REECE FAMILY

ELIZA ELLEN (GURLEY) REECE

Born September 27, 1867
Springtown, Hendricks County, Indiana

Married John William Reece, III
March 2, 1892

Died September 6, 1952
Otterbein Home
Lebanon, Warren County, Ohio

A Tribute Written By
The Rev. Wilbur R. Montgomery, D.D.

It seems fitting that after a long, useful life, Mother Reece should choose to fall asleep at the close of the summer season and find peaceful rest after a strenuous life at the time when God begins to put the golden hues upon nature as a prelude to its rest.

While we are sorrowful at the home-going of our dear mother, we have a sense of joy that with the fulfillment of life, she has entered into the fullness of life which she anticipated here, her death having occurred September 6, 1952.

Mother Reece was born in a humble home in Indiana, September 27, 1867. It was a family of eight children. Her mother, Emmaline (Portis) Gurley, died when the children were about her feet, leaving the father with the responsibility of caring for them. So, Mother Reece learned early in life to make her own way.

She was married to John William Reece on March 2, 1892. Three children were born of this union: Chester Devro, Jesse Leo (who died in infancy), and Helene Mora (now Mrs. W.R. Montgomery).

ELIZA ELLEN (GURLEY) REECE..... 1867-1952

The major part of Mother Reece's life was spent in Indianapolis, where in addition to the responsibilities of rearing her family, she found time to be an unusually active member of the church and a hostess to the many people who made her home their home.

In the early days of her life in Indianapolis, a new home was built in one of the growing suburban sections of the city. It soon became apparent that the young married people of the community needed to develop some religious services. In that era there were no automobiles, and other types of transportation had not been placed at the disposal of the community. There was no church near. So Mother and Father Reece opened their home for prayer meetings. Later other homes were opened. The people carried their lanterns, and with their children, they went into each others' homes for prayer and praise.

As this movement grew, it seemed necessary that a church be organized. So, one wonderful night, the neighbors and friends gathered in the Reece home, 1732 South Belmont Avenue, Indianapolis, and organized a church. Because charter members came from different church backgrounds, the new church was an independent church for a time. The young church outgrew the homes, and a church building was erected. As time went on, it became obvious that the church needed to be related to some denomination. It was decided that overtures should be made to the leaders of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ. Soon the Belmont Avenue Church was regularly received into the White River Conference of the United Brethren Church.

Mother Reece's home became the home-away-from-home of the ministers and other leaders of the church. Often on Sundays, numerous guests who had come to the Belmont Church stopped at the Reece home for meals and for overnight lodging.

Mother Reece found time to work in the church program. Her chief delight was the work in the Ladies' Aid Society. So when the old church was sold and a new one was built, Mother Reece and her sister, Aunt Hattie, could be found in the kitchen making biscuits and dumplings and cooking chicken, in order that the church debt might be paid. It is doubtful whether any two women have ever worked harder to make the church a reality in their community.

What then could be any more natural than that Mother Reece, after her strength had declined, should spend the last days of her life in the Otterbein Home which the church has provided? She loved the Home. It became a resting station on the way to the "many mansioned" home into which she has now entered. Her body was laid to rest in Indianapolis' Washington Park Cemetery.

Surviving are: her son, Mr. Chester D. Reece of Indianapolis, Indiana; her daughter, Mrs. W.R. Montgomery of Dayton, Ohio; her sister, Mrs. Harriet Teagarden of the Otterbein Home; five grandchildren; and one great-grandchild.

Reece Family

MAMMAW AND AUNT LAURA

A Loving Reminiscence

Recalled by one of Mammaw's Grandsons,[1]

James Wilbur Montgomery

Whenever my sister Sarah Ellen and I visited Mammaw[2] and Pappaw[3] during Indianapolis' hot summer evenings in 1928 and 1929 or so, after Mammaw's household chores were done, we'd all sit outside on dining room chairs that Pappaw would place for us on the lawn at the east side of the house away from the setting sun, where his proudly maintained "Genuine Acme Galvanized Woven Bessemer Steel Wire Lawn Fence"[4] protected us from stray dogs.[5]

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[1] "Mammaw and Aunt Laura: A Loving Reminiscence,"

[2] "Mammaw" was our childish name for Mother's mother, Eliza Ellen (Gurley) Reece: born September 27, 1867, in Springtown, Hendricks County, Indiana; she died September 6, 1952, at the Otterbein Home (a church-sponsored retirement village), Lebanon, Ohio. To me, even now, her name is *Mammaw;* we children called Dad's mother "Grandmother."

