

The Daughter of a **BLACKSMITH**

By Floe Frantz

The date was 1893; the place was Scott, a little village in Paulding County, Ohio; the occasion, the birth of identical twins, daughters of Charles Weslie Weaver, a blacksmith. The twins were named Chloe and Floe. No middle names were given. Until some mark of identification appeared, a blue ribbon was tied on Chloe's left wrist, and a pink one on Floe's.

The years passed and at the age of seven years I, one of the twins, became aware I was the daughter of a blacksmith. Sister (the name we used for each other) and I were at play in the yard when Papa appeared in the blacksmith shop door and called, "Floe come here. I need you a few minutes."

Reluctantly I went. I had been in that shop many times before, but never had I looked at it with awe; I felt so small. What could I possibly do to help?

There was the big forge with its blazing fire, a long bench with a row of hammers ranging from a big sledge to a tack hammer, a vice near one end and a cabinet with many sized drawers at the other. The anvil, sitting on a large section of a big log, hung full of pinchers or tongs of all sizes. The wooden tub, made from a half barrel, stood full of water at the right of the anvil.

But there was Papa! When he said, "Come pump this bellows for me," I felt bigger.

It was not hard pumping the handle up and down and it was interesting to watch the fire in the forge glow brighter and bigger when the air blew on it from beneath the grate built in the forge. Soon Papa took a horse-

shoe from the fire, and when he hit that red hot iron with his hammer, the sparks flew. One hit my bare leg. How I jumped and hollered, "ouch". But the spark was small, fell off quickly and left only a tiny red spot. This was my initiation into being a blacksmith's helper.

My help was needed many times, especially in the summertime when I used the big fly brush to chase the flies off the horses so they would not switch their tails and hit Papa in the face with stinging blows while he was tacking shoes on their hoofs.

Unfortunately, I never lent a helping hand in the blacksmith shop with joy. I never got over the feeling of being very small among all those iron tools, the blazing fire and the big farm horses. There was always a bit of fear in my heart that I might get burned by a spark, step on something that would hurt my bare feet, or have an ill-tempered horse nip at me. How glad I was when the job was done and I was free to leave.

I didn't know it at the time, but this was one of the most progressive times of my young life — rubber tires appeared on buggies, spring wagons and carriages and even as shoes on horses. Farm machinery ran with gas engines, and took the place of horses. Papa's work was needed less and less.

But Papa never gave up his shop. In the early 1920's when he came to live with me and my family in the village of Springhills, Ohio, he built a leanto shed on the west end of our big barn and set up his shop.

Now, at the age of 92 years, as I look back on his life, I realize that Papa was a talented man. He



My twin sister, Chloe, and me when we were about five years old.

loved music and played the violin beautifully. He was a lover and respecter of his country, and proved it by never neglecting to vote on election day. He could disassemble a clock, clean and oil it, then put it back together, and it ran like new. He loved flowers and tended them with loving care. He was a mother as well as a father; he set up house-keeping and raised Sister and me from age six until we were married.

I still cherish these words of his, which he spoke to me during his last illness, "Floe, you have always been so good to me." He lived to be 78 years old.