

historic structure report

HISTORICAL DATA - HOME

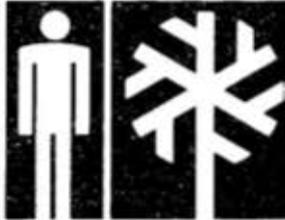
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WILLIAM
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NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE / OHIO

historic structure report
Historical Data - Home

WILLIAM HOWARD TAFT NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE / OHIO

BY EDWIN C. BEARSS
HISTORIC PRESERVATION TEAM

DENVER SERVICE CENTER
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
OCTOBER 1972

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Foreword

This report has been prepared to satisfy the research needs as enumerated in Historical Resource Study Proposal W1HO-H-2, Historic Structure Report, Taft Home, and to meet other needs of the Service. To secure documentary information to assist architectural historians and restoration specialists in their efforts to complete the restoration of the Taft Home, thousands of pages of manuscript materials were examined. Items bearing on the structural history of the house, its furnishings, and family activities associated with the Home were extracted and studied. In compiling this report, it was decided, because of the intimate relationship, to include information on the furnishings and household activities, as well as the structural history. By this action, the Service has been provided with a comprehensive document detailing the structural history of the Taft Home, its Furnishings, and the Family Life at 60 Auburn Street in the years 1851-1889.

My research disclosed that in 1877 reference was made to a plan or plans of the house in discussions between Alphonso Taft and J. W. Asher, and in 1889 to an inventory made for the Dickinsons of the furnishings and their whereabouts. Although a diligent search was made, these important documents were not found. Perhaps, some future searcher will be more successful in his or her quest.

Many persons assisted in preparation of this report, and without their aid it might have been stillborn. Particular thanks are due: Park Manager John Troy Lissamore, Park Technician Ruth Ann Heriot, and other members of the staff of William Howard Taft National Historic Site for their assistance in and around Cincinnati. General Superintendent William Birdsell, a dynamic and resourceful individual, took great interest in the project and demonstrated a keen appreciation of the value of historical and architectural research. Charles P. Taft, son of the President, took time from a busy schedule to discuss the long struggle by the William Howard Taft Memorial Association to acquire, preserve, and begin restoration of this historic property. Mr. Richard Haupt, former Director of the Cincinnati Historical Society, Alice M. Vestal, and members of the staff went out of their way to make documents entrusted to their care available. The Society's clipping, newspaper, and iconographic files are unsurpassed. Mr. Paul V. Kiel, restoration architect for the Taft Memorial Association, shared his knowledge of the structure. The staff of the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress spent more than six weeks pulling materials from the Taft Papers for my perusal. Employees at the Cincinnati City Hall and Hamilton County Courthouse were helpful and considerate.

Mr. and Mrs. Everett Inman, residents of the front first floor apartment from 1964 to 1972, shared their knowledge of the Bellinger era and the 1964 restoration; Mrs. Robert W. Knauft toured the house, sharing her recollections of the property as it had been in the Ruffner years; and Mrs. Gertrude Hughes Thayer told of her visits to the house more than 50 years ago.

Major Charles R. McCollough's "Historic Grounds Report," which was prepared first, proved a wonderful guide and simplified my task.

Architectural Historians Norman Souder and Hugh Miller of the National Park Service toured the Home, made suggestions as to what interested the restoration specialists, and examined the building's fabric. By sharing their vast knowledge of the builders' arts, they enabled me to learn and understand much of the structural history of the Home about which the documents were vague or silent. Bill Jedlick spent several days at the site discussing furnishings and enlightening me on that subject.

My colleagues Barry Mackintosh and John Lissamore read the manuscript in draft, making many valuable suggestions, and saving me from future embarrassments. Last but not least, I wish to thank and express my appreciation to Mrs. Judy Sprouse and Miss Patricia Zbel for the hours they slaved typing the subject manuscript.

I. ADMINISTRATIVE DATA--TAFT HOME

A. Name, Number, and Classification of Structure

The Taft Home, Structure No. 1, William Howard Taft National Historic Site, is of First Order of Significance.

B. Proposed Use of Structure

The exterior of the building will be restored to its appearance circa 1852-1877. The basement of the post-1851 wing, the entire lower story of the house, and the widow's walk will be restored and refurnished to reflect their appearance circa 1861-1877. These rooms will constitute a historic house museum to commemorate and interpret William Howard Taft's birth, his childhood and adolescent years, and the environment in which his family lived, prospered, and became politically important. The upper floor will be partially restored and the rooms adapted to provide space for audio-visual media to interpret William Howard Taft's life as a public servant and for administrative facilities. The basement of the pre-1851 structure will provide space for management purposes.

C. Justification of Such Use as Shown in the Master Plan

A study of the voluminous Taft Family Correspondence, Journals, and Account Books has satisfied the General Superintendent, the Park Staff, personnel of the Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, and the Denver Service Center that portions of the 1970 Master Plan providing for restoration and interpretation of the Taft Home must be revised. The aforementioned group believes that the kitchen and billiard room located in the post-1851 wing; the entire lower story, and the widow's walk should be restored and refurnished to the period 1861-1877. The structure's exterior will be restored to the period 1852-1877. Such a treatment will provide a much better insight into the Taft years at 60 Auburn Street and a more valuable interpretive experience for the visitor than the one projected in the approved master plan.

D. Provision for Operating the Structure

The Taft Home's primary use will be as a historic house museum, with the upper story and basement of the pre-1851 house providing space for administrative, visitor, and interpretive facilities.

E. Cooperative Agreement, if any, Executed or Proposed for Operating the Structure

Although no cooperative agreements will be needed to operate the structure, General Superintendent Birdsell and Area Manager Lissamore have been told by preservation groups that they would be interested in refurbishing the Taft kitchen, as well as several other rooms.

F. Brief Description of Proposed Construction Activity

The proposed restoration must include both the plans to exhibit the house and the planned utilization of the areas which will not be open to the public.

The Park Manager and the architect are in agreement with the proposed use of the interior. The kitchen and the billiard room in the basement and all of the first floor with the exception of the pantry are to be exhibited as a house museum. The dining room, being the largest of the first floor rooms, would be the logical area to be utilized as a visitor orientation room.

The second floor, it is proposed, would be utilized as library, meeting room, and offices.

There are sufficient bedrooms together with the nursery on the first floor to tell the Taft story adequately without having visitation on the second floor.

The traffic flow could be channelled from the front entrance through the hall (with glimpses into the library, and parlors) into the dining room from which point the visitor could look into the nursery, attend an audio-visual talk and go down the stairs to the billiard room and exit through the kitchen door to the parking lot.

Business callers would take the front stairs to the offices, as would those using the library and meeting room.

It is proposed that the exterior of the house be restored to the 1851-1877 period of the Taft family occupancy. During this process, it is also proposed that the wing masonry be stabilized and the portions which were "restored" in 1964 be corrected where indicated to effect a more accurate restoration.

The room on the north side of the hall in the pre-1851 portion of the basement will have area sufficient for public men's and women's wash rooms. The room on the south side of the hall to contain the furnace and mechanical equipment.

II. THE MOVE TO MT. AUBURN

A. Alphonso & Fanny Tafts' Cincinnati Years

The Taft family has had a significant role in the history of our nation for almost one hundred years. Alphonso Taft, the only child of Peter Rawson and Sylvia Howard Taft, after a distinguished career as a Cincinnati lawyer and a member of the Ohio judiciary served in President Ulysses S. Grant's cabinet and as minister to several European powers. One of his sons, William Howard Taft, was elected 27th President of the United States and served as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court from 1921 until 1930. He is the only man to head two of the three branches of our government. Horace Dutton Taft, another son, founded the Taft School. Robert Alphonso Taft, the President's son, was the Republican leader in the Senate from 1939 until his death in 1953. Mr. Republican's son, Robert A. Taft, Jr., is currently serving the people of Ohio as their junior United States Senator.

Cincinnati and Hamilton County, Ohio, have been intimately associated with the Tafts since the autumn of 1838. In that year 28-year-old Alphonso Taft, with a law degree from Yale, arrived in the bustling river town of Cincinnati. He went to work in the law office of Nathaniel Wright. In the spring of 1839 Alphonso returned briefly to his parents' farm, near West Townshend, Vermont. Having passed his examinations for admission to the Ohio bar, Alphonso on heading back to Cincinnati joined the Wright firm as a partner. By 1840 he was getting involved in politics and worked for the election of the Harrison-Tyler ticket, in the bitter "log cabin and cider" campaign.

In the summer of 1841 Alphonso Taft again returned to Vermont, where at West Townshend on August 29 he married 19-year-old Fanny Phelps. Following a short honeymoon at Niagara Falls, the newlyweds headed for Cincinnati, where they began housekeeping in a house at the corner of Fourth and Vine that Alphonso had purchased for \$3,000. Alphonso's parents had decided to move west, and they shared the house with their son and his bride.¹

During the next ten years Fanny Taft bore her husband five children, of whom only two survived infancy. These were Charles Phelps born in 1843 and Peter Rawson (Rossy) in 1845. Rossy during his early

1. Ishbel Ross, An American Family: The Tafts--1878 to 1964 (Cleveland, 1964), pp. 5-10.

years was frail and unable to romp and play with his brother and the children of the neighborhood.

Alphonso's law practice flourished, and by the late 1840s he was associated with the firm of Key & Taft. He frequently traveled to Columbus to argue cases. In 1850 he spoke to the Young Men's Mercantile Library Association on "The Railroads of Cincinnati." Taft had been an early advocate of railroad development. He championed the subsidization of existing lines and construction of new ones to link the "Queen City" with other states and regions. Alphonso was an incorporator of the Ohio & Missouri Railroad and the Marietta & Cincinnati Railroad. He was on the board of directors of the Little Miami Railroad.

Mr. and Mrs. Taft were social and cultural activists. Alphonso spoke out in support of unpopular social issues. He and Fanny worked for the establishment of a House of Refuge, which he opened in October 1850. They were well read and attended lectures, such as that given by Charles Dickens at the Broadway Hotel.²

B. The Tafts Leave the City

1. Mt. Auburn--Its Location & Growth

Alphonso Taft by 1851 had become a successful lawyer, and, worried about the health of his wife who had been ailing for several years, he decided to purchase property on one of the seven hills overlooking the city. He believed that the family would be healthier on the heights, out of the city with its hot, humid summers and winter smog. The locality Taft finally settled upon was Mt. Auburn, which one reached by taking the Sycamore Street Omnibus.

The first land sales on Mt. Auburn dated to 1793, and in 1819 James Key had purchased property at the brow of the hill at the head of Sycamore Street, where he built a handsome house. This dwelling was among "the earliest, if not the first, country residence erected in the locality." This area was known as "Key's Hill" until about 1837, when it was renamed Mt. Auburn, when Mrs. Sumner, a native of New England, had a painted signboard erected at the foot of the hill, on Liberty Street, reading, "Mount Auburn, 1 mile." The name caught popular fancy and was quickly accepted.³

The following year, 1838, the relocation of the Mad River Road to the present-day alignment of Auburn Avenue accelerated development

2. Ibid., pp. 10-13.

3. Sidney D. Maxwell, The Suburbs of Cincinnati: Sketches, Historical and Descriptive (Cincinnati, 1870), pp. 100-102.

of the area. With improved transportation came the subdivision and sale of lots from the Levi Woodward and Robert McGregor tracts. On these lots, measuring several acres, were built substantial houses by well-to-do merchants and professional people wishing to escape the city and its problems.⁴

2. The Move

On June 13, 1851, Alphonso Taft purchased the two-story square, brick house, with basement, at 60 Auburn Street from the executors of the estate of G. Bowen. The price paid by Taft for the house, improvements, and 1.82 acres of land was \$10,000. The Bowen lot had a frontage on Auburn Street of 100 feet, and extended east 769 feet, down a steep hill, to a point slightly east of today's Young Street. The east, or back lot, line was irregular.⁵

Peter Rawson Taft, Alphonso's father, on the 19th rode the omnibus up to Mt. Auburn from the city to inspect the newly acquired house, and on the 21st Alphonso recorded the deed to the Mt. Auburn property from Mary Bowen.

The Bowens had moved out by June 24, when the Tafts commenced moving in. On that date Grandpa Taft, accompanied by "Alphonso's wife," took two baskets of crockery up to their new home. Two days later, on the 26th, Grandpa "carried up a load of crockery & carpets," and the next day Alphonso paid Mrs. Bowen \$70 for her parlor carpet and \$4 for the two sets of sitting room blinds.

The Tafts spent the last two days of June packing their clothes, books, and household effects. On July 1 Grandpa Taft went up to Mt. Auburn and put down the carpets, and on the 2d the Tafts, having employed four furniture cars, moved from their old home on the north-east corner of 4th and Vine to 60 Auburn Street. Each car made four trips, and it cost the family \$16 to make the move.

The next several days found the family--Alphonso, his mother and father, his wife Fanny, and their two boys--getting settled in their new home. On the 2d Grandpa Taft paid to have Fanny's bedstead "put up"; on the 3d the family spent the day setting up furniture; and on the 4th Grandpa went downtown and "got a load of furniture." Grandpa

4. Ibid., pp. 102-103. The Mad River Road had followed the crest of the hill and was rough and difficult of ascent.

5. Peter Rawson Taft Diaries, June 13, 1851, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 11, Family Diaries & Miscellaneous Personal Volumes. The Peter R. Taft Diaries will be cited hereinafter as P.R.T. Diaries.

on the 5th put up a hall lamp, and put down carpets. On July 7 two stone steps were positioned by a mason in front of the house, and a carpenter arrived and commenced work on a dumbwaiter. The latter was completed on the 12th, but "it did not work well, it was made too large and heavy." Two days later the carpenter was called back. To make the dumbwaiter work easier, he cut its cupboard in two. Meanwhile Grandpa had positioned shoe scrapers on the front porch.⁶

In the third week of July, Alphonso employed two men to put two cellar windows in the house, and to upright and underpin the "back piazza." The repair of the piazza indicates that at this time the Tafts had no intention of constructing an addition to the house. On the 25th Josiah R. Hunt was hired to build a cupboard for the upper, rear piazza. The cupboard was finished by August 4, and it was used to shelve the Tafts' extensive library.⁷

The Tafts liked their new home. Grandpa on July 19 noted in his diary, "Mt. Auburn is a beautiful high airy place," with pleasant neighbors. His only objection was the steep hill which had to be climbed to get out from the city.⁸ Alphonso wrote his friend Aaron F. Perry, a Columbus lawyer, about his new home. Replying on August 8, Perry wrote, "I am truly glad to hear of your new arrangements, because I believe you will all enjoy them." Cincinnati, he continued, "was always close and oppressive . . . , and I believe you will find it healthier out on the hills."⁹

C. The Construction of the 41 x 23-Foot Addition

Within a few weeks of the move to 60 Auburn Street, Alphonso Taft determined to build an addition to his house. Work on the three-story 41 x 23-foot brick ell was started on September 1, 1851, by four laborers.

6. P.R.T. Diaries, June 19-July 14, 1851, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 11; Journals of Peter R. Taft, June 14-July 29, 1851, William Howard Taft Memorial Association. Hereinafter the William Howard Taft Memorial Association will be cited as WHTMA.

7. Ibid., July 18-Aug. 4, 1851, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 11; Journal of Peter R. Taft, July 26, 1851, WHTMA. P.R.T. paid Hunt \$1 for "40 feet of boards for back of cupboard." This piazza was two-story and was attached to the east elevation of the house.

8. P.R.T. Diaries, July 19, 1851, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 11.

9. Perry to A.T., Aug. 8, 1851, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1, Family Correspondence.

Grandpa Taft supervised the men as they excavated for the foundation of the addition. Sufficient earth had been removed by the 8th to enable William H. Stevenson and his stonemasons to begin "laying the foundation." By the 16th the "diggers" had finished, and Grandpa settled with them for 14 days' works, \$59.50 all told. Stevenson and his masons were through laying stone on the 18th, for which they were paid \$160.87.¹⁰

Hunt & Lull had contracted for the brickwork. On September 16 Hunt began to make mortar, and the next day he and his partner started laying bricks on the stone foundation. They worked long hours, and by the 20th they had finished the brickwork of the first story. By the 29th the brick had been laid up "two stories high." On October 1 the back porch or piazza was taken down, suggesting that Hunt & Lull had worked from east to west, and they were now ready to join the addition with the original wing of the structure. The walls of the third story had been laid by the 3d, and the next day Hunt & Lull finished the coping and chimneys and laid out an ash bin in the cellar.¹¹

The addition closed in, carpenters commenced shingling on October 7 and finished on the 9th. Meanwhile tinnners had hung the gutters and downspouts.

On October 9 the cellar floor in the front part of the house was paved, and the next day carpenters began laying floors in the addition. Grandpa Taft reported the upper flooring finished on the 11th and that on the 13th they were putting up "partitions on the middle floor & laying floors." On the 15th lathing and plumbing began, and on the 17th the back stairs were built. Next, plasterers were called in and the walls and ceilings plastered. This project was finished on November 11.

John B. Lull on November 6 bricked up windows, probably those in the east elevation of the main house which were covered by the addition. Next day workmen cleaned out the upper story and commenced installing window sash and lights. On the 12th drains were put down, rubbish cleaned out of the addition, and stonemasons put down two hearths. Grandpa Taft spent three days building and positioning railings, and on the 14th Lull whitewashed the senior Tafts' room.¹²

10. P.R.T. Diaries, Sept. 1-25, 1851, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 11. One of the "diggers" was paid \$1.25 per day and the others \$1.

11. Ibid., Sept. 16-Oct. 4, 1851. A.M. Williams on September 25 brought out a load of lumber, and the brickyard send out 53,000 bricks.

12. Ibid., Oct. 5-Nov. 15, 1851.

Hunt & Lull having completed their contract, Lull dropped by on November 22 to measure the brick in the addition. The dimensions of the structure were found to be 41 x 23 feet, with the height of the walls 31 feet 4 inches. In estimating the number of bricks, Lull and Grandpa Taft agreed that the east, north, and south elevations of the addition equalled 105 feet. They called the two lower stories 22' 6", with 21 brick to a square foot. Cost of building these two stories was placed at \$497.02; the cost of the upper story, its height placed at 8' 10" was \$129.78; the dining room chimney on the lower floor \$15.33, on the second floor \$8.19, on the upper story \$4.69, and above the roof \$5.89; for a total cost of \$678.09.

Deductions allowed were: in the lower stories 15 windows (6' 1" x 3' 8") 21 bricks to a square foot \$69.99; in the lower story 2 windows (6' 1" x 3' 2") 21 bricks to a square foot \$7.98; in the two lower stories five doorways (8' 6" x 3' 2") 21 bricks to a square foot \$28.35; in the upper stories 10 windows (3' 10" x 3' 8") 14 bricks to a foot \$19.60; and in the upper story one doorway (7' 7" x 3' 3") 14 bricks to a foot \$3.45; for a total deduction of \$129.37. When this figure was subtracted from \$678.09, it left Alphonso Taft owing Hunt & Lull \$548.12 for the addition's brickwork.¹³

D. House Improvements, 1851-52

Early in December 1851 Alphonso Taft employed James Griffith and his carpenters and painters to make a number of improvements to the interior of the house and to build him an observatory. Identifiable projects undertaken during this period were:

1. The Kitchen and Dining Room

Much work was done on these two rooms, both located in the addition. Cupboards were built.

2. Painting

The house and interior woodwork were painted.

3. Improvements to Exterior of Pre-1851 Wing

On January 28, 1852, Grandpa Taft reported carpenters putting cornice on the house, and on February 10 they "fixed blind fasteners to old house" and hung shutters.

13. Ibid., Oct. 14 & Nov. 22, 1851.

4. Retaining Wall South of Kitchen and Walkway

In late February, as soon as the ground thawed, the Tafts had the bank south of their kitchen dug away. Stevenson, the stonemason, was hired to build a retaining wall to provide a walkway and storage space and prevent the bank from further sloughing.¹⁴

5. Observatory

Owen, the hired man, was sent down into the city on February 27 to pick up Alphonso's "observatory," i.e., telescope and associated instruments. It was the first week of May before Griffith, the carpenter, positioned it on the widow's walk of the pre-1851 wing. It is probable that the access stairway, doorway, and widow's walk were built a few weeks prior to installation of the observatory.¹⁵

6. The Senior Tafts' Room(s)

Peter and Sylvia Taft in the first week of December 1851 paid \$6.10 to have their room papered. Twenty-four yards of carpeting were used to cover its floor, and on January 1, 1852, the senior Tafts moved into their first floor quarters, in the northwest corner of the house. To heat their room(s) they purchased a stove and its fittings from French for \$36.25.¹⁶

7. The Boys' Room

On March 18, 1852, Hunt was hired to lay "up a fireplace in the boys' room." Two days later, a carpet was put down in their upstairs room.¹⁷

8. Fanny Taft's Room

Grandpa Taft on March 10 had cleaned out the stove in his daughter-in-law's room. Thirteen days later, Fanny "moved down into her new room." On the 25th Grandpa put up curtains in Fanny's room, and Alphonso insured the house for \$4,000.¹⁸

14. Ibid., Dec. 1, 1851-March 19, 1852.

15. Ibid., Feb. 27-May 7, 1852.

16. Ibid., Nov. 27, 1851-Jan. 1, 1852. Grandpa Taft in mid-December had built an octagonal ottoman for their room.

17. Ibid., March 18-20, 1852.

18. Ibid., March 25, 1852.

9. Plumbing

Plumbers in the autumn of 1851 had installed interior plumbing. A large storage tank for water was positioned in a basement room west of the kitchen, and a second tank in one of the upstairs rooms. A cold wave soon swept into the area and caused much suffering. On December 17, 1851, the Tafts' thermometer registered four degrees below zero. The Tafts' kitchen pump froze on four successive mornings, and on the 16th the force pump burst.¹⁹

Alphonso Taft in late October 1852 secured hot water for his house. The boiler was delivered on the 26th, and the next day a plumber was called in to fix the "pipes to our boiler."²⁰

The interior plumbing, pumps, and boiler were a constant source of trouble. On December 31, 1852, a plumber had to be called in to "mend the water works." Four weeks later the temperature dropped to below zero. The pump at the barn froze, along with the "water pipes in Alphonso's room on account of his being gone & no fire in his room."²¹ On September 27, 1853, Grandpa "got the boiler to stove & had it put up."²²

To supply water to the interior plumbing gravity was used. On October 21, 1853, Grandpa Taft reported that he "cleaned out the upper tank."²³

E. Cisterns

Within one week of their move to Mt. Auburn, the Tafts were plagued with cistern problems. On July 7, 1851, Grandpa cleaned out the cistern, only to discover on the 9th that their well was almost dry. An Irishman was hired to help clean out the well, and in descending into it fell and hurt himself. Among the debris removed from the well were 18 dishes.

19. Ibid., Dec. 10-18, 1851. On January 28, 1852, the plumbers installed a pump in the bathhouse.

20. Ibid., Oct. 26 & 27, 1852.

21. Ibid., Dec. 31, 1852 & Jan. 27, 1853. On Christmas Night 1853, while Alphonso was in Millbury to get married, no fire was kept burning in his stove and the pipes in his room again froze. They thawed without bursting. Ibid., Dec. 25, 1853.

22. Ibid., Sept. 27, 1853.

23. Ibid., Oct. 21, 1853.

There was a heavy shower on the 17th, which put eight inches of water in their cistern.²⁴

Alphonso Taft in late July, having determined to build a second and larger cistern, employed Hunt to undertake the project. On August 2 Peter Rawson Taft recorded that "diggers of our cistern have spent 11 days work on it." The excavation was completed on the 9th, and a bricklayer was put to work. Hunt now turned his laborers to excavating for a second cistern as a filter to the larger one. Grandpa Taft on the 23d paid Hunt \$20 on the cistern account, and observed that he was laying the arch to the second cistern. Hunt spend August 30 cementing the cisterns, and on September 2 reported the project completed. Meanwhile laborers had commenced excavating for the foundation of the addition. The joists of the east room of the addition (the kitchen) would be above the cisterns.²⁵

On September 3 three loads of coarse gravel were put into the cisterns, and on the 6th Grandpa Taft paid Hunt \$100, the final payment on the cistern contract. He observed that the dimensions of the big cistern showed it to be "13 feet deep by 12' 9" in diameter, the whole depth was 15 feet the arches at the top & bottom 4 feet." It would hold 387 barrels of water, while the filtering cistern held 75 barrels, and the stable cistern 47 barrels.

Water was piped into the top of the filtering cistern, and allowed to stand in the filtering deposits. When a sufficient quantity had accumulated, gravity drained it through an effluent pipe into the larger cistern, which had an ingress pipe near its top.²⁶

On the morning of October 5, 1851, it was found that the big cistern had leaked about three quarts. Hunt was notified of this, and on the 16th he relined it with cement. Meanwhile there had been a rain and there was about a foot of water in the filtering cistern. It began leaking in November, and on the 26th the water was drawn from it into the big cistern by a syphon. Next day the filtering cistern's interior was given another coat of cement by Hunt & Lull. The repairs gave proof of satisfaction on the last day of the year, when a heavy rain put four feet of water in the big cistern and there were ~~no~~ leaks.²⁷

24. P.R.T. Diaries, July 7-17, 1851, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 11. On July 13 Grandpa Taft fixed the water pipes feeding the cisterns.

25. Ibid., Aug. 2-Sept. 2, 1851. Hunt was a native of Windham, Vermont. In connection with construction of the cisterns, the Tafts on August 27 purchased 17½ feet of 1½" pump pipe and 219 feet of 1-inch pipe.

26. Ibid., Sept. 3-4, 1851.

27. Ibid., Oct. 5-16, Nov. 26-27, Dec. 31, 1851.

In mid-February 1852 the big cistern was again leaking, but it was five weeks before Hunt got around to mending it.²⁸ This corrected the difficulty, and no more trouble was had with the two house cisterns. On December 27, 1852, Grandpa Taft noted in his diary, "our cisterns are full."²⁹

F. Walks and Walkways

Hunt & Lull in the third week of October 1851 put a crew to work paving walkways behind and north and south of the house. They were still laying pavement in November. Lull on the 19th sent for 1300 paving bricks, while Grandpa Taft graded the back yard. The next day, the 20th, they finished paving the front walk, but to do so they had to send for another 1300 bricks.³⁰

On February 27, 1852, Grandpa Taft purchased 300 paving bricks and replaced those that had cracked during the winter. The following month he paved a walkway from the rear of the house to the privy.³¹

G. Maintenance, 1852-53

Peter Rawson Taft, during most of his life on Mt. Auburn, took an active interest in maintenance of his son's property. Until the mid-1860s he personally attended to all but major maintenance problems. His diaries and journals contain details of what he did in this respect and the cost thereof.

Grandpa Taft on November 10, 1852, put down a door stone for the front door, and six weeks later he fixed the front step.³² On February 12, 1853, he mended the kitchen blinds.³³ Ten days later he built a dog house, and on March 1 he repaired the cellar door.³⁴ On March 21 he changed stoves in Alphonso's room, and mid-May found him building

28. Ibid., Feb. 10-March 15, 1852.

29. Ibid., Dec. 27, 1852.

30. P.R.T. Diaries, Oct. 15-Nov. 20, 1851, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 11.

31. Ibid., Feb. 27 & March 22, 1851.

32. P.R.T. Diaries, Nov. 10 & Dec. 27, 1852, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 11.

33. Ibid., Feb. 12, 1853.

34. Ibid., Feb. 22-23, & March 1, 1853.

a new door for the carriage house. On the 24th he laid a floor in the cow barn.³⁵ Grandpa Taft on September 3 hung the front gate. Two days later he worked on a washstand.³⁶

On October 12, 1853, he put up the marble wash basin recently purchased by Alphonso. Next he built drawers for the washstand positioned beneath the basin. The first week of November found him mending clothes horses.³⁷

H. The Death of Fanny Taft

The move to Mt. Auburn, with its improved environment, came too late to save Fanny Taft. She had been in failing health since the birth and death of her fifth child, and in the spring of 1852 she became desperately ill with "congestion of the lungs and of the brain." At 7:05 a.m., on June 2, after kissing each member of the family, Fanny died. Her funeral services were held the next day in the parlor, and on the 5th her remains were laid to rest in Spring Grove cemetery.³⁸

Alphonso soon afterwards wrote and privately published a memoir extolling Fanny's virtues and graces, which were many, which he distributed to his relatives and friends.

35. Ibid., May 19-24, 1853.

36. Ibid., Sept. 3 & 27, 1853.

37. Ibid., Oct. 12-15, Nov. 5, 1853.

38. Ross, An American Family, p. 13; P.R.T. Diaries, June 2-5, 1852, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 11.

III. THE MIDDLE 1850s AT 60 AUBURN STREET

A. Alphonso Taft Remarries

1. Louise Maria Torrey of Millbury

Alphonso Taft did not remain a widower many months. While his parents looked after the home and his motherless children, Alphonso traveled to New England several months after Fanny's death. He was lonesome and wished to remarry, preferring another girl from New England. In New Haven, Connecticut, he stopped with the Rev. Samuel Dutton, a friend from his days at Yale. The Duttons introduced him to Louise Torrey, and he was struck by her grace and intelligence.¹

Louisa Marie Torrey, known as Louise, was the second of four children, all girls, born to Samuel Davenport and Susan Waters Torrey. A Boston merchant, Torrey had married Susan in 1824, three years after the death of his first wife. Louise was born in Boston in September 1827, and when she was four her parents moved to Millbury, a small Massachusetts town in the Blackstone valley. There they occupied a handsome frame house across the street from the Waters mansion.

The Torrey girls--Delia, Louise, Susan (Susie), and Anna--were spirited and well educated, enjoying a degree of female emancipation uncommon in the nineteenth century. In 1843 Delia and Louise enrolled at Mount Holyoke College. Louise stayed a year, but Delia dropped out at the end of six months, because of illness. The girls then went to New Haven, where they studied with Miss Mary Dutton and attended lectures by Professor Dennison Olmsted, a scientist. While in New Haven, they lived at the home of their Aunt Harriet, who was married to the Rev. Samuel Dutton.²

In 1847 Delia and Louise taught at Monson Academy in Maine. They were popular with the men but hard to please. Louise in January 1853 from Boston, where she was studying music, wrote Delia, "Tell everybody that I have come to the same conclusion as yourself--viz.--not to marry."

But before the year was over, Louise was being wooed by Alphonso Taft, a man 17 years her senior. On his return to Cincinnati, following

1. Ross, An American Family, pp. 16-19; Henry F. Pringle, The Life and Times of William Howard Taft, 2 vols. (New York, 1939), I, 11-12.

2. Ross, An American Family, pp. 16-18.

his introduction to Louise, Alphonso wrote Mrs. Dutton inquiring, is she "extravagant, undomestic, wilful," or has she been badly "crossed in love?" Aunt Harriet told Louise that she had an admirer. Reassured, Alphonso wrote Samuel Torrey, "I need not be told that Louise is a splendid woman, one of whom a man might be proud. I sincerely believe that it will turn out that she is just the companion I want and I hope I would be a fair match. Whether she may think so is more doubtful."³

2. A Millbury Marriage and the Return to Cincinnati

Louise appreciated Alphonso and his inquiries amused her. In November 1853 Alphonso said goodbye to his parents and two sons and traveled, by train to Millbury to propose to Louise. Knocking at the Torreys' door, Alphonso told her they were "to be married at Christmas," if she could get ready. Delia approved of the match, because it would introduce Louise into "a larger sphere of influence & a greater responsibility." Delia trusted that the family would combine its "efforts" to keep Louise from "hurrying herself in her preparations to the expense of her health, comfort and good looks in the interval before the wedding," which was scheduled for the Christmas holidays.⁴ Alphonso then hastened back to his legal work in Cincinnati.

Alphonso's friends were glad to learn that he was remarrying. Typical was the reaction of Mr. and Mrs. Aaron F. Perry of Columbus. Acknowledging a Taft letter of December 11, Perry congratulated him "heartily on an arrangement so likely to contribute to your happiness." Perry assured his friend that marriage was the "only refuge for a man of correct character from outside follies, heartlessness & insincerity of the world." The Perrys extended a cordial invitation to their friend to stop over, going, coming or both, and "if you will bring madam to stay with us on your return, we will make her & you comfortable."⁵

In a second letter, dated December 16, the Perrys invited Taft and the lady about to become his wife to spend New Year's with them. This would give them an opportunity "to get acquainted with our new friend, and to see you in your new relationship."⁶

Alphonso Taft left Cincinnati on December 20 and "started to the east after a wife." Six days later, the 43-year-old widower was married

3. Ibid., p. 19.

4. Delia Torrey to Susie Torrey, undated, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

5. Perry to A.T., Dec. 13, 1853, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

6. Perry to A.T., Dec. 16, 1853, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

to Louise Torrey, 26, in the family home. After saying goodbye to the Torreys and their relatives, the newlyweds left Millbury for New York City. There they stayed at the St. Nicholas, enjoyed the Crystal Palace, went to a Jullien concert, and shopped. Mrs. Taft bought some books for her two stepsons.

The Tafts caught a train for Buffalo by way of Albany on the 29th. A heavy snowfall had blanketed the Hudson River Valley, and their train was three hours late by the time it chuffed into Albany. West of Albany more time was lost, when the train preceding theirs jumped the track. The engine and three passenger cars were "turned upside down and torn all to pieces." No one was killed but 16, including a couple married at Batavia that morning, were seriously injured.

Additional time was lost, and when the train pulled into Buffalo on the morning of the 30th, Alphonso found that they had missed their connections. It would be 7:30 a.m., the next day, before they could board a train for Cleveland. While in Buffalo, the couple stayed at the American House, and both wrote letters describing to the Torreys their hectic trip from New York City. When he wrote his father-in-law, Taft reported that unforeseen delays have "checked our progress, so that with all our industry & perseverance we may not be able to get home on Saturday," January 1. They, however, intended to make the effort. Louise, he reported, had stood the "journey admirably. We were in the cars all night & did not arrive here or have an opportunity for any refreshments till 2 o'clock p.m. today."⁷

When it became apparent they could not reach their destination on New Years, they stopped in Columbus with the Perrys, whom Louise found to be interesting and agreeable people "whose acquaintance I shall always value." The next morning, at 4 a.m., the Tafts boarded the Cincinnati train, and reached the Queen City at 11 o'clock. "It was a beautiful bright morning and the whole country had its pleasantest look."

They were welcomed to the "beautiful house" by Mr. Taft's parents and his two boys. Louise found Peter Rawson Taft to be a "pleasant cheerful old gentleman whose whole object is to make people happy." Sylvia Taft was "a fine looking woman with black eyes." She was "thoroughly kind and good," and seemed anxious to do "everything in her power for me and yet wishes me to feel things are to be as I wish them." She found Charles, 10, and Rossy, 7, bright boys who needed a mother's training in grooming and manners. "They are easily influenced and are ambitious to please me," she wrote Delia. "It seems very strange to

7. A.T. to Samuel Torrey and Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Dec. 30, 1853; P.R.T. Diaries, Dec. 20, 1853-Jan. 2, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1 & 11.

be called 'Mother' but they take to it so naturally that I am getting used to it."⁸

B. Louise Taft's First Months in the House

1. Her Initial Impressions

The housekeeping had not "been of such a high order lately" as to discourage Louise, and she was told that "good help" would not be a problem. Her informants she soon discovered, however, were mistaken on this point. She found the house capacious. The room she was to share with her spouse was "delightfully situated and prettily furnished. It had a very fine prospect from the back windows of the surrounding country--which was a surprise to me. I shall count it a real feast and expect to live at my window."⁹

Louise found the parlor "charming," one "capable of being made as inviting as need be by the furniture I am able to buy for it." The sofa was "pretty and easy--plenty good enough for the back parlor," and she would "retain two of the chairs to fill up."¹⁰

On questioning her father-in-law, Louise learned that during the past month a number of improvements had been made to the parlor. The carpet had been taken up and cleaned, walls repapered, blinds mended, new iron mantels installed, and the woodwork painted.¹¹ During the same period, a leak in the roof had been patched with zinc, a door to the observatory hung, and a Mr. Wesson employed to varnish two tables, one rocking chair, one stand, and 12 chairs.¹²

"The chambers," she observed, were "more poorly furnished than the rest of the house." The parlor chamber had "nothing in it which corresponds to the general style of the house." Louise hoped she would have enough money left, after refurnishing the parlor, to "fix it up."¹³

8. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Jan. 4, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

9. The Tafts' bedroom was in the northeast corner of the upper story of the addition.

10. Ibid.

11. P.R.T. Diaries, Nov. 30-Dec. 5, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 11.

12. Ibid., Dec. 3, 13, & 21, 1853.

13. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Jan. 4, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

2. Louise Refurnishes the Parlor and Parlor Chamber

Louise and Alphonso went shopping for furniture on the morning of January 3, 1854. For \$300 Louise believed she could refurnish the parlor. She found furnishing styles in Cincinnati different from those with which she was familiar, but believed she would be able to find what she wanted. Black walnut, which was native to the area, did not enjoy the same prestige as it did in New England. "Nice furniture" made of black walnut, displayed by Cincinnati merchants, had been either stained or grained to look like rosewood. The more inexpensive furnishings were "made with the two kinds of wood mixed."

The table which they proposed to buy had a black marble top, surrounded by rosewood, with legs of black walnut stained to give the appearance of rosewood. This table, which enjoyed much popularity in the region, cost \$65.¹⁴

By January 12, when she wrote her mother, Louise had bought most of her parlor furniture and was well satisfied with it, "though some of the articles seemed high-priced." She had purchased the black marble topped table for \$65, a sofa at the same price, a large arm chair for \$40 and a small one for \$30, "a very pretty gothic chair covered with figures in bright colors" for \$15, and a whatnot for \$25. In the parlor she had retained four common chairs, transferring the old sofa and mahogany chairs to the parlor chamber. As soon as her piano arrived, the parlor would be furnished. People who had seen it called it "a very pleasant cheerful room."¹⁵

Louise's piano arrived on January 14 and was delivered to 60 Auburn Street by Mr. Mason. It was carried into the parlor and uncrated. The tone was perfect, and Louise practiced for several hours, before declaring it in perfect order. When he examined the piano, Alphonso found it to be a beautiful instrument, and its handsome wood "set off the parlor." A matching rosewood piano stool had been purchased by the Tafts.¹⁶

3. Place Settings, Linen, etc.

Mrs. Taft by January 4, 1854, had not had time to examine the dishes and housekeeping articles, but feared she would need to acquire a number. As for silver, the most immediate needs were a castor and salt spoons.

14. Ibid.

15. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Jan. 12, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. The large arm chair and whatnot had been built to order.

16. A.T. to Samuel Torrey, Jan. 14, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. The cost of the piano, including freight charges from Boston, was \$365.

There was a handsome china tea set, which included a teapot, waterpot, and coffee pot, and a pretty pair of butter knives. She loved her silver, and the additional forks made some spare, and Grandpa Taft claimed "the privilege of using the steel ones." They also had some very handsome goblets.¹⁷

Louise, as the days passed, found that many of the household items had been packed and stored following Fanny's death. Her many callers continued to admire her silver, but she found that it looked rather incongruous beside a brittannia castor and ivory salt spoons. But, she wrote her mother. "I do not fret about these things. I shall have things just as I want them in course of time."¹⁸

By the end of the first week of February, Louise Taft had started to entertain, having had one tea party and a musical party.¹⁹ Such activities compelled Louise to purchase a number of items for her table. At first, she felt called upon to look to Delia for advise, but she soon concluded her older sister was too far away to profit much from her suggestions. In Mrs. George W. Day, she soon found a friend with "good taste & judgement and our Yankee idea of things." Mrs. Day had helped her to select a castor, mustard spoons, table mats, and ivory-handled tea knives. "Mr. Taft," as she called her husband, had not had much experience in this respect, and as he was "so busy" he was "much relieved" to have her despende with his services.

On January 30 Louise had written for her father to forward \$129 of her money, as she must supply herself with "table linens and a good deal of table furniture without delay." In shopping for her dinner service, she found that "American plate" was very popular in Cincinnati, and she was "inclined to believe it is good enough for me." As the stores displayed scarcely any Sheffield, she spent \$40 for a pretty set of American plate. She had also purchased salt spoons to match her silver, and planned to buy two plaid table cloths--one long and one square. As there was a "pretty cake basket," she would not need another at present.²⁰

17. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Jan. 3, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

18. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Jan. 14, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

19. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Jan. 30, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. Mr. Sage had brought his flute to the musical party, and as it was a stormy evening had stayed all night.

20. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Jan. 30 & Feb. 7, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. Louise Taft's tea knives cost six dollars a dozen.

Louise by this time had "come in possession of the Keys" & had been housekeeper for two weeks. As soon as she could get things "arranged" as she wished, she would enjoy it. Everything was kept "locked from garret to cellar so that it was a great care to provide rations for every meal."²¹

4. Quiet Evenings in the Parlor

The custom-made whatnot and large arm chair had been delivered by March 1, and they greatly improved the parlor. It was in this room that Mr. and Mrs. Taft spent their evenings reading and helping Charles and Rossy with their lessons. Alphonso felt "very anxious about their studies," and he wanted Louise to interest herself and hear their recitations.

Alphonso habitually read to Louise from the Cincinnati newspapers, to which he subscribed, the speeches made in the halls of Congress, and was desirous that she be "posted" on "the political history of the country."

Although she had been in the house two months, Louise had not purchased any "chamber furniture or mantel ornaments." In securing these items, she planned to be more "deliberate" than she had been in the parlor furniture.²²

5. Louise Adjusts to a New Environment and Society

Mt. Auburn, Louise found, was farther out from Cincinnati than she had supposed. The distance seemed "long in riding up or down because of the steepness of the hill." The difference in elevation between Alphonso's office, in the city a mile and one-half to the south, and their house was more than 300 feet. The street leading to Mt. Auburn was winding, rough, and formidable. She had had "no idea of the bold aspect of the scenery." They had a beautiful view from their back windows. In ascending the hill, there was no view of Mt. Auburn until a sudden turn brought them to the top, and they found themselves

surrounded with fine residences, so shut out from the sight of the city that it seems like a village by itself. We can see the city and the river from the upper windows and from the

21. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Jan. 30, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

22. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, March 2, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

top of the house. There are about fifty families living on the hill, many of them New England people, all acquainted with each other and very neighborly and social. There are none among them remarkably intellectual or highly cultivated though some of them are very wealthy and make quite a show. They are all friendly and pleasant neighbors.²³

Louise called the views of Cincinnati and the Ohio River from Mt. Auburn breathtaking. The beauty and scenery about Cincinnati exceeded anything heretofore beheld. She soon discovered, however, that there were disadvantages to the Queen City. On February 7, 1854, she complained to Delia that the soft coal burned in the homes, foundries, and by the railroads "spread such a dust that everything is black with it." It was worse in the city than on Mt. Auburn, for which she was thankful. When in the city, she hardly dared "make a call or enter a store without satisfying myself that I have not a large beauty spot on my nose or other part of my face." She considered it a ruinous extravagance to "wear light kids," and she hardly believed she could "keep tidy in white underclothes."²⁴

Mrs. Taft met her husband's partners. Judge Thomas Key was fine looking and gentlemanly but seemingly a misanthrope. He, she admitted, had reason to be despondent, because of poor health. His throat and lungs were so diseased that his doctor had ordered him to keep to his room. Mr. Patrick Mallon was "a good-natured, clever fellow," with "a pretty little wife." Mr. George Sage, "a young man who had been a student" and now practiced in the office, was "a pleasant social fellow musical rather than intellectual, and on the whole quite available."²⁵

She had use of the team and carriage, and a young Irishman who had "nothing else to do but drive me about when Father and Mother [Taft] do not care to go." Her husband's parents, however, were "very enterprizing about visiting and . . . for such old people . . . seem to enjoy going as much as I do."

23. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Jan. 14, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

24. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Feb. 7, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

25. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Jan. 14, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

Alphonso, she found, was too busy to come home for dinner, as the railroad companies by which the firm was retained were in "the midst of a great contest." They accordingly made the most of their evenings, preferring to remain at home.²⁶

6. Louise Taft takes Charge of the Kitchen

The Tafts through most of their Mt. Auburn years employed a cook. Louise, among her domestic duties, had supervision of the kitchen and other household employees. She, however, took it upon herself to do much of the baking, and when the family was without a cook she had to prepare the entire meal.

Louise was skeptical of her skill in the kitchen, and when her mother-in-law observed her action, she wished she had paid more attention to this side of her education. March 1854 found her applying herself to "learning the art of making bread." Their cook had been unsuccessful, and, while Grandma Taft had once been very skillful, she had lost her touch and could not "find out where the difficulty lies." To add to Louise's difficulty, Grandma Taft made her milk risings without yeast, a process with which her daughter-in-law was unfamiliar. Except for the difficulty with the bread, Louise had been "quite successful in making breakfast and tea cakes, and she had been complimented" on her sponge cakes.²⁷

In the first week of March, the Tafts' cow gave birth to a calf, and with a good supply of milk on hand, Louise experimented with her mother's formula for making potato yeast. It was not too successful, so on the morning of the 13th she concluded to try a brewer's yeast and "scalded the milk and made a sponge." It rose rapidly, and, having mixed it into a dough, she left it until it was light enough to put into pans.²⁸

Louise's mince pies had been pronounced excellent, and she was pleased by her ability to make "nice pastry." Grandma Taft was greatly amused by Louise's way of pounding pie crust, and thought it was the reason that they were better than hers.²⁹

26. Ibid. Edward, the Irishman, had replaced Owen as the Tafts' hired man on June 30, 1853. P.R.T. Diaries, June 30, 1853, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 11.

27. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, March 2, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

28. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, March 13, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

29. Ibid.

C. The Tafts' First Year as Man and Wife

1. The Tafts Support the Anti-Slavery Crusade

In 1854 passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act doomed the Whig party and gave birth to the Republican. Opposition to opening territories previously closed to slavery by the Missouri Compromise spread across the north. On Tuesday, April 10, the National Anti-Slavery Society convention convened in Cincinnati, with Lucy Stone and Frederick Douglass "as the stars of the occasion." The meetings were well attended, and the hall thronged during the entire three-day session. Louise attended several of the meetings with Alphonso, and heard Miss Stone and Douglass, but she preferred to read about the other addresses. Alphonso and his wife found the discussions animated and interesting.³⁰ The anti-slavery movement and the sectional difficulties convulsing the nation were frequent subjects of discussion in the Taft parlor for the next seven years.

2. A Quiet Summer at 60 Auburn Street

With the approach of summer, Louise Taft made preparations for a visit to Millbury. She had been told that Cincinnati summers were hot, humid, and unpleasant. In addition, insects were said to be a problem. She was told that all houses, those of both the rich and the humble, would be invaded by moths. To guard the family woolens, she had them packed in camphor, as soon as they could be dispensed with. Beds were likely to be infested with vermin and were frequently examined.

In September, mosquitoes were in their glory. To escape this plague, the well-to-do scheduled their vacations to coincide with the mosquito season.³¹

Louise would be accompanied to Millbury by Charlie, her 11-year-old stepson. They would depart as soon as Charlie's spring school term ended. When she wrote Delia of her plans, Louise observed, "we have as yet made no arrangements about leaving our house while we are all away." They would have to leave their hired man to take care of the cow and the horses, but she hesitated to trust the house with the servants. She believed they would "get some pleasant family from the city to take the establishment till we come back." This should not be hard, because Mt. Auburn was in its glory. The countryside in this, the first week of June, had never looked more beautiful, while the weather was "just cool enough to be comfortable."

30. A.T. to Mrs. Susan Torrey, April 15, 1854, L. C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

31. Louise Taft to Mrs. Torrey, March 20, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

Alphonso had been felled by a bilious attack brought on by a sudden cold in the last days of May. But through "the influence of Homeopathic powders and good nursing," he quickly recovered. When she wrote Delia on June 5, Louise reported, "I was never in better health in my life, but I expect to be a good deal prostrated by the heat when it first comes on."³²

Louise and Charlie left Cincinnati for Millbury in early July. Remaining in the house were Alphonso, his mother and father, Rossy, the servants, and hired man. Writing his wife on July 8, Alphonso complained that "the house seems quite empty since you left." Miss Rutledge had spent the day working for his mother. Early that day, Alphonso had met his neighbor George Pendleton, who remarked that he had caught a burgler in his residence before daybreak. The thief had been arrested and brought before the grand jury then in session, indicted, tried before Judge Flynn by a petit jury, found guilty, and sentenced to the penitentiary for five years. All this had occurred in seven hours. Louise was to ask her father, "If they can beat this in the Bay State."³³

On Sunday, July 9, Alphonso had Charley, the hired man, harness the team and hitch it to the covered buggy. With Rossy for company, he drove out to the cemetery to visit Fanny's grave and returned to the city in time for church.³⁴ Three weeks later, on July 31, the senior Tafts, accompanied by Rossy, boarded a train which would take them on their vacation to Saratoga Springs, New York, and the family home in Vermont. The only ones left in the house were Alphonso and the hired help. Made wary by Pendleton's experience, Alphonso gathered up the family silver that was out and put it in the silverware box. Among the items put away were: three large tablespoons, four dessert spoons, six Torrey teaspoons, six teaspoons without anyone's initials, two salt spoons, one napkin ring, seven small forks, and one large fork.³⁵

3. Louise Taft's Illness

The travelers had returned by late September, and the family was reunited in their Mt. Auburn home. Delia had accompanied her sister, who was four months pregnant, and Charlie on their return and would spend the winter with the Tafts.

32. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, June 5, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

33. A.T. to Louise Taft, July 8, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

34. A.T. to Louise Taft, July 9, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. Charley had replaced Edward as the hired man.

35. A.T. to Charlie and Louise Taft, July 31, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. While his family was in the east, Alphonso boarded at Mrs. Shays.

Writing her father on October 2, 1854, Delia reported that the Cincinnati weather had been very charming, and she and Louise had improved it by going for daily carriage rides. Several days before, they had taken a drive along the Ohio to look at the vineyards. They had purchased a peck of Catawba grapes and found them delicious.

Alphonso, she reported, was preoccupied with his business and was unable "to give us much of his society." Though home in the evenings, he was "often engaged with writing or studying." As yet, there had not been many evening callers, so they retired and rose early. Grandpa Taft was a very agreeable old gentleman, who made "himself useful in mending everything that is out of order and cheering everybody who is dispirited."³⁶

Within two weeks of her return to Cincinnati, Louise was stricken with typhoid fever. On October 5 she had complained of headaches and indigestion, and it was believed she was suffering with influenza. When she was no better on Saturday, the 7th, Alphonso sent for Dr. Benjamin Ehrmann, a celebrated homeopath and the family physician. As Louise had become enthusiastic with that practice, she deemed it best to give it a trial.

After examining Louise, Dr. Ehrmann diagnosed her illness as a mild case of typhoid or nervous fever. As he had been called in promptly, he told the family that he would soon have the disease under control and his patient on her feet in a week or two. He prescribed some medicines and told Louise to stay in bed. Delia would be her nurse.³⁷

Dr. Ehrmann was too optimistic. At the end of 17 days Louise was still confined to her bed, and when the physician called he explained that his patient was doing well and should soon be able to sit up.

In reporting her sister's condition to her parents, Delia on October 24 wrote, "she sleeps better and is quiet and composed when she is awake." She, however, could give no assurance of Louise's "entire recovery," as "her fever is of such a slow and lingering nature that it requires a great amount of patience and she sometimes feels a little disheartened." She had had no pain and no bad symptoms, but her pulse and tongue still indicated fever.

Although she slept in the same bed with Louise, Delia had no fear of taking the fever. So far she had borne the loss of sleep without

36. Delia Torrey to Samuel Torrey, Oct. 2, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

37. Delia Torrey to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Oct. 10, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

difficulty. Delia's practice had been to sleep with her sister until 2 a.m. and then change with some one. Louise was dependent on Delia to get her to sleep. In taking care of her, Delia was assisted by "very good second girl."

Grandma Taft, during Louise's sickness, had assumed charge of the housekeeping.³⁸

On November 7 Delia was able to write her parents that Louise was really improving. She was still weak, with some inflammation of the stomach, but it was "such a relief" to be able to lay aside her fears and feel that Louise is getting well. During the past fortnight, there had been nights when Louise could not "lie 2 minutes in the same position."³⁹

Louise, on the morning of the 8th, breakfasted on four oysters and dined on beefsteak. As yet, her diet included only meat and fish, and she was limited to two meals per day. She was of the opinion that bread-stuffs did not agree with her as well as meat, and Dr. Ehrmann advised the family to honor her whims. On the 9th Alphonso bought her a quail, while Delia made some graham bread and toast.⁴⁰

"After six weeks on a sick bed," Louise Taft was only "too happy and grateful" to find herself, on November 19, sufficiently recovered "to sit up again and to make my first attempt at using the pen." She was now able to get about her room by supporting herself "with furniture," as something was deemed "necessary to preserve the center of gravity." She had been dressed for several days, and had been sitting up for three or four hours at a time, though it tired her strength.⁴¹

Writing her mother on November 26, Louise reported, "it was but . . . a year ago today that I consented to leave you all and come away so far to this new home in the West." Her health had continued to improve. She was now taking her meals downstairs with the rest of the family. But, she admitted, "I creep about from room to room exacting from my weak

38. Delia Torrey to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Oct. 24, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

39. Delia Torrey to Samuel Torrey, Nov. 7, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

40. Ibid. While nursing her sister, Delia read Uncle Tom's Cabin and some of Sidney Smith's essays. She described the former, as the "only literary work that has had any attraction."

41. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Nov. 19, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. Charles Phelps, Charlie's and Rossy's maternal grandfather, died on Nov. 19, 1854. Although he had been failing for months, his death came as a shock.

limbs unwilling duty." She, however, was getting stronger daily, and "when the weather will permit me to ride I expect to gain still more rapidly."⁴²

Although her recovery had been slower than forecast by Dr. Ehrmann, Louise's faith in homeopathy was steadfast. She was pleased with that "science and glad to have become better acquainted with the family doctor."⁴³

By the first week of December, Louise returned to the kitchen to give orders and oversee the work, although she had to call on Delia to take her place in the commissary department. Delia had made all the pies and most of the bread since Louise became ill.

Louise's "powers of locomotion" were still limited, and she experienced difficulty in moving about the house and up-and downstairs with celerity.⁴⁴

4. Alphonso forms a new Partnership

In October 1854 Aaron Perry and his family moved from Columbus to Cincinnati, settling near the Tafts on Mt. Auburn. Alphonso dissolved his association with Key and Mallon and formed a new law partnership with Perry. The occasion was celebrated with oysters and champagne. "Had we been told at New Haven, what has since happened to us, I doubt if either of us would not have considered the predictions somewhat highly colored," Perry observed. Louise Taft and Elizabeth Perry had much in common and soon became close friends.⁴⁵

The new partnership had been organized at an inauspicious time, because the Cincinnati area was plagued by a recession, and a number of Queen City banks and business failed. One of the first to go under was Peter B. Manchester, a banker, whose creditors got almost nothing. Alphonso escaped without any loss, but, as his wife wrote her parents, "money never was as scarce and everybody complains of hard times."⁴⁶

42. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Nov. 26, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

43. Ibid.

44. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Dec. 4, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

45. Delia Torrey to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Oct. 24, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1; Ross, An American Family, p. 22.

46. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Nov. 26, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

5. Women's Liberation, 1854

The Taft parlor, with Delia as a house guest, continued to be the locale of many interesting discussions focusing on society and political and economic institutions. While Louise was recuperating, Mrs. Ernst and the Hayward girls called. Delia and Louise, especially the former, were impressed by Mrs. Ernst who was a progressive, and active in women's rights, the abolition movement, and "everything that was radical." When Lucy Stone had been in Cincinnati in April for the Anti-Slavery Convention, she had been a guest of Mrs. Ernst. Louise and Delia were so impressed with Mrs. Ernst that they hardly noticed the Hayward girls' stylish white hats and purple satin cloaks.⁴⁷

Delia was so intrigued with Mrs. Ernst's philosophy that she returned her visit. "Thoroughly indoctrinated respecting the wrongs" she suffered, Delia spent Christmas Eve discussing women's rights with Alphonso. Louise now doubted that her sister could be content to return to Millbury and again live quietly at home. While Delia was not threatening to turn "lecturer," she was casting about for a position which would make her independent of the male sex. She argued that teachers were too poorly paid, and she hoped to find employment in "some mercantile pursuit."⁴⁸

6. Louise and Alphonso's First Christmas

Christmas was a hallowed but quiet day in the Taft home. Alphonso gave silver fruit knives to his mother, his wife, and Delia. Louise received a copy of Holmes' Poems and Delia Fanny Fern's Ruth Hall. Charlie and Rossy were on vacation, and they saluted the rest of the household with firecrackers and whistles. The boys' Christmas stockings were filled with "goodies," besides one of Jacob Abbott's histories for each--Julius Caesar for Charles and Alexander the Great for Rossy.⁴⁹

On New Years Day 1855, Alphonso and Louise had an open house, and they entertained about 40 callers. Nearly all the gentlemen on Mt. Auburn dropped by, as well as several friends from the city. Cake and chocolate were served, and "the day and evening passed off quite cheerfully."⁵⁰

47. Ibid.

48. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Dec. 24, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

49. Delia Torrey to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Dec. 26, 1854, and Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Jan. 7, 1855, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

50. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Jan. 7, 1855, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

D. The Birth and Death of Samuel Davenport Taft

1. Louise Taft gives Birth to a Son

Mrs. Taft in the seventh month of her pregnancy was glad to see the end of the holidays. She and Delia could now address themselves "to the business of sewing." There was a good supply of material in the house. Delia had made many cotton sheets and hoped to complete the pillow cases before they were needed. Louise had bought a handsome embroidered flannel skirt and a little white worsted hood at Mrs. Ernst's Anti-Slavery Bazaar, and Delia would embroider a cap.

Louise had hired the nurse Fanny had employed in her last confinement. She had been recommended by Grandma Taft and Alphonso.⁵¹

At 9:30 a.m., February 7, 1855, Louise Taft "gave birth to a fine boy, weighing 9 pounds, after a very short labor." The delivery took place with such ease that by the time the doctor and nurse arrived, the baby had been born. Relaying this news to the Torreys, Alphonso wrote that their daughter was doing very well, and their first grandchild "healthy and strong." As the child was not expected for another three weeks, his early arrival was a great surprise, and Louise joked about our "surprise party." The baby was named Samuel Davenport in honor of his maternal grandfather.⁵²

2. Louise & Alphonso have their Room Repapered

Weather in the Cincinnati region was unseasonably cold in late March and early April 1855, and Louise, who was now up and about, was compelled to delay her annual spring "house cleaning" and other scheduled "spring work." This enabled her to devote additional time to the family sewing, and on April 8 she boasted that we are in good season with our sewing. She had been occupied with "a dressmaker for most of the past two weeks."⁵³

It was still cold when Louise wrote her mother on April 15 to inform her that they were still wearing cloaks and furs. The baby, during the past week, had visited Grandma Taft in "her room" several times. He was carried in with his cradle to pass the day while the paperhangers were papering Louise and Alphonso's room.⁵⁴

51. Ibid.

52. A.T. to Samuel Torrey, Feb. 7, 1855, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

53. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, April 8, 1855, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

54. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, April 15, 1855, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

During the third week of April there was "a most sudden change in the weather . . . , until that time" it had been unusually cold. One day the Tafts had been comfortable in their winter clothes, and the "next even summer clothing was oppressive." Delia, who was used to the New England climate, had never seen such "a rapid growth in vegetation." Peach and cherry trees blossomed, the grass turned green and "made great progress upward"; while Grandpa Taft and the neighbors were "sowing seeds and making gardens."⁵⁵

3. Thanksgiving--1855

Louise Taft, in the autumn of 1855, planned to expand her social activities. She was encouraged to do so by several factors: the presence of good servants; Sammy was at a stage in his development where he was little trouble; and her physical condition had never been better. For Thanksgiving dinner she would host the Phelps, Mr. and Mrs. Cook, and Dr. and Mrs. John P. Atwater. In the near future, she would have Mrs. Perry over to pass the day, to be followed by Mesdames Day and Tracy. Writing her sister Susie of these plans, Louise reported that she was thinking of giving a party for the "Mt. Auburn people some time before Spring," but her plans had not been finalized.

Several nights before Alphonso had had several gentlemen in for an evening of euchre in the parlor. When Susie came west for her anticipated visit, she would have to learn the game, as it was more popular in Cincinnati than whist.⁵⁶

Louise's Thanksgiving dinner was not too successful. Writing Delia, who had returned to Millbury that summer, she complained, "I made quite an effort . . . but with my usual success had but few guests." Mrs. Cook had to stay home with a cold, while Dr. and Mrs. Atwater had a more pressing engagement. Fanny Cook, however, had come with her father and remained for several days as a house guest.⁵⁷

4. Louise & Alphonso's Second Christmas

Christmas 1855 found the Tafts exchanging gifts, and on the 30th Louise wrote Delia that "Santa Claus was quite liberal to the boys." On Christmas morning Charlie and Rossy received Dickens' Child's History

55. Delia Torrey to Mrs. Susan Torrey, April 20, 1855, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

56. Louise Taft to Susie Torrey, Nov. 12, 1855, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. Charlie Taft had started taking dancing lessons and was beginning to like them.

57. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Dec. 4, 1855, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

of England in two volumes, besides "some money for their purses and other trifles in their stockings." Later in the day they called on Grandma Phelps, and she gave them each a book--No Such Word as Fail for Rossy and Charlie the Diary and Correspondence of Amos Lawrence. From their aunts, Mrs. Cook and Mrs. Atwater, they each received "a pretty silver napkin ring."

Santa Claus brought the baby a little barking dog, but by nightfall he had "deprived it of its tail and three legs." Sammy, Louise reported, was doing very well and had cut his second tooth. She was dressing him in stockings and shoes and "short clothes." He, however, refused to creep, and lifted himself up by a chair or cricket. In doing so, he frequently fell and had taken some hard bumps.⁵⁸

Louise had given her husband a pair of slippers made by his "Dutch shoemaker," and a silver napkin ring. On the 26th, their second wedding anniversary, Alphonso gave Louise the "first two volumes of Macaulay's History, with the promise of the rest of the set when it comes out." Grandpa Taft had been given a handsome dressing gown by his wife.⁵⁹

Alphonso and Louise celebrated Christmas evening by going to the opera to see the celebrated Lyne & Harrison troupe in Cinderella. Charlie was delighted to accompany them.⁶⁰

5. A Cold January & Sledding on Sycamore Hill

January 1856 was unseasonably cold in Cincinnati. Writing Delia on the 16th, Louise observed, "We are having the coldest winter ever known here. . . . We have had nothing like a thaw since Christmas." Many of their friends and neighbors, both in the city and on Mt. Auburn, had reported their pipes frozen and burst. Although the Tafts' pipes had frozen several times, no damage had occurred.

Her husband's interest in science and his "mania about thermometers" had been excited by "this cold term." She had been awakened at night "with the cold air blowing in at the open window to find him making scien-

58. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Dec. 30, 1855, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

59. Ibid. Several weeks before Alphonso had given Louise a copy of Rose Clark by Fanny Fern, but she found it so tedious that she gave it to Fanny Cook for Christmas. "Rather a doubtful principle," she confided to Delia.

60. Ibid.

tific investigations into the state of the weather." On several occasions, Alphonso reported that the mercury in his thermometer had dropped out of sight.⁶¹

Throughout most of January, the road leading from the Taft home down Sycamore Hill into the city was glazed with ice. This made for good sledding, and the boys enjoyed the sleds their grandfather had made for them. The parents realized the dangers involved, but Alphonso was "disposed to let them share in the sport, at some risk . . . to their limbs, on the principle that it is a kind of sport which cultivates dexterity and manly courage." He confessed, however, that it made him "tremble to see them shoot down the hill . . . from top to bottom at a speed which seems uncontrollable."⁶²

The frigid weather did not put a stop to entertaining and Louise reported that the "gaiety of the hill" continues. On Friday, the 11th, she and Alphonso had attended a club party at the E. B. Reeder's. She, however, had concluded to give up her projected house party this winter. It would be a trying undertaking, and she was disposed to put it off as long as possible.⁶³

6. The Death of Samuel Davenport Taft

Tragedy and sorrow engulfed the Taft house on April 7, 1856. On that day, at 7:30 p.m., Sammy, the Tafts' 14-month-old son, died of whooping cough.

A grieving father two days later wrote Samuel Torrey, "We have just returned from the cemetery where we left our dear little Sammy." The funeral had been held in the parlor at 1 p.m., with Doctor Samuel W. Fisher of the 2d Presbyterian Church and Doctor E. A. Crawley, President of the Mt. Auburn Young Ladies Institute, conducting the services. Alphonso was "thankful for the beautiful and excellent remarks of both these reverend gentlemen, who conducted the whole occasion in the most consoling and able manner."⁶⁴

61. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Jan. 16, 1856, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

62. A.T. to Delia Torrey, Feb. 1, 1856; P.R.T. Diaries, Jan. 31, 1856, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1 & 11. On the 31st two boys broke their legs sledding on Sycamore Hill.

63. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Jan. 16, 1856, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

64. A.T. to Samuel Torrey, April 9, 1856; P.R.T. Diaries, April 7 & 9, 1856, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1 & 11.

During Sammy's fatal illness, Louise had found "it inconvenient to take him up frequently as was necessary from his bed at night," so the family had "the lounge brought down" and put in order. This proved a great comfort to him, and would "always be associated" in Louise's mind with "the agony of his last hours."

After his death, she had placed the body on the lounge in Mary's room, "where we had nursed and watched him many a long night." Mary continued to sleep there, and "while we had him so near I could not feel that he was really removed so far beyond the reach or need of our poor protection." The second night of the wake, Louise deemed it necessary to leave the windows open to admit cool air and Mary went upstairs. It had been a great comfort, and the body was not removed from Mary's room until the hour for the funeral, when it was placed in the little coffin.⁶⁵

Writing her mother on April 21, Louise Taft poured out her grief. "It would be a great comfort," she wrote, "to be with you for a little while just while this affliction is so fresh and heavy." Constantly passing through her mind were the thousands of "little incidents of our dear Sammy's brief life and early death," which she would love to share. Although Sammy had had love and good care, she chided herself for her actions. If she had known that he would die, she would not have left the sick room for even a moment.

If he had died during his severe sickness of the previous summer, it would not have come as so great a shock, because "he had never been well and I was prepared to think that I might lose him at any time." But since then he had been so healthy that she had "come to feel that he was safe." She was not disposed to condemn herself for her actions, but desired "to look back of all second causes and see the hand of our Heavenly Father who gave and has taken away." Hereafter heaven would seem nearer and more real now that she had "a little treasure there." She would not call him back, as he had "lived long enough to be a precious possession to memory and love."⁶⁶

E. Fourteen Busy Months

1. Louise and Alphonso take a Vacation

To ease her sorrow, Louise threw herself into spring housecleaning. The plumbers were called in to repair the plumbing, and in May, Louise, accompanied by Mary, traveled east to Millbury.⁶⁷ Grandma Taft was left

65. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, April 21, 1856, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid.; P.R.T. Diaries, April 25-29, 1856, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

in charge of the housekeeping. She apparently encountered difficulties, because Louise on May 25 wrote Alphonso, "I presume she blames me for leaving her so long with so much care, but I cannot feel that I am responsible." If Grandma had consented to the arrangements proposed with Mary, she would have been saved many annoyances. This experience might convince Grandma that "the work of our house is not as light as she has supposed and one girl is by no means sufficient help unless she makes a slave of herself."⁶⁸

Alphonso traveled to Millbury in early June to visit his in-laws and to bring Louise back to Cincinnati. The boys remained with their grandparents. Writing his father on June 3, Charlie reported that he had left the windows open a little while, but found that he had to close them because of "all kinds of bugs coming in, which made it very uncomfortable."

In addition, the cow was not giving as much milk as she had, because, as Charlie tattled, "Grandpa will not buy any feed."⁶⁹

2. The Summer and Autumn of 1856 on Mt. Auburn

When Louise and Alphonso returned to Mt. Auburn in the last week of June, they were accompanied by Susie Torrey. Notifying her mother of their safe arrival, Louise reported, "We are getting rested from the fatigues of our journey as rapidly as the intense heat will admit and the weather does not seem so oppressive as we get more accustomed to it."

Mary had stopped off at Dunkirk to see her brother and did not reach Cincinnati until Thursday, the 28th. Louise was delighted to see her, as she did not like doing Mary's work when it was so hot. The other girl whom she had left with Grandma Taft was "quite a good one."⁷⁰

Susie planned to spend the year on Mt. Auburn with her sister and brother-in-law. The Tafts, like hundreds of thousands who shared their antipathy to slavery, read Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin, which came off the press that autumn. On October 18 Alphonso wrote

68. Louise Taft to A.T., May 25, 1856, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. Apparently, Grandma Taft had refused to employ a second girl during Mary's absence.

69. Charlie Taft to A.T., June 3, 1856, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

70. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, June 29, 1856, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

Delia that Louise and Susie are "buried in Uncle Tom's Cabin."⁷¹ Later in the month Louise reported to Delia that we bought Dred as soon as it came out and read it with great interest. She did not believe that it compared with Uncle Tom's Cabin, "though parts of it are even more beautiful."⁷² Alphonso in the second week of November read Dr. Elisha K. Kane's Arctic Explorations, which Mrs. Perry had loaned him.⁷³

A drought in the autumn of 1856 caused serious economic problems in the river towns. Steamboat traffic on the upper Ohio and its tributaries was interrupted. As most of the coal was shipped downstream from the Virginia and Pennsylvania fields in barges, the advent of cold weather found Cincinnatians almost destitute of fuel. Coal which usually sold for 12 to 14 cents a bushel now brought 60 cents, and not much could be had at that price. The Tafts, like their neighbors, conserved fuel and burned no unnecessary fires.

In December, through his railroad connections, Alphonso was able to get 250 bushels of coal. This came just in time, as many of their Mt. Auburn friends were "living from hand to mouth," and in the city the poor were suffering.⁷⁴

3. Susie Torrey Spends the Winter with the Tafts

Louise and Susie on January 4, 1857, walked down Sycamore Hill to Dr. Fisher's 2d Presbyterian Church and rode the omnibus back. The hill was frozen and slippery, but there was insufficient snow on the ground for the boys to go sledding.⁷⁵

The Tafts were thrifty, and Louise was delighted that it had become fashionable on Mt. Auburn to "give parties in rather a cheap way this winter." This winter they were not expected to "go into the ex-

71. A.T. to Delia Torrey, Oct. 18, 1856, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

72. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Oct. 1856, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. The Torreys had mailed the Tafts some quinces. Some had been bruised in shipment, but the rest were taken to the kitchen and turned into preserves.

73. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Nov. 10, 1856, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

74. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Nov. 23, 1856, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

75. A.T. to Delia Torrey, Jan. 4, 1857, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

travangaza of ice cream which was so expensive." Instead at the two parties she gave, they served blancmange and peaches.⁷⁶

Like most women Louise and Susie believed in "keeping up with the Joneses." Susie was too proud to ride in the Tafts' "old carriage," and her sister sympathized. Whenever Louise did not feel able to walk, she "patronized the omnibus," which Susie could not afford.

Louise Taft was again pregnant, and when not involved in parties and the social whirl Susie was a great help around the house. She did much of the sewing. On February 22, 1857, Louise wrote Delia that their younger sister was working on some linen cases for the small pillows. Two pair were nearly completed, and she planned another two pair. When these were completed, they would turn their attention to "some smaller work--embroidery, flannels, &c."⁷⁷

4. A Family Dispute

Although the house at 60 Auburn Street was large, there were occasional clashes between Louise and her in-laws. The worst of these occurred on March 3, when she was three-months pregnant. Grandpa Taft and Mary had words over her failure to "furnish something for our hired man to carry a quarter of veal to the storeroom." Louise, who was in the dining room, overheard and came down into the kitchen.

Without saying anything to her father-in-law, Louise told Mary that he was at fault. Whereupon P.R.T. shouted that if he heard any more "saucy talk" out of Mary, he would "put her out head first." Louise whirled about, and, facing Grandpa, stamped her foot on the floor, and, in a "very imperious manner," said she shall not stir one step. P.R.T. did not reply, but preserved his "countenance indicating something like determination," and Louise turned and ran upstairs. Grandpa followed. Louise turned into her bedroom and shut the door.

P.R.T. noted in his diary that "there the matter ended." But he thought Louise to blame for coming into the kitchen to espouse the hired girl's side in a quarrel without making any effort to determine the facts. He felt his daughter-in-law "very blameable and that she ought to be ashamed of herself."⁷⁸

76. Louise Taft to Samuel Torrey, Feb. 1, 1857, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

77. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Feb. 22, 1857, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

78. P.R.T. Diaries, March 3, 1857, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 11.

5. Louise's Pregnancy Restricts Her Activities

In May, Louise and Susie focused their attention on dressmaking. As she was five months pregnant, Louise found she could make no use of last year's dresses. This plagued her thrifty nature, because she had hoped to wear out all the black dresses she had made or purchased while in mourning for Sammy.⁷⁹

The second week of June saw the number living in the house reduced from 14 to six. Alphonso and Susie, accompanied by the Tarboxes who had been house guests, headed west to St. Louis and St. Paul, while Grandpa and Grandma Taft traveled south to Lexington and the Bluegrass region of Kentucky. Louise on June 8 wrote Delia that she had been deserted by the whole family except the boys and the servants.⁸⁰

Susie did not remain long in Cincinnati following her western trip. Having spent more than nine months with the Tafts, she was ready to return to Millbury. She was accompanied by Rossy who would spend his summer vacation with the Torreys.

79. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, May 10, 1857, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

80. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, June 8, 1857, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

IV. FORTY EVENTFUL MONTHS

A. William Howard Taft's First Year

1. Birth of a President

Tuesday, September 15, 1857, was a warm and pleasant day in Cincinnati. Although nobody realized it, a significant event was taking place in the Alphonso Taft home at 60 Auburn Street. Louise Taft was in labor and gave birth to a son destined to be elected 27th President of the United States, and to serve his country as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court from 1921 to 1930. Writing Increase Tarbox, a Torrey relative, on the 21st, Alphonso reported, "Louise is getting along astonishingly well, and the baby is fat & healthy. She started off with a fair prospect of milk, and on the third day the boy had plenty, and this state of things continued for 2 or 3 days, when the supply began to fall off." There was talk of employing a wet nurse. Outside of this development, the health of both mother and child was perfect, and the family had cause to be "thankful to a kind Providence."¹

There was joy in Millbury, and Susan Torrey wrote her daughter Louise, "Kiss the dear baby for me. It will be a long time before he will be aware of my existence but I already take a lively interest in his." Delia suggested that the baby be named Andrew, but she approved the name William Howard given him by his parents. The "Howard" was to honor his paternal grandmother, Sylvia Howard.²

Two days after the birth of the baby, Willie as he was called, Rossy returned from his summer in Millbury. He was accompanied by Louise's youngest sister Anna, who would spend the year in Cincinnati helping with the baby and attending Mt. Auburn Young Ladies Institute.

2. The Baby's Appearance and Growth

Alphonso, on October 16, notified the Torreys that "Louise's little boy is getting along nicely." They all thought him "quite

1. A.T. to I.N. Tarbox, Sept. 21, 1857; P.R.T. Diaries, Sept. 15, 1857, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1 & 11. Family tradition is that the birth of a President took place in the southeast bedroom on the middle floor of the 1851 addition. There are no family letters either confirming or contradicting this tradition.

2. Mrs. Susan Torrey to Louise Taft, Oct. 5, 1857, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

good looking," and he was "built more on Rossy's plan than Charley's." His eyes were dark and could be described as black. His complexion also was dark. He had been a "good deal" of trouble, and they still had a nurse. His mother never looked better.³

Writing Delia when the baby was seven weeks old, Louise explained their troubles. Since his birth, it seemed as if her "hands and feet were tied to this baby." He insisted on being held whenever he was awake. As she had "plenty of milk for him," she was unwilling to have him wet nursed. She had not left him to go to the city since her nurse had been discharged.

Louise felt that Willie, as he was called, was "as good as ordinary babies, though he cries enough to be healthy and has not learned to distinguish properly day and night." Alphonso had told her that if she were unwilling to admit that Willie was "peevish," she could write to Millbury and deny it.

Unlike "poor Sammy," Willie was healthy and hearty, and Louise, despite loss of sleep, took "real comfort in taking care of him." He, however, had inherited from her "a strong tendency to constipation." He was large for his age, and was daily getting heavier. Contradicting Mr. Taft, as she called her spouse, she reported that "the question of complexion" had not been settled. The eyes were "deeply, darkly, beautifully blue," but whether this would always be true remained to be seen. Alphonso had laughed at her for remarking that they have "the effect of black," because that was all she seemed to care about.

Already he had such a large waist that he could not wear dresses with belts, and the slip Mother Torrey had sent had been outgrown.⁴

Charlie was also growing up, and at Christmas that year he wore his first frock coat. At Mt. Auburn Young Ladies Institute, Anna excelled in Latin and French and was the best music student in attendance. In the Taft parlor during 1857 long hours were spent discussing and castigating the Dred Scott decision, and events abroad such as the Sepoy Mutiny.⁵

Louise and Alphonso and the senior Tafts gave a party for their friends on January 11, 1858. Soon thereafter, Louise was taken sick and confined to her bed for nearly three weeks. Writing Delia, on February 12,

3. A.T. to Delia Torrey, Oct. 16, 1857, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

4. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Nov. 8, 1857, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

5. Ross, An American Family, p. 27.

she reported that this was the first time she had been downstairs for meals in two weeks. She had been dieting to cure a tendency toward constipation and had given up coffee. To reinforce her resolution, she did not permit any in the house, as she was the only member of the family who liked it. Her principal food was currently cracked wheat and graham bread, supplemented by some "hearty food . . . to supply the baby's wants." His milk had been accordingly "a little short for a day or two," but Willie was "as fat and hearty as ever."

While recuperating from her illness, Louise had read Emilia Wyndam and Washington Irving's biography of George Washington. She had been encouraged to read the latter by "allusions to American history" found in The Virginians. She had found Washington's biography as "absorbing in interest as the romance."⁶

3. Willie at Five Months

Willie continued to develop rapidly. By the time he was five months old, he had "attained the accomplishments common to babies of his age." He could bring his big toe up to his mouth, "much to his own satisfaction and our amusement." He spread his hands to anybody who might pick him up, and his face was "wreathed with smiles at the slightest provocation."

The failure of his hair to grow, however, compelled his mother to ask forbearance for her failure to send relatives locks as keepsakes.⁷

Louise on February 28 gave her mother a detailed description of her grandson. "Our little Willie," she reported

is well and hearty & a most charming baby as you would wish to see. He is a great contrast to Sammy who though good & quiet was never very playful. Willie laughs & plays constantly.

Everyone says that he does not resemble Sammy. He has a round and not very large head, a broad rather than high forehead. His eyes though blue have, I still insist, expressions of his father's. His nose is like Rossy's. He has the short upper lip making the

6. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Feb. 12, 1858, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

7. Ibid.

fish-shaped mouth common to babies of our family, but his chin is peculiar and just like his father's & grandfather's. I must not omit to mention a solitary dimple in one cheek which we think contributes much to his beauty. As to the curls it will be a long time before the hair will be long enough to make any shows. The boys call him a little shave-pate. He is not a long baby, but is very fat & plump.⁸

Louise Taft, during the final week of February, carried Willie down to Dr. Atwater's to have him vaccinated from "the arm of their baby who had gone through the process successfully." She had dreaded the undertaking and was glad it was over.⁹

4. Willie's First Spring

Spring came to Mt. Auburn early in 1858, and Louise found the mild weather rather debilitating to all but Willie, who enjoyed it thoroughly. He was so fond of being outdoors that it was "hard work to amuse him on a rainy day." He cried to go out "with everyone, and if the door" were left open he would "run like a spider and crawl down the steps and off the porch" before his mother could catch him. Whenever she went into the city, she usually took him with her.¹⁰

By May 3 Louise Taft reported that, except for the second floor storerooms, she was finished with spring housecleaning.¹¹ On learning that the Torreys were having their house repainted, she wrote Delia, "I wish you could have tried the grained paint for halls and staircases." She was glad that hers were grained, as it relieved her from having "all that white paint to take care of."¹²

8. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Feb. 28, 1858, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

9. Ibid.

10. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, March 22, 1858, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. The change in weather had come abruptly, because on February 24 a cold snap had caused the pump at the carriage house and the hydrants in the house to freeze. P.R.T. Diaries, Feb. 24, 1858, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 11.

11. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, May 3, 1858, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

12. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, June 10, 1858, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

Willie continued to grow, and on June 10 Mrs. Taft wrote her parents, "he is well and growing fat and hearty, has two teeth, can set alone, and creep after a fashion."¹³

5. A Summer in Millbury

In late July 1858 Louise took Willie east to Millbury. With a growing baby on her hands, Louise had expressed fears that she was becoming too deeply involved in domestic affairs. While she was in Massachusetts, Alphonso, who had remained in Ohio to attend to his business, wrote frequently. In one of his letters, he chided her for becoming so deeply engrossed in clothes, dressmaking, and sewing that she was neglecting her reading and interest in public affairs.¹⁴

Stung by her spouse's complaint, she wrote on August 22:

I received in all humility what you say of my need of application to some course of reading and the danger of letting the mind run to waste for want of systematic culture. . . . I have been dismayed and discouraged to find that my mind was so occupied with household matters--the care of the family--of the house but chiefly, the complicated machinery of the kitchen, that even when you found time to read to me I found it difficult to listen with undivided attention.¹⁵

In her defense, Louise reminded Alphonso that in his readings he had been concentrating on ancient history, so as to bring his father within range of his literary sympathies. For herself, she continued, she was inclined more "to the blooming flowers and fresh foliage in preference to the dyed and perserved specimens--to the living, breathing representatives of animated nature than to their fossil remains."¹⁶

A truce ensued. When Louise and Willie returned to Cincinnati, they traveled by way of Niagara Falls, from where she wrote Delia, "it will be something to tell Willie years hence that he crossed the

13. Ibid.

14. Ross, An American Family, p. 28.

15. Louise Taft to A.T., Aug. 22, 1858, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

16. Ibid.

Niagara River in a little row-boat within reach of the spray from the Falls--before he was a year old."¹⁷

Mosquitoes plagued the Tafts and their neighbors in the late summer, and they slept under mosquito bars. Willie, despite this protection, was victimized. His mother, following their return to Mt. Auburn, complained that he had had several encounters with mosquitoes, "and has come off with his face badly marked." Their efforts to expel the pests from his bar had been unsuccessful, as they could not tell how they got in, "and I think we shall have to adopt the theory of Prof. Agassiz that they are created where we find them."¹⁸

B. Willie Becomes a Personality

1. The Weaning of Willie

Willie was one year old, and on September 19 his mother wrote Delia that we dress him up and take him for a walk every afternoon. He now went to the table at meal time and took care "to get his share of what is good." Louise encouraged him to eat heartily in anticipation of weaning him, which she hoped to accomplish in several weeks.¹⁹ One week later, Louise was still discussing plans to wean her son. When she did, she would have a lounge placed in Anna's room, so that Kate (one of the hired girls) could help her, as they expected there would be a great fuss.

Willie was now walking "in real earnest." His steps were short and uncertain, but "he goes it alone" as far as the length of the room on occasions. His ambition was excited by applause, and his attempts to run frequently resulted in a fall. Undaunted, he would scramble to his feet and toddle off.²⁰

Mrs. Taft on October 8 commenced weaning her son. In reporting this operation, Alphonso observed, "We expect an outcry. He is a delightful little fellow; seems willing to make the best of the ills of this life. But a change of diet will be resisted by him."²¹

17. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Sept. 26, 1858, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

18. A.T. to Delia Torrey, Sept. 19, 1858, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

19. Ibid. On Willie's first birthday, his proud parents had had his photograph made.

20. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Sept. 26, 1858, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

21. A.T. to Delia Torrey, Oct. 8, 1858, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

Relying in part on her mother's advice, Louise proceeded to wean Willie. In mid-October she informed her mother that the task was a "rather trying one" for both of us. The days had been easy, but on the first two nights Kate had slept on the lounge and "took him from me and fed him when he waked." Willie liked the bright light and pleasant fire, and it quickly became apparent that it was a mistake to indulge him. The next two nights no one got up when he cried, and he bellowed at the top of his voice for about two hours before dropping off to sleep.²²

Willie had been weaned by mid-November, and Louise wrote her mother that he does not "pine from being weaned but takes to feeding quite naturally." She was careful of his diet, but did not restrict it to the degree recommended by Mrs. Torrey. She did not dilute his milk, although she some times boiled it, giving it to him with a cracker or bread before he "goes to the breakfast or dinner table to moderate his appetite." Willie refused to eat meat, except in hash which he devoured eagerly." His favorite food was potatoes of which he never tired. Since being weaned, he had had no trouble with constipation, which was a good omen.²³

With Willie walking about the house, heating stoves (which had been set up with the approach of cold weather) had to be investigated. In November, as he trudged about the house, "working very hard and climbing upon everything which he can reach," he had burned himself several times on the hands. This taught him not to meddle with the stoves, but Mrs. Taft could not cure him of taking coal out of the grate in her bedroom. His hands were slapped. This merely caused him to run off laughing, whenever his mother caught him near her stove.²⁴

2. The Winter of 1858-59

Alphonso and Louise Taft had 14 guests to dinner for Thanksgiving. The menu included roast turkey, chicken pie, oyster soup, scalloped oysters, vegetables, and cranberry sauce for the principal course. For dessert there was plum pudding, mince and custard pies, apples, nuts, and raisens. After the meal there was coffee. Mrs. Taft had "uncommon luck in everything, and the dinner was much praised."²⁵

22. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Oct. 1858, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

23. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Nov. 15, 1858, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

24. Louise Taft to Susie Torrey, Nov. 28, 1858, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

25. Ibid.

Chess vied with euchure and whist as the most popular game in the Taft household that winter. While Charlie and Rossy played hundreds of games of chess, Alphonso and Louise read in the parlor. Louise before Christmas had read Darwin, the works of Louis Napoleon, and Norman Exile. The Tafts at this time subscribed to The American Journal of Science and Westminster Review.²⁶

In February, the Walcotts were house guests. They were fond of euchure and whist, and the evenings were spent in the parlor at the card table. Mrs. Walcott was an excellent musician and she played the piano as the card players listened.²⁷

The holiday season was not a joyous occasion for Willie. He was cutting back teeth, and on January 2 his mother wrote Susie Torrey that three molars were through. He had also been sick with the grippe, but with his bowels again "in a healthy state" and his cough nearly gone, she trusted the worst was over. She reassured her parents that their grandson had not "suffered much in appearance from the siege he has gone through."²⁸

She was mistaken, however. On January 10 one of Willie's ears started to drain. Communicating this news to Millbury, Alphonso wrote, "He is really quite unwell and I have no doubt but he suffers a great deal of pain." To make matters worse, Kate had quit and Louise found it difficult to get a nurse who could be trusted with the baby. She had hired a "nurse girl," but she found that she was the only one that could pacify Willie when he was fretful.²⁹

Willie's health and disposition had improved by the last week of the month, and Louise wrote Delia that he was "very happy and good natured & but little trouble when he is well." He was fearless, climbing "about & up in the chairs to look out the window," and was popular with Charlie and Rossy who loved to frolic with him.

Efforts to find a replacement for Kate had been unsuccessful, because Willie would not "learn to love a strange girl as he had Kate." Louise's

26. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Dec. 13, 1858, and undated, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

27. Louise Taft to Susie Torrey, Feb. 13, 1859, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

28. Louise Taft to Susie Torrey, Jan. 2, 1859, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

29. A.T. to Samuel Torrey, Jan. 10, 1859, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

greatest difficulty at present was to keep Willie out of the kitchen, as his presence there made her uneasy. When it was time to eat, Willie would trot around the table until Grandpa Taft picked him and placed him in his lap.³⁰

It was understandable that Grandpa Taft, in writing to Samuel Torrey, reported that Willie has "enough to attend to at home." He was all over the house and constantly getting into mischief. Anna had complained of his scratching paint off the woodwork. Louise had whipped him, and Willie, unsubdued, had struck back. But, on the whole, his paternal grandfather found him a good little boy, no worse than any other of his age.³¹

3. The Birth of Henry Waters Taft

With the coming of warm weather, Willie's "chief delight" was to be outdoors, "playing with the dog, watching pigeons and doing mischief generally."³² By mid-May he had cut his eye teeth, and his mother was beginning to fret about his backwardness in learning to talk. He, however, was "full of sweet & cunning ways."³³

Louise Taft was again pregnant. She felt strong and well and believed it better to have her children in close succession. "I delight in large families and if my health is spared to me I intend to make it the business of my life for a few years," she wrote. On May 27, 1859, she gave birth to Henry Waters Taft. He weighed nine pounds and was fat like Willie.³⁴

Louise's recovery was rapid. On Thursday, June 15, the day before Harry was three weeks old, she went for a ride in the carriage. On the 18th she came downstairs for dinner for the first time since her confinement. When her nurse left at the end of four weeks, she hoped "to feel equal to the task of taking care of the new baby."

30. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Jan. 26, 1859, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

31. P.R.T. to Samuel Torrey, March 9, 1859, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

32. Anna Torrey to Susie Torrey, April 1859, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

33. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, May 15, 1859, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

34. Ross, An American Family, p. 29.

In the days since the birth of his brother, Willie had grown "very unruly and truculent," and Louise realized that she must re-establish her authority without delay. Her confinement had taught Willie "a hard lesson which he could have learned in no other way--that he need not expect my exclusive attention." He had finally learned to sleep in his crib without complaint, and no longer did he expect his mother to rock him to sleep. On occasions he seemed very jealous of the baby, and when he saw his mother nursing Harry, he would cease playing, draw up a rocking chair in front of mother and baby, climb into it, insisting that she rock and sing to him.

Willie, she confessed to her mother, was very cute and interesting in his ways but very backward about talking.³⁵

Soon after the birth of the baby, Louise Taft wrote her parents that she had been so mistaken about the color of Willie's eyes that she would not venture to a prediction. Harry's dark hair, however, was a "fixed fact," and she was very proud of it because Sammy and Willie had been so late in getting any. Willie's hair was now "very pretty and curly" and his eyes were "as blue as the sky." Current prospects were that Harry's would be darker.

The period between the birth of her boys had been so short that care of the new baby did not seem "half so much a burden to undertake as it did when Willie was born." Even so, she expected to do little else for the next six months beyond care for the baby, oversee the housekeeping, and do some reading in the little leisure time remaining.

Alphonso, during his leisure hours, was engrossed in "theological and philosophical metaphysical studies," and speculated that his wife would "have to write a book to give bent to this thoughts."³⁶

Mrs. Taft, as the weeks passed, found that she got "along with the care" of her two babies about as well as when she had one. She did not find herself worn down by the cares. Both babies were "quite well, active and promising." Willie had improved greatly in behavior and was much less trouble than heretofore. Harry at two months was becoming "bright and interesting," and was able "to smile and notice objects." Louise considered him a sweet baby.³⁷

35. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, June 19, 1859, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

36. Louise Taft to Susan Torrey, June 1859, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

37. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, July 25, 1859, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

4. Charles Goes Away to School

Charlie was now 16 and had graduated from high school. In late July, Alphonso left on a business trip to the east. While in Massachusetts he planned to enroll his eldest son at Andover to ensure his admission to Yale and to visit Millbury.

On July 31st Charlie and Rossy wrote their father. The former reported that he was troubled how to begin his letter. His mother had told him to commence "where I left you." To which he had answered "'Ahp-m' (Willie's favorite expression) as I have not much to tell."³⁸ Rossy informed his father that on the day of his departure, he had "got to work on my pigeon house but my course was suddenly checked by Grandpa; telling me it wouldn't do." He had given up the project and had loafed the remainder of the morning. The best news he had was that the family dog had stopped killing his pigeons.³⁹

Louise on August 1 wrote her husband that "the little ones are quietly asleep each in his own bed, Willie lying as usual with his conveniences for sitting down all exposed to the air and his feet higher than his head." He had spent most of the day romping and playing with Rossy "It would do Grandpa Torrey's heart good to see how he handles Rossy's little spade. He will take up half a shovel full of dirt and carry it some distance like an experienced digger."⁴⁰

Mr. Taft returned to Cincinnati in August, and soon thereafter Charlie left for Andover.

C. Life Goes on as the Nation Drifts Toward Civil War

1. Mrs. Torrey's Visit

In September 1859 Mrs. Susan Torrey traveled west for her second visit in the home of Alphonso and Louise Taft. While she was in Hamilton County, Aaron Perry returned from a European trip "with a variety of mementoes of travel and some elegant presents" for family and friends. He presented Alphonso with a cane made of wood from the

38. Charles Taft to Father, July 31, 1859, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

39. Rossy Taft to Father, July 31, 1859, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

40. Louise Taft to A.T., Aug. 1, 1859, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

battlefield at Waterloo, and Louise with "a breast pin and bracelet of Berlin iron of exquisite workmanship."⁴¹

The Torreys had been disappointed when Louise and the grandchildren failed to come east for a late summer's visit. When Mrs. Torrey asked the reason, Louise stated that the trip would have cost \$300, and they had had to expend that amount to repair the north retaining wall. Moreover, she continued, "the house needed painting & various repairs" to make it "appear well" in comparison to the Henry H. Stouts'.

Stout had recently purchase the two-story brick house south of the Tafts'. Mrs. Torrey considered the Stout place "quite elegant" and preferable to her son-in-law's, "though it cost less."⁴²

Since her last visit to Cincinnati in 1856, Mt. Auburn had grown rapidly, as the well-to-do moved out from the city. The growth of Mt. Auburn and other outlying communities was accentuated by construction of "horse rail-roads."⁴³

2. The Millbury Visit and Willie's Third Birthday

Mrs. Torrey soon returned to Millbury, and in February 1860 her daughter wrote, "Harry is growing very bright and interesting." Although not as handsome as Willie had been at nine months, he was smarter. He was walking about the nursery, using furniture for support, and by "pushing a chair before him makes progress in a straight line." ~~Harry wished to be on his feet all the time and had walked~~ a "full 2 months earlier than Willie."

Louise hoped her parents would come to Ohio for a visit this summer, because the Tafts had to employ their surplus capital for improvements to the house. For the price of round trip railroad tickets to Millbury, they could have the outside of their house painted, and buy a needed carpet.⁴⁴

41. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Sept. 26, 1859, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

42. Mrs. Susan Torrey to Samuel Torrey, Oct. 2, 1859, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

43. Ibid.

44. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Feb. 1860, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

Discussing her children in a second letter to her mother at this time, Louise philosophized, "I am more and more impressed with the responsibility of training children properly." She found that Willie needed "constant watching and correcting and it requires great cautions and firmness to do just the right things always." It seemed there could be no stronger motives for "improvement than the thought of the influence of our character on our children. It is what we are, not what we do in reference to them, which will make its impression on their lives. They will be sure to find out our weak points whatever professions we make."⁴⁵

On May 21, 1860, a tornado hammered the Cincinnati area, causing damage to property of Mt. Auburn neighbors but none to the Taft's. Three weeks later, Louise and Alphonso--accompanied by Willie, Harry, and their nurse--left on a nine-day pleasure trip to Quincy. They were back on June 20, and on July 5, with approach of the mosquito season, Grandpa Taft put up the family mosquito bars.⁴⁶

Despite Louise's worries about the family's cash reserves, Alphonso was able to fund both needed home improvements and a trip to Millbury for the family. On August 9 Mrs. Taft, her two sons, Anna Torrey, and the nurse, boarded the cars on the first stage of their long trip to Millbury.⁴⁷ When Louise reached her parents' home, there was a letter awaiting her from her husband, posted on the 10th. Among the things he wished to know was where she had hidden the key to the dining room closet.⁴⁸

Mrs. Taft and the boys, having spent five weeks in Massachusetts, returned to Mt. Auburn on September 14. The next day being Willie's third birthday, his mother took him into the city to have his photograph taken. She had a full length picture made, and on the 23d she wrote Delia that the photograph had been framed in oval gilt and hung. Between the photograph and frame was about an inch and one-half of white border. Her family and friends called it a "good likeness," and she planned to have duplicates made and send one to her father.⁴⁹

45. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Feb. 6, 1860, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

46. P.R.T. Diaries, May 21-July 5, 1860, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 11.

47. Ibid., Aug. 9, 1860.

48. A.T. to Louise Taft, Aug. 10, 1860, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

49. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Sept. 23, 1860, and Louise Taft to Samuel Torrey, Oct. 28, 1860, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. Mrs. Taft described Willie as "hearty as a bear and very active and noisy."

