

Mr. & Mrs. Seth Wadhams were friends of my parents John R. and Elizabeth Vaughan Case, in the early Chicago days. Their coming to Elmhurst, or Cottage Hill, as it was called at that time was because of my parents having moved there about 1860. The date of their coming I do not know but I vaguely recall having heard that they occupied some other house before building their home which I learn from your library records was in 1868.

In the development of their property many white birches of the cut leaf variety were planted. These trees were great favorites with both Mr. & Mrs. Wadhams and became such a feature of the place that the name "White Birch" was appropriately adopted for it. The grounds were laid out by the landscape gardener who designed the Bryan place "Bird's Nest" and the Lathrop place "Huntington."

The White Birch house was of cream colored brick, called I think Milwaukee brick, fashionable at the time. It was a well built house and considered handsome. The original plan was that of a square house with a central hall and two rooms on either side; parlor with a back bedroom on the right, sitting and dining room on the left and four bedrooms upstairs. The kitchen and pantries were in an ell with servants' rooms above.

I mention this because the house was so greatly altered by Mr. & Mrs. King during their ownership.

Mrs. Wadhams' maiden name was Elizabeth McKinney and she came of fine New England heritage. Heirlooms which she greatly prized had come to her from Treat and Wolcott ancestors. Of these one was a coat of arms very beautifully embroidered on satin bearing the initials "T.T." and "By the name of Treat." In the Wolcott line were two plates which had been brought from Louisburg when that place had been taken in 1745 from the French by British and Colonial forces. Dr. Oliver (?) Wolcott

was one of the officers of this expedition. Another treasure was a long scarlet broadcloth cloak, such as were worn by wealthy gentlefolk in early New England days.

Mrs. Wadhams was a great invalid, confined much of the time to the house. She was tall, distinguished in appearance, slender and extremely pale. Her beautiful gray hair was plainly parted and worn with curls on either side of her face. I remember her as wearing a shawl which added to her stately appearance. It was told of her that one day when calling at the home of her pastor, the well-beloved Dr. Robert Patterson in Chicago one of his small daughters meeting her in the hall as she was being ushered in backed away from her and gazing upward in awe tremblingly asked "Are you God?"

Mr. and Mrs. Wadhams had one child, Dana, who had died young, a sorrow from which Mrs. Wadhams never recovered. He was only a memory when I was old enough to hear about him but his portrait showing an attractive little boy in a plaid dress hung in the sitting room and was decorated with ivy.

After the death of this child Mr. and Mrs. Wadhams adopted two children, a girl "Emma" and a boy "Fred." They were not brother and sister but I know nothing of their parentage; nor do I know if this was a legal adoption, but they were called Emma and Fred Wadhams. Emma was the older of the two and married a Mr. Loring when I was a very small child. Fred studied medicine, graduated from the Rush Medical College and settled I believe in Wisconsin in the late Eighteen Seventies.

Mrs. Wadhams was very fond of flowers and Mr. Wadhams thoughtful always of his invalid wife had built for her a small greenhouse in the garden back of the house in which she took great delight when she was able to be out.

My mother was one of the few people Mrs. Wadhams always saw and depended greatly on the cheer of her visits. The roads of that day were so muddy in the spring and so rough when frozen in winter that walking was often preferable to driving and to shorten the distance between our two houses Mr. Wadhams had a walk cut through the shrubbery south of the main lawn, balancing the driveway on the north, christening it "the Case walk", which was often used by my mother in her faithful visits to her invalid friend.

Mrs. Wadhams died suddenly in the night during the summer of 1882 from the heart disease which had long afflicted her. Mr. Wadhams survived her for about six years if I remember correctly.

Mr. Wadhams was public spirited and cooperative in the affairs of the small community. He joined in planting the elms along the avenue from the R.R. station to the Bryan place and in doing other planting of the streets near White Birch and was always much interested in the beautiful trees on his own place. He was a good friend and kind neighbor.

I remember at the time of the marriage of Florence Lathrop to Henry Field, as a surprise and tribute to the bride and her family, Mr. Wadhams had the avenue from the R.R. station to the Lathrop house decorated with lighted Chinese lanterns hung on each of the elms lining the roadway.

Biographical sketch written by Edith Case Skeele - 1937

SETH WADHAMS

From a letter from Wilbur Hagans, March 11, 1939

Seth Wadhams was born in Dutchess County, New York, in 1813 and died in Los Angeles, California, February 6, 1888, and is buried in Graceland Cemetery.