[3] "Pappaw" was Mother's father and Mammaw's husband, John William Reece, III: born February 12, 1867, in Hancock County, Indiana; he died June 5, 1941, in Indianapolis. We called Dad's father "Grandfather."

[4] Decorative, practical fencing sold at that time by Sears, Roebuck

[5] Mammaw harbored an obsessive fear of "mad" dogs that, she believed, roamed about (perhaps they really did; even recently, dangerous packs of stray dogs were reported by *The New York Times* to have been endangering areas of Brooklyn), viciously inflicting rabies on people whose properties weren't securely fenced. Her fear increased during the summers' warmest days, known to her as "Dog Days." As it happened, I didn't learn to share her fear of dogs; I loved them, and when Sarah Ellen and I grew just a bit older, we were given "Prince," a puppy of our own--but that's another story...

To keep mosquitoes away, from time to time Mammaw would burn smoky strips of cotton cloth in an old pie pan placed near us on the ground. I remember climbing into her rather ample lap on those evenings--even when perhaps I had become too big a boy for that--begging, "Mammaw, tell me about something old fashioned!"

She'd fan us both with her cardboard-and-wooden-handled fan from Beanblossom's Funeral Home that had a pretty, silken-haired, Aryan-looking, pastel picture of Jesus on it, and she'd remind me not to pull at the small gold-loop earrings she wore in pierced ears. Then she'd shrug, as if to imply she was far too young to know about anything that was "old fashioned."[6] But soon she'd remove her steadying hand from me just long enough to adjust her always falling bifocals; and after a brief throat-clearing prelude, readying her somewhat gravelly but expressively melodic voice, she'd begin reciting a tale, usually a familiar anecdote, in her own endearing manner of speech and with her own blend of colloquialisms,[7] something like this:

"Well, I'd reckon I could tell you about the time that sister Laura[8] fell into the barrel. (She's your Aunt Laura that

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[6] She certainly *was* too young! At that time she would have been younger than I am; I'm sixty-five now, but usually I feel far from being old, and I can't think of my boyhood days as having been *old fashioned.*

[7] As a child in Hendricks County, Indiana, she must have learned distinctive southern words and speech patterns from her High Point, North Carolina, parents and grandparents. Those patterns must have become intensified when, as a child, she lived for some time near Gurley, Alabama, before returning to live in rural south-central Indiana and in Indianapolis. While the Gurley family was living in Alabama, Mammaw's mother died of *swamp fever*--likely today it would be called malaria--and her seventeen-year-old twin sisters died of *galloping consumption*, leaving nine-year-old Eliza and her eleven-year-old sister Laura to labor as "adult women" for the remaining household. Clearly an intuitively perceptive and intelligent--if unschooled--woman in her maturity, occasionally Mammaw used to recite memorized passages from the third *McGuffey Eclectic Reader*, proudly explaining that she had studied that far before her mother died.

[8] My Great Aunt Laura, Mammaw's loquacious and warm-hearted next-elder sister, was Laura (Gurley) Bain Britt Watson, 1865-ca.1944

lives over yonder across town, now.) She always was big-boned and a mite clumsy, you know. Now this happened when Laura and me, and Hattie[9] and Emmaline,[10] we was all jes' girls at home, a-fixin' supper for all the menfolks that was out at work all day. Well, Sir, one day Laura went to fetch some flour to make us some sour-milk biscuits. She got herself a tin cup and she took it, and ***up*** she clumb on them steep loft stairs that we had in that pore li'l ol' house 'way out in the country.