3. Involvement in the City's Social Life

The Tafts by 1859 were becoming deeply involved in the social and political life of Cincinnati. They were invited to and attended more parties, and socially prominent Mrs. Jacob Burnet and Mrs. William S. Groebeck called on Mrs. Taft. Alphonso was a charter member of the Literary Club, along with Rutherford B. Hayes, John W. Herron, a jurist and father of the future Mrs. William Howard Taft, and future Librarian of Congress Ainsworth R. Spofford. Louise and Alphonso attended the grand opening of the new Opera House in 1859, she draped in an Indian shawl. They quickly became familiar figures at the Opera House, listening to Maria Piccolomini in Don Giovanni. In February 1860 they met Ralph Waldo Emerson. He had lectured at their church, and Louise spoke to him of Worcester and Concord. "He is social and genial and talks well but he has not repose of manner but is nervous and fidgety," she wrote Delia. Alphonso found Emerson to be "a real character, and original genius," and he approved his ideas "on beauty and its effect on the human race."⁵⁰

Alphonso, although he continued to devote long hours to his legal affairs, admitted that they were getting to be a "party-going family." In one hectic week they attended four soirees, a play, and a lecture on the Italian War by Henry J. Raymond. Alphonso sought to include people from both upper and middle economic classes and all professions in his cadre of friends and associates. Aaron Perry, his law partner and long-time friend, became concerned because he felt the Taft children were associating almost entirely with boys and girls from the aristocracy, which was not in the Vermont tradition. Louise informed those in Millbury that she was not disposed to hold herself aloof but was as "democratic as could be desired."⁵¹

The social ferment intensified when the Prince of Wales stopped in Cincinnati in September 1860, while on his American tour. The Tafts were not invited to the ball given in his honor, as they had "no young ladies to dance with the Prince." But he passed in front of their house on the 29th, as he rode out to Clifton. As his open carriage rolled by, all the family, except Alphonso who was not at home, stood out in the yard and watched.

When he relayed this news to the Torreys, Alphonso reported that Willie "is very robust & full of play." Since his father's recent return from an eastern trip, Willie had told his parents on several occasions that he was "going to Millbury," and when Grandpa Taft asked,

50. Ross, An American Family, p. 31; Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, March 4, 1860, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

51. Ross, An American Family, p. 31.

"Are you going to leave me?" Willie would say, "I shall come back again." Thus he was able to keep on the good side of his paternal grandparents.⁵²

Willie, in the last week of October, received his "first invitation to a real party." A note was delivered at the Taft home inviting Willie to Johnny Shay's birthday party. Rosa, the nurse, was indignant to learn that Harry had been left out. To make her son presentable, Louise bought him a new pair of shoes, and she took him to the Shays and remained to see the frolic. As most of the children were older, "Willie was content to observe the play," but nevertheless he had a good time. Among the guests were Sarah his sweetheart and Alexander his rival.⁵³

4. The Washington Visit

In November 1860 the election of Abraham Lincoln to the Presidency caused a national crisis. In the deep South the forces of moderation were being shouted down by fire eaters calling for secession. Politicians championing moderation were still in control in the upper South and were working with northern Democratic leaders to effect a compromise. The lame duck Buchanan administration refused to face up to a desperate situation and exercise leadership, and the nation drifted toward disunion and war.

The autumn of 1860 found Charlie in his freshman year at Yale, and Willie attending his first circus. Rossy was becoming an inveterate outdoorsman, who enjoyed hunting and fishing. Alphonso had voted for the Lincoln-Hamlin ticket on November 8 and rejoiced in the Republican victory. In December, leaving Delia who had come west for the purpose, to charge of the house, Louise and Alphonso visited Washington, D.C. En route, they saw the engine house at Harpers Ferry fortified and defended by John Brown and his followers in October 1859. Congress was in session, and Southerners gathered in small groups, and "all the usual social exchanges seemed to be ignored as grave-faced men and women waited breathlessly for the storm to break."

Alphonso met and talked with many Southern leaders. The depth of purpose underlying "their smooth words" was apparent to him, and he and Louise were among those who crowded the senate galleries. Fiery speeches made by Senator Robert Toombs of Georgia and Judah P. Benjamin of Louisiana impressed the Tafts. Alphonso thought that

52. A.T. to Samuel Torrey, undated, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

53. Louise Taft to Samuel Torrey, Oct. 28, 1860, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois made one of the worst speeches he had heretofore heard. He wrote Aaron Perry:

Its characteristics were the boldest falsehood, and a total absence of patriotism. It is not compromise but decision and prompt action that is wanted. Everybody is perfectly conscious of that though many have axes which they think will be best gained by compromise.⁵⁴

Although South Carolina had already withdrawn from the Union and other states were expected to follow, Louise found gravity but no alarm among the Washingtonians. Alphonso felt certain, however, that there would be no turning back and that there would be war. He and Louise attended President Buchanan's reception on New Year's Day and "saw the old traitor himself, and also Miss Lane."⁵⁵

The Tafts were back in Cincinnati by February 1, 1861, and saw President-Elect Lincoln, when he stopped off in their city.⁵⁶

54. Ross, An American Family, pp. 32-34; P.R.T. Diaries, Dec. 25, 1860-Feb. 1, 1861; Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Dec. 30, 1860, & Jan. 2, 1861; A.T. to Perry, Jan. 3, 1861, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1 & 11.

55. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Jan. 2, 1861, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

56. P.R.T. Diaries, Dec. 25, 1860-Feb. 1, 1861, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 11.

V. THE TAFTS AND THE CIVIL WAR

A. The First Year of the War

1. War Fever in Cincinnati

Five weeks after Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated as 16th President, Confederate batteries in Charleston Harbor, on April 12, 1861, opened fire on Fort Sumter. The fort surrendered the next day, and on the 15th President Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers. War fever swept the land, and the men of Mt. Auburn organized themselves into a company of Home Guards commanded by Capt. George L. Rathborne, who had been an officer in the British army. As this was an independent volunteer unit, the men provided their own arms and accoutrements. Alphonso had ordered a Colt's revolver, and the Literary Club "was under arms and drilling constantly night and day."

Writing to her mother, Louise Taft on April 24 reported, "there is hardly any business in the city and every other man wears a military cap in default of other accoutrements." Many of her friends were convinced that secessionist forces from Kentucky were planning an attack on Cincinnati, which they said was next to Washington the most vulnerable city in the North.

Teenagers were also arming and drilling. Rossy was "full of pluck" and boasted that he wanted the opportunity to "pop one of the Secession fellows." Reporting this to her family, Louise Taft commented, "He has always had a passion for a gun and is a pretty good shot."

Little boys, no larger than Willie, were parading about Mt. Auburn in "paper uniforms" to the measured beat of the drum. The "Stars and Stripes" were displayed from every home, and "disloyalty to the Union" was no more tolerated in Cincinnati than "Unionism was in South Carolina."¹

Louise reassured her parents that they felt quite safe in Mt. Auburn, "though chance shot & shell might reach it if it was worth the trouble & powder." If she thought there was any danger, she would have sent the nurse Rosa with the children and Delia, who was visiting them, to Millbury. She, however, would remain with Mr. Taft.

1. Louise Taft to Samuel Torrey, April 21, 1861, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

Grandpa Taft was very upset by the crisis. He was greatly agitated and impatient with the "slow" reaction of the government "in allowing the rebels so much time for plotting." This, he stated, had worked to their advantage, and they must "surely take Washington, and be victorious everywhere at first, though we are the strongest and must at last prevail."

Mr. Taft, however, did not have such a pessimistic view. "Since the South has sought war, he was disposed to give them enough of it, let them face it to the bitter end." He hoped "the present pluck of the people will last so that no treaty or compromise shall be thought of till they are thoroughly whipped, and we can make our own terms about letting them go out of the Union."²

Louise found that newspapers now constituted Alphonso's "meat, drink and lodging." He stayed downtown till 10 o'clock at night to catch the late dispatches. As a leading citizen he was in demand to champion patriotic causes and war benevolences. He helped sell Government bonds, made speeches urging emancipation, and supported efforts to recruit manpower.³

2. Willie's Fourth Birthday

The initial war scare in Cincinnati soon passed, as Kentucky first sought to remain neutral and in September declared for the Union. Delia by this time had returned to Millbury, and Louise Taft informed her that Willie had become an "exemplary church-goer and attends Sunday School regularly" at the Western Unitarian Conference Church, with the nurse. Louise had taken him down to Mr. Conway's that morning and he had behaved well. She believed that "preaching & teaching will balance each other so as to force a fair average."⁴

For his fourth birthday, Mrs. Taft had Willie's hair cut and his photograph made. Writing Charlie who was in his second year at Yale, Louise noted that Willie has been greatly changed by "losing his curls, and she would send him one if she got the opportunity." She was mailing him a copy of the photograph, although she did not "think it very good."⁵

2. Ibid.

3. Ross, An American Family, pp. 35-36.

4. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Aug. 25, 1861, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

5. Louise Taft to Charlie Taft, Sept. 22, 1861, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

B. The Arrival of Horace Dutton Taft

Louise Taft was again pregnant, and at 4:30 a.m., December 28, 1861, she gave birth to another son. He had a large, muscular frame at birth and his mother thought that he looked like his father. Two weeks later, on January 12, she wrote her mother, "The little fellow asserts his right to some attention, and has already become of consequence in the house and family." He was without a name and likely to remain so, as the Torreys had been no help in selecting one for their newest grandson. She was disappointed that they had failed to "sanction" her choice of Horace, which Mr. Taft also liked. She considered it less pretentious than most classical names; it sounded to her noble and manly; and was "associated" in her mind with such men "as Horace Birney, Bushnell, James, Maynard, Greeley, & others."⁶

"Robert," which the Torreys had suggested, she liked, but "the inevitable nickname Bob Taft" discouraged her. In the end Louise carried the day, and the baby was christened Horace Dutton Taft.⁷

The winter of 1861-62 was long and disagreeable in the Ohio Valley, and it was March 30 before the first spring-like day on Mt. Auburn. The children were delighted to get outside and have the "liberty" of playing in the dirt.⁸

C. The War Threatens to Engulf the Tafts

1. The Confederates Invade Kentucky & Threaten Cincinnati

Louise and the children spent the late summer of 1862 at Millbury, so they were absent from Cincinnati during the exciting and hectic days of the Confederate sweep into Kentucky. A hard marching Rebel column led by Maj. Gen. E. Kirby Smith in mid-August had bypassed Union troops holding Cumberland Gap, and on the 30th had smashed a hastily gathered blueclad force at Richmond, Kentucky. Advancing into the Bluegrass region, Kirby Smith's soldiers occupied Lexington and a column thrust North toward the Ohio River. There were calls for volunteers to fight and to erect fortification on the southern approaches to Cincinnati. On September 2 Mr. Taft and Charlie, who was on vacation from Yale, shouldered spades, left Mt. Auburn, crossed the Ohio, and joined the

6. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Jan. 12, 1862, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

7. Ibid.

8. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, March 30, 1862, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

force digging rifle-pits, throwing up batteries, and felling timber on the hills south of Covington.

Confederate veterans appeared before the fortifications on the 11th, held their ground for two days, and disappeared on the 13th. The crisis had momentarily passed.⁹

During the three days that the Confederates demonstrated before the earthworks covering the approaches to Covington, the omnibuses did not run; the Mt. Auburn ladies did not venture into the city; and the wildest rumors circulated. "Not so much as a spool of thread could be bought in the city." A few of the hired hands were exempt from service, but no one dared have them drive into Cincinnati, as there was danger of "them being dragged from the carriages and pressed into service." So resolute were measures taken by the authorities to prevent shirking that "a very good reason had to be given" to be about the city and not working on the defenses.¹⁰

Meanwhile a second, and more formidable, Confederate army led by Gen. Braxton Bragg had advanced from Middle Tennessee into Kentucky, thrusting toward Louisville. Maj. Gen. Don C. Buell's Army of the Ohio won the race for Louisville. Bragg's and Kirby Smith's armies were left in possession of the Bluegrass Region, while Buell built-up a force with which to take the offensive. On October 1 Buell's columns marched. There was a hard fought battle at Perryville on the 9th, and the Confederates withdrew from Kentucky by way of Cumberland Gap.¹¹

Mrs. Taft and the children returned to Cincinnati in the second week of October. Writing Delia on the 5th, Mr. Taft had observed, "This letter will not reach you till Louise & the children are well on their way home." He regretted that he had been unable to visit Millbury this year, but the "war & the defences of our city have so engaged most of our people that they could not travel." His neighbors had expected him to do his share, and he had not been "disposed to disappoint any reasonable expectations."

9. P.R.T. Diaries, Sept. 2-15, 1862, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 11.

10. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Oct. 15, 1862, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. Mrs. Taft, on her return from Millbury, received this graphic account of conditions from Mrs. Perry.

11. P.R.T. Diaries, Sept. 2-Oct. 12, 1862; P.R.T. to _____, March 7, 1863, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1 & 11.

In addition, he continued, he knew his parents would "feel very lonely and sad" if he had left them alone, and his mother's health had been "so precarious & so feeble . . . that she was not fit to be left alone." Perhaps, he could have got some one to stay with them but that would have been difficult, as his mother "did not want anybody & there" were not many suited to the task. His parents had "come to feel that neither of them will continue long with us," and it was difficult for him to leave. While they missed Louise and the children, if he were gone they would be completely lost.

With just the three of them and the hired help, the house seemed "very solitary." Alphonso, on observing that their little dog had taken possession of the hall and was sleeping on one of the mats, had sought to "expel him." He soon learned, however, that "the old folks had given permission on the grounds of greater safety," and he said no more about that subject.¹²

To celebrate her return to Mt. Auburn, Louise Taft on the evening of the 13th gave a levee in the parlor. The neighbors dropped in by pairs, first came the Stouts, then the Riddles, etc. After chatting a while, the Tafts and their friends "resolved themselves into a euchure party with two tables."¹³

2. Alphonso's View on Conduct of the War

Alphonso, long before the Confederate invasion of Kentucky, had lost patience with Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan and was convinced that he should be relieved as commander of the Army of the Potomac. He described the methodical McClellan as a "poor patriot," who was of more service to the Confederacy than Gen. P.G.T. Beauregard. McClellan and General-in-Chief Henry W. Halleck appeared to Alphonso to be "brutally pro-slavery and lacking in republican sentiment." His favorite generals during the first years of the war were Maj. Gens. John C. Fremont and John Pope.

He was unimpressed with President Lincoln. Writing Delia in late 1862, he observed:

You see I am not satisfied with Lincoln's performance. He must come up to the work and do his duty before this great war rendered threefold greater by his "vacillations and inefficiency" can be brought to a successful

12. A.T. to Delia Torrey, Oct. 5, 1862, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

13. A.T. to Delia Torrey, Oct. 14, 1862, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

conclusion. . . . Nothing can be clearer than that there has been no consistent plan made, or adhered to, in this war. . . . As to politics, you know my sentiments so well that it is unnecessary for me to write. You know I am radical, and find a good deal of fault with the administration, but am hopeful nevertheless.

After President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, Alphonso rallied to his support. This was a shift in policy which fired him with enthusiasm for the administration.¹⁴

3. Willie and Harry Become Little Boys

Louise Taft, on her return from Millbury in October 1862, had sought to enroll Willie in the first grade, but the authorities told her this was impossible, as he would not be six until September 1863. She accordingly determined to teach him at home.

Horace, she observed, missed his Grandmother Torrey, and scolded whenever he was "left to take care of himself on the floor." He had not learned to creep but was making the effort. He was "as cunning and good as ever."

Grandma Taft was "as feeble as ever" and seemed "liable to all sorts of accidents." The day after the travellers' return to Mt. Auburn, Grandma had fallen half way down the stairs and had cut her head badly. As the months passed, she became more "helpless and dependent."¹⁵ By end of the year, she was coming to her daughter-in-law to have her cut everything, and Louise "found it easier to make what she undertakes than to help her." She had recently made Grandma a calico dress, and red flannel undershirts and drawers.¹⁶

Grandpa Taft wrote Samuel Torrey, three days before Christmas, that Willie and Harry had new boots and were outdoors most of the time. They could stand the cold better than he and were, he boasted, "good tough boys." Willie was growing rapidly and now weighed 55 pounds.¹⁷

14. Ross, An American Family, pp. 37-38; A.T. to Delia Torrey, June 15 + Oct. 5, 1862, June 7, 1863, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

15. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, mid-October 1862, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

16. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Jan. 4, 1863, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

17. P.R.T. to Samuel Torrey, Dec. 22, 1862, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

A warm front moved into the Ohio Valley with the new year, and during the first week of 1863 the Tafts had no need for fires in their parlor and sitting rooms. On January 8 Grandpa Taft reported that the little boys "promise quite as fair as the others did at that age." Harry was wearing his pantaloons which, with his boots and jacket, made him look like a big boy, and he had told his Grandpa that he would "never wear petticoats" again, as they were for girls.¹⁸

Louise Taft had hired a seamstress, with a Wheeler & Wilson's Machine, as the boys were beginning to "look rather shabby." She decided it was time to take Harry out of petticoats and put him into pantaloons. He had grown so that his skirts were too short; his drawers were ragged; and looked "funny enough with his boots." Harry was six months older than Willie had been when she had ceased dressing him in skirts and petticoats. On January 4 she had dressed Harry in the blue suit Willie had outgrown, and it fit him well.¹⁹

The three little boys loved to frolic in Grandpa and Grandma's rooms. They had "some high games," Grandpa observed, but he "never saw better boys to mind than they." Grandma had declared that "Willie and Harry think whatever grandpa says is law and is all right."²⁰

Willie and Harry were enrolled in Sunday School in June 1863. The school had been recently organized, and a campaign was underway to bring in all the neighborhood children.²¹

They spent most of the summer out in the yard with Grandpa Taft and the hired man. Mr. Harry Smith, a friend and neighbor, had bought a pony for his sons, Rufus and Mack, which was kept in the Tafts' stable. By mid-July Willie was riding the pony about the yard. Relaying this news to Susie Torrey, Louise boasted "you would be surprised to see how well he rides." Harry was also riding, but he was "perfectly reckless and has to be watched."²²

18. P.R.T. to Samuel Torrey, Jan. 8, 1863, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

19. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Jan. 4, 1863, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

20. P.R.T. to Samuel Torrey, Jan. 8, 1863, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

21. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, June 24, 1863, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

22. Louise Taft to Susie Torrey, July 19, 1863, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

4. The Tafts Entertain a Future President

July 1863 found Northern armies victorious at Vicksburg and Gettysburg. Many of the leaders, as well as the people, believed the terrible war would soon be over. Union armies, however, failed to capitalize on these successes, and in the third week of September, the Confederates won a bloody victory at Chickamauga. The war would continue for another 20 months.

Five weeks after Chickamauga, Mrs. Taft planned a party honoring Judge Noah H. Swyane. When she called to invite the Perrys, she found that Mrs. William Dennison, the wife of the former governor, was their house guest. She was invited, along with the Perrys and Brig. Gen. Jacob D. Cox. As the day for the party neared, Aaron Perry called to say that Mrs. Dennison's husband was in town, and he would like to bring him along with Brig. Gen. James Garfield. Louise was agreeable.

The party was on Thursday night, October 22, and in addition to a former governor and his lady and two brigadier generals, the Tafts' guests included the Perrys, Stouts, Riddles, and Mrs. Torrey. Judge Swyane, who was to be guest of honor, had to decline at the last moment to attend the funeral of Brig. Gen. William H. Lytle, a gallant Union officer killed at Chickamauga.

Mrs. Taft had a "nice supper," and she was happy to find her distinguished guests easily entertained. After dinner there was euchre and small talk. Mrs. Dennison was "very lovely and agreeable, and easy to entertain." Mrs. Stout was "particularly gracious and attentive to Mrs. Torrey, while General Garfield was "a real wag, and kept the euchre table in a roar of laughter."²³

Alphonso spent much of the summer and autumn of 1863 in the courts combating the anti-war activities of the Copperheads. He had been retained by Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton to defend the government in a number of suits involving this group. He and Aaron Perry now dissolved their law partnership, and the Perrys soon after moved from Mt. Auburn to another home in the city.

Charlie was in his junior year at Yale, while Rossy was distinguishing himself at Andover. Louise that autumn assisted at the

23. Louise Taft to Susie Torrey, Oct. 25, 1863, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1; A.C. Kemper, "William Haniel Lytle," Sketches of War History 1861-1865, Paper Read Before the Ohio Commandery of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States (Cincinnati, 1888), Vol. I, pp. 19-36.

Sanitary Fair held in Cincinnati to raise funds for war relief. A huge temporary building was erected in the square between Main and Walnut, and more than \$230,000 raised.²⁴

5. Willie Spends Four Months in Millbury

Mrs. Torrey soon returned to Massachusetts, and Charlie traveled to Mt. Auburn from New Haven to spend the Christmas holidays. Alphonso and Louise at this time decided to let Willie spend the winter and spring of 1864 at Millbury with his maternal grandparents. On January 5 Charlie and Willie were taken to the station and started east.²⁵

The Tafts hated to see their six-year-old go, and Louise on the 6th wrote Delia, "I have had a struggle . . . in deciding to part with our darling Willie--the light of my eyes, and pride of my heart." But he had begged to go with Charlie to visit Grandpa Torrey, and had persisted in it so "bravely that he persuaded us all almost against our own better judgement to let him go." If she had had another day to meditate on the subject, Mrs. Taft confessed, she might not have let him start in such cold weather. "But the trial of deciding to spare him at all" was so traumatic that she had momentarily lost sight of that consideration.

In view of Delia's plans to go to California, the Tafts believed their son would be a great "comfort to Father," which was her chief motive in letting him visit Millbury.²⁶

Four days later, on the 10th, Alphonso wrote to assure his father-in-law that he would find Willie "a pretty manly little boy." If they had not thought him "a good boy, who would not make . . . much trouble, & who would give you a good deal of pleasure," they would never have permitted him to go.

The Torreys would discover that Willie, who had started school in October, "means to be a scholar & studies well," and in this respect has no peers. They must remember, the father added, that Willie had had only three months of schooling, and that no effort had been made "to press him on." He had "a kind of zeal that is his own."²⁷

24. Ross, An American Family, pp. 38-40.

25. P.R.T. Diaries, Dec. 25-Jan. 5, 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

26. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Jan. 6, 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

27. A.T. to Samuel Torrey, Jan. 10, 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

The Tafts, with a cold front punishing the eastern United States, rejoiced to learn that the boys had reached Millbury. Writing Willie, on the 10th, Alphonso wanted to know whether: (a) Charlie "had to pay fare for you"; (b) they slept well en route; (c) they missed their connections in Cleveland; and (d) "you cried any from the cold."

With the cold came snow, and there was splendid sleighing. All that was wanting at 60 Auburn Street was sleighs. Some of the neighborhood boys had "contrived boxes & runners to ride on," but with the war sleds were scarce. There was dangerous sleighing on Sycamore Hill, and several boys had been injured along with onlookers. This was a "hazardous sport," Alphonso warned, as the "hill is so smooth, & steep, & long, that they go down with fearful speed."

Before closing his letter, Alphonso read it to Harry, and he asked his father to say "good night Willie."²⁸

Alphonso wrote his son again on January 23 to report that a thaw had ruined the Mt. Auburn sleighing. The sun and a warm wind had "turned the snow into water, & started it down the hill toward the river in a hurry." No snow or slush was left in the street, nor anywhere else except on the north slopes and near the north elevations of the houses. On the Taft property, the only snow left was on their "carriage way, down by the kitchen," while Ben's snowman still stood near the "old broken apple tree, with his cap on."²⁹

Willie was felled with measles in late January. Thanking Grandpa Torrey for this report, Alphonso responded, "He is a great pet with us, & we love to hear from him as often as anybody is willing to take the trouble to write." After recovering, Willie attended a Millbury school. His father cautioned him not to fight any of the Yankee boys, as "they will treat you well, for they will consider you as good a Yankee as the rest of them."³⁰

Susie Torrey's announcement that she would marry on April 11, 1864, William Wood (an affluent widower, ten years her senior) now usurped most of the space in the Taft-Torrey correspondence. On March 2 Louise wrote, "Willie has subsided into insignificance beside the new excitement."³¹

28. A.T. to W.H.T., Jan. 10, 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

29. A.T. to W.H.T., Jan. 23, 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

30. A.T. to Samuel Torrey, Jan. 29, 1864; Ross, An American Family, p. 40.

31. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, March 2, 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

Louise Taft determined to return to Millbury for her sister's wedding and to say farewell to Delia who had determined to go to California by way of Panama. With Grandpa Taft's health continuing to deteriorate, Mrs. Taft was glad that her trip east would occur in early spring, rather than in the late summer as was customary. There had been a "general decay" in her mother-in-law's "vital powers," and there was doubt whether she would live another year. Grandpa's health, however, had improved, and he had fared better this winter than the previous one.³²

Accompanied by Harry, Horace and their nurse, Mrs. Taft was soon on her way to Massachusetts. When she returned to Mt. Auburn on May 6, she brought all her brood, including Willie. Mr. and Mrs. Torrey hated to see him go, as with the departure of Susie and her husband and Delia for California, the big house in Millbury was terribly quiet.³³

D. The War's Final 12 Months

1. Drafted into the "Army"

Willie was back in the Mt. Auburn school, and on May 14, 1864, Mrs. Taft wrote Anna that he was "much in earnest to make up lost time." He "read and spelled so well" that his mother "thought he would be able to advance beyond the First Reader." She, however, discovered to her dismay that he would also have to "attain a certain standing in arithmetic and in writing before he will be ready to pass on with his class." The Hamilton County schools, she informed Anna, were "classified in that way in order to secure thoroughness in every branch, and the standard is a high one."³⁴

To celebrate Harry's fifth birthday on Friday, May 27, Mrs. Taft had a "little party." Willie thought that they must invite the older brothers of Harry's playmates, so they had two Hollisters, two Davises, two Allens, and one Johnston boy. Counting her three that made ten boys, and there was "noise enough."³⁵

32. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, March 13, 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

33. Ibid.; P.R.T. Diaries, May 6, 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 11.

34. Louise Taft to Anna Torrey, May 14, 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

35. Louise Taft to Anna Torrey, May 30, 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. Horace was talking at 17 months, and had told his mother that he was "Grandpa Torrey's darling."

The late spring and summer of 1864 found Union and Confederate armies locked in a terrible struggle before Richmond and Petersburg in Virginia and in front of Atlanta. With war news monopolizing the front pages of the newspapers and the conversation of their elders, Willie and Harry spent the days "drilling in a little company into which they had been drafted."³⁶

2. Summer Vacations, 1864

Alphonso and Louise in July treated themselves to a vacation without the three little boys. Not since their trip to Washington in the winter of 1860-61 had they been able to do this. Willie, Harry, and Horace remained at Mt. Auburn with "three good girls, and with Grandpa and Grandma Taft to keep a watchful eye." Charlie, who was home from Yale, would have "general control and oversight" during their absence.

The Tafts made their headquarters at Saratoga Springs, New York, where they were joined by Rossy and Anna. Rossy was exhausted from his studies, having won the Woolsey scholarship at Yale, the top honor in his class. Leaving his wife, Anna, and Rossy at the spa, Mr. Taft, who liked the ocean, traveled to Long Branch, New Jersey, for several days. He then returned to Saratoga Springs' Congress Hotel, and, after several more days, he, Louise, and Rossy returned to Cincinnati.

Louise Taft had enjoyed herself, and confessed in a letter to Delia that the novelty of traveling without the little boys and with her husband "formed a large share" of making it a pleasant vacation. She was delighted, on her return, to find the children well, and to learn from Charlie and her in-laws that they had been "better boys" than when "she was at home."³⁷

The third week of August found Mrs. Taft ready to enroll Willie in the second grade. He had recently lost his two upper front teeth, which did not "add to his attractions."

On Friday, the 12th, Mr. Taft had taken Willie up to Yellow Springs for the weekend. The accommodations were poor, the table bountiful, and the resort "filled to overflowing with people from Cincinnati." Alphonso found it to his professional "advantage to cultivate the acquaintance of the businessmen," who congregated there on weekends.³⁸

36. Louise Taft to Ann Torrey, June 28, 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

37. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Aug. 4, 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

38. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Aug. 17, 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

3. The Last Winter of the War

School resumed in the last week of August 1864. Although Willie was in the second grade, his teacher called for homework. His father was delighted to find him studying in the evenings, because it increased the boy's importance.³⁹

The family enjoyed a quiet Thanksgiving dinner and day, with the "usual accompaniments except mince pies," an expensive luxury which Louise Taft had determined "to dispense with this year." After dinner Alphonso and the boys adjourned to the basement and played billiards.⁴⁰

During the same week, Mr. Taft and Aaron Perry organized a Mt. Auburn reading club. The Tafts hosted the first meeting, where William Shakespeare's The Tempest was read.⁴¹

Willie and Horace in the second week of December came down with chicken pox. Willie was "not at all sick," but Horace had "a more serious time." Harry, Mrs. Taft informed her mother, was "such a thick-skinned little animal" that he was "impervious to such diseases."⁴²

Charlie's twenty-first birthday fell on Thursday, December 22, and Mrs. Taft gave him a party. There were 35 guests, and she served cake, coffee, peaches, and stewed oysters. With the refreshments there was dancing in the parlor with music provided by three black fiddlers. The recently installed gas lighting was a blessing, and Mrs. Taft wrote Anna:

I never prepared for company with less labor or anxiety. The trouble of getting lamps enough together used to equal preparing the table and when I had done my best it seemed only darkness made visible. Now it seems like magic that every room in the house can be illuminated instantaneously, without a thought before hand.⁴³

39. A.T. to Anna Torrey, Sept. 3, 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

40. Louise Taft to Anna Torrey, Nov. 30, 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

41. Ibid.

42. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Dec. 15, 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

43. Louise Taft to Anna Torrey, Dec. 25, 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

Christmas came three days later. Willie and Harry received sleds, and Horace blocks, a pop gun, and whistle.⁴⁴

Harry had been enrolled in the first grade in the autumn of 1864, and Horace graduated from skirts and petticoats to pantaloons in the late winter of 1864-65. Writing her father on March 13, 1865, Louise reported that the boys were "busy with kites, balls, and tops, successively, all the time out of school." Willie was making progress in his studies, but Harry had "not yet distinguished himself."

She and Mt. Auburn neighbors were hoping to "get up a dancing school on the hill soon for beginners, and we shall try a little instruction for the heels as well as the heads of these little boys." It had been suggested that she also send Horace, but she confided to her father, "I think he can wait awhile," as he "looks funny enough in his new pants."⁴⁵

Writing Anna she expressed herself in a different manner. She thought Horace looked "very smart in his new clothes," and he was "much prettier as a boy than a girl."⁴⁶

The dancing school sponsored by Mrs. Taft opened on April 29, and she enrolled Willie and Harry.⁴⁷

Although they were approaching 80, with Sylvia in poor health, Grandma and Grandpa Taft continued to enjoy their grandchildren. Alphonso nevertheless felt called upon in March 1865 to write the Torreys that "my father & mother being in the family, may be regarded as some restraint upon the enjoyment of social gaiety in the house." He, however, regarded this as more "imaginary than real." His mother was unable physically and his father was disinclined "to take part in society." But, he assured the Torreys, they have no wish "to limit the sociality of the household." He had raised this point, because

44. Ibid.

45. Louise Taft to Samuel Torrey, March 13, 1865, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

46. Louise Taft to Anna Torrey, March 7, 1865, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

47. Louise Taft to Anna Torrey, April 30, 1865, and Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, undated, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. Mrs. Taft had written Delia that Willie and Harry "are having their heels educated." Delia, soon after her arrival in California, had secured a position teaching physiology and calisthenics for \$60 per month at the Benicia Seminary.

many of his friends were of the opinion that "aged people in a house are necessarily a restraint upon the hilarity and good cheer, so essential to the happiness of young people."⁴⁸

4. The Surrender of General Lee and the Assassination of President Lincoln

News of the surrender by Gen. Robert E. Lee of his Army of Northern Virginia to Union forces commanded by Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant caused tremendous excitement in Cincinnati. On Friday, April 14, 1865, there was a parade surpassing anything Louise Taft had heretofore seen. Cincinnati "fairly blossomed with flags, and everybody turned out to join in a rejoicing which included all parties." That evening every street "blazed with illuminations and fireworks." Almost every house on Mt. Auburn was lighted and many were "variously ornamented." During the evening the Tafts took time out from the victory celebration to drive to the depot to meet Rossy, who was returning from Yale for a brief vacation.⁴⁹

Next morning, the 15th, news of the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln caused a transition from jubilee to gloom, which "seemed too great to be believed." Alphonso reported, "the revulsion of feeling was terrible and affected all classes with horror. The symbols of joy which had been universal were turned into mourning, and the city" was "draped and craped from one end to the other." Almost every "little hovel of Irish, Dutch or Negro" had at least a picture of the late President "with black around it." All flags were at half mast and nearly every "building festooned with black rumbic."

Persons known to be pro-Confederate were in danger of being mobbed. Junius B. Booth, the famed brother of the assassin, had been advertized to perform at Cincinnati at Pike's Theatre that evening, but there were "such violent demonstrations he was obliged to leave the city secretly."

Correctly gauging the situation, Alphonso observed, "Mr. Lincoln could not have died at a more happier moment for his own fame. Never since his accession has he been so popular with all the parties. The success of our arms puts everybody in good humor with the Administration, and his leancy toward the rebels won the favor of the Peace men." The dead President's views on Reconstruction, however, had "met with great diversity of opinion even among Republicans." There were many vexing

48. A.T. to Mrs. Susan Torrey, March 18, 1865, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

49. A.T. to Anna Torrey, April 18, 1865, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

and difficult problems to be answered, and, perhaps Taft continued, Lincoln "was not the man for the coming emergency. Whether [Andrew] Johnson is, remains to be seen." The assassination, which he termed a "diabolical conspiracy," would cause the people to demand a "sterner" Reconstruction policy.⁵⁰

Writing Samuel Torrey on April 22, eight days after the assassination, Alphonso Taft observed, "our city is still hung with black." He, along with members of his wing of the Republican party, were "hopeful of President Johnson," as he seemed "to be more likely to hold the rebel leaders responsible for their crimes than Mr. Lincoln was inclined to do." It was his opinion that the plot to murder the President and other Administration leaders had been "prepared sometime since, but like a torpedo it went off at the wrong time, working more harm to the getters up of it, than to the United States."⁵¹

50. A.T. to Anna Torrey, April 18, 1865, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

51. A.T. to Samuel Torrey, April 22, 1865, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

VI. THE TAFTS AS COMMUNITY LEADERS

A. The Birth of a Daughter

1. The Summer of 1865

Willie and Harry, like all red blooded boys, loved their summer vacations from school. Their mother, who was eight months pregnant, viewed them as a nightmare. On July 2 she complained, "the boys are free from school restraints and make the most of vacation." Rainy days were worse, and when unable to romp and play outdoors, they made the house "noisy enough." They had a "mania for writing letters to Grandpa Torrey, teasing for money and all sorts of things. They talked a great deal about going to Millbury, especially Harry." Recalling Willie's trip, Harry claimed it was his turn. Mrs. Taft, however, would "not think of inflicting him upon anybody till he grows more manageable," as he was at an unreasonable age and was "perfectly unresponsive." Willie, she found, was "generally a good boy and Horace always."¹

Two days before, Mrs. Taft had written Horace Dutton, a family friend, in the same vein. "Our little boys," she reported, "are growing quite out of your knowledge." His namesake, Horace Dutton, was "so lovely and faultless a boy as to bring into doubt the universal depravity [sic] doctrine." The same could not be said for Willie and Harry, "who have plenty of old Adam."²

By July 9 Louise Taft reported that her boys were getting accustomed to vacation. After dinner they put on their nightgowns and were told to take naps, but frequently these ended in frolics. About 4 p.m. they "took a swim in the bath-tub," and, after getting dressed, had the privilege of riding down to the city with the hired man to pick up their father. On the Fourth of July, the hired girls had taken the boys to see the parade, "after which they came home to the enjoyment of shooting crackers, torpedoes, &c."³

1. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, July 2, 1865, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

2. Louise Taft to Horace Dutton, June 30, 1865, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

3. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, July 9, 1865, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

Alphonso in mid-July informed his father-in-law that "our boys at home are enjoying themselves, playing from morning till night." They were in good health and growing rapidly. Willie had "advanced considerably in the culture that belongs to his time & size, & is growing manly. His appetite for useful knowledge is healthy & keen."

Harry, he reported, is "pretty full of mischief, & we think greatly bright." As for Horace, Louise considered him "a standing repudiation of the doctrine of total depravity." He was a "universal favorite" with the family.

The Tafts were conservative and thrifty, and Alphonso noted that "we must break up the boyish ideas of Willie & Harry as to spending money." If he were to buy all they wanted, he would be broke. He was certain, however, they would "get better ideas as they grow up, on that subject."⁴

2. Fanny's Arrival

The Tafts and Torreys were thrilled on July 18, 1865, when Louise gave birth to a fifth child and first daughter, Fanny Louise. Mrs. Taft described her to her mother as a doll-like creature with delicate hands and feet, and the "same three-cornered mouth and dimples as Willie." Alphonso and Louise had longed for a daughter and "no tongue can tell with what joy she is received." Reporting the safe arrival of their granddaughter to his in-laws, Alphonso wrote, "you will be more curious about the personnel of the daughter of the family, than about all the boys put together. We shall certainly make a beauty of her, if admiration will do it." Mt. Auburn friends and neighbors dropping by to see the infant and extend congratulations called her a pretty baby, a "verdict" the family willingly accepted.⁵

Delia had returned to Millbury from California in August 1865, so Anna made plans to travel to Cincinnati to see her niece. The boys were delighted to learn of their favorite aunt's forthcoming visit. With sleeping quarters of a premium, Willie was delighted to learn that he would sleep with her, "though the other little boys will claim the privilege." During Anna's stay Harry and Horace would "occupy the nursery alone."⁶

4. A.T. to Samuel Torrey, July 17, 1865, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

5. A.T. to Samuel Torrey, Undated, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

6. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Aug. 25, 1865, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

3. Alphonso Taft Becomes a Public Servant

By this time Charlie, having graduated from Yale in June 1864, was studying law at Columbia, and Rossy was in his third year at Yale. In December 1865 Alphonso Taft accepted an appointment from Governor Charles Anderson to serve the remaining three months of Judge George Hoadley's term on the State Superior Court. Hoadley had resigned, Louise wrote her mother, because he could make more money in private practice. Alphonso had previously refused this office, but he now believed he could "afford to take a little rest after such long drudgery in practice." In three months there would be an election, at which time Mr. Taft, if he desired, could file and run for a three-year term as judge of the Superior Court.⁷

He chose to run and was elected when his term expired, and he served a third term as choice of both Republican and Democratic parties. Alphonso, now called, "Judge," was delighted with his new station in life. As a successful lawyer, he had long aspired to be a member of the judiciary. On December 7, 1864, he had written his friend Salmon P. Chase a congratulatory letter, "To be Chief Justice of the United States is more than to be President, in my estimation. I rejoice beyond what I can express, in the confidence that now the momentous interests of Liberty will be protected in that High Court." He could forgive Lincoln much for having named Chase Chief Justice of the United States.⁸

B. Sicknesses, Accidents, and Deaths

4. "Camp Itch"

Horace in the first week of December 1865 was afflicted with a rash of boils "all over his conveniences for sitting down." These eruptions were contagious, and Willie and Harry also suffered. Mrs. Taft's friends told her these skin irritations, resembling "camp itch", were epidemic throughout the Cincinnati schools.⁹

Fanny grew rapidly, and by the time she was seven months old, in February 1866, her mother had bought her "a willow chair with a little table in front for playthings, where she" sat contentedly by the hour. Next she bought a "willow carriage" for Fanny and a velocipede for Horace.¹⁰

7. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Dec. 10, 1865, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

8. A.T. to Chase, Dec. 7, 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1; Ross, An American Family, pp. 46-47.

9. Ibid.

10. Louise Taft to Delia, Feb. 28, 1866, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

Grandma Taft, having been in feeble health for several years, died in the upstairs room she shared with her husband, at 1:10 a.m., on February 28. The funeral took place in the family parlor the next day, with burial in Spring Grove Cemetery.¹¹

2. The Horse Kicks Horace

On Thursday, April 19, 1866, Louise Taft went into the city to purchase material for shirts for Rossy. She returned on the 1 o'clock omnibus, and, after disembarking and entering the gate, she met Rossy coming out the house. He called that Horace had been kicked in the head by a horse; that he had been badly hurt; and he was going after Dr. Ehrmann.

Rushing into the house, Mrs. Taft dashed down to the kitchen and found Mary holding Horace. Her little boy was covered with blood and was screaming piteously. She saw that the blood was coming from a bump as large as a hen's egg on the left side of his head.

Dr. Ehrmann soon came, staunched the blood, cut away the hair from the wound, and closed the gash with stitching plaster. Horace screamed and kicked, as Mrs. Taft held him in her lap. By the time the doctor was finished, her face was as bloody as her son's.

Horace was then put to bed in the Tafts' bedroom, and his mother collected her wits and learned what had happened. She found that Horace had accompanied the new hired man to the stable, and had asked him to put him on the horse's back. The man, who was not very smart, attempted to do so in the stable, while the horse was drinking. Taken by surprise, the animal backed, reared and kicked. The man held onto the boy, got some bruises on the leg and arm, while Horace took the "main blow on the side of the head above the temple." The man's story was "rather incoherent." Grandpa and Mrs. Taft thought "the blows must have been with the front feet."

Grandpa Taft was greatly upset by the accident, and he was compelled to go to bed. His appetite was poor, and he had failed rapidly in the seven weeks since his wife's death.¹²

While Horace was recovering, Mrs. Taft slept with him in her bedroom, Mr. Taft and Rossy slept in the parlor chamber, and Fanny and the nurse, Mary Ann, in the nursery.¹³

11. P.R.T. Diaries, Feb. 28-March 1, 1866, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 11.

12. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, April 24, 1866, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

13. Ibid.

3. Willie and the Runaway

On Monday, May 14, 1866, Mrs. Taft decided to go into Cincinnati to do some shopping, which she had been compelled to forego while Horace was recovering. Learning that the hired man was busy, she determined to go down on the omnibus. The man was told to pick her up at Shillito's at 12 o'clock, and they would bring Mr. Taft and Charlie home.

Willie said, "I shall come with John."

Mrs. Taft replied, "There will be no room."

"Oh yes, there will be," he answered, and Mrs. Taft said no more.

Reaching Shillito's, Mrs. Taft purchased two dresses for herself, "and various items for the family, and was thinking that if I could stay all day I could do much more." She now decided to go home and see if everything was all right. While standing in front of Shillito's, with her bundles, wondering why the carriage was late, Frank D. S. Whetstone walked up and said that he wanted her to go home with him in his buggy; that there had been a runaway; and that "my little Willie was hurt."

"Where?" Mrs. Taft asked.

"On the head," was the answer, but the extent of his injuries had not been determined.

Mrs. Taft did not lose her composure, but she thought, "how unlikely that we could escape loss and sorrow a second time."

As they drove toward the hill, Mr. Whetstone explained that John and Willie had left home in the carriage and were driving down Sycamore Street, when the horse shied and bolted. The carriage was overturned, John escaping with a severe bruise on his side, while "Willie was dragged along in the carriage after it had overturned, and his head was badly cut against the curbstone." Willie, bruised and bleeding, had been carried into a house at the corner of Mulberry Street. His father, Charlie, Dr. Ehrmann, and a surgeon soon arrived, and when Mr. Whetstone had gone to get Mrs. Taft the surgeon was dressing the wound. Whetstone assured Mrs. Taft that he believed her son was "conscious though he had had only a glimpse of him."

When the carriage came pounding up to the house at the corner of Mulberry, they learned that Mr. Taft had taken his injured son home. Mrs. Taft's heart sank when she passed their carriage "half way down the hill, the body a perfect wreck and the shafts and wheels separate, having been brought back from below Franklin St., where the horse was stopped."

Mrs. Taft, on reaching home, found Willie "conscious and patient though suffering a good deal of pain." She was not "so much shocked at his appearance from having had such recent experience" with Horace. She, however, was glad to have been spared the sight of seeing him before his wound was dressed.

Once again, Louise Taft became a nurse, and until Willie was out of danger she cared for him day and night. Reporting the accident to the Torreys, Mrs. Taft wrote, "You must not think of us as depressed and discouraged by our misfortune. We are happy in the thought that our boys are spared to us, brought as it were from Meath to life."¹⁴

Louise Taft three weeks later informed her parents that Willie and Horace are "pretty well and playing out constantly, yet I feel anxious all the time lest they should bruise their sore heads. I don't know but it will take them all summer to get quite healed."

Continuing, she wrote, I had "more pride in Willie than in all the rest." The recent accident had made them appreciate how nice he was and realize what it would have been to lose him.

Willie was proving himself a good student, and despite his accident was keeping up with his studies and would be examined with his class. He was now reading biographies and histories, and had finished volume one of Irving's Life of Washington.

Harry was still a "scape grace and vagrant," and his parents hoped "to regulate him as he gets older." Horace was "well-meaning and his simplicity makes him a victim of Harry's pranks."¹⁵

In the fourth week of June, Willie and Harry passed their examinations and would be in respectively the fourth and second grades when school resumed in September.¹⁶

4. The Deaths of Mrs. Torrey & Grandpa Taft

Louise Taft, like her husband, lost a mother in 1866. Following her death, Louise wrote Delia, "How hard to realize that Mother is not

14. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, May 16 & 18, 1866, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

15. Louise Taft to Samuel Torrey, June 6, 1866, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

16. Louise Taft to Susie Wood, June 26, 1866, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

with you to consult and pass judgement upon everything proposed. The loss can never be made up to us."¹⁷

Grandpa Taft was taken very sick in mid-June. On Sunday, the 10th, he had "three violent chills," followed by fever and general prostration. Dr. Joseph Potter was called, and, after examining the elder Taft, told Alphonso that the end was near. The doctor was wrong. Grandpa Taft soon rallied.

To help care for his father, Mr. Taft hired a black male nurse. By June 26 Grandpa was "somewhat better"; he again smiled and joked, and seemed like his old self. He remained bedfast, however, and required the constant care of his nurse. Unless there was a marked improvement in his condition, there would be no late summer trip to Millbury for the family.¹⁸

Grandpa Taft was doomed to remain in poor health until his death in the spring of 1867. On December 9, 1866, the Tafts were shocked to learn of the death of Madison, Grandpa's nurse. He had complained of a cold and sore throat and on Tuesday, before Thanksgiving, was sent home to recuperate. On doing so, Madison sent out a replacement. Within ten days Madison was dead of "quick consumption," leaving a wife but no children. His replacement was an older man, not as experienced in nursing, but "disposed to be generally useful." Grandpa liked him as well as Madison, who had been disposed to be arbitrary at times.¹⁹

5. The Cholera Epidemic of August 1866

By mid-summer 1866 Mrs. Taft had had a change of heart and clothes were packed, preparatory for starting for Millbury. Their departure was first delayed on August 10 when Willie and Harry, especially the former, became sick. "Then Grandpa was feeling poorly," and Mr. Taft did not "have the heart to tell him that we would leave him." A cholera epidemic which had broken out in Cincinnati increased in virulence, and Mrs. Taft wrote Susie Wood on the 12th, "we have almost given up leaving home," as it is "best for families to keep together, and within reach of medical aid, and the best remedies."

17. Ross, An American Family, p. 47.

18. Louise Taft to Anna Torrey, June 16, 1866, and Louise Taft to Susie Wood, June 26, 1866, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

19. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Dec. 10, 1866, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. Madison "was a man of character and had accumulated property." The new nurse had worked for Mr. Longworth as a waiter for 32 years.

They had learned of the outbreak of the plague on the 5th, when 14 deaths had been reported. Thereafter, daily, the death toll had increased. The morning paper of the 12th had listed 54 deaths from cholera. There was great anxiety, and "everyone is provided with preventives and remedies." But, Mrs. Taft continued, "its progress is so rapid that it is not safe to wait for a physician. I think we shall not hesitate to trust to Homeopathy, and it is very safe for domestic practice."²⁰

On Monday, the 13th, 64 deaths from cholera were reported in the city, and the Board of Health declared it an epidemic. There was now no chance that the Tafts would be traveling to Millbury. Diarrhea was an early symptom of cholera, and that morning Willie and Harry had had trouble with their bowels. Mrs. Taft took charge and dosed the boys with camphor, the recommended remedy. Mr. Taft was not feeling well, but he had been obliged by business to go into the city. This caused Louise to fret, because he had had "so much experience, and was so prompt in emergencies." He was more "easily alarmed" than she, "probably because he is more familiar with the danger." This was good, because physicians had written that cholera was "easily controlled when taken early but if the patient neglects the remedies till they can get a doctor, they are gone."