It is quite likely that he came to Elmhurst in 1868. I do know that he rented the house (to which we came in 1857) for two or three years while building and improving White Birch.

He came to Chicago in 1835 or 36; had a clerkship in a grocery store at northeast corner of Dearborn and Lake streets; in vacation time attended hangings of horse thieves- stealing horses at that time, altho the penalty on capture was death, was among the more venturesome a pastime. Occasionally he took time off for hunting as the prairie west of Western Avenue abounded in prairie chicken - he was a good marksman.

I first knew him when he was about 60 years of age, a strong character, jovial, companionable, fond of a joke and a keen sense of fun - all around congenial, but beware if he should be an enemy!

He never indulged in anything stronger than cider of which there was always a barrel in the basement; he did not smoke but made no objection if you did in his company.

He was a thoroughly enjoyable host.

Such is the background of the man whose improvement of the Burnham lot is the cornerstone of an enduring monument to the educational life of Elmhurst.

The "lost year" - 1887-88 is accounted for by my being abroad. When I said goodbye to him in the early autumn he was preparing to leave a little later in company with Dr. Heidenann for the winter in California, within four or five months he passed away. I did not return to America until November 1888.

SETH WADHAMS

From a letter from Wilbur Hagans dated March 16, 1939

When I got down to do Mr. Wadhams full justice found it would run to two volumes hence shortened it.

Mr. Wadhams rented our house, on the tract at NW corner of St. Charles Road and Prospect street, while improving White Birch. That particular house was moved to, in 1877, an adjoining tract to the north. Subsequently this house was moved to some location north of the C&NW R.R. and with some alterations occupied by two families.

Graceland Cemetery, founded by Thomas B. Bryan, is at Clark Street and Irving Park Avenue, Chicago . Mr. Wadhams' lot is pretty well north, near Montrose Avenue, the north limit of the cemetery.

Miss Carolyn Wade tells us that Mr. Wadhams was connected with the Knickerbocker Ice Company of Chicago.

Seth Wadhams

1874-906-
Westchester

Seth Wadhams - born Oct 29 - 1815 - Kosken, Conn
died Feb 8 - 1888 - San Diego, Calif

Background -

Great-great grandfather John Wadhams or Wadham
came from Somersetshire, England.
between 1645-1650. Settled in Wethersfield
Connecticut

US-added to name in America by 9th generation

Great-grandfather - Noah Wadhams

Grandfather - Seth Wadhams

Father - David Wadhams

Seth Wadhams was one of 16 children

Mr. Seth Wadhams

(Spoken) Conn

White
Berets

Died at San Diego, Cal., Monday morning, aged 76 years. Seth Wadhams was born Oct. 29, 1812, in Lithfield County, Conn., son of David Wadhams and Phoebe Collins. He left home at the age of nineteen and clerked for three years at Rochester, N.Y. after which he came to Illinois, first to Vandalia and shortly afterward to Chicago. While in the employ of Ryerson and Blakely, dealers in hardware, he sold the first piece of bar iron sold in Chicago. After some three years partnership with H.P. Moses he went into the ice business, in which he amassed a fortune. He came to Elmhurst in 1868 and began the beautiful suburban residence known as "Birchwood", one of the handsomest in the state. In January '49 he married Elizabeth McKinney, a native of Hartford, Conn., she died Sunday, July 9, 1882, and is buried at Graceland. Mr. Wadhams had been in California several months and was planning to start for home February 16. He left here last November to spend the winter on the coast, hoping to regain his health. For two years past he had suffered from Brights Disease and his death was not unexpected by his friends, who foresaw the almost inevitable termination of the complaint. Mr. Wadhams leaves ~~nothing~~ no family, having lost his wife six years before, and his only relatives are a brother and a sister living respectably in South Bend Indiana and Chicago. He was rated as a millionaire, and a careful and saving man. His residence here is the finest place in the town and is the admiration to all visitors to Elmhurst. This place said to be worth \$100,000, was willed by Mrs. Wadhams to three charitable institutions and will probably be sold at private sale for their benefit. The disposition of Mr. Wadhams' property is not known as yet. The remains will be brought east and buried in Graceland Cemetery. Dr. Heideman of this place and Miss Richardson who accompanied Mr. Wadhams on his trip will return with the body. Mr. Wadhams was a man of rather reserved disposition and had but few intimate friends; but the verdict of those who knew him best is that under his rough and petulant ~~and~~ demeanor he really carried a warm and charitable heart.

