

The Tale of Two Alices

Both my father's mother and my mother's mother were named Alice, and they must have known each other. Here's Alice Gerould, born in Keene NH, and her husband, Robert Gadsden, born in Savannah, Georgia – sort of a twin city to Charleston, South Carolina, where Don't-Tread-On-Me was born. Gadsdens were all over both cities:



Robert Godin Gadsden (b 1875)
father of Dorothy Gadsden Reed
grandfather of Grandpa Bill



Alice Devereaux Gerould Gadsden (1883-1937)
mother of Dorothy Gadsden Reed
grandmother of Grandpa Bill

There are a couple of mysteries about the two Alices. They both grew up in Cheshire County, NH, Alice Wellington Reed (op.cit.) in Walpole, and Alice Gerould Gadsden down the road in Keene. They both went to Keene High School, Alice W. graduating in 1904, and Alice G. probably in 1902.

Here's the first mystery:

Both my parents were born in Chicago in the same year, 1912. Alice Gerould was 29 when my mother was born. Alice Wellington was 26 when my father was born. They had been in Chicago long enough to meet guys, Robert and James, and get married.

But the questions are:

What were two young single girls from New Hampshire doing in Chicago by themselves not long after the turn of the century (20th)?

And: How did Alice G. hitch up with a guy from Georgia in Chicago? And how did Alice W. meet J.F. Reed?

Here's what we know: According to the 1910 US Census, Alice Gerould, unmarried, was living in Keene with her parents and was a stenographer in a bank. A year later, on April 25, 1911, she got married to Robert Gadsden, from Savannah, in Keene.

According to the same census, Alice Wellington, unmarried, was living in Chicago, a lodger in a rooming house on Princeton Avenue. She returned to Walpole to get married to James Franklin Reed, from Illinois, on August 24, 1911, four months after Alice Gerould married Robert Gadsden, 17 miles down the road in Keene.

All four of them got back to Chicago in time for my father and mother to be born in 1912. Fr. Bill was born on June 18, 1912, roughly ten months after Alice and James' wedding in Walpole, and Dot was born on August 3, 1912, more than a year after Alice and Robert's wedding in Keene, a decent delay in both cases. So there was some conceiving of interest to moi between April and August 1911 - did they call it "whoopie" then - and subsequent begetting.

But how did Alice G. get to know Robert G.? And how did Alice W. get to know James R.? And what were the two Alices from New Hampshire doing in Chicago? My father wrote in the few pages of a memoir that he began writing on a yellow legal pad that:

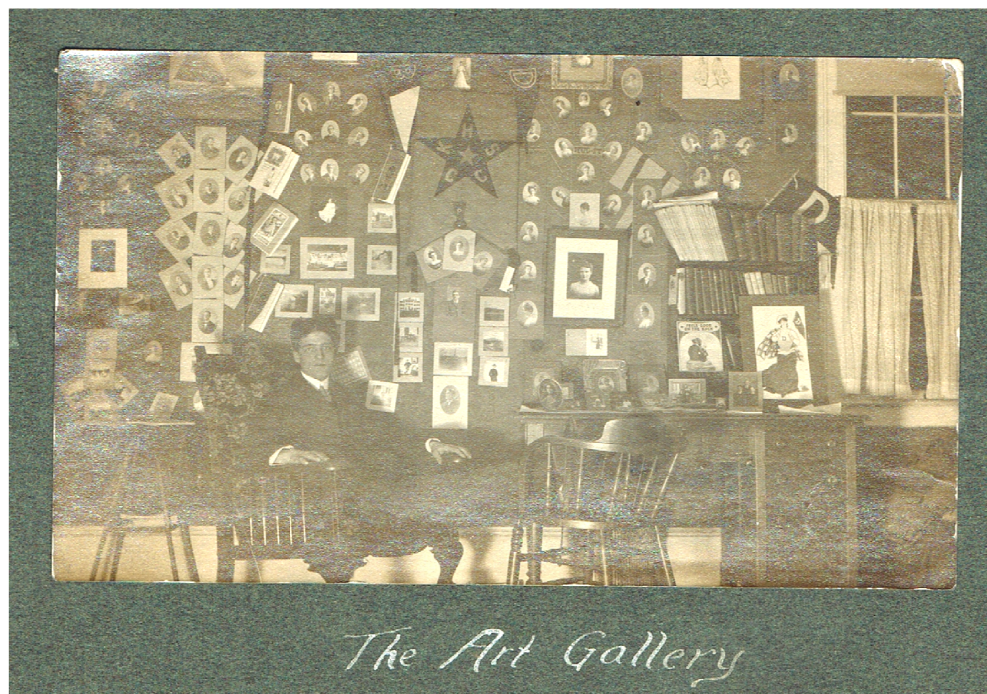
"That family (the Gadsdens) and ours met at the Church of the Annunciation. Apparently, Alice Gadsden and mother were very good friends. They both had babies at about the same time (1912). Their daughter, Dorothy, and I met on our mother's knees when we were a year old. When we moved to Morgan Park (Illinois), the Gadsdens lived in Beverly Hills, about three miles north of where we lived."

