

The memories of Dorinda Nickerson Smith bring those days into focus. She became the wife of the oldest son, Robert Sutherland. Her family came from Maine to Madison in 1853, soon moving north "to what was then considered a new country, Portage County, near Almond, Wisconsin."

Here 12 yoke of oxen were used to break ground for the new homestead and a home was erected in the woods nearby. Dorinda had many delightful tales to tell of these pioneering years. She told of the first load of wheat from the new farm which was hauled to Milwaukee, a trip of several days, of deer that walked about in the yard and of the Indians who came begging for food. [She told] of the opening of the first school house and church in the vicinity and of the jolly spelling bees." ²⁹

The Sutherland Children Grow Up

The school for District 1 was a log house built in 1857 on the NE corner of SE ¼ of SW ¼ of Sec 13. It was built shed fashion and had two small windows, long benches and long desks. It was used for church, and also for town meetings until a town hall was built in 1868. A year later it was replaced by a small frame building. The family valued education and pursued it as far as it was possible for them. Hannah Rebeka Sutherland was one of the first teachers and was paid \$12 a month plus board. She says, "At this time I boarded at home, for my brother, nine years old, walked with me from the Sutherland farm. Going two miles through the woods was the closest way. This was my brother's first term of school. I had taught him to read, spell, and write at home. In later years Collin Stephenson Sutherland was one of Portage County's superintendents of schools and at the time of his death was a professor in the schools in Appleton, WI." ³⁰

Hannah and James had another child, Nancy Abigail, in 1856 in Belmont, WI after the family had settled into their new home. In January 1860 Phebe Madelia was born, and just a few months later the Census gives her age as 1. Leah Mae was born in 1861. Hannah had given birth to eleven children, eight surviving.

The first wedding in the Sutherland family took place on October 2, 1859 when Sarah married Thomas E. Reeves. Sarah and Tom lived four years at the head of the Pemobscot River in northern Wisconsin where they ran a public house. Sarah was known for her kindness to all who came to their establishment. But she was lonely, not seeing a white woman during that time. The Reeves returned to Belmont Township where Hannah Alfa was born in June 1863. Soon they moved to southern Minnesota, living many years at Eagle Lake in Waseca County.

On October 13, 1862, another wedding! The third oldest daughter, Elspa Philena, married Seth S. Phelps. They went to Waseca County in southern Minnesota. Only one mature daughter was left to give help to her parents, Hannah Rebeka.

Hannah Stephenson Sutherland, James' wife, died at Almond, January 12, 1866 at the age of 48. In the local paper, repeated in a New Brunswick paper, was the statement that she was the wife of James who was the son of Robert and Nancy. She and her husband had faced hard times in mid-life, were apart while he sought prosperity in Australia, she

²⁹ Blue Earth County newspaper, May 6, 1943

³⁰ Wayne Guyant, *History and Memories of Belmont Township*, 76-77