

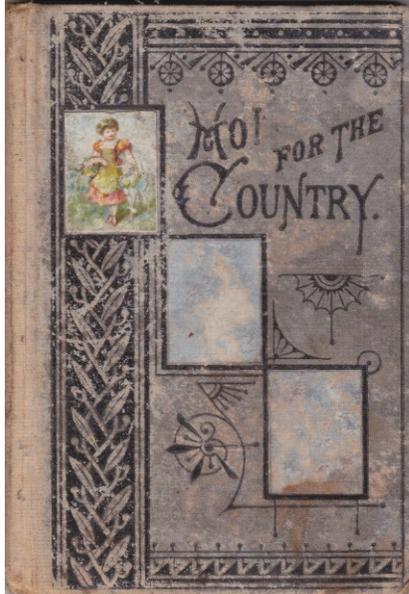
Alice Lamay

by David Baumann

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645 words

This little item is a follow-up to my article “People We’ll Never Know”. In the spring of 2016 I was browsing Simple Treasures, an antique store on Highway 37 near my home in Salem, Illinois. I found a charming little book called *Ho! For the Country*. It was intact, although not in very good condition. It is small—only four by six inches and less than a quarter inch thick. The publisher was Dodd, Mead, and Company of New York. No names of either author or illustrator were provided. There was no publication date, although the appearance of the book made me think that it had seen print in the late nineteenth century. The price was eight



dollars. It had seen a lot of wear, but that told me that it had a lot of history, and its charm attracted me.

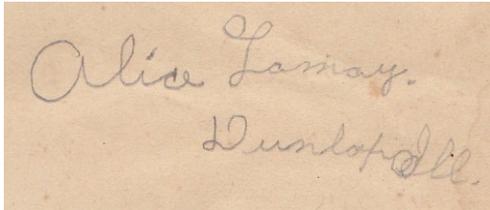


Several months went by, though, until I read it; I read it aloud as a bedtime story to my small daughter. The book is only 46 pages long, with its text on the even numbered pages and delightful engravings on the opposite pages. The story is simple but pleasurable to read. Two children, a girl named Grace and her brother Jack, are taken from the big city to their uncle’s place in the country where they are to stay for a few weeks in the summer. First they travel by boat along the coast; when they reach port they take a train, and conclude their travels by wagon to their uncle’s home. A number of heartwarming episodes follow in which the children learn about living in the country.

The front hinge was completely loose, so I repaired it with a strip of paper set in place with bookbinder’s glue. As I worked I wished that I knew more about book repair than I did, for I felt that the book deserved better than I was able to give it. I

thought of the many hands in previous years that had turned the pages. But at least now the front hinge is secure.

First thing I noticed when I opened the cover was the inscriptions on the blank pages at the front. On the first page, written in pencil in a child's clear hand, was



the name "Alice Lamay" and "Dunlap, Ill." On the following page are other names and place descriptions, only some of which I can read because of a little fading and—curiously—because the cursive style is so old fashioned that I can't quite make it out in

parts. The place names, however, were in the same locale as Dunlap. Because Alice Lamay's name was the first entry, I concluded that she was original owner.

On a whim, having little hope of learning anything, I did an online search for "Alice Lamay Dunlap, Illinois". To my glad surprise, I found an entry on Findagrave.com! Thanks to a researcher named Dan Ryan, there was an entry for an Alice M. LaMay Staley. I learned that she was born on October 18, 1891 in Stark County, Illinois; the town of Dunlap is located in the adjacent county of Peoria. She married Austin A. Staley (1890-1955). She apparently had three siblings, but there was no information about any children she may have had. Alice died in Peoria on February 16, 1982 at the age of ninety. She is buried at Swan Lake Memory Gardens, located at 4601 W. War Memorial Drive in Peoria. Most satisfyingly, there was even a photograph of young Alice.



There is no certainty, of course, that this Alice M. LaMay Staley is the same person as Alice Lamay who owned this book well over a century ago, but the information available online is enough to convince me that I have found the owner of the little book of more than a hundred years ago that now resides in my collection.

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