In closing a letter to Susie, Mrs. Taft confided, "For some reason, I dread it [the cholera] for Mr. Taft more than anybody--it is so common for able bodied men to be struck down & his life seems so precious."²¹

Despite the fears and apprehensions the Taft household escaped the epidemic. On August 17 Mrs. Taft wrote Anna that the cholera seems "to be abating in the city." The weather was clear and unseasonably cold, a favorable sign. The family, except for Grandpa, was well. "Willie," she reported, "had a tendency to diarrhea for 2 or 3 days which made us uneasy, and Mr. Taft was ailing a little, so we called in Dr. Ehrmann. Charlie and Rossy had left the city and were vacationing at Yellow Springs and White Sulphur Springs."²²

6. Alphonso Taft's Illness

Louise Taft, in mid-November, at her husband's suggestion attended a series of eight lectures on cookery by Professor Blot. These

20. Louise Taft to Susie Wood, Aug. 16, 1866, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

21. Ibid.

22. Louise Taft to Anna Torrey, Aug. 17, 1866, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

caused quite a sensation in and around Cincinnati and were entertaining and well attended.

In company with her friends and Mt. Auburn neighbors (Mesdames Perry, Noyes, and Smith), Louise sat down with the fashionable audience, and listened and watched. Professor Blot lectured, while his assistant did the work. A dinner for an "ordinary family with a different bill of fare every day--soup, fish, relish, entree, roti entrement and dessert--was prepared," Those in attendance were then invited to taste the food and savor its flavors and quality.

Their cook having a day off on the 18th, Mrs. Taft prepared the family dinner, using her newly acquired knowledge to prepare a vegetable soup. Mr. Taft complimented her and pronounced the school a success.²³

Mr. Taft was sick and confined to the house for two weeks in late November and early December 1866. He had difficulty with his throat, a poor appetite, and rheumatism. Besides complaining of stiffness in his joints, his flesh was sore to the touch.

While confined to the house, Mr. Taft, as his wife's suggestion, grew a beard. Relaying this news to Delia on December 10, Mrs. Taft reported, the beard "is unquestionably a protection to the throat, and I think it is becoming. Its intense blackness is modified by a slight sprinkling of gray, softening up the furious look."²⁴

While Mr. Taft was sick, Louise availed herself of the opportunity to wean Fanny. Occupied as she was with caring for her husband, she turned Fanny over to Mary Ann's care. The baby had survived this traumatic experience, and as Mrs. Taft wrote Delia, was fat and well, and growing "more bewitching."²⁵

C. The Tafts in Europe

1. The Horse Railroad Reaches 60 Auburn Street

On Sunday, the 9th, Louise Taft entertained Charlie, one of his former classmates, and young ladies at tea. The house was in confusion because of Mr. Taft's sickness, and with only one of the

23. Louise Taft to Susie Wood, Nov. 18, 1866, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. A ticket to Professor Blot's school was six dollars for eight lectures, or one dollar per session.

24. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Dec. 10, 1866, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

25. Ibid.

hired girls on duty, Mrs. Taft "never worked harder to accomplish anything." To make matters worse, Mary Ann's brother was being married, and her services had to be dispensed with after dinner until bedtime. For the tea, Mrs. Taft had "a sponge cake, silver cake & cream." She also served stewed oysters, canned peaches, hot rolls, and coffee.²⁶

Mrs. Taft had recently instituted a new schedule. The alarm sounded at six o'clock, and the hired man got up and made the fires. Mrs. Taft arose when the clock struck 7, awakened the boys, and the family sat down for breakfast at 7:30. Although this was not remarkable, she confided to Delia, "it is a great improvement on our former habits and forwards the work of the house immensely." She now felt "quite ready to get up," because with Fanny weaned she did not have to feed the baby during the night.²⁷

In June 1867 the horse railway commenced operating from Mt. Auburn to and from the city. Improved public transportation, it was forecast, would enhance Mt. Auburn property values. Mr. Taft realizing this purchased a lot on Dorchester Avenue, adjoining the Stouts' property and running back to the Taft garden.²⁸

2. Charlie & Rossy go to Europe

Anna Torrey spent the winter of 1866-67, following her mother's death, with the Tafts. Although she had adopted the fashionable new posture known as the Grecian bend and had grown into an accomplished and attractive young lady, she was plagued by poor health. Alphonso urged on her the homeopathic treatment.

Early in 1867 Charlie again left home and sailed for Europe, and by June he was studying Roman law at Heidelberg. That same month Rossy was graduated from Yale. His father was understandably proud to learn that his second son was class valedictorian, and Willie was an excited spectator on Presentation Day.²⁹ Soon thereafter Rossy followed his elder brother to Europe.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

28. Anna Torrey to Samuel Torrey, May 15, 1867, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

29. Anna Torrey to Delia Torrey, June 30, 1867, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1; Ross, An American Family, pp. 48-49.

With Charlie and Rossy in Europe, Anna at Mt. Auburn, and Alphonso a judge with a guaranteed annual income, the Tafts decided they could afford the luxury of a trip abroad. In the spring of 1869, ten weeks before they were scheduled to sail, Mrs. Taft gave a party for Fanny. There were about 25 children in attendance with their mothers, and Louise and Anna served the children ice cream and the mothers sandwiches, coffee, and ice cream. There was dancing in the parlor conducted by Mrs. Ernst, and "the children were as happy as larks."

Describing the party in a letter to Delia, Anna reported that "Fannie was radiant with delight and Miss Nourse says covered herself with glory by her joyousness. . . . She is a merry sprite and a great favorite."³⁰

3. The European Trip

Louise and Alphonso sailed from New York City for Europe in July 1869.³¹ Anna kept Willie and Harry and looked after the family home, while Horace spent July and August in Millbury with Mr. Torrey and Delia. Writing Anna from London on the 18th, Mrs. Taft suggested that Willie "might read up in the Gazateer and Encyclopedia of this the greatest harbor in the world and in connection with our travels, make his geography real & impressive to him." She hoped that Harry would draw a map of Great Britian, and "observe how we sailed along the southern coast of Ireland and up into Queenstown harbor & then across the channel to Liverpool."

Anna was to tell Rosa, who was again working for the Tafts, that they had sailed for four or five hours "in plain sight of County Cork." She was to tell Mary, a hired girl, that Mrs. Taft had thought of her "in her old home in this great city of London. She would know that the Tafts' hotel (The Charing Cross) was on the Strand in the heart of the great city."³²

Crossing over to the continent, Alphonso and Louise met Rossy and Charlie, the former acting as their guide. As they toured France,

30. Anna Torrey to Delia Torrey, May 5, 1869, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. Miss Edith Nourse ran a private school, known as "The Nursery," which Fanny attended.

31. According to his passport, issued in May, Alphonso Taft was 58 years old, six feet tall, with high forehead, hazel eyes, norman nose, medium mouth, broad and full chin, dark hair intermixed with gray, dark complexion, and oval face.

32. Louise Taft to Anna Torrey, July 18, 1869, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

Austria-Hungary, and the German and Italian states, Alphonso and Louise wrote frequent letters to their younger children. Louise described for them the glories of Schonbrunn, the Pantheon, etc. By September, Horace had returned from Millbury and had been enrolled in the Sixteenth District School.

From Strasbourg on September 12 Louise Taft wrote to her boys. She hoped that Horace was home to share the letter, and that they were again settled in their school work after the excitement of the summer. While she supposed that Horace would not be studying German this year in the Sixteenth District School, she expected "him to take a high stand in English as a scholar." She wanted Harry to draw a map "to illustrate our course of travel," and was certain that Willie's knowledge of geography was better than hers. She trusted he would not make the mistake she had in supposing that Strasbourg was in a German State, whereas it was "3 miles inside the French border."³³

Soon after his parents' departure, Willie, then a 12-year-old, had written his father, reporting that the Cincinnati weather was "so hot that there is nothing to do but to stay in the house and keep cool." He had worked in the garden that morning and had earned 25 cents, which boosted to \$8.95 the money owed him by his father. He would like to use several dollars to purchase from his father his short-handled gold pen.

To amuse themselves now that school was out, Willie and Harry spent considerable time with Mike, the hired man, and playing billiards at home and croquet at the Smiths. On the afternoon of July 16, they had planned to go down to the bathhouse with Mike, but Aunt Anna decided to go downtown to get some new boots for Harry, They accordingly had to postpone the trip to the bathhouse one day.

Since his parents' departure, Aunt Anna had paid "two big bills," the carpenters' for \$94.94 and the carriage man's for \$63, Willie reported.³⁴

4. The Tafts Return from Europe

A few weeks before Christmas 1869, Willie, his parents having returned, wrote Rossy a letter that astounded his half-brother for its penmanship, maturity, and interest. He had commenced a practice that was to leave for historians a mountain of documents. William Howard Taft throughout his career always found time to correspond with

33. Louise Taft to Boys, Sept. 12, 1869, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

34. W.H.T. to A.T., July 16, 1869, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

family and friends. Rossy, back in Heidelberg following his parents' visit, wrote an appreciative note to Willie:

We expect you younger boys, who have the benefit of our experience in education, to do great things. Never be content until you have done the very best you could have done, for if you always do that you will never be unhappy. I am glad to hear that you boys are doing so well in school. It is a favorable indication as to your future career. You must make Charley and me proud to be able to call you brother. . . . Work hard, and do your part in building up the reputation of the family.³⁵

Charlie, having graduated from Heidelberg, returned to Cincinnati in the spring of 1870, and entered into a law practice with Edward F. Noyes. While Charlie was getting himself established in his profession, Rossy was in Paris, where he lived through the exciting days of 1870.³⁶

D. Four Crowded Years, 1870-74

1. The Christmas Season--1869

Fanny was stricken with diphtheria in December 1869. By Christmas she was recovering but still bedfast, and Harry "fixed her up a neat little Christmas tree, which hangs right over her head, with sundry pieces of candy suspended from it." The tree gave Fanny "great satisfaction," but distressed Horace almost as much as if delighted her. "For his mouth waters for candy, and he can't have any of that."

The boys were in good spirits for the holiday season, because they had successfully passed their examinations at the Sixteenth District School. These examinations, lasting four days, had covered the entire curriculum, and the trustees had awarded silver medals to each class. Willie and Horace had won medals, with the former taking the first place medal in his 30-member class. His average in six subjects was 95, having scored 100 in geography, history, grammar, composition, and spelling, and 70 in arithmetic. This made his parents very proud.

35. Rossy Taft to W.H.T., Dec. 12, 1869, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

36. Ross, An American Family, pp. 50-51.

In addition, Willie had had a leading role "in an exhibition which came off in the Presbyterian Church, the week before."³⁷

In the winter of 1869-70 the Tafts got rid of the pony. Writing Willie from Heidelberg, Rossy observed, "It must be a great blessing to be rid of the trouble and expense of the horse. Old Dick used [to] fully eat up his value, every year."³⁸

2. Willie Taft Becomes Will Taft

After graduating from the Sixteenth District School, Willie, or Will as he was now called by his relatives, entered the Woodward High School. Will by this time had grown to his full height and "had hardened up physically, although his fellow students" called him "Lub" or "Lubber." He was "good-natured, with a hearty laugh and a genial spirit that turned to tough determination when he tangled with the gangs that haunted Butchertown," below Mt. Auburn. Will, unlike many of the boys from the wealthy hill communities, more than held his own in fights with these rowdies. He was heavy in built but was light on his feet. He had wrestled for years and could hit with tremendous force.³⁹

Mr. Taft in October 1872 commented on the progress of his younger sons in school. Will, he observed, is foremost, and "I am inclined to think will always be so. Horace may advance upon him as he grows older. Harry is not so effective at school. He is bright enough; but his mind is scattered abroad, & he cannot concentrate it so precisely as is necessary to complete success." Harry seemed to have "more taste & talent for music and drawing." He accordingly did not know "what plan of education & life" would be best for Harry. "It may be," the father mused, "that he will be the merchant of the family." Harry had entered Woodward High School at the same age as his elder brothers, but he was "more quarrelous, and more difficult to satisfy than the other boys, and makes us more trouble & concern." Be that as it may, Harry was "in the main a good boy, & the teachers at school speak well of him."⁴⁰

37. A.T. to Delia Torrey, Dec. 24, 1869, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

38. Rossy Taft to W.H.T., Feb. 6, 1870, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

39. Ross, An American Family, p. 52.

40. A.T. to Samuel Torrey, Oct. 16, 1872, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

The Tafts, as customary, did not make any "great outlay" for Christmas in 1872, though Fanny was bound to be spoiled. Louise Taft had bought her daughter a handsome doll to outfit in the wardrobe she had received the previous year. Anna had brought from New Orleans a gold chain and locket for her neice. Rosy and Delia had given her a nice sled; Mrs. Dayton a writing desk furnished with stamped paper; while other members of the family had showered her with two fans, books, candy, oranges, rasins, etc.

Mrs. Taft had surprised her husband with a picture of herself, while for the family she had purchased a "table such as is used in the public library on which to show camina." She had given Will and Harry "white silk napkins" for their necks, such as are worn to keep collars clean," and Mr. Taft had given the three boys knives.⁴¹

3. Cupid Takes His Toll

In the autumn of 1873 Charlie Taft moved out of his room in his parents' home and into a house of his own. On December 4 he was married to Annie Sinton, the daughter of David Sinton, a wealthy Cincinnati businessman. Rosy (having returned from Europe) was living at home, practicing law with Charlie, and courting Matilda Hulbert, daughter of William P. Hulbert, a wealthy local merchant. Rosy and Tilly were married in 1876. A year earlier on April 25, 1875, Anna Torrey married Professor Edward Orton, a professor of geology at Ohio A & M. Orton was a widower with four children, and the newlyweds made their home in Columbus.⁴²

4. Will Enters Yale

Will was scheduled to graduate from Woodward High School in June 1874. Although Mrs. Taft would not visit Millbury during the forthcoming summer, Will planned two trips that summer to New England. As soon as he graduated he would be traveling to New Haven to take his Yale entrance examinations. He would then return to Cincinnati, to remain until the freshman class reported in September.⁴³

Social crusades kept Mrs. Taft occupied in the late winter and spring of 1874. Writing Delia, she reported, "the Temperance Crusade has reached the city, and there has been great excitement." At one of

41. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, January 1873, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

42. Ross, An American Family, pp. 56-57, 61.

43. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, March 23, 1874, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

the initial meetings, committees were appointed from every church. She and Miss Edith Nourse learned on reading the newspapers that they were to represent the 1st Congregational Church. Miss Nourse thereupon referred to Mrs. Taft as "praying sister," and they refused to be drafted.

This campaign was spearheaded by the Methodists and Baptists, and ladies were soon scurrying about Mt. Auburn with pledges to abstain from intoxicating beverages. On three successive days when the ladies called, Mrs. Taft chanced to be out. Rumors spread that she was trying to dodge them. Relaying this news to Delia, Louise wrote, "I think they find many of the most sober & thoughtful people decline to pledge themselves. The movement has become somewhat secular and of course the Catholics & Germans are opposed to it."

Louise Taft meanwhile had attended a state constitutional convention to hear a discussion on women's suffrage. On the first two days she was accompanied by Miss Nourse and on the third by Mrs. Whitman. When the measure was brought to a vote, 49 out of 53 delegates favored the submission of the proposal to a referendum. Mrs. Taft was surprised to see how much support the proposal had, and "how poor the arguments against it." She correctly forecast that the suffrage proposal would meet defeat when submitted to the state's male electorate.

News that Charles Sumner, United States Senator from Massachusetts, was dead caused Mrs. Taft a "sense of personal loss." Washington would never seem the same now that he was gone. Mr. Taft, who was identified with the Grant wing of the Republican Party, Mrs. Taft, confided to Delia, "never appreciated him as highly as I,"⁴⁴

Louise Taft in late March 1874 spearheaded the organization of a Mt. Auburn Book Club. Twenty-six members were recruited, and the initial meeting held in the Taft parlor. Counting husbands who were invited to attend, about 40 showed up to whom Mrs. Taft served ice cream and cake. Col. Samuel E. Fisher presided. A good time was had by all, and hopes were voiced that future meetings would be as successful.⁴⁵

April Fools' Day was hectic at 60 Auburn Avenue. The boys and Fanny played all manner of tricks upstairs and down.⁴⁶

44. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, March 23, 1874, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

45. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, April 1, 1874, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

46. Ibid.

Early in September 1874 the family said goodbye to Will, and he left for New Haven and the beginning of his first year at Yale. The freshman class numbered 191, the largest to date. On the 13th Louise wrote Delia, informing her that they had had a postal card from Will but no letter.

Schools had reopened for the fall term in Cincinnati, and Harry had re-entered Woodward High School "with courage, and we hope better things of him than last year." He seemed "happier without Willie to overshadow him," and it would "do him good to cultivate his self-respect," his mother wrote.⁴⁷

47. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Sept. 13, 1874, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

VII. THE 1877 FIRE AND REMODELING OF THE HOUSE

A. Alphonso Taft Goes to Washington

1. Taft as a Candidate for Governor

In 1875 Judge Taft declared himself a candidate for the governorship of Ohio. The Republican Party was plagued by dissensions that had convulsed it since 1872, when the party had split--with the liberals supporting Horace Greeley in his unsuccessful campaign against President Ulysses S. Grant and the Stalwarts. Many Ohio Republicans believed that a man of Taft's standing and reputation could heal the wounds and unite the party. The pre-convention campaign focused on personalities as well as such issues as bounties, greenback inflation, speculation, and the redistribution of power and wealth. Rutherford B. Hayes, however, was the choice of the convention, and Charles Phelps Taft moved that the nomination be made unanimous. Alphonso gave Hayes his support in the ensuing campaign and stumped the state, helping to contribute to the Republican victory.¹

2. His Service in President Grant's Cabinet

Alphonso Taft, although he had failed to win the nomination, was soon thrust onto the national scene.

Beset by scandals in the War Department, President Grant in March 1876 named Alphonso Taft to be Secretary of War in his cabinet. News that his parents would be moving out of the family home on Mt. Auburn, where he and his brothers and sister had been born, caused Horace to write a sad letter to his father, who had been called to the nation's capital.

On March 17 Horace lamented, in two weeks we shall leave the "old homestead. It makes me rather sad to think that we have to leave the old home in which we were born and raised, especially when we are to be scattered . . . all over the country." But as the Grant administration would be leaving office on March 4, 1877, it would "only be for a year and at the end of that time," Horace hoped that "we shall all be back again and living in the same old way."

1. Ross, An American Family, pp. 61-62.

family," and had never seen the validity in the saying, "There is no place like home."²

By April 1 the Tafts had vacated their house, and Mrs. Taft joined her husband in Washington, where they took rooms at the Ebbitt House. Fanny was left in Cincinnati at Miss Nourse's school until she persuaded her mother that she would die unless rescued. The house at 60 Auburn Street and its furnishings were rented to Mrs. Mary C. Wilbur, widow of the late president of Wesleyan College. Judge Taft, in accordance with President Grant's wishes and in line with his personal preference, in May gave up his position as Secretary of War to become Attorney General. Rutherford B. Hayes was inaugurated as 19th President on March 5, 1877, and the Grant administration was out of office. The Tafts would soon be returning to Cincinnati. One of Fanny's playmates, learning of this, wrote her on March 16, "Are you really coming home so soon? Oh won't we have fun this summer. Your house looks as natural as ever."³

B. The Fire

Alphonso Taft, his wife, and daughter arrived back in Cincinnati at the end of March, but as it would be several days before Mrs. Wilbur vacated their house they took advantage of the hospitality extended to them by Mrs. S. B. Handy, a friend who also lived on Mt. Auburn. They were asleep at Mrs. Handy's on the morning of April 4, 1877, when a servant girl employed by the Leopold Burkhardts sighted smoke and flames "issuing from the roof of Judge Taft's home." She called a policeman. He first aroused Mrs. Wilbur and her servants, and, then racing to Box 85, turned in the alarm.

Through some error by the operator at the Central Station the alarm was sounded Box 75, and the engines were sent speeding to Eighth and Accommodation Streets. By the time the mistake was corrected, and the fire-fighters reached the Taft house, the flames "had made great headway." The hoses were unrolled, and the firemen made quick work of the fire, "but it was not extinguished until the roof of the house had burned off and the entire second story was gutted, leaving only the walls and chimney standing." Although it was about 6 a.m. when the alarm sounded, neighbors had promptly rallied, and had succeeded in removing most of the furniture. Judge Taft's valuable library had suffered some water damage.

2. Horace Taft to A.T., March 17, 1876, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

3. Laura _____ to Fanny Taft, March 16, 1877, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

Preliminary estimates placed the damage to the house at \$5,000. Judge Taft, on learning this, felt better, because his insurance policies (one for \$10,000 with the Washington Insurance Company on the house and the other for \$5,000 with Cincinnati Equitable Insurance Company on the books and furniture) would cover the loss.⁴

As was to be expected, Judge Taft was flooded with letters from friends and associates, expressing their sympathy at his loss. Typical of these was the one received from Gen. William T. Sherman, commander of the United States Army. Writing from Washington, on April 10, Sherman noted that he had read of Taft's loss in the newspapers. Speaking for his family as well as himself, Sherman was sorry to lose his society in Washington and to learn that his home had been damaged by fire. "But from the manly appearance of your boys," Sherman was satisfied that Taft would soon forget the nations capital, and "repair the damage to your home."⁵

C. Repairing the Damage and Remodeling

1. Judge Taft Bargains with J. W. Asher & Son

Judge Taft moved promptly to secure estimates for repairing the fire-gutted upper story of his home. On April 9, five days after the fire, Cincinnati contractor J. W. Asher & Son, after inspecting the damage and lengthy discussions with Judge and Mrs. Taft, made a proposal. They would repair and effect the following alterations and additions to the house: (a) Raise the upper story to a height of 11 feet in the clear, putting "brick work to the height of cornice." (b) Do all necessary plastering required for alterations. (c) Place galvanized "iron cornice around the building the same as the plan."⁶ (d) Position galvanized iron caps "to front windows." (e) Sills to be furnished where needed to new windows. (f) Seven new box frame sash, inside shutters, and a front door and frame, as shown on the plan, to be positioned. (g) The verandah in front of the doorway to be "as wide as the pilasters." (h) "Two pair of stairs and floor over the same were to be taken down," and the

4. Cincinnati Enquirer, April 5, 1877. Policy No. 4135 with Cincinnati Equitable described the house as a two-story dwelling "situated on Mt. Auburn" with a 40-foot front and 32 feet deep, "also a three story brick back building 41 by 23 feet."

5. Sherman to A. T., April 10, 1877, Lets. Recd., A. Taft, 1872-78, WHTMA.

6. Although a plan is mentioned, no plans were found in the William Howard Taft Papers at the Library of Congress or the Alphonso Taft Papers in possession of the William Howard Taft Association.

subject stairs to be placed "on the outside of Building" and boxed in. (i) The old back stairs railing to be substituted for the front stairs railing. (j) To be added in post-1851 wing: a sliding door and frame in the hall and "1 frame for 2 old doors to slide and partitions to same"; china closets; one French bathtub and casing; one water closet seat; and the plumbing for same. (k) The old partitions in the bathroom and water closet to be removed. (l) The studding in the upper floor to be pieced out. (m) In the parlor the east window to be cut down; and new sash and inside shutters added. (n) A floor of black walnut and ash to be laid in the dining room and a dumbwaiter installed. (o) A doorway to be put in connecting the upper floor hall with the "back porch." (p) The contractor to furnish "all hardware, all the painting & glazing," and lumber; and the materials to be of good quality.

J. W. Asher & Son would charge Judge Taft \$1,650 for this work, and guarantee completion in 60 days.⁷

If Judge Taft desired a bay added to the south side of the pre-1851 house, the contractors would charge him \$250.

For \$2500 Asher & Son would do all the work aforementioned, as well as "the plastering, papering, painting, plumbing, and repairing required by the insurance cos. under their policies," inasmuch as "they are not substituted for or made necessary by the alterations and additions aforesaid, furnishing all the materials for the same." If the bay were added, it was to be paid for as an extra. The painting was to include the outside of the building. Tile would be used instead of shingles on the roof.

Payments were to be made as follows: one-third when the roof was on; one-third when the plastering was finished; and the final one-third after the contract was fulfilled.⁸

Judge Taft scrawled across the second proposal, "I accept the above proposition," and the builders prepared to begin construction.⁹

2. The Work

Asher & Son, the prime contractor, having agreed to complete the project in 60 days turned out a large crew. The Tafts continued to

7. J. W. Asher & Son to A. T., April 9, 1877, Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882, WHTMA.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

live with Mrs. Handy, but visited 60 Auburn Street frequently in May and daily in June as the work neared completion. Judge Taft in June left Cincinnati on a brief business trip to New England.

Writing her husband on the 27th, Louise reported that the "plumbers, carpenters and painters are all at work--the latter rather slowly." Robert, the Tafts' hired man, had told her that the painters "cannot get through in two weeks at the rate they are going." She had found it necessary "to watch every day for things going wrong." On June 26 she found that they had "hung the door of the staircase going up, so that it swung into our room instead of against the wall." As it exposed to view "the stairs from the front," she had it changed.

The "range and furnace men" had finished their projects, and the plumbers were "getting to the end." If all went well, Louise hoped to have Carmago Manufacturing Company begin papering the upstairs next week.¹⁰

Craftsmen from Camargo Manufacturing Company had finished papering the upstairs by July 9. With the paperhangers and painters out of the way, Louise Taft had the carpets put down. Next the bookcases and books were moved, and by Friday, the 13th, she hoped to have all the furniture again in position. A man was at the house "making over all the mattresses pillows, bolsters, and beds." The newer ticks were being washed, while the ones that had seen better days would be replaced.¹¹

It had been an arduous and challenging task to select the decor. The wallpaper was especially "disappointing," as "it looked so different when it was hung." But, Louise wrote Delia, "I have satisfied myself tolerably, and hope to feel repaid for my deliberation." Mrs. Smith had been very helpful, having gone shopping with her daily, but she had relied more on Miss Nourse's judgment. Miss Nourse had exhibited "great interest in having the house a success artistically. She was uncompromising, and she rushes round so I feel as if I was following a steam engine."

Mary Farrell was assisting in the rehabilitation of the old carpets, while several new ones would be purchased. Several choice patterns were at Shillito's, and it would be "a great advantage to select them at one place," where Louise could "see that they harmonize with each other."¹²

10. Louise Taft to A. T., June 27, 1877, L. C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. The winter's supply of coal having arrived at John Harris' yard, it was being hauled out to 60 Auburn Street and was being stored in the cellar.

11. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, July 9, 1877, L. C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

12. Ibid.; Louise Taft to A. T., June 27, 1877, L. C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

Will and Harry had returned to Cincinnati from Yale to spend the summer, and both looked splendid. The days dragged by, and their mother trusted they would be more content as soon as the family moved back into the old home, and their father returned from the east coast.¹³

The family was reunited and again in residence at 60 Auburn Street on July 23, 1877. Several projects had not been completed, however, and during the day mechanics disturbed the Tafts' privacy. Judge Taft, writing Delia, urged her and her father to visit them, so they could see "how very comfortable" our home is. Louise, he boasted, has been "wonderfully exercised with it, and has really accomplished wonders in reconstructing and beautifying it." Costs had exceeded estimates, but by how much he would not know until the bills were itemized.

Louise had been so anxious and had worked so hard perfecting the arrangements of the house and furniture that she was exhausted, and her husband feared she might get sick.

Judge Taft was impressed by what his wife and her friends (Mesdames Smith, Hollister, and Mallon, and Miss Nourse) had accomplished with the decor. The "papering & carpets," he described, as "very beautiful & quite original." He had had "no idea that there was room for so much decorations in these articles." Where ceilings had been tinted, they gave the appearance of being frescoed.

The laundry had been "divided so as to make two fine bathrooms &c, and one storeroom also."¹⁴

Mrs. Taft's sister, Anna Orton, and her baby were late August house guests. When Anna arrived, she found workmen frescoing the parlor. Despite the inconvenience, it was a good time for Anna to be at 60 Auburn Street, because Will was visiting a classmate in Cleveland and Horace was going on a geological expedition with Professor Orton.¹⁵

By August 25 the workmen had finished frescoing and painting the parlor. Judge Taft thought the frescos very pretty. A crew of carpenters were momentarily expected to begin laying a hardwood floor. Relaying this information to Delia, Alphonso observed, "the carpets are all down, & the papering all done, gas fittings, and plumbing, and furniture & shelving & books, all is done, but the parlor."

13. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, July 9, 1877, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

14. A. T. to Delia Torrey, July 23, 1877, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

15. A. T. to Delia Torrey, Aug. 21, 1877, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

Their dining table had been a problem. "After being put in order, it was found to be too low for the dining chairs in use now days, and we found no way to harmonize the matter but to have new legs put on." This inconvenience did not dampen Judge Taft's enthusiasm, however, as he wrote Delia, "The furniture looks fresh & beautiful."¹⁶

3. Asher & Son's Bill for Extras

In repairing the fire damage, Asher & Son, in accordance with instructions from Judge Taft, made a number of additions and improvements to the structure not called for in their contract. On July 28, 1877, they forwarded to Taft a breakdown of the bill for these changes. It read:

three dormer windows	\$75.00	
one flight of box stairs	35.00	
one door frame	3.10	
three cellar sash	1.50	
three cellar frames	3.00	
three screens & iron cellar frames	<u>3.00</u>	\$120.60
south bay	\$250.00	
laying floor in attic	65.00	
roof paper & putting on	9.00	
eight anchors	28.00	
seven pair outside blinds & hanging	42.00	
extra transom, 7 doors, pairs	49.00	
four pair inside shutters	<u>38.00</u>	\$481.00
wainscotting bathroom	\$16.00	
three caps and sills	5.28	
17 feet of water table	9.40	
one stone flat form	53.00	
timber for roof	10.00	
wash tub	14.00	
one iron coal shute door & installation	8.25	
wire screen for windows & door	12.00	
extra hardware & nails	<u>36.00</u>	\$163.93
six transom sash	\$ 3.30	
1053 feet 7/8s	36.85	
350 feet of flooring	15.75	
50 feet of lumber	3.00	

16. A. T. to Delia Torrey, Aug. 25, 1877, L. C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. While Will was visiting his Cleveland classmate, Harry and a Cuyahoga County classmate were staying with the Tafts.

12 feet clear 1 3/8s	\$.96	
12 feet of lumber	.60	
10 feet of lumber	.35	
drayage	<u>3.00</u>	\$63.81
rubber springs	\$ 1.50	
window springs	1.00	
18 feet clear 1 3/8 lumber	1.44	
12 feet clear 7/8 lumber	.48	
molding	1.50	
three hand rail hooks	1.20	
one pair of hinges	.15	
99 3/4 days' labor at Taft Home	299.25	
4 1/2 days' labor at shop	<u>13.50</u>	<u>\$320.02</u>
		\$1,149.36

Credit

by wooden platform	\$12.75	
back stairs not put in front	15.00	
wainscotting in bathroom	<u>7.00</u>	<u>\$ 34.75</u>
		\$1,141.61

450 feet of black walnut flooring in dining room		<u>20.25</u>
		\$1,134.86

less for black walnut and ash flooring in dining room		<u>50.00</u>
		\$1,084.86 ¹⁷

4. Repair and Cleaning of Chimneys

Jacob Magly & Son, Bricklayers & Jobbers, were hired to assist the prime contractor. On June 23, 1877, they billed Judge Taft for \$62.28:

April 9, 1877, work on rear chimney, 2 1/2 days by bricklayer and 2 1/2 days by his helper	\$28.75
575 chimney bricks and \$4.50 worth of mortar for chimney top	14.00

17. The iron door for the coal shute was bought for \$7.50 from Walton, Hemler & Co. Walton, Hemler & Co. to A. T., July 1, 1877; Asher & Son to A. T., July 28, 1877, Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882, WHTMA.

April 25-28, 1877, difference between the cost of brick and
 woodwork on the south bay. An extra cost for brick work
 of \$18.84

\$62.59 18

A Mr. Osgood charged Judge Taft ten dollars for cleaning the
 chimneys and removing bricks for a grate.¹⁹

5. Wallpapering, Frescoing, Painting, and Plastering

a. Papering and Tinting

Louise Taft had the house redecorated following the fire. Wall-
 paper and border were purchased from Camargo Manufacturing Company,
 whose workmen did the cutting and hanging. The bill presented by
 Carmago and paid by Judge Taft for this project, provides details about
 room arrangements and appearances during the Taft years subsequent to
 July 1877. Camargo's bill demonstrates that the rooms were redecorated
 as follows:

Upper Floor--Pre-1851 House

<u>Southwest Room</u>	<u>Unit Cost</u>	<u>Total Cost</u>
16 pieces of wallpaper	.50	\$ 8.00
3 pieces of border	2.50	7.50
6 pieces of cornice molding	.75	4.50
3 pieces of tinting style	.18	.45
3 pieces of ceiling	1.50	4.50
4 corners		3.00
Tinting ceiling	.07	1.25
Hanging 19 pieces	.25	4.75
Hanging 12 pieces	.30	3.60
Cutting out 16 pieces	.35	2.10
Hanging 4 pieces	.6 1/4	<u>.25</u>
		\$39.90

<u>Southeast Room</u>	<u>Unit Cost</u>	<u>Total Cost</u>
16 pieces of wallpaper	.35	\$ 5.60
3 pieces of border	.75	2.25

18. Magly & Son to A. T., June 23, 1877, Bills Paid by A. Taft,
 Oct. 1875-May 1882, WHTMA.

19. Osgood to A. T., July 10, 1877, Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct.
 1875-May 1882, WHTMA.

3 pieces of ceiling style	.15	\$.45
3 pieces of ceiling molding	1.00	3.00
4 corners	.25	1.00
4 ornaments	.20	.80
6 pieces cornice molding	.50	3.00
6 pieces (illegible)	.10	.60
Hanging 19 pieces	.25	4.75
Hanging 18 pieces	.30	4.50
Hanging 8 pieces	.06	.50
Sizing 16 pieces	.09	1.12
Tinting ceiling		<u>3.00</u>

\$30.77

<u>Northwest Room</u>	<u>Unit Cost</u>	<u>Total Cost</u>
16 pieces of wallpaper	.35	\$ 5.60
3 pieces of border	1.25	3.95
Hanging 19 pieces	.25	4.75
Cutting out 3 pieces	.35	1.05
Sizing	.07	<u>1.12</u>

\$16.47

<u>Northeast Room</u>	<u>Unit Cost</u>	<u>Total Cost</u>
16 pieces of wallpaper	.20	\$ 3.20
3 pieces of border	1.25	3.95
Hanging 19 pieces	.20	3.80
Sizing	.07	<u>1.12</u>

\$12.07

Second Floor--Post-1851 Wing

<u>Back Hall</u>	<u>Unit Cost</u>	<u>Total Cost</u>
18 pieces of wallpaper	.25	\$ 4.50
4 pieces of border	.25	1.00
Sizing 18 pieces	.07	1.26
Hanging 22 pieces	.20	<u>4.40</u>

\$11.16

<u>South Room</u>	<u>Unit Cost</u>	<u>Total Cost</u>
10 pieces of wallpaper	.20	\$ 2.00
2 pieces of border	.31 1/2	.63
Sizing 10 pieces	.07	.70
Hanging 12 pieces	.20	<u>2.50</u>

\$ 6.03

<u>Blue Room</u>	<u>Unit Cost</u>	<u>Total Cost</u>
10 pieces of wallpaper	.20	\$ 2.00
4.2 pieces of border	.35	1.57
Tinting ceiling		3.00
Sizing 10 pieces	.07	.70
Hanging 12 pieces	.20	2.50
Hanging 4 pieces	.30	<u>1.20</u>
		\$11.27

<u>Mrs. Taft's Room</u>	<u>Unit Cost</u>	<u>Total Cost</u>
10 pieces of wallpaper	.75	\$ 7.50
3.2 pieces of border	1.75	6.13
3.2 pieces of ceiling style	.15	.52
3 pieces of ceiling molding	1.00	3.00
4 corners	.25	1.00
4 ornaments	.20	.80
7 pieces of cornice molding	.40	2.80
Hanging 13.2 pieces	.25	3.38
Hanging 13.2 pieces	.30	4.05
Hanging 8 pieces	.06	.50
Tinting ceiling		3.00
Sizing 10 pieces	.07	<u>.70</u>
		\$30.18

<u>Tile Bathroom</u>	<u>Unit Cost</u>	<u>Total Cost</u>
7 pieces of wallpaper	.50	\$ 3.50
2.2 pieces of wallpaper	.50	1.25
5 pieces of border	.75	3.75
3 yards of muslin	.20	.60
Sizing 9 pieces	.07	.63
Hanging 14.2 pieces	.30	<u>4.35</u>
		\$14.08

First Floor--Pre-1851 House

<u>Front Library</u>	<u>Unit Cost</u>	<u>Total Cost</u>
10 pieces of wallpaper	1.35	\$13.50
22 pieces butterfly border	2.50	6.25
2 pieces butterfly border bot.	2.00	4.00
5 cornice molding	.50	2.50
4 pieces cove tint	.15	.75
Tinting Ceiling		3.00

Sizing 10 pieces	.07	\$.70
Hanging 14.2 pieces	.25	3.63
Hanging 10 pieces	.30	<u>3.00</u>
		\$37.28

<u>Main Hall</u>	<u>Unit Cost</u>	<u>Total Cost</u>
30 pieces of wallpaper	.75	\$ 22.50
13 pieces hall border	1.25	16.25'
7 pieces plain block	.25	1.75
7 pieces plain block	.10	.70
14 pieces Ponief Red	.25	3.50
6 pieces Ponief Red	.10	.60
5 pieces Dado paper	2.75	13.75
Sizing 36 pieces	.07	2.52
Hanging 96 pieces	.30	28.80
Tinting ceiling		6.00
2.2 pieces ceiling molding over library	1.25	3.13
4 corners	.50	2.00
Tinting ceiling		3.00
3 pieces style	.15	.45
Hanging 9.2 pieces	.30	2.85
6 pieces . . . & room ceiling	.10	.60
Tinting ceiling		3.00
Hanging 6 pieces	.30	1.80
Taking off 190 pieces	.20	<u>38.00</u>
		\$152.20

<u>Red Room</u>	<u>Unit Cost</u>	<u>Total Cost</u>
8 pieces of wallpaper	.75	\$ 6.00
3 pieces of Owl Dado	3.50	10.50
6 pieces of P . . . Border	1.25	7.50
3 pieces of plain block border	.25	.75
6 pieces of red velvet border	1.25	7.50
6 pieces of cove	.10	.60
6 pieces of cornice strip	.10	.60
Tinting ceiling		3.00
Sizing 11 pieces	.07	.77
Hanging 38 pieces	.30	<u>11.40</u>
		\$53.62

First Floor--Post-1851 Wing

<u>Dining Room Hall</u>	<u>Unit Cost</u>	<u>Total Cost</u>
6 pieces of wallpaper	.75	\$ 4.50
2 pieces Owl Dado	3.50	7.00

5 pieces P . . . nip border	1.25	\$ 6.27
5 pieces plain block border	.25	1.25
5 pieces regular velvet border	1.25	6.25
5 pieces cove	.05	.25
5 pieces cornice molding	.50	2.50
Sizing 8 pieces	.07	.56
Hanging 33 pieces	.30	9.90
Tinting ceiling		<u>3.00</u>
		\$41.38 ²⁰

Workmen from Carmago returned to 60 Auburn Street on May 14, 1880, to tint the ceilings of the dining roomk dining room hall, and "spare room." The charge for this service was \$13.21

b. Frescoing

Mahler & Jepe on August 24, 1877, billed the Tafts for \$125 for the parlor frescoing and \$10 for the ceiling in the sitting room.²²

c. Painting, Graining, Varnishing, & Glazing

William Grant was given the task of painting the house, and on July 20, 1877, he billed Judge Taft for:

extras done painting the basement (the woodwork, walls, and floors of the kitchen, laundry, pantry, storeroom, and stairways)		\$ 80.00
refurnishing old kitchen		7.00
repainting outside sash		8.00
painting back porch		6.00
setting lights of French plate glass in front door		19.00
reglazing transoms and bookcase doors		14.00
extra graining & varnishing in halls and bathrooms, and pantry walls in small bathroom		30.00
graining & varnishing floors of two back bedrooms		7.00
graining & varnishing floors of four rooms & closets on first floor		<u>10.00</u>
		<u>25.00</u>
		\$206.00

20. Camargo Manufacturing Co. to A. T., Aug. 1877, Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882, WHTMA.

21. Ibid., May 14, 1880, Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882, WHTMA.

22. Mahler U Jepe to A. T., Aug. 24, 1877, Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882, WHTMA.

On Grant's bill it was noted by Judge Taft, "The wall and floor of kitchen were painted before & ought to come into the contract of repairs also the back porch.

"Repainting outside sash might not be paid for. The floor of the dining room is not satisfactory [and] must have more labor in polishing [and] hand rubbing."²³

d. Plastering

Grace & Scully on June 14, 1877, billed Judge Taft for \$84.50 for work done to his house following the fire and preparatory to re-decorating. Their charges were for:

repairing and plastering in 15 rooms, Halls, and stair-ways	\$28.50
plastering partition in basement	16.00
plastering chimney in basement	3.00
removing mortar and laths from partition	6.50
one-half barrel of plaster of paris for plastering rooms	1.50
skimming mortar	5.50
plastering the ceilings of the library and parlor	20.00
skimming wall in library	3.20
	<u> </u>
	\$84.50

Judge Taft was also billed by Grace & Scully for another \$54, the cost of plastering the attic and basement ceiling.²⁴

In August, Grace & Scully positioned 136 feet of running cornice in the parlor at 50 cents per foot. For this work, the Tafts paid \$68.²⁵

6. Plumbing and Bathroom Fixtures

Lamping & Woodburn supplied the fixtures and labor for the bathroom and other plumbing projects at 60 Auburn Street. On August 1, 1877, they billed Judge Taft for:

23. W. Grant to A. T., July 20, 1877, Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882, WHTMA.

24. Grace & Scully to A. T., June 14, 1877, Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882, WHTMA.

25. Ibid., Aug. 2, 1877, Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882, WHTMA.

June 28, 1877	65 feet of four-inch pipe	\$26.00	
	one 4 x 4 offset	1.25	
	one 4 x 16 offset	2.25	
	three 4-inch elbows	3.00	
	eight 4-inch pipe hooks	1.60	
	two coverings with caps for ventilator on roof	1.50	
	three days' labor for two men	<u>15.00</u>	
		\$50.60	
	June 30, 1877	70 feet of 4-inch stone pipe	\$10.50
		six feet 4 x 4 (illegible)	4.20
three 4-inch curves		1.50	
one 3-inch stone trap		1.00	
one cesspool with bell trap		2.25	
one cesspool with strainer		<u>.75</u>	
		\$19.90	
July 14, 1877	one water closet	\$26.00	
	30 pounds of sheet lead for safe	3.00	
	two 4-inch lead bends	3.00	
	two and one-half feet 4-inch soil pipe	2.10	
	61 feet light 1 1/4-inch pipe	18.30	
	71 feet 5/8-inch strong pipe	21.30	
	32 feet 1-inch light pipe	8.00	
	16 feet extra strong 3/8-inch pipe	3.20	
	one plated combination bath bill	.75	
	one bath plug & chain plated	1.00	
	one copper-plated sink	7.00	
	one 2 5/8-inch Fuller flange & thimble cock	4.50	
	one plated plug & waste chain for old stand	1.00	
	four 5/8-inch lever stops and waste cocks	6.00	
	three 2-inch lead traps	5.25	
	one 2-inch iron strap	1.00	
	one 2-inch iron elbow	.60	
	nine brass screws	.10	
	one marble wash stand top	16.00	
	one 14-inch overflow basin	2.50	
	one plated plug & waste for basin	1.25	
	three basin chains	.30	
	one plated stay & chain	.75	
	two plated Boston self-closing cocks	12.00	
	30 pair of lugs	3.60	
	one copper seat bath	9.00	

	one leaded valve	\$ 1.50
	one pull & plate	1.00
	two 2-inch cocks (long stems & lever)	5.00
	one 2-inch grating	.25
	75 pounds of solder	18.75
	two Victor self closing cocks	10.00
	two plated 4-inch arin comp. stand cocks	6.00
	17 days' of labor of plumber & helper	<u>85.00</u>
		\$259.00
July 26, 1877	one six-foot copper bathtub	\$15.00
	two pounds of solder	.50
	two days labor of two men	<u>2.50</u>
		<u>\$ 18.00</u>
		\$417.50 ²⁶

The decision to install new chandeliers in the parlor and dining room compelled the Tafts to purchased on August 7 from Lamping & Woodburn 166 feet of gas pipe. It took the fitters six days to install the pipe.²⁷

Robert Woodburn was no longer in partership with Lamping, when in March 1879 he billed Judge Taft for plumbing fixtures and labor during the previous 15 months. The bill read:

January 8, 1878	two new valves for pump	\$.50
	2 1/2 hours labor	.88
May 20, 1878	one 3/4-inch elbow for kitchen range	.20
	four hours labor, two men	2.20
June 19, 1878	two feet 5/8-inch extra strong pipe	.25
	two pounds solder	.25
	four hours labor, two men	.50

26. Lamping & Woodburn to A. T., Aug. 1, 1877, Bills Paid By A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882, WHTMA.

27. Ibid., Aug. 7, 1877, Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882, WHTMA.

Nov. 7, 1878	repairing two cocks	\$.50
Dec. 2, 1878	one and one-half hours labor, two men on waste pipe	.75
Feb. 1, 1879	new 3-inch force pump chamber	8.50
	two new valves	.50
	two pounds solder	.50
	three-fourths day's labor, two men	3.75
March 6, 1879	repair of Fuller cock	<u>1.00</u>
		\$20.28 ²⁸

By 1881 the Tafts were patronizing John Douglas for plumbing services. In April, Douglas was called to 60 Auburn Street to work on the yard cesspool.²⁹ Douglas in January 1882 spent three-fourths of a day cleaning out the boiler.³⁰ In mid-March, Douglas and a helper were at the Taft house for two and one-half days ventilating the water closets, repairing pipes, and positioning a new 42 x 22-inch iron sink.³¹

7. Chandeliers, Lamps, and Fixtures

a. In the Upper Story

McHenry & Co. was called on by the Tafts to rehabilitate and replace damaged lighting fixtures throughout the upper story. In the period, July 13-August 13, the following work was accomplished:

July 13, 1877	renewing two 6-light chandeliers	} \$ 18.50
	renewing three 3-light chandeliers	
	renewing one three-rod hanger	

28. Woodburn to A. T., March 31, 1879, Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882, WHTMA.

29. Douglas to A. T., April 21, 1879, Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882, WHTMA.

30. Ibid., Feb. 1, 1882, Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882, WHTMA.

31. Ibid., May 3, 1882, Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882, WHTMA. Major items used by the plumber, in addition to the sink were 20 feet of 2-inch galvanized vent pipe, 6 1/2 square feet of sheet lead, 5 feet of one-inch lead waste pipe, two sink legs, and 8 pounds of solder.

