



Heather Ross | Remembering Yesterday

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Remembering Yesterday

## The Little Brown Bag

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My great-grandmother, Maryann Fairbrother, told me never to touch the little brown bag which rested on a table in her bedroom. As a child I remember visiting my grandma often. She had a soft voice and was always baking and sewing and of course I remember the little brown bag.

Maryann Fairbrother was born on Feb. 5, 1852. She was the second of eight children. The homestead where she was born is located on the Kettle Moraine Ranch. The house is still standing today. She married Aseph Perry from Troy Center on Sept. 3, 1869. They farmed for a while and then moved west. After several bad years, Aseph took a job as a foreman for the new railroad that was being built. While he worked there, Maryann cooked for the construction crew at the same time raising four children. When the railroad reached Oregon, they received word that Maryann's father had passed away and her family wanted her to come back to Wisconsin to run the farm with Aseph and the children.

Once back in Wisconsin, Maryann became the local midwife and nurse to the community. She would send her boys down to Perry's Pond (located in Old World Wisconsin) to get plants that she would dry and mix with others to use for the medicine that she carried in that little brown medical bag. She

had a medical book for reference, later donated to Old World. They farmed until the early 1920s and then moved to a house in Eagle on Highway 67, across from the old school. Maryann and one of her daughters were with my mother when I was born in 1925. Dr. Schmidt also attended the birth and that of my sister's; modern medicine had arrived. But I also remember the old remedies that Grandma used: Goose grease for colds and coughs; honey and lemon and brandy for cough; baking soda for upset stomach; a small, warm onion on the ear for an earache; cloves for toothache; honey for cuts and small wounds. Vicks was a standby and The Watkins man had excellent salve.

Grandma Maryann died in 1933. I remember her casket in the parlor, near her pump organ, with flowers everywhere. I wish I had listened to all of her stories but, like all children I was too busy with playing and growing up.

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