

Ideal Home Life and Public Activity of George Lawson Sheldon



Upper Corner— Julia. Lower Corner— Julia. Anson. Mary. Mrs. Sheldon. George Lawson Sheldon. Anson at Play. George L. Jr., Fishing in the Weeping Water. Isadore Feeding Squirrel.

AN OLD FASHIONED house almost hidden from view in the center of a yard eight acres in area, covered with shade trees, elms, oaks, pines, cedars, walnuts and ash, here and there a rustic bench, a swing or two, green grass everywhere, with the rippling little Weeping Water skirting the edges of the yard to the west, a portion of the old dam of years ago still obstructing the natural flow of the water, and then as far as the eye can see to the west, the north, the south, broad acres, handsome country buildings, herds of cattle, immense orchards; to the east the town of Nehawka.

Such is the home of George Lawson Sheldon, the republican nominee for governor of Nebraska. In such a place he was born; in such a place he has grown to manhood—close to nature, close to the people who represent the best of Nebraska's citizenship, in a place that breathes integrity, honesty, love and hospitality. He became a part of all this. He lives all this in his daily life. He lives as the people around him live. He works as the people around him work. He goes to the field as his hired man goes to the field. It is from such surroundings as these and from such a life as this, his own people, representatives of the best citizenship of Nebraska, have called him forth to carry their standard to victory and "to place above the state house door the word 'integrity.'"

Home of the Mother.
Across the little village of Nehawka, in plain sight of the home of George Sheldon, lives Mrs. Sheldon, the mother of the republican candidate. A pioneer settler of Cass county and Nebraska, a grand woman, the widow of a grand man, beautifully rounding out a life of usefulness, just such a mother one would expect George Sheldon to possess. She is delightful to meet, pleasant and entertaining. George will be elected," she inquired. "Well, maybe he will. I have been reading the democratic papers and they don't seem to think he will be. If it is for the best I hope he will be chosen." And then, her face still radiant with thoughts of her son, she talked of the old days.

"It was in 1857 we built the house where my son now lives," she said. "The timber from which the lumber was sawed had to be hauled for many miles. Mr. Sheldon had a sawmill and he sawed the lumber himself. Some people ask me if those old days were not days of trials and hardships. Ah, but we had such good times. There were only a few of us here then, but we were young and it seems to me now as I look back over the long years that the young people today don't have the good times we had."

Though 76 years old, Mrs. Sheldon is enjoying good health and takes an active interest in the affairs of her home and of the state, and only last summer made a visit back to Massachusetts to see her sister.

Story of His Boyhood.
It is of such timber as this George Sheldon is made. It was the daily companionship of such a woman as this that made him tender, and broad and sympathetic. "George is just like he used to be," said A. F. Strum, a lumber and hardware dealer of Nehawka. "He is generous and unselfish and always thinking of others. One time when we were going to school here together, his father had given him a knife. Some of the other boys were denied these little luxuries because of the financial condition of their parents. Of course many of the boys wanted that knife. One of the boys wanted to trade for it and George refused to trade, but said:

"Here, you can use it whenever you want to, so what's the use of trading for it?"

"The boy borrowed the knife, and when he brought it back George said, 'Go ahead and keep it. If I can't get another one I can do without.'"

"I am just telling you this story to show you that even as a child George Sheldon was generous and unselfish. A knife to a boy those days was a great possession, and mighty few boys would have given one away. When financial assistance is wanted for any charitable purpose in Nehawka, George Sheldon always responds. He is liberal and does his kind acts without any boast to announce the fact."

Home Life is Happy.
George Sheldon's home is a happy one and the beauty of the exterior is no more pleasing than is the beauty of the character of those who constitute it. The family consists of Mr. and Mrs. Sheldon, Master George Lawson Sheldon, Jr., age 2 years; Miss Mary Sheldon, age 7 years; Miss Julia Pollard Sheldon, age 3 years, and Master Anson Holington Sheldon, age 15 months. Mrs. Sheldon was formerly Miss Rose Higgins and she, like her husband, comes of a family noted for its hospitality. In her home she is queen, and to those who come there she is the ideal hostess. Her beautiful children to her are not cares, but joy; she is companion and mother in one; they love and respect, but do not fear her; she rules with kind words and love. George Lawson Sheldon is the image of his father, as is little Miss Julia and Anson, while Mary looks more like her mother. All have the dark eyes of the father and mother. No maid has been set apart as a nursery for them. The entire house, from cellar to garret—the entire yard is their play house and play

ground. Even the sacred precincts of their father's study is as free to them as the air they breathe. Incidentally the father happens to know that, and he knows these children are just like other children brought up in such pleasant surroundings and he has prepared himself.

