

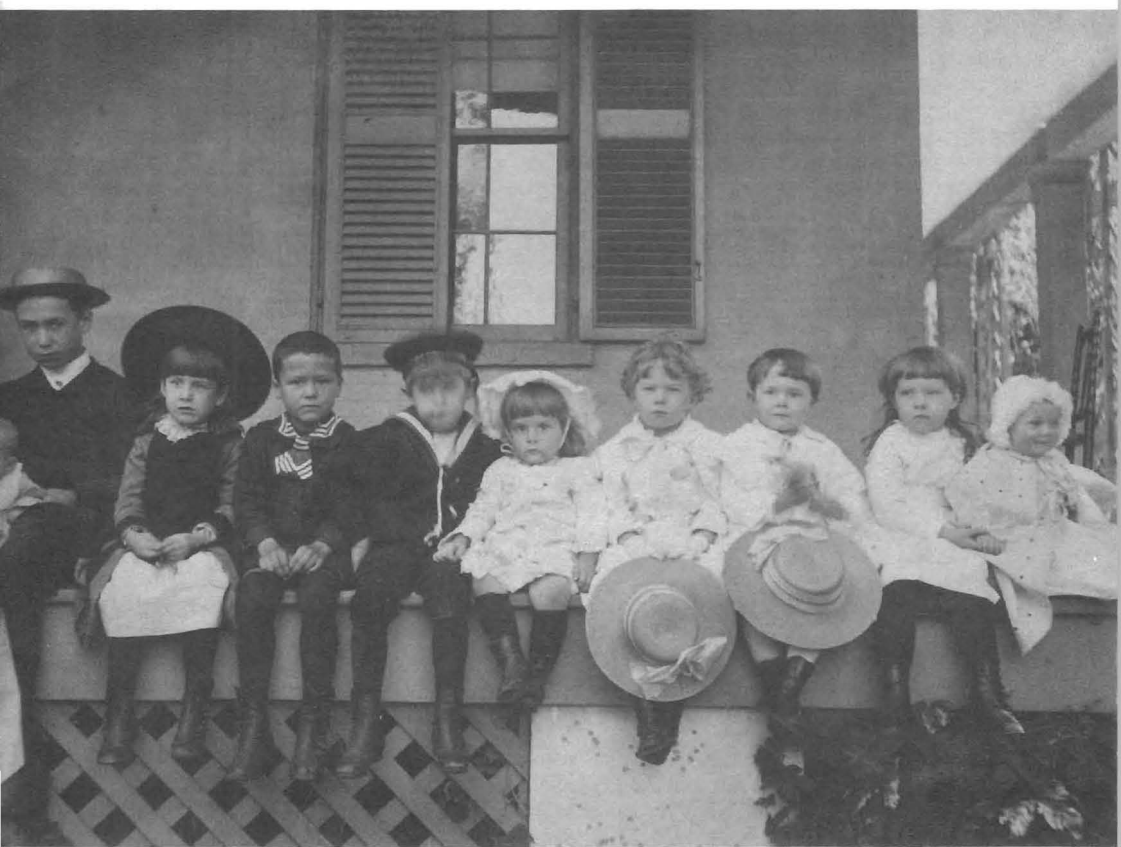
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THE LAST OF THE RUTLAND RIPLEYS



Grandchildren of William Young Ripley

Left to right: Agnes Ripley Pease, Frederick Dorr Steele, Zulma Ripley Steele, Joseph Dorr Steele, Brian Ripley Dorr, Henry Bryan Dorr, Alice (Ahlo) Ripley, Amelia Van Doren Ripley, Janet Ripley Pease, Helen Ripley (Buckingham).

WHERE HAVE ALL THE RIPLEYS GONE?

The name Ripley was a prominent one in most of nineteenth century Rutland. The patriarch, William Young Ripley, came to Rutland from Middlebury in 1837 to seek his fortune in the marble business. For over six decades his family was prominent in the commercial and cultural life of the community.

By 1840 W. Y. Ripley was involved in the first marble quarrying in Rutland, with a railroad spur built to the yard of Ripley and Barnes Marble Works in Center Rutland. At age 65 he became president of the reorganized Rutland County Bank. A strong believer in female education, he gave financial assistance and maintained an active interest in the small Troy Conference Academy in Poultney. In gratitude the name of the academy was changed to Ripley Female College. It was one of the few schools of its kind in the country. For many years W. Y. Ripley was a trustee and board president of what has become known in our own time as Green Mountain College. In 1868 he had the Opera House built on Merchants Row, but it burned to the ground in 1875, the same year that Ripley died at age 77.

A grandson, Thomas Emerson Ripley, author of *Vermont Boyhood*, wrote of his reminiscences in his younger days in mid-century Rutland. He ends his book on a poignant note: he tells of an incident on one of his infrequent visits when he drops in at a store, whose proprietor was a recent emigrant from Europe. In Ripley's words:

"Stranger in town?" he asked.

"No," I replied with a show of pride. "I'm a native. My name is Ripley."

"Don't remember the name," he said.

* * *

This account is an attempt to understand why the name Ripley has become unknown in the town which the family had so greatly enriched, both economically and culturally. By the time Julia Ripley Dorr died in 1913 there were only two of the Ripley clan left in the state—Agnes Ripley Parker and her adopted daughter, Grace—and none at all in Rutland. Helen Ripley Buckingham, daughter of Will Ripley, lived for the greater part of her adult life in Washington, D.C. and spent her retirement years in Brandon.

The sources for this account are numerous books (many privately printed) and letters—all reflections of each member's intimate participation in this family. A personal history of the Ripley family *A Book of Remembrance* was written by Julia C. Ripley Dorr for her children, nieces and nephews. This privately-printed book was reprinted, with a few omissions, by the great-grandson of Julia, Robert Gilmore Steele, in his *With Pen and Sword—Lives and Times of the Remarkable Rutland Ripleys*.

From these two books we learn that William Young Ripley and his second wife, Jane Betsy Warren Ripley, with Julia (daughter of his first wife), and William Young Warren, Edward Hastings, Charles Henry, Mary Jane, Agnes Warren, and Helen Jane grew up in their brick home in Center Rutland.