	14 feet of Y. A. burners	\$ 3.80
July 14, 1877	capping outlets and repairing pipes, found leaking	4.00
July 15, 1877	five 2-foot brackets	6.25
	one 3-foot bracket (gilt)	2.00
	two 2-foot brackets (1168)	2.00
July 21, 1877	one 2-foot bracket	1.25
	one 2-foot bracket (gilt)	5.00
July 23, 1877	Putting on old brackets, &c.	1.00
	5 Y. A. burners	1.00
	one two-light toilet chandelier	6.00
	one 2-foot bracket (gilt)	5.00
	one 2-foot bracket	5.00
	three stiff brackets (real bronze)	4.50
	four 2-foot brackets (bronze)	6.00
	one 1-foot stiff bracket for girls' room	.75
	three 1-foot stiff brackets for bath and closet	3.75
	one ell cock for portable stand	.50
	two stiff brackets	1.30
	renewing five light extensions	4.00
July 25, 1877	changing brackets for toilet & hanging chandelier	1.40
	five lengthening pieces	.75
	three bushings & four wall plates	.50
	18-foot covered Atlantic hose for old portable stands	7.20
July 27, 1877	one 1-foot bracket (gilt)	1.25
	one 1-foot bracket	1.00
	11 feet of pipe & 5 fittings	1.60
	two gas argon burners	2.00
	making extensions & changing brackets	1.20
July 28, 1877	two connecting balls for stands three-quarters of a foot of 1/8-inch brass pipe, one stiff joint, two nozzles, one connecting ball, and one drop ell for toilet chandelier	2.10
July 30, 1877	two swing brackets	4.00
	four argon and one blue chimneys	.60
	three and one-half feet bronze pipe	} 2.20
	two fittings and one nipple	
	two 1-inch nozzles	
	labor for making extensions	

August 4, 1877	one 1-foot bracket (real bronze)	\$ 2.00
	two 1-foot brackets	2.00
	three Y. A. burners	.75
	two Stockwell self-starting burners	6.00
	lowering chandeliers & changing brackets (labor)	.75
	one taper slide & one box of tapers	<u>1.50</u>
		\$125.80 ³²

b. In the Parlor and Library

The Tafts also had their library and parlor redecorated in 1877. Chandeliers and fixtures for these rooms were supplied by McHenry & Co., and included:

September 1, 1877	one four-light chandelier, with scalloped shades	\$ 48.40
	two green paper shades	.90
	five F. R. globes	2.50
October 10, 1877	two four-light chandeliers of polished brass with scalloped etched shades	100.00
	five 7-inch globes	2.50
	one globe holder	.20
	2 1/2 feet burnished brass pipe	<u>1.25</u>
		\$155.55 ³³

c. Subsequent Purchases

Judge Taft on September 1, 1880, purchased from McHenry & Co. a Cleveland Nickel Student Lamp, with green shade, for \$5.50.³⁴

In May 1881 the Tafts again called on McHenry & Co. for lighting fixtures. McHenry & Co's. bill read:

32. McHenry & Co. to A. T., Aug. 31, 1877, Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882, WHTMA.

33. McHenry & Co. to A. T., undated, Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882, WHTMA.

34. Ibid., Oct. 1, 1880, Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882, WHTMA.

May 5, 1881	repair of chandelier extension	\$.85
May 20, 1881	six Y. A. Lava tip burners	1.20
May 21, 1881	six 5-inch shades	4.50
	six 5-inch holders	1.50
	labor of putting old cord on extensions	.50
May 26, 1881	one Y. A. burner	.20
May 28, 1881	one Y. A. burner	.20
		<u>.20</u>
		\$ 8.95 ³⁵

Judge Taft in July and August purchased from McHenry & Co. four Argon chimneys, and paid \$2.45 for labor to take down, repair, and rehang the extensions.³⁶

On January 28, 1882, Judge Taft had B. Dammenhold, Plumber & Gas Fitters, repair the drop light in his room and install a new bracket.³⁷

8. Heaters, Boilers, Ranges, and Hearths

a. Rehabilitating the Heating System

C. N. Bennett, Heating & Ventilation Engineer, was employed following the fire to refurbish and rehabilitate the heating system. On July 1, 1877, he billed Judge Taft for:

May 2, 1877	two 10 x 10 register boxes	\$ 4.00
	31 4 x 12 tin pipes	27.90
	six 8-inch tin pipes	3.84
	4.7 pounds of smoke pipe	9.40
	two 8-inch elbows	3.00
	one smoke pipe thimble	.50
	14 hours of labor	5.60
	expenses	.60
	one sox press	1.00

35. Ibid., June 1, 1881, Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882, WHTMA.

36. Ibid., Aug. 21, 1881, Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882, WHTMA.

37. A. T. to Dammenhold, Jan. 28, 1882, Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882, WHTMA.

	two 8-inch bottom heads	\$ 1.50
June 21, 1877	five hours labor	2.00
	one sox press	1.00
	expenses	.20
June 25, 1877	cleaning & re-enameling four frames	6.00
	cleaning & re-enameling four frames	4.00
	cleaning & re-enameling three fronts	3.00
	cleaning & re-enameling four registers	4.00
	two 10 x 14 registers	
	re-enameling four grates & materials	10.00
	re-enameling three mantels	7.50
	boxing fireplace	2.00
	labor cutting down and bricking up flue	6.00
		<u>6.00</u>
		\$103.04 ³⁸

b. The Purchase of New Heaters, Kitchen Range, and Boiler

William Miller, Manufacturer of Stoves, Ranges & Furnaces, sold to Judge Taft a number of items needed to modernize the kitchen, laundry, and heating system. Miller's bills, including charges for labor, read:

April 14, 1877	one No. 8 heater coil	\$ 5.00
	two longside pipes	1.50
	four elbows & two nipples	.80
	one pipe joint & one elbow	1.15
	labor for moving stove	.50
	one old No. 4 heater	15.00
April 23, 1877	one upright boiler	1.50
May 2, 1877	connecting stove	2.67
June 25, 1877	two 1876 Baltimore Heaters	120.00
July 11, 1877	one 1876 Baltimore Kitchen Range & Shelf	100.00

38. C. N. Bennett to A. T., July 1, 1877, Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882, WHTMA.

July 12, 1877	5 1/2 feet of line one No. 2 laundry boiler & pipe	\$ 2.25 17.00
July 24, 1877	cleaning out flue for laundry	2.00
July 30, 1877	two skillets four spoons	.95 .90
Aug. 9, 1877	14 pounds galvanized pipe	<u>3.50</u>
		\$274.73 ³⁹

c. New Hearths

The Tafts in August 1877 purchased for \$60 from C. B. Evans Mantel & Grate Co., "one club house frame and basket tile hearth and border, with fire jambs and settings." The charge for installation was \$5.50.⁴⁰ C. N. Bennett spent the day at 60 Auburn Street, laying a 50-brick hearth.⁴¹

d. Maintenance Charges

In August 1877, C. N. Bennett was called to the Taft house. Five and one-half feet of 15-inch square pipe (probably for a hot air duct) was installed, and Bennett billed Taft for \$15.75 for two days masonry work.⁴²

In July and September 1881, the Tafts called on William Miller for parts and labor. A Miller workman on July 13 installed two short centers, one cover, and a grate in the laundry. On September 23 two men were at 60 Auburn Street positioning a chimney top, 19 pounds of galvanized pipe, and making a chimney box.⁴³ December 1881 found the

39. William Miller to A. T., Aug. 31, 1877, Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882, WHTMA.

40. C. E. Evans to A. T., Aug. 28, 1877, Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882, WHTMA.

41. Bennett to A. T., Nov. 30, 1877, Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882, WHTMA.

42. Ibid., Aug. 31, 1877, Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882, WHTMA.

43. Miller to A. T., Aug. 1 & Oct. 1, 1881, Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882, WHTMA.

Tafts purchasing grates and a shovel for their Baltimore heaters and having them cleaned.⁴⁴

9. Lightning Rods

Judge Taft on June 4, 1877, was billed by J. R. Weston for a patented galvanized iron lightning rod for his residence. The charge for the rods was \$53, with a credit of two dollars for the old ones.⁴⁵

44. Ibid., Jan. 1, 1882, Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882, WHTMA.

45. J. R. Weston to A. T., June 4, 1877, Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882, WHTMA.

VIII. THE LAST YEARS AT 60 AUBURN STREET

A. Will Taft is Admitted to the Bar

1. Will Graduates from Yale

In September 1877 the Taft boys returned to school in the east, Will enrolling for his senior year at Yale. There in mid-October he was honored when his class voted him class orator. Meanwhile all the bills for repair and rehabilitation of the house had been submitted, and Judge Taft found that they totaled about \$8,000, about \$3,000 in excess of the sum for which his insurance companies were liable. This, he lamented to Delia, was "a good deal," but he was cheered by the knowledge that "the house is very good indeed & most satisfactory."¹

Will did not return to Cincinnati for the Christmas holidays, remaining at Yale to work on his class oration. His father believed that he was correct in this decision.

With Christmas less than ten days away, the two older sons and their wives called at 60 Auburn Street. Rossy and Tillie were there on the afternoon of the 16th. This was only the second time Rossy had been in his boyhood home since the fire. Since his nervous breakdown, Rossy did not go out much, consequently his father and Mrs. Taft were delighted to see that he "seemed interested in the house and furniture and was rather socialable. [sic]"²

On the evening of the 16, the Tafts entertained at a tea for Charlie and his wife, Judge Williamson, and Misses Clark and Leggett. After eating, they gathered around the piano in the parlor and sang Christmas songs. Judge Taft declared that the piano "adds very much to the loveliness of the house," and that Fanny sang very well, having both a good voice and ear.³

1. A. T. to Delia Torrey, Sept. 29 & Oct. 21, 1877, L. C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

2. Rossy had suffered a nervous breakdown in 1877 and had been confined in a sanitarium soon after the birth of his son Hulbert. Judge Taft confided to his friends that he believed Rossy had studied too hard. Within a few months Rossy was released, returning to his home on Freeman Street, in Cincinnati, that the Hulberts had given Tillie as a wedding gift. Ross, An American Family, p. 66.

3. A. T. to Delia Torrey, Dec. 16, 1877, L. C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

January 1878 was unseasonably mild in the Ohio Valley. By the beginning of the fourth week, the Tafts had discontinued "the furnace fire after being roasted out by it." Wood fires in the fireplaces sufficed and were pleasant, whenever there was need of a cheerful blaze.⁴

The winter and spring passed quietly on Mt. Auburn, and on June 27, 1878, William Howard Taft was graduated from Yale. He missed leading his class, standing second in a class of 132. The valedictory was delivered by Clarence H. Kelsey, with Alphonso and Louise in attendance. In September, Will entered Cincinnati Law School, which he could attend while living at home. There he studied under Rufus King.⁵

2. The Fry Mantel

While Will was preparing to enter law school, his mother was excitedly writing Delia, describing her "new mantel piece, and all the other changes." The new mantel was one of Heinrich Fry's masterpieces, and he was "very ambitious, and full of enthusiasm about it." In her opinion, the Fry Mantel improved "the parlor more than any piece of furniture and is worth all it cost." She had not told anybody what she had paid, but she had invested what she had received from Rossy, "where it will do the most good," and what she paid "is nothing to nobody."

Fry's contract had included relocation of the "large mirror, and the setting of the other mantel in the library." He had positioned a wide shelf under the mirror, with "three large substantial brackets, and it completely finished the side of the room." Louise Taft continued, "you can form no idea till you see it, how it enlarges the room, repeats the bay window, the bust, pedestal, drapery, &c, and reflects the mantel, piano & everything in the room." She expected to receive a handsome plaque and vases for the mantel for their silver wedding anniversary.

In the near future, she was going to purchase two or three large easy chairs, and then she would consider the parlor "finished."⁶

4. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Jan. 22, 1878, L. C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

5. Ross, An American Family, pp. 65-66. King was the school's dean.

6. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Sept. 7, 1878, L. C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. The Fry Mantel is of black walnut, and carved on either side of the mirror are raised figures of Penelope and Odysseus. Below the shelf in raised letter is carved the phrase, "Small Cheer and Great Welcome."

3. The Rogers Mantel and New Carpeting

The Rogers Mantel, Mrs. Taft informed her sister, looked "very lovely in the library, and finishes that room beautifully." She was having it cleaned and the carpet shaken and put down fresh and clean.

She had also accepted from Tiller, a lovely carpet (with Eastlake pattern) for Harry's room. Louise, however, considered it too pretty to be wasted on a boy's room, and had it put down in the parlor chamber, A Brussels carpet, also a gift from Tillie, was sent up to Harry's room.⁷

Relying on Miss Nourse's advice, Mrs. Taft purchased four pictures for her parlor. One was a copy of Guido Reni's "Aurora," which cost her \$10.⁸

Before the end of September 1878 Louise Taft had purchased a new carpet for the hall. It was a "#1866 Bigelow body 6 frame," costing \$2 per yard. On the 25th William Bristol spent the day at the Taft house, where he cleaned 40 yards of Axminster carpet and four Brussels carpets of 10, 30, 20, and 19 square yards.⁹

4. Mrs. Taft Secures the Return of Rossy's Books

By September 1878 Rossy and Tillie had separated. Several years before, Mrs. Taft had given Tillie the books in French and German, Rossy had sent home while studying abroad, with the understanding Mrs. Hulbert would buy the newlyweds a second bookcase. Now that Rossy was again living at home, Mrs. Taft suggested she would like the books returned. Tillie's mother refused, remarking that she had "a nice place for the two book cases to stand together," and she appropriated them for her home.

Upon Rossy's return to 60 Auburn Street, Mrs. Taft "suggested that he might like to read some French & German, while he was at leisure." He said he would and went after his books, returning with them and the two bookcases. Writing Delia of her coup, Louise observed, "I have told no one but you, and you must burn this."¹⁰

7. Ibid. Mrs. Taft complained at this time that her old carpets were "giving out," and these two would "set me up."

8. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Sept. 25, 1878, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

9. Bristol to A.T., Sept. 25, 1878, Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882, WHTMA; Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Sept. 28, 1878, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

10. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Sept. 1878, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

5. Will's 21st Birthday

Mrs. Taft had a surprise party for Will on Saturday, September 14, for his 21st birthday. She had the parlor rug taken up, hired several musicians, and served ice cream, cake, sandwiches, and coffee to Will and a score of his friends.¹¹

With all her children at school, Mrs. Taft in the autumn of 1878 found it restful "to be at leisure to stay at home and enjoy the pleasant house." Horace, Fanny, and Louise came home for dinner at 2 o'clock, which she found more "satisfactory than" eating alone.

The household's schedule called for breakfast at 7:30 to permit the scholars to get off for school, allowing Mrs. Taft "a long morning for cooking or going out, and the afternoon for reading or visiting." In the evenings, the girls used her room for studying, while she and Mr. Taft occupied the library. Horace studied in his room. After listening to the girls' lessons at 9 o'clock, Mrs. Taft sent them to bed.¹²

6. The Grand Piano and the Tafts' Silver Wedding Anniversary

The Tafts having decided to purchase a grand piano, Louise contacted Delia, who was the family capitalist. Her husband, she wrote in a letter marked "confidential," would like to borrow \$2,000 or more. But as the piano would cost at least \$500, she believed the sum should be \$3,000. Mrs. Taft suggested that this sum, as well as the other money owed Delia, be consolidated and repaid in five years at six per cent interest. Mr. Taft, she explained, did not like to mortgage his property, because mortgage debts were part of the public record, and injured a man's credit.¹³

Delia Torrey agreed to the loan, and the Tafts bought a grand piano. The piano was positioned in the parlor, where on the night of December 26, 1878, about 100 friends joined with Alphonso and Louise to celebrate their 25th anniversary.

The parlor had been "appropriately and tastefully decorated." Over the Fry Mantel were the dates 1853 and 1878, in letters of evergreen. "A magnificent bank of white flowers, roses, camellias, etc.,

11. Ibid.

12. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Sept. 28, 1878, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. It has been impossible further to identify the "Louise" staying with the Tafts during the 1878-79 school year.

13. Ibid.

interspersed with green leaves, and with the above dates in blue flowers, was placed over the door in the hall." There was no "general compliance with the idea that a silver wedding must be commemorated in offerings of silver." Mrs. Taft's sisters had presented a clock and a pair of candle sticks; Maj. Harmon P. Lloyd, Judge Taft's law partner, a silver horseshoe; John Gano a shawl pin in the form of a minute quiver and arrows; Mrs. Charles Taft a splendid Satsuma vase; Mr. and Mrs. Aaron F. Perry a magnificent vase of Black Widow Ipsenware, "the flowers with which it was ornamented, apparently sparkling with dew drops"; Mrs. Judge Whitman an exquisite plaque adorned with a flower piece; Mrs. A.J. Howe a Worcester jug; and there was a vase and several plaques of cloisonne enamel on porcelain and copper, and a bronze incense box sent by California relatives.¹⁴

7. Will Taft's Appointment as Assistant Prosecutor

While William Howard Taft attended Cincinnati Law School, he lived at home. In 1878 the school was housed in the old Mercantile Library Building in the heart of the city. To finance his way, young Taft worked as a reporter for Murat Halstead's Cincinnati Commercial. Taft in May 1880 traveled to Columbus, where he took and passed the examination for admission to the bar. He, however, did not plunge into private practice but continued to work for the newspaper until October 25, 1880, when he was appointed assistant prosecutor of Hamilton County.¹⁵

B. Alphonso Taft Serves His Country Abroad

1. The Presidential Campaign of 1880

In September 1879, the year before Will's appointment, the Tafts had gathered at Cincinnati's Grand Hotel to participate in General Grant's triumphant return from his lengthy world tour. Mrs. William T. Sherman stayed in the Taft Home and Alphonso and Louise called on the Grants. June 1880 found Judge Taft at the National Republican Convention in Chicago. There he struggled, along with other Stalwarts, to secure the nomination of his close friend, General Grant, for a third term. He was deeply disappointed when the convention turned its back on the Civil War hero and nominated James A. Garfield for President and Chester A. Arthur for Vice President.

14. Cincinnati Gazette, Dec. 27, 1878. On returning to Cincinnati following his public service as a member of President Grant's cabinet, Judge Taft had formed a law partnership with Maj. Harmon P. Lloyd.

15. Pringle, Life and Times of William Howard Taft, Vol. 1, pp. 47-54.

"Grant is beaten," he wrote Delia, "How it was done will no longer interest you. It was not fairly done but in politics there is no remedy for fraud Garfield was sprung upon the convention and they took him to get out of a difficulty."¹⁶

Judge Taft, as a good party man, willingly took the stump for Garfield, and Will participated in his first campaign. With her husband and eldest son gone for a week at a time, Mrs. Taft complained to Delia, "I am all forelorn." There was nobody to discuss politics with, so she turned her thoughts to the pianos. The grand piano, she reported, filled up the parlor and the old piano had been placed in the library, where it facilitated Fanny's practicing.¹⁷

In November the Garfield-Arthur ticket was elected. Garfield was inaugurated as 20th President on March 4, 1881, and was gunned down by an assassin in July. Dying in September, he was succeeded to the Presidency by Chester A. Arthur.

2. Will Taft as Real Estate Agent

In 1882 both Judge Taft and Will received governmental appointments. William in January accepted an offer from President Arthur to become Collector of Internal Revenue for the 1st District, with headquarters in Cincinnati, and about the same time his father was named by the President to be United States Minister to Austria-Hungary.

May found Judge and Mrs. Taft packing, and on the 21st Will wrote Fanny, "This is the last Sunday that Mother & Father will spend at home for a long time." Even before they left, he found himself delegated with the task of writing family letters. A source of disappointment was his failure to rent the house. The Worthingtons had expressed some interest at taking the property for \$1,200 a year, but they wanted the Tafts to do some papering and painting. If the Worthingtons balked at the terms, there was a chance the William Gibsons might be interested on their return from Europe in July.

During his parents' absence, Will hoped to rent a room on the hill but was unable to find any suitable accommodations. He had located suitable quarters on Ludlow Street, but he hesitated to take them until such time as he found renters for 60 Auburn Street. Rossy, having been divorced by his wife in 1882, had engaged rooms on Second Street.¹⁸

16. A.T. to Delia Torrey, June 13, 1880, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

17. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, June 6, 1880, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

18. W.H.T. to Fanny Taft, May 21, 1882, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. Will, taking cognizance of Rossy's vagaries, believed he could not have selected a less desirable apartment.

Will and Rossy continued to live at home for several weeks after Judge and Mrs. Taft had sailed for Europe. Writing his father on June 4, Will reported, the "house still unrented" and no very promising offers.¹⁹ By the final week of June, Will and Rossy had moved out of the house. Will occupied rooms at Mrs. Glass' and Rossy his apartment on Second Street.²⁰

3. The Goeppers Lease 60 Auburn Street

William Gibson, on his return from Europe, had expressed interest in a year's lease of the house. But he was not prepared to act until he could consult his wife, who was visiting in Asbury Park, New Jersey. A second individual, Herman Goepper, had also seen and liked the house. Will explained to Goepper that Gibson had first claim. Gibson's wife decided against moving into 60 Auburn Street, and Goepper made arrangements with Charles Taft to lease the property for three years, commencing October 10, 1882. It was agreed that Charlie would have the upstairs rooms repapered. The Goeppers also stated that they wanted use of "the carpets and some of the heavy pieces of furniture."

To provide for protection of the house, furniture, and grounds, arrangements had been made for the McDonalds to live in the house until such time as the Goeppers moved in. Both McDonald and his wife liked the arrangement, and Mr. McDonald, at a cost of ten to fifteen dollars, had "fixed up the stable so that he keeps his two horses and a carriage in it." The McDonalds had told Charlie that they would vacate by September 20, but Will would not be surprised "if they stayed until the Goeppers" took possession.²¹

Charlie Taft on August 26 relayed the favorable news regarding the Goepper lease subject to a satisfactory agreement on necessary repairs, to his father. He was delighted to secure the Goeppers as tenants, because they were certain to take care of the property. If the McDonalds vacated by September 20, as they had promised, Charlie would have 20 days to do the papering. The Goeppers were to pay \$1,200 per year for the lease.²²

19. W.H.T. to A.T., June 4, 1882, and A.T. to W.H.T., June 21, 1882, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

20. W.H.T. to A.T., June 25, 1882, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. Will's fears regarding location of Rossy's apartment were borne out, when it was broken into and his underclothing and a pair of trousers stolen.

21. W.H.T. to Louise Taft, Aug. 23, 1882, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

22. Charles Taft to A.T., Aug. 26, 1882, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

The lease was signed, and the McDonalds were off the property by the 22d. This created a security problem, and Charlie got Will to sleep in the house until the Goeppers took possession on October 10.²³

Will was understandably concerned about his mother's better furniture. Writing her after her arrival in Vienna, he observed, "It seems a pity that you can not enjoy your bed room set and that choice furniture in the parlor." Evidently, Mrs. Taft did not believe it was worth the shipping costs, because she did not follow up her son's suggestion.²⁴

4. Improvements Made by the Tafts for the Goeppers

On October 8 Will was interrupted from his duties as Collector of Internal Revenue by a visit from Charlie, who wanted him to go out to Mt. Auburn and look at the property with him. Their neighbor to the south, Mrs. Leopold Burkhardt, had asked permission "to dig a drain . . . across our lot about fifteen feet back of the house down the hill tap our house sewer." After studying the problem on-site, the Taft brothers concluded that if the drain were located as Mrs. Burkhardt requested, "it would tear up the ground too much and that the better way . . . was to carry her drain back through the yard, and down across our pasture." It could then be connected with the sewer running through the Emery and Hollister places.²⁵

Mrs. Burkhardt, after discussing the situation with the Taft Brothers, had her drain laid in accordance with their suggestion.

Entering the house, Will found it being "repapered and improved." The Goeppers had "selected light paper for every room," as Mrs. Michael Goepper thought the house too dark.

Before returning to his office, Will discussed with Charlie his mother's request that several of the better carpets be shipped to Vienna. Charlie said this would be a mistake, because they were already down, and the Goeppers might consider their removal a breach of contract.²⁶

23. W.H.T. to A.T., Sept. 16, 1882, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

24. W.H.T. to Louise Taft, Aug. 28, 1882, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

25. W.H.T. to A.T., Oct. 9, 1882, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

26. Ibid. Mrs. Michael Goepper was a widow, and she lived with her son Herman and his bride. The Goeppers had formerly resided on Broadway.

5. The Goeppers and the House

Little is known about the structural history of the Taft house during the three years it was home to the Goeppers. The house made the society columns of the Cincinnati newspapers on April 11, 1883, as scene of the elegant ceremony at which Joseph H. Feemster and Emma Goepper were married. The bride was the daughter of Mrs. Michael Goepper of 60 Auburn Street, and the sister of Herman and Edward Goepper, well known Cincinnati businessmen. The bridegroom was a chemist and had formerly resided at 99 Walnut Street. After the wedding, which occurred at 3 p.m., the couple and 75 invited guests partook of a "delicious collation" catered by Becker, while an orchestra seated in the central hallway "rendered some choice selections."²⁷

6. Judge Taft Thinks about Selling His Home

In March 1883, Will Taft resigned his collectorship and formed a law partnership with Major Lloyd. That summer, accompanied by Rufus Smith, Will visited his parents in Vienna for three weeks. He took a walking tour of Switzerland and traveled the British Isles, before running out of funds in London. He returned to the United States in October, eager to participate in the Ohio elections.

Judge Taft, in the first week of 1884, wrote Charlie concerning stories he had seen in the Cincinnati newspapers that local real estate had increased in value. He was thinking about the possibility of selling the family home and investing the proceeds. His personal preference was to retain the property, but as he expected to retire following his return from Europe, he must think about curtailing expenses.²⁸ Charlie's reply is missing from the Taft Correspondence and Alphonso dropped the subject.

C. The Post-European Years

1. The Tafts Reoccupy Their Home

Alphonso Taft was transferred from Vienna to St. Petersburg in 1884, and closed out his years of public service as minister to Russia. 1884 had been a Democratic year, and Grover Cleveland had defeated James G. Blaine for the Presidency. With the inauguration of the new administration on March 4, 1885, the Tafts began to devote thought to the time when they would be returning to Cincinnati.

27. Cincinnati Enquirer, April 11, 1883.

28. A.T. to Charlie Taft, Jan. 6, 1884, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

Mrs. Taft on March 8 wrote Will, explaining that she was "not anxious to get the house before Oct.," but perhaps "your father will be uneasy to get back." For the present, Will was to hold the Goeppers to their lease. She, however, had many questions as to the condition of the furniture and house. She inquired, "Does the house need painting? Is the paper soiled? Does the old furniture hold out? Do they [the Goeppers] complain of the heat from the laundry warming the upper room?" Mesdames Smith and Noyes, she wrote, might be better judges of these items, and Will might wish to contact them.²⁹

Will undoubtedly investigated the condition of the house, but his letter answering his mother's questions is missing from the William Howard Taft Papers.

The Tafts returned to the United States by way of Great Britain in August 1885. Typhoid pneumonia caught while in St. Petersburg had sapped Judge Taft's strength. Landing in New York City from the steamship Serbia, they stopped several days with Harry. When Alphonso made his official visit to Washington to report to the State Department, Louise caught the train to Millbury for a family reunion. Judge Taft soon joined her there. Having shipped more than 100 boxes of furniture and clothing from St. Petersburg to Cincinnati, Judge Taft on September 15 wrote Will advising him to be on the lookout. Whenever the boxes arrived, an effort should be made to get possession of the house, and to store their furniture on their own premises.³⁰

About the same time, Judge Taft was writing Secretary of State Thomas H. Bayard in reference to his furniture and household effects, "which had been in use by me for about 3 years." The only items subject to duty were 50 yards of carpeting and a pair of curtains purchased in London. Secretary Bayard called this subject to the attention of Secretary of the Treasury Daniel Manning, and he issued orders to the Collector of Customs at Cincinnati for free entry of 101 boxes of personal and household effect belonging to Judge Taft.³¹

Will Taft by this time had answered his father's letter, evidently expressing concern about what was to be done with the furnishings.³² Judge

29. Louise Taft to W.H.T., March 8, 1885, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

30. A.T. to W.H.T., Sept. 18, 1885, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

31. A.T. to Bayard, Sept. 22, 1885, and Bayard to Taft, Sept. 25, 1885, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. Duty would be required on the two items purchased by the Tafts in London.

32. W.H.T.'s reply to his father's letter of September 18 is missing from the William Howard Taft Papers.

Taft on the 23d reassured his son. He pointed out that his mother would be in Cincinnati to oversee the unpacking. She knew what was in each box and had already "arranged in her head how to dispose of a large part of them." Some of the items would duplicate furniture currently in the house, and it would be necessary to store some things. Its management and distribution "would be Louise's responsibility."

As yet, they had heard nothing regarding the physical condition of the house, and what maintenance was required. If experience were a guide, Judge Taft presumed that a minimum the roof would have to be painted. But that should not hinder their moving in. He also feared that the exterior would have to be painted, but he did not want to paint the interior.³³

Will either failed to answer his father's letter, or if he did his reply has been lost. Leaving Millbury in the fourth week of September, Mr. and Mrs. Taft proceeded to Cincinnati, with a lay over in New York to visit Harry. The second week of October found them in Cincinnati but not in their home. The Goepfers did not give up their lease until the 10th, and several more days passed before Judge and Mrs. Taft announced to their friends that they were at home at 60 Auburn Street.³⁴

2. Fanny Takes Charge

While his parents were in Europe, Will had been courting Helen Herron, better known as Nellie. They had become engaged in April 1885 and would be married on June 19, 1886. Upon the return of his parents, Will gave up his apartment to make his home with them. As the date for the wedding approached, Mrs. Taft gave her son and his future bride a sofa, two arm chairs, and four rosewood chairs that were in her house. She arranged to have them reupholstered and covered, before she sent them over to the house in Walnut Hills her son was having built.

At a later date, she gave Will and Nellie her rosewood table with black marble top.³⁵

33. A.T. to W.H.T., Sept. 23, 1885, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

34. A.T. to Delia Torrey, Oct. 12, 1885, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. While waiting to move into their house, Mr. Taft took a room at the Gibson House and Mrs. Taft stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Noyes on Mt. Auburn.

35. W.H.T. to Nellie Herron, Feb. 28, 1886, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 2. Will and Nellie had the marble replaced with rosewood.

Judge and Mrs. Taft on April 7, 1886, left Cincinnati for a California vacation. Will, Fanny, and Horace continued to occupy the house during their parents absence.³⁶

Fanny took advantage of her opportunity to run the house. She listened attentively when Nelson, the hired man, told her that he knew a very good gardener who would like to work about the place. A second friend, he continued, would make a vegetable garden behind the barn, for \$1.50 per day. Nelson promised to take care of the garden after the vegetables were up. To keep the front lawn looking nice, the gardener needed a hose and lawn mower, and on April 14 Fanny wrote for permission to purchase these items.

There had been a dispute with Mr. George H. Haldy, the man who rented the Taft stable. This, he believed, gave him ground for a garden. He had had hot beds spaded and had torn down the fence between his garden and the Tafts'. Fanny was a determined young lady, and she wrote her mother, "I don't propose to have him take possession."

To make matters worse, Haldy was making a "dirty mess of our carriage road with the pulling, handling and dumping of the dirt wagons through the yard." One of the first wagons through had brushed against the stone-wall, and had toppled into Mr. T.H.C. Allen's yard two dozen capstones. Haldy promised to have them repositioned and set.³⁷

Mr. and Mrs. Taft received Fanny's letter in San Francisco. Replying on April 23 Judge Taft, after explaining that he had bought a "nice" lawn mower and hose before going to Vienna, authorized Fanny to replace them.

If Mr. Haldy believed he had any rights to Taft property, in addition to the stable and carriage road, he was mistaken. Haldy's hired man had previously cut and burned brush for him, and Judge Taft had contemplated employing him to trim the [grape] vines and do some other things in the garden." But if Horace and Fanny wished "to cultivate a garden or the orchard" nobody was to stand in their way. If Haldy made any more claims, Judge Taft would evict him from the stable.

As for Haldy using the carriage road to cart fill for his lot, he had discussed this subject with Taft before the start of the California trip. Haldy had been told to go ahead, but on finishing the road and wall were to be repaired. In addition, Judge Taft had told

36. W.H.T. to Nellie Herron, April 8, 1886, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 2.

37. Fanny Taft to Louise Taft, April 14, 1886, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

Haldy that in filling his lot, he could spread on the Taft lot sufficient dirt to hold up the earth on his property, so he would not have to build a retaining wall.³⁸

Taft encouraged his daughter to try her luck at gardening, but cautioned, it "will require some attention." He suggested that they plant seed corn, "other things which will be useful," and flowers. He regretted being away at this season, because he had intended "to make some practicable use of that fine garden plot which faces the [illegible]." Fanny was to do what was best with the garden, but Judge Taft urged her to hire a man of "some experience & skill in such work for a month or two to prepare & plant" it. Afterwards Nelson could take charge. He would appoint Fanny, Horace, and Miss Clarke, his "three commissioners to put in order & cultivate the place."³⁹

When she next reported to her parents, Fanny advised them that house-cleaning was in progress. The study and library had been "cleaned and the clean curtains" hung. Tomorrow Nelson would clean the parlor, the curtains having already been washed. Haldy's carts, however, continued to constitute a problem. Several more weeks of hauling on the carriage road, and the house would be ready for a second cleaning. The dust was exasperating, and everything "was covered with a fine white powder five minutes after dusting," although they kept the north windows closed.⁴⁰

3. Will takes a Bride

Mr. and Mrs. Taft returned to Cincinnati in June to attend the marriage of Will and Nellie on the afternoon of the 19th, at the home of the bride's parents on Pike Street. After a brilliant reception, the bride and groom departed from Cincinnati for Seabright, New Jersey, first stop on a lengthy honeymoon in Europe.

Judge Taft in July notified Haldy that his stable lease would terminate on October 1. Although cart traffic on their carriage road had been

38. A.T. to Fanny Taft, April 23, 1886, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. In agreeing to permit Haldy to use his carriage road, Taft knew he was granting him a "pretty important favor, but he did not wish to hamper him in his improvements, further then was necessary for my own protection." At some future date, Judge Taft might continue the fill commenced by Haldy and raise the rear of his lot ten feet.

39. Ibid.

40. Fanny Taft to Louise Taft, April 25, 1886, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

an annoyance, the Tafts agreed that the fill made by Haldy had accrued to their advantage. Although they were rid of the dust, they now had plenty of noise, because on the site of the Mallon house, on the next lot north, T.H.C. Allen was building a three-story stone and brick multi-unit dwelling.⁴¹

4. The Tafts Repair Their Walkways

In August the Tafts employed a crew to repair "the sidewalks and brick pavement all around the house." When Mrs. Taft relayed this news to Delia, she added, "You know how easy it is to find something always to repair."⁴²

5. Will & Nellie Spend a Month at 60 Auburn Street

Will and Nellie Taft, on their return from their European Honeymoon in October, found that the contractor had not finished their home in Walnut Hills. They accordingly moved in with Judge and Mrs. Taft. Here Nellie for the first time was able to form impressions of the elder Tafts. She observed that as parents, they spread serenity and had an "abiding confidence in the future of their children which strongly influenced the latter to justify it." They had created an atmosphere in which the children absorbed high ideals and strove to meet the family standard of intellectual and moral effort.

Judge Taft in early November spent several days in New England. Writing to Will, he expressed hope that they were still on Mt. Auburn. He would be glad to have the young couple remain with them until their home was completed.⁴³

Before the end of November, Will and Nellie were able to get into their home and moved from 60 Auburn Street. On doing so, Will borrowed Nelson from his parents to help Nellie get the place arranged.⁴⁴

41. Louise Taft to W.H.T., July 22, 1886, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

42. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Aug. 12, 1886, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

43. A.T. to W.H.T., Nov. 4, 1886, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

44. W.H.T. to Nellie Taft, Nov. 30, 1886, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 2.

D. The Senior Tafts Move to California

1. Plans to Spend the Winter of 1888-89 in California Fail

With Will married and in a home of his own, the only children living with their parents on Mt. Auburn were Horace and Fanny. Mrs. Taft's sister, Delia, continued as heretofore to be a frequent visitor. Judge Taft's health had continued to deteriorate in the years following his siege of typhoid pneumonia. To escape the Cincinnati winters and to avoid a reoccurrence of an annoying cough that had plagued him during the winter of 1887-88, thoughts were turned toward spending the next winter in California. When he advised Delia of this, Alphonso observed that while they should go, he supposed they would try another winter here.⁴⁵

Eighteen eighty-eight was a good year for orchards in Hamilton County, and the Taft trees were no exception. On September 17 Louise Taft and Agnes, the hired girl, put up half a bushel of peaches. Writing Delia of this, she also mentioned the "wild plan of going to California." If it came to pass, she inquired, "Will you be ready to start with us the 1st of November?"

Fanny would remain in Cincinnati as mistress of the house. Judge Taft had promised to give her cash to pay the bills.⁴⁶

2. The Tafts Spend \$250 for Home Improvements

Either Fanny reconsidered or her parents had second thoughts about leaving a 23-year-old girl in charge of their home, because on October 11 Mrs. Taft wrote Delia, "we have not succeeded in renting our house and are settling down to the conclusion that we shall stay at home." As Mr. Taft had retired and was no longer obliged to go outside, Louise hoped that he would escape the cough this winter. Two hundred and fifty dollars of the money they would have spent for the California trip had been put into home improvements. Among these were double windows in their room, which they enjoyed very much.⁴⁷

45. A.T. to Delia Torrey, Sept. 12, 1888, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. In the autumn of 1887, the Mt. Auburn tramway had been opened for traffic, making commuting downtown easier.

46. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Sept. 18, 1888, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

47. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Oct. 11, 1888, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

3. The Family Learns that Judge Taft has Cardiac Asthma

Sorrow came to the Taft household on June 3, 1889, when Peter Rawson (Rossy) Taft died of consumption. By this time Horace, too, had left home, and Fanny was the only member of the family living with Judge and Mrs. Taft at 60 Auburn Street.

Before another two weeks passed, William Howard Taft was told by Dr. Ferdinand Forchheimer that his father's condition was serious. The doctor explained that during his recovery from typhoid pneumonia, one of the Judge's "lungs was thickened and the right ventricle of his heart was affected to such a degree that it did not discharge its proper functions."

When Dr. Forchheimer saw Judge Taft on his return from Europe, he had not expected him "to live a month," but gradually by what the doctor called compensation, "another part of the heart, one of the auricles, assumed a double duty and 'pumped' for the right ventricle as well as itself." This had prolonged his life, but now it was apparent that the end was approaching, and that Judge Taft could not live more than a year or two. The family should accordingly be "prepared for the end at any time," as the "double and abnormal work by the heart" had caused a degeneration of that vital organ and feeble circulation. This defective circulation caused the Judge's feet to swell and great difficulty in breathing. Because of his breathing difficulty, Taft now slept propped up on the sofa.

Dr. Forchheimer had not told Judge Taft that he might drop dead at any moment, because he feared the worry would aggravate his condition. Judge Taft accordingly referred to his affliction as asthma, when in reality it was cardiac asthma.

The shock caused by Rossy's death, in conjunction with the hot, muggy Cincinnati summer, had caused his condition to worsen. "Father," Will wrote Horace, seems to realize that his illness is serious, but he refuses to stay in bed. "Today he was foolish enough to go down and pay his taxes." On Monday, June 24, Mr. and Mrs. Taft and Fanny planned to leave for the east coast. They proposed to travel by easy stages, stopping at Cleveland, Niagara Falls, Albany, and Millbury. Will believed their father would benefit from the change in climate. As Horace would be with them in Millbury, Will charged his brother with the mission of preventing father from "attempting any exercise." A member of the family should be with him at all times. This could cause difficulties, as he was going east with the intention of doing genealogical research in Massachusetts and Vermont.⁴⁸

48. W.H.T. to Horace Taft, June 17, 1889, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. Judge Taft had been "greatly affected by Rossy's death, "which brought up again so vividly the tragedy of his life and this greatest disappointment of Father's life."

4. Judge Taft's Last Trip East

Before leaving for Millbury, Judge Taft on the 22d contacted Will and asked him to have the telephone removed from 60 Auburn Street, "as we shall not be here much more this year."⁴⁹ Judge Taft, prior to his June 24 departure, asked Will to rent the house. After the family had reached Millbury, Will on July 15 wrote his father questioning the wisdom of leasing the property, except on a month-to-month basis. If his father found himself unwilling "to risk the fatigue of a long trip to California" in the autumn, he might wish to "go back into the comfortable old house."

In the weeks since his parents' departure, Nelson had cleaned Fanny's and Mrs. Taft's rooms, and Judge Taft's study. Will was ashamed to admit it, but today was the first time he had been up to Mt. Auburn since their departure. The reason, he continued, was not lack of interest, but a heavy work load at the office.⁵⁰

Will the next day informed his mother that it would be better "to rent the house from month to month at a lower price than to shut you out from taking it for a year." He had just spoken to Nelson, who told him that he was keeping the grass cut and had "cleaned the four upstairs rooms in the front part of the house." He, however, had not sawed much wood for the fireplaces.

When they parted, Will sent Nelson down to the gas company to have the gas turned off.⁵¹

5. The Sweitzers and the House

William Howard Taft by July 22 had made arrangements to rent the property to General N.B. Sweitzer and his wife by the month. The Sweitzers moved in on August 1. When he paid Nelson his wages, the hired man told Will that he was now employed by the new tenants. His wife was also working for them, but she considered the tasks burdensome.⁵²

49. A.T. to W.H.T., June 22, 1889, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. The telephone had been first installed on March 1, 1881.

50. W.H.T. to A.T., July 15, 1889, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

51. W.H.T. to Fanny Taft, July 16, 1889, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

52. W.H.T. to Louise Taft, July 22, 1889, and W.H.T. to A.T., Aug. 6, 1889, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

The Nelsons did not remain in the employment of the Sweitzers long. On the evening of the 22d, Nelson showed up at William Howard Taft's Walnut Hills home to report that he and Mrs. Sweitzer had parted company and that he and his wife had moved from their quarters at 60 Auburn Street, returning to their cottage, and "leaving Mrs. S in possession to supply their places with white girls." Learning from Nelson that Mrs. Sweitzer "wished to be relieved of part of the silver," Will sent him and one of his employees up to the house. They picked up the Taft silver and deposited it at a safety deposit company.

More important, Nelson had told Will that Mrs. Sweitzer was "not pleased with the house and was fitting up some rooms at the Ortiz into which they proposed to move sometime in Sept." She had informed Nelson that she had heard that Judge Taft planned to be in Cincinnati briefly in September and would stop at the Burnet House. But, she continued, he might "as well come out and take the house at that time because she would . . . be ready to move."⁵³

In a futile effort to get the Sweitzers to remain in his house, Judge Taft was agreeable to a reduction in the rent. Before bringing this concession to the Sweitzers' attention, Will called at 60 Auburn Street. The general was not at home, so Will talked to his wife. She told him that they had taken the Phillips' house and would move on October 1. Will accordingly did not mention his father's decision to lower the rent.⁵⁴

6. Will Rents the House to the Dickinsons

The Sweitzers having given notice, Will searched for a new tenant. W.T. Dickinson, a successful wholesaler of hats and caps, was interested in renting the property for \$107 per month. If they took the house, the Dickinsons did not want to use the Taft linen, silver, or crystal. They desired "a little cleaning done to the house, to some of the ceilings, etc., and wished an inventory taken of the furniture in each room." There were five in the family, but no small children. They would bring in from their College Hill estate, a horse and buggy to be kept in the Taft stable.⁵⁵

53. W.H.T. to A.T., Aug. 24, 1889, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

54. W.H.T. to A.T., Sept. 19, 1889, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

55. W.H.T. to A.T., Sept. 27, 1889, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. A diligent search of the William Howard Taft Papers and the files of the William Howard Taft Memorial Association failed to turn up the subject inventory.

Although this was not as much rental as his wife believed they should receive, Judge Taft was agreeable. He telegraphed Will, accepting the terms. Dickinson was notified that he and his family could have possession on October 16, 1889, and that Judge Taft would have the house cleaned where needed, and would either paper or whiten some of the ceilings.⁵⁶

7. The Tafts' Final Weeks in the House

Mr. and Mrs. Taft, accompanied by Fanny, returned to Cincinnati from Millbury on October 1 and moved back into their home. Early the next morning, Will came over in his phaeton and drove his parents to see Nellie and his three-week-old son. Louise Taft had bought as a gift in New York City a silver cup, inscribed with their grandson's name--Robert Alphonso Taft.

The senior Tafts were delighted to see that the Sweitzers had left the house and furnishings in very good order. Mrs. Taft described them as very discontented people, whom she was not sorry to lose as tenants. The Dickinsons seemed reasonable, and they did not "expect repairs, do not want linen, silver, china or glass, and wish to have us put away all our foreign ornaments."

Preparatory to turning over the house to the Dickinsons, Mrs. Taft engaged chimney sweeps and paperhangers. As the new tenants had no desire to use the attic, Mrs. Taft employed that area for storage.⁵⁷

As it would be several weeks before they were ready to start for California, the Tafts, when they vacated their home for the last time, moved to the Burnet House. In November, accompanied by Delia and Fanny, Alphonso and Louise Taft boarded a westbound train. Traveling via the southern route, the Tafts soon found themselves in San Diego and living at the Florence Hotel.

E. Alphonso Taft Dies

1. Charlie Taft as Agent for the Property

President Benjamin Harrison in January 1890 appointed William Howard Taft to be Solicitor General of the United States. This was a giant step forward in his career, but it would take him away from Cincinnati to the nation's capital. Upon Will's departure, Charlie shouldered responsibility for looking after 60 Auburn Street.

56. Ibid.

57. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Oct. 2, 1889, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

Writing Will on February 3, Mrs. Taft commented, "Charlie must try to rent our home for the summer for we are bound to stay here." Perhaps, she mused, Mr. Dickinson might keep it for his children.

If they could sell the property, they could "live pleasantly anywhere." At present, they were happy and contented in San Diego.⁵⁸

Charlie Taft, in the ensuing weeks, sought to sell the property through Charles Anderson, a real estate agent. A Mr. Reese offered \$18,000, and if he boosted his price to \$29,000, Charlie was inclined to "let it go." Reese, however, did not. Dickinson meanwhile would not say whether he planned to rent the property for another year.⁵⁹

The failure to sell or find a renter to occupy the property when the Dickinsons moved out in October plagued Mrs. Taft. In May, when she reported they had moved from the Florence Hotel into a cottage at Fourth and Grape, she complained to Will, "We can ill-afford to have our [house] empty, especially as the income from the Vine Street property is so much reduced."⁶⁰

Charlie's efforts to locate a buyer for the 60 Auburn Street property failed, and he complained to Will, "whether I shall ever be able to sell the old house on Mt. Auburn or not is a doubtful question." Leopold Burkhardt, who valued his property next door at \$50,000, had offered \$25,000 for the Tafts' which was \$5,000 less than they would accept. Mrs. Gibson had refused to make an offer.⁶¹

By the time the Dickinsons moved out in October 1890, Charlie had rented the property to Charles J. Schiff for an indefinite period, by the month. The Schiffs remained in the house for less than four months. Schiff, having taken a position with the East Tennessee, Virginia & Georgia Railroad, moved south and vacated the premises on February 1, 1891.⁶²

58. Louise Taft to W.H.T., Feb. 3, 1890, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. With Will's departure, Mrs. Taft wrote, "half of our interest in Cincinnati departs . . ., only Charlie's family holds us there now."

59. Charlie Taft to W.H.T., March 19, 1890, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

60. Louise Taft to W.H.T., May 16, 1890, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

61. Charlie Taft to W.H.T., Oct. 20, 1890, & Louise Taft to W.H.T., Feb. 12, 1891, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

62. Charlie Taft to W.H.T., Oct. 20, 1890, & Louise Taft to W.H.T., Jan. 11, 1891, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. Schiff had been on the Board of Directors of the Southern Railroad.

To prevent the vacant house from being vandalized, Charlie hired for \$20 a woman to take care of it. He also listed the property with Mr. Sullivan in hopes of selling it to Mr. Allen.⁶³

2. A Family Funeral for Judge Taft

Judge Taft's physical condition deteriorated rapidly in the spring of 1891. Will, learning from his mother that his father was about to die, traveled to San Diego in the third week of May. On the 17th he wrote Nellie from this "house of impending death. Father grows weaker every hour. Last night, Mother called me at two o'clock. I hurried down to find his breath short and feeble and his pulse down to 30."⁶⁴ Alphonso Taft died on May 21, several days after his son had left San Diego to return to Washington.

Mrs. Taft, in accordance with her late husband's request, had the body returned to Cincinnati for services and burial. Col. Leopold Markbreit, president of the Cincinnati Volksblatt who had recently rented the family home, was contacted and gave his permission to use the downstairs for the funeral. The funeral was held on May 28. During the morning there was a meeting of the Hamilton County Bar, and Horace Taft reported that

on looking over the names of the speakers it was a pleasure to feel the absence of conventionality and perfunctoriness in most of the speeches. The old men had been intimate with them. The young men were nearly all bound to him by acts of kindness that in many cases had been of the utmost importance to them. Ruf Smith broke down completely. He had known Father very well and was under great obligations to him.⁶⁵

The five surviving children and their spouses, with the exception of Horace's wife, assembled in the parlor of the family home at 2 p.m. for the funeral service. The Rev. George A. Thayer officiated and "the

63. Louise Taft to W.H.T., Feb. 12, 1891, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

64. W.H.T. to Nellie Taft, May 17, 1891, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 2.

65. Horace Taft to Frances Taft, May 29, 1891, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. Colonel Markbreit and his family had moved in on April 1, 1891. Unlike the previous tenants, the Markbreits rented the house unfurnished, and the Taft furniture was removed and placed in storage.

music was rendered by a church choir." The casket of chancellor finish, with silver and copper trim, was draped in black. Many prominent Cincinnatians were in attendance at the services, lasting about one-half hour. The procession left 60 Auburn Street at 2:45 p.m., with burial in Spring Grove Cemetery. The pall bearers included former law partners Judges Patrick Mallon and George R. Sage, and Maj. H.P. Lloyd and A.F. Perry, and friends and associates William S. Groesbeck, Judges H.P. Peck and F.W. Moore, W.M. Bateman, Harry R. Smith, J.W. Herron, David Sinton, and S.B. Hollister.⁶⁶

66. Ibid; Cincinnati Enquirer, May 29, 1891.

IX. STRUCTURAL HISTORY OF THE TAFT HOME, 1891-1964

A. Mrs. Taft as Owner

1. The Markbreits as Tenants

In the years following the death and burial of her husband, Mrs. Alphonso Taft lived with her sister Delia in the family home in Millbury, Massachusetts. She maintained a lively interest in politics and her children and their growing families. She traveled extensively, both in the United States and abroad. As she was compelled to live on a fixed income, she was very cognizant of the rental received for the family home on Mt. Auburn and the Vine Street property, along with their maintenance costs and taxes.