One side of the little room set aside as his study and library, is covered with book cases reaching almost to the ceiling. It is on top of these book cases he has planned his precious papers, newspaper clippings and other reading matter he wants to look over at his leisure. A short distance west of the house are still portions of the old dam and the mill race, marking the location of the first saw mill ever erected in Nebraska. It was here, too, the elder Sheldon ground corn for the pioneer settlers and for the Indians. Only a few of the old rocks are left, while a little farther to the south, past the old barn, is the remnant of the old brick yard. In the rear of the Sheldon house to the north is a little cabin in a clump of trees occupied by colored people. Everything around the old house speaks of the past and it is the intention of George Sheldon to keep it that way. When the house was built there was not a tree in the yard. Every one there now was set out by the elder Sheldon and his faithful helpers.

Children at Play.
A staff photographer and a reporter for The Bee recently visited the Sheldon home. They found young Anson Sheldon busy with a coal chisel digging up the back yard and depositing the dirt in his little apron in very approved fashion. George Lawson Sheldon, Jr., called "Lawson," to distinguish him from the father he so much resembles, was busy with his fishing line in the Weeping Water, while Mary and Julia were helping their mother "straighten" up the house in preparation for the coming of the husband and father on the day following.

Across the yard Miss Isadore Sheldon, a niece of the republican candidate, the only child of Frank Sheldon, was feeding a squirrel from her hand. Running around among the trees were a half dozen or more squirrels as gentle as pets, for the children have been taught to love the little things and every day it is the pleasant duty of Miss Isadore to feed a cup of nuts to them. On a settee in the yard three or four of the town people were taking advantage of the shade trees for a little recreation, for the Sheldon yard is free to the people of Nehawka—the gate has long since been taken from the hinges and if it ever had a lock that lock has floated away in the Weeping Water long years ago.

Part of Nebraska History.
The house in which George Sheldon lives, as told by his mother, was built in 1857 by George Lawson Sheldon, sr., who played such a conspicuous part in the making of Nebraska. It is located on the original Sheldon homestead and is long and built one and a half stories high. It was intended to erect a two-story house, so Mrs. Sheldon said, but in those days there were no trees in that part of Nebraska, and for fear a two-story house would be more of an object for a storm than a lower house, the plans were changed. The doors are of walnut, as is

the other wood work on the inside. The furniture is old fashioned, and has done service for two generations, every piece hallowed by tender associations. The rooms are not large, but are conveniently located. There is no porch, the exterior being plain. Across the road to the south is the old barn, now almost out of commission, built at the same time. A short distance west of the house are still portions of the old dam and the mill race, marking the location of the first saw mill ever erected in Nebraska. It was here, too, the elder Sheldon ground corn for the pioneer settlers and for the Indians. Only a few of the old rocks are left, while a little farther to the south, past the old barn, is the remnant of the old brick yard. In the rear of the Sheldon house to the north is a little cabin in a clump of trees occupied by colored people. Everything around the old house speaks of the past and it is the intention of George Sheldon to keep it that way. When the house was built there was not a tree in the yard. Every one there now was set out by the elder Sheldon and his faithful helpers.

George Sheldon as a Farmer.
The management of the immense farm which these boys helped their father to get has been turned over to Vilas Sheldon, the youngest son. Up to within the last year, however, George Sheldon has been raising cattle and farming on an extensive scale, about two miles west of his home in town. Out there he was one of the men. As everyone knows who knows George Sheldon he is very deliberate in his actions. He starts off slowly, but he keeps at it. He had employed a man to stack hay and he himself was one of the pitchers.

"George is so slow, I will have a picnic," remarked the stacker to his fellow workers before going to the field.

"That night he had a different remark to make. 'I guess Sheldon can pitch to someone else tomorrow,' he said. 'The fellow pitches up a whole shock at once and he never quits.'"

And that's the way George Sheldon does everything—he keeps at it. It was while he was at work out on this farm that someone came and told him he had been nominated for the state senate.

"What's the matter," he said, "couldn't you get someone else?"

"Of course we could," said the courier, "but the convention wanted you. You have been living here all your life. You have been one of the people and you know what the people need."

Getting Along in Politics.
So Sheldon had to drop his plow, stop working for himself and start out to do service for a people who needed him.

Two years later he made a trip down into Mississippi, where he had bought some land. When he came back he found he had again been nominated for the senate. Again he tried to get out of it, but he couldn't. His people knew he was a do-liberate man and he never did anything until he was sure he knew what should be done. Again he had to quit working for himself to help his people. When he left the senate after the last session, he remarked he had to go home and work a little for himself. He again went to Mississippi to look after his investment there. Telegrams began to come to him. He was urged to announce his candidacy for governor. He refused. He was urged again and again. He still refused. The newspapers took up his name and spread it everywhere. The people got to know him as those people who live neighbor to him know him. When he did finally come home and tell the people he would make the race, the preliminary work was all done. It was just a question of how much his majority would be in the convention. But Sheldon didn't care for that. He had consented to make the race. He felt it due his neighbors that he make a fight. The first thing he did was to move out of the comfortable front room of his old-fashioned home into a little side room out of the way of everybody and he got to work. He wrote letters and he wrote speeches. He dug deep into the needs of the state and what relief a governor could give a people. He started out slow and deliberately, just like he did when he was pitching hay to that farm hand. But he kept at it. He finished in a whirlwind as strong and stronger than when he began.

