Weaving is a theme that runs through the life of Sarah (Sally) Walbridge Way. As a girl she wove at her mother’s great loom. As a young woman she worked in the weaving mills at Lowell, Massachusetts. And as a pioneer wife and mother she wove a comfortable domestic life from the raw material of frontier Minnesota.

The third of the four Walbridge sisters, Sally took to the household chores easily. When she was sixteen, her mother noted: “Sally has done almost all my spinning and she has wove one web for fulld cloth and has another in the loom. she is small, does not weigh more than a hundred and 6 or 8 but she is a good girl to work.”

It was common practice at this time for girls to be hired out to learn the “many useful branches of home industry” from a relative or neighboring farm wife, often for room and board only. In June 1845, Sally began to serve out her time in Peacham Hollow, at the household of Lyman Watts’s brother. Roxana wrote: “Sally lives at the hollow with Isaac Watts she has been there 5 weeks and I expect she will stay a year she does not have much wages but the work is not hard and she works for herself a good deal.”

By October 1845, Sally had left housework “to work in the factory,” actually a weave shop that her uncle Isaac owned along the Peacham Hollow Brook. After only three weeks there, she became ill with “the Billious fever.” Near the end of her recovery Sally assured Martha in Michigan, “I am a going back to the hollow to work again this week Jane Brown has worked in the factory this summer and Cynthia [also] is now at the factory.”

The weave shop was a thriving enterprise, employing Sally and her two Brown cousins, as well as others. And the pay must have been better than teaching, for Cynthia Brown had previously “kept school in Danville.”

A change worth noting had come about in the lives of Peacham women. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries Sally’s grandmother
and mother had been an integral part of the subsistence farming—managers
of the household, care givers for the children, and helpmates of their hus-
bands. Although concentrating their work in the house, they connected
closely with the produce of the barn and field, and they were familiar with
all the tasks handled by their husbands, sons, and hired hands. In one area,
however, Roxana may have expanded the role her mother played. Her
butter and cheese, and maybe even her wool, had begun to be sold outside
the home, the first steps toward a more commercial, modern way of life.
Further expansion in the role of women took place in the Walbridge–Watts
household in the late 1840s, as new economic opportunities outside of the
home opened for young single women. Roxana’s daughters Chastina, Sally,
and Clara took advantage of these—Chastina and Clara as teachers, and
Sally as a factory worker. Furthermore, these women had control over their
earnings.

Although wage earning became acceptable in the 1840s for girls in their
late adolescence, marriage was still their expected future. The Walbridge
girls worked outside the home, but they saw this as a transitional stage
before marriage. Statistics show that girls who worked for wages, such as
mill girls, were as likely to marry as their sisters who remained on the farm.
Chastina worried about becoming an old maid shortly before she reached
age twenty, and Sally complimented her oldest sister Martha, who married
at seventeen: “Sister has done very well to get married so young as she is.”

But although women could now work outside the home, the real possi-
bilities were few. The most acceptable employment, recognized by family
and community alike, was teaching, a profession that Chastina and Clara
followed easily. As Sally was not a scholar, she could not take this path. She
attended the district school and received a primary-level education, but she
is not listed as a pupil at Peacham Academy.

If teaching was not an option, domestic service was an acceptable pos-
sibility, and until almost the turn of the twentieth century, it was the largest
employer of female labor. Sally took advantage of the opportunity it of-
fered. The pay, however, was low, the isolation must have been stifling, and
the work was unrewarding. Sally did not stay with it long.

A third option, new in the nineteenth century, was employment in the
factories that mass-produced products earlier hand made singly on the
farm. Small factories shot up in most of the New England villages, espe-
cially along rivers which could be dammed for water power. And once a
young woman like Sally had worked in a local factory, it was a small step to
the larger factories at Lowell. As early as the 1820s, this new economic
opportunity was opening for the daughters of New England farmers, but
the major increase came in the 1830s. At that time the textile factories
along the Merrimack River in Massachusetts were developing into the
largest manufacturing center in the United States. Cheap, reliable labor was
the key to their success. It soon became clear that rural farm girls living
north of the factories could solve the labor problem. In order to entice
these young women to leave home, however, the mill owners realized that
they would have to provide living conditions to satisfy the farm families
that their daughters would be well cared for and suitably chaperoned. They
set up a system of boardinghouses where women workers were required
to live under a strict set of rules, which included mandatory church at-
tendance. The work was difficult, the factories noisy and hot, and the
hours averaged seventy-three hours a week: thirteen hours a day, Monday
through Friday, with eight hours on Saturday. The workday ran from dawn
to 7:00 or 7:30 P.M., with half-hour breaks for breakfast and midday dinner.
But despite what today seems like economic exploitation, the women
workers themselves often felt stimulated, and even liberated from the iso-
tation of their rural life, the constraints of their farm work, and the limi-
tations of their small-village society. Most important, they earned cash.
Monthly wages are estimated to have been from nine to thirteen dollars.
Most factory girls, including Sally, experienced a new kind of power,
which came with a salary they could spend at their own discretion.

