

The American Frugal Housewife
by Mrs. Child (Lydia Maria Francis Child)
published in Boston:
Carter, Hendee, and Co. 1833
this account by Cynthia Ann Hendee Henry
July 13, 2018

As I update this account, 22 years after beginning it, it is a good reminder of the blessings of the Internet, not in use in 1996. How much easier would solving this puzzle have been a few years later and now helping me appreciate this wonderful invention all the more. Of course, now, *The American Frugal Housewife* can be ordered online. And, to my ongoing account of this fun little book...

June 1996: These pages are from a little book given to me by my half-sister, Nancy Lee Hendee Wilson, since it had the name "Hendee" as one of the owners of the publishing company. She spotted it in some store and sent it to me--fun find! At this time, I do not know the connections to our family. I called

Directory Assistance in Boston on July 1, 1996 to see if the company was still listed. They gave me the number of a "Carter Hyde Publishing Company."

L. Maria Child.



Lydia Maria Francis Child
1882 engraving

December 1996: I received a letter from Grace Neil Anderson, author of *In the Shadow of Cox Mountain*, who is kindly answering some of my questions. She stated that she knew of "someone of the Hendee family who went to Boston and became a wealthy book dealer." She did not remember the source, but Nancy apparently found one of the books he published. (Grace and her book pertain to Pittsford, Vermont---deep Hendee roots.)

March 1997: The mystery seems to be solved! I sent a copy of this text and the above-mentioned pages to Cousin Mary LaBatt (also a descendant of David Hendee and of the same generation as am I, though about 30 years older). She wrote a postcard back, stating, "The Hendee in book business was Charles Jefferson Hendee, son of Caleb, Jr. See his manuscript (page 19 in your new copy)." So, there it was right in front of my nose, but unearthed by Mary---again to the rescue!

So, Charles was the son of my 3x great-uncle, Caleb Hendee, Jr., and was first cousin to my great-grandfather, Clark Kendrick Hendee. (See family tree at end of this story.)

We see on page 10 of the Caleb Hendee, Jr. manuscript, "Charles Jefferson Hendee, my son, born on Monday, 4 o'clock AM. on July 1st. 1805." On page 13, Charles goes to Boston "to live on the 5th. Sept. 1825, where he still lives." On page 15, following the dreadful weighing incident, Caleb goes to Boston, "making Chas, my son, and Deacon Hay a visit."



Charles Jefferson Hendee

Identified as possibly being Charles as a photo in the Pittsford Historical Society Museum

On page 16, "Charles Hendee and his sister were here for several weeks in August and Sept. on a visit. Charles still resides in Boston."

On page 19, we see that Charles' stay in Boston was an excellent idea: "My son, Charles Jefferson Hendee, was married of August 1836 to Miss Davis of Roxbury, Mass. where he now lives. In a letter received not long since, he informed me that he had cleared the year previous \$70,000 in his book business."

It is so exciting to have different pieces of this huge family history puzzle come together--and from such a variety of sources. What would Nancy have thought when she picked up that book long ago, that I would, years later, have that "Hendee" on the cover in a manuscript by his father (Caleb, Jr.) acquired from a totally different and then unknown, source (Gayla Hendee Stafford), and then that the match would be made by still a different source (Mary), both being third cousins and found only through my genealogical searches! I bet Nancy never thought we would know Mr. Hendee's full name, much less his relationship to us. It's been fun!

The book also provides wonderful insights into the lives of our ancestors, being a contemporaneous narrative of their very times! It really is fascinating. I learned that it is better to knit rather than to weave your own socks. I am so glad I can go to the store and buy soap rather than following all the directions involving ashes and lye to make my own. "Look frequently to the pails to see that nothing is thrown to the pigs which should have been in the grease-pot. Look to the grease-pot and see that nothing is there which might have served to nourish your own family, or a poorer one." "An ox's gall will set any color." "When mattresses get hard and bunchy, rip them, take the hair out, pull it thoroughly by hand" "Barley straw is best for beds; dry corn husks, slit into shreds, are far better than straw." "The Indians say that poke-root boiled into a soft poultice is the cure for the bite of a snake. I have heard of a fine horse saved by it." There were words new to me: elder-blow tea, vinegar curds, English-mallows, and fustic. There were cures for illnesses such as throat temper, mortification, quincy, worms, and chilblains. "For avoiding lock-jaw from a scratch, one should bathe the injured part freely with lye or pearl-ash and water. Also, one must bind a rind of pork to the wound if by needle, pin, or nail." Other suggestions were also offered. "For cholera-morbus, use a spoonful of ashes stirred in cider." Where did they get myrrh? (to mix with aloes and saffron for digestive disorders) "An ointment made from the common ground-worms, which boys dig to bait fishes, rubbed on with the hand, is said to be excellent, when the sinews are drawn up by any disease or accident."