"Well, Laura, she histed[11] herself right up into th' loft to git some flour out o' the barrel that Father kep' up there, but, don' cha[12] know, the flour was nearly plumb gone, so there waren't none left up near to the top of it. So she had t' lean 'way fur over into the barrel to scrape at that ***leettle***[13] bit o' flour that was a-layin' down there on the bottom. Well, Good Lands! She reached and she stretched and she strained and she wiggled, and fin'lly she leant 'way over and reached ***so*** far down with her cup, that purty soon she clean lost her balance, and jus' fell right smack dab into that there barrel and rolled down them steps, ker-whackity-whack, a-lickety-split, jes' a-screamin' an' a-hollerin' with all her might 'n' main, all the way down to the bottom o' the stairs, and she scratched her head a little nick on a nail that

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[9] Aunt Hattie, my favorite, hard-working but always overweight, great aunt, was Mammaw's younger sister, Harriet Angeline (Gurley) Jines Teagarden (1869-1958)

[10] Another of my great aunts, the jolly and effervescent Emmaline (Gurley) Woodruff, ca. 1873-ca. 1936. Among Mammaw and her sisters, Aunt Emma's appearance most closely resembled the only extant photograph of their mother, Emmaline (Portis) Gurley (ca. 1838-ca. 1876), whose ancestry is thought to have included Cherokee Native Americans.

[11] ("hoisted")

[12] ("don't you")

[13] ("leettle"--spoken in a peculiarly pinched, high sound, dropping slightly on the second syllable--was, for Mammaw, significantly smaller than "little")

was a-stickin' out o' the barrel, and she got herself all-over powdered with fine white flour, to boot.

"***Whoooh-eeee!*** My Lands, but she was a sight for the jaybirds! Good Lor's-'a'-mercy! But, shore 'nuf, right away we all c'd see that she waren't really hurt nary a bit, and we all jus' laughed and laughed. Then even Laura, she laughed fair t' split her sides till the tears was just a-gushin' outen her eyes like flowin' wells, and I reckon she'll always laugh about it with Hattie and Emmaline and me, even these many a year after, whenever us four sisters all git ourselves together and remember about that empty flour barrel in that ol' loft and Laura's great flight, ker-blum! right down them stairs."

Reece Family

HARRIET ANGELINE (GURLEY) JINES TEAGARDEN

Born October 22, 1869
Hendricks County, Indiana

Married James Franklin Jines
June 2, 1904
Married Albert Teagarden
ca. 1939

Died May 10, 1958
Otterbein Home
Lebanon, Warren County, Ohio

A Tribute Written By
The Rev. Wilbur R. Montgomery, D.D.

Mrs. Harriet Teagarden, or "Aunt Hattie," as she was affectionately called by all who knew her, was born in Hendricks County, near Indianapolis, Indiana, October 22, 1869. She was married to Frank Jines of Indianapolis in 1904.

They made their home in a new section of Indianapolis where, with Mr. and Mrs. John W. Reece III (her brother-in-law and sister), they became instrumental in establishing the Belmont United Brethren Church, all of them becoming charter members. Mr. Jines was for many years a trustee of the church, while Aunt Hattie was active in the Ladies' Aid Society, which for an extended time did much to support the church.

Mr. Jines died in 1931, and in due time Mrs. Jines went to live with her sister, Mrs. John Reece.

Later Mrs. Jines was married to Albert Teagarden of Wabash, Indiana. They made their home on his farm near Wabash until the death of Mr. Teagarden in the winter of 1946.

Aunt Hattie and Mother Reece then came to Dayton, Ohio, where they lived with Dr. and Mrs. Montgomery until November 22, 1950, when they became members of the Otterbein Home family in Lebanon, Ohio. Their room there at Bethany Hall became known as "Sunshine Corner." They were deeply appreciative of the Christian fellowship and the painstaking care which the home provided.

When Mother Reece died in September of 1952, Aunt Hattie seemed quite alone, but the love and care of the home saw her through the long days of adjustment.

The north corridor of the second floor of Phillippi Hall became a fellowship center where Aunt Hattie spent the greater part of her waking hours during her last four or more years. From the window she watched the procession of the seasons and the activities of the home.

The years spent in the Otterbein Home were in many ways happy ones for Aunt Hattie. Everyone seemed to appreciate her, and since her going, a number of the home personnel have said, "Mrs. Teagarden was a wonderful woman." They knew her well. What more could one want that anyone should say?

HARRIET (GURLEY) TEAGARDEN..... 1869-1958

Aunt Hattie lived long and well. She has entered into rest.

[Editorial note: Although Aunt Hattie had no living children, she suffered a miscarriage of twins, due to an Indianapolis streetcar accident in the early 1900's.]

