

NATHAN MEEKER LOOKS FOR A HOME

Do you know how the town of Greeley got started? There are many things about Greeley that will surprise you. So let's learn about the town of Greeley!

First, you must meet the man who started Greeley. His name was Nathan Cook Meeker. He was born on July 12, 1817 in Ohio. If he were alive today, he would be more than 100 years old!

Nathan was a very smart boy and could read and write when he was five years old. When he was twelve years old, he taught his brothers to read and write. For fun, Nathan liked to read newspapers and write stories and poetry.

When he was 17 years old, Nathan left home. He followed the Ohio River from Cleveland, Ohio to Cairo, Illinois. That was a long walk of 400 miles! Cairo then and now is a busy town where two rivers ---the Ohio and the Mississippi---meet. Nathan was amazed to see so many big river boats. The boats carried people, animals, and freight of every kind. Nathan was excited because he was going on a river boat to the big city of New Orleans. Nathan knew rivers were very important for towns and people.

When he got to New Orleans, he didn't have any money, so he had to find a job. He got a job with a newspaper but didn't work there very long.

Nathan lived in many states (Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, Pennsylvania, New York, and New Jersey) from 1835 - 1843.

He tried many different jobs when he was a young man. He worked for newspapers and was a teacher and a traveling salesman. He was shy and didn't have many friends.

Books were his friends. He read books for fun and to find facts about things which interested him. He wrote his own books and poetry, but never became a famous writer.

In 1843, Nathan was a teacher in a one-room school in New Jersey. His lungs hurt, and he was very sick and weak. He quit teaching, and went back to see his family in Ohio. Here he met a teacher, Arvilla Delight Smith. Nathan liked Arvilla very much and wrote her long letters. In the letters he told her about himself and what he liked and didn't like. He asked Arvilla to marry him. Arvilla also liked Nathan and said, "YES. " They got married in Euclid, Ohio on April 8, 1844. They lived with Nathan's parents for awhile.

That summer, Nathan and Arvilla thought about where they wanted to live. Nathan read about the beautiful Rocky Mountains in the West. He read about new towns in the East where families lived together in one large house, cooked in one big kitchen, and ate in one big dining room. Nobody had separate houses, farms, or land. The town and the land for farming belonged to everybody. These places, where everyone lived together,

cooperated, and worked hard were called "communes. " If everybody followed the rules, people would never fight and always be happy, healthy, safe, and never hungry. A place this perfect is called a utopia.

Nathan and Arvilla didn't have much money so they couldn't go to the Rocky Mountains and start a home. In September, 1844, they decided to move to a utopian town in Ohio called the Trumbull Phalanx. There were 93 families here. A small river, Eagle Creek, ran through the middle of the town. Factories in the town made wooden bowls, wagons, shoes, and other things. There was a flour mill, a store, and a big school.

In the new town, Arvilla taught kindergarten. Nathan was the librarian, teacher, secretary, and poet.

The farm land was rich and good. The men were farmers, but the Trumbull Phalanx was not a healthy place. There were lots of trees, mosquitoes, and unsafe drinking water. Men and women, boys, girls, and babies got sick with malaria or ague.

The sick men could not work, and the lazy men would not work. Without workers, there were no crops planted, no food to eat, and no money to keep the town and people going.

Everybody was sad and mad! They didn't want to cooperate or communicate. In a perfect town, everyone must do his fair share.

Arvilla and Nathan stayed here for three years. Their oldest boy, Ralph, was born on January 26, 1845. When he was 1^{1/2} , Ralph fell into a big tub of hot, soapy laundry water. He was badly burned. On August 15, 1847, Arvilla had another baby, George Columbus. Arvilla and the new baby were very sick. People were leaving the Trumbull Phalanx. Nathan and Arvilla left and went back to Euclid. Poor baby George. He was always so weak and sick. His lungs were bad, and he couldn't breathe very well.