There were recipes (or "receipts") for potato cheese, calf's foot jelly, beef tea, and for boiling neat's tongue or buffalo tongue (soak a day and a night and boil six hours). There is the phrase "a leg of bacon." Beef liver was one cent a pound. The term "shilling" is used, even though the country is no longer part of England. What is a "rattle rand?" (part of an ox) "A pig's head, though despised for being cheap, is delicious when well-cooked and is a profitable thing to buy." "When cooking a calf's head, leave the windpipe on, for if it hangs out of the pot, all the froth will escape from it; clean the lights thoroughly." "Pigeons are best when potted." Keep a calf's rennet handy for when your husband brings home company unexpectedly so that you can make a five-minute rennet pudding." Who has had a carrot pie or a whortleberry or cranberry pie? "Cup cake" here means using one cup of butter, two cups of sugar, three cups of flour, and four eggs. If "Election Cake" was "old-fashioned" in 1832, when *did* it originate? Here, "fritters" are synonymous with "flat-jacks." When did this turn into "flapjacks?" What must be missing from the recipes of the International House of Pancakes is a spoonful or more of New England ("N.E.") rum to make them light. They would also need to know to "heat it until it foams by putting in a hot poker." We also have lost the idea for pancakes of using sour beer with a spoonful of pearlash.

General health rules included avoiding making "children cross-eyed by having hair hang about their foreheads where they could see it continually." Mrs. Child talked about the "extravagance of the present day" and that "in this country, we are apt to let children romp away their existence til they get to be thirteen or fourteen. This is not well." She recommends that every family member "should be employed either in earning or saving money. Small children can knit garters and suspenders or braid straw. They can pick cranberries from the meadow to be carried to market rather than wearing out their clothes in useless play. The children can also make handsome

feather fans if you keep turkeys or geese." Her overall theme is, "The true economy of housekeeping is simply the art of gathering up all the fragments, so that nothing is lost. I mean fragments of time, as well as materials."

This really is a fascinating book to look through and glimpse the way of life of our ancestors about whom we are reading here. So, as you envision the people on these pages, also envision them washing their hair with N.E. rum or brandy (for the roots), emptying the feather bed and washing and drying the feathers, or dissolving isinglass in gin to make a strong cement for broken glass, china, or seashells. I forget what a totally different world our ancestors lived in!

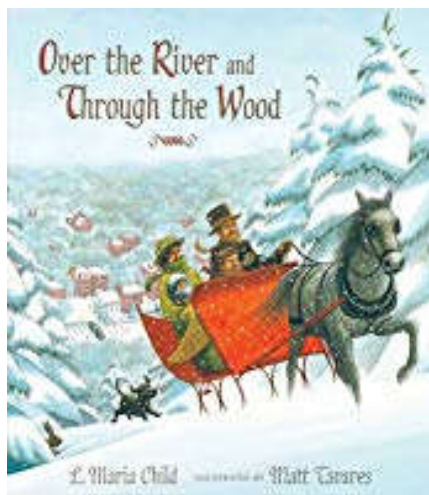
February 1999: My latest entry here has nothing to do with the Hendee family, but was just a fun non-connection. While in New Orleans last spring break, I bought a book, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* by Unda Brent. It was edited by "L. Maria Child," author of *The American Frugal Housewife*. Lydia also wrote other books.

July 10, 2018 Now that we have the wonderful Internet, I ordered a copy of this truly intriguing book, bringing forth tidbits from times long ago, to accompany Julia's family history cookbook.



Lydia Maria Francis Child (1802 – 1880), was an American abolitionist, women's rights activist, Native American rights activist, novelist, journalist, and opponent of American expansionism. Her journals, both fiction and domestic manuals, reached wide audiences from the 1820s through the 1850s. At times she shocked her audience as she tried to take on issues of both male dominance and white supremacy in

some of her stories. **Despite these challenges, Child may be most remembered for her poem *Over the River and Through the Wood*.** Her grandparents' house, of the poem, was restored by Tufts University in 1976 and stands near the Mystic River in Medford, Massachusetts. This is believed to be the river referred to in the poem.



This house, located in Medford, Massachusetts, is claimed to be the original house of Mrs. Child's grandparents.



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