Julia Ripley Dorr

Julia married Seneca Milo Dorr in 1847 and they lived in Ghent, Columbia County, New York for ten years. The first three of their children were born there. She re-established her roots in Rutland in 1857, building a home "The Maples" across Otter Creek from the Ripley's. There her literary career flourished and she was instrumental in founding several women's organizations.*

General William Y. W. Ripley

William Y. W. Ripley followed his father's interest in banking and marble. He married Cornelia Thomas, a Middlebury girl and together they raised five children. He rendered distinguished service in the Civil War as head of Vermont Sharpshooters. His book *Vermont Riflemen in the War for the Union*, originally published in 1883, was reprinted in 1961. William died in 1906 while on a fishing trip to Castleton Pond with his son Tom. General Ripley was a close friend and former business associate of Redfield Proctor who was Secretary of War from 1889-1891.

Edward Hastings Ripley

Edward Hastings Ripley, the second son, was also active in the Civil War and his experiences as an army corps commander are related in his *Capture and Occupation of Richmond*, published in 1907. Otto Eisenschiml edited the correspondence between Edward and his parents at home in *Vermont General*, published in 1960. When the family marble business was sold to the Proctor interests, Edward moved to New York City, married at age thirty-nine, had two children, dabbled in railroad and hotel construction and, when not traveling, summered at his farm in Mendon or at his wife's cottage at Bar Harbor, Maine. He died in New York City in 1915.

Charles Ripley

Charles, the youngest son, served without distinction in the Civil War. Many of his letters from travels out West and in the Orient are reprinted in *With Pen and Sword*. Charlie died in a shipwreck in Asia in 1887.

Mary Jane Ripley

Two daughters married and left Rutland with their husbands. Mary Jane's husband was Cyrus M. Fisher and the two left for England in 1864 where Fisher was looking after the interests of a mining company. In 1873, on a trip home they were both drowned when their ship sank in a gale near Halifax.

Helen Jane Ripley

The other daughter, Helen Jane, married John J. Myers, whose partnership with Julia Dorr's husband, Milo Seneca Dorr, ended in failure. The Myers settled in Cleveland, Ohio, where Helen experienced two difficult childbirths; the second causing her death in 1865, on the same day President Lincoln died.

Agnes Warren Ripley

Agnes Warren Ripley, the youngest of the six children of W. Y. and Jane Betsy Ripley, married Charles Edmund Parker of Vergennes, Vt. No children were born of this marriage but an adopted girl, Grace Agnes, became a medical doctor with a practice in Burlington. Agnes died in 1917.

* * *

*See the *Society's Quarterly*, Vol. IV, No. 3 & Vol. XVIII, No. 2.

The Second Generation

The Patriarch, W. Y. Ripley, died in 1875. By that time Julia, Agnes, William Y. W. and Edward were married and raising families on their own. Julia Dorr, the half-sister, had four children, three of whom were born in Ghent, New York: Zulma (named after Julia's own mother), Russell and William. Harry was born in Vermont.

Zulma Dorr Steele

Zulma, Julia Dorr's only daughter, married William H. Steele who had varied interests in the Lake States where their young family was reared. A diary kept by Zulma during the years 1871 to 1886 was transcribed by her grandchild, Anne Gould Steele Marsh, and a portion is reprinted below with Mrs. Marsh's gracious consent.

Russell and William Dorr

Both Russell and William had business interests out-of-state. Russell's oldest son, James Bryan Dorr, was an engineer and in his later years, researched the Dorr family history. He presented a copy of his booklet *Some Branches of the Dorr Family Tree* to the Society along with other papers. At the time of his recent death he was the oldest grandson of Julia Dorr.

Harry Ripley Dorr

Harry served in the Spanish-American war and his correspondence with his uncle General William Y. W. Ripley, is reprinted in part in Steele's *With Pen and Sword*. The gist of Harry's letters was a strong desire to escape the tedium of training camp and to see action.

Zulma DeLacey Steele
1870



The Third Dorr Generation

The children of William Y. W. Ripley and Cornelia Ripley numbered five: Elizabeth (Bessie), William, Janet, Tom and Ned. Elizabeth married John Pease and moved out-of-state; Janet married her first cousin, Harry Dorr, and she lived in Williamstown, Mass. to the ripe age of ninety-one.

Tom Ripley

Tom Ripley knew only too well the hazards of working for his father at the Rutland County Bank. By the time he graduated from Yale his goal was the same as most of the Ripleys who had steadily migrated from Plymouth in the 1620s to Connecticut, to Middlebury, to Rutland. He struck out on his own and took a job with the Wheeler-Osgood Company, in Tacoma, Washington. With a stake in the business paid for by his father, he competently ran the sales department, eventually becoming president of the firm. Like so many in his family he had a talent for painting and drawing and he proudly listed himself in "Who's Who" as "artist and business executive."

William Ripley

William, the oldest son, was cut out to be an engineer and, on graduation from Massachusetts Institute of Technology he superintended the family's marble works. He invented an automatic sand feed which washed and distributed the sand to the machines which cut the marble in the shops. A patent for this device was granted October 2, 1883. In 1889 he became superintendent of the Tacoma company that employed Tom.

Ned Ripley

Meanwhile, Ned, the youngest ripley was being groomed to manage the Rutland County National Bank. The account of the death of both Ned and Will is recounted in the diary kept by Cornelia Ripley which follows Zulma Steele's diary.

Frederick Dorr Steele

Frederic Dorr Steele was the first of Zulma's three children. Although he spent the greater part of his youth in Wisconsin, he lived with his grandmother, Julia, at "The Maples" and attended Rutland High School where he pitched on the baseball team and established a life-long friendship with Robert C. Gilmore. Steele and Gilmore produced a magazine which Gilmore wrote and Steele illustrated. Steele's first son was named after Gilmore. (The Rutland Historical Society is indebted to Robert Gilmore Steele, author of *With Pen and Sword*, for many copies of his father's work.) By 1889 young Dorr was in New York City studying and working on magazines. There he worked with and became friendly with many of the great illustrators of the golden age of American drawing: Charles Dana Gibson, Howard Chandler Christy and Howard Pyle. He illustrated books and stories for Kipling, Richard Harding Davis, Mark Twain and Joseph Conrad. His work appeared in Harper's, McClure's, Collier's, Century and Scribner's. In his privately-printed family biography *A Yankee Pedigree* Robert C. Steele devotes a chapter to his father and laments the lack of a full-length biography. The Society maintains a shelf of books and magazines containing F. D. Steele drawings, as well as copies of many of Steele's sketches and privately-printed ephemeral works.

Frederic Dorr Steele's most familiar drawings are those of Sherlock Holmes. Steele based his drawings on the sharp features of the actor William Gillette who had portrayed Holmes on Broadway. Steele added the deer-stalker hat, the curved pipe and the magnifying glass which are still the hallmark of Holmes.

