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#2327

Le Van Merchant Burt,  
1875 - 1971.

GUIDE



AUTO-BIOGRAPHY -- FRANKLIN BURT, 1841-1924, on microfilm

Descriptive Comments

1. Taken down in longhand by two young women, neither of whom had had many educational advantages.
2. LeVan M. Burt waited until January 30, 1927 after the death of his father (May 21, 1924) before going through his notes.

Chapter 1

1. Franklin Burt was born in New Boston, Massachusetts on June 25, 1841 and lived there for the first eight years.
2. Father: Friend [sic] Humphrey Burt  
 Mother: Maria Hodges Burt  
 Brothers and Sisters: (He was the first son.)
  1. Jane Louisa -- married Hiram H. Free
  2. Albert Calvin
  3. Elizabeth -- married Ulysses A. Clayton
  4. Maria -- never married
  5. Caleb -- married Olive Basnett
  6. William Price -- married Rose Prichard
  7. Benjamin R. -- married Lilian Allen Jeffords
  8. Friend H. -- married Emma J. Black

Chapter 2

1. In late life, due to his blindness, his amanuensis is Miss Marguerite Shaw.
2. Incidents from four to seven years of age.
3. Speaks of accident -- father's tannery burning to the ground; size of New Boston.
4. Schooling in small schoolhouse.
5. Father, a free-soil Democrat, was elected to State Legislature.
6. John Hodges, his mother's brother, married Sara Jones.
7. Nicholas Hodges is also his mother's brother.
8. Andrew Hodges is still another brother of his mother's.
9. Elizabeth Hodges, mother's sister, married Icabod Lomis [Icabod Loomis?].
10. Talks about tannery and childhood incidents -- neighbors, rooster chasing, picture taking, visit to dentist, balking horse incidents, pure India-rubber overshoes.

Chapter 3

1. Begins in the early spring of 1849 -- getting ready to move to the great West.
2. Trip to their new home "way out in Pennsylvania."
3. Building of home.
4. School experience.

Chapter 4

1. Moved to Starrucca Creek.
2. Went to Windsor Academy at Windsor, 12 miles from home
3. Rural experiences.

Chapter 5

1. Father built a large tannery and a boardinghouse near the great stone bridge known as the "Starrucca Viaduct." Talks about school, the tannery, the swimming hole.

Chapter 6

1. Talks about enlarging the tannery.
2. Attended school at Harford University, Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania.
3. Only stayed for one term as the conditions did not appeal to him.
4. Next went to Susquehanna Seminary at Binghamton with Frank Corbett and Frank Tremain -- they were known as the three Franks.
5. His father had to mortgage his tanning property in 1857.
6. Worked in his father's store for a while.
7. Went into partnership with Mr. Boman to buy whitefish at Lake Ontario, pack them in barrels and half-barrels, and ship them to Binghamton.
8. Father elected to the Legislature in New York State.
9. Father got a bill through the Legislature for the construction of a railroad from Binghamton to Albany, called the Albany and Susquehanna Railroad.

Chapter 7

1. Interesting visit to New York City, 1860.
2. Joined the Union Army under Colonel Robie.
3. Was to recruit a tenth company.

Chapter 8

1. Company held elections: Frank Burt -- Captain; Oliver P. Harding -- First Lieutenant; Frank. W. Tremain -- Second Lieutenant.
2. Having been elected Captain, was called before a military board to take examinations as to his knowledge of military affairs; passed with no trouble and received commission from the Governor.

Chapter 9

1. The Honorable Daniel S. Dickinson made a patriotic address at the camp in Elmira.
2. He was a member of the Sixth Massachusetts Regiment which was reviewed by President Lincoln.
3. January 1862 -- moved from Washington to Annapolis to become a part of the Burnside Expedition.
4. Was taken aboard the ship "Arican," a French vessel that sailed between France and America.
5. Bound for Hatteras Inlet, North Carolina.
6. Experiences aboard ship -- difficulties of landing, trip to Roanoke.

Chapter 10

1. Engaged in the battle of Camden, North Carolina, April 19, 1862.
2. Went to Washington and into Maryland through the city of Frederick. Fought an engagement September 14, 1862 with a Michigan regiment.
3. Became sick and was taken to Sharpsburg.