With William Howard Taft living in Washington, Mrs. Taft relied on John J. Sullivan to look after her Cincinnati real estate. In March 1892 Will resigned as Solicitor General to become United States Circuit Judge for the Sixth Judicial Circuit of Ohio. He and his family returned to Cincinnati.¹ When Louise Taft learned of this, she wrote her son regarding her Gorham Silver, which he and Nellie had been using while living in the nation's capital. She suggested that Will have it shipped home to Cincinnati with his household effects, and she would pick it up on her first visit.²

The depression of 1893-94 caused Mrs. Taft, along with many retired people living on fixed incomes, to have serious misgivings about her Cincinnati real estate. In September 1894 she wrote Will, "Is there any hope of selling the Mt. Auburn property?"³ Will evidently offered little encouragement, because on November 20 she inquired, "Do you suppose there will be any chance of selling the Mt. Auburn property next spring?" Sullivan had notified her that the "old house would count for nothing to a real estate purchaser." If this were true, it might be wise to have the house razed, and sell the lot to a contractor inter-

1. Pringle, Life and Times of William Howard Taft, Vol. I, pp. 121-22.

2. Louise Taft to W.H.T., Feb. 2, 1892, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

3. Louise Taft to W.H.T., Sept. 15, 1894, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

ested in building apartments. She had read in Cincinnati newspapers where several apartments had been erected on Auburn Street.

What especially troubled her was that the Markbreits' lease on the house and lot would expire on April 1, 1895, and she feared that before renewing their lease the Markbreits would demand she make extensive repairs. This would be frustrating because the house returned a small rental.⁴

The Markbreits, before their lease expired, agreed to remain in the house another year. The rent would remain the same as heretofore. Before the lease again expired, Mrs. Taft contacted Attorney Adolph Richter and authorized him to see if he could find a buyer. In the late summer of 1895 Richter had "a nibble if not a bite," but when she relayed this news to Will, Mrs. Taft confessed, "I doubt if it will materialize."⁵ An air of urgency was added when Colonel Markbreit notified Sullivan that his family planned to vacate the Mt. Auburn property on April 1, 1896. Mrs. Taft authorized Sullivan to advertise for another tenant, provided Richter was unable to sell the property. Richter's efforts to interest contractors in building an apartment house on the site were unsuccessful, but a new tenant H.G. Hunnewill, manufacturer of "Shine-All," was found.⁶ Before the Hunnewills signed a five-year lease and moved in Mrs. Taft had to have the house painted and make other repairs.

2. The Hunnewills as Tenants

The Hunnewills lived in the house from the spring of 1896 until the summer of 1899. In February of the latter year, Albert C. Thompson, who had recently been appointed to the United States District Court by President William McKinley, prepared to move from Portsmouth, Ohio, to Cincinnati. Judge Thompson was taken out and shown the Taft home by Richter. He and his wife liked the building and its location. When Mrs. Taft learned of the Thompsons' interest in her property, she

4. Louise Taft to W.H.T., Nov. 20, 1894, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. Mrs. Taft suggested that her son contact Major Lloyd and Mrs. Gibson to see if they were interested in purchasing the property.

5. Louise Taft to W.H.T., Oct. 22, 1895, & Jan. 1, 1896, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

6. Louise Taft to W.H.T., Jan. 21 & Feb. 29, 1896, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

wrote Will, "It will be great good luck to get so permanent a tenant, possibly a purchaser."⁷

Richter failed to keep Mrs. Taft advised as to the status of his negotiations with Judge Thompson, so she wrote Will on March 22, pointing out that Adolph Richter was more respectful than when he used to talk about "them durned women." But she understood that he still "thinks ladies are hard to suit in business matters." She therefore wanted Will to see what arrangements Richter was endeavoring to make with the Thompsons.

The Hunnewill lease had caused some difficulties because it failed to specify the repairs for which each party was to be responsible. Now the Hunnewills were attempting to "slip out," and leave Mrs. Taft "to arrange for new tenants for the next two years." Judge Thompson, however, had indicated to Richter that he was "disposed to take the house provided some repairing is done."⁸

Mrs. Taft wished her son to be advised of details of her verbal understanding with Mrs. Hunnewill, which she trusted he would explain to the Thompsons. She had told Mrs. Hunnewill that certain furnishings did not belong to the house, and she was at "liberty to take them away" at her convenience. The chandeliers and large mirror, which Will and Nellie had in their home, had been removed from 60 Auburn Street. Also included in this category was the Fry Mantle in the parlor. If the Thompsons purchased the property, Mrs. Taft was prepared to replace the Fry Mantle, as well as the chandeliers.⁹

B. The Thompsons as Owners

1. The Thompsons Purchase the Property

When the Thompsons and Mrs. Taft finally settled on a price, \$18,000, for the property, the Fry Mantle was included. One hitch,

7. Louise Taft to W.H.T. Feb. 19, 1899, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1; Charles T. Greve, Centennial History of Cincinnati and Representative Citizens, 2 vols. (Chicago, 1904), Vol. 2, pp. 107-10.

8. Louise Taft to W.H.T., March 22, 1899, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

9. Ibid. The mantle was described as "a gem of Mr. Fry's carving, and is to be preserved as an heir-loom," not costing less than \$150. Mrs. Taft planned to give it to Will and Nellie.

however, developed in regard to a sewer line the Tafts shared with the Burkhardts, owners of the lot bounding their property on the south. When notified by Will that the Burkhardts wanted \$150 as compensation for their rights, Mrs. Taft admitted that they had a "show of justice," because the neighbors had paid their share of the cost of the sewer, with the understanding that they have an access. Except for a desire to close the transaction as soon as possible, Mrs. Taft, although she found it "humiliating to have to yield" directed Will to pay the Burkhardts the money and secure their signature.¹⁰

The other heirs were as delighted as Mrs. Taft with the sale of the Mt. Auburn property. On June 30, 1899, when she directed Will to forward to Horace and Fanny their share of the money paid by the Thompsons, she observed, "my obligations this year modify my profits." Since the first of the year, she had paid \$300 in taxes on her Cincinnati property; a \$100 special assessment for improvements to Auburn Street; \$150 to the Burkhardts for removal of the sewer; and one-half the cost of painting the house.¹¹

It was late August 1899 before the last of the legal documents had been signed and filed, and "the business of the sale of the Mt. Auburn property . . . closed and the proceeds disposed of." When no bills for their services were forthcoming from William Howard Taft and Adolph Richter, Mrs. Taft on September 28, 1899, forwarded to her son \$100 as a birthday present for his services in selling the house. She had not asked for a bill, lest she get the same reply as she had from Richter: "that he had made out none, and did not intend to." She had then mailed him \$100 as his commission.¹²

2. Judge Thompson--The Man

The new owner of the Taft House, Judge Albert C. Thompson had been born in Brookville, Pennsylvania, January 23, 1842, the son of J. J. Y.

10. Louise Taft to W.H.T., June 28 & 30, 1899, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. Mrs. Taft would have preferred to have paid the \$150 to the Thompsons, and have the judge insist on the Burkhardts removing the sewer before he took possession. The cesspool, she observed, "was only large enough to receive the sewage of one house, with one water closet." A number of years before, the sewer had broken near the stable and it had been costly to repair. When she thought of their experiences with the sewer and the Burkhardts, Mrs. Taft was cognizant of her husband's warning, "to beware of a joint-occupation of any convenience."

11. Ibid.

12. Louise Taft to W.H.T., Aug. 23 & Sept. 12, 1899, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

and Agnes Kennedy Thompson. When 17 years old, he had entered upon the study of law in the office of W. W. Wise at Brookville, and was engaged in his studies when Fort Sumter was bombarded into surrender. Young Thompson, then in his 19th year, answering President Lincoln's call for 75,000 Volunteers, enlisted on April 19, 1861, for three-month's service in Company I, 8th Pennsylvania Infantry.¹³ Discharged a sergeant, Thompson on August 27, 1861, enlisted as a private in Company B, 105th Pennsylvania Infantry, and was "rapidly and successively" promoted to 1st sergeant and 2d lieutenant. On November 26, 1861, he was transferred to Company K, and five days later promoted to captain. Thompson won his men's respect, and Company K became possibly the best drilled and disciplined in the regiment.

The 105th Pennsylvania, as a unit in Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan's Army of the Potomac, participated in the Peninsula Campaign. Captain Thompson was wounded at Seven Pines on May 31, 1862, and rejoined his regiment on July 6 at Harrison's Landing. At 2d Manassas on August 29, he was wounded again, a Rebel minié ball striking him in the right chest, fracturing the second and third rib and lodging in his lungs. He was hospitalized in a boarding house on D Street, in Washington, D. C., where he was nursed by his mother. Mrs. Thompson had her son transferred to Brookville, where he spent a 7-month convalescence, before resigning his commission on March 1863, because of his wounds.¹⁴ In June 1863 Thompson returned to limited duty as a captain and was assigned to the Invalid Corps. He served first on the staff of the provost-marshal for Kentucky, and later in New York City, enforcing the draft. Captain Thompson on December 10, 1863, again resigned his commission, and resumed preparation for the legal profession by entering the Brookville law office of W.P. and G.A. Jenks. On December 13, 1864, he was admitted to practice in the courts of Jefferson County, and the following year he moved to Portsmouth, Ohio.

Thompson's rise in Ohio legal circles was meteoric. In October 1869 he was elected judge of the Probate Court for Scioto County. Twelve years later, in October 1881, he was elected judge of the Court of Common Pleas for the Seventh Judicial District of Ohio, which position he resigned to seek election to the U.S. Congress.

Thompson was successful and served as Republican Representative from the 11th Ohio District in the 49th-51st Congresses. He was an active legislator. In the 49th Congress, he served on the Committee on Private

13. Compiled Service Records of Union Soldiers, NA. According to the muster rolls and returns of the 8th and 105th Pennsylvania, Thompson was 6 foot two inches tall, with light complexion and light hair, and brown eyes.

14. Ibid.

Land Claims; in the 50th on the Invalid Pension Committee; and in the 51st on the Judiciary and Foreign Relation Committees. As a member of the former, he was chairman of a sub-committee named to investigate "the United States courts in various parts of the country. This work was done most thoroughly and resulted in raising the standard of many of the courts, articles of impeachment being preferred against one of the judges in Louisiana."

Judge Thompson was vitally interested in the "McKinley Tariff Bill." He authored the 24th section of the bill, "constituting the great smelting works of the country bonded warehouses for the storing of imported ores admitted free of duty, which, when refined, were exported in an unmanufactured state by the refiner."

Thompson was also interested in local improvements. While in Congress, he secured the erection of a \$75,000 public building in Portsmouth; construction of the Bonanza Dike and three ice piers; and free mail delivery in the city of Portsmouth. In 1890 there was a savage fight for the Republican nomination in the district convention at Gallipolis, and, with victory in his grasp, Representative Thompson yielded to the partisans backing William H. Enochs, thus ending the "most protracted and hardest fought political struggle" heretofore experienced in an Ohio political convention. This terminated Thompson's career in Congress, one marked all along the way "by straightforward and honest fighting."

After leaving Congress on March 3, 1891, Thompson never actively re-entered politics, although in 1896 he served his party as a delegate to the Republican National Convention in St. Louis, being "prompted in accepting the honor by a desire to serve the interests" of his close personal friend William McKinley.

On September 13, 1898, Thompson was appointed Judge for the United States District Court for Southern Ohio by President McKinley. Soon thereafter, Thompson moved from Portsmouth to Cincinnati.¹⁵

3. Mrs. Thompson and the Family

Judge Thompson had married Ella A. Turley at Portsmouth on Christmas 1867. To the couple, while they were living in Portsmouth, were born six children: Charles on October 27, 1868; Albert C. on November 28, 1870; Sara Gibbs on January 25, 1874; Amy on February 19, 1876; Ruth on August 13, 1879; and Guy on October 4, 1883.

The Thompsons lived in the Taft house from July 1899 until 1910. In mid-January of that year, Judge Thompson was stricken with grippe. Aggravated by his war wounds, the grippe turned into septic poisoning from which

15. Greve, Centennial History of Cincinnati, Vol. 2, pp. 107-10.

the Judge died shortly after 5 a.m. on January 26 in his residence at 2038 Auburn Avenue (as 60 Auburn Street had been redesignated). With the Judge at this time were his wife, two daughters, one son, and Dr. Marion Whitacre. The funeral was held the next afternoon at 4 p.m. in the house, with the Rev. Dudley Rhodes officiating, with burial on the 28th in Portsmouth's Greenlawn Cemetery.

Mrs. Thompson continued to live at 2038 Auburn Avenue for a number of months after her husband's death. In November, through her attorney, she offered to sell the property to the Cincinnati Park Commission for playground purposes. The proposition was filed away for future consideration. No hearing anything further from the Park Commission, Mrs. Thompson placed the Taft Home on the market and moved back to Portsmouth, where she died on March 14, 1932.¹⁶

4. Improvements Made to the Property by the Thompsons

After the purchase of the property in the summer of 1899 and before 1904, the Thompsons made a number of improvements to the house. The front veranda was removed and replaced with a single-story front porch extending the full width of the house. The two-story wooden piazza, in the angle between the original house and the ell built by the Tafts in 1851, was razed. In its place the Thompsons built a single-story conservatory. The two-story stable and two adjacent outbuildings were demolished.¹⁷

C. Col. E. H. Ruffner as Owner

1. Colonel Ruffner--The Man

The Widow Thompson in 1912 sold the house and lot to Col. Ernest H. Ruffner, who had recently retired from the U. S. Army. Born in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1845, Ruffner had planned to enlist in the Union navy during the Civil War, but his mother "talked him out of it." He then secured an appointment to the United States Military Academy, from which he graduated in 1867. Ruffner stood number one in his class, so he was commissioned a 1st lieutenant in the Corps of Engineers.

16. Albert C. Thompson Pension File, NA, Application No. 936,718, Certificate No. 702,242; The Commercial Tribune, Jan. 27, 1910. Mrs. Thompson's executrix was her daughter Ruth. Cincinnati Enquirer, Nov. 25, 1910.

17. Sanborn Map Co., Cincinnati, Ohio, Central Map Survey & Publishing Co. (Chicago, 1891), Vol. 1, Plate 41; Sanborn Map Co., Cincinnati, Ohio (Chicago, 1904), Vol. 2, Plate 173.

For the next 35 years, Ruffner served as an army engineer on a number of projects. He did surveys on the Great Lakes, built roads in the Rocky Mountains and on the Staked Plains of Texas, surveyed state boundaries in the West, was a project engineer at the Centennial Exposition in 1876, and participated in engineering work on the Ohio and Mississippi rivers and their tributaries. There were assignments as lighthouse inspector and as engineer in charge of the Charleston, South Carolina, Engineer District. While at the latter post, he supervised construction of Batteries Huger and Jasper, massive Endicott reinforced concrete emplacements. Battery Huger, mounting 15-inch guns, was incorporated into historic Fort Sumter. From the Atlantic seaboard, Major Ruffner in 1902 was ordered to Cincinnati as district engineer. While in that position, he supervised construction of the Fernbank Dam and other Ohio River projects.¹⁸

Colonel Ruffner had married Mary Watson on December 7, 1869. To the couple were born three sons (Henry, Ernest, and Arthur) and a daughter, Violet. The Ruffners' daughter had married Louis K. DeBus several years before her parents purchased the Mt. Auburn property. When the Ruffners occupied their new home, the Debuses moved in with them.

18. Cincinnati Times-Star, April 24, 1935, and May 25, 1937; E.H. Ruffner's ACP File, National Archives, RG 94. At the time of his graduation from West Point, Ruffner called Kanawha, West Virginia, his home. His first assignment was to the Engineer Office at Detroit, Michigan. From August 1867 until December 1870, he was involved in making surveys and inspections of the Great Lakes. The warmer months were spent in the field, and the winters in Detroit. In December 1870 Lieutenant Ruffner was ordered to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, for duty on the staff of the general commanding the Department of the Missouri. His duties during the next two years took him to Santa Fe, Forts Hays and Wallace, Denver, and Pueblo. From May to October 1873, he participated in a reconnaissance into the Ute Country. In 1874 and again the following year, he supervised construction of a wagon road connecting Santa Fe and Taos. Ruffner in the latter year also made a special survey of the Indian Territory. The spring of 1876 found him leading a surveying party across the Staked Plains, and that autumn saw him at the Centennial Exposition.

Ruffner in 1877-79 superintended construction of the Alamosa-Pagosa wagon road, and on November 8, 1878, he was promoted to captain. In September 1880 Captain Ruffner, having spent almost ten years in the Department of the Missouri, was transferred to Charleston, West Virginia, and placed in charge of improving navigation on the Kanawha River. Much of his time, during the next 30 months, was spent at Paint Creek, supervising construction of Dam No. 3. In 1883 Ruffner was ordered to Willett's Point, New York, and assigned to command of Company A, Battalion of Engineers. The next year he spent three months in Italy on leave of absence. On August 4, 1884, Captain Ruffner was ordered to Quincy, Illinois, and placed in

2. Charles Ludwig's Visit to 2038 Auburn Avenue

Mrs. Ruffner died in 1921, and the colonel and his widowed daughter and her children lived at 2038 Auburn Avenue until the mid-1920s, when the colonel remarried. Mrs. DeBus and her children at that time moved to a new address, but by 1935 Mrs. DeBus and her daughter Martha and son L. K. were again living with the colonel.

In April of that year, the Cincinnati Times-Star did a feature article on a fan found on the body of a United States Army officer killed at El Caney, during the Spanish-American War. Charles Ludwig, the author of the article, called on Colonel Ruffner and observed that he lived "in the old Taft homestead." Ludwig informed his readers that "on the colonel's wall is the head of a mountain sheep with strange horn formation." Ruffner told Ludwig that he had killed the trophy, while doing an "engineering project in the Colorado Rockies in 1878."

His present hobbies, he continued, were reading and raising exotic plants. "I raised that grape vine from a seed," he remarked, as he pointed "to a long vine climbing up his library window."¹⁹

3. The Death of Colonel Ruffner

Two years later, on May 24, 1937, Colonel Ruffner died in his Auburn Avenue home. In his obituary, it was pointed out that the deceased was of "studious mind," and read Spanish, Italian, French, and German, and after his seventieth birthday in 1915 he had taken up the study of Russian. He was a student of the Bible, wrote poetry, and had done a number of paintings, many of which had been accepted for exhibitions.²⁰

D. Mrs. Robert W. Knauff Recalls the House

Mrs. Knauff, a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. DeBus, lived in the Taft house from 1912 until about 1925. On December 8, 1971, Mrs. Knauff toured her childhood home with Architect Hugh Miller and the author, sharing her recollections of the house as it was in her maternal grandparents' years.

charge of improvements to navigation programmed for the upper Mississippi, Des Moines, and Illinois rivers. Ruffner was promoted to major on July 2, 1889, and soon after ordered to Buffalo, New York.

19. Cincinnati Times-Star, April 24, 1935.

20. Ibid., May 25, 1937.

1. Lower Story

a. Pre-1851 House

Colonel Ruffner used the northwest room as his sitting room. The fireplace mantel was a Fry and is currently stored in the basement.

The northeast room, now a kitchen, was the Ruffners' bedroom. The fireplace and mantel were tile. In the southwest corner of this room, Colonel Ruffner had a carpenter build cabinets for his extensive library.

After the death of his first wife, Colonel Ruffner had a bathroom, with tub and toilet, built between his bedroom and the dining room. The bathroom was entered by a door opening into the northwest corner of his bedroom.

Colonel Ruffner also had a wooden addition built onto the north elevation of the house. Access to this addition was gained by enlarging the bedroom's east window into a doorway.²¹

Colonel Ruffner had his parlor in the south room, and it had a parquet floor. There was one fireplace and it had a carved mantel, which Mrs. Knauft believed was done by Fry. The moulding is unchanged.

Mrs. Knauft could recall no changes to the hallway. She stated that the door opening onto the front porch was solid, and that there was a doorway, but no door, opening into the dining room.²²

b. Post-1851 Wing

The Ruffners' kitchen was in the southeast corner room. In the northeast corner of the room was the kitchen range, while there was a table in the center of the room. Two doorways, located as at present, opened into the kitchen.

The northeast corner room was the pantry. In the southeast corner was a dumbwaiter. The sink and ice box were positioned against the north wall, with the sink nearer the door opening into the dining room. In the northeast corner was the Ruffners' breakfast nook.

Colonel Ruffner's dining room was west of the kitchen and pantry. The fireplace and mantel, now in the room, were there in the 1920s. Above the

21. Personal Interview, Mrs. Knauft with Miller & Bearss, Dec. 8, 1971.

22. Ibid.

mantel was hung the head of the mountain sheep shot by Mrs. Knauft's grandfather in 1878. In the northeast corner of the room was a sideboard. There were two doorways opening from the dining room onto the conservatory. The easternmost had sliding doors. Mrs. Knauft was unable to recall the nook presently located at the west end of the dining room.

Between the dining room and the two eastern rooms was a stairwell, with two flights of stairs--one giving access to the upper floor and the other to the basement.²³

2. Upper Story

a. Pre-1851 House

Mr. and Mrs. Debus' bedroom was in the northwest room. Mrs. Knauft was unable to recall a mantel or fireplace. There was a closet in the southwest corner, and the two doors giving access to the room were in the same location as today.

The room east of her parents' bedroom was her sister's room. There was no fireplace in this bedroom. A stairway, giving access to the attic, was located against the room.

Two bedrooms were on the south side of the central hall. Opening off the northwest corner of the west bedroom was a closet, while there may have been a fireplace against the south wall. There were two doorways giving access to this bedroom, one off the hall and the other from the east bedroom. The east bedroom did not have a fireplace.

The central hall and stairway are unchanged. At the west end of the hall was a window seat, flanked by boot boxes.²⁴

b. Post-1851 Wing

The southeast room, which was the DeBus' nursery, is unchanged. There were two doorways giving access to the nursery and a closet in the northwest corner.

The northeast room, to which there were two doorways, may have had a bathroom in the northeast corner. There was a closet in the southwest corner.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

Mrs. Knauft identified the family bathroom as located in the northwest part of this wing. Access to the bathroom was gained through a doorway opening into its southeast corner. The toilet was in the northeast corner, the washstand in the northwest corner, and the tub against the west wall. Opening off the hall, giving access to the bathroom, was a walk-in closet.

The middle bedroom between the family bathroom and the northeast room had a stairway against its east wall, leading downstairs. This stair was steep and dark. To keep people from tumbling down the stairway, which was not enclosed, there was a railing.

There was a hall connecting the front hall with the nursery. Opening off this hall were doorways giving access to the family bathroom and the middle bedroom. Mrs. Knauft believes that her grandfather had the partitions and doorways built into the hall. This, she believes, was done in conjunction with construction of the sleeping porch. She is also of the opinion that there was no door in the opening between the front and rear halls.

While he owned the property, Colonel Ruffner had an enclosed wooden sleeping porch built over the conservatory. Access to the subject porch was gained through a doorway opening off the rear hall.²⁵

3. Basement

a. Pre-1851 House

The northwest room was used as a storeroom by the Ruffners, while the southwest room was their coal room. In the east part of the latter room was the family furnace. Coal was delivered through a chute opening into the basement from a point east of the bay foundation. Separating these two rooms was a central hall, with a stairway leading to the 1st floor.²⁶

b. Post-1851 Wing

The northeast room, with a doorway in its north wall, was the Ruffners' laundry. Beneath this room was a large cistern. Adjoining the laundry on the south was another utility room. There was a smaller cistern near the south wall of this room.

West of the laundry was a large room in which clothing was hung to dry. There were two doorways giving access to this room from the outside, one to the north and the other to the south.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

The enclosed area between the south wall of the basement and a stone retaining wall served the Ruffners as a storage area for garden tools.²⁷

4. Flooring

All the floors, except for the parquet flooring in the parlor, were soft wood.²⁸

5. Yard

Mrs. Knauft recalled that there had been a third cistern outside the basement, near the house's east elevation. She recalled the buckeye trees in the front yard, and a grape arbor in the back yard.²⁹

E. Mrs. Gertrude Hughes Thayer Recalls the House

Born in 1910, Mrs. Thayer as a child romped and played with the DeBus girls. Her father was an interior decorator, and he was employed by Colonel Ruffner on several occasions to make improvements to the house.

Interviewed on December 9, 1971, by Architect Miller and myself, Mrs. Thayer provided us with her recollections of the house and yard. She corroborated much of what Mrs. Knauft had told us, besides recalling several additional details. She told us that Colonel Ruffner liked to sit on the front porch and read.

1. The Conservatory

Mrs. Thayer's recollections of the conservatory were vivid. She told us that the DeBus children had several horned frogs, and they secured food for them in the conservatory. The conservatory was entered from the dining room. Its floor was tile, and there were a large number of small windows in its south and east elevations. Colonel Ruffner kept a large number of potted plants and ferns in the conservatory.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

2. The Pantry

In the pantry, she continued, there was a sliding ladder used by the Ruffners and DeBuses to get their china and crystal off the shelves.

3. The Basement

Mrs. Thayer recalled that inside the north porch were benches, while the doors giving access to the laundry and utility rooms had glass in their upper panels.³⁰

F. Mrs. DeBus as Owner

1. The Association's First Efforts to Acquire the Property

When Colonel Ruffner's will was probated, it was found that he had left the house and lot at 2038 Auburn Avenue to his daughter Mrs. DeBus. Within nine months of her father's death, Mrs. DeBus determined to sell the property and listed it with a real estate agent, Mrs. Colter Rule. "For Sale" signs placed by Mrs. Rule on the front yard of the property had immediate repercussions. They were called to the attention of the William Howard Taft Memorial Association, and a campaign was launched to preserve the house as a historic site.

At a meeting of the Association held in Room 1504 of the Carew Tower on March 2, 1938, a resolution introduced by Murray Seasongood was adopted, stating that the group favored "acquisition of the Taft homestead." It was agreed that officers of the Association would formulate a plan of action and secure estimates of the cost of acquiring and maintaining the property.³¹ Officers of the Association were also empowered to consult and secure the cooperation of parties and civic and patriotic organizations.

When questioned by the press, President Raymond Walters of the University of Cincinnati, who had attended the Carew Tower meeting, remarked that he "heartily approved the proposal to preserve the birthplace of the distinguished Cincinnati who was the only man ever to hold the two great offices of President of the United States and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court."³² Among other civic leaders rallying to support

30. Personal Interview, Mrs. Thayer with Miller & Bearss, Dec. 9, 1971.

31. Cincinnati Times-Star, March 3 & 9, 1938. Mrs. Ernest B. Allen, president of the Association, presided at the March 2 meeting.

32. Ibid., March 3, 1938.

the proposal were Charles Otterman, Assistant Superintendent of Schools; the Rev. W.E. Montgomery, pastor of the Mt. Auburn Methodist Church; and Attorney Carl Meier.³³

Mrs. Cuba Weaver, Girl Scout Director, was delighted to learn that the Association was interested in suggestions for compatible uses for the property. Calling attention to the growth of juvenile delinquency in the area, she advanced the proposal that part of the historic house could be used as a community center.³⁴

Association officials on contacting Mrs. Rule learned that Mrs. DeBus was in California. The owner, she stated, would be "glad to have the property used as a Taft Memorial and would . . . temporarily not consider other propositions for its purchase." Among those heretofore received had been a proposal from a prospective purchaser who wished to "remodel the house into small apartments."

Mrs. Rule informed the Association that the property for tax purposes was valued at \$12,500, and that it could be purchased for that sum, which she did not consider exorbitant.³⁵

On Tuesday evening, March 15, members of the Association gathered at Red Cross headquarters on Auburn Avenue to review plans for raising funds for purchasing and maintaining the historic property. Several plans were broached and discussed.³⁶

Money was difficult to raise, and in the summer the Association determined to turn to the school children of Cincinnati and Hamilton County. To spark lagging local interest in the site, officials agreed to sponsor a program honoring the memory of President Taft in the public and parochial schools of the area. These programs were held after the opening of the autumn semester and were aimed at acquainting the "students with the life and achievements of the only American who served his country both as President and as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court." The children were encouraged by their teachers to make "penny gifts to the memorial fund."³⁷

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid., March 9, 1938.

37. Cincinnati Enquirer, June 10, 1938. Arrangements for the Taft programs were made by Claude V. Courter, Superintendent of Schools, and Rev. Carl J. Ryan, Superintendent of Parochial Schools.

Money raised from the school children of Hamilton County and other sources was insufficient to enable the Association to purchase the Taft home. Mrs. DeBus, as the months passed, became impatient. Finally, through her agent, she notified the Association that it had until April 4, 1940, to come up with the necessary funds.³⁸

2. Charles Taft Lends a Hand

In desperation the Association turned to the sons of President Taft. On March 25, 1940, Charles Taft wrote to his brother Senator Robert A. Taft. He reported that the Adult Education Society had looked at the Taft Home. This group, which sponsored a program for retraining domestic servants, was told by Mrs. Rule that Mrs. DeBus had been offered \$6,500 for the property, but was reluctant to sell at that price.

If the Adult Education Society found that the house suited its program, the Association would be certain of a tenant. It had been estimated that the cost of rehabilitating the structure would be \$3,000. This added to the purchase price called for an initial investment of \$10,000, with a "rent return of probably \$1,500 per year." Charles suggested that the family buy the property and turn it over to the Association for what it cost them.

Charles believed that the use to which the Adult Education Society planned to put the property was ideal, because the trainees would keep the "house in good shape," and as it was expected to expand the program to include married couples, the men could maintain the grounds.³⁹

Senator Taft was enthusiastic about his brother's proposal. Writing Charles on March 29 he pointed out, "I am afraid I could not possibly go into anything of this sort at the present time." He, however, approved use of the house as a retraining center, as it was "more likely to be preserved if some civic society is induced to buy it."⁴⁰

3. The Campaign of 1940 Dooms the Association's Plans

Mrs. Ernest B. Allen, President of the Association, meanwhile had written letters to individuals and groups to interest them in a fund

38. Ibid., April 23, 1940.

39. Charles Taft to R.A.T., March 25, 1940, files Taft Memorial Association.

40. R.A.T., to Charles Taft, March 29, 1940, files Taft Memorial Association.

raising campaign for a Taft Memorial. James E. Almond, President of the American City Bureau and a Taft admirer, poured cold water on her plans. He observed that with Senator Taft "a very strong contender for the Republican presidential nomination, it would be very foolish, at this time, to launch any fund-raising program with which he would be even remotely connected."

Continuing, Mr. Almond wrote, though William Howard Taft was a "great statesman and able jurist, his activities are not yet far enough in the past to let us forget that he was" elected as a Republican. But as the years passed, his political affiliations would be forgotten. He accordingly urged Mrs. Allen and the Association to hold their fund raising campaign in abeyance.⁴¹

After reviewing the letter to Mrs. Allen, Eric L. Schulte, Chairman of the Campaign Committee, announced that the Association was suspending its fund-raising efforts to avoid embarrassing Senator Taft in his efforts to secure the Republican nomination for President.⁴² Mrs. DeBus, on being notified of this situation, authorized Mrs. Rule to find another buyer for the Taft property.

4. Mrs. DeBus Finds a Buyer

Among those expressing interest in the house was a contractor. When Mrs. Rule questioned him about what he planned to do with the structure, the contractor explained that he would demolish the 1851 addition, the walls of which had started to crack, and remodel the front part of the house into four apartments, two upstairs and two downstairs. Mrs. Rule, knowing of the house's historical significance, then contacted Elbert R. Bellinger, who owned and occupied the adjoining Burkhardt home. Bellinger was interested in old houses and appreciated the significance of the Taft home as a presidential birthplace. Before agreeing on the purchase price, Bellinger promised to stabilize the house, and if he ever sold the property to give the Association first opportunity to buy.⁴³

On April 15, 1940, the sale was consummated, when Mrs. DeBus sold the subject property to Bellinger for one dollar and other good and valuable considerations.⁴⁴

41. Mr. Almond to Mrs. Allen, March 18, 1940, files Taft Memorial Association.

42. Cincinnati Enquirer, April 23, 1940.

43. Ibid.; Bellinger to Taft Memorial Association, Jan. 2, 1963.

44. Violet R. DeBus to Elbert R. Bellinger, April 15, 1940, found in Hamilton County Deed Book 1857, pp. 609-10. The boundary of the property conveyed began at a point in the center of Auburn Avenue, at the southwest

G. Elbert Bellinger as Owner

1. Bellinger Converts the Home into Apartments

Bellinger recalled that when he took possession, the house and grounds were badly rundown. There was no sewer and "a wood log cesspool in the back yard." Termites had infested the kitchen and basement. The gas, electrical, and water systems had been condemned. On both sides of the southeast corner of the 1851 addition, there were cracks in the brick walls. Bellinger attributed these faults to the location of a cistern under the exterior wall of the southeast basement room. The structure's exterior was painted a "dirty yellow and was black with soot."⁴⁵

During the next seven years, Bellinger, a self-styled interior decorator and carpenter, undertook to stabilize the house and convert it into apartments. As he recalled, this work was accomplished by a crew that always included himself and a helper and sometimes as many as nine men. There were "hardwood floor men, plumbers, electricians, [and] roof men." Bellinger boasted that he did "all the carpenter work, painting, papering, partitions, reinforcing, iron construction, stone work, cement work and plastering" himself, and did it in such a way that it could be "removed without spoiling the original formation of the house."⁴⁶

2. Bellinger Puts up and takes Down a "For Sale" Sign

In 1944 or 45 when the project was "about half finished, with four bathrooms in" and no hardwood on the second floor, Bellinger's health broke. He determined to sell the property and put up a "For Sale" sign in the front yard. Eight prospective buyers, several white and the rest black, came to look at the Taft house. Of these, two black undertakers were the most interested. As he owned and lived in the Burkhardt house next door, Bellinger asked what they planned to do with the house. Convert it into a funeral home they replied. Next they offered Bellinger a certified check for \$60,000, \$20,000 above his asking price.

Before consummating the bargain, Bellinger had second thoughts and sought the advice of his attorney. His lawyer asked, "Did you touch the check?"

corner of land formerly belonging to the estate of O. Cogswell, deceased, and afterwards owned by Allen; then south with Auburn Avenue 100 feet; then south 86° and 29' east by the parallel to the line of the Cogswell heirs 250 feet; then north 100 feet; and then with the south line formerly belonging to the Cogswell estate 250 feet to the place of beginning.

45. Bellinger to Taft Memorial Association, Jan. 2, 1963.

46. Ibid.

"No," Bellinger replied.

"Then," continued the Attorney, "tell the undertakers that you want to think about their proposal, take them out into the yard, and pull up the 'For Sale' sign. He should then explain to his prospective buyers that he had changed his mind about selling.

Bellinger did as directed, and the Taft Home was removed from the market.⁴⁷

3. The Construction of the Youth Detention Home

In 1950 plans were made by Hamilton County to construct a new Youth Detention Home. The site selected was in Mt. Auburn, near the intersection of Auburn and Bodmann Avenues. The County Commissioners in October bought the two century-old mansions that were to be razed to permit construction of the home.

Bellinger sold the Burkhardt house and grounds to the county for \$35,000, while the Llewellyn Reakit estate received \$55,000 from the county for its property.⁴⁸

When the Burkhardt house was razed, Mr. and Mrs. Bellinger moved into the rear first floor apartment of the Taft house. They salvaged fixtures and gate posts for incorporation into the Taft Home and grounds.

With erection of the handsome two-story, brick Detention Center, Bellinger secured a building permit and constructed a wooden fence, three and one-half feet in height on the rear of the Taft lot.⁴⁹

4. Rallying Community Support for the Proposed Memorial

In 1959 the long simmering hopes of the Taft Memorial Association to acquire and restore the Taft Home received a boost. Mr. Bellinger, his

47. Ibid.

48. Cincinnati Enquirer, Jan. 14, 1951. Bellinger had acquired the Burkhardt property from the descendants of Leopold Burkhardt, pioneer Cincinnati oil man and founder of the Burkhardt Oil Co. Burkhardt, a wealthy eccentric, had converted it into apartments. The Reakit Mansion had been built by the Bodmanns, and Llewellyn Reakit had been born there in 1867. The mansion was famed for the works of art its rooms contained and its spacious, well-kept grounds.

49. Building Permit, 2038 Auburn Ave., May 16, 1951, files Division of Buildings, Cincinnati, Ohio.

wife having died, contacted the Association and announced that he was willing to sell. His price was \$75,000. Juvenile Court Judge Benjamin Schwartz of the Youth Detention Center and City Councilman Charles Taft were advised of this development by the Association. When questioned by the press on Saturday, September 13, Mr. Taft stated, "I'm sure I am speaking for the other members of the family when I say we would all feel very happy indeed" about having the home established as a memorial.

The most feasible plan, he continued, would be for the cost of acquisition and restoration to be borne by public subscription, and for the home to be administered by the Memorial Association, in cooperation with Judge Schwartz and the Detention Home.

Judge Schwartz saw the building as a historic house museum, and as an inspiration for the boys and girls. The upper story rooms would provide much-needed office space and relieve congestion in the Youth Center. It troubled the judge to see signs boasting that Cincinnati was "the birthplace of the man who held two of the country's highest offices," and to know that no sightseeing busses passed the Birthplace, because they "are ashamed to go up there."

Once purchased, Judge Schwartz added, the property could be turned over to the county for maintenance.⁵⁰

An Enquirer reporter, Libby Lackman, called at the house and found Bellinger living the first floor rear apartment. Bellinger's living room had been the Taft dining room, and his bedroom was the room in which the 27th President was reportedly born. The Taft parlor, with its carved walnut mantel by Fry, was a living room for one of the front apartments.

Bellinger told Miss Lackman that he was "impatient over failure of Cincinnatians to do anything concrete to revere the memory of Taft." Although he had given permission for the Taft Association and Daughters of the American Revolution to put up plaques, they had done nothing but talk. More distressing was the action of appraisers for the Association in valuing the property at \$35,000, \$40,000 less than his sale's price.⁵¹

The \$40,000 separating the buyers and seller stalled negotiations for six months. On April 12, 1960, there was an important meeting at the Hamilton County Courthouse between County officials and leaders of the group interested in preservation of the Taft Home.

50. Cincinnati Enquirer, Sept. 13, 1959.

51. Ibid.; Bellinger to Taft Memorial Association, Jan. 2, 1963. According to Bellinger, the only Taft furnishings in the house were a half-dozen glass-doored bookcases.

Prosecuting Attorney C. Watson Hover explained to the group that Ohio Law permitted the county to contribute up to \$25,000 a year to patriotic and historical groups. He pointed out that the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio could purchase the Taft Birthplace, with county and private funds, and then "lease it to the county for renovation, annual maintenance and other expenses."

The County Commissioners expressed the opinion that perhaps \$12,500 a year could be made available at this time for the project. Judge Schwartz again stated that the Youth Center was interested in securing office space in the house and some of the grounds for a driveway. He called the present condition of the property a "disgrace." Charles Taft and Albert Meyer, Cincinnati real estate developer, told the gathering that Taft and Ingalls interests had available about \$25,000 in contributions to be used in restoration of the house. Herbert Koch of the Historical and Philosophical Society urged preservation of the Birthplace. He added that the public has "no idea of the large number of inquiries that are received . . . from persons all over the country about the birthplace of the man who was President, Chief Justice of the U. S. Supreme Court and Governor of the Philippines.

Before the meeting adjourned, Commissioner Louis J. Schneider announced that "if we can spend \$1,200 to perfume a dog pound, we should be able to spend \$12,500 for this noble purpose." (Earlier in the day, the commissioners had approved \$1,200 for steamer units for the dog pound, after neighbors had complained of the odor.)⁵²

The Enquirer supported the proposed William Howard Taft Memorial with an editorial on April 17. The influential newspaper chided:

The man who entered the White House in 1909 is, in a way, less fortunate than one of his sons, the late Sen. Robert A. Taft, who without having attained such high office had won a memorial in Washington. The father if not worthy of less in his home city, and now representative citizens . . . are undertaking to turn the 100-year-old Mt. Auburn home into a place where visitors may find papers and mementos of the late President and late Senator.

In the opinion of the editor, the sponsors of the memorial would succeed, "but the more the supporters, the greater the success that may be anticipated." The proposed memorial should be endorsed as a civic project.⁵³

52. Cincinnati Enquirer, April 13, 1960; Times-Star, April 13, 1960; Post, April 14, 1960. James R. Clark and Edwin J. Tepe, the other two Commissioners in attendance, also supported the project.

53. Cincinnati Enquirer, April 17, 1960.

5. The Association Bargains with Bellinger

Having secured the backing of the County Commissioners and the Enquirer, the Taft Association (of which Charles Taft was now President) reopened negotiations with Bellinger. Once again Bellinger was offered \$35,000 for the property, its appraised value. When Bellinger dragged his feet and explained that his price was \$75,000, threats were made to institute condemnation proceedings. The Association, in making its presentation to Bellinger, told of plans to use the lower story of the home as a Taft Museum, while the Youth Center occupied the basement and upper story for offices.

Bellinger, succumbing to pressure, went to see his attorney--Les Cors. They came up with a counter-proposition. Bellinger would give the Association a 100-year lease on the property, with the privilege to purchase it from his heirs for \$35,000 at his death. He would retain his apartment for life and receive \$250 per month for a similar period. The Association was to pay all taxes and utilities, except for the telephone and electricity.⁵⁴

The proposal prepared by Les Cors provided a vehicle for continued negotiations. After an Association architect had examined the house and prepared drawings and specifications, Bellinger met with Judge Schwartz. As plans called for restoration of the lower story to its appearance, circa 1860, it was suggested by Judge Schwartz that Bellinger occupy one of the basement apartments, giving up his first floor flat. This Bellinger refused to do. Discussions continued, and Bellinger made a counter-proposal. He told an Association architect that if the Association wanted his apartment, it would have to pay for it. As he had no desire to move to another Cincinnati address, he would have to have additional money to build a \$25,000 house in Miami, Florida. Since he planned to live six months each year in Michigan, he would need \$10,000 to remodel his home there. This made "an additional \$35,000, tax free above" the original proposal.

This was more than the Association could pay for the property. On further study, Charles Taft agreed to the proposal originally advanced by Bellinger, and in mid-June 1960 he announced that a "permanent lease" had been signed.⁵⁵

Charles Taft, in turn, in December 1961, assigned the lease on the property at 2038 Auburn Avenue to the William Howard Taft Memorial Association.⁵⁶

54. Bellinger to Taft Memorial Association, Jan. 2, 1963.

55. Ibid.; Cincinnati Enquirer, June 18, 1960. Bellinger sought to sell his furniture in the furnished apartments to the Association for \$2,000, but his offer was declined. The Association, however, agreed to pay him \$45 per month for the use of it.

56. North Cincinnati Community News, Dec. 22, 1961.

H. The Association Begins Restoration of the Taft Home

1. Fund Raising, Research, and Publicity

To secure documentary materials to be used by architectural historians in restoring the house, Charles Taft in June 1961 employed the Cincinnati Enquirer to announce that he would like to hear from persons who might have information or nineteenth century photographs of the structure. The only historic photograph the Association possessed was the circa 1867 view of Mrs. Taft and her children in the front yard.⁵⁷

The Memorial Association met on September 15, 1961, the 104th anniversary of William Howard Taft's birth, to review plans for restoration of the house and grounds prepared by Architects Frederic Kock and Paul Kiel and Landscape Architect Henry E. Kinney. President Charles Taft explained to those in attendance that the cost of restoration of the exterior of the house and grounds to their appearance at the time of William Howard Taft's birth, including a modest endowment for maintenance, would be about \$150,000. Members of the family had pledged \$25,000 and the Association would conduct a nationwide drive to raise the remainder. For publicity purposes, President John F. Kennedy and Chief Justice Earl Warren had been named honorary chairman of the Association, while former Presidents Dwight D. Eisenhower, Harry S. Truman, and Herbert C. Hoover, and former Prime Minister of Canada Louis St. Laurent were honorary vice chairmen.

After the house was restored, the group was informed, it would become a public museum and honor all members of the distinguished family, including the late Sen. Robert A. Taft.

Before adjorning, the Association approved the plans for restoring the property outlined by the architects.⁵⁸

By late autumn, the estimate of funds needed to restore the house and grounds had been revised upward to \$250,000.⁵⁹

Local newspapers in 1962 gave the project good coverage. On February 16 the PTA of Taft Elementary School observed Founders' Day at a luncheon, during which the school was given a copy of the circa 1867

57. Cincinnati Enquirer, June 21, 1961.

58. Cincinnati Post-Times, Sept. 13 & 15, 1961; Millcreek Valley News, Oct. 5, 1961. The \$25,000 contributed by members of the Taft family had been used to cover initial expenses, the cost of research, and to defray the expenses of the architectural studies.

59. Cincinnati Post-Times, Dec. 16, 1961.

photograph of the Birthplace. Councilman Charles Taft and Association Executive Director Mrs. Samuel Beall were in attendance. Councilman Taft told the PTA of plans to restore the house.

He called the restoration "a community project in which every Cincinnati can take pride and in which he can share with interest, with participation, and with money."

Taft explained that the project helped make "the history and traditions of the past in the community a part of the living present for children, their parents, and other adults in Mt. Auburn and all of Cincinnati."

The goal of the Association, he concluded, was "to come as close as we can to re-creating the atmosphere of that home . . . from which came the influence that shaped six lives that helped to make not only Cincinnati but our United States today."⁶⁰

In mid-May The Pictorial Enquirer, a Sunday supplement, featured a three-page, illustrated article on the projected restoration.⁶¹ Four months later, on September 15, the Cincinnati Times-Star carried a feature story, "William H. Taft's Birthplace Is To Be Restored." Both articles called attention to the Association's fund-raising campaign, and the Times-Star's story made use of information about the Tafts and their home collected by Executive Director Beall while researching the William Howard Taft Papers at the Library of Congress.⁶²

2. The Home is Designated a Registered National Historic Landmark

Although the fund-raising campaign absorbed much of the Association's time and energy, steps were taken to have the Taft Home designated a "registered national historic landmark" by the United States Department of the Interior. These efforts were successful, and the Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall in February 1964 notified the Association, through Congressmen Carl W. Rich and Robert A. Taft, Jr., that the house's historical significance had been recognized. In his covering letter, Secretary Udall pointed out that the home "is still basically sound, but somewhat altered and in only fair condition." The Association hailed the action of the Secretary, and informed the press that plans had been made and work would soon start on restoring the structure "to its earlier handsome appearance."⁶³

60. Cincinnati Enquirer, Feb. 16, 1962.

61. Ibid., May 13, 1962.

62. Cincinnati Post-Times, Sept. 15, 1962.

63. Post-Times Star, Feb. 2, 1964.

The formal presentation of the handsome "National Landmark" bronze plaque was made to Charles Taft, as president of the Association, by Roy E. Appleman, a distinguished historian with the National Park Service. The date selected was September 15, 1964, the 107th anniversary of William Howard Taft's birthday. With a crew working on restoration of the house, the presentation ceremonies were held at the William Howard Taft School, before a student assembly. Others in attendance were Judge Schwartz and Mrs. Benjamin Hoyer, one of the founders of the Association. When the plaque was presented, it was found to read "Alfonso Taft Home, Birthplace of William Howard Taft." Commenting on the error in spelling "Alphonso," Appleman quipped, "I think we'll have to recast it," and added that in the promotional material his name had been spelled "Appelman."⁶⁴

When he addressed the students, after accepting the plaque from Appleman, Charles Taft discussed his father's role as a "trust-buster," and his opinions as Chief Justice in the Chicago Stockyards and Grain Exchange regulation cases. These cases established precedents upon which a later Supreme Court sustained the Wagner Labor Relations Act, regulating collective bargaining.⁶⁵

3. The Restoration Begins

Six months before, on March 31, 1964, Charles Taft, acting for the Association, had taken a vital step in restoration of the house. On that date he signed a "letter of intent" with contractor G. A. Linder to do "preliminary [architectural] investigations for restoration of the home."⁶⁶ Mr. Bellinger hailed this development and on April 22 had his attorney, Les Cors, notify Charles Taft that he was satisfied with "the progress of the Association toward the restoration of the William Howard Taft birthplace." As Bellinger had been "concerned" for more than 20 years with the preservation of the house as a historic site, he was delighted to "see these years of effort culminated in tangible progress toward that goal."