Joseph Dorr Steele and Zulma Steele

Of Joseph Dorr nothing much is known except what his mother writes fondly about in her diary. The youngest—Zulma—was, like her mother, an artist. Her interests were centered in the artist colony in Woodstock, New York. Some of her Impressionist style oil paintings have been seen recently in a shop in Putney, Vermont.

Zulma and Julia at the Centennial in Philadelphia

No sketch of the life of Zulma, daughter of Julia Dorr, has yet appeared in print but a forty-page, closely-typed copy of her diary has been compiled by Zulma's granddaughter, Anne Steele Marsh. A copy of this typescript is in the Society's collection, the gift of Mrs. Marsh. The informal jotting down of common activities of a spirited woman is autobiography at its best. The pioneer conditions in Wisconsin and Upper Michigan in the 1870s could not have been much different from those in William Y. Ripley's days in Vermont.

In her diary, the entry for 22 September 1876 notes that Zulma left Appleton, Wisconsin, on the sixth of October and her father, Seneca Milo Dorr, met her in Albany for the trip to The Maples, the family home on the Creek Road (later Dorr Drive) where they arrived in Rutland on the 8th of the month.

I left Rutland with my dear mother on Monday, September 25th at 3:30 PM for Albany. We took the night boat "Lt. John" down the Hudson, and this was the first night that I had slept without little Fred by my side since he was born. I should have been very sad had it not been that I knew the little fellow was safe with his grandfather at The Maples. The boat was very crowded, many obliged to sleep on the floor. We had many funny experiences and were much amused by conversations of some country people in the next stateroom to ours, to whom everything on the boat was new. Arrived at New York Tuesday morning, crossed on the ferry and took the train for Philadelphia.

Here we got into our first crowd from the boat to the train, — being an hour and a half getting only a few rods, so dense was the crowd of people [a rod = 16½ feet, ed.]. Arrived at Mr. George Sayres, 1500 North 7th Street, where we had rooms engaged, at three o'clock. Did not go out that day, but rested ourselves in our room. We found Mr. and Mrs. Francisco and Mr. and Mrs. Wooster from Rutland at the same house and it was very pleasant to be among friends. . .

Wednesday Sept. 27th — Went to the Centennial grounds with Mrs. Francisco at half past nine. Mother and I spent the whole day in the Annex of the Art Building studying very carefully the immense number of paintings which the building contained. The paintings were a great treat to me, and mother was as much interested in them as I, so we spent much of our time among them. Left the grounds at four o'clock. Lunch at the Vienna Bakery with Mrs. F.

Thursday, Sept. 28th — This was "Pennsylvania Day" and there were 275,000 people upon the grounds. Mr. Francisco went out after breakfast and soon returned with the tidings that there were 5,000 people waiting within two blocks of us to take the 9th and Green St. cars, so we gave up going until after dinner. When we reached the Grounds we were unable to enter any of the Main buildings, the crowds were so great. We rode around the grounds on the narrow railway three times and went through Photographic Hall. At six o'clock we went to the Vermont headquarters or State Building and there met Mr. and Mrs. Francisco and Elroy Francisco, who had invited us to stay with them to see the grand display of fireworks in the evening. We went with Elroy to the Trois Freres restaurant for supper, and had much sport trying to get waited upon, between the crowd and the French waiters it was a difficult matter. Then we went back to the Vermont building and near there witnessed the display of fireworks which was, I suppose, the most extensive this country has ever seen. At a given signal the whole of the Centennial grounds were illuminated with colossal calcium lights, and the effect of the volumes of different colored smoke which arose and streamed the entire sky was beautiful, grand, and at times terrible to see. The first figure that was given was an immense head of Washington, but this was somewhat a failure as the poor man's eyes and nose went out in utter darkness before his forehead and hair were outlined. Next came a figure of a soldier waving the American flag,

all the colors of which were beautifully brought out in the light. The flag fell fold upon fold at the feet of the soldier and above his head was the American eagle carrying a scroll upon which was written "Welcome to all Nations." It was a beautiful sight and as different parts of the picture came out in a blaze of light, cheer after cheer went up from the thousands of people crowded near the foot of George's Hill. After this there were showers of rockets, different colored balloons which vanished in a rain of stars, and many others which I cannot describe here. I heard afterward that the fireworks were a contribution of an English firm and that the expense was \$10,000. We were to ride home with Mr. & Mrs. Francisco and Mr. & Mrs. Sayre, and as soon as we could make our way through the mass of crowding people, we did so to the outer gate where our carriage was to wait for us. But when we arrived there the crowd was so great, and the carriages were so thick, that it was impossible to tell which was ours. And one by one the gentlemen of our party went out to search for it, while we huddled together like a pack of sheep, and hoisted a flag of truce in the shape of a handkerchief tied to Mr. Sayre's cane, so that we could be distinguished among the crowd. Getting tired of that, at last we sat down on the curbstone until one of the gentlemen appeared with a boy who offered to conduct us to where our carriage was waiting. So we started with the boy as pilot, but had not got across the street before we missed our boy, and were obliged to go back to our cold stones and wait for him to discover that his party were missing. After a short time he appeared again, this time with the carriage, and we packed ourselves in and started for home. This was a tedious proceeding as horses and vehicles of every description were so closely packed together that it was only a step or two at a time that we moved at all. When at last we did reach home, who should I find in the sitting room at Mr. Sayre's but Will [Zulma's brother], who had just come from Appleton. Fortunately they were able to get a room at Mr. Sayre's, and our trip was made doubly pleasant.

Friday Sept. 29—Went to the grounds at ten o'clock with Will and a friend, Mr. Decker, who left us to get their first impression of the grounds and buildings, while mother and I spent the afternoon in the Annex. Lunch at the Vienna Bakery. We spent the afternoon in the West end of the Main Building, going through the exhibits of Norway, Sweden, Chile, Peru, Argentine Republic and Orange Free State. Home at 5 o'clock. 75,000 people in the grounds.

Saturday Sept. 30—We had rain all day, and this, by the way, was the only day when it did rain. The admission to the grounds was only 25 cents, and as a result there was a great rush of people of the poorer classes and of school children who could not go any other day. The rain drove everyone indoors so that the buildings were all packed with a wet and disagreeable crowd of people. It was the most unpleasant day we experienced. There were 125,000 people. We spent the entire day until 2:30 P.M. in the Main Building going through the United States and France. I had taken a very severe cold which was just settling in my lungs, and at half past two we went home, sick and tired and about ready to give up the exhibition and go home to the peace and quiet of the Maples.

