

MRS. JANE NICHOLSON A HUNDRED YEARS OLD

unmarried Indianapolis

Newspaper

GIFT TO HER FROM LITERARY
CLUBS AND OTHERS.

Feb. 1, 1906

LIFE OF UNUSUAL INTEREST

Mrs. Jane Wales Nicholson to-day celebrated her one-hundredth birthday anniversary, at her home in Broadway. Owing to Mrs. Nicholson's delicate health, there was no special demonstration in honor of the day. A few familiar friends called during the afternoon and greeted her, where she sat surrounded by loving messages in the shape of flowers, gifts and congratulatory notes. Mrs. Nicholson is a woman of unusually dainty and sweet personality.

A gift highly prized was a solid silver loving cup, sent by the Indianapolis Woman's Club. Mrs. Nicholson was a founder and charter member of this literary club, and has kept her interest in its members and programs. The cup is plain urn-shaped with three handles. At the base is engraved on one side the date 1806, on the other 1906, midway between on one side the club monogram, opposite the name Jane Nicholson. The College Corner Club is another in which Mrs. Nicholson has taken a deep interest, and club meetings have frequently been held at her home, that she might enjoy the papers. The Parlor Club holds an interest, as her daughter, Miss Elizabeth Nicholson, was founder, and was president for many years. These club members delight to honor Mrs. Nicholson.

Journey to Ohio Wilderness.

Mrs. Nicholson's maiden name was Jane Finley Wales. She is the daughter of Isaac and Ruth Welch Wales, and was born in North Carolina, February 1, 1806. A descendant of generations of Quakers, she was early taught to "test all things by the Inward Light and to listen for the voice of Conscience." She was the second child in a family of five, four girls and one boy. When she was eight years

old, her maternal grandfather, Samuel Welch, decided that he must remove his large family of twelve children and their children, from a slave State to a free State. Isaac Wales had just completed a new house and planted a fine orchard and disliked leaving his beautiful farm for an Ohio wilderness, but his wife's extremely tender love for her father, Samuel Welch, turned the scale, and Isaac Wales sold his farm at a great sacrifice.

They joined the Welch colony. This was long before the day of carriages, but the grandfather and grandmother rode in a small two-wheeled vehicle called a gig, and regarded as luxurious compared with the great white covered wagons drawn by four horses, which conveyed the other families. The memory of this journey from Carolina to Ohio is still vivid in Mrs. Nicholson's mind—the bells on the horses, the finding of chestnuts on the way up the Blue Ridge mountains, the wild beauty of the scenery. Her word pictures of this trip have charmed her children and grandchildren many an hour.

Samuel Welch settled in the Miami valley in southern Ohio. He had bought 1,200 acres of exceedingly rich but heavily timbered land—enough for each child to have a farm. Here Isaac Wales began the heavy task of clearing the land. Sometimes his little daughter saw the deer come out of the thick woods to a salt spring where they drank. The Shawnee Indians had just left that part of Ohio, and there were traces of their wigwams.

Quakers' Payment of "Muster Fine."

The second year saw a clearing sufficiently large to raise a few bushels of rye. The children looked forward anxiously to white bread. Mrs. Nicholson re-

members seeing her mother help winnow this rye, which was then put away until it could be taken to a distant mill to be ground. In the meantime an officer of the Ohio State militia came to collect the "muster fine." The Quakers protested against war, and would neither drill for nor countenance war, so they were fined. These officers took what they chose and made their own valuation. In this case, for a fine of perhaps \$2.50, they took the whole crop of rye, leaving not a grain. The little children were bitterly disappointed to see all the crop go, but they heard no complaint from either the father or mother. It was a matter of conscience, and they believed it right to suffer in the good cause.

In 1830 Jane Finley Wales was married to Valentine Nicholson, since deceased, a descendant of early English Quakers. A younger sister, Nancy, was married at the same time to Thomas Butterworth. The ceremony was that of the Friends' church and the meeting-house was of hewn logs in the thick woods. Often in the past as these sisters sat through the silent meetings they had heard the rare sweet note of the hermit thrush. In this house Elias Hicks had once preached. His earnest conviction and his impassioned words had earlier divided the Society of Friends into Hicksites and Orthodox. The four young people in this double wedding were Hicksites.

"Underground Railway" Work.

Very early in their married life Mr. and Mrs. Nicholson were enlisted in the anti-slavery work. Their home was one of a chain of hospitable homes, stretching from the Ohio river to the lakes—stations on the "Underground railway," whose trains were mainly made up by the faithful Quakers. It was a frequent board for Mrs. Nicholson's children to be awakened for the midnight arrival of a carriage load of fugitive slaves. In addition to her own family cares, Mrs. Nicholson must provide for these frightened and always hungry man and women. Perhaps they must be concealed for a time from the zealous executors of the fugitive slave law.

At this time the Anti-Slavery Society decided to hold one hundred conventions in the West. In the district embracing southern Ohio Mrs. Nicholson's home became the headquarters for the noted anti-slavery lectures. Mrs. Nicholson has given much study to slavery in all its aspects, reading every book and pamphlet obtainable.

During her entire life there has not been one worthy reform without Mrs. Nicholson's sympathy and support. This often meant to her husband and herself sacrifice and denial quite incomprehensible to the young or even middle-aged people of to-day.

Perhaps Mrs. Nicholson's Quaker heritage made her deeply sympathetic with the very earliest movement for the rights of women. Homekeeping and home-loving, she was ever ready to give the support of her name and influence to every movement for the welfare of humanity.

The years have taken from her countless old friends and almost all her many near relatives. Only twelve first cousins remain and the sister, whose wedding day was her own. Mrs. Butterworth was unable to take the long journey to observe the century anniversary. Mrs. Butterworth, at ninety-six, still writes long and interesting letters and enjoys life.

Seven children were born to Mr. and

Mrs. Nicholson. Three are living in daily communication with Mrs. Nicholson—Mrs. Horace McKay, Miss Elizabeth and Miss Mary E. Nicholson. Two granddaughters are Mrs. Brandt Steele and Miss Mary I. McKay and there are two great-grandsons, Horace McKay Steele and Theodore Steels.

Old Anti-Slavery Friends.

Of those associated with her in her anti-slavery work, only two remain. Extracts are given from two birthday letters:

"Boston, Mass., January 30, 1906.

"Dear Mrs. Nicholson:
In two days more you will have reached your centennial birthday. Let me congratulate you and your daughters that you have lived so long and well. When I remember you and your noble husband as I knew you both more than fifty years ago, I can hardly believe that I am nearly eighty-one and that you will have passed your hundredth milestone when this letter reaches you.

The world has grown older and, I hope, better than it was when we were fighting for free soil and free speech in Ohio in 1850. Slavery is no longer an established institution. The people have largely outgrown their old-fashioned aversion to God and an eternal hell, and work for humanity draws to a close. Younger hands and hearts will take up and carry on the reforms which still remain to be furthered. I am glad you have fought a good fight and that your daughters stand beside you. With warmest regards, in which my dear wife, Lucy Stone, would join if she were still with me, and with kind regards of my daughter, Alice, believe me, dear Mrs. Nicholson, ever your friend,

"HENRY BLACKWELL."

Frank Sanborn, of Concord, writes: And to your dear mother on her hundredth birthday say that she has lived to see greater changes in some ways than we could ever have expected, even half a century ago. I hope the world is better than it was then. I know it is better so far as your mother and her family had the power to make it so. Each century and every generation has its own evils and its own blessings. We have done what we could, and, perhaps, we could have done more if we had all been born North Carolina Quakers. They seem to have accomplished more than the rest of us."