Gives Up His Business.
But when he started out running for

governor George Sheldon gave up the management of his farm. This was turned over to Vilas Sheldon. George Sheldon found he could not be governor and devote himself to his private business at the same time. The republican party wanted him for governor, and again George Sheldon had to sacrifice his own business. At this time he has practically freed himself from the cares of the farm, though a neighbor remarked:

"He still has 300 or 400 head of cattle on his hands." In passing it might be remarked that some years ago the elder Sheldon retired from active management of the homestead and it fell to the lot of George Sheldon to take care of the cattle and attend to that branch of the farm. During these years he became an expert with the rope and could throw a steer with the best of them. But this fact would never have been known outside of those who worked with him had it not been for the chance remark of that 9-year-old son, who thinks that accomplishment of his father is his greatest. But Mr. Sheldon had given no exhibition with the rope and neither does he wear the regulation cowboy outfit.

Student of "Dry" Works.
George Sheldon has always been a student and his library, or den or what one might call it, is his favorite loafing place when at home, and since being relieved of active supervision of the farm he has spent much time there. It is full of the driest reading matter imaginable, a Congressional Record open on his desk being one of the first things to attract attention of those who enter. Railroad rate sheets, works on railroads and railroad reports take up much room on his book shelves, and it is from these he has secured information which is doing so much to detract the railroad kings of Nebraska politics. In such a home, with such a family around him, he has had an unusual opportunity to study and to fit himself to be the chief executive of this state.

It has been told frequently that the Sheldon home has been the depot at which people waited for the usually belated Missouri Pacific train which is scheduled to come through Nehawka. On cold nights it is said the front room of this hospitable home was used by citizen and stranger alike. This may be true and it may not be true, but for the last year and a half the story will not apply, for the reason that George Sheldon went down to the senate with a request from Nehawka that the railroad be required to keep the depot open at night. The depot is kept open, though every effort was made to prevent George Sheldon from getting what he was after.

Home Man.
George Sheldon is a "home man." At his home he appears the best. He would pre-

fer to be at home than to hold public office. People who know him know this is true and when they visit his home they can easily see why this would be true and why he would prefer to be at home. He is loved by his family and by his neighbors. He loves his family and is loved by each member of it. Mrs. Higgins, a most delightful woman, already past three-score years, his mother-in-law, said:

"I have read some things in the democratic papers about George, but he is loved at home. Even his mother-in-law has naught but good to say of him. When a woman loves her son-in-law, according to the funny papers, he surely is about perfect." And then this delightful woman, who is an important part of George Sheldon's home, talked at length in her dignified way of her temporary home with this splendid family, of the sweetness of his children, of the splendid character of his beloved mother.

Native of Nebraska.
Senator Sheldon is a native born Ne-braskan, and on May 21 was 36 years old. He was brought up on Nebraska soil and Nebraska was breathed into him every day. He attended the Nehawka school, graduated at the State university with the degree of bachelor of literature in 1882 and followed this up with a post-graduate course at Harvard. At the university he was a leader in debates and in university politics, not because he is now running for governor (and such things are usually credited to gubernatorial candidates), but because his old classmates tell about it and say it is true. He was captain of the university cadets and his company won the competitive drill in Omaha, for which he received a loving cup from the people of the big city. He was captain of Company B of the Third Nebraska volunteers during the Spanish-American war and was mustered out of service with his regiment in 1899. He was married in Roseville, Ill., in 1886.

In appearance Senator Sheldon reminds one of the great big trees in his yard, among which he loves to roam. He is built of iron, over six feet in height and broad shouldered in proportion. He is serious at all times, except when those children get hold of him, and, of course, that is different. He says he can't tell a funny story in his speeches, and he imagines for that reason his speeches have little effect, or he did have such an imagination until one evening recently in Lincoln he suggested such a thing. A bystander remarked:

"I hear the people and the newspapers commenting on that speech you made in which you showed the difference in freight rates charged the shippers of Nebraska and Iowa. I haven't heard of anyone telling about any funny stories any speaker is telling in Nebraska."

GEORGE L. SHELDON'S HOME, BUILT BY HIS FATHER HALF A CENTURY AGO

MR. SHELDON'S MOTHER AND HIS OLDEST SON

HOME OF THE ELDER MRS. SHELDON