

George and Deborah Standing

A Brief History

George Standing was born May 29, 1830 at Battersea England, on the Thames River. He was the son of John Standing II and Martha Cheal Standing. They soon moved to Essex, and from there to County Sussex, where John rented an 80 acre farm with a small river running through it, with cattle in the meadows, - a fine place for children to play. George's Mother died there, leaving her husband with seven children, the youngest being twins a few days old. George's father remarried, and had ten more children .

While still a young boy, George went to live with his uncle John Cheal at Crawley, where he helped his uncle in the general store, and received some schooling from him. He enjoyed long morning walks with his Uncle John through the countryside, his beloved dog trotting at his side. When he was eleven, he was sent to a boarding school at Croyden, then ten miles from London. The pupils numbered 80 boys and 60 girls, with almost no communication allowed between the sexes. When 13½ he returned to John Cheal's home and helped him in the store for a two year period. Then he was apprenticed to John Harniman, a storekeeper at Newport in the Isle of Wight, and became an expert tea taster. Later he owned a store at Leigh .

While George was living with his Uncle John Cheal he met Deborah Fox, the young half-sister of Mary Fox, who became John Cheal's second wife. George and Deborah became much interested in each other. After his business at Leigh was well started they were married at Dewsbury Friends Meetinghouse on Eleventh Month 22nd. 1855.

Deborah Fox, daughter of David and Rebecca Payne Fox, was born in Dewsbury August 23, 1832. David Fox had been raised a Methodist, but was a convinced Friend. He loved music and he played the cello, but knowing Friends disapproved of music he felt he should give up the cello. Feeling it would be wrong to sell it or give it to another person, he buried it . A play based on this incident and called "The Quaker's Cello", was written in 1933 by Clifford Bax. David Fox had fifteen children, Deborah being a child of his second wife .

George and Deborah had about fifteen years of happy domestic life at Leigh. Then George became interested in emigrating to America. Some of the Standing and Fox relatives had already gone to seek their fortunes in the new land. George felt it might be a better place to raise a family. Planning to move to America, George sold his store to James Whitehead. Then the family went to visit relatives and friends in southern England, who persuaded them to give up the idea of emigrating. For a period of about five years they were engaged in business at Readhill and Ashton. Still George was drawn to America, and

they prepared for the voyage. On February 8, 1870, George and Deborah and their five sons, Henry, Ernest, George, Charles and Alfred sailed for the United States on the ship Idaho. (A daughter, Edith Rebecca, was born in 1864 and died in 1866.)

The sea was rough for their voyage, but they had favorable winds, so they made the trip in slightly under two weeks. Deborah's brother, Samuel Fox, met the travelers at New York Harbor, and after their goods were put through customs and stored, they accompanied him home to Brooklyn.

Elihu Burritt of Birmingham, England, a leader in the peace cause, had given George letters of introduction to Friends at Burlington, New Jersey. The Friends there were very kind to the newcomers, but after investigating possibilities they decided that a homestead in that part of the country would be beyond their means. After a few days spent there they departed by train for Muscatine, Iowa. George had a brother, Alfred J. living there at this time. The family was kindly entertained for two weeks in the Daniel Johnson home. Then they stayed with the Watson Peasley family, for whom George worked on the farm during the summer.

In the fall of 1870, having heard that a farm might be available in the Earlham Quaker Community, George set out from Muscatine for Earlham, walking most of the 200 miles. He bought an 80 acre farm four miles northeast of Earlham for \$5.00 an acre. He engaged a carpenter, Lindley Bufkin, to build a house for the family to be ready at a certain time. Then he returned to Muscatine to prepare to move his family and goods. He bought three horses, two cows and a wagon. Jesse Collier, who was on his way to Cass County, agreed to take a load of the Standing's goods on his wagon. Due to muddy roads, reluctant cows, the illness of Deborah, etc. the journey took two weeks. When they arrived they found, to their disappointment, that their house was not completed, so they had to stay with neighbors for a while.

Earlham was then a new town. The Rock Island railroad came west from Des Moines in 1869. During the seventies great quantities of corn were shipped out of Earlham, but after 1880 more of the corn was fed to livestock locally.

The land had to be cleared of young trees before it could be plowed. George tried to plow a little ground that fall, but found it could not be done with a regular sod plow pulled by two horses. He became very discouraged. He arranged with a neighbor, Jesse Hadley, to break some ground for him the next spring, and he also bought four acres of corn in the field from Jesse for immediate use. He and the boys harvested this corn and stored it in their living room for lack of a crib. They built a rough pole shelter with slough grass roof for the livestock. This structure served for several years, but they almost lost this "barn" in a prairie fire soon after it was built. The family had just returned from Meeting and built

up the fire when a big wind came up which blew sparks from the chimney, setting the prairie grass afire. There was much excitement when the fire was discovered. Neighbors soon came to help fight the fire, and all working together, they got it under control before much damage was done .

To plant their first crops of corn and beans (1871) they chopped a series of holes in the plowed sod with an axe and dropped in the seed by hand. Also that year they raised some sorghum cane, turnips and potatoes. They grew very tired of the steady diet of beans and cornbread. In those days wheat was the most important crop in Iowa and there were many mills on the rivers for grinding flour. The nearest mill to the Standing settlement was Mitchell's Mill, where a sawmill was also located . In 1872, the family raised ten or fifteen acres of wheat, which yielded a fair crop, and the wheat was a very welcome addition to their diet. It was a great event when Jake Craven drove in with his threshing machine. George was a successful hog raiser. One year they had a bumper crop of potatoes, some of which they cooked and fed to the hogs.

