

## THE LIFE OF HESTER LORENZ FRENCH

This tells about the life of Hester Lorenz French, her background, the people who shaped and influenced her life, and her spiritual journey through life. She knew what it was like to have plenty, to have little, and experienced tragedies and triumphs. Through it all, she trusted in the Lord and studied her Bible from which came many of the songs she composed.



*John Lorenz*

The GRANDFATHER OF HESTER LORENZ FRENCH, John Lorenz, came from Saxony, Germany in 1846 at the age of 16 in company with his older brother Peter and his older sister Johanna Lorenz, who married the captain of the ship and returned to Europe.

John Lorenz had been too young to come over with the several hundred Saxons who immigrated to America and settled in East Perry County, Missouri. He and his brother fully intended to settle in there among their countrymen, but as he explored his adopted land, he fell in love with the Cedar Fork Valley with its many springs and homesteaded 160 acres at the age of 21.



*Sophia Voelker*

John Lorenz met Sophia Voelker at the Perryville Lutheran Church. They were married and moved into their first home that John built on the banks of a large spring.

John Lorenz served in the Northern army during the Civil War, and Sophia managed affairs at home during his absence. Once she was stalked by wolves as she was locking up the sheep late, but the bravery of the family dogs enabled her to reach the safety of house and family. John and Sophia Lorenz had 8 children. Two died in infancy. The second son, Charles, died of typhoid fever at the age of 22, shortly before his intended wedding.

The Cedar Fork property was willed to the youngest son John Peter Lorenz who was the father of Hester Lorenz French. John Peter Lorenz met and married Carrie Emma Babcock, daughter of Frances and Henry Babcock, on January 12, 1898.

*Mr. and Mrs. Henry Babcock  
invite you to be present  
at the marriage of their daughter  
Carrie E.  
to  
John P. Lorenz,  
Wednesday evening, January twelfth,  
eighteen hundred and ninety-eight,  
at six o'clock,  
Yount, Missouri.*

*At Home  
St. Mary's, Missouri.*



*Wedding Invitation and Picture of John and Carrie Lorenz*



*John Peter Lorenz*

John Peter Lorenz (father of Hester) lived on the Cedar Fork, Missouri property all his life and kept the property intact. In an era when many people kept fancy poultry as a hobby as well as profit, John P. Lorenz's "Spring Valley Farm" became widely known in the poultry world. He exhibited in many shows including those of New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, and St. Louis, and many others, receiving hundreds of blue ribbons.

Orders for Black Langshan chickens, White Peking ducks, Emblen Black Geese, and Mammoth Bronze turkeys (and their eggs) were received from all over the U.S. as well as foreign countries, including Africa, South America, China, Cuba, Philippines, and Canada. Turkey and geese eggs were \$1.00 each.

To Avoid Mistakes Write  
Your Order On The Back  
of This Letter

**LORENZ & COMPANY**  
**Spring Valley Farm**

Write for Catalogue and  
Price List

**DEALERS IN MERCHANDISE AND BREEDERS OF GIANT BRONZE TURKEYS  
TRAPNESTED BLACK LANGSHANS AND SINGLE COMB RHODE  
ISLAND RED CHICKENS 200 TO 275 EGG STRAIN**

PERRYVILLE, MO., \_\_\_\_\_ 19\_\_

*Letterhead Lorenz and Co.*



*Carrie Emma Babcock*

Carrie Emma Babcock (mother of Hester) working tirelessly and faithfully, helped establish a successful Sunday school at Cedar Fork Church. Each week, rain or shine, she was at Sunday school with her family, playing the organ, teaching the youth class, and planning programs (for which she usually composed all the poetry). Her many kind deeds were known throughout the community.

Carrie Lorenz came from Fabius, New York, at age 3 with her parents, Henry and Frances Babcock. Henry was a farmer and Frances was a school teacher. Frances's father, Alexander Shankland, had come to Missouri while a Civil War soldier and subsequently settled near Yount, Missouri. A widower, Alexander wrote to his daughter and son-in-law and told them he would give them the farm if they would come to Missouri and care for him until he died.



*Henry and Frances Babcock*

During the summer of 1875, Henry, Frances, and daughter Carrie leisurely made the trip by covered wagon drawn by two sturdy oxen with their milk cow tied behind the wagon. It was a very happy journey, one that Carrie forever cherished in memory. After arriving in Missouri, Frances soon obtained a school. She taught in various Perry County schools and moved to Cedar Fork at retirement age, where she lived until her death.

John and Carrie began a busy life of farming, running their poultry business, and raising a family. Hester was one of four children: Dorcas, Hester, Byron and Sylvia. Hester was the second child, born December 11, 1900.