Bellinger assured Cors that he stood ready to assist the Association in its efforts. Such help could be invaluable, because Bellinger had acquired an intimate knowledge of the structure in the years since he had "saved it from a wrecker's ball."⁶⁷

64. Enquirer and Post-Times Star, Sept. 16, 1964.

65. Post-Times Star, Sept. 16, 1964.

66. Enquirer, April 6, 1964.

67. Cors, Hair & Hartsock to Charles Taft, April 22, 1964.

Linder had completed his investigations by August, and on the 19th he appeared at the city hall and secured a building permit to lower the roof of the house at 2038 Auburn Avenue in accordance with plans prepared by Kiel, Wood & Kock.⁶⁸

Work was commenced immediately, and on September 15, 1964, when Enquirer reporter Libby Lackman visited the house, she found Councilman Charles Taft sitting on the porch. Scaffolding surrounded the structure, while inside "workmen were readying a restoration job that would cost from \$100,000 to \$110,000." Mr. Taft explained that this would include "lowering the roof to its original height and reinstating a captain's walk and front stoop." Involved would be the tearing away of the front porch on which Mr. Taft was sitting.

Miss Lackman followed Mr. Taft into the house and up to the second story. There he pointed out a "blackened border in brick work, uncovered when plaster was torn away . . . in a start on restoring the original roof." The fire, he explained, had occurred in April 1877.

Architects Frederic Kock and Paul Kiel showed Miss Lackman the circa 1867 photograph which was "guiding them in their restoration plans." Miss Lackman observed that in the photograph, the upstairs windows were much shorter than those now visible. The architects explained that the original four-foot windows had been enlarged when the roof was raised in 1877 following the fire. These windows, they continued would be restored to their circa 1867 appearance when the roof was lowered.⁶⁹

I. Everett Inman Describes the 1964 Restoration

Everett Inman and his family moved into the front downstairs apartment in January 1964. At this time Mr. Bellinger was living in his rear lower story apartment, while the two basement apartments were occupied. No one was living upstairs. Mr. Inman was a carpenter and experienced in the rehabilitation of old houses. He was therefore hired by G. A. Linder and worked on the 1964 restoration of the Taft Home. Inman also became a confidant of Bellinger.

On December 1, 1971, Mr. Inman spent several hours touring the structure and sharing his recollections of the 1964 restoration.

68. Permit No. 2161, for Building at 2038 Auburn Ave., Aug. 19, 1964.

69. Enquirer, Sept. 16, 1964.

1. Lower Story

a. Pre-1851 House

The northwest room (the Taft Library), the Inman's living room, was visited first. Inman stated that the closet in the northwest corner had been added by Bellinger, and the west window changed in the 1964 restoration.

Among changes made to the apartment kitchen in 1964 were the shortening of the west window and the conversion of the north doorway into a window. The frame outside kitchen into which this doorway had opened was demolished. Bellinger had told Inman that he added the kitchen fixtures in the 1940s, when he converted the house into apartments, and he had built the adjoining bathroom. This contradicts Mrs. Knauft's recollection that Colonel Ruffner had added this bathroom.

The Inman's southwest bedroom had been altered as follows in 1964: the west window had been shortened and the south bay removed. When the south wall was rebuilt, two windows were added where the bay had been.

Bellinger had identified this room as the Taft parlor. He had added the partitions dividing the Inman's southwest bedroom from the east bedroom, and a small bathroom and kitchen. When he purchased the house from Mrs. DeBus, Bellinger had explained, there had been a large arched doorway giving access to the parlor. In converting the building into apartments, the archway was remodeled into a doorway and a door hung.

In 1964 wooden strips had been secured to the steps leading to the upper floor to protect them. No other changes had been made to the front hall.

The front porch was removed in 1964 and replaced by a stoop, similar to the one shown in the circa 1867 photograph.⁷⁰

b. Post-1851 Wing

According to Mr. Inman no changes had been made in this area during the subject restoration.⁷¹

2. Upper Story

a. Pre-1851 House

The northwest room was a living room for one of Bellinger's apartments. The hardwood floor in this room, as well as the others throughout

70. Personal Interview, Inman with Bearss, Dec. 1, 1971.

71. Ibid.

the upper story, had been put down by Bellinger in the 1940s. When the building was lowered six feet in 1964, the two windows in this room were shortened. Bellinger had told Inman that the fireplace in this room had been removed by Colonel Ruffner.

In 1964 several changes were made to the bedroom, east of the aforementioned living room. The windows had been shortened when the roof was lowered, and the stairway leading to the attic had been removed. There had been a closet under these stairs. Bellinger had told Inman that the closet had been added by Colonel Ruffner.

Extensive changes were made in the southwest apartment in 1964. After the bay was removed, the south wall was rebuilt with two window openings. The east and west windows were shortened. Partitions added by Bellinger in the 1940s to separate the bathroom, kitchen, and bedroom from the living room were removed.

The west window in the central hall was shortened in 1964. Bellinger had told Inman that the boot box under the window, as well as those flanking it, dated to the Taft period.⁷²

b. Post-1851 Wing

Mr. Inman recalled Bellinger telling him that the only change he had made to the fabric of the southeast room was to put down hardwood flooring.

Bellinger had converted the northeast room into a kitchen and bathroom by the addition of partitions and fixtures. These had been removed in 1964, when Linder investigated the structure's fabric.

The northwest room had served the rear apartment as a living room. Bellinger, in putting down the hardwood flooring, had closed off the back stairway.

The back hall was unchanged.

Bellinger had told Mr. Inman that the big bathroom, except for the partition creating an entry way, had not been altered when he converted the structure into a multi-unit apartment. This bathroom and its fixtures, according to Bellinger, had been installed by Alphonso Taft.

The south sleeping porch, said to have been built by Colonel Ruffner, was removed in 1964.⁷³

72. Ibid.

73. Ibid.

3. Basement

a. Pre-1851 House

The four windows opening into the north room had been walled-up in 1964. A new electric control panel was installed.

When the south bay was removed in 1964, its brick foundation was demolished and sealed with a concrete plug. This plug partially closed the coal chute.

Mr. Inman reported that no changes were made to the central hall.⁷⁴

b. Post-1851 Wing

I was informed by Mr. Inman that Bellinger had converted the middle room into a three-room apartment. Partitions had been placed, bathroom and kitchen fixtures installed, and hardwood floors laid. No changes were made to this apartment during the 1964 restoration.

In 1964 the ceiling and flooring had been removed from the two east rooms, and the sills and cisterns exposed. These cisterns were investigated by Contract Archeologist McCollough in the summer of 1971. According to Mr. Inman, Bellinger had told him that there was a third cistern, a short distance outside the east wall of the southeast room.

Mr. Inman reported that no changes had been made to the tool room.⁷⁵

J. The Taft Home Becomes a National Historic Site

In August 1965 the Association accepted from Mr. and Mrs. Mills Judy two carved oak mantels and a carved oak four-section wooden bookcase, framed by Fry carvings. One of the mantels had three carved Gothic portrait panels of Miranda, Prospero, and Ferdinand, and the other had carved ornamental and bird decorations recessed in column-supported arches and two carved crests. These furnishings, which had belonged to the Nicholas Longworth home, were given in honor of Myers Y. Cooper, Mrs. Judy's father.⁷⁶

74. Ibid. Mr. Inman believes it was a mistake to seal the windows, because it left the basement with no ventilation and the dampness has accelerated deterioration of the fabric.

75. Ibid.

76. Post-Times Star, Aug. 16, 1965; Enquirer, Sept. 1, 1965.

Soon after the home's designation as a Registered National Historic Landmark, the Association began a campaign to have the property made a National Historic Site. A study of alternatives was prepared by the National Park Service, and in April 1968 the Secretary of the Interior's Advisory Board recommended that the property be established as a National Historic Site. Elbert Bellinger in the meantime had died, and the Association now had clear title to the property.

A Master Plan was prepared based upon an analysis of the study of alternatives. Representative Donald L. Clancy of Cincinnati introduced into the 1st Session of the 91st Congress legislation calling for establishment of the birthplace of William Howard Taft as a National Historic Site.

On Wednesday, July 23, 1969, the Department of the Interior endorsed Clancy's proposal and disclosed that National Park Service master planners had estimated that \$318,000 would be needed to restore and stabilize the structure. Annual maintenance and administrative costs for the proposed site were placed at \$62,600.⁷⁷ Mr. Clancy's bill, H. R. 7066, was cleared by the Committee on Interior & Insular Affairs, and was considered and passed by the House on September 15. The Senate acted favorably on the bill nine days later, and it was signed into law by President Richard M. Nixon on December 2, 1969.

K. Hugh Miller's Architectural Investigation of the House

On December 7 and 8, 1971, the author accompanied Architectural Historian Hugh Miller of the Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation on a tour of the house. While Miller examined the fabric, I made notes.

1. Basement

a. Pre-1851 House

We started our reconnaissance in the northwest room. The three windows in the north wall closed in 1964 were noted, as were the footings for a fireplace in the Inman's living room. A window opening in the west wall had also been closed. The north and west walls were of stone and had been plastered. The west one-half of the room was floored with stone paving, and the east one-half had wood laid over dirt. The underside of the joists and the flooring had been whitewashed. Prior to installation of the central heating system, there had been a ceiling. Newspapers dating to 1931 were found packed around some of the water pipes. This

77. Enquirer, July 24, 1969.

indicates that the present heating system dates at least to that period. The overhead hatch was open when the whitewash was applied.

In the southwest room, Architect Miller found the floor brick and the ceiling plastered. There was no evidence that the walls had been plastered. In the north wall was a doorway that had been bricked in, and a heating pipe opening sealed with bricks. East of the walled-up doorway was found evidence that a hot air duct leading to the first floor had been here. Next to the ceiling, adjacent to the south wall, were found footings for two first-story fireplaces. In the wall below the west footings was found a bricked-in flue opening. Miller observed the concrete plug used in 1964 to seal the space left when the south bay was removed, and the old coal chute. In the east wall was seen evidence of a cellar window, while in the north wall, between the north-east corner and the doorway, was an old opening. A double joist was observed near the middle of the room which may have supported a first floor partition.

The floor and walls of the hall were stone, and the partitions brick. At the east end of the hall was an old window opening closed in 1851. In the southeast corner was a patch in the ceiling, in which newspapers, dating to 1922, were found. Stairway trim was contemporary with that found in the rest of the basement, while the framing of the doorway giving access to the northwest room may have been added at a later date.

b. Post-1851 Wing

In the northeast room, Architect Miller checked the cistern. He saw that the door opening to the outdoors was new, while the two windows had mid-nineteenth century trim, sash, splay, and sash moulding. In the southeast corner was a fireplace with applied veneer. The doorway into the southeast room had been cut after the partition was added. Paint samples obtained from the north wall showed that it was once painted olive drab. The ceiling had been dropped, probably when Bellinger converted the building into apartments.

The cistern in the southeast room was inspected. Architect Miller observed that the partition, dividing the northeast and southeast rooms, had been added before Bellinger purchased the property. Footings for this section of the house were probably a builders' trench. The doorway and door opening to the outside were nineteenth century.

Mr. Miller, on examining the room west of the east rooms, found that the floor consisted of narrow boards, covered with linoleum, with hardwood over the linoleum. The fireplace had fake backing.

Examining the fabric of the bathroom, Miller found that the west wall was part of the original structure, while the east wall had been added in the 1940s by Bellinger. An investigation of the fabric was made without finding any evidence of a dumbwaiter.

The lower course of the south wall of the tool room was stone and the upper courses brick. There was a change in the wall construction opposite the window. The subject window's lintel is cracked. The west wall of the tool room is brick on stone, and the window, formerly opening into the southeast room of the pre-1851 house, is bricked in. A stone ledge at the base of the west wall may have been part of the footings and served as an access to the pre-1851 structure. The floor of the tool room is brick. There is a light over the doorway leading from the tool room into the house.

A stone retaining wall parallels the south side of the house and provides access to the tool room. The fabric of the porch and doorway on the north side of the house is mid-nineteenth century.

2. Lower Story

a. Pre-1851 House

A crowded schedule prevented Architect Miller from making a detailed investigation of this section of the house.

b. Post-1851 Wing

The fireplace in the dining room probably dates to the early twentieth century. Architect Miller is of the opinion that the circular window in the alcove leading to the pantry may date to the 1877 reconstruction. A window in the north wall of the pantry was probably walled in with brick at the same time.

The southeast bedroom (the traditional birthplace of William Howard Taft) was found to have trim dating to the mid-nineteenth century. Trim above the windows and the doorway giving access to the pantry is dog-eared, while that above the doorway leading into the hall is not. The fireplace and mantel are similar to those found in other rooms. Newspapers recovered from the chimney date to 1956.

3. Upper Story

a. Pre-1851 House

An examination of the northeast room disclosed that a doorway had provided access to the stairway leading to the attic. The sill may have been on top of the first step. These stairs, which were removed in 1964, had been in the house since 1877, as they were framed and plastered. There had been a closet under these stairs, which was entered through a doorway parallel to the steps.

In the south room evidence was found that a partition had formerly divided this room. Against the south wall there had been two fireplaces.

The hallway boot boxes had been added subsequent to construction of the house. Their carpentry, however, is consistent with that found throughout this wing.

In the northwest room, a stove pipe opened into the chimney.

b. Post-1851 Wing

Architect Miller found that the Taft bathroom had been entered through a doorway in the alcove at its southeast corner. The doorway, opening off the southwest corner into the entry hall, dates to the 1940s. The closet, south of the bathroom, was entered from a doorway opening into the bathroom alcove.

In the northeast and southeast corners of the northeast room are toilet stacks which should be removed. The trim and hardware of the doorway opening from this room into the southeast room is not consistent with that found in adjacent rooms and was probably added by Bellinger in the 1940s. At the west end of this room was a large closet, entered through a doorway.

Mr. Miller observed that in the upper story, unlike the lower, there is no dog-eared trim.

4. Generalizations

Architect Miller observed that throughout the structure the door trim is simple, with no embellishments, except in the lower story where there is a stylized cap moulding. Doors in the pre-1851 buildings are consistent and of an earlier period than those in the post-1851 wing. The hardware (escutcheons and cast ornaments) are consistent throughout the building.

Ceilings of the lower story rooms in the pre-1851 structure are highly ornamented, and the ceiling mouldings may have been added in 1877.

Details of the front stairs (curves, trim, and balustrades) are more elaborate than that of nearby doors and baseboard trim.

Joists visible in the basement and post-1851 wing are 2 x 11s, while those in the pre-1851 structure are 2 x 10s, with 16-inch centers.

Most of the flooring in the pre-1851 structure are tongue and groove planks, six to eight inches wide; those in the post-1851 wing are tongue and groove planks, five inches wide. All the hardwood floors, except those in the parlor, had been added by Bellinger.

In the upper story of the post-1851 wing, the door and window trim is consistent and different from that in the pre-1851 structure, except

where new doors were cut by Bellinger. These can be readily identified, as the trim is out of character and easily recognized.

The only Taft-era wallpaper found is on the back wall of the Taft bathroom. It is green and buff with circular geometric patterns.

X. USE, FURNISHING, AND HOUSEKEEPING DETAILS, 1851-1876

A. Certain Rooms, Their Uses, and Their Occupants

1. A Few Generalizations

The designation and use associated with certain of the rooms remained constant throughout the Taft residency. In the basement, the kitchen always occupied the east wing of the 1851 addition. The floor plan of the basement of the pre-1851 house has not been changed. The south room was the Tafts' coal storage, and it was here that the furnace was positioned after installation of central heating in the mid-1860s.

The Taft parlor and parlor chamber were south of the central hall in the lower story of the pre-1851 house. North of this hall were two rooms occupied until November 1861 as an apartment by Grandpa and Grandma Taft, and afterwards by the family library and Mr. and Mrs. Taft's bed chamber.

Throughout the Taft years, the family dining room occupied the west room of the post-1851 wing. Mrs. Taft's pantry (kitchen-closet) and downstairs storeroom were in the northeast corner of this part of the house. The southeast room (William Howard Taft's traditional birth-place) was a bed chamber and in the 1860s the family nursery.

Four bed chambers and a central hall occupied the upper story of the pre-1851 house. The family bathroom, sitting room, and bed chambers were located in the post-1851 wing of this story. During the Taft years these rooms were occupied by various members of the family.

Alphonso Taft's observatory was located within the confines of the widow's walk.

2. Alphonso Taft's Observatory

Alphonso Taft's serious interest in astronomy commenced in the mid-1840s, when he formed a life-long friendship with O. M. Mitchell, the famed Cincinnati astronomer. In the spring of 1852 Alphonso's observatory, equipped with a telescope, was positioned on the roof, within the confines of the widow's walk.

His observatory was very popular in the autumn of 1858, when Donati's comet came into view. At 4 a.m., on September 15, he awoke Louise, and,

dressing, they went up onto the observatory to watch the heavenly visitor. "It was a great comet with a big tail," Alphonso wrote Samuel Torrey. "You have probably seen it," he continued, "but if you have not, and should wish to find it, you will look for the two pointers in the Great Bear which point at the north pole star. The comet is nearly on a range with these two stars, about as far from them as the pole star is, but in an opposite direction."

This comet, he wrote, has had "its orbit observed & calculated so as to be identified, though its last appearance was 300 years ago."¹

On the evening of October 7, Alphonso, Louise, and Anna went up to the observatory and "took a deliberate look through the great telescope at the comet." In certain respects, Alphonso believed, the comet looked more beautiful to the naked eye. His telescope magnified it greatly, and its head became more luminous, "but the train is quite lost." It was "no sight at all through the instrument," he lamented, "as it cannot be taken into the scope of [the] object glass." To the naked eye, the comet was splendid, and in comparison to it, "all the rockets and fireworks of the politicians were nothing."²

Delia Torrey questioned Alphonso's statement that the last time Donati's comet approached the earth was 1558. Acknowledging his error Alphonso admitted, had he reflected a moment, he would have known that its last visit was 1818. While en route to church, the previous evening, the family had again admired the comet.³

Charlie Taft in the summer of 1865 also became interested in astronomy, and he and his father spent house up in the observatory. Rossy was heard to ask his brother if he had "found that 'Beloved Star,' he was wont to sing about so much."⁴

In late August and early September 1877, James Foster, Jr., & Co., undertook several projects for Judge Taft. On August 31 two stereoscopes were repaired, and on September 3, two pair of spectacles. Nine days later Taft's telescope was repaired. For \$10.50 a new celestial

1. A.T. to Samuel Torrey, Sept. 15, 1858, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

2. A.T. to Delia Torrey, Oct. 8, 1858, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

3. A.T. to Delia Torrey, undated, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

4. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, July 9, 1865, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

eye piece was added, the rack repaired, polished, and lacquered.⁵ On February 26, 1878, James Foster repaired Judge Taft's "mercurial barometer" by putting in and filling a new tube.⁶

3. Storerrooms, 1851-64

There were two storerooms in the house in the 1850s. The documents, although providing clues, do not specifically locate these rooms. For example, Grandpa Taft in October 1855 collected the seeds he proposed to plant the following spring and placed them in "a drawer in the store room in the southeast corner of the house." Among the seeds stored were: beets, parsnips, lettuce, sunflowers, muskmelons, cucumbers, lima beans, long white beans, corn, and garden beans.

Unfortunately, Grandpa Taft did not indicate whether the subject storeroom was in the basement, the lower, or upper story of the house.

Louise Taft in May 1858 reported that, except for the "second floor store rooms," she had finished the spring house cleaning.⁷ This statement, taken in conjunction with the entry in Grandpa's diary, indicates that the southeast room of the upper floor's post-1851 wing was used as a storeroom.⁸

In the spring of 1858 Louise Taft fired two hired girls for being rowdy. After they had left, the hired man turned over to Mrs. Taft two keys that they had given him, for which he had no further use. Mrs. Taft found that they were to the doors of the upper and lower storerooms, which had disappeared the previous autumn before Kate McCormick had left her employment. These keys had been in possession of the domestics for months.⁹

This statement provides us with evidence that the Tafts had two storerooms--one on the upper story and the other either in the basement or the lower story. If on the lower story, it would have been part of the pantry.

5. James Foster to A.T., Sept. 12, 1877, "Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882," WHTMA.

6. Ibid., Feb. 26, 1878, "Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882," WHTMA.

7. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, May 3, 1858, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

8. P.R.T. Diaries, Oct. 10, 1855, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 11.

9. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, April 10, 1858, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

4. Grandpa and Grandma Tafts' Rooms, 1851-61

From the time that they moved into the house until November 1861, Grandpa and Grandma Taft occupied, as their apartment, the two lower story rooms on the north side of the central hall.

The senior Tafts, in accordance with their daughter-in-law's suggestion, positioned their stove in their front room, instead of the bedroom, in the winter of 1856-57. This arrangement found favor with the old couple's visitors.¹⁰

In mid-April 1858 the senior Tafts had their front room papered, painted, and grained. Before the arrival of the artisans, Grandpa Taft took up the carpets. The painter was paid \$15 and the paperhanger \$11.20 for their work by PRT.¹¹

While the senior Tafts were absent in October 1858 on a short visit to the DeWitt Sawyers, Mrs. Taft had their rooms cleaned.¹²

5. Alphonso and Louise's Bed Chamber and Sitting Room, 1854-61

When Alphonso and his bride arrived in Mt. Auburn, their bed chamber was the northeast room on the upper story of the post-1851 wing. This room was "delightfully situated and prettily furnished. It had a very fine prospect from the back windows of the surrounding country."¹³

After the birth of Samuel Davenport in February 1855, Mrs. Taft converted the room adjoining their bedroom on the west into a nursery. In November 1856, eight months after Sammy's death, Louise and Alphonso "abandoned" their bedroom "to the use of the family as a sitting room and made a bedroom out of the nursery adjoining." Louise enjoyed the privacy of the bedroom in contrast to the public use of this large room previously." By closing the door leading into the hall and placing the bed against it, the room seemed "quite sizeable." Her large bureau had also been moved in, while Mr. Taft's bureau stood "where the bed was near the wash bowl so that the dressing appurtances are compactly arranged in a small space and next the bathroom door."

10. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Nov. 23, 1856, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

11. P.R.T. Diaries, April 15, 1858; Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, March 22, and Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, April 10, 1858, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1 & 11.

12. Louise Taft to Delia, Oct. 1858, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

13. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Jan. 4, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

With the sofa, library table, and rocking chairs, they comfortably furnished the sitting room.¹⁴

Charlie took sick at Thanksgiving 1856 and was confined to bed for several weeks. Louise had him moved out of his room and into their new bedroom, which made a capital sick room, "so much more quiet and retired than his." At first, they had thought of having a bed put up in their new sitting room for Charlie, but they liked the "new arrangement" of the sitting room, so much they concluded not to interfere with it.¹⁵

Mrs. Taft in the spring of 1858 purchased a new carpet and curtains for the sitting room. The former was a necessity, because during the previous autumn she had been compelled "to make over the old carpet entirely . . . and could only make it do by hiding the rags under the stove & oil cloth."¹⁶

6. The Nursery, 1856-64

Mary, the nurse employed by the Tafts to help care for Sammy, occupied the southeast room on the lower story of the post-1851 wing. After Sammy's death, his body was placed on a lounge in Mary's room.¹⁷

Willie in the winter of 1858-59 slept in the nursery. His mother had had the room cleaned, and the mending of the carpet was quite an undertaking. When it was taken up and shaken, it was so worn that it had to be cut in two. The ends were then sewed together to make it last through the winter.

A new crib, large enough to hold him until he was four or five, had been bought for Willie. With new blankets and a white spread, it made the nursery look very neat.¹⁸

14. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Nov. 23, 1856, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

15. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Dec. 8, 1856, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

16. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, March 22, and to Delia Torrey, April 10, 1858, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. Mrs. Taft did not clean her sitting room until late April, because she did not want to get her "new carpet and curtains till we have done with fires" for the season.

17. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, April 21, 1856, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

18. Louise Taft to Delia, Oct. 1859, and undated, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

Horace in the spring of 1864 slept with Mary, the little German nurse, in the nursery. His two older brothers had been moved upstairs and slept in the northwest room.¹⁹

7. Alphonso and Louise Exchange Rooms with Grandpa and Grandma Taft

In late summer of 1861, Louise decided to insist on an exchange of rooms. Writing Delia in September, she confided that she had delayed her preparations for moving in hopes that her in-laws would spend a few days away from Mt. Auburn. She, however, was impatient to accomplish the move before cold weather made it necessary to set up the heating stoves.

Grandma Taft had said she would buy a new carpet for the parlor, but after visiting several Cincinnati furniture stores, she concluded that common tapestry at 90 cents a yard was good enough. Mrs. Taft said it wasn't. Mr. Taft remained noncommittal on this subject, although admitting that a new parlor carpet was needed. Mrs. Taft accordingly had selected an "elegant one," but would wait until the move was consummated before having it brought out to 60 Auburn Street.²⁰

Goaded by his wife, Alphonso early in November told his parents that he and Louise wanted to exchange rooms with them. "Grandpa and Grandma," Louise recorded, "felt a natural disinclination to being disturbed, and thought they could not feel at home, or be made comfortable, in new quarters." Seeing that Alphonso and Louise were "determined to accomplish the change," they reluctantly consented.

The days between November 7 and 20 were hectic. On the 7th Grandpa and Grandma Taft, assisted by John Dawson, moved their furniture and personal effects upstairs into the east rooms. Alphonso and Louise, on vacating their bed chamber left their "carpet, stove, curtains, oilcloths," and bedstead for the elder Tafts. Alphonso was "anxious that their room should be made just as comfortable and respectable, as possible, since it is to be parlor, sitting room, library and all."

The lower story northwest rooms vacated by Grandpa and Grandma would be redecorated before Alphonso and Louise moved in. While the

19. Louise Taft to Anna Torrey, May 14, 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

20. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Sept. 1861, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

rooms were being refurnished, they moved into the nursery, and found it to be "a cosy, comfortable little place," Writing Delia on the 12th, Louise reported:

The little bedstead from the back parlor chamber is brought down to the nursery, and Grandma's old one takes its place, where it looks very well. I wish you could look in and see how cosily we are packed into this little room. The bed stands where Willie's crib did, the bureau being moved to the other side of the door. Another bureau stands against the wall of the bathroom, and a third by the window as formerly. Willie's crib has a nice little niche in the passage leading to Grandma's room, where it just fits in, the door being locked on the other side. The large bed being out, and the door open in the hall, there seems to be a great deal more room than ever before.

I keep a fire in the parlor, where is Mr. Taft's table and books, expecting that he would be content to stay there, but he declared the nursery the cosiest place and stays here most of the time.

By the 12th the whitewashing was done, and by nightfall the next day the painting, graining, and varnishing. On Thursday, the 16th, the two rooms were wallpapered. Louise on the 11th had driven into the city and had purchased the new parlor carpet, "a splendid Brussels at \$1.40 per yard." Meanwhile fireplaces in three of the rooms had been "set," and plumbers were installing a new sink in "Louise's room," with "two nice drawers underneath, and a large marble slab and silver plated pipes." They also "mended some pipes" in Grandma and Grandpa's new room.

Carpenters were at work positioning "some nice drawers and inside closet doors in the closet," like those in the dining room pantry. The closet was to be "papered, varnished, and carpeted."

After the decorators had finished, the bookcases and books were moved into the northwest room. The haircloth sofa and rocking chairs, after being "recovered and varnished," were placed in the library, along with the roundtable. For their new bedroom, Mrs. Taft purchased "a small French bedstead" and had their bureaus varnished.

Mr. Taft, on observing the way his wife was ordering the workmen around, remarked that she displayed "the talent of a Major General." As for herself, she felt as if she "was coming into the promised land."²¹

21. P.R.T. Diaries, Nov. 7-20, 1861; Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Nov. 12, 1861, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1 & 11.

On November 17 Mr. Taft wrote Samuel Torrey from their new bedroom, in "the rear room of the front house on the north side of the hall." They had slept for the first time last night in their new bedstead, and "their bedroom had been newly grained and papered." The new parlor carpet had been put down in the rooms on the other side of the hall, and the "books & bookcases are in the front room which is now the library."

We would, Mr. Taft continued, be glad to have our "Millbury friends look in upon us." To provide additional comfort, they had installed Dodge's patented grates in both their rooms, as well as the guest room, where Delia and Susie stayed on their Mt. Auburn visits.²²

Mrs. Taft, who was pregnant, gave birth to Horace on December 28, 1861, and, writing from her new quarters, observed, "The pleasantness and convenience of my new surroundings were good for constant enjoyment, and I had been in such a hurry of preparation and anxiety that I had not before found time to realize them." Her new bedroom was "far enough removed from the noise of the children and the house" that she could enjoy some peace and quiet. Although she had spent New Years in bed, she had "never known a happier one and the congratulations of the season seemed [sic] to have a peculiar meaning."²³

8. The Billiard Room

Harry Smith, a neighbor, in the summer of 1864 had secured a billiard table for which he did not have room. The Tafts learned of this. Charlie had become a billiard shark and urged his parents to take the table off Smith's hands. Mrs. Taft, cognizant of the drinking and gambling associated with public billiard parlors, suggested to her husband that they acquire the table and outfit a basement room for billiards. Mr. Taft was agreeable and the boys overjoyed.

To secure necessary space, the Tafts appropriated the hired man's room and took down the partition separating it from the tank room. The tank was removed, and the billiard table moved in. Next, the walls were papered and the woodwork painted, providing the Tafts with a "nice large" billiard room.²⁴

22. A.T. to Samuel Torrey, Nov. 17, 1861, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. The guest bedroom was one of the four chambers on the second floor of the pre-1851 house.

23. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Jan. 12, 1862, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

24. A.T. to Anna Torrey, Sept. 2, 1864; Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Sept. 4, 1864; P.R.T. Diary, Aug. 31, 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1 & 11.

9. The Basement Storeroom Becomes the Hired Man's Quarters

Conversion of the hired man's and tank rooms into a billiard room confronted Mrs. Taft with the problem of finding new quarters for this individual. She determined to appropriate the basement storeroom, which "had always been too good for that use," for quarters. She cleaned out much of the useless rubbish, storing items still possessing utility (such as bedding) in the back parlor chamber, and the remainder on the back porch and in an outside storeroom. A bed, chair, bureau, and other furniture were moved into the former storeroom.

The first hired man to sleep in these new quarters was a black. In reporting this development, Mr. Taft wrote Anna, "We are getting aristocratic, & have now a colored man. It does not yet appear how we shall like him, or perhaps I might say how he will like us."²⁵

10. The Northwest Bedroom

On her return from Millbury in May 1864, Mrs. Taft moved Willie and Harry out of the nursery and upstairs into Anna's old room. Rika, one of the hired girls, slept in the room east of the boys' bedroom.²⁶

Charlie returned home following his graduation from Yale in June 1864. He moved into the northwest room, over the library. Reporting this development to Anna, Mr. Taft warned that with Charlie in such "permanent possession" of her former room, she could hardly expect to recover it. When she next visited Mt. Auburn, they would give her "the liberty of the two parlor chambers."²⁷

11. The Parlor Chamber as a Guest Room

Anna Torrey visited Mt. Auburn in November 1864 and occupied as her room the parlor chamber. Grandpa put up a stove for her, and it

25. A.T. to Anna Torrey, Sept. 3, 1864; Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Sept. 4, 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

26. Louise Taft to Anna Torrey, May 14, 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

27. A.T. to Anna Torrey, Sept. 3, 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

promised to be a "very warm & pleasant room." In addition, it was very light and cheerful, as sunlight flooded the room most of the day.²⁸

Anna was back at 60 Auburn Street in the autumn of 1865, and again slept in the parlor chamber. She was in poor health in December, suffering from dyspepsia. Writing Delia on the 17th, she reported, "I have a stove in my room, the parlor chamber. The girl makes a fire there every morning before I get up and by strenuous efforts I manage to keep comfortable."²⁹

12. Grandpa Taft has his Bedroom Redecorated

In the first ten days of March 1866, following the death of his wife, Grandpa Taft had his bedroom cleaned, the carpet taken up, and the ceiling whitewashed.³⁰

13. Will Taft again Occupies the Northwest Bedroom

Rossy returned from Europe in the winter of 1872-73, and Mrs. Taft moved him into a downstairs room (either the parlor chamber or the southeast room), while Willie continued "to enjoy" the northwest bedroom. Louise Taft did not propose to "make any new household arrangements" until Rossy married and left home.³¹

B. Furnishings and Fixtures

1. Improvements to the Parlor, 1856-1877

a. Mrs. Taft has her Parlor and Chamber Furniture Covered

On February 19, 1856, Louise Taft informed her sister Susie that "the next business we are to undertake will be to cover my parlor"

28. Anna Torrey to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Nov. 6, 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

29. Anna Torrey to Delia Torrey, Dec. 17, 1865, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

30. P.R.T. Diary, March 8, 1866, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 11; P.R.T. Journal, March 2, 1866, WHTMA.

31. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, January 1873, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

furniture." Her friends and neighbors were in a habit of covering theirs to protect it from dust in the summer and soot in the winter. Next, she would get a new dark spread for her bed, and have Aunt Mary cover "the rocking chairs and cushions in my room to match."³²

b. The Roberts' Mirror

Mr. Roberts, against whom bankruptcy proceedings had been instituted in May 1857, was indebted to Mr. Taft for professional services. He agreed to have everything Mrs. Taft bought at his auction deducted from his account. Before the sale, he approached Mr. Taft and inquired, "if he would not take their mirror, a large and beautiful one and just the thing for our house." Alphonso hesitated. At the sale "it was bid in for Mr. Roberts at \$70." He refused to part with it at that price, having given \$137 for it. After the auction, the mirror not being sold, Roberts again offered it to the Tafts for \$100. Alphonso was agreeable, and Louise boasted to Delia, "so we have quite a windfall."

The glass was of finest French plate, 62 x 46 inches, and the frame, although plain and simple, was handsome. When moved into the Taft parlor, the mirror was hung over the piano, between the doors.³³

c. The Family Portraits

Shortly before Christmas of 1857 Louise Taft completed a "piece of embroidery" she had been working on for months. She had it made up as a fire screen which enhanced the parlor.³⁴

During the winter of 1858-59 the Tafts engaged a painter to do their portraits, which were to be hung in the parlor. The first one finished was Mr. Taft's and it was "very handsome."³⁵ Several days were lost because of Grandpa's unwillingness to sit. He argued "that he did not wish his present looks preserved; and he did not wish to be remembered as an old feeble, broken down man." After about a week he had a change of heart; "and a more perfect likeness you never saw."

32. Louise Taft to Susan Torrey, Feb. 19, 1856, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

33. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, May 10, 1857, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

34. Louise Taft to Susie Torrey, Jan. 2, 1858, & Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, March 6, 1859, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. The rosewood frame and glass for the firescreen cost \$18.

35. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Oct. 1858, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

The artist found Louise Taft a difficult subject, but those that saw the painting, after it was completed, called it a good likeness.³⁶ Mrs. Taft, besides hanging the family portraits, purchased several pretty engravings to fill up "the recesses."³⁷

d. Reupholstering the Furniture

Rossy for Christmas 1873 had the parlor furniture reupholstered. Mrs. Taft thought this a "magnificent present" for the family, because the subject furniture, after 20 years, was "in rags." The man, who called to measure the furniture, said the project would cost \$175. Mrs. Taft had some second thoughts on Rossy's gift, because the new upholstery made her parlor "carpet & everything else look shabby."³⁸

2. Bargains at the Stetson Sale

Immediately following the bombardment and surrender of Fort Sumter, while war fever was at its height, the Stetsons, having sold their home preparatory to moving east, held a public sale on Friday, April 19. Mrs. Taft and Delia attended, and the former made two purchases. An extension table, which had cost the Stetsons \$75, was knocked down to her for \$15, and a "large book case such as we have been wanting cost \$24."

Reporting her good fortune to her parents, Mrs. Taft wrote, "It was the worse possible time to sell and there were few bidders." While it seemed absurd to buy furniture, when they might be "utterly ruined by war times," she had been "anxious to secure bargains on the very things we wanted so much."³⁹

3. The Taft Sewing Machine

The previous month, the Tafts had paid \$40 for a Huggins Sewing Machine. On April 18 Grandpa Taft made a box for it.⁴⁰

36. Louise Taft to Susie Torrey, Feb. 13, 1859, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

37. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, May 15, 1859, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

38. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Jan. 2, 1874, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

39. Louise Taft to Samuel Torrey, April 21, 1861, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. The bookcase had cost Mr. Stetson \$100.

40. P.R.T. Diaries, April 18, 1861, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 11; P.R.T. Account Books, files WHTMA.

4. Louise Taft Buys a New Bedroom Suite

Mrs. Taft in April 1877, following the fire, purchased furniture to refurnish one of the bedrooms. For \$164 she acquired one walnut wardrobe (\$28), one bedroom suite (\$77), one spring mattress (\$11.75), three cedar chests (\$11.75), and a second wardrobe (\$36).⁴¹

5. Oil Cloths and Carpeting

Mrs. Taft in early May 1857 attended the Roberts' bankruptcy auction. She purchased "a quantity of oil cloths . . . which" supplied "a want" she had "felt a great while." There was sufficient yardage to cover the floors of the bathing room, water closets, the "entry between," the upper front hall, and "the little room where we go on to the top of the house." The carpeting formerly in the upper front hall was put down in the back hall, "the base floor of which has always been an eyesore."

The oilcloth, though worn, had been a nice one and was very cheap at 32¢ per square yard. This improvement contributed to "the comfort of housekeeping."⁴²

On Friday, May 1, 1874, Mrs. Taft employed a man from a carpet shop to put down five carpets. On Saturday they would be finished with spring housecleaning and the annual ordeal finished. By next year Mrs. Taft hoped they would have "some new carpets, paper &c."

For the past five days, she had had only one girl, and as the rug cleaner charged \$1.50 per day for his services, Mrs. Taft had worked harder than usual. Writing Delia, she reported, "I am like an old horse, stiff in the joints though strong as ever. Since Mary has gone to the kitchen, she volunteers no help upstairs."⁴³

6. Photographs and Albums

a. Hanging Photographs and Pictures

Mrs. Taft, when she mailed her father the photograph made on Willie's third birthday, wrote, "I expect you will think it worthy

41. (Illegible) to Mrs. Taft, April 14, 1877, "Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882," WHTMA.

42. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, May 10, 1857, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

43. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, May 4, 1874, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

of a frame." She did not believe their walls would be "desecrated" by having a nail or screw driven in near the ceiling, on which to suspend it by a long red cord." All their pictures were hung in that fashion and were very ornamental.⁴⁴

b. The Taft Photograph Album

In mid-May 1865 Alphonso Taft purchased "a massive Photograph album" with space for four pictures on each page. Mrs. Taft accordingly wrote her mother on the 23d that "I want a good [photograph] of all my friends." She had one of her mother that was "tolerably satisfactory, but none at all of Father or Susie." She hoped her father would "lose no time in securing one."⁴⁵

7. Fixtures

Grandpa Taft in December 1855 purchased for \$18 a marble wash basin for the family bathroom.⁴⁶ In late July 1861 he secured some lead pipe and repaired the kitchen sink.⁴⁷

8. Bells

On April 1, 1863, a bell hanger came out from the city and hung several signal bells in the house.⁴⁸

9. Silverware

Mrs. Taft in late June 1865 purchased a dozen new plated teaspoons, and thought about getting some forks. Two of her small ones had been

44. Louise Taft to Samuel Torrey, Oct. 28, 1860, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

45. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, May 23, 1865, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

46. P.R.T.'s. Expense Book, Dec. 16, 1855, WHTMA.

47. P.R.T. Diaries, July 29 & 30, 1861, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 11.

48. P.R.T. Diaries, April 1, 1863, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 11.

lost, and she had only one large plated spoon. Recently, one of her salt spoons, which had been missing for more than three years, had been found in the cow's stable.⁴⁹

10. The Taft Vinegar Barrel

The Tafts in June 1865 suffered "quite a loss." The hoops of their vinegar barrel burst, and the contents were gone before they knew it. About two months before, the barrel had been filled with sour cider, and they had thought that they had "a full supply for a year."⁵⁰

C. Housekeeping and Maintenance, 1854-1881

1. Parts of a Puzzle

The day-to-day correspondence of the Tafts and Torreys, together with entries found in Peter R. Taft's diaries and journals, contain numerous references to housekeeping and maintenance operations adding to our knowledge of the William Howard Taft Birthplace. Items of interest focusing on the structural history of the house have been culled from thousands of documents on file at the Library of Congress and in custody of the William Howard Taft Memorial Association. These, it is hoped, will prove valuable to the architectural historians in completing the restoration of the Taft Home.

2. Housecleaning

Mrs. Louise Taft, during her years as mistress of the house, made it a practice of having biannual housecleaning. The one in the spring was more thorough, usually lasting from ten days to two weeks. Mrs. Taft devoted much thought and energy to these undertakings. For example, in May 1860, she wrote Susie that she was exhausted but the spring housecleaning was about completed. She had left the parlor and dining room to last. She planned to get a new carpet and have her room in order before the end of the week, as she planned a birthday party for Rossy on May 10.⁵¹

49. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, July 2, 1865, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

50. Ibid.

51. Louise Taft to Susie Torrey, May 7, 1860, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

November 1861 found the Tafts in the throes of autumn housecleaning. The exchange of rooms and reorganization of the household undertaken at this time caused added problems.

Writing Delia on the 12th, Louise complained, "We are just in the transition state of moving and repairing, which leaves me neither time nor place for writing. We [she and Alphonso] are living for a week in the nursery, and a cosy, comfortable little place we find it."⁵²

Spring cleaning was delayed until late May and early June in 1864, because of a visit to Millbury. In making plans, Mrs. Taft decided to "shirk taking up the carpets." If she did, she feared some of them were so old they would never go down again, and the others "would last longer with less beating & striking."⁵³

The front stairs carpet, however, required attention. She had it "pieced" out at the top, so that she was "able to change the worn parts and put it down so differently that it looks much better from below and will wear a long time."⁵⁴

3. Painting and Whitewashing the House

a. The Exterior

Grandpa Taft spent a fortnight in late October and November 1859 painting on and about the house. On the 2d he noted in his diary that he was "painting on top of house."⁵⁵

Louise Taft returned from her late summer 1860 visit to Millbury to find a contractor painting the exterior of the house. This, she wrote her mother, would "improve its appearance decidedly." The contractor charged Alphonso \$150 for this work.⁵⁶

52. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Nov. 12, 1861, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

53. Louise Taft to Anna Torrey, May 14, 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

54. Louise Taft to Anna Torrey, May 30, 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

55. P.R.T. Diaries, Oct. 25 & 26, Nov. 2-9, 1859, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

56. Ibid., Sept. 19, 1860; Louise Taft to Susan Taft, Sept. 18, 1860, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers.

John B. Deiters was paid \$150 to paint the house in the spring of 1881. Before leaving 60 Auburn Street, the workmen tinted a number of ceilings and painted floors.⁵⁷

b. The Kitchen, Front Door, and Porches

Mrs. Taft in the spring of 1858 had the walls and woodwork of her kitchen repainted, also the front door and porches.⁵⁸ Reporting this development to Delia, she wrote, the kitchen "looks as neat as wax with its nicely painted walls and woodwork."⁵⁹

In June 1864 Mrs. Taft had her kitchen repainted--the walls a light green, the woodwork a stone color, and the floor a "good strong yellow."⁶⁰

c. Whitewashing

Mrs. Taft in June 1864 spent \$5 to have some whitewashing done in her house.⁶¹

4. Wallpapering in the Post-1851 Wing

On Monday, April 9, 1855, Louise and Alphonso were driven into the city and purchased wallpaper for their room, the dining room, and the upper and lower halls. Writing her mother, Louise reported, "The new part [of the House] never having been papered before, we were fortunate in our selections and the rooms are much improved."⁶²

5. The 1858 Improvements to the Pantry

Mrs. Taft began her spring cleaning on March 23, 1858. She did not plan as much as last year, and neither "the carpets in the parlor nor in the chambers over it" would be taken up.

57. J.B. Deiters to A.T., May 27, 1881, "Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882," WHTMA.

58. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, March 22, 1858, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

59. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, April 10, 1859, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

60. Louise Taft to Anna Torrey, June 13, 1864, William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

61. Louise Taft to Anna Torrey, May 30 & June 13, 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

62. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, April 15, 1855, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

In conjunction with the cleaning, she had programmed some long desired improvements. Carpenters and plasterers had been engaged to alter the kitchen pantry, so it would open into the dining room. This, she anticipated, would be a great convenience "for keeping nice china and glass away from the dust and common use of the other closet."

She had the carpenter build drawers for her table cloths and napkins and "an inner small closet for sugar and other nice things." There was plastering and painting, so she had to have the dining room carpet taken up.⁶³ The pantry was finished by April 10, and Mrs. Taft called it her \$80 sideboard.⁶⁴

6. Cleaning the Chimneys

Louise Taft in June 1864 hired a chimney sweep to clean the chimneys.⁶⁵

7. Graining and Varnishing Certain of the Rooms and Halls

The Tafts in April 1858 had their halls and stairways grained.⁶⁶ Six years later, in May 1864, workmen spent several days at the house graining and varnishing the front hall and the dining room stairs.⁶⁷

8. Refinishing the Front Door

Mrs. Taft in April 1858 employed mechanics to "provide the front door with a new smooth face."⁶⁸

63. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, March 22, and Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, April 10, 1858, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1; P.R.T. Diaries, May 19, 1858, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 11. The mechanics did not show up when expected, and it was mid-April before the pantry was finished.

64. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, April 10, 1858, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

65. Louise Taft to Anna Torrey, June 13, 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1. The chimney sweep charged \$5.

66. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, June 10, 1858, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

67. Louise Taft to Anna Torrey, May 30 & June 13, 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

68. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, April 10, 1858, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

9. Redecorating the Dining Room

In the spring of 1869 the Tafts had their dining room redecorated.⁶⁹

10. The 1877 Dumbwaiter

When the house was remodeled in 1877, Mr. Taft had a dumbwaiter installed to facilitate transfer of food from the kitchen to the pantry. M. Douglas, a carpenter, carried out this project and billed Judge Taft for three and one-half days labor, 36 feet of lumber, three dozen No. 2 screws, \$1.43 for a rope, and \$25.50 for ironwork.⁷⁰

11. Redecorating the House for Mrs. Wilbur

a. Wallpapering

The Tafts in the late winter of 1876, before moving to Washington and leasing 60 Auburn Street to Mrs. Wilbur, had their dwelling redecorated. S. Holmes & Co. repapered the "North and South Rooms" of the pre-1851 wing of the upper story. The bill forwarded to Judge Taft read:

<u>North Rooms</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Unit Cost</u>	<u>Total Cost</u>
March 17, 1876	12 rolls of wallpaper & hanging	.45	\$5.40
	3 rolls of border & hanging	.50	1.50
	12 rolls of wallpaper & hanging	.45	5.40
	2 1/2 rolls of border & hanging	.80	2.00
<u>South Rooms</u>			
March 17, 1876	12 rolls of wallpaper & hanging	.45	\$5.40
	2 1/2 rolls of border & hanging	1.30	3.25
	12 rolls of wallpaper & hanging	.45	5.40
	2 1/2 rolls of border & hanging	.80	2.00

69. Anna Torrey to Delia Torrey, May 5, 1869, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

70. Douglas to A.T., Feb. 25, 1878, "Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882," WHTMA.

<u>Front Hall</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Unit Cost</u>	<u>Total Cost</u>
March 17, 1876	12 rolls of wallpaper & hanging	.45	\$5.40
	2 1/2 rolls of border & hanging	.50	1.25

Closets

March 17, 1876	8 rolls of wallpaper & hanging	.40	\$3.20
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Unidentified Upper Story Rooms, Post-1851 Addition

March 17, 1876	plastering		\$15.00
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March 21, 1876	32 rolls of paper & hanging	.45	9.90
	5 rolls of border & hanging	1.50	7.50
	13 rolls for ceiling & hanging	.55	7.15
	scraping, sizing & painting 13 room	.20	2.60
	2 rolls of wallpaper	.25	.50

Closets

March 29, 1876	7 rolls of paper & hanging	.45	\$3.15
	1 oak		.45
	2 1/2 rolls of border & hanging	.40	1.00
	1 rail		.80
	labor		2.00

\$77.25⁷¹

b. Painting, Graining, & Varnishing

Painting, graining, and varnishing were done by H. Humphreys. A breakdown of the bill shows that Humphreys charged \$15.50 for 62 pounds of color; \$1.25 for one quart of varnish; \$5 for graining maple and walnut flooring; \$10 for whitewashing; and \$14 for four days' labor.⁷²

c. Cleaning the Carpets

W. H. Bristol of Boston Steam Carpet Beating Co. spent two days at 60 Auburn Street. On March 21, 210 yards of Brussels carpeting were taken up, cleaned, and put down. Two days later 94 yards of Brussels and 22 yards of Ingrain 3-ply carpeting were cleaned.⁷³

71. S. Holmes & Co. to A.T., April 8, 1876, "Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882," WHTMA.

72. Humphreys to A.T., April 10, 1876, "Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882," WHTMA.

73. W.H. Bristol to A.T., March 23, 1876, "Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882," WHTMA. On the 21st eight carpets measuring: 61, 27, 27, 31, 28, 17, 19, and 10 yards were cleaned.

