

Wise words from Emma Lamb Barnes Baker

Mrs. Emma Lamb Barnes reported to a small group of women on the
Denver convention of the Queen Esther Circle on
Nov. 11, 1904, during which she said:
“Now, young ladies, do not refuse any work because
you do not know how. Learn how. Dig.”

Emma Lamb Barnes Baker

The 'Pansy' of Petoskey



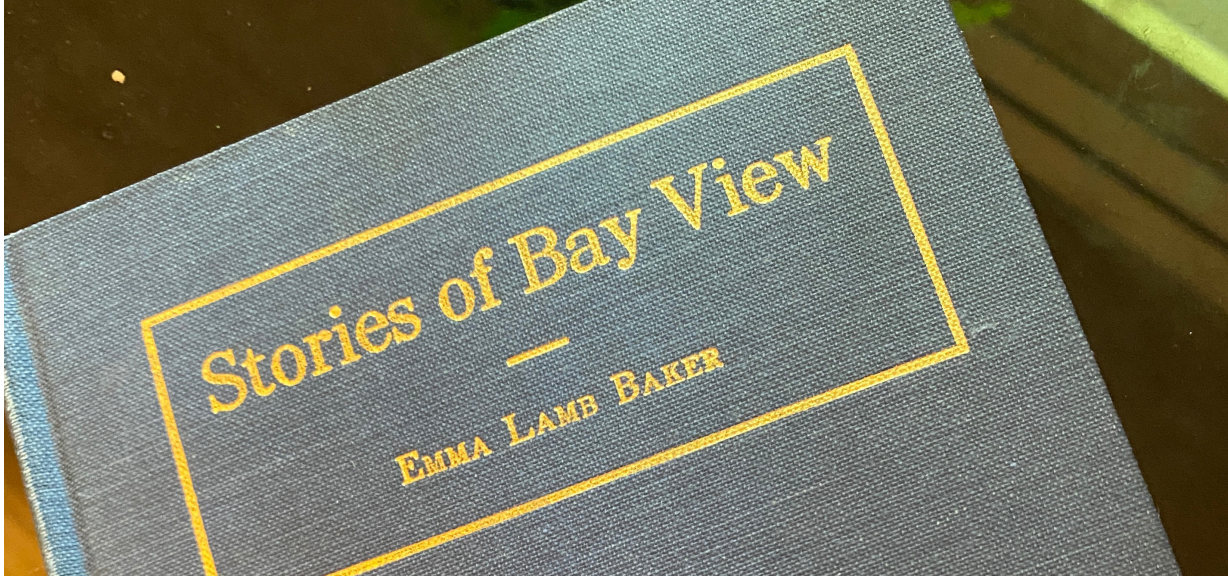
Photo from "Stories of Bay View" by Emma Lamb Baker

It didn't take long for 43-year-old Emma Lamb Barnes to roll up the sleeves of her dress and get involved in the goings-on in her new town of Petoskey and Bay View in 1893.

She married her first husband, Rev. George Barnes, in 1881 at the age of 32 in Danville, Michigan. This, sadly, was just one year after the death of her sister, Sarah Lamb, who was Rev. Barnes' first wife. Not much was found about the Lamb family other than a mention in George's obituary of Emma's father, Jonathan Lamb, as one of the pioneer educators of Michigan. With such a father, it is no wonder Emma would one day become principal of a grammar school in Mason, Michigan, before being plucked away to married life.

She presumably first came "Up North" with George to his last station in Charlevoix. After his retirement from the Methodist church there, the couple moved to Petoskey, where he had "built a home of which he took a great deal of pride."

Emma's civic involvement began in the church; perhaps as a preacher's wife, this



The cemetery is in possession of a copy of Emma Lamb Baker's book, copyrighted in 1925, which was given to Alick Rosenthal on July 28 of that year. The signed copy reads, "Best wishes from your friend the author, Emma Lamb Baker."

was inevitable. She not only belonged to several women's clubs, but was often voted president, appointed to many committees (including one of equal suffrage in 1915), and played hostess to countless meetings and parties. Throughout her life, she was a member of the Monday Study Club (later changed to the Assembly Study Club), the Busy Woman's Club, Emmet Federation of Women, Women's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Church, the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), and the Federation of Women's Clubs. At one time or another, all of these clubs, populated with prominent women of Petoskey, and amid subjects of "home in relations to sanitation, food, decoration, child culture, psychological studies, nature, English classics and the Bible," focused efforts on Local Option, women's suffrage and World War I efforts.