*John, Hester, Dorcas, Byron, Sylvia, and Carrie*



*Sylvia, Byron, Hester, and Dorcas*



*The childhood home of Hester*

Hester had a happy childhood and, at a young age, had a deep Love for Jesus, feeling His Presence in her life.



*Hester, age 8*



*Hester, age 12*

Hester was an excellent student. She was once asked about evolution on a test and her answer was "THE BOOK SAYS ...BUT I DON'T BELIEVE IT." She believed the Bible that says "GOD CREATED THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH". Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:26 "AND GOD SAID LET US MAKE MAN IN OUR IMAGE, AFTER OUR LIKENESS."

**Letters from Hester:**

*Dear Sis:*

*I am recovering from the effects of a picnic given by the Camp Fire Girls of Cedar Fork. We gave it Saturday night and had a real nice time. There were about 50 to 75 people there.*

*Had soda water, ice cream, peanuts, and popcorn and cleared the enormous sum of \$4.42. An incident of this huge affair was the spilling of the money twice by Sylvia in the midst of tubs of soda, ice-cream, etc...*

*Love, Hester*

Hester was sent to Farmington, Missouri (about 30 miles from Cedar Fork) to attend high school, which she finished in just 3 years.

Some excerpts from letters:

*Oct. 25, 1916*

*Dear Mamma:*

*Received your letter and got my shoes today. I like them fine and they just fit...*

*I went to the basketball game Sat. night and it was fine. Fredericktown was playing against Farmington and got beat 28 to 8...*

*The other evening I was sitting at my desk studying away and I saw Mr. John's coming toward me. I couldn't imagine what terrible thing he had to say but he merely wanted to tell me I could practice on the high school piano after four o'clock as long as I wanted to free of charge. I don't know how he knew I wanted to practice. Did you write to him?*

*I haven't practiced there yet because I had already rented Mrs. Shaw's piano. I think I will quit practicing on it though and practice on the high school piano. I like Mrs. Forsyth fine. She makes me raise my fingers up so high they nearly break off... Will and Johnnie came up and stayed a few minutes a while ago. How is every body getting along down there? I'm getting tired of staying up here all the time. Will has been telling me all about the doings down here.*

*Bye, Bye*

*Hester*

Excerpts of letters from Hester's mother Carrie:

*"Pattern your life after Jesus – not after me"*

*Always conduct yourself so as to command the respect of all. Make friends with those of good character that will last you through life like mine have."*

*"Always go to school neat and clean. Change your dress just as soon as you get home and wear an old one."*



*Hester, age 16*

Letter from Hester:

*September 29, 1917*

*Dear Sis:*

*How are you and all the rest? Did Mamma get my letters? The high school is having a carnival and is displaying all kinds of fruit and vegetables and corn and things.*

*The soldier boys left last week and all the schools had a great parade in their honor. We marched four together down around thru town. I think everybody thought that Ralph was the captain for he towered about a foot higher than anyone else.*

*In regard to the dress goods, tell mamma that although that red piece is very pretty, I don't think that is exactly what I want. I think I would rather have a dark blue or dark green and as to the goods you folks can use your own judgment but I think cotton mixed serge will be all right. It will look good and also wear well. The cotton makes it stronger. But, of course, I don't know what you will be able to get. You and mamma can make it anyway you want to so long as it is pretty. However, I am sending three pictures as suggestions.*

*I like agriculture fine. We do all sorts of interesting things and take trips out to the country. We went to Mr. Chandler's Monday to determine the percent stand of corn and he certainly has fine corn. We had a fine time while there. We went in cars from the high school. Mrs. Chandler was canning tomatoes. They have a canner outside and can the tomatoes in tin cans...*

*I belong to a group up here and we all meet at someone's house every two weeks. We met at Velma's last Tuesday and four members had a very interesting debate. Next time we are going to start sewing for a missionary box to send to poor kids in St. Louis or elsewhere. We all give five cents a month to buy the stuff to make garments out of.*

*Love to all,  
Your Sis, Hester*

In 1918 Hester received word from her mother Carrie that their home had burned down. They were able to save a few contents but the house was a total loss.

Hester finished high school in Farmington and attended Missouri State Teachers College at Cape Girardeau, Missouri to obtain her teaching credentials.



*Hester Marceline Lorenz, age 18*

Excerpts of letter from Hester to her sister:

*Dear Sis:*

*Will now answer your letter and tell you all the news from Cedar Fork...*

*I really must tell you about my experience with the Baudendistle School directors. In order to make a fitting and proper impression on the directors I dressed up in a white waist and black skirt with my hair pulled back. Mamma and I embarked with many secret misgivings on my part. As we neared the residence of Mr. Prince Hudson I put on my most intelligent look and sat up very properly until my back was beginning to hurt from sitting up so straight. I earnestly endeavored to look old and experienced. Yesterday they sent word that they had decided to give me the school. I think I earned it, don't you?*

*From Hester*



*Floyd Edward French*

Hester was engaged to be married to Floyd French whom she had known many years. He had gone off to serve in World War I.