D. The Taft Domestic and Hired Men

1. Several Observations

The Tafts, while in residence at 60 Auburn Street, employed a hired man to do the chores and help with the heavy work around the house, and several females for domestic duties. Louise Taft, during her first 13 years as mistress of the house, frequently had a cook and two servant girls. One of the latter served as a nurse for the children. These employees lived with the Tafts. Until September 1864 the hired man occupied a room in the basement, the nurse usually slept in the nursery with the children when they were babies, and the other female help shared a room on the upper floor.

Changes in help were frequent. Only a few of the domestics remained with the Tafts long enough to establish an identity. Louise Taft, her letters reveal, probably contributed to this situation, as she worked the girls hard and was a strict disciplinarian. Grandpa Taft, until his death in 1867, supervised the hired man.

2. Louise Taft and Her Domestic, 1854-57

Soon after moving to Mt. Auburn in July 1851, the Tafts hired Owen to help with the chores. On June 22, 1853, one year after Fanny's death, a live-in maid was employed, and eight days later Owen quit and was replaced by Edward, an Irish boy. Some time before Alphonso's marriage to Louise Torrey, a second girl was hired.⁷⁴

Louise Taft, on becoming mistress of the house in January 1854, discovered that the hired girls did not have enough work to keep them occupied. She, however, did not propose to assume any of their duties. Grandma Taft had trained them to "think they must sew for us, so they do some mending and whatever else we provide for them." Louise accordingly bought some cloth, and under her supervision they cut out and sewed half a dozen pair of shorts for Charlie and Rossy. If she could find a "real sweet girl who was a good cook, she would let one of them go."⁷⁵

On her return from Millbury in late September 1854, Louise continued to experience the trials incidental to housekeeping--poor help. A new

74. P.R.T. Diaries, June 22 & 30, 1853, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 11.

75. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Jan. 12, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

cook, who promised well, was hired and reported for duty on October 2.⁷⁶

During her six-week illness that autumn, Louise discovered that she had "an excellent second girl who does plain sewing pretty well," but she would have to "make an entire revolution in the kitchen as soon as I am able to get into it." There had been friction with Grandma Taft, and Louise was glad to find that her mother-in-law was "getting tired of the care and I long to dismiss her from all share in it and take the direction of it myself." Her first task, on resuming her duty as mistress of the house, would be to change help.⁷⁷

Louise Taft on December 3, 1854, took the offensive. She fired the Irish girl hired during the "emergency of my sickness," who had been unable to take "any responsibility about the cooking or of doing the washing & ironing with any thoroughness or dispatch." She had been replaced by a Welsh lass, "who though making no great pretensions is of the right material to encourage every effort to teach her." Her friends had told her that the Welsh were the best help obtainable, and they commanded premium wages, "because they were scarce." They were called "the Yankees of Great Britain and seem more like our sort of folks" than the other foreigners.

She and Alphonso had been on the lookout for a Welsh girl since her return from Millbury, but they had almost given up in despair. The new girl would be paid two dollars per week, and her board and room, while the second girl continued to receive a dollar and a quarter a week.⁷⁸

Louise, at the end of three weeks, was congratulating herself on her good help. The Welsh girl was a treasure, but the frequent appearances of a "spruce young Welchman in the kitchen" raised fears that they would soon lose her.⁷⁹

The Welsh girl worked for the Tafts until the second week of March 1855, one month after the birth of Samuel Davenport. When she left it was to get married. Several days later, the little Irish girl quit, as

76. Delia Torrey to Samuel Torrey, Oct. 2, 1854, L.C. William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

77. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Nov. 26, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

78. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Dec. 4, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

79. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Dec. 24, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

she was unable to get along with the German domestic hired as a replacement for the Welsh lass. Reporting this development to her mother, Mrs. Taft wrote, "We have now a German establishment throughout, a man and two girls. They are very different from the Irish. I have not seen enough of them to know if I like them better."

Although her baby was five weeks old, Louise had not resumed charge of the housekeeping. Her mother-in-law seemed to enjoy having regained "full possession of the kitchen."⁸⁰

In late February 1856 the Tafts lost another cook. As she "was poor help" Mrs. Taft did not regret her departure. A new girl was hired and reported on the 25th, but she stayed only a week. A new one was expected that evening, and Louise confided to her mother, "I do not mean to tolerate poor help as I have done, but to change till I get one who is suitable."

Mary, the nurse, unlike the other domestics was invaluable. She was as efficient in the kitchen as she was faithful to the baby. When they visited Millbury that summer, they planned to bring "Aunt Mary."⁸¹

In the autumn of 1856 Louise Taft sought to save money by getting along with one hired girl. To do so, she called on Susie Torrey, who was spending the year with the Tafts, to help around the house. Mary continued to be an excellent employee. Mrs. Taft, however, had had a falling out with Mike, the hired man, because he would not help around the house when there was nothing to do outside. She fired him, and he went to work for their neighbors, the Bodmanns. He would not remain there long, Louise wrote Delia, as he was already complaining of the hard work, and Mr. Bodmann had told her that he was lazy.

A boy had been employed as Mike's replacement, and Louise sought to "break him in to be of more use in the house." She found, however, that like most men he was "sensitive about being made to do a woman's work." She was envious of Mrs. Perry, who had succeeded in "making their man wash windows and scrub floors."⁸²

80. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, March 14, 1855, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

81. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Feb. 25 & March 2, 1856, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

82. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Nov. 10, 1856, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

3. The Domestic Situation at and after Willie's Birth

Mrs. Taft's help situation reached a crisis during the seven weeks following Willie's birth. She had four different girls during this period. Affairs in the kitchen had been chaotic. For the past two weeks, she wrote Delia on November 8, 1857, they had had a cook who was "wholly incompetent to do our work." She, however, trusted that the crisis had passed with the reemployment of "Big Mary," who had worked for them during the winter of 1856-57. To secure her return, Louise had been compelled to hire her sister, who had immigrated to the United States in July, as a nurse girl. The latter had learned "to do chamber work," and "possessed real tact and skill in care of the baby." As Big Mary and her sister were reliable, Louise trusted her help situation had been solved for the winter.⁸³

She was mistaken. On January 2, 1858, Louise wrote Susie that they had a new girl who equals Kate in "no respect but that of size, where she goes beyond or rather above her, being a full head taller than I am." Unlike most of her predecessors, she had been born in the United States, and was "better acquainted with housework than care of children." As yet, she had not relieved Mrs. Taft "much in the care of Willie." But with school recessed for the Christmas holidays, Anna Torrey, who was spending the year with the Tafts, was looking after the baby.

The new girl did not have the fault common to "Americans of feeling above her business, but is on quite too familiar terms with the Irish and Dutch." With her, they had "rather a noisy and unruly set in the kitchen," and Mrs. Taft was uncertain how long she would tolerate this situation.⁸⁴

Mrs. Taft and Willie spent most of the summer of 1858 in Millbury. On returning to Mt. Auburn, her first task was to get the household reorganized. The cook, she complained, was not all that was desired, but she was smart enough and Louise hoped "to train her to mind in other things." Kate McCormick, the nurse, had struck for higher wages, and rather than fire her and hire another, Mrs. Taft raised her salary to \$1.75 per week.⁸⁵

83. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Nov. 8, 1857, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

84. Louise Taft to Susie Torrey, Jan. 2, 1858, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

85. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Sept. 26, 1858, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

Several weeks before Harry's birth in May 1859, Mrs. Taft made a wise change in help. She hired a girl, old, homely and experienced in the three essentials of cooking, washing, and ironing. Her second girl was "rather green" but had the saving virtue of being fond of children. She had left "a good place to come" with Mrs. Taft, because she was desirous of being where there was a baby. She was devoted to Willie and took pride in taking him for walks about the neighborhood. She reported that people stopped her to inquire whose child he is, and to "say he it the beautifullest boy they ever saw."⁸⁶

4. The Departure of a Favorite Nurse

Mrs. Taft still had servant problems in 1862. Six months after the birth of Horace, she complained to Susie that she had been her own cook for two weeks. She had two young girls, so there was no need for her "doing a great deal in the kitchen," but she was "tempted to improve the opportunity to practice a little in the cooking line."

She had made yeast bread, brown and white, biscuits, muffins, etc. "to say nothing of butter, cheese, and fancy articles." Her efforts had been successful, and Grandpa Taft had declared her bread better than the baker's. Louise was pleased to have acquired the experience, and confessed that she would never "submit to anything but good bread again."

One important development was that she had learned to manage the big cooking range, and now knew when it was being properly cared for. This would have future benefits in enabling her to instruct the cook on its mysteries.⁸⁷

Rosa, the childrens' nurse and companion for several years, was discharged in the last week of January 1863. She hated to leave 60 Auburn Street, and pined for the baby more than the two older boys, seeming to fear that without her, he would "suffer for want of care." Mrs. Taft confessed that Horace was "more fond" of Rosa than of me. He had been sleeping with Rosa and Harry lately.

When Rosa returned on Saturday, January 26, to get some of her clothes, Mrs. Taft found "her in my room sobbing and crying over the sleeping baby in the crib."⁸⁸

86. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, June 19, 1859, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

87. Louise Taft to Susie Torrey, June 15, 1862, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

88. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Feb. 1, 1863, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

5. The German Invasion

To replace Rosa in the nursery, Mrs. Taft hired a "large fine-looking girl, a few months from the Vaterland, who speaks and understands no English." Although "somewhat awkward and coarse-looking, as though accustomed to labor," Frederika had "a fine head and face." She had been well brought up and educated. She sang sweetly, wrote a pretty German hand, and read well.

Another plus was her willingness to do hard work. Minuses were her unhandiness with the children and the failure of Horace to take to her. She was only 16, and Mrs. Taft paid her \$1.50 per week, besides providing board and room.'

A second girl, also from Germany, and not quite 16 was paid \$1.25 per week and acted as the interpreter. Carolina was a perfect contrast to Frederika, "homely as possible, small but bright and quick, and just right to wait on Grandma and run up & downstairs." Neither had lived out before, and Mrs. Taft called them Riká and Lina for short.

Lina dressed and undressed Grandma, took care of the senior Tafts' rooms, and carried up Grandma's meals. Lina, since she understood and spoke English, slept in the nursery, ready to be called during the night. Fortunately she was small enough to suffer no discomforture from sleeping in the trundle bed. Willie and Harry were thus free to sleep together in the large bed. Both girls were instructed to wash and dress in the bathroom, as Mrs. Taft hoped "to keep the dressing arrangements distinct and separate."⁸⁹

Mrs. Taft at this time also had a cook. In the months which followed, Louise Taft and her children learned German from Rika and Lina. On February 15, 1863, Mrs. Taft wrote Delia that Willie is "quite tractable, and interested in learning (German) orally." Willie and Harry, however, were not old "enough to make progress in reading, but they catch words by sound." Harry could not be "tamed to any sort of application, but he was ambitious to imitate and appears to know as much as Willie."⁹⁰

In June, Mr. Taft boasted to Delia, "As to the German, Louise and the boys have to retain enough of their mother tongue to talk with me, but they are making progress toward Germany." Horace had finally taken

89. Ibid. Rosa, soon after leaving the Tafts, was married to "a young man from her old home in Ireland," Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Feb. 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

90. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Feb. 15, 1863, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

to Rika and Lina, and understood German better than English, and his friends would "have to acquire German if they would be on easy social terms with him."⁹¹

Rika remained with the Tafts for ten months. In October she became discontented and left to take a job in the city. She was replaced by a "nice looking Irish girl for upstairs works." Mrs. Taft hoped to employ a "little girl" as a nurse for Horace.⁹²

Louise Taft in late February 1864 employed "a new German nurse" whom she liked very much.⁹³ She provided Delia with additional details of her new domestic arrangements on March 13. "Our old Margaret, the stationary engine," continues to manage the kitchen. Margaret's niece, "quite a nice girl," waited on Grandma Taft, worked upstairs, and helped with the sewing. The German nurse, although she spoke little English, got along well with Harry and Horace.

With this force to look after the house, it would free Mrs. Taft to travel to Millbury for Susie's wedding and to say goodbye to Delia and the Woods before they started for California.⁹⁴

6. The Domestic Come and Go

The Tafts in 1866 had a new cook, Mary, whose culinary arts did not always satisfy Mrs. Taft. On Monday, March 19, Mary strained her back lifting a boiler off the cooking range. She was compelled to go to bed, and Mrs. Taft expressed fears that "she may be sometime getting over it." As Mrs. Taft was not enthusiastic with Mary's bread, she again resolved to do her own baking, "so as to feel capable of giving explicit directions."

Relaying this information to the Torreys, Louise explained, Mary "seems to cook without any rule and is of course very variable. She seems anxious to please and I may after a while make her understand how I like things."⁹⁵

91. A.T. to Delia Torrey, June 7, 1863, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

92. Louise Taft to Susie Torrey, Oct. 25, 1863, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

93. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, March 2, 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

94. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, March 13, 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

95. Louise Taft to Anna Torrey, March 25, 1866, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

The second girl, Katy, was a good worker, but she had a bad disposition, and Mrs. Taft doubted she would ever like her.⁹⁶

Mrs. Taft in December 1866 wrote Delia that she had concluded that "generalship" was her vocation. She had "such a large team to drive," it "takes all my time to keep them at work." At present, she had "two smart girls, and I am trying to train them properly, and to control my affairs more than I have done lately. But they don't relish being watched & directed, and having a third girl [the nurse] complicates matters, and I am sometimes distracted with my cares."

To add to her problems in this respect was the hired man. A German boy, he did not "know enough to go in when it rains, and his stupidity will make a perfect vixen of me."

Her seamstress had come for a second week while Mr. Taft was ill, and she had devoted very little time to her, and "the amount of work accomplished was far from satisfactory."⁹⁷

Mary, who had been promoted to cook in the second week of September 1874, had "an attack of palpitations of the heart." This so alarmed the Tafts that they sent for a doctor and priest. She took several days vacation to rest, and Mrs. Taft was left with only one girl. Reporting her problems to Delia, Mrs. Taft wrote, "I am trying to muster courage to persuade her to get an easier place [to work], and find two able-bodied girls, who will not be afraid of hard work."⁹⁸

E. Heating and Lighting the House

1. Fuel

The Tafts burned coal to heat their house, storing it in the southwest basement room. Alphonso bought his year's supply of coal in September and had it hauled out to 60 Auburn Street and stored. For example on September 27, 1851, he purchased 100 bushels of coal from Pomeroy for \$10.⁹⁹

96. Ibid.

97. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Dec. 10, 1866, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

98. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Sept. 13, 1874, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

99. P.R.T. Diaries, Sept. 27, 1851, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 11.

The winter of 1857-58 was unseasonably cold in Cincinnati, and the Tafts, with a baby in the house, burned a lot of fuel. On September 28, 400 bushels were drayed out to Mt. Auburn and stored in the basement. Within five months most of it had been consumed, and another 400 bushels were brought out from the city.¹⁰⁰ In October 1858 they, with another winter approaching, bought \$100 worth of coal.¹⁰¹

Coal was cheaper in the spring of 1874 than it had been for years. To take advantage of this situation, Mr. Taft purchased a year's supply--800 bushels. Mrs. Taft insisted that the coal be stored in the basement, before she had the front rooms cleaned. The hired man's time was so engrossed in carrying out this task that Mrs. Taft could not call on him to take up or put down carpets. She "ventured to go over Sunday with no carpet in the spare chamber," and as luck willed it, she "got caught with company."¹⁰²

Judge Taft frequently bought his coal in carload lots. On July 13, 1881, he purchased from Consolidated Coal & Mining Co. \$277.95 worth of coal for delivery to his home. The fuel purchased included 14.590 tons of Grate Anthracite, 10.25 tons of Camp Creek, and 7.145 tons of National Anthracite.¹⁰³

2. Heating Stoves and Kitchen Ranges

While the parlor, library, etc., had fireplaces, most of the bedrooms (chambers) were heated during the winter by stoves. Information about the stoves has been gleaned from family letters, diaries, and account books. In mid-December 1854 the temperature dropped below 20 degrees, and water froze in Delia's room. Delia wrote her father, "Tell Anna that I sleep very cold without my bedfellow and a bottle of warm water has to supply her place."¹⁰⁴

100. Peter R. Taft Diaries, Sept. 28, 1857, & Feb. 6, 1858, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 11.

101. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Oct. 1858, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

102. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, May 4, 1874, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

103. Consolidated Coal & Mining Co. to A.T., July 13, 1881, "Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882," WHTMA.

104. Delia Torrey to Samuel Torrey, Dec. 15, 1854, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

With the advent of cold weather. Grandpa Taft took his stove out of storage and put it up in "our room." The boiler soon commenced leaking, and on February 13, 1855, he had a new one "put in our stove."¹⁰⁵ Before the end of March, the stove's heater was leaking, and it had to be replaced at a cost of \$12.20.¹⁰⁶

On October 9, 1857, the Tafts, having purchased a new coal stove, had it put up in the kitchen. Grandpa on the same day repaired one of the basement windows.¹⁰⁷

Louise Taft, in the autumn of 1858, had the new stove purchased by her husband put up in their bedroom. Their old stove was positioned in Anna's room. The fire in the Tafts' chamber, along with the one in the dining room, kept the rear of the house more "cheerful and comfortable" than heretofore during the cold months.¹⁰⁸

The Tafts in September 1859 bought a new kitchen range from Blunt, who took three days to remove the old one and set up the new model.¹⁰⁹

On November 10, 1859, with approach of winter, Grandpa Taft took out of storage and positioned in the rooms occupied by him and his wife their heating stove.¹¹⁰ Four years later, he noted in his diary that he had "mended" the flue in the nursery.¹¹¹

Mrs. Taft in mid-November 1864 commenced autumn housecleaning. The mosquito bars and other "summer items" were taken down and stored. She

105. Peter R. Taft Diaries, Dec. 27, 1854, & Feb. 13, 1855, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 11.

106. Ibid., March 24 & April 17, 1855, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 11; Peter R. Taft Account Book, 1850-1861, WHTMA.

107. Peter R. Taft Diaries, Oct. 9, 1857, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series, 11.

108. Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Oct. 1858, and undated, L.C., William Howard Taft, Series 1.

109. P.R.T. Diaries, Sept. 1-3, 1859, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 11.

110. P.R.T. Diaries, Nov. 10, 1859, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 11.

111. P.R.T. Diaries, Dec. 7, 1863, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 11.

had the dining room stove taken out of storage, flaked, and set up. This made that room "so much more comfortable and cheerful" that she regretted not having it done earlier.¹¹²

The Tafts in the autumn of 1864 installed a gas stove in the basement billiard room. Mrs. Taft was delighted, because it was no trouble and heated the room in a few minutes.¹¹³

Grandpa Taft in September 1865 paid \$17 for a new stove for his room. A grate and fire bricks for this stove cost an additional \$2.60.¹¹⁴

3. Central Heating

Louise Taft found the Cincinnati winters cold and damp, and she threatened to move south. She was excited to learn that her parents back in Millbury were thinking of getting a furnace. The subject of warming houses by steam had been a frequent topic on Mt. Auburn during the winter of 1856-57. Hot air furnaces had not found much favor, because they did not operate efficiently on bituminous coal. The flues became clogged by soot and had to be frequently cleaned. Mr. Mitchell's new house was heated by steam, and Mr. Taft had told Louise that he might install a similar system, if their neighbor had no complaints.¹¹⁵

Mr. Taft, however, determined not to experiment with central heating at this time. Seven years later, after Charlie had graduated from Yale and the installation of gas for lighting, Mrs. Taft and her eldest stepson undertook a campaign to prevail on Mr. Taft to get a furnace, so the house "can be made comfortable all over without keeping the doors shut." Opening the doors from the parlor and library into a cold hall was "something of an exposure" after a winter's evening of dancing or euchre.¹¹⁶

Their arguments were resisted at first, but in the end Alphonso capitulated. By the winter of 1866-67 the family had central heating.

112. Louise Taft to Mrs. Susan Torrey, Nov. 16, 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

113. Louise Taft to Anna Torrey, Dec. 25, 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

114. P.R.T. Account Book, 1850-1866, WHTMA.

115. Louise Taft to Samuel Torrey, Feb. 1, 1857, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

116. Louise Taft to Anna Torrey, Dec. 25, 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1.

4. Lighting the House with Gas

City gas mains were laid along Auburn Street in April 1861, but the Tafts did not take advantage of this service for several years.¹¹⁷ The acquisition of the billiard table and the outfitting of the basement billiard room in 1864 finally induced Mr. Taft to bring gas into 60 Auburn Street. Mrs. Taft for several years had urged her husband to make this improvement. Now Charlie came to his step-mother's aid, telling his father there "was no use in waiting" until the spring of 1865, as he had suggested to his wife. Charlie cinched the discussion by pointing out how much more pleasant the billiard room would be with gas lights. "From this modest beginning we rushed to the full idea of spending three or four hundred dollars to put gas in the house & in every room of it," Mr. Taft reported.

Chandeliers were selected, and a contractor brought in at the end of August. On September 4, 1864, Mrs. Taft wrote Delia, "Our house is now in an admirable state of confusion--fibre carpets up, and boards taken up in every floor upstairs." Relaying this information to the Torreys, Mr. Taft wrote, "We shall look more cheerful than we have ever done before, as we are getting old, and it is necessary to bring in all the aids to cheerfulness and youthful gaiety."¹¹⁸

F. Telephone

Judge Taft on March 1, 1881, contracted with City & Suburban Telegraph Association for installation of telephone service into his home. The cost for this service was \$60 per year.¹¹⁹

117. P.R.T. Diaries, April 14-24, 1861, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 11.

118. A.T. to Anna Torrey, Sept. 3, 1864; Louise Taft to Delia Torrey, Sept. 4, 1864; P.R.T. Diaries, Aug. 31, 1864, L.C., William Howard Taft Papers, Series 1 & 11.

119. Taft to City & Suburban Telephone Association, March 1, 1881, "Bills Paid by A. Taft, Oct. 1875-May 1882," WHTMA.

APPENDIX A

Residents of the Taft Home, 1851-1940

Residents of Home on July 2, 1851

Alphonso and Fanny Taft
Peter Rawson and Sylvia Howard Taft
Charles Phelps Taft
Peter Rawson (Rossey) Taft

Residents of Home on July 1, 1852

Alphonso Taft (a widower)
Peter Rawson and Sylvia Howard Taft
Charles Phelps Taft
Peter Rawson (Rossey) Taft
Owen (the hired man)

Residents of Home on July 1, 1853

Alphonso Taft (a widower)
Peter Rawson and Sylvia Howard Taft
Charles Phelps Taft
Peter Rawson (Rossey) Taft
An unidentified maid
Edward (an Irishman--the hired man)

Residents of Home on October 2, 1854

Alphonso and Louise Taft
Peter Rawson and Sylvia Howard Taft
Charles Phelps Taft
Peter Rawson (Rossey) Taft
Delia Torrey
Charles (hired man)
An unidentified cook
Two unidentified hired Irish girls

Residents of Home on April 30, 1855

Alphonso and Louise Taft

Peter Rawson and Sylvia Howard Taft
Charles Phelps Taft
Peter Rawson (Rossey) Taft
Samuel Davenport Taft
Delia Torrey
Two unidentified hired girls (Germans)
One hired man (German)

Residents of Home on July 1, 1856

Alphonso and Louise Taft
Peter Rawson and Sylvia Howard Taft
Charles Phelps Taft
Peter Rawson (Rossey) Taft
Susan Torrey
Aunt Mary (a servant)
One unidentified hired girl
Mike (the hired man)

Residents of Home in November 1857

Alphonso and Louise Taft
Peter Rawson and Sylvia Howard Taft
Charles Phelps Taft
Peter Rawson (Rossey) Taft
William Howard Taft
Anna Torrey
"Big Mary," the cook
"Big Mary's sister," a nurse
An unidentified hired man

Residents of Home on October 1, 1858

Alphonso and Louise Taft
Peter Rawson and Sylvia Taft
Charles Phelps Taft
Peter Rawson (Rossey) Taft
William Howard Taft
Anna Torrey
Kate McCormick (a nurse)
An unidentified cook
An unidentified hired man

Residents of Home on October 1, 1859

Alphonso and Louise Taft

Peter Rawson and Sylvia Taft
 Peter Rawson (Rosy) Taft
 William Howard Taft
 Henry Waters Taft
 Mrs. Susan Torrey (house guest)
 Anna Torrey
 An unidentified cook
 An unidentified nurse
 Dan (the hired man)
 Charles Phelps Taft (at Andover)

Residents at Home on June 30, 1860

<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Value of Real Estate</u>	<u>Value of Personal Property</u>	<u>Where Born</u>
Alphonso Taft	49	Attorney	\$50,000	\$10,000	Vt.
Louise Taft	32	Housewife			Mass.
Peter Rawson Taft	78	Gentleman	1,000	40,000	Mass.
Sylvia Howard Taft	68				Vt.
Charles P. Taft	16	Student			Ohio
Peter Rawson (Rosy) Taft	14	Student			Ohio
William Howard Taft	2				Ohio
Henry Waters Taft	1				Ohio
Anna Torrey	19				Mass.
Margaret Mulligan	28	cook			Ireland
Rosa Mulligan	20	nurse			Ireland
Edward Mulligan	22	hired man			Ireland

Residents at Home on October 1, 1861

Alphonso and Louise Taft
 Peter Rawson and Sylvia Taft
 Peter Rawson (Rosy) Taft
 William Howard Taft
 Henry Waters Taft
 Rosa Mulligan (nurse)
 An unidentified maid
 An unidentified hired man
 Charles Phelps Taft (at Yale)

Residents at Home on October 15, 1862

Alphonso and Louise Taft
 Peter Rawson and Sylvia Taft

Peter Rawson (Rosy) Taft
William Howard Taft
Henry Waters Taft
Horace Dutton Taft
Rosa Mulligan (nurse)
Two unidentified girls
An unidentified hired man
Charles Phelps Taft (at Yale)

Residents at Home on September 15, 1863

Alphonso and Louise Taft
Peter Rawson and Sylvia Taft
William Howard Taft
Henry Waters Taft
Horace Dutton Taft
Mrs. Susan Torrey (house guest)
Fredercka (nurse)
Carolina (maid)
An unidentified cook
Ben (hired man)
Charles Phelps Taft (at Yale)
Peter Rawson (Rosy) Taft (at Yale)

Residents at Home on September 15, 1864

Alphonso and Louise Taft
Peter Rawson and Sylvia Taft
William Howard Taft
Henry Waters Taft
Horace Dutton Taft
Margaret (the cook)
Margaret's neice (a maid)
An unidentified German nurse
An unidentified hired man
Charles Phelps Taft
Peter Rawson (Rosy) Taft (at Yale)

Residents of Home on September 15, 1865

Alphonso and Louise Taft
Peter Rawson and Sylvia Taft
William Howard Taft
Henry Waters Taft
Horace Dutton Taft
Fanny Louise Taft
Three unidentified female servants (one a cook)

An unidentified hired man
Charles Phelps Taft (at Columbia)
Peter Rawson (Rossy) Taft (at Yale)

Residents of Home on September 15, 1866

Alphonso and Louise Taft
Peter Rawson Taft
Charles Phelps Taft
William Howard Taft
Henry Waters Taft
Horace Dutton Taft
Fanny Louise Taft
Mary (a cook)
Mary Ann (a nurse)
Eaty (a maid)
John (a hired man)
Madison (grandpa's nurse)
Peter Rawson (Rossy) Taft (at Yale)

Residents of Home on September 15, 1867

Alphonso and Louise Taft
William Howard Taft
Henry Waters Taft
Horace Dutton Taft
Fanny Louise Taft
Two unidentified female servants
An unidentified nurse
An unidentified hired man
Charles Phelps Taft (in Europe)
Peter Rawson (Rossy) Taft (in Europe)

Residents of Home on September 15, 1868

Alphonso and Louise Taft
William Howard Taft
Henry Waters Taft
Horace Dutton Taft
Fanny Louise Taft
Two unidentified female servants
An unidentified nurse
An unidentified hired man
Charles Phelps Taft (in Europe)
Peter Rawson (Rossy) Taft (in Europe)

Residents of Home on September 15, 1869

Anna Torrey
 William Howard Taft
 Henry Waters Taft
 Horace Dutton Taft
 Fanny Louise Taft
 Rosa (a servant)
 Mary (a servant)
 Mike (the hired man)

Alphonso and Louise Taft (in Europe)
 Charles Phelps Taft (in Europe)
 Peter Rawson (Rossy) Taft (in Europe)

Residents of Home in June 1870

<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Value of Real Estate</u>	<u>Value of Personal Estate</u>	<u>Place of Birth</u>
Alphonso Taft	59	M	Judge of Superior Court	\$56,920	\$ 3,650	Vermont
Louise Taft	42	F	Keeping house			Mass.
Charles P. Taft	26	M	Attorney			Ohio
William H. Taft	12	M	Student			Ohio
Henry W. Taft	11	M	Student			Ohio
Horace D. Taft	8	M	Student			Ohio
Fanny L. Taft	4	F				Ohio
Mary Farrell	30	F	Servant			Ireland
Mary Conner	23	F	Servant			Ireland
John McGrath	19	M	Hired man			Ireland
Peter R. (Rossy) Taft	24	M	Law Student		(in Europe)	

Residents at Home on September 15, 1871

Alphonso and Louise Taft
 Charles P. Taft
 William Howard Taft
 Henry W. Taft
 Horace D. Taft
 Fanny L. Taft

Two unidentified female servants
An unidentified hired man
Peter R. (Rossey) Taft (in Europe)

Residents at Home on September 15, 1872

Alphonso and Louise Taft
Charles P. Taft
Peter Rawson (Rossey) Taft
William Howard Taft
Henry W. Taft
Horace D. Taft
Fanny L. Taft
Two unidentified female servants
An unidentified hired man

Residents at Home on September 15, 1873

Alphonso and Louise Taft
Charles Phelps Taft
Peter Rawson (Rossey) Taft
William Howard Taft
Henry Waters Taft
Horace Dutton Taft
Fanny Louise Taft
Two unidentified female servants
An unidentified hired man

Residents at Home on September 15, 1874

Alphonso and Louise Taft
Peter Rawson (Rossey) Taft
Henry Waters Taft
Horace Dutton Taft
Fanny Louise Taft
Mary (a cook)
An unidentified maid
An unidentified hired man
Charles Phelps Taft was married on December 4, 1873,
and had a home of his own.
William Howard Taft (at Yale)

Residents at Home on September 15, 1875

Alphonso and Louise Taft

Peter Rawson (Rossey) Taft
Henry Waters Taft
Horace Dutton Taft
Fanny Louise Taft
Two unidentified female servants
An unidentified hired man
William Howard Taft (at Yale)

Residents of Home on July 31, 1876

Mrs. Mary C. Wilbur had leased the Home for one year.

Residents of the Home on July 31, 1877

Alphonso and Louise Taft
William Howard Taft (on vacation from Yale)
Henry Waters Taft (on vacation from Yale)
Horace Dutton Taft
Fanny Louise Taft
Two unidentified female servants
Robert (hired man)
Peter Rawson (Rossey) Taft had married Matilda Hulbert in 1876

Residents of the Home on September 15, 1878

Alphonso and Louise Taft
Peter Rawson (Rossey) Taft (separated from his wife)
William Howard Taft
Horace Dutton Taft
Fanny Louise Taft
Several female servants
An unidentified hired man
Henry Waters Taft (at Yale)

Residents of the Home on September 15, 1879

Alphonso and Louise Taft
Peter Rawson (Rossey) Taft (separated from his wife)
William Howard Taft
Horace Dutton Taft
Fanny Louise Taft
Several female servants
An unidentified hired man
Henry Waters Taft (at Yale)

Residents of the Home June 10, 1880:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Where Born</u>
Alphonso Taft	M	69	Lawyer	Vermont
Louise Taft	F	52	Keeping House	Massachusetts
Peter R. Taft	M	34	Lawyer	Ohio
William Howard Taft	M	22	Lawyer	Ohio
Henry W. Taft	M	21	At College	Ohio
Horace D. Taft	M	18	At College	Ohio
Fanny L. Taft	F	14		Ohio
Mary O'Connell	F	30	Servant	Ireland
Mary Vale	F	28	Servant	Ireland
Mary Devany	F	29	Servant	Ireland

Residents of Home on September 15, 1881:

Alphonso and Louise Taft
 Peter Rawson (Rossy) Taft
 William Howard Taft
 Fanny Louise Taft
 Several female servants
 An unidentified hired man
 Henry Waters Taft (living in New York City)
 Horace D. Taft (at school)

The Herman Goepfers leased and occupied the Home from October 10, 1882, until October 10, 1885.

Residents of Home on November 1, 1885:

Alphonso and Louise Taft
 Peter Rawson (Rossy) Taft
 William Howard Taft
 Horace Dutton Taft
 Fanny Louise Taft
 Miss Clarke (hired girl)
 Nelson (hired man)

Residents of Home on November 15, 1886:

Alphonso and Louise Taft
 Peter Rawson (Rossy) Taft

William Howard and Nellie Taft
Horace Dutton Taft
Fanny Louise Taft
Several unidentified female servants
Nelson (hired man)

Residents of the Home on September 15, 1887

Alphonso and Louise Taft
Peter Rawson (Rossy) Taft
Horace Dutton Taft
Fanny Louise Taft
Several unidentified female servants
Nelson (hired man)

Residents of the Home on September 15, 1888

Alphonso and Louise Taft
Peter Rawson (Rossy) Taft
Horace Dutton Taft
Fanny Louise Taft
Agnes (servant)
Nelson (hired man)

The N. B. Sweitzers had rented and were living in the house on September 15, 1889.

The Dickinsons had rented and were living in the house on September 15, 1890.

The Leopold Markbreits leased and lived in the home from April 1, 1891, to April 1, 1896.

The H. G. Hunnewills leased and lived in the home from April 1, 1896, to June 1899.

Judge Albert C. Thompson and his family owned and lived in the house from June 1899 to 1912.

Col. E. H. Ruffner and his family owned and lived in the home from 1912 to May 1937.

Mrs. L. K. DeBus owned the property from May 1937 to April 1940.

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The papers of William Howard Taft, numbering about a million items, document Taft's long career as a public servant, his childhood, and his life prior to his appointment as United States Solicitor General in 1890. They also include the papers of his father, mother, and paternal grandfather, and the letters the Tafts exchanged with Samuel and Susan Torrey and their daughters.

In 1919 William Howard Taft placed the first installment, the main body of the subject papers, in the Library of Congress and in later years he made substantial additions to the collection. The Library of Congress secured legal title to Taft's papers in 1952, when his heirs signed a deed of gift terminating the deposit status of the papers which had been in effect for more than 30 years.

The Taft Papers are divided into 25 series. Of these only three pertain to the years in which the Tafts lived at 60 Auburn Street (2038 Auburn Avenue). The relevant series are: "Series 1. Family Correspondence and Related Item. 1805-1929. 39 boxes." Documents on file in this series consists of correspondence exchanged among various members of the Taft and Torrey families. This series is a gold mine of information on the Mt. Auburn years. "Series 2. William Howard Taft--Helen Herron Taft Correspondence. 1882-1929, 17 boxes." This entry includes the correspondence between Taft and his wife. A number of items refer to the family and life at 60 Auburn Street. "Series 11. Family Diaries. 1835-1930, 30 volumes." Found in this entry are a number of personal diaries. Especially valuable in the preparation of this report were the Peter Rawson Taft diaries.

The William Howard Taft Memorial Association has a number of letter books and journals that belonged to Peter Rawson Taft and Alphonso Taft. These items, especially "Bills Paid by Alphonso Taft, October 1875-May 1882," provide important data on the structural history of the house and its furnishings. This record group is currently in storage but will soon be placed on deposit with the Cincinnati Historical Society.

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PLATE I

View of Taft Home from west side of Auburn Street,
with Louise Taft and her children posed on front
lawn. The boy standing at the fence is said to be
William Howard Taft. Courtesy William Howard Taft
NHS.

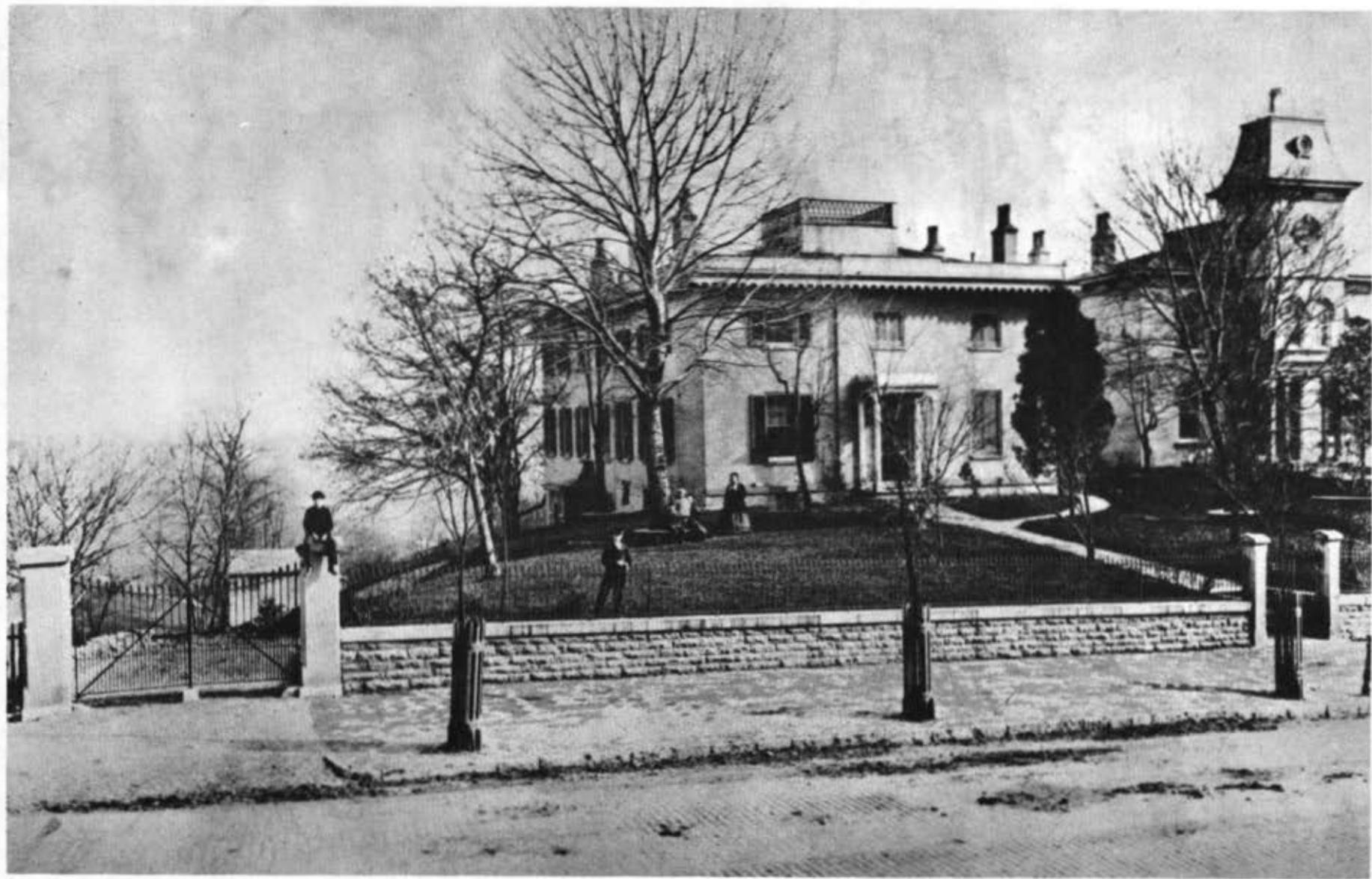


PLATE II

The Taft Boys and their pony at the carriage-
house. William is holding the pony. Courtesy
William Howard Taft NHS.

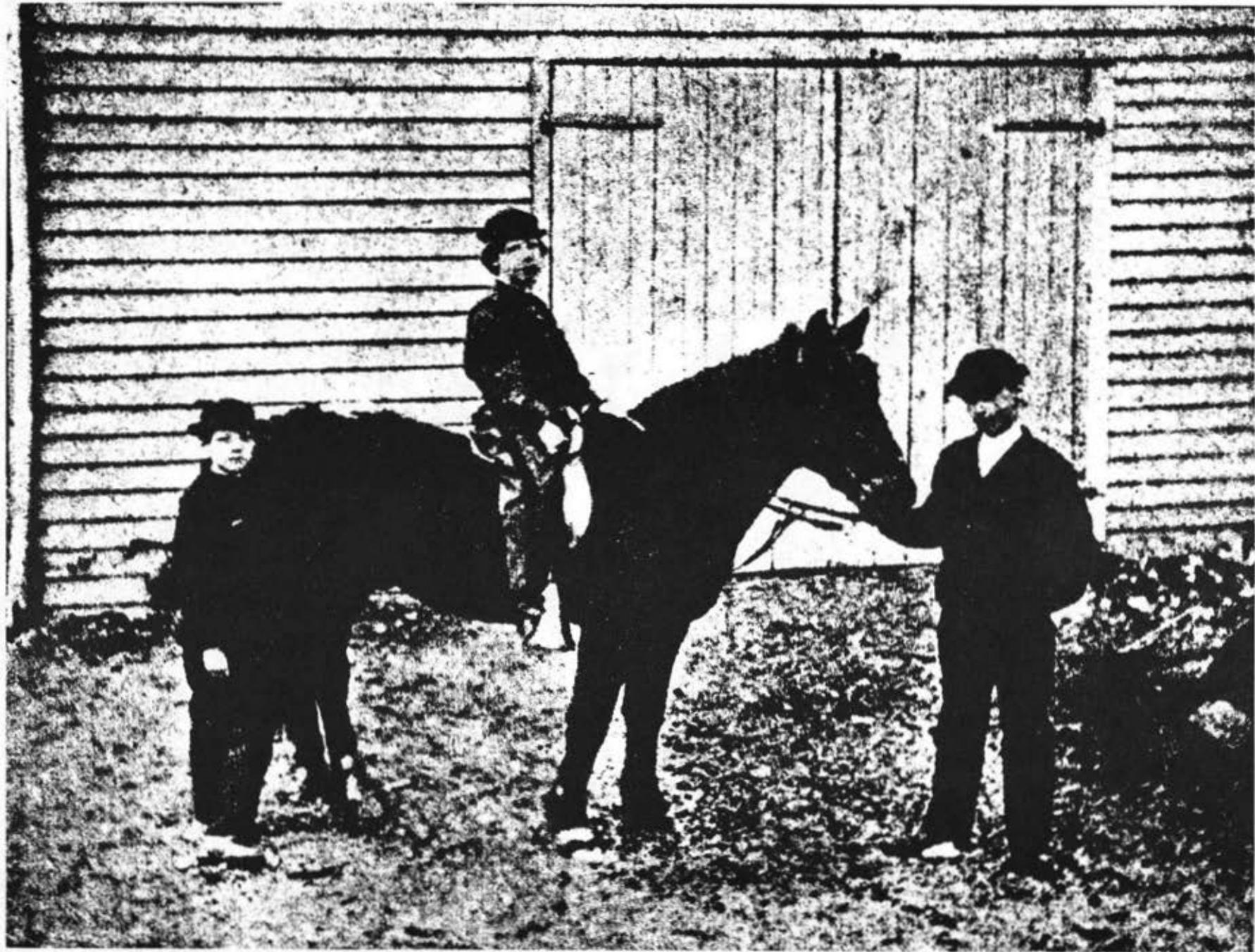


PLATE III

Peter Rawson Taft, from an original
painting, circa 1857. Courtesy William
Howard Taft NHS.

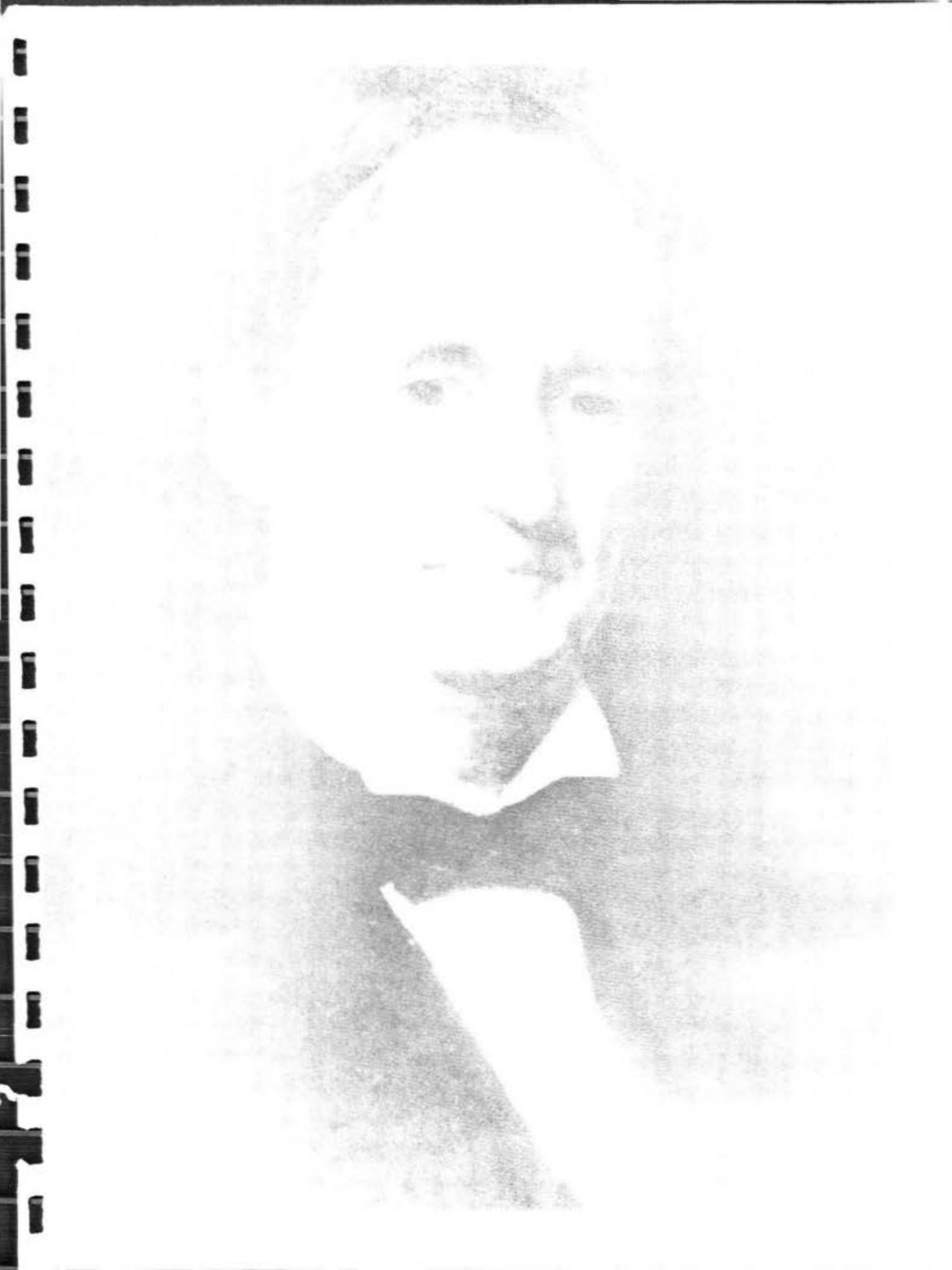


PLATE IV

Alphonso Taft, circa 1860. Courtesy
William Howard Taft NHS.



PLATE V

Louise Taft, circa 1853. Courtesy
William Howard Taft NHS.