The pastures were not fenced in those days, so the horses and cattle roamed at large. The boys of the family had to round up the stock and bring them home at night. One of the cows wore a bell, so she could be located by its tinkle. The building of field fences was a necessary skill which they learned early .

On November 21, 1872, Josiah was born, the only native American of the six brothers. He is the only one surviving in this year 1970, very frail, tenderly cared for by his family, and much beloved by his nephews and nieces .

The three older Standing boys attended school at East Grove Meetinghouse during the winter of 1871-2 . Abner Newlin and Henry Standing were the most advanced scholars. Some of the boys also attended the public school at East Grove, which stood south of the house now occupied by the Clifford Rater family. For two or three years Henry taught his younger brothers at home, or if he was otherwise occupied, George taught his sons. They had regular hours of the day reserved for school.

George and Deborah Standing were much interested in providing a good education for their own family and for their friends. The elementary Meeting school began in their home. Then a schoolhouse was built on the Newlin farm in 1892. They were active in starting a boarding school, held at North Branch Meetinghouse, which ran for only a short time. Later they helped support the Stavanger boarding school near Le Grand, Iowa.

In 1873 George and his boys planted an orchard of 100 apple trees. John Frederick Hanson, a neighbor (who lived on the place later owned by George E. Standing) helped them to select suitable varieties. They also planted a row of maple trees north of the orchard and a row of Lombardy poplars on the west.

Previous to their coming, an old stage coach road to Council Bluffs passed through their place where the grove was later planted. Bands of Mesquakie Indians occasionally camped in the area east of the Standing farm. They used to come to the house begging for flour, pork, eggs and chickens.

Soon after arriving in the community, the Standing family began attending Friends Meeting held in the East Grove Meeting House. They liked this meeting, held mostly on the basis of silence. Members included the following families : Edward Hadleys, John F. Hansons, Jasper Hadleys, Isaac Smiths, Ruth Newlins, Aquila Newlins, William Ramseys, Lindley Buffins, Mordecai Davidsons, George Goodens, and the Standings. Jasper Hadley would go each week to the Standing home, where he and Deborah made plans for the next sessions of the First Day School held in connection with the East Grove Meeting. Deborah was the teacher of the adult class . John F. Hanson was one of the leaders in this meeting. When he went on a protracted visit to Norway, other members of the meeting were instrumental in having East Grove laid down, after which most of the members then attended Bear Creek Meeting .

After the separation of 1877, the Conservative Friends Meeting was established, and George and Deborah and family became members there . They were very concerned loyal members of the Society of Friends, faithfully participating in local, Quarterly and Yearly meetings. For a number of years meetings were held in a remodeled dwelling house near Bear Creek cemetery. About 1902 a new meeting house was built nearby.

George Standing remained a subject of the British Crown all his life. He did begin the process of securing his naturalization papers, but did not feel free to sign the required statement renouncing all allegiance to his former country. (This statement was later modified) However he encouraged his sons to become United States Citizens. He was always interested in events happening in this country, also in international relations, and imparted this feeling of responsible citizenship to his sons .

Deborah Standing adjusted well to the change from city life in England to becoming a pioneer farm wife in Iowa. She learned to preserve the wild fruits found here-- plums, strawberries gooseberries, crabapples . The whole family cooperated in the household tasks, George and the boys helping Deborah, who in her later years was not able to be on her feet much. Deborah made the family clothes. She had a Howe sewing machine, which she shared with the neighbor women, who in turn helped her cut out garments .

George Standing loved poetry, and had many favorites which he read and recited. His sons followed him in the practice . Perhaps his boyhood days on the Sussex farm, and his long walks with his Uncle John Cheal started him on his lifelong interest in Nature. Wherever he went he made a garden. He

loved flowers, which he grew in great abundance around his house and in doors. He was fond of his horses, and fed them so well they grew fat and lazy .

When Josiah Standing, the youngest son, planned to be married to Frances Nicholson (their wedding was 3rd. month 7, 1898), it was decided to build a small house for George and Deborah nearby, and leave the older house for the newlyweds. The four room house was built in 1897. Deborah was able to enjoy this home for a few years before her passing in 1901, and George continued to live there until his death on March 14, 1912 . Robert and Edith Peckham added two more rooms in 1910 . This is the house which Roy Knights have occupied in recent years. Josiah and Frances Standing moved to the East in 1899. After their marriage in 1900, Alfred and Alice Standing moved into the original house .

Deborah Standing died on April 16, 1901 . George wrote of her in his autobiography, "In the spring of 1901 my beloved partner was called to her heavenly home. Since then, although blessed with many blessings, my journey has been the valley of much loneliness ; and although I cannot see the end, it cannot be far off. I have the comforting feeling that she is still my ministering angel, and that she is waiting to welcome me to the more exalted life where sad partings come no more ."

George and Deborah were fond of their grandchildren, who liked to visit their home and do errands for them. The neighbors respected the Standings, and many years after they were gone spoke of them with affection .