Here are some hypotheses about the Alices, assembled from census-like facts, old photos, family myth and wild imagination (which always seeks to fill a void).

It is possible that Alice Wellington was *sent* to Chicago by her mother, because she was seeing a Dartmouth student that the Wellingtons found unacceptable. The problem was evidently that he was Italian, evidently not the thing to be at the time from certain viewpoints, Leonardo and Dante notwithstanding.

Here's what my father wrote in that legal pad: "Alice was sent to Chicago by her mother to get away from an Italian boy who took a great fancy to her. There she did secretarial work. It was at a boarding house where both Frank (James Franklin Reed, my grandfather) and Alice ate regularly and met. In time, they were married at the farm in Walpole."

Here is a photo from an album I found in my father's suitcase, which is full of pictures of Alice Wellington. Let's assume the gent in these photos is the beau in question.



The Suitcase:



Is he in his Dartmouth dorm room? Is that Alice in the framed picture on the wall and in her signature white dress?



The caption under the far right photo says: "Oh Joy Oh Bliss"

This is Phi Gamma Delta at Dartmouth, with beau in the front row, second from the left:



Here are Alice and Dartmouth out for a spin. The caption says, a bit ominously, "Oh! Dear"



Then this. Alice looks less than blissful, Dartmouth looks a little worried, and the caption says, "Don't - Stop it". Sounds like they're having some differences.



Don't - Stop it.

Finally, from the same photo album, here's a new beau, James Franklin Reed from Chicago, my grandfather, and smiles all around:



Then ... "There's that smile again"! Do you think "Stumped" refers to anything more than the tree?



It is speculation that Alice was exiled for falling in love with an Italian, of course, but why else was she boarding in Chicago, where she was working for a lawyer, according to the 1910 Federal Census. And why would I have that received notion (from my father) if it didn't contain some truth. Then there is the incontrovertible – if open to interpretation – photographic evidence.

Compare these faces, the first of Alice with the Dartmouth guy, and the second with J. F. Reed, known as Frank, my grandfather from Chicago. Notice any difference in demeanor?



NEWS FLASH! Update on the Italian boyfriend

When Harold Wellington visited last summer in Walpole, he mentioned that Alice's boyfriend had become very wealthy and eventually gave Dartmouth College, his alma mater, a new field house in 1968. I went to Dartmouth's website and discovered it is the LEVERONE Field House. I had a name. I went on line and discovered he also gave Leverone Hall, the graduate school of management, to Northwestern University, in 1972, and yearly took many disadvantaged kids to White Sox games.

Where did Nathaniel Leverone, Alice's erstwhile suitor, come by the dough to build buildings that bear his name at prestigious colleges and buy thousands of ball game tickets? He grew up in Keene, NH, in very comfortable surroundings and graduated from Keene High School in 1902 – he was such a good student he skipped two grades. Alice Gerould was in the same class, and Alice Wellington graduated in 1904. They all must have known each other in high school. Nat went on to Dartmouth where he graduated in 1906, member of Phi Beta Kappa. His father, Robert Leveroni – Nat must have changed the “i” to “e” – was in the fruit and nuts business and owned two buildings on Main Street in downtown Keene. Both he and his wife, Rosa, were born in Genoa, Italy.

Nat and both Alices went to Chicago, where he became the brainchild of the Automatic Canteen Company, a pioneer in the vending machine business. He had a long and prosperous career, and was a renowned philanthropist and public speaker, known nationally.

In 1963, a complete biography by Gladys Zehnpfennig, entitled *Nathaniel Leverone, Pioneer in Automatic Marketing*, was published in a series called *Men of Achievement*.

This from the early pages of the book:

“When Nat began to “call” on young ladies, he ran into a slight problem with his father who maintained that no honest man would be on the streets after nine p.m. Since visiting hours for proper young ladies usually lasted from seven to nine, this schedule ordinarily would work out nicely. It seemed, however, that the prettiest girls were just as inaccessible as Rapunzel. They either lived at Bellows Falls which was about twenty-two miles away, or at *Walpole* (my emphasis) which was seventeen miles away

“If he wanted to get home from Walpole with the horse and buggy (see photo) by nine o’clock, he would almost have to start back before he got there.”



Here, by the way, is how I remember Alice Wellington Reed from my childhood. She would set me on her knees and say, “This is how the gentleman rides, *Da dup. Da dup*, her knees bouncing smartly. And this is how the farmer rides, *Hobble de hoy. Hobble de hoy*, her knees alternating slowly.



Alice Wellington Reed

SB: Say, wasn't there another (Grandmother) Alice in this equation?

Well, yes, Alice Gerould, from Keene. But first, a little something about the Geroulds.