One may wonder what the Women's Christian Temperance Union and Local Option have to do with women's suffrage. That person would have to understand, in the time when women were fighting for their right to vote, that they were also called upon during the war to take the place of men in facto-

ries and fields, they were expected to raise money for war bonds, and were even trying to keep their families safe from the flu pandemic. As if this weren't enough, alcoholism was just being realized as a disease, and was becoming an epidemic linked to an increase in domestic violence and poverty. Women with husbands who would spend their entire paychecks on liquor had little to no recourse. It was in this environment that some of the female population were destined to stand and say, "Enough."

There is evidence to show Emma was involved in this, and a lot more. In 1894, she was named as a "prominent worker" at a gathering of the WCTU in Bay View's Evelyn Hall. The newspaper describes the patriotic decor including a banner that read "Woman's Cause is Humanity's Cause." That same year, she was elected president of the Monday Club. She presented a petition representing the WCTU, asking for the passage of an ordinance suppressing the saloons. In May of that year, the Petoskey branch of the WCTU sent Emma to its state convention in Ann Arbor. She attended again as a representative of the women of Petoskey in 1911.

She was also busy leading the Monday Club (which morphed, along with the Emerson Club, in 1906 into the Assembly Study Club), and, according to the *Petoskey Record* on July 4, 1896, proved “witty and wise as toastmaster during the club’s third annual meeting” in which one of the speakers spoke on the “Higher Education of Women.”

In January of 1913, Emma spoke at a WCTU meeting. From the *Petoskey Evening News*: “In her usual spicy manner, Mrs. Barnes urged us to our best endeavors to keep Emmet County dry. ‘Those voters who stand with us in this issue must see to it that they do their whole duty at the ballot box. We must be ready to give our reasons for our position. The story being circulated through the county by the liquor man, claiming that they are satisfied with local option and it is the dries who are having the question resubmitted is utterly false. Go and read the list of signers on that petition and be convinced.’”

In March, Emma wrote to prospective members of the Busy Woman’s Club, saying the group “wishes to meet all the members of the class” and inviting women to “come and bring one.” On the same page, an ad reads, “Every woman in Petoskey is urged to attend the meeting in the Methodist church, Sunday afternoon at 3 in the interest of local option.”

At this time in Michigan, women were reeling from a failed suffrage vote from the spring election. Many suspected voter fraud and opposition of suffrage by liquor lobbyists, as the amendment lost by just 760 votes (247,375 yes; 248,135 no). Perhaps this failure only fueled the fire for the women of Petoskey. On March 29, 1913, Mrs. Hale, one of the “best authorities” on women suffrage spoke at the Baptist church. From the *Petoskey Eve-*

ning News: “Anticipations are that the women suffrage meeting Monday night in the Baptist church will be one of the most enthusiastic ever seen in the city. ... The fact that she (Mrs. Hale) will be in Petoskey is a source of much congratulation among the women suffrage workers of the community.”

In April, Emma lost her husband, George, who had been suffering from jaundice for the past three months. That October, Emma resumed her presidential duties with the Assembly Study Club, and in January of 1915, it seems her spirits were restored well enough to write a humorous editorial about the trouble with so many hats in church. Also in January, at a meeting of the Women’s Federated Clubs, Emma was appointed to the Equal Suffrage committee.

By 1916, another talent of Emma’s (besides leading, teaching, and writing) became evident in the community. She was the heroine of the day at a Woman’s Home Missionary Methodist meeting in which the speaker unexpectedly took ill. From the *Petoskey Evening News*, Jan. 24, 1916, “The pastor explained the unexpected change of speakers and announced that Petoskey had a deaconess, pastoreess and authoress who could out-deacon any of the deaconesses. He then introduced the best known and honored woman of Petoskey Methodism, Mrs. Emma Lamb Barnes. From first to last Mrs. Barnes kept her audience in the best of humor. Her sparkling wit like gleams of chain lighting made unforgettable the great outstanding features of missionary work in America.”

In February 1916, Emma shared her thoughts in a story for a class on writing for the press, called “Meditations of a Suffragist on the Arcadia and Betsy River Railway.”

