed likely funds could be found to educate only one child, and by nineteenth-century tradition and practice that should be the son. [41](#) However, Alice was adamant. She would acquire a college education if it took until she was fifty. If her family would consent to help her, she promised not to marry until she had provided the wherewithal to put her brother through college and given her sisters whatever education they wished. [42](#)

One may easily overestimate how radical on the part of a young woman a decision to go to college was in the 1870s. For an upper-class girl, an immigrant's daughter, or a member of the urban working class, higher education was a radical and usually impossible course. For a daughter of the professional, economically insecure middle classes, it was unusual, but did not necessarily represent a large measure of rebelliousness. More women than men had the secondary educations that prepared them for further training. Although the old colonial men's colleges were closed to them, normal schools, state universities, and church-related colleges were almost all coeducational. The opportunities were really not as limited for middle-class women as has sometimes been suggested.

Alice Freeman through all of her life was a conservative person, and this was especially true in her youth. She did not demand a college education because of a burning zeal for women's rights. Her motivations were only two: a real intellectual curiosity and love of learning, and her practical desire for the "life insurance" policy that she wrote about later and, as time went on, was going to need desperately for herself. She wanted independence and a way to support herself if necessary, and the easiest and most socially acceptable route to that goal was secondary school

teaching. By the late 1870s good secondary school posts increasingly required some exposure to higher education. Because for many years she was to have no choice but to earn her own living, she was fortunate to be able to obtain the best education available.

Perhaps a further goal motivated Freeman to seek a college education. As we shall see later, she was always interested less in ideas than in people. By going to college, she could expand her horizons beyond the little community she had already thoroughly explored. Her father had gone off to Albany, not exactly a metropolis, but he must have brought home tales of people he had known whom Alice would never meet if she did not leave home. Thomas Barclay had also experienced other places, other personalities, other ways beyond the isolation of the Susquehanna. Alice yearned for broader horizons, new friends, a wider view of the world.

Chapter Two Notes

[1](#) Marjorie B. Hinman and Bernard Osborn, *Historical Essays of Windsor, Township and Village* (Windsor, N.Y.: Broome County, 1976), 10, 54; H. P. Smith, *A History of Broome County, New York* (Syracuse: D. Mason and Co., 1885), 327, 330.

[2](#) George Herbert Palmer, *The Life of Alice Freeman Palmer* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1908) 20. Cited hereafter as Palmer, *Life*. Some Freeman genealogy is evident in Palmer's biography yet made even more explicit in the joint diary, written on facing pages by Alice and George after their marriage. The diary was also retrospective: year by year and month by month, each recorded on facing pages the events of their lives before they met. (Alice Freeman Palmer Papers, Wellesley College Archives.) This volume is cited hereafter as Diary.

[3](#) Hinman and Osborn, *Historical Essays*, 10-11.

[4](#) *The Chronicle* 7 (June 30, 1876). *The Chronicle* was a student publication of the University of Michigan.

[5](#) Palmer, *Life*, chap. 2.

[6](#) *Ibid.*, 20.

[7](#) *Ibid.*, 21.

[8](#) Mrs. Frederick Novy to Wilma Slaight, archivist, September 8, 1980. Wellesley College Archives.

[9](#) *Windsor Times*, August 20, 30, September 13, 1873; January 8, 1874.

[10](#) Palmer, *Life*, 18.

[11](#) *Ibid.*, 25.

[12](#) *Ibid.*

[13](#) Ibid., 32-33.

[14](#) William G. Rothstein, *American Physicians in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), 85, 93, 97; Colin B. Burke, *American Collegiate Populations: A Test of the Traditional View* (New York: New York University Press, 1982), 323.

[15](#) Kenneth Ludmire, *Learning to Heal: The Development of American Medical Education* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 15.

[16](#) Diary, 1861-64.

[17](#) Palmer, *Life*, 41-42.

[18](#) Some trauma or catastrophe appears common among activist women of the late nineteenth century. Using as her database the hundreds of biographical sketches in *Notable American Women*, *Women of the Century*, and the first *Women's Who's Who*, Barbara Kuhn Campbell has meticulously documented the unstable, catastrophe-prone family situations during the childhoods of prominent turn of the century American women. *The "Liberated" Woman of 1914: Prominent Women in the Progressive Era*, (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1979) chap. 1.

[19](#) *Historical and Statistical Gazetteer of New York State* (Syracuse: R. P. Smith Co., 1860), 130.

[20](#) Ibid.

[21](#) Ibid. .

[22](#) *Historical and Statistical Record of the State University of the State of New York* (Albany: Weed, Parsons, and Co., 1885) 729; Diary, 1865; Palmer, *Life*, 34-35.

[23](#) Palmer, *Life*, 34.

[24](#) *Windsor Echo*, 15 (1900): 67.

[25](#) Mabel Newcomer, *A Century of Higher Education For Women* (New York: Harper Bros., 1959), 35; Burke, *American Collegiate Populations*, 215.

[26](#) Palmer, *Life*, 43.

[27](#) Ibid., 38, 42.

[28](#) Ibid., 38.

[29](#) Alice Freeman to Lucy Andrews, November 19, 1876. Alice Freeman Palmer Papers, Wellesley College Archives. Hereafter references to Freeman's correspondence is to Alice Freeman Palmer Papers, Wellesley College Archives, unless otherwise noted.

[30](#) Alice's engagement is discussed in Palmer, *Life*, 34-41; and *Diary*, 1869.

[31](#) *Diary*, February 16, 1871.

[32](#) Palmer, *Life*, 28.

[33](#) David Allmendinger in his study of Mount Holyoke students observed that economic necessity led young women to prepare to earn their own livings. "Mount Holyoke Students Encounter the Need For Life Planning, 1837-1850," *History of Education Quarterly* 19 (Spring 1979): 27-46. Studies showing the economic compulsions driving nineteenth-century women into paid work are summarized in Schwager, "Educating Women," 351-55.

[34](#) Elizabeth Green, *Mary Lyon and Mount Holyoke: Opening the Gates* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1979), 10.

[35](#) Ibid.

[36](#) Ibid., 38.

[37](#) Anna Mary Wells, *Miss Marks and Miss Woolley* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1978), 20.

[38](#) Vida Scudder, *On Journey* (New York: Dutton, 1937), 15.

[39](#) Dorothy Burgess, *Dream and Deed: The Story of Katharine Lee Bates* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952), 13-14.

[40](#) Alice Freeman Palmer, *Why Go to College* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell and Co., 1897), 3-4.

[41](#) Palmer, *Life*, 42.

[42](#) Ibid.