Sunday Oct. 1—. . . very tired, both mother and myself. Will got a carriage and we all went to ride in Fairmount Park until one o'clock. The sun was bright and we had a delightful drive which did us all good. In the afternoon we slept and rested and retired early.

Monday, Oct. 2nd—Felt much better and made up our minds to go to the exhibition and see what we could and come home when we felt tired. We went first to the Women's Department, and after hearing so many speak of this building with scorn and contempt, we were much pleased with it. It seemed to us that there were no more poor things exhibited for the size, than in any other building on the grounds. There was nothing better of the kind, nothing in fact nearly as good as Mrs. Dany's painting on slate, and Miss Martha Wood's, who was first drawing teacher at Ripley College [once Troy Conference Academy and now Green Mountain College in Poultney].

Their table tops and panels were beautiful. Mother was much interested in work of the Royal School for needlework. I know she can do as fine work of the same kind herself. I saw also the Wisconsin Shrine, which I always thought rather absurd, and the Wisconsin State, which made me blush for my state. The Cincinnati woodcarving was, of course, remarkable as examples of what can be done with patience. Some of the Japanese scenes were beautiful and the painting on china, etc., etc. The butter heads by Mrs. Brooks attracted much attention but I thought the remark of a lady who said, "Mrs. Brooks was cute to make that head in butter, for if it had been made in any other material it would not have attracted the least attention," was very true. I was glad to see also the work of the Cooper Institute girls. Mrs Garsteney's pen and ink drawings, Miss Frelom's and Lt. Christopher's. As we were looking at the Royal needlework, we heard mother's name spoken and turned to find Aunt Agnes Warren and Tish with Miss Rudney, all from Buffalo, standing near us. We had a very pleasant little visit with them. Afterwards as we were examining the pictures in the same building we met Mrs. Vule and the Thompson girls. Mrs. Vule told me of Tom's engagement to Miss Anna Dorr of Buffalo. It was nearly noon when we came out of the Women's Department, but we thought we had time to look at Horticultural Hall nearby. So we started in that direction walking among the most beautiful beds of foliage and playing fountains. Just before we reached the building we sat down upon one of the seats to rest, and soon saw Miss Julia Pease and her brother John, Mr. Gelding and Will Page coming towards us. We had a pleasant chat with them, passed on and into the building. As we entered we came upon Miss Foley's fountain in the center of the building and were proud of our Vermont girl. There were no flowers in the building, but the mass of beautiful palm trees and all different kinds of fresh green foliage with statues and fountains gleaming and sparkling here and there, made me think of fairyland. We then went upstairs and upon the roof where the view of the grounds was most charming. We lunched at the American restaurant, and after that went to the Kansas and Colorado building where the display of fruits and grains was very large and beautifully managed. We were much disappointed in Miss Maxwell's stuffed animals, tho' I have no doubt that they looked much more life-like than when they were first placed on exhibition and were free from dust and cobwebs. This did not take us long and we went next to the immense Agricultural Hall which would have repaid a longer visit than we were able to give it. From here we passed to the Government Building, which was one of the most interesting and instructive upon the ground. Here we met a very gentlemanly policeman who [sic] we recognized as one who answered some questions for us in the west end of the Main Building a few days before. He also recognized us and offered to escort us over the building, and he did so, explaining many things to us. We spent most of the time looking at the relics of the Arctic explorations by Dr. Hall and Dr. Kane in their trips to the North Pole—a fur suit worn by Dr. Kane and a journal kept by Dr. Hall on his last voyage. Nothing on the grounds moved me more than to look upon these things which spoke so plainly of trials and suffering and death. On the page of the journal which was open for the public . . . was one of the last entries in the book in which it was written that the crew were nearly out of food, that they had no meat for the dogs, and that unless help came they must perish. Our policeman was able to tell us much more of the history of what we saw, and seemed to be a very intelligent man. Afterwards one day we saw a large company of policemen going to dinner and noticed that our policeman, as we called him, was in command of the corps.

Tuesday, Oct. 3rd spent in Memorial Hall with Will. Here we met Mr. & Mrs. Fitch, our neighbors. To try to describe even a few of the number of fine paintings which we saw and enjoyed would seem a hopeless task, so I have resolved to go to my Art Catalogue to refresh my memory instead of trying to make a note here of all we saw in the Art Galleries. Lunch at the Vienna Bakery. Afterwards we went to Italy in the Main Building, bought my silver earrings and a gold cross for Will Dorr to give to Carrie Fisher as a wedding present. On our coming out of the building

we stopped at Brazil to see the feather flowers and beautiful butterflies. They were exquisite. We met Will's uncle Lewis H. Morgan of Rochester and his wife and son, and found that Aunt Abby Steele and cousin Mary were expected the next day.

Wednesday, Oct. 4th—In the morning we went to Memorial Hall with Will. I saw the immense picture of Venice paying homage to Caterina Camaro by Hano Makart. This, I believe was the only one of the very large pictures that I enjoyed and thought beautiful. The coloring was so very deep and rich and each figure was beautiful and graceful by itself. . . . Lunch at Vienna Bakery where I ran into Imogene Clark, one of the Poultney girls at Ripley College; Machinery Hall where we took Rolling chairs and Will conducted us through the building, stopping to see the most important things. Should have been glad to have given more time to this building. Then being somewhat rested, we went to the Main Building and through China and Japan. . . . The Japanese bronzes were the most beautiful things which we saw that afternoon. . . .

Friday, Oct. 6th—Will had to go this day, but mother and I made up our minds to stay a few days longer . . . and went alone to the grounds. First we finished Memorial Hall, which took us the entire afternoon. Then we took the cars for the Southern Restaurant where we had lunch. It was too windy and dirty to enjoy being outdoors, so we went back to the Main Building. Met Mrs. Goldsmith [wife of Dr. Middleton Goldsmith of Rutland] . . . On the cars we met John Woodfin who was on his wedding trip, having been married the week before to Carrie Fisher. . . .