As chair of the 16th Annual Woman's Home Missionary Society Convention, Emma further proved her impeccable knack for speech in May. The *Petoskey Evening News* reported: "After having greeted delegates with cheery remarks, she said 'It is much easier to drive a spanking fine team over these lovely auto roads than to drive a small pony and cart, but we are very thankful for the pony.' She said 'Ability and opportunity constitute a call to service and all have those,' and, as she looked over the audience, 'These are they who have heard the cry of the Lord.'"

The paper reported on more of Emma's talks in that year: a patriotic speech for Flag Day, a dry rally in Pellston (no doubt in preparation for the upcoming November vote on prohibition), and as an authority on "love, courtship and marriage" to 56 young female Methodist missionaries.

Somehow between all those speeches and meetings, Emma found love again in Vestal A. Baker, whom she married on Valentine's Day, 1917, a Wednesday at 5:30 p.m. in her home on Grove Street. The color scheme was red and white, of course, with red heart place cards and white carnations on the table set for a wedding supper with immediate relatives and a few close friends. From the news on their nuptials in the *Petoskey Evening News*, "The bride is one of the best-known church and club workers of the city. She is an author, lecturer, temperance worker; for twenty years has been president of the Women's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Church and has long been a teacher and worker in the Sunday school and WCTU."

Emma (now Baker), a newlywed at 68, jumped back to her efforts at empowering women. In July and September of 1917, she

Why a pansy?

In February of 1893, *The Petoskey Record* announced a regular meeting of the Petoskey WCTU, which would be held in the hall over Stark's store. "Our pansy, Mrs. G.S. Barnes, will give an interesting original temperance story."

In this case, the paper meant, "pansy" as a compliment. The term comes from the French word for thinking, "pensée." It wasn't until after Emma's time that the term became derogatory and used to describe men who think too much.

It is also interesting to note that the Barnes' cottage on Maple Street in Bay View is called "Hearts Ease" which is a smaller variety of pansy.

was sent to several conventions to represent Petoskey: Petoskey Federation of Women's Clubs, the WCTU, as a Sunday School teacher delegate to Detroit, and as a Methodist missionary.

After one such trip to Camp Grayling to see what could be done to help "our boys," she found that they would like items to read, such as newspapers, books and magazines; she brought that news home. She wrote, "The musical call of the bugles was still sounding as we rode away. The lake lay like a mirror in its frame of green hills. Looking back over the encampment to impress the



beautiful picture forever on my mind, I said, ‘I am glad our boys have such a pleasant place to stay for a while before they leave Michigan.’”

In August, Emma spoke up for the women of Bay View at an association meeting during a discussion on the construction of a “cafeteria and cereal food room to furnish, at low-cost, eatables for persons of small means who will come to Bay View.” When it was suggested the association involve the domestic science department, “Mrs. Barnes Baker said, ‘Let’s get a dock and some sidewalk before we go into the business of housekeeping, and if we do enter this let’s put some women on the board. What would we do if we lost our light housekeepers?’”

Meanwhile, at the state level, Michigan Gov-

ernor Albert Sleeper signed the bill in May of 1917 to place a referendum to allow women to vote in presidential elections. And so, in 1918, the campaign for suffrage really ramped up. In March, Emma hosted a meeting of Division 1 of the Methodist church: “A good attendance of the ladies of this section is greatly desired.” In May, the National Women’s Suffrage Association organized a local chapter at the Petoskey High School. Emma was not voted into office for this, but, as a notable Petoskey woman, she was very likely there.

On Sept. 17, 1918, the following letter was published in the *Petoskey Evening News*. One doesn’t know for sure which of the signees penned it, but, knowing what one now knows about Emma, chances are good it was her.

“LETTER TO EDITOR,

The EVENING NEWS:

Suffrage is this year a war issue, else women would feel that they could not devote time to it, momentous though the question is. They did not ask that it be submitted, but it has come to be a vital war work.

We are sending a million and a half men to fight for democracy. Who can best represent them at the ballot box? Who can better do it than the mothers, wives, sisters and sweethearts of those who have gone abroad? We all know there are many naturalized citizens who are disloyal. There are enemy aliens who have the ballot. They are certain to oppose women suffrage.

