

Hadley People We Knew



L-R Lucy J, Lizzie E & Mary A Hadley June 1932

Meet the Hadley sisters: [Lizzie Etta](#) (1865-1951), [Mary Ann](#) (1871-1954), & [Lucy Jeanette](#) (1873-1940). These were the only girls of seven children born to Lucien Norman Hadley (1844-1928) and Jeanette Bourn (1850-1915). All were born in Templeton, MA and all are buried in the Pine Grove Cemetery of that town. All were graduated from the Templeton High School and were members of the First Parish Unitarian Church, the Ladies' Social Circle and the Women's club of Templeton.

All three sisters were school teachers in various towns in Massachusetts and none of them were ever married. It has been learned that all, for a short time, had at least one man who had a marital interest in each of them. However, if they had married, it was the custom to discharge them from their teaching positions and certainly if they had become pregnant their teacher careers would likely have been finished.

During their youth, many potential husbands had been killed or seriously wounded in our Civil War and the eligible pool of available men was small. Besides, many of the returning veterans were faced with learning a skill or relegated to the family farm, during which time these three

sisters were off acquiring a college education. Their educational pursuits separated them from many of the working-class men. In some cases their teaching income, though small, was greater than that of men – another separation condition between women and men for those times.

When the three sisters retired, and with help from the estate of their successful father, along with contributions from their four brothers, purchased a home in their native home-town. The combined savings of the three was still not sufficient for them to support their nice but modest home. Had it not been for financial help from their brothers, they likely would have been living close to poverty even though throughout their teaching career they saved and all had led a modest life.

These three sisters, even though they had no children of their own, considered themselves somewhat of experts in raising children. Their unsolicited “suggestions” on caring for and the discipline of children often lead to difficulties for my mother.

I remember the two oldest of these sisters, who were my great aunts, being kind and loving to me and my older sister. They were short in stature and usually were in house dresses with handkerchiefs tucked somewhere into their breast cavity. As a small boy, I remember them all having white whisker that seemed to be greater in number than my grandfather. I often felt I was about to be suffocated in their breast from their hugs when we visited them. I was usually given the task of completing some type of writing assignment during my visits and I remember them grading my assignment that was accompanied with praise even though my work probably needed a good deal of correction. None-the-less, my work was greeted with kind words and encouragement.

I remember they had an old pump organ in their parlor which I would try and play for what seemed like hours at a time. They had all kinds of wooden toys and games. I loved their Chinese Checker boards and enjoyed a hoop toss game which had a string attached. I would swing the string/hoop, which was attached to a small wooden pallet that was in the shape of a head which had a long nose. The object was to swing the string and catch the hoop on the nose.

By: James R Hadley

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