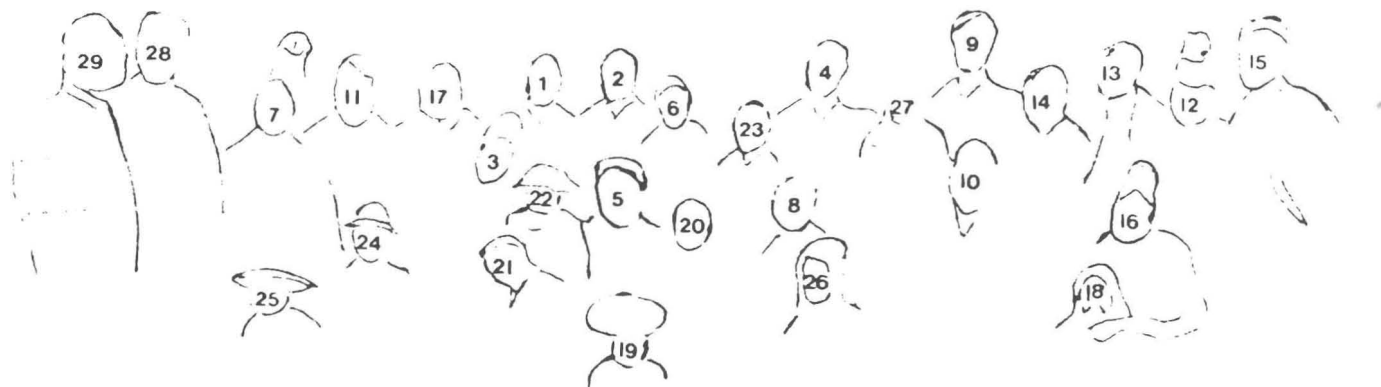
Saturday, Oct. 7th—Our last day at the great exhibition. We went first to Germany where we saw the most beautiful china and porcelain in the building . . . came back to the center of the building just in time to hear Leroy play the Weber concerto. It was delightful. We then took the cars and went to the Trios Freres Restaurant for lunch, after which we took a look at the Japanese Bazaar and mother bought herself a quaint little green vase. We saw into the Department of Public Comfort long enough to see how uncomfortable it was, and walked through the Carriage Annex. Thus ended our ninth day upon the grounds of the Centennial Exposition, and of great profit, the memory of which will be an inspiration to me as long as I live.

* * *

The scene is the family home in Appleton, Wisconsin; Dec. 24th, 1876 Will (Zulma's husband, William H. Steele) is still confined to the house with asthma and bronchitis.

It is just two weeks today since he has been out. Last night the entertainment for the Sunday School was given in Birtschy's Hall. Will and I had charge of it. The program was music by Mr. Frank Sprama; Charade in three acts (silent). Will Dorr [Zulma's brother] Mrs. Corwin, Mrs. A. L. Smith, Mrs. Cannes, Margery and myself. Mrs. Smith was just as funny as she could be in an old dressing gown, brown and green goggles. Will was quite elegant in black suit and grey nigs, and I wore a scarlet petticoat, short black overskirt and waist, broad muffler and cardinal kerchief around my neck, little mushie cap with red ribbons and my hair braided and the ends tied with red ribbons, striped red and white stockings and low shoes. Everyone seemed delighted and when, at the last, I charged Mr. Smith off the stage at the point of his large umbrella the house was in a roar. Will got many compliments and people said he need not be afraid to have his hair turn grey. The next thing on the program was music by Mr. and Mrs. Birge, after which refreshments were served. Next a reading of a Christmas poem by Mr. Gale, the minister, followed by music from Miss Bushnel. Then came a Mother Goose pantomime, "When I Was a Bachelor and Lived by Myself" which I had put in the hands of Miss Susie Smith to arrange and present. This came nearly being a failure as she came down in the morning to tell me that several who had promised to take part in it had refused at the last minute





Descendants of WILLIAM YOUNG RIPLEY

Photo taken at Ripley Home, "The Centre." Center Rutland, Vermont, early 1896.

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|---|--|
| 1. Russell Ripley Dorr | 17. Agnes Ripley (Mrs. Charles E.) Parker |
| 2. Henry Ripley (Harry) Dorr | 18. Agnes Ripley Pease (later Mrs. Jackson) |
| 3. Louise Bryan (Mrs. Russell) Dorr | 19. Zulma Ripley Steele (later Mrs. N. T. Parker)* |
| 4. William Bryan Dorr | 20. Joseph Dorr Steele |
| 5. Julia Caroline Ripley Dorr | 21. Bryan Ripley Dorr |
| 6. Zulma DeLacy Steele | 22. Henry Bryan Dorr |
| 7. Amelia Van Doren (Mrs. E. H.) Ripley | 23. Frederic Dorr Steele |
| 8. Cornelia Thomas (Mrs. W. Y. W.) Ripley | 24. Alice (Ahlo) Ripley (later Mrs. A. Ogden Jones) |
| 9. William Thomas Ripley | 25. Amelie Van Doren Ripley
(later Mrs. Raphael Pumpelly) |
| 10. William Young Warren Ripley | 26. Janet Ripley Pease |
| 11. Charles Edmund Parker | 27. Helen Ripley
(later Mrs. George H. Buckingham) |
| 12. Janet Ripley (later Mrs. H. R. Dorr) | 28. Edward Hastings Ripley |
| 13. Thomas Emerson Ripley | 29. Charles Henry Ripley |
| 14. Isabel (Belle) Reynolds (Mrs. W. T.) Ripley | |
| 15. Charles Edward (Ned) Ripley | |
| 16. Elizabeth (Bessie) Ripley (Mrs. John) Pease | |

* Mrs. N. T. Parker died in 1979.

to help. This was rather discouraging but by working all the morning we found others who could take the part, and we had one rehearsal at the hall. The girls were all obliging and enthusiastic and by evening they had their costumes all ready, and the whole thing passed off splendidly. George Birge as the Bachelor was capital and Minnie Dodge as the bride was as sweet and cunning as a little bride could be. The others all did well and the evening was pronounced a grand success. After the Pantomime, Charlie and Rose Morey sang "Gently, Gently Sighs the Bride" very nicely.

Christmas 1876. Fred [Frederic Dorr Steele, son of Zulma] hung up his stocking by the parlor fire, and after he had gone to bed we opened the box from Rutland and filled his stocking. We agreed not to exchange presents among each other, and did not send anything away. All our friends understood that we were not to do much this year and almost everyone feels poor. Will is spending the day with us and we have a great deal to make us merry and happy. The year has been a happy one in spite of 'hard times,' and we look forward to a happy year to come.

On December 27th W.H.S. [Zulma's husband] notes: James F. Atkinson failed Dec. 30th, 1876. Liabilities \$111,000. Assets \$60,000. The failure causes much distress in the city.

January 12. Atkinson's failure has been followed by failure of W. J. Butler, hardware; our neighbor, H. A. Phinney, clothing; A. Nitchle, groceries; H. Schuler, and Randall & Patten, groceries; A. Findenkiller, hardware . . . it is almost impossible to make collections.*

*From 1874-1879 the business cycle, country-wide, was in a depression, generally attributed to technological progress and the lack of free movement of prices and wages.