HELENE MORA REECE MONTGOMERY BROWN

Born Indianapolis, Indiana, July 26, 1898
Died Franklin, Indiana, March 15, 1988

SOME FAMILY HISTORY AND ANECDOTES

Compiled for Helene's Present & Future Family
by Her Elder Son, James Wilbur Montgomery

If, during the most recent three or four years, Helene Montgomery Brown had been asked to describe herself, without any hesitation she would have answered vaguely that she was "a good clean Christian woman" who liked to read the Bible and "good clean Christian literature," and wanted only to do whatever she could for "good clean Christian service," thus echoing the sincerely offered but nearly meaningless platitudes of several television evangelists and perhaps also of some like-minded fundamentalist associates whose questionable tenets she came increasingly to espouse as substitutes for any cogent theology.

Characterized more accurately--and just a few years earlier--by her Fairview (Dayton, Ohio) United Methodist Church friend Esther Phillippi as energetic, logical, and positive, as well as a sometimes impatient perfectionist who nevertheless was full of kindness and good will, Helene surely embodied all those traits, and perhaps others that may have been known only those who were nearest to her.

In her older age, although until most recently she emphatically denied being *old*, Helene--clearly savoring her position as respected widow of the all-but-canonized Rev. Dr. Wilbur R. Montgomery--lived comfortably for several years at the Franklin (Indiana) United Methodist Home, where eventually she and a long-time family friend, the Rev. Willard Brown (a widower) became married. Ultimately she became <u>his</u> widow, as well; and, finally, she quietly died--at almost ninety years of age--in her room at the Franklin home.

Afflicted with progressive pulmonary fibrosis, Helene had been in declining health for some time, but she continually reassured her friends and loved ones that she had no pain. Although recently she had become somewhat forgetful and understandably crotchety and had been confined to bed, she rallied somewhat and, with assistance in walking, had been taking

her evening meals in the home's dining hall. Upon returning to her room after dinner on March 15, 1988, she collapsed and died mercifully within a few minutes.

Helene Mora Reece was born in Indianapolis, Indiana, on July 26, 1898, the third child of devoted and sincere church-going Christians Eliza Ellen (Gurley) Reece and John William Reece, III. Her infant brother Jesse Leo had died of cholera during a severe epidemic not long before her birth, so that the young Helene (named by her devoted aunts Hattie, Emma, and Laura after Miss Helene Mora, a notable British actress and singer who, at the time, was their favorite on the Indianapolis vaudeville stage) became sheltered and reared--although in modest circumstances--as if she were a rather frail princess.

Further, lest Helene's mother might conceive and bear another child that might succumb to the cholera as little Jesse Leo had, the otherwise loving, warmhearted, and always outgoing Eliza effectively forbade further amorous approaches by John, her therefore frustrated and unfortunately virile thirty-one-year-old husband. Too conservatively religious--and economically too poor--to take a mistress and perhaps too much in love with Eliza to contemplate divorce (an action considered in that era to be morally abhorrent), John remained, to all outside appearances, a quietly loyal husband. If, in his later years (possibly under the libido-freeing influence of otherwise negligible paralytic strokes) he slipped into a minor indiscretion or two, it should have caused little wonder. The Reece's early marital dilemma, however, if it were one, seems to have reached a compensating fulfillment in the busy and generous church- and relative-centered social life, simple and economical though it was (and though it had to be) with which John and Eliza kept their little house virtually a center for community activity.

Whether or not Helene as a formative child was consciously aware of her home's aura of physical denial, certainly she was a timid child placed in turmoil by an inner conflict of outwardly repressed feelings of self-worth. Perhaps by withdrawing very much into her own little world, she endured the social bustlings and chatter of her gregarious parents' constant stream of *company*: of relatives, neighbors, and church and Sunday school friends who dropped in, as well as of visiting staying-over relatives and, from time to time, of unrelated, paying boarders.

Only in recent years was Helene at last able to confide that her earliest childhood memory concerned an unfortunate episode in which, her home filled more than usual with visiting aunts and guests, Little Helene neglected to attend to her bodily

needs and soiled herself in the presence of her aunts. Devoted to her as they were, however, they made a great effort to downplay the matter, bathe the child, and dress her in clean clothes; but the child's perception of that abject humiliation remained an overriding memory throughout her life.