Chapter 11

1. Helped the surgeon after some recovery -- saw many wounded and many amputated limbs.
2. Government started a cemetery near Sharpsburg for men killed at South Mountain and Antietam in the Union Army.
3. Went on foot to join regiment which had moved to the vicinity of Harper's Ferry.
4. Started on march down through Virginia.

Chapter 12

1. Was part of one of four companies to cross the Rappahannock River in the face of the enemy.
2. They were forced to retreat.

3. Waited for General Burnside to lead them in person against the enemy; decided it would be a useless loss of life.
4. December 13, 1862 was the only battle in which he participated that suffered defeat.
5. Moved on to Suffolk, Virginia.
6. Took a fort (no name given) on April 19, 1863.
7. After three years, he resigned from the Army.

Chapter 13 (omitted)

Chapter 14

1. Accepted proposal of father to buy the firm of Burt & Knight, which covered half interest in the Brookdale tanning property.
2. Became Mason at Otseningo Lodge at Binghamton.
3. Sold out; went into partnership with his father in the tanning business in Mannington, West Virginia.

Chapter 15

1. Figures and costs of tanning business.
2. 1868 -- tannery destroyed by fire.
3. Insurance ample -- began rebuilding at once. B. & O. R.R. put in a hitch for the
4. His sister, Elizabeth, married Mr. U. A. Clayton; became ill after a few years and went to live for a while with her brother, Friend H. Burt Jr., at Harriman, Tennessee, and died. He thought that she was the most intelligent of the family.

Chapter 16

1. 1870 -- married to May E. Merchant.
2. Lived in Mannington for about 25 years.
3. Organized a Masonic Lodge:
  - a. elected to Worshipful Master
  - b. Senior Grand Deacon
  - c. Junior Grand Warden
  - d. Senior Grand Warden
  - e. Deputy Grand Master
  - f. Grand Master
4. Went to the triennial conclave that was held in San Francisco -- at the cost of \$600.00, bought round-trip ticket to go on an excursion train with sleeping and dining cars; started from Baltimore.

Chapter 17

1. Sights of California.
2. Observed the details of hydraulic mining.
3. **Stopped at Salt Lake City.**
4. Stopped at Reno, Nevada; Lake Tahoe, Silver Mines - the Comstock Lode.
5. Stopped at Chicago; went on to Canada; back to Rochester; home to Mannington.

Chapter 18

1. Made a trip to Wheeling, West Virginia; brought a Dr. Youst back with him.
2. Visited the "Luray Caverns."
3. This chapter is somewhat confused: "I now find that this chapter should have been written previous to others already written."

Chapter 19

1. Those in Mannington who favored the rebels tried to erect a Methodist Church South, but were too much in debt.
2. He bought the property and unfinished church and organized a Presbyterian Church -- seven members with four from the Burt Family.
3. Franklin Burt elected Trustee and Superintendent of the Sunday School. He conducted it for 20 years -- almost 150 students divided into 12 classes.
4. Built up a town of their own, which is known to this day as Burt Town, although within the corporate limits of Mannington.

Chapter 20

1. Became Vice-President of the Exchange Bank organized by Jack Blackshere.
2. Frequently called to serve on Grand Jury.
3. Served on the Federal Grand Jury.
4. Was elected as Councilman several times.

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Chapter 22

1. Uncle Orlo, his father's brother, member of the Massachusetts Legislature, died.
2. Edwin C. Burt, "the great shoe man," sent his son, Charles, who was getting wild, to work for them. He did for a year or more until his father died and left him \$20,000.00.

\*\*Chapter 21

Tells the story of a bank swindler and how he caught him and brought him to justice.

3. James Burt, another Uncle, wanted Franklin Burt's father "to set" his son George to work. He did. Several years later James married Ellen Burt. They were second cousins.

#### Chapter 23

1. Tales of storms and floods, close calls and catastrophic incidents.
2. A very interesting chapter of local interest and the perils of that era.

#### Chapter 24 (omitted)

#### Chapter 25

1. In 1890 drilled into the "Big Injun" sand and the oil began to flow at the rate of 150 barrels per day. Increased from there.
2. Brief stories of oil wells.
3. Established the Burt Oil Company.