A DIARY OF TROUBLED TIMES

Kept by Cornelia T. Ripley, wife of W.Y.W. Ripley

An introduction to Grandma Ripley's Diary of March-August 1898

[Transcribed by Cornelia Ripley Sherman, daughter of Thomas Emerson Ripley and Cornelia Clement Ripley; married F. Barreda Sherman]

In the eighteen-nineties William Thomas Ripley, oldest of the three sons of General William Young Warren Ripley of Rutland, Vermont, lived with his wife and three young children in Tacoma, Washington, where he had an important position in the Wheeler-Osgood Company, a pioneer manufacturer of doors and plywood; Tom, the second son, also associated with Wheeler-Osgood, had moved with his little family from Tacoma to Boston where he sought to develop an Atlantic Coast market for his company's products; and Ned, the youngest son, unmarried, lived with his parents in Rutland.

In 1897 Ned became very seriously ill and Will, impelled by love for his brother and his sense of family responsibility as the oldest son, left home, wife, children and job and hastened to Rutland to help his parents care for their ailing son. For, as Tom wrote later: *Ned was the baby of the family on whom we all depended to carry on the Vermont tradition. Rutland, 'the little white house' without a Ripley there? It was unthinkable!* So Will devoted his every effort to caring for the brother who meant so much to them all.

[note by the editor — "the little white house" referred to above by Tom Ripley was occupied by the W. Y. W. Ripley family and it stood at the northeast corner of West and Cottage streets. It was later removed to a site at 62 East Washington Street, Rutland.]

Possibly Ned's illness was not first correctly diagnosed as consumption but it became obvious that the care he received was ineffective and he was recognized as a victim of "the Great White Plague." Accordingly he and his faithful nurse moved to Saranac Lake in the Adirondacks whose fresh mountain air was believed to offer a hope of recovery for tuberculosis sufferers. But, alas, in Ned's case that help was not realized and he died in 1897, at the age of thirty. A heavy loss to his parents, his brothers and his sisters.

Now a new threat hung over the family. The grave danger of contagion from tuberculosis was not fully realized in those days nor was there an adequate knowledge of asepsis. Will, having been in intimate contact with his brother for so long, had acquired the disease himself and was soon undergoing care at the Saranac Tuberculosis hospital. Here again the cure proved ineffective and his doctor decided that he should be moved South. In March he was sent to Washington, D.C. where his parents were to join him and move him further South, but when they reached him, he was so ill that the doctor recommended that he go West to Colorado whose Rocky Mountain air was deemed even more curative than that of the Adirondacks. And at this point, Grandmother Cornelia Ripley started the Diary. [excerpts from which appear below]

William [William Young Warren Ripley, husband of the diarist and father of William T. Ripley] and I left Rutland on Wednesday, March 22nd, 1898, reaching Washington the morning of the 23rd. There we found Will, whom we found more seriously ill than we had supposed . . . there was great danger of his left lung's breaking down and Dr. Gardner advised us to take him to Denver rather than go further south as we had expected to do . . . WE . . . left Washington on the 29th of March, having secured a drawing room for Will and sections next to it for ourselves. The journey was made as comfortably as we could expect, the hardest of it being the change in St. Louis with a wait of two hours in the hot uncomfortable station, Will lying on a hard wooden bench with some wraps under his head.

[The diarist relates tactfully a most disagreeable task—the choice of a doctor. ed.]

We reached Denver Saturday morning, April 1st . . . drove at once to our rooms at the Vallejo . . . and here Will's strength was tried to its utmost in getting up the long flight of steps and an equally long flight of stairs inside . . . Sunday morning we saw that he was fearfully ill and with symptoms of pneumonia. Being entire strangers in the city, we found that fixing upon a doctor was a matter which needed some consideration, especially as the head of the family was of one mind while his mate disagreed with him entirely. We took Will into our consultation and he, joining the mate, the two prevailed. But our choice of Dr. Denison proved to be a most disastrous one though his first treatment for pneumonia was doubtless what it should have been. In a day or two the lung had broken down and, according to Dr. D's diagnosis, the cavity covered one-third of the lung.

These first days at the Vallejo were most distressing ones. Dr. D. pronounced the case a difficult one and, joined to our great grief for our recent loss [Ned Ripley. ed.], we felt that the Angel of Death was hovering very near us a second time and our grief and anxiety were almost more than we could bear. I remember going to the dining room time after time when I felt that each morsel would choke me. I think I could not have stood up through these days except for the strength of one who stood beside me though he was very near breaking down himself . . .

Will failed steadily from the last of April through May, during which time Dr. D. continually told us the lung was gaining, the cavity constantly growing smaller, etc. but that he had no power of resistance. We watched him with aching hearts for we began to feel that he was fast slipping away from us. Dr. D. had little hope and Dr. Craig, who was called in, told us frankly that he could live only a few weeks.

Then Will, who had a growing distrust in Dr. D., dismissed him and called Dr. Fisk. Denison's methods and medicines were all discarded and in a week's time the spark of hope we had kept alive began to grow.

June came in very hot, contrary to our expectations, and Dr. Fisk told us that Will would lose ground if we stayed in the city. He advised us to come to Estes Park.

. . . it was arranged that William, with Will and Green (the male nurse), should leave Denver on the afternoon of the twenty second, going as far as Lyons (the end of the railroad) where they would spend the night, and that the Dr. (Dr. Ruedi) would meet them there early the next morning to come up the mountain with Will. They made the trip to Lyons easily, Will lying on his cot in the baggage car. At Lyons four men came, ready to carry him, still on his cot, to the hotel where a bed had been put on the porch for him. I had packed a roast chicken, bread, etc., and with milk and whatever this hotel could offer, he made a good supper and breakfast and was ready to begin his ride at seven o'clock in the morning. The cot on which he had come up had been put into a light spring wagon and with the Dr. on the seat with the driver and poor Green hanging on where he could to Will's amusement, they started while it was still cool, stopping an hour or so on the way to rest and lunch, and reached the Park at two o'clock. Will slept much of the way and while awake enjoyed the wild view and, though he was tired for the next few days, the trip did him no harm and we were all filled with thankfulness and hope.

June 30th. Will's tent has come and is set up nearby in front of his window and just across the driveway from the house. There are two cots in it, easy chairs and a table. We hope to have Will spend most of his time outside and later to have him sleep in the tent. He goes out in the morning with a cane in one hand and leaning on Green's shoulder with the other. He comes in at noon and out again after lunch.