Not all was positive, however, for there was certainly a stigma attached
to working in the factories, as revealed in the family letters and in the
comments quoted below from the Brown cousins and Peacham friends.
Roxana, for instance, noted precisely the pay received when Chastina and
Clara were teaching, but never wrote about Sally’s wages. Also, she did not
describe Sally’s work except to say that she “has been to work in the factory
about 7 months.” One of the Peacham boys who went to California during
the Gold Rush, learning of a former female classmate’s decision to “go off
to work in a factory,” found it “strange enough.”

The family had an additional reason to feel concerned and cautious
about Sally’s venture to Lowell. She was beautiful, a real “looker.” When at
twenty she was away at the Lowell mills, some cousins visited the Watts
farm in the spring of 1848, and Chastina wrote to Sally of the occasion:
“The boys would go and look of your miniature once in a while, but they
thought it did’nt look near as well as you. By the way Albert says you are a
very good looking girl, the best that he knows of. And that there will be a
great deal more danger for you down there [in Lowell] because you are so
handsome. The boys thought very strong of you going, and wondered why you went. I wanted to tell them that we had'nt a rich father. . . . Horace Brown made us a call [and] spoke of you and wondered why we let you go to Lowell—And said too that he had heard how handsome you was.” Chastina advised Sally to “take care of & for your beauty.” Beauty was highly valued; the unspoken reminder here was that it would help in attracting a husband, and the unspoken concern, that it would attract unwanted attention.

Unfortunately no letters survive written by Sarah (who from now on used her given name) or other Peacham girls who worked at Lowell. There are four letters written by Chastina to Sarah at the mills from the fall of 1847 to the spring of 1848. The first was dated in mid-October “early after your departure from Peacham,” in which Chastina wrote: “We were glad to hear of your safe arrival at Lowell, & also of the prospect of your company, being so fortunate as to work so near together. I expect, you & Esther are rather green yet, in your weaving business. I want to know of your advancement. whether you are still considered as ‘raw hands,’ or can do your work alone.” Sarah’s expertise with home weaving and work at her uncle’s weave shop might have qualified her for this more skilled and higher paid job. Weavers were known to take pride in their work and to feel self-respect, traits Sarah no doubt welcomed, being the third daughter who had never quite achieved the housekeeping skills of Martha or the scholarly accomplishments of Chastina.

While weaving advanced in the factories, home textile making continued at the Watts farm. Chastina reported to Sarah that “Miss Kittredge [a seamstress] remains with us yet, but I expect she will get through yet this week. last week [Clara] & myself finished the warp to the web. I spun twelve skeins. . . . Today I have cut Clarissa’s calico dress, & tomorrow . . . I shall spin again. . . . Miss K. just cocked up her head in the bed, & said, ‘are you writing to Sally?’ answer yes. ‘give her my respects then, & tell her I expect when she walks in the streets, her head is strait forward, but her eyes every which way’ Exit under the bed clothes.” Chastina ended the letter with the same theme: “I suppose all the family send their best wishes for your welfare. mind your health—keep a watch over yourself—knowing that there are snares for the unsuspecting.” Even with all the assurances of the mill owners, families worried about their daughters. One cause for concern must have been simply the number of people in Lowell, thirty-three thousand in 1850 compared to fewer than fourteen hundred in Peacham. In Lowell’s central district in 1849, one observer counted ninety stores; Peacham had three or four.
The letters reveal that Sarah was not alone at Lowell, for at least four other Peacham girls are mentioned by name. Both Chastina and Clara directed letters to the Peacham girls as a group, catching them up on gossip and sometimes teasing them: “My best to Esther, and tell her I should like to see her very much indeed. . . . love to Jane & Mary. Simon hasn’t got nobody to keep house for him yet. He’s in a pitiable condition. Tis leap year, & some of you girls ought to volunteer to go and keep house for him.” Earlier Clara had written: “You must not work too hard so as to make your self sick now remember. Give my respects to Jane, Mary, Esther, Ann and all the rest of the good folks.” Next spring Chastina wrote: “I suppose you enjoy yourself pretty well dont you. Do you think that one year at Lowell will do for you? or shall you want to go back when you get home?” As a postscript to the letter she added: “I dreamed the other night that you came home and brought twenty five hundred dollars home with you, I thought if that was the case I should go to Lowell.” For the girls who remained at home, Lowell had a fascination, and also a reputation as a place to make a great deal of money.