One day she received word that Floyd had lost his left leg and was recovering from the amputation and the flu at Fort Riley, Kansas, where he spent many months. In one letter he wrote that he was sleeping on the porch under 5 blankets.

Floyd had a strong work ethic and a resilient nature and went on to many accomplishments including building a house during the depression using almost exclusively materials found on the land. He made cedar shakes for the roof and all the doors.

During their engagement, Hester continued teaching school, and Floyd worked on the family farm. There were always social gatherings to look forward to especially on Sundays following church. They were married on June 6, 1921 when Hester was 20 years old.



*Hester and Floyd,  
December 1919*

Mr. and Mrs. John B. Lorenz

request the honor of your presence  
at the marriage of their daughter

Hester Marceline

to

Floyd Edward French

on the morning of Sunday, the fifth of June

nineteen hundred twenty one

at half past ten o'clock

Ceremony at

Cedar Fork

Church



Wedding picture of Floyd and Hester French

June 5, 1921

From Hester's mother Carrie:

*"Now dear, while your life is so full and fair before you, you must give back to the world as well as take from it. By this I do not mean that you should necessarily give money, but you can give a kind word and a cheery smile which are worth more than money to those around you. Nearly everyone is a burden bearer and things like these help so much. Then by giving others happiness you will add to your own happiness. By bearing Christian fruit, we can prove ourselves to be Christ's disciples."*

On October 8, 1923, the sad news came that Hester's mother Carrie was killed in a car accident in St. Louis. She was 50 years old.

Hester's mother, Carrie, had been a stable influence on her family providing loving, spiritual, and moral guidance. She was deeply missed but her legacy lived on.

The following year in July 1924 Hester and Floyd experienced the heartbreaking death of their infant son Melvin who died due to a medical error.

Hester and Floyd continued on with their lives moving from Perryville to Cedar Fork to the home Floyd built using materials that were on the land. Their lives consisted of hard work, love, humor, and always dealing with a crisis including the time the two year old twins set fire to the house while playing with matches. It was quickly contained, and very little loss was suffered.

The depression was on and there was no market for the crops and wheat they raised so what they couldn't use for themselves by canning and preserving was given away. They learned to



be very self-sufficient. Over the years 8 children were born (Dorothy, Eldon, Norvin, Iris, Aletha, Alvada, Daisy and Floyd, Jr.) and they considered each one to be a blessing.



Family Picture, 1939

In the fall of 1941, Floyd, Hester and family moved to Fredericktown, Mo. (about 25 miles from Cedar Fork). Floyd built a 5 bedroom home with room for the children to play, a garden, and an orchard.

The neighborhood children always knew they were welcome and often Hester would tell Bible stories and they listened intently. There were many “parties” with lots of running games, homemade ice cream and cookies, and the house would be filled with music (good and bad.)

Hester made clothes, gave piano lessons, taught Sunday school, and played the piano for church services. She always had time for her children, however, and would stop whatever she was doing to help with homework or whatever the need was.

Advice from Hester: *“ Fix your eyes on worthwhile goals and try to attain them even though the road is hard and it seems that you cannot. When you have accomplished something you will have new strength and determination to accomplish something else.”*



Family Picture, 1952

The children were growing up and one by one began leaving home. The family dynamics were always changing with the addition of in-laws and grandchildren.



Floyd and Hester, 1955

Hester wrote: *“The things we worry about now*

*will seem small some day. Trials and troubles are sent to us to cause us to get our minds off of perishable things. We are not allowed to long and strive for the hollow glories and honors of earth without being reminded that they are of very short duration. We look in the glass and see a gray hair here, a wrinkle there – just gentle reminders that our bodies are clay and must some day go back to dust freeing our souls for a more glorious existence – or else one of shame.”*

On May 16, 1963, Floyd died at age 67 and the funeral was held in the church he helped build. There was standing room only. He was buried next to his parents at Whitewater Cemetery, Yount, Mo., a picturesque church and cemetery.

After Floyd's death, Hester wrote the song "Waiting for Me" and continued writing and composing music. There were lonely times and reflections. At the urging of her children, she started traveling to see her children and grandchildren who by this time were in 5 different states.

Hester continued to serve the Lord in various ways including playing the piano and assisting with services at various country churches that were without regular ministers. She was a life-long Christian who used her gifts and talents for the Lord. She died October 2, 1979, after a brief illness, and her presence was greatly missed with many feeling they had lost their cheerleader.

Her children give permission to copy her music to use freely for the glory of God.



***Hester Lorenz French***  
***1900 - 1979***