

Francis Chamberlain [6169172]

and daughter Fleda Chamberlain

{This letter has been copied, essentially verbatim, from pages 6 through 8 of the M history. Inserts are enclosed in braces {} and Marvel lineage codes are enclosed in brackets [].}

Perkins Institution
Watertown, Mass.,
May 14, 1923.

To members of the Marvel family,
Peoria, Ill.

Dear Relatives:

Some weeks ago my father, Mr. Francis Chamberlain [6169172] of Sedan, Kansas, sent me a letter from Mrs. Markley with the request that I should write the letter she had kindly asked him to write.

How like Dad it is to wish letter writing off on some member of his family and for years I have been that one, so was not surprised when this request came.

I hardly know if Mrs. Hester (Marvel) Markley [6169145] meant our reply should be one giving an account of our family or just a friendly letter to better become acquainted. Thus being in doubt I am going to take the privilege of combining the two and will begin with a sketch of our family.

My father as you recall is the second son and child of Rachel (Marvel) Chamberlain [616917]. John William Chamberlain, the older brother passed away sixteen years ago at Independence, Kansas where his family now lives. He had nine children and all but one are living at Independence and all are married. His widow is also living.

Father had two sisters: Mrs. Myrtle {Ophelia (Chamberlain)} Brooks [6169173] of Peru, Kansas, who has one grown son and Mrs. Gertrude {May (Chamberlain)} Black [6169174] who lives in southern Missouri, but whose address I do not know. She has two young girls of perhaps fifteen and ten.

My father is the best man in the world we think and has his family five daughters and one son. The older daughter, Mrs. Flo {Ella (Chamberlain)} Fields [6169172], Fleda Chamberlain [61691732], the writer of this letter and Mrs. {Myrtle} Ruth {(Chamberlain)} Woods. Mrs. Fields and Mrs. Woods live in Sapulpa, Oklahoma. Next in line is Mrs. Dola {May (Chamberlain)} Humphrey living in Iola, Kansas, and Mrs. Glayds {Dale (Chamberlain)} Sterritt whose home is in Terlton, Oklahoma. Then the only boy a young man of almost sixteen and the pride and stand by of all of us is Dwight Weaver Chamberlain [61691728]. He of course is at home and though in his early teens has done as much towards running the ranch and farm since he was ten years old as Dad has done. He showed such keen business ability early in life and Dad has been a companion to him always and has never failed to allow him the privilege of assisting and an equal responsibility in the farm, ranch and stock. In fact since Dwight was seven he and dad have been partners. The early training and interest Dad gave Dwight has meant a lot to him but it will mean even more as he grows older.

Dad has not been in good health for more than two years and it was not until last November we could coax him to quit the farm and move to Sedan where he might take life easier. He sold the farm to Dola's husband, or Mr. Earl Humphrey and kept the ranch thinking he and Dwight together could run it without taxing his strength. Mr. Humphrey has farming as sort of a side line and does not live there, so we are wondering if disposing of the farm has lessened Dad's responsibility very much. He is so interested in it and never goes to the ranch but that he stops there to see how the tenant is getting along, etc.

Since I was seven years of age and met with an accident which later destroyed my vision I have been away from home most of the time. Until I was fourteen I was away having my eyes treated and then when there seemed to be no help for me I went to Kansas City where I entered in the State School for the Blind. There I was until I graduated when nineteen years of age. The next year I was a private teacher for a child of seven in Oklahoma City whose parents were people of means and were reluctant in having their child away from home. I was with them a year and then went to the Kansas school for the Blind where I was an instructor for three years. The next year after finishing my third term in the Kansas school I went to St. Louis where I took some special courses to better prepare me for my life's work and then the next year came to Perkins Institution for the Blind where I did some special teaching and at the same time took a special teachers course given at Harvard. This was a year ago this winter I took this course and last August the Director of Perkins wired me to accept a regular position in Perkins and early September I came to fill that position. The first of March I was asked to return to another year so that this is a polite way of saying my teaching has met with the approval of the Director and Principal though I can easily see where I have not accomplished all that is my wish.

I have never had such interested and interesting pupils as I have this year and hope to come nearer realizing my dreams of accomplishment next year.

There are so many places of literary and historic interest in and around Boston though I have not been the rounds I have paid my respects to many. Some of the places I have enjoyed most was my visit to the Longfellow home where I had a visit of forty minutes with Miss Alice Longfellow, or as her father spoke of her, Grave Alice. She is quite an elderly woman by this time and lives with her companion in the old home.

The Louise Alcott home, home of Paul Revere, Buckman Tavern, where the American soldiers sat for hours melting pipes to mold bullets the night before The Battle of Lexington. The Old North Church where the lanterns were hung the night Paul Revere made his famous ride and King Chapel where all the Royal Governors of this state went to church.

These are just a few of the very interesting places if I were to speak of the others and tell you of my visit to the grave of Mother Goose, the Boston Light which is the oldest light house in America and any number of other places I am sure my letter would be far too long. And I must say a few words about the Perkins Institution.

This institution is not only the pioneer school for the blind in America, but it is also the superior one and in many ways it is the finest in the world. Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe who was the husband of Julia Ward Howe the author of The Battle Hymn of the Republic, was the founder of this school and for fifty years was its director. At the time the school was in Boston but in the last fifteen years it has been located just out of Watertown and six mile from Boston. We have beautiful grounds and wonderful, wonderful buildings.

Pupils from all New England come here to be educated and this year we have a little more than three hundred who are receiving their education by means of their fingers tips instead of their eyes.

I am wishing every member of the Marvel Association the very climax of success and hope that it will be so my Dear Father can be present with you at your meeting in August. I know he would enjoy meeting you all.

I belong to the Chamberlain Association in Boston and some of the meetings we have are just interesting. I have not yet learned if I am a direct descendent of the original Chamberlain who came over shortly after the Pilgrims came but hope to learn more about the early history of my Dad's Grandfather and Great Grandfather this summer.

Sincerely,
Fleda Chamberlain