It is not clear when Sarah left the mills for good, for there are no letters from the rest of 1848 or early 1849. She next appears in the Rix journal as accompanying Chastina and Alfred to the church for their wedding in July 1849. Among the guests at the reception were eleven family members and three friends, two a couple and one identified simply as “John Way.”

John Way is the subject of a surprise journal entry written by Alfred two months later: “This day has been one of some interest. . . . Visit from Mother Watts, and learned from her that Sarah & John Way are to be married next Monday & that John is to leave for California.” Two weeks earlier when Chastina was at the Watts farm, she had “helped Sarah quilt, on her pink & white quilt like mine,” indicating that Sarah was preparing her fixings, the last stage of courtship. Now Chastina “went over to father’s. Picked over the raisins for Sarah’s wedding cake.”

On October 16, 1849, Sarah Walbridge and John Way were married, only ten weeks after Chastina and Alfred’s wedding. Chastina recorded the evening’s events: “At six o’clock the appointed time; the guests began to arrive. When what a flutter we are in! the brides dress is not fixed yet, because the boys have but just come home from school, and were to bring fixings for the dress, & hat from Cows shop for the man. So, I had to apply my fingers to the work . . . until the dress is done! And the bride is dressed. She looks neatly dressed in white muslin, with blonde lace in the neck & about the sleeves. A white satin sash about her waist. . . . Alfred & I stood
up with them. . . . the pair did not seem much frightened, & did first-rate. Our refreshments consisted of tea, biscuit & butter, doughnuts, cookies, tarts & two sorts of cake as usual. As near as I can remember, there were 33 there besides our family—which consisted of fourteen members after adding one new one.” The next day “Mr. Way & his wife started for Dunham C.E.” on the traditional wedding trip where they visited the Canadian Brown relatives.

Two weeks later Sarah and John returned to Peacham, where according to the November 3 entry in the Rix journal, “John is fixing up a room at home for Sarah” at the Watts farm. For the next few weeks the Ways visited local relatives, and finally on Sunday, January 6, the Rix journal in Alfred’s handwriting reads: “After Service went over to the East Part, took tea with our folks and bade John S. Way, Goodbye.” On the 7th: “The California Company started to day on their long & toilsome journey & labor. We have no hope that they will all, 18 in number, ever come back alive. But still we say, ‘Success to ye! Bet you’ll find more yellow things than gold—more blue one than the sky.’”

What we know of John Stephen Way comes from the few facts in People of Peacham. He was five years older than Sarah, making him twenty-seven at their wedding, and his father, Stephen Way, was a farmer in Barnet. A twentieth-century Way descendant said John’s grandfather “had fourteen children by his wife and one by the hired girl; the latter event was known in the family as ‘Great Grandfather Way’s sin.’ From this branch [is] descended” John Way, Sarah Walbridge’s husband. There is no mention of John Way in Peacham Academy catalogs; perhaps, like Sarah, he was no scholar. He was, however, a good businessman, to judge from a letter Roxana wrote to Hubbell: “Mr Way Sallys man has gone to California . . . when she married him he was worth 15 hundred dollars in money but that did not satisfy and he must try his luck in C.” It is possible that some of that bankroll was from Sarah’s wages in the factories.

Seven months after the wedding, on May 18, a baby girl was born. Statistics show that the proportion of couples whose first child was born less than eight and a half months after marriage was at a high of nearly 30 percent in the 1780s, decreasing to about 20 percent by the 1830s. Therefore this scenario was not uncommon, but how would Roxana have reacted to it? In her letters from this period, she expressed no criticism but neither did she specify the dates of Sarah’s wedding or the baby’s birth. Whatever her personal feelings, she at last held a grandchild in her arms.
The baby was named Martha for her first-born, who by then had been dead for almost four years.

