

**AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF CHARLES
CLINTON NOURSE: PREPARED FOR USE
OF MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY:
CONTAINING THE INCIDENTS OF MORE
THAN FIFTY YEARS' PRACTICE AT THE
BAR IN THE STATE OF IOWA**

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Autobiography of Charles Clinton Nourse: prepared for use of members of the family:
containing the incidents of more than fifty years' practice at the bar in the state of Iowa by
Charles Clinton Nourse

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CHARLES CLINTON NOURSE

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C. C. Morse

Autobiography of
Charles Clinton Nourse

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MORE THAN FIFTY YEARS' PRACTICE AT THE BAR
IN THE STATE OF IOWA

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CHAPTER I

ANCESTRY AND EARLY LIFE

DES MOINES, IOWA, MAY, 1908

TO MASTER JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN,

DEAR JOE:

I promised your father that I would write you a long letter containing in detail something of a biography of myself. He assures me it is not intended for publication, but only for your perusal and for such friends of the family as may now or hereafter deem it interesting to know something of those of the family who have preceded them.

In Washington county, in the state of Maryland, near the little stream of Antietam creek, where was fought one of the memorable battles of our Civil War, there is located a quaint, old fashioned village called Sharpsburg. The inhabitants of the village and neighborhood were in a large part Germans or of German descent.

On one corner of the public square there still remains, in fairly good repair, an old fashioned stone dwelling house. In this house on the first day of April, A. D. 1829, I was born, as were also my two older brothers, Joseph Gabriel and John Daniel, born respectively June 25, 1826, and November 30, 1827. This stone house at one time belonged to my grandfather, Gabriel Nourse, who was the son of James Nourse. The ancestors of the latter are given in a book now in the possession of your mother, entitled *James Nourse and his Descendants*.

In the basement or first story of this stone building my father taught school about the time of the birth of his three boys, given above. At that early day the people of the village

and surrounding country were not supposed to be very highly educated. If children were taught to read and write indifferently and something of arithmetic, at least as far as the single rule of three, their education was supposed to be sufficient for the practical purposes of life. My father has related to me that when he first commenced teaching in the village, in the presence of such a company as usually assembles around a country store, a wise man of the village explained to his admiring hearers that the cause of the changes of the moon resulted from the fact that the earth came between the sun and the moon and hence obstructed the light in such a way as to produce the new moon and the various changes until the full moon. My father rashly attempted to suggest that the wise man was mistaken, for the obvious reason that the moon in its first quarter could be seen in the heavens at the same time as the sun could be observed, and it was impossible that the moon could be partially darkened by the shadow of the earth. The wise man was rather mortified by this exposure of his ignorance, but did not acknowledge his error, but angrily reproved a young man for presuming to differ with him.

In this stone building also my grandfather, Gabriel, died in April, 1839, and was buried in the village churchyard. This stone house is still standing at the date of this writing, and the basement room where my father taught school is occupied as a store-room for vending relics and curiosities gathered from the battle-fields of the neighborhood.

Three miles from the village of Sharpsburg, on the Virginia side of the Potomac river, there is another quaint, old fashioned village called Shepherdstown. Here my mother, Susan Cameron, was born October 25, 1803, and was married to my father, Charles Nourse, June 10, 1825. Here in this village my mother died October 10, 1835. There is still standing in this town the old Methodist church, surrounded by a village churchyard, where will be found modest tombstones marking the graves of my mother, and of many of her brothers and sisters, and also her mother, Susan Cameron, who