In Euclid, Arvilla and Nathan opened a store. Arvilla worked in the store, and Nathan filled his wagon with store goods which he sold to people who lived in the country.

In 1849, Arvilla and Nathan moved to another town in Ohio and started another store. This town had good water and icy caves where Nathan kept the butter, milk, cream, eggs. and meat which he sold in the store.

On July 5, Arvilla had another baby--Rozone. Nathan was worried about the fever and ague which made his family sick, so he moved to a new town, Hiram Center, Ohio in 1850. He didn't want the new baby to be sick.

One day in April, 1852, Arvilla went to town and left Nathan to watch Rozone. Nathan tried to do two things at a time ---- read about the Rocky

Mountains and watch Rozene. But on this day Rozene was very curious and went outside and crawled up on the edge of the well. She slipped and fell in, head first.

The water was icy cold and she screamed, and screamed, and screamed. Finally, Nathan stopped reading and realized Rozene was gone. Now he heard a child screaming! He ran outside and pulled Rozene out of the well. Her skin was blue and cold. She was barely breathing. There was a big bump on her head. Nathan was so sorry, and felt so badly. He loved his baby girl and was very worried. What would Arvilla say? Would Rozene die? How could he save her?

Just then, Arvilla came home and saw what had happened. She grabbed Rozene, pulled off her wet clothes, and jumped into bed with her. Arvilla told Nathan to get many blankets to put over her and the baby. For almost a day, Arvilla stayed in bed with Rozene, who was almost dead. The blankets helped Rozene get warm. Her skin turned pink again. Water came out of her lungs. She started to breathe. It was lucky Rozene lived.

Arvilla and Nathan had two more babies. Mary was born in 1854, and Josephine in 1857.

Life was hard in America in 1857. People bought things on credit from Nathan's store, but because of bad times they didn't have money to pay Nathan. Nathan owed people money for his store merchandise. Nobody

could get paid, and to make things worse, many people were sick or dying from a disease called cholera. So once again, Nathan decided to look for a new home.

The Meekers moved to Dongola, Illinois. This was near Cairo, where Nathan rode on a river boat many years before . Here, Nathan bought land and raised fruit trees and strawberries. He opened another store. Arvilla, George, and Ralph worked in the store. Everybody also worked on the farm to help Nathan pay his bills from the old store in Ohio.

In 1861, a terrible war broke out in America. Mr. Meeker got a job writing about the war and the battles. He left his family at Dongola to keep the farm and store running while he became a newspaper reporter. His stories about the Civil War were printed in *The New York Tribune*. This was a famous newspaper started by Horace Greeley in New York City in 1841. Many people read Nathan's stories and liked them. The Civil War ended in 1865.

Nathan liked living on a farm, but he was a better writer than a farmer. Reading and writing were two of his favorite things. He wished someone would pay him to write stories. That would make him and everyone very happy.

In 1866, Mr. Greeley asked Mr. Meeker if he wanted a job working at his newspaper, *The New York Tribune*. Mr. Greeley wanted Nathan to be

the agricultural editor, and write stories about farming. Nathan liked this idea. He sold his farm in Illinois and in 1867 moved his family to New York City.

Arvilla and Nathan had a nice home in the city. Mr. Meeker traveled all over the United States to see how people farmed. He wrote lots of stories or the newspaper about the farmers he met and the crops they raised. Where ever he went he kept looking for the best place for a new home for his family.

There were many rich people with fancy clothes in New York City. The streets were crowded and dirty. There were many poor and sick people, too. Nathan did not like living in the city. He wanted a nice home in a safe place with a beautiful view, fresh, pure air, and clean water. He wanted his family to be happy and healthy. George had weak lungs and a disease called, "consumption." Rozene was not well. Many times Nathan closed his eyes and dreamed of a home in the beautiful Rocky Mountains. Would his dream ever come true? Was there a utopia somewhere in the West?

Many things are about to happen to the Meekers. If you think they are going to move again, you might be right!