The story of the birth is worth telling; the following version is from the Rix journal written by Chastina who was herself six weeks pregnant:

May 17: . . . Came home [Watts farm] & found Sister Sarah feeling bad & weeping over the miniature of her husband.
May 18: . . . Awoke this morning @ 4 o'clock & found there had been a mess during the night. found some of the neighbors there. In short Sarah was sick & continued to be very bad, until about 10 minutes before 5 o'clock P.M. when she was delivered of a daughter. I took my place in the kitchen & there kept myself all day.
May 19: . . . The baby is a fine little plump thing—very pretty all getting along as well as could be expected. . . .
May 20: I have been sewing for the little tot nearly all day. Sarah quite comfortable.

Within a week Sarah “is not so well” and finally on July 6: “Dr Farr opened Sally’s Breast,” and the next day “She begins to feel better.”

Full happiness appeared at the door on August 24 when John Way “the Californian was at home again—with his pocket full of Rocks.” John had been gone less than seven months, and several of the letters he addressed to Sarah remain. On February 21 he informed her “of my safe arrival in San Francisco . . . 34 days from [New] York.” His early appraisal of California was “I think that we have seen a little of the Eliphant in getting here and if I get gold Enough to pay me for Coming to California I Must be one of the lucky ones I think that California is the place to Make Money but not for enjoyment.” He had not yet received a letter from home and was “most disheartened” about going to the mines without one.

His account of mail call in San Francisco described a situation common to most forty-niners: “The mails that come on in the steamer this time was sorted and ready to distribute on Sunday morning and there was more persons than could be served that day at the office door before sun rise they form in roes and each man takes his turn as he gets on the ground there is most order about it that I ever saw . . . sometimes a man will get within 8 or 10 [feet] of the door and sing out who wants to buy my chance they often pay an ounce of Gold for a mans chance and then they exchange places it is the most civil place I was ever in.”

By June he wrote “about the Claim that we bot here Paid 830 dollars for the Privilege of four men to work with 14 others on the bar we since have bot out 3 . . . we should get it worked out by the 4th of July but it will take
one month longer than that and perhaps more we Came in Possession of the last three Claims this morning.” He had three “lucky” Saturdays; on one of them, four miners, including John “took out $1150.00 . . . but those strikes are few and far between the best weeks work I have made in California was last week my dividend was $334.” John ended with words Sarah no doubt was waiting to hear: “I shall be at home next Winter some time if I have my health.”

In this he succeeded. The Rix journal noted on September 21, 1850: “The Gold from California, dug by Way, [and other Peacham men] has come. John has got as much as a boy can lift all in 20s & 40s—he dont tell how much in value, but I gues it is $2700.00.”

At the end of December, Roxana wrote Hubbell that “Mr Way Sallys husband has returned from California he done well while he was there he has bought a farm in Hardwick and is going to move onto it soon he pays 21 [hundred] dollars for it They have a fine little girl 7 months old and they call her Martha Sallys health is not verry good as she was sick all last summer.”

With a customary wry humor, Alfred described the farm, which was about twenty-five miles northwest of Peacham, as being “situated on La-moille River—with a fair view of the Stream from the house. In front of the house towers Mount Pisgah & a little north Mount [Horeb]. The stream is filled with fine trout & gravel—one a great luxury, the other a small one. The buildings of the Ancient Order of Architecture—still they have an air of comfort, except in cold weather when the air is too cold for comfort—though even then, I suppose, it will bear the name of cold comfort. I think, on the whole, John & Sarah are very favorably situated for enjoying life.”

Their family grew, and in 1853 Roxana wrote to Augusta that “Sally and her man live in Hardwick they have two Children a Martha and Edgar little black eyed rouges as ever you saw Mr Way is doing verry well and getting a good living . . . Sallys husband made half a ton [of maple sugar].”

But Hardwick did not satisfy John for long. Although he stayed there until 1855, within three months of returning from California, he began to discuss with Alfred plans for going west again and at one time he even had “Australin fever.” In the spring of 1855, Alice wrote Augusta: “John Way & John Martin and their families started for Minesota the 25th of last April. Sarah and Mrs Martin were awful homesick.”