Will's Tent

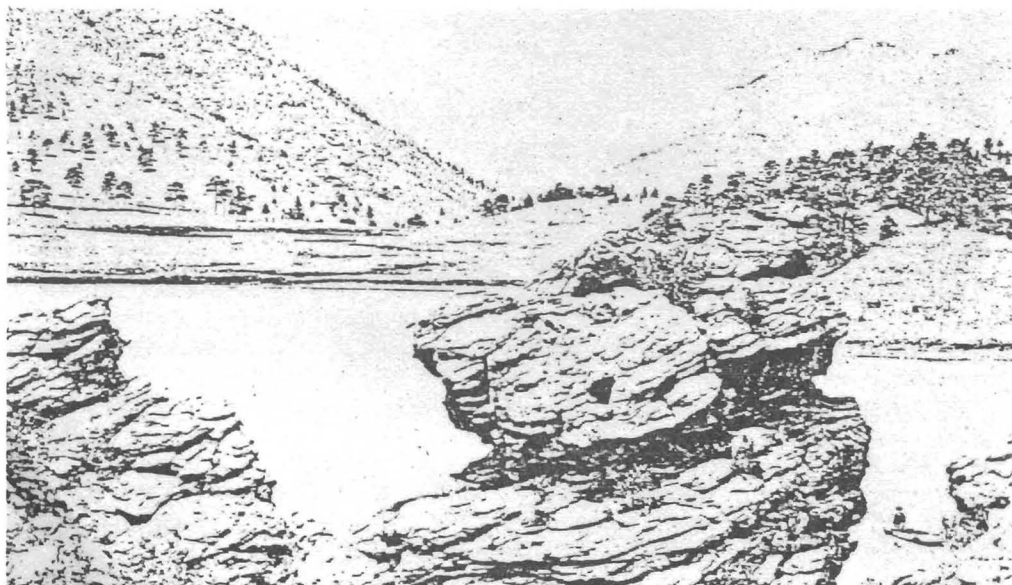
July 7th. Will seems to be gaining slowly and I cannot but feel that if we could have gotten Ned into this high, dry, cool air we might have saved him. Outside the ruggedness and strength of everything I see about me helps me to a more healthy feeling.

Estes Park has none of the softness of our beautiful New England. Its features are grandeur and sublimity. The Park is an irregular basin guarded by sentinel mountains of fantastic shape and monstrous size. The lowest part of the Park is 7,500 feet high and though the sun is not hot during the day, the mercury hovers near the freezing point every night of the summer.

We celebrated the evening of the Fourth [of July] in a small way. Mr. Lester (our host) filled the long piazzas with Chinese lanterns of various shapes and hues, built a tremendous bonfire on a hill opposite the house, and later sent up an abundance of roman candles and rockets, at each of which the children set up rousing cheers to Mr. Lester. The display ended, we were ushered into the Dining Room for cake and claret punch. William was called upon for a speech which he made in a happy manner, ending by asking all to rise and drink to the long life and prosperity of Mr. Lester.

July 19th. We were all made happy yesterday by Will's being able to take his first drive in Estes Park with his father. He was gone half an hour and felt no lasting fatigue. This morning Belle [Will's wife] drove with him and they both looked happy and hopeful as they started off.

This morning Mrs. Reynolds [Will's mother-in-law] and I with the children went over the brook to an immense pile of rocks opposite the house where the children were delighted to play. One rock as large as a house the children called their hotel



"... an immense pile of rocks where the children were delighted to play."

and they climb to the third floor with shrieks of happiness . . . Billy [Will's son] is like a little goat among the rocks—swift and sure footed. Colorado air has done a great deal for him and he seems as rugged in every way as the other children. He is a dear little boy in himself and his resemblance to his father gives him a large place in my heart. May God bless both father and son.

July 27th. Will is gaining slowly and our good Dr. Ruedi seems quite satisfied with the condition of his lungs which have made a great improvement since he first examined them in Denver . . . Today, he and we all, are happy over a telegram from Tom [Will's brother] promising to be with us Saturday P.M. . . . Will does not speak much of his business in Tacoma but I think he will to Tom and I hope it will do him good.

We have been hoping for some weeks that Janet and Harry [Janet Ripley Dorr daughter of W. Y. W. Ripley, and Henry Ripley Dorr, son of Julia Dorr and Seneca Milo Dorr, first cousins. ed.] can come to the Park but troubles in the financial world have made it impossible for Harry to get away. We wish that they might be here with Tom. I do so long for my two daughters that a visit with Janet would give me infinite comfort and yet, on Will's account, I am glad to have this visit put off 'till August when we hope he would be strong enough to enjoy it more. William and Harry will enjoy tramping and fishing together.



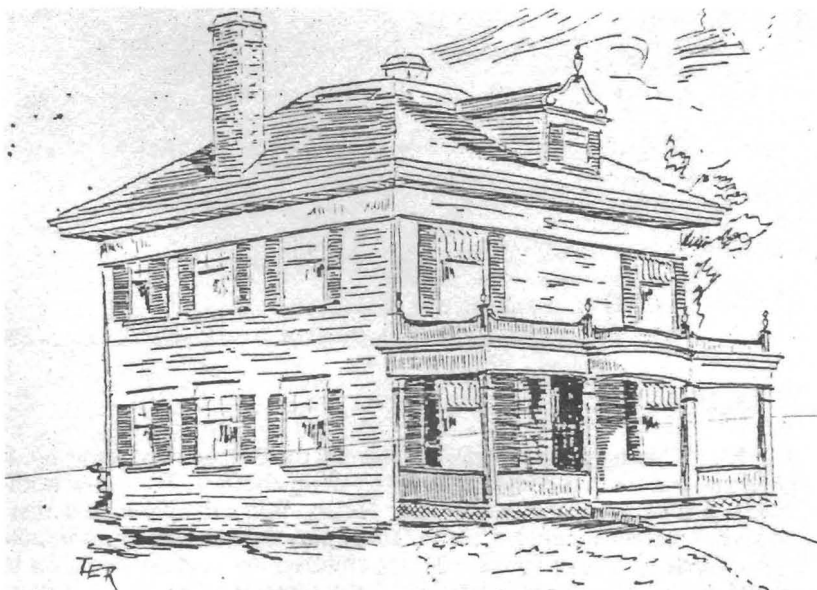
Estes Park

July 28th. . . . After Will's drive this morning Mrs. R. [Will's mother-in-law] and I, with Billy between us, took "Lady Maud" (the horse) to drive over to the post office near which our beautiful Mariposa Lilies grow. The day was fine though a small dark frown hung over Black Canyon in front of us. Our road lay along the green banks of the Big Thompson whose bright waters seem always to be on a mad race, and new sights beguile us into letting the Lady take her own time.