#### Chapter 26

1. Elected delegate to the Republican State Convention "about the year 1891."
2. President of the Republican Club.
3. Quit the Republican Party, because at the convention the delegates "howled and hooted" at his resolution for an amendment prohibiting intoxicating drinks.
4. Favored prohibition and made up a ticket for the November election.
5. Later nominated for Governor.
6. In preparation for the campaign, obtained the services of Miss Vandelia Varnum of Cattaraugus County, New York, "who was one of the most eloquent and convincing woman speakers of the day."
7. Also engaged Mrs. Frances W. Graham of Lockport, New York to sing at the meetings. Connected with the New York W.C.T.U. -- President.
8. Narrative on John Brown.
9. Had a note of "upwards of 2100," but did not win the election.

#### Chapter 27

1. Purchased land and built a home in Prohibition Park, Staten Island, N.Y.
2. Purchased the interest of Mr. Whitcomb of the firm of Whitcomb & Chapman.
3. Mrs. Burt is very ill.
4. Contributed to the building of a college in the Park (The Westerleigh Collegiate Institute) and a church.



5. Got tired of commuting to work -- traded with a man for two dwellings on 96th Street in New York (five-story brick houses).
6. Traded one of the vacant apartment houses for an apartment house on the west side somewhere in the sixties -- soon traded that for 500 vacant lots, 25 ft. x 100 ft., a short distance from the Park property on Staten Island. Sold it to a large real estate company in New York for cash.
7. Traded back and forth the Staten Island home for profit (because people could not pay interest or taxes) about four times.

#### Chapter 28

1. Mrs. Burt still suffering -- moved to Guilford, New York to live with her sister. Mr. Burt moved to the Hotel Castleton.
2. Became ill with gallstones.
3. LeVan Burt was attending school at Norwich; Ada Burt at Wellesley.
4. 1904 -- LeVan graduated as an engineer.
5. Franklin still had the oil business in Mannington and mining operations in Colorado.
6. Still indulged in real estate operations.
7. Gave a large apartment house on the corner of 106th Street and Amsterdam Avenue to an insurance company in payment for an annuity of \$2,800.00 a year as long as he lived.
8. Developed a case of vertigo. Fell off a moving trolley car and never suffered from vertigo again.

#### Chapter 29

1. Invested money in a gold mine claim owned by ex-governor John P. St. John of Kansas.
2. Took a trip to Colorado to look over the mining situation.
3. Went there quite a bit after that and would stay from one to six months a year.
4. Spent \$200,000.00 without any strike of valuable ore in eleven years. Closed out -- went back to New York.
5. Stories of mining incidents and accidents.

#### Chapter 30

1. Ventured a little in stock, but quit.
2. The Burt Oil Company sold out most of its holdings to the Standard Oil Co.
3. The Burt Manufacturing Company sold the tannery property.

4. Around 1914, disposed of all real estate holdings except # 940 President Street, Brooklyn, where he lived.
5. Went into the oil business in Wayne County, Kentucky with Mr. J. E. Jones -- Delta Oil Company, which is no longer existent.
6. Franklin has been blind for the past seven years and is also suffering from "other bodily troubles."
7. This chapter was written May 8, 1924.

#### Chapter 31

1. Mrs. Burt has been "sorely afflicted during the last 35 years of her life -- could not ascertain the cause."
2. The chapter deal with her illness and death on April 5, 1923.

#### Chapter 32 (written by LeVan Burt, son of Franklin Burt)

1. Includes incidents his father did not mention.
2. Tells of how his mother and father met and were married (married October 13, 1870).
3. "His word was law at home, at the office and at the tannery."
4. Tells of tannery workmen buying a gold-handled cane for his grandfather, and a "fine revolving office chair" for his father -- for Christmas presents.
5. Franklin always wanted to be a lawyer -- "and for a layman was very well posted along this line."
6. "As a musician he did not excel."
7. "As a detective he met with considerable success." Tells of an incident.

#### Chapter 33 (by LeVan)

1. His father's eye trouble began in the late 1890's -- cataracts grew over both eyes. After four operations, he had good vision for twenty years or more.
2. "Keretitis" caused him much pain and resulted in almost total blindness.
3. On April 8, 1928 their first radio was installed. Favorite broadcast was "The Cheerful Philosopher" by Burr McIntosh.
4. May 21, 1924, Franklin Burt died -- from old age and "some kind of pneumonia."
5. Details of the funeral.

6. Left will dating October 6, 1909. Bequeathed to LeVan all his personal effects and naming him as executor. The remainder of the property was to be divided between him and Ada -- since their mother was already dead.

Albert Calvin Burt -- a two page obituary written by (Capt.) Franklin Burt.