One of the striking patterns about New England families moving west is that they moved in groups. Diaries and letters reveal that families did not go alone and settle among strangers; they moved to areas where friends and
family had already located, and they created communities with the spirit and culture of home. Such a place was Northfield, Minnesota, in Rice County in the Cannon Valley amidst rolling country and wooded hills. Within five years of the Ways’ building their log cabin and clearing their land, at least five other Peacham families were mentioned in letters and diaries as living in the area, including both Watts and Way relatives. By 1867 when Isaac visited Sarah and John, it took him more than a week to see the people he knew from home, and even then he missed some.

The 1850s and 1860s were the years of the population boom in Minnesota, partly because land closer to Vermont had already been settled and partly because improved transportation—better roads, open waterways, and expanded railroads—made travel to Minnesota easier. In 1850 the U.S. Census listed only one hundred native Vermonters in Minnesota; by 1860 there were 4,208. Minnesota entered the Union in 1857, two years after the Ways settled there.

The first priority for pioneer families in Minnesota was preparing land for crops; housing was of secondary importance, and John Way proceeded accordingly. Roxana wrote to Augusta the year after the Ways left Vermont: “I got a letter from [Sarah] a few days ago she says they were in tolerable good health but she is not contented I expect they have seen some pretty hard times since they have been on their new place They have built them a log house and the winter was so severe that they suffered very much with the cold [John] has bought 100 and 60 acres of land has got in about 19 acres of seed corn wheat oats and potatoes but Sarah says it has been so dry that the crops did not look well at all She says they are on a road of a great deal of travel and they are trying to build up a town about a mile from them.” The letter not yet sent, Roxana added a week later: “Sarah writes that it has been verry dry in Minesota and the prospect for crops were not very flattering I think it is rather a hard case for one to go from a cold Country to a colder one and have to suffer all the privations of beginning new faring hard and being homesick into the bargain as Sarah is she thinks she dont see anything there that is any better than in Vt and a good many things worse especially the Snakes she has to watch there to keep them out of the house and beds she says she killed as many as three a day for 3 weeks within 3 feet of her house. I dont believe she will ever be contented there John wont own but what he . . . has to work verry hard to get things so that they can live they had no water last winter only as they melted snow he has got a well begun but cant find time to finish it.” Contented Sarah may not have been, but settled she became, despite droughts, severe winters,
economic slumps, Indian attacks, the famous Northfield bank robbery, and even the grasshopper plagues of the 1870s. Two more children were born, Clara Ella in 1857 and, nine years later, Alice.

One cheery episode, Christmas in 1863, Sarah described to her sisters in Peacham: “There was quite a time in our town Christmas evening with old folks & young they went 15 miles after some pine trees & put them in a large hall & had them hung full of everything you can think of for presents for old & young that had been bought & put there by any one that wanted to give a christmas present . . . & they had someone drest up for Santa Claws (the worst way) that handed the presents as fast as they could get them from the tree & read the names I bought Martha a bible & she got it from the tree. . . . Every one makes a great account of christmas out here but when I lived in Vt I hardly knew when it was, do they make any account of it there now! I got a new shawl pin but not from the tree.”

Sarah returned to Vermont only twice, once in the summer of 1861 and again in 1882, when only two members of the family remained to greet her. Meanwhile, the rest of the family wore a path to her Minnesota door. In the fall of 1857, Dustan, fresh from California, went there with Augustus hoping to find work. After Isaac’s return from the war, Father Watts went west and stayed the summer with the Ways, observing the horse stud business which had long been John’s specialty and had become a key factor in the family’s increasing prosperity. Sometime in the mid-1860s, the Ways finally built a “handsome” two-story frame house.

John, according to “old-timers” in the community, “bought the first Morgan stallion (Vermont Morrill) to Minnesota and made a great deal of money with the [stud fees].” Roxana would have rejoiced at Sarah’s increasing comfort, and even more at the “contentment” that must have gone along with it.