When Helene reached school age, she had to carry several heavy books, walk a great distance, and then travel by two or three streetcars between home and school each day; and yet her life often was quite pleasant. Her brother Chester sometimes teased her in good-humored ways, but occasionally, as he grew old enough to earn a bit of money, he bought presents for her: wooden-wheeled roller skates (for skating on the kitchen floor) and a box camera and print-developing supplies (he even taught her how to make prints from her negatives). Eventually he even took her for rides on his new motorcycle. Helene and her friend Nellie South played together with dolls as children; approaching adolescence, they pretended to have boyfriends and wrote notes to themselves that they exchanged, pretending to have received them from secret admirers. Chester later was to serve in the United States Navy during World War I and to become the witty and jovial husband of Helene's friend, Nellie; and they were to become the parents of Marceil (now Mrs. William Payk) and of Howard Reece.

Helene's mother Eliza Ellen (Gurley) Reece (1867-1952), although mildly crippled by a weak, turned-out-and-under left ankle since childhood, was a capable, industrious, and thrifty housekeeper. Of necessity she had learned to do everything by herself; usually she neither asked for, nor could she tolerate, her daughter's help in the kitchen. Her home never had a telephone, but by the time Eliza and John had grandchildren, their home did have electric wires fastened along doorframes and across ceilings to illuminate centrally suspended bare-bulb fixtures. They preferred, however, to use kerosene or gasoline lamps at night, so cleaning the lamps' glass chimneys amounted to a major household task, along with keeping the lamps filled and the wicks trimmed. The home lacked central heating, but when necessary, a central room was heated by a decorative baseburner, a furnace-like device with little isinglass windows that revealed the glowing fire inside. Ceiling gratings overhead allowed a bit of warm air to circulate into upstairs rooms. John, who chewed plug tobacco, used to amuse his grandchildren by opening the baseburner door and expectorating tobacco juice into the fire!

In winter Eliza cooked and baked on a cast-iron, wood-burning stove that also served to heat the kitchen; in summer she used a kerosene stove (of course, true to the language of her rural Southern heritage, she called it her ***coal oil*** stove; she fried eggs on a ***spider***, not on a skillet; and she carried potatoes home from the ***store*** in a brown paper ***poke)***. She grew grapes in an arbor over the well, where the pump was her only

source of water. The ***privy***, or the outhouse, was down the walk, between the chicken pen and John's own bailiwick, the barn--where John raised pigeons in the loft. Whenever company came, Eliza went to the chicken pen, chose an appropriate chicken: a fat hen if she wanted to make chicken and dumplings, a pullet if she wanted fried chicken, or any old chicken for a stew. Gentle, sweet woman that she was, she always talked kindly to the chickens as she fed them; but when it was ***their*** turn to feed her, she was merciless! She grasped the condemned bird by the neck, carried it out into the yard, and with quickly decisive motions, wrung the chicken's neck in such a way that its head parted company from its body, which thereupon went sightlessly flapping and stumbling about briefly in its final paroxysms.

According to the season, Eliza made great quantities of grape and rasberry jelly, pouring it into various glass jars and sealing the tops with melted paraffin wax; or she canned tomatoes, sealing the can tops with red sealing wax; or she canned Mason jars of vegetables or fruit. These were all stored for later use on wooden shelves in her little *cooling room*, a small earthen-floored excavation that John had dug for her under the back porch. She never cooked according to formal recipes; she told her Grandson James that she "just put in a little pinch of this and a pinch of that," and--by today's nutritional standards--her meals must have been poorly balanced and full of unwholesome fats. (Her only *salad*, for example, seemed always to be cole slaw, and her chicken dumplings could have sunk a ship!) Nevertheless, she served her meals with such buoyant good will and, certainly for her grandchildren, with such loving warmth, that all her food seemed unusually delicious.

Sometimes Eliza sewed *new* clothing out of old: *made-over* clothes for the young Helene, who didn't learn to cook, for she saw the family kitchen only when she ate in it, or when she practiced roller skating on its linoleum floor! (Later, after she was married to Wilbur, Helene did sew very well, indeed--a great boon in the Depression days and a proof of her own innate capabilities and inventiveness. She even learned how to cook certain items unusually well: cakes, custard pie, and chocolate fudge became her specialties.)

