

## Alva Raymond Kinney 1870 - 1946

He was two years old when the family moved to Camden. He and brother Will played with the Cooper boys at the nearby grist mill. At age 5 Ray once turned on the mill to "watch the wheels go around"...In the famous Blizzard of '88 Ray, then 17, his sisters and four neighbor students rode home from the school in Elisha's hay wagon, heading due north into the teeth of the storm, barely able to see the road. Then he had to go out again, wallowing through shoulder-deep snow to drive home the cows from a sheltering ravine. Many neighbors lost livestock that froze, smothered, or plunged into the river.

Like most farm boys Ray went to school only in the 12-week winter term. At another school's spell-down he was impressed by the good English and perfect manners of a Mr Carruthers from Doane College, and determined that he too would have a college education. Oddly enough a crop failure helped him. There wasn't enough work for both boys and Will preferred to stay on the farm.

Already twenty, he faced seven years of academic work, three preparatory and four of college. Elisha paid the first year's \$13 tuition; Ray earned all the rest. First he boarded and worked on a farm outside Crete. One year he stayed out and taught a country school. When the family farmhouse burned (summer of '94) they lost bedsteads, butter and bible, but saved Ray's trunk and the parlor organ...Back at college he worked every job he could find--door-to-door book agent, campus bell-ringer, janitor for two churches and a law office. While earning "A" grades in Surveying, Economics, Lit, Physics, and Military Science, he spent his spare time with scrub football, drama club, and sparking his landlady's daughter Grace Barragar.

Resting up briefly right after graduation, he wrote to Grace who was visiting cousins in Wisconsin. "I am working when I feel like it. Ran the binder two or three days, tinkered around trimming fruit trees and cutting weeds. I go to bed early, about 10, and get up after they threaten me with no breakfast."

He had to choose his career. Colorado gold assaying tempted him, but he suspected it might be pie in the sky. For a time he did travelling jobs for Lawyer Foss. His letters were a mix of joshing and sentiment. "By the way, I heard some news today. I am to be married; Buck Buchanan told Hinman so. What! Yes, to an orphan who lives next the church. I asked her name and suggested everyone I knew within a block or two. Alas, who can it be?"

In 1900, by now a family man and travelling for the Crete Mills, he wrote from Custer SD: "I do believe the Creator knew what he was about ..when He made [the Black Hills] of granite. If they were made of anything else they would be moved considerably north. Everything that can get up and dust is going up to Deadwood I suppose."

1902, Wyo: "Friday evening about dusk we met a man on horseback driving two nice big horses ahead of him. Further up the road another man comes lickety-split, passes us, jumps off his horse, whips out his winchester and takes a crack at the first man. The horse-thief did not wait to discuss the question but took to the hills like a greased lightning. The pursuer kept on shooting as long as he was in sight, then headed the horses back."

1903 (now selling Cogswell gold tooth crowns) El Paso: "How did you spend Sunday? I went over to Ciudad Juarez and saw a genuine Bull Fight--to the finish of 4 bulls, one horse and almost one man. He was under the horse while the bull did the work. You would think Varsity had kicked goal when the matador stuck the bull. Hereafter I will go to the slaughterhouse when I want to see them butcher bulls."

1904 Johnstown PA: In the hotel where I am writing the water was 30 feet deep. Not in the hotel--it was built since--but where it now stands.

*[From GBK's history]*: In 1904 Ray and the two Tidball boys took over the Ravenna flour mill. The dam was out and the mill hanging over the river bank. Ray got right into the cold water laying stone for the dam. Eventually he mortgaged his part of his father's farm, and I [Grace] sold the Crete home and the three other small houses my mother had owned there, and we bought out the Tidball share of the mill...When bleached flour became the fad, he could not pay the \$400 the company wanted for a bleacher. With his knowledge of chemistry he built his own. The company sued for infringing on their patent, but he was on his way to the riches.