A few years after the Civil War, Isaac ventured west, trying to decide what to do with his life. Upon his arrival he “found the folks all well and prospering.” His activities in Minnesota, as described in his 1867 diary, included “draw sand,” “went hunting,” “riding around,” “reading and tinkering around the house,” helped put out a fire in a furniture store in town, attended “a meeting of the Y.M.C.A.,” “went . . . to the woods after a load of wood,” “butchering . . . slaughtered eight porkers,” “helped . . . unload a car of lumber,” “helped pick turkeys,” “went to Sircle Lake fishing . . . only got twelve in all,” “went to examination at the college,” attended “prayer meeting,” and went to church less often than he felt he ought, writing “I don’t feel right about it.”
Sarah Walbridge Way. Photograph taken by Ira E. Summer in Northfield, Minnesota, ca. 1860. Courtesy Choate Farm Collection.
One of the most striking things that Isaac saw was the “pile of bus[iness] done in Northfield. I never saw more business done anywhere than was done here last Sat. that is according to the place. It was one continual stream of humanity all day long. The business street was almost blockaded and the stores all full of customers. I should like to own either one of the eight or ten stores here, I know it must pay big.”

Later, sister Clara and her family from California crossed the country by train in 1871 and spent a week in Minnesota before going on to Vermont. Sister Ella visited several times in the 1870s, staying many months to help Sarah, as maiden aunts in those days were supposed to do. In 1887, Ella found a paying job a short distance away in Faribault, the Rice County seat.

In 1882, when Sarah was fifty-five and John sixty, they moved (with their furniture) from their farm outside of Northfield into the town itself, marking what must have been a watershed of aging and retirement. From here John Way served as a state legislator for one term in 1883. Twenty-six years later they died within a month of each other, both recognized as pioneer settlers in the Northfield area.

In all of this, Sarah’s voice is missing. Except for her three brief letters added to her mother’s to other family members and the 1863 Christmas letter quoted above, there is little hint of her doings and feelings. The sisters and brothers who visited left few comments. Only three vignettes remain.

The first comes from Isaac’s letter written to “Sister Alice” back in Peacham during his visit in 1867, in which he spoke of “Little Alice,” Sarah’s youngest child: “She is improving fast but cant talk yet. It took me about two weeks to get her tamed so I could play with her, but now she will play half a day at a time. She knows the most of any child I ever saw that couldnt talk.” No other information is available on what must have been one of Sarah’s hardest times—watching the slow development of this “worrysome” child, who died at nine years old in 1875.

One interlude in Sarah’s life which must have been enjoyable was a trip to California in the spring of 1883 to visit Clara. All that is known of this comes from a brief letter written by Ella (who kept house for her in her absence): “She had a pleasant journey and did not get very tired.”

Silent though she may have been in letters, Sarah speaks with a clear voice in another way. Shortly after the new farmhouse was built, she created a parlor for it. Parlors are a lost item in households of today, but once they were a social necessity in city mansions and rural farmhouses alike. Centers of peace and order closed to everyday family use, reserved for weddings, funerals, social visits, and other special occasions; quiet sanctu-
aries for the amenities and symbols of refinement, they were the only places in their lives that women could call their own. Sometimes a parlor came in for odd usage; Sarah’s granddaughter “mainly remembers using it as a child to spread out platters of homemade candy to cool.”

Thanks to photographs, a detailed description, and the furniture itself, now in storage at the Smithsonian, we can imagine Sarah’s parlor: the door opens on a cool, dark room, its heavy curtains closed. When they are open, the room hardly seems lighter, for the only touches of color come from a vivid wall-to-wall Brussels carpet, the chromolith on one wall, and the gold-leaf inner panels framing it and two other pictures. Everything else is dark brown or black.

Along one wall is a magnificent cast-iron stove, polished to a gleaming black. A wide “settee”—what might be called a sofa if it were not so formidably uncomfortable—beautiful in its curving lines of black walnut and upholstered “tuft-style in black [horse]hair cloth” sits along another wall, with a large etching of a Bierstadt scene above it. In a corner stands a small round table, and over that a corner shelf with a bead-fringed lambrequin in needlepoint hanging from it, made for Sarah by her daughter. A Story and Clark parlor organ, with side chairs of the same black walnut and horsehair grouped nearby, fills the third side. The remaining wall space is occupied by two large armchairs, one with an upholstered back, with a large oval table between them and pictures overhead of two Greek figures in white against a black background.

This parlor as it stood inviolate through the years, first at the farm and then in town, was a symbol of the life of comfort and even elegance that Sarah wove out of her own hard work and the raw materials that she found in the new country to which she came.

One of the threads worked into the weaving of Sarah’s life was the strong connection with Vermont that went and stayed with her. As late as 1889, Charles Choate wrote in his diary, “Sent 1 pail & 2 cans Sugar to John S. Way Minn.”