We stopped at the post office, Billy hoping to see the tame woodchucks which are kept there, but no woodchucks appearing, we turned our attention to the field of lilies. Mrs. R. and Billy got out and climbed the fence while horse and driver stayed

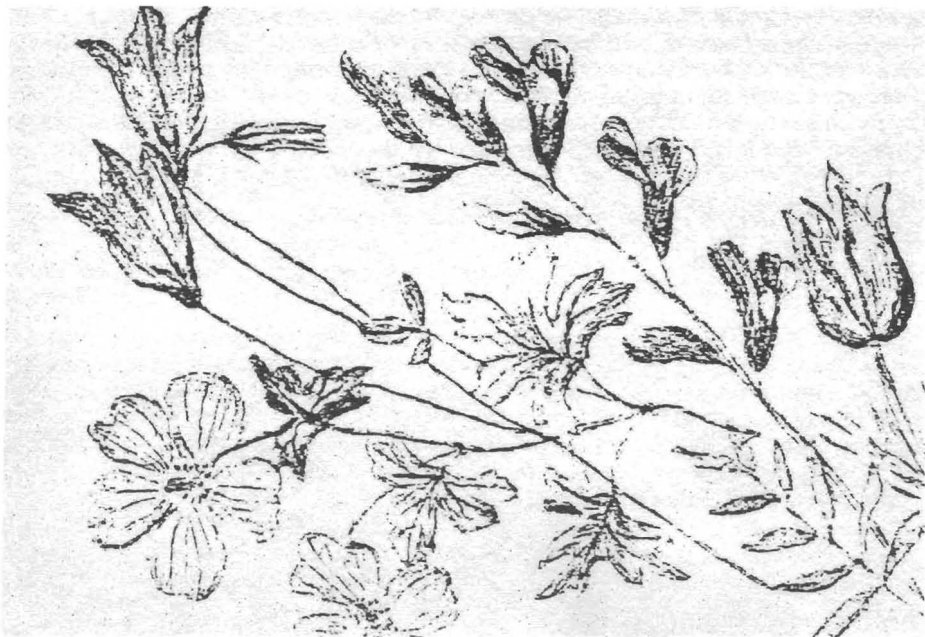
outside. the bundle of lilies in the pickers' hands had grown to a large size before I heard an awful sound, and looking back, saw the canyon black indeed. The little speck had grown most alarmingly. I stood with straining eyes on the extreme edge of the porch and saw a figure sitting on the high seat by the driver. Is it our boy? No, for this man is holding the reins and bringing the four horses handsomely around the curve. "But it is," we all exclaimed and we should have known Tom was always at the fore in all circumstances. We planned many things for the days to come and with Tom I am to try my hand at sketching.

Tacoma Home



August 5th. Yesterday William and I drove past the old log dairy built on a stream. William pursued his way to the lake while I climbed some rocks for a seat in a most entrancing spot and longed for a brush and an artist's touch.

August 6th. Tom and I have lately started out for a bit of sketching, our present place being a pile of rocks below Dr. Ruedi's house. There we perch ourselves, sketch a little and visit a great deal. Our seat commands a beautiful view of the mountains in the distance. The Dr.'s pretty cottage is on one side and on the other the roadway with a little winding stream below, fringed with willows from which we heard one day the snapping voice of a coyote who was prowling as near to humanity as his courage would let him. As for the children, I believe there are not three happier little monkeys in the world. Billy says he likes this place because it has such a large yard. They scamper over the hills trying to catch chipmunks; they run down to the brook to visit with a herd of Holsteins; they drive the horse and the colts which are feeding over the ranch. They have such hotels, stores and houses. They go after wildflowers—which Helen Loves—for their grandmother to paint and inside the house they are petted and made much of.



Grandmother Ripley's Sketch of Estes Park Flowers

Mrs. Sherman concludes: . . . The end for Will was not far away. It came on August 24 and his mother could not bear to write about it. We know nothing of the details but in a letter written much later Helen, Will's daughter, has this to say: "In spite of the tragedy hanging over the family plus the fact that Grandma Ripley was mourning for poor young Uncle Ned, we children lived unclouded lives in that bracing air and majestic scenery, although I do remember gentle, self-controlled Grandma Reynolds weeping and enfolding all three of us in her arms on that final day and saying, 'poor, little fatherless children'."

* * *

The book, given to Grandmother Ripley by Janet and Agnes Pease [daughters of John & Elizabeth Ripley Pease, ed.], was a little red leather-covered notebook, 3¼ by 6 inches, containing seventy-five closely written pages of fading, spidery handwriting plus a number of photographs and sketches, some of which are reproduced here. Grandmother Ripley willed it to Will's daughter Helen [Buckingham], who was, of course, present during those critical months at Estes Park, and her only child having died, she gave it to me, writing "I am so glad and it is so right that you should have it—I know that it will be as precious to you as it has been to me." And I am sure that "Grandma Kelie" (as she was called) and Cousin Helen would be pleased to know that this intimate family story of hope, fear, grief, love and faith is now available for their descendants to read.

Cornelia Ripley Sherman

Mill Valley, California
March 1984.

A SHELF OF RIPLEY BOOKS

Dorr, James Bryan, *Some Branches of the Dorr Family*, 1969

Dorr, Julia C. R., *A Book of Remembrances* 1901

For a more Complete list of Julia Dorr's works, see the Rutland Historical Quarterly, Vol. IV, No. 3, 1974, pp. 32-34. For Mrs. Dorr's civic work, see Vol. XVIII, No. 2, 1988

Ripley, Edward H., *Capture and Occupation of Richmond*, 1907

_____, *Vermont General*; edited by Otto Eisenschiml

Ripley, Thomas E., *Vermont Boyhood*

_____, *Green Timber*, 1968; in two printings (Life in Tacoma)

Ripley, William Y. W., *Vermont Riflemen in the War for the Union*, 1883

Steele, Robert G., *A Yankee Pedigree* (privately printed, 1969), 65 copies

_____, *With Pen or Sword*; Lives and Times of the Remarkable Rutland Ripleys (copies for sale)

_____, Extracts from *Correspondence Between Thomas E. Ripley and F. Barreda Sherman*, 1931-1956, 1988

Sherman, F. Barreda, *The Clements of Haverill and Rutland*, 1642-1969, 1980

_____, *The Ripley Family in America*, 1980

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Cornelia Ripley's Sketch Book, courtesy of Cornelia Ripley Sherman

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