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Article Summary: Aldrich wrote seven novels and more than one hundred sixty short stories about small-town life, many of them set in Nebraska. Several of her works describe the lives of women gaining independence in the first half of the twentieth century.

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Photographs / Images: Aldrich; portrait of Aldrich as a young child; Bess and Charles Aldrich with their four children; "The Elms," the Aldrich home in Elmwood, Nebraska; a scene from the movie version of *Miss Bishop*; cover design for *The Lieutenant's Lady*



Bess Streeter Aldrich.

BESS STREETER ALDRICH

A Literary Portrait

By A. MABEL MEIER

Bess Streeter Aldrich is one of Nebraska's most popular women authors, deserving attention because of her efforts to preserve and portray the heroic spirit of the hardy immigrants who a century ago blazed trails across the Midwestern prairies in search of land and homes.

Her contribution to the literature of the pioneer consists of seven novels and more than 160 short stories. Regarding the small town as a "microcosm of the world,"¹ she characterized life as she saw it by writing of the small towns which dotted the prairies of Nebraska and its neighboring states during the first half of the twentieth century. Through her works readers in general and Nebraskans in particular may increase the awareness of their cultural heritage.

Mrs. Meier holds a master's degree in education from Kearney State College. The material in her article is taken largely from her thesis, presented in May, 1968.

Much valuable material relative to Bess Streeter Aldrich has recently been made available by the Nebraska State Historical Society. Her personal papers, restricted for ten years following her death, provide a source of information about her activities, personality, and philosophy and are helpful in appreciating Bess Streeter Aldrich both as a woman and a writer.² Personal letters furnish a mine of information about Mrs. Aldrich's character traits, her interests, and her ideals. Business correspondence, providing a glimpse into her relationships with her editors and publishers, reflects the writer's emergence from obscurity to prominence in the literary world. The notes in her own handwriting relative to the structure of her later novels display Mrs. Aldrich's methods of workmanship and the application of her literary theories to her own composition.

Although Bess Streeter Aldrich was a Nebraska resident for forty-five years, she was born at Cedar Falls, Iowa, February 17, 1881. Her parents, Mr. and Mrs. James Wareham Streeter, were among the earliest pioneer settlers of northeastern Iowa. Bess's paternal grandparents, the Zimri Streeters, came to Iowa from Illinois with their family of three sons and seven daughters. They arrived in 1852,³ having moved by team and wagon since there were as yet no railroads west of the Mississippi River. Zimri Streeter represented Black Hawk County in the First Iowa Legislature and was sent to Georgia by Governor Samuel J. Kirkwood in the presidential election year of 1864 to contact the soldiers of the Iowa contingent and to bring their votes back to Des Moines for the official count.⁴ It was he who was the model of Jeremiah Martin in the Aldrich novel *Song of Years*.

Bess Streeter's maternal grandmother, Margaret Anderson, after the death of her husband Basil in Illinois, came west with her six children and homesteaded in northeastern Iowa. The romantic story of Basil and Margaret Anderson's courtship and marriage in Scotland and their voyage to America is recounted by Mrs. Aldrich in the

Portrait picture of Mrs. Aldrich as a young child.



autobiographical sketch "I Remember." Their love affair also served as the basis for the family history of Abbie Deal's mother in the novel *A Lantern in Her Hand*. It is of interest to note that the account of Abbie and Will Deal's wedding reads in this novel like that of the writer's own parents. As the youngest of the couple's eight children, Bess had undoubtedly heard the story many times.⁵

Bess's mother was the eldest daughter of Margaret and Basil Anderson. She taught school in the first log cabin schoolhouse in northeastern Iowa⁶ and married James Streeter on New Year's Day, 1855.⁷

Bess's childhood reportedly was a happy one. "Born to middle-aged parents at the tag end of their big family," Mrs. Aldrich recalled, she lived her childhood "among a host of older people, playing, reading, fancifying, singularly free from responsibility." The Streeter home at the edge of Cedar Falls was a lively place. The fun-loving family liked to talk, to laugh, and to tell jokes. Bess enjoyed the childhood pastimes of bobsledding, picnicking, hunting in the woods for wild plums, red haws, and thorn apples, reading books such as *Little Woman* and *The Little Min-*

ister, and participating in yuletide festivities. Mrs. Aldrich relates with nostalgia the happiness she felt during a Christmas celebration in her parents' home:

There was so much fun going on that in a sudden sweep of emotion you felt sorry for the people all over town, all over the country, who could not live there in that rambling old house set high in its snowy yard.⁸

Bess Streeter attended school in Cedar Falls and was graduated from high school at the age of seventeen. She enrolled in the Iowa State Teachers College in her home town and received her degree in 1901. After graduation she taught several terms: one year at Boone, Iowa; three years at Marshalltown, Iowa; and one year at Salt Lake City, Utah. She then returned to her alma mater to become assistant supervisor in the primary training school. After one year Bess resigned to marry Charles Sweetzer Aldrich, an attorney who had recently served as the youngest U. S. Army captain in the Spanish-American War.⁹