Eliza's sister, Helene's plump, outspoken, generous, childless (she had suffered a miscarriage of twins in an Indianapolis streetcar accident), and caring Aunt Hattie lived next door with her punctilious railroad telegraph-operator, Uncle Frank Jines, in what had been the area's original farmhouse. Their most prized possession, other than Uncle Frank's railroadman's pocket watch or his trained pet rooster, was a player piano that graced their seldom-used parlor. Even though John and Eliza had to be cautious about spending money unnecessarily, they bought an upright piano for their parlor,

too. They even paid small sums for little Helene's sporadic piano lessons, and she learned to play some hymns, as well as "The Edelweiss Glide" and "Ben Hur and the Chariot Races," among other such musical gems. Only her singing was discouraged: "Helen," her mother say--for no one called her "Helene" at home--"you can't sing. Your voice is cracked, just like your father's," whereupon mother Eliza Ellen would burst forth in *her* unaffected, Southern country-singer's nasal voice, sliding up and down from pitch to pitch, cheerfully intoning "The Wabash Cannonball," "The Red River Valley," or her very favorite hymn, "Rock of Ages."

Eliza, beloved of everyone who knew her and fondly called "Aunt Lydie," even by nonfamily members, was herself the ninth or so of the twelve or thirteen children of Charles Devro Gurley (1821-1905), a continually impoverished but unquenchably ambitious father and a militant member of the High Point, North Carolina, Anti-Liquor Club. In his maturity he became a staunch Baptist, and later, a Quaker. *Devro*, as he was always known, served in High Point's 67th Regiment of the Confederate Army, receiving a military discharge in 1863 "on account of hernia." As a young man, he left his North Carolina home for a time to serve an apprenticeship as cabinet maker and carpenter in Georgia; and in his declining years, he worked on the construction of several barns, proudly building them only with pegs instead of nails. Some of those Southern Indiana barns still were standing when Eliza pointed them out to her grandson James during an automobile tour in the late 1930s.

Early in the 1860s, Devro's Cherokee (or part-Cherokee) father-in-law, "William Portis," simply disappeared. Subsequently, someone was seen riding his horse and using his saddle bags. (It should be remembered that, beginning early in May, 1838, the United States government had forced--with the use of armed troops--Cherokees to leave their own choice lands along the Eastern seaboard, and to endure the long trek now known shamefully as "The Trail of Tears," all the way to what was then the Oklahoma Territory; many Native Americans died along the way. It is speculated that, because numerous Cherokees had become converted to Christianity as early as the 1600s, some intermarried with Caucasian Americans; and, perhaps remaining more or less in hiding, thus their racially mixed families escaped the forced evacuation.) Although William Portis was thought to have been robbed and murdered, no legal action ever was undertaken on his or his family's behalf.

In 1864 Devro obtained a safe conduct paper signed by eighteen neighbors and, *during the War Between the States*, he boldly moved by covered wagon--with Emmaline (Portis), his second wife, who was to become the mother of Eliza Ellen (his first wife, Maria Nancy Peacock, having died about 1850), with

Emmaline's mother, Rachel (Albertson), whose grandfather Joab Albertson left his family's banks and silk mills in Holland to become an immigrant in America, and with five Gurley children--*not* to Watauga County, North Carolina (his stated destination), but through the Cumberland Gap into Yankee territory, all the way north to Hendricks County, Indiana!

Always eager to improve his family's lot in life, Devro moved again, about 1876, to Alabama, where he likely planned to work for a wealthy uncle whose estate founded the still-existing town named "Gurley" in northern Alabama. Tragedy intervened: when Eliza was nine or ten years old, her mother Emmaline died in Athens, Alabama--just short of their destination--just thirty-eight or thirty-nine years old, of "swamp fever," which may have been typhoid fever or malaria; at about the same time, Devro's mother-in-law Rachel and his twin teen-aged daughters died. Little "Lydie," who later was to manifest a bright, articulate, and intuitively intelligent maturity, suddenly became "mother" and housekeeper to the family; she had been able barely to study through the *third* McGuffey Reader when household duties stopped her school attendance. Somehow Devro was able to bring his remaining family back to Indiana, to environs south and east of Indianapolis.