There are those who say women do not want the ballot. To meet this fallacy women are being asked to sign a petition saying they wish it, or are willing other women shall have it. The work must be done this week. It is the first step in our campaign. Those who have it in charge ask for volunteers in circulating the petitions. They are Mrs. Emma L. Baker, county chairman; Mrs. Jessie Groesenbaugh, city chairman, Mrs. DH Hinkley, treasurer; Mrs. Leon Chichester, secretary.

The said petition was successful according to an October 12 article in the *Petoskey Evening News*: “Women of Emmet County are much interested in the coming suffrage vote. 1,400 women of Petoskey and the county have signed a petition asking the voters of the county to vote in favor of the suffrage amendment, Nov. 5. The petition aroused interest at the fair this week where it was

A Memorable Day

by Emma Lamb Baker

(published March 9, 1918, in the
Petoskey Evening News)

“Ruskin lamented that few people take thought of the wonders and beauties of the sky.

“However dreary our surroundings, the sky is above us— rose-tinted dawn; glorious sunsets, skies of pearly grey, or sunny blue in which float ever-changing clouds — all are ours if we have eyes to see.

“The skies of Thursday, March 7, cannot be soon forgotten by those who saw their beauty.

“In the night a fleecy snow had turned the earth to a fairyland; every tree, and bush and twig ‘wore ermine fit for an earl,’ rose-colored clouds flung upward fold on fold against a sky of palest gold in which were fading out a brilliant star and crescent moon. We wondered if heaven could be more beautiful.

“Sunset filled the west with white peaks, rose-tinted, that turned to burnished gold above a blazing, red sun.

“The evening skies staged a scene of such surpassing wonder and beauty that all the waking world looked and marveled, many asking, ‘Is not this a sign of world-victory for our righteous cause?’”

on exhibition at the suffrage booth." On, Nov. 5, 1918, even with a low voter turnout because of the flu, the men of Emmet County approved women's suffrage: 1,105 yes to 599 no.

Emma may have been done circulating petitions and attending meetings on obtaining suffrage, but she was not done hosting parties, giving talks, and traveling to conventions. She remained involved in church and club activities until ill health prevented her from doing so in her old age.

At an open meeting of the Federation of Women's Clubs, Emma addressed the audience in "her usual pleasing manner" on the duties of women as citizens and voters and suggested that time should be given on this subject at each meeting of the individual women's clubs. She made good on her own suggestion during her Assembly Study Club in 1919 with an advertised focus of a brochure written by Judson Grenell: "What Michigan Women Should Know About Voting."

Emma said, "It is excellent, — so clear and easy that any wayfaring woman who studies it need not err in voting. In preparation read, 'To Our Imperial Voteresses,' in the *Saturday Evening Post* of Sept. 27."

In addition to her club involvement, Emma continued writing and publishing poetry and was honored as Poet Laureate of the Methodist Church in 1927, two years before she died at age 80. From the article in the *Petoskey Evening News*: "Mrs. Baker has pleased many people for years, and has given many notable productions in prose and poetry which have been helpful to this northern region. No one can measure the amount of good her publications have done this region ..."

CHURCH WORKER IS CALLED HOME

**MRS. EMMA L. BAKER DIES
LAST NIGHT FOLLOWING
LONG SICKNESS**

**Was One of Best Known Leaders
in Church and Social Affairs
in City and Region**

Mrs. Emma L. Baker, widow of the late V. A. Baker, died last night at her home on Grove street, following an illness of many months. During the last few weeks her condition had rapidly grown worse and she had been in critical condition for the last several days. Mrs. Baker was one of the best known church and club leaders among the older residents of the city and northern Michigan and was widely known for her efforts for local option and prohibition. For years she was the leader of the Assembly Study club and its Bible instructor.

Mrs. Baker had resided here for more than forty years. In summer she usually occupied her Bay View cottage. While she had not been active during late years, because of ill health, she had maintained her interest in the various forward movements, church, clubs and civic affairs. As her health gradually failed she gave up, one by one, her many positions of leadership in the clubs and church groups of the city.

Mrs. Baker was born July 8, 1849, at Waterloo, Washtenaw county, Michigan. She was married to Rev. George S. Barnes, January 12, 1881. Mr. Barnes died April 24, 1913. On February 14, 1917, she was married to V. A. Baker, who passed away a year ago last May.

She leaves no near relatives excepting a nephew, Fred Randolph, of Munith, and two nieces, Mrs. George Crosby, of Detroit, and Mrs. Flora Reeves, of Munith, Michigan, who are expected here for the funeral.