Captain Aldrich and his wife resided for a year and a half at Tipton, Iowa, and then moved with their two-month-old baby, Mary Eleanor, to Elmwood, Nebraska, where Mr. Aldrich and his brother-in-law, John Cobb, had purchased the American Exchange Bank. For sixteen years "Cap" Aldrich was cashier of this bank as well as a practicing attorney. Three sons were born to the Aldriches in Elmwood to complete their family.¹⁰

Bess Streeter began to write at an early age. There is no doubt that she possessed a natural talent for storytelling. She claimed to have inherited this ability from her mother, who was known as an interesting letter writer among her relatives and was fond of writing verses.¹¹ As a schoolgirl of fourteen Bess sent her first story to a contest conducted by the *Chicago Record* and received a pocket camera for the prize.¹² During her senior year in high school she won \$5.00 for a short story submitted to the *Baltimore News*. With her prize money Bess purchased a black chiffon parasol.¹³ At seventeen Bess also wrote "Xantippe," the handwritten manuscript of which is among her

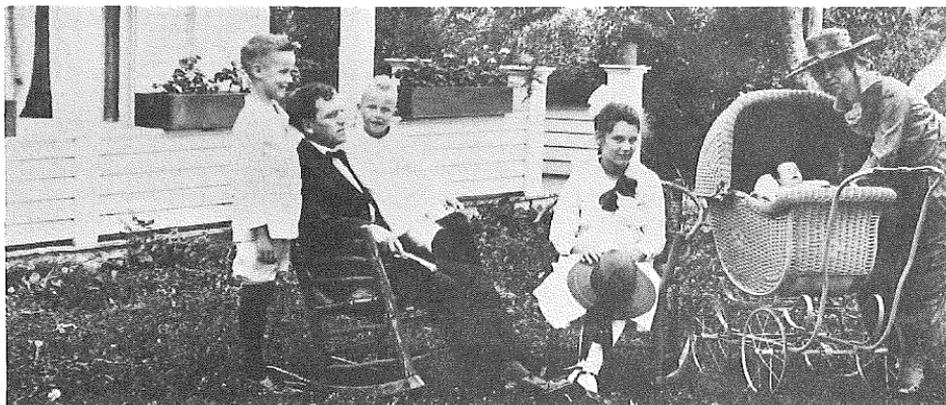
papers in the Nebraska State Historical Society. Nothing, however, indicates that the story was sold.

During her teaching career Bess wrote a few articles for teachers' magazines and composed stories for supplementary reading in the primary grades. Copies of the *Young Citizen*, published at Cedar Falls, Iowa, during 1903 and 1904, carry several such readings.¹⁴

Prior to her marriage, Bess Streeter sold one adult story, "The Madonna of the Purple Gods," which the *National Home Journal* of St. Louis, Missouri, purchased for \$5.00. However, Bess's handwritten notation on the letter from the magazine states that the check, when it arrived, was for \$10.00 instead of \$5.00.¹⁵

Bess was a busy homemaker during her first years in Nebraska, but the writing bug stayed with her. Eager to improve her technique, she enrolled in a short story correspondence course given by the Home Correspondence School of Springfield, Massachusetts. She found time, often when one of her babies was napping, to complete her lessons and to put on paper the stories she had probably constructed mentally while performing household tasks.

The two lessons from the correspondence school that are preserved in the Historical Society files carry evalua-



Bess and Charles Aldrich pictured with their four children.

tion marks of 99 and 98. In Lesson No. 2 is the statement that "a good short story is like a loaf of bread." Her elaboration shows her understanding of this literary genre:

The chief character is the main ingredient, flour. It is limited in action by the particular incident related about that person as the flour is limited by the amount of water used as a medium for its expansion. The plot is the yeast cake, small and compressed in itself, serving its purpose by permeating every part of the loaf. The salt and sugar of the author's imagination are the flavors. The story, like the loaf, must be worked smoothly and symmetrically, so that the finished product conveys a single clear impression.

A letter from J. Berg Essenwein of the literary department of the correspondence school manifests his opinion that Mrs. Aldrich was an apt student:

I am going to tell you frankly that it is difficult for me to be very helpful to you in my criticisms for the reason that you do not seem to need very much help. Not once out of a thousand times do I have to say this, but I might as well be frank with you and tell you that your writing pleases me so much that it is almost a work of supererogation to criticize it.¹⁶

After she had been in Nebraska two years, Mrs. Aldrich entered the short story "The Little House Next Door" in a *Ladies Home Journal* literary contest. The editor of the magazine wrote to her:

It gives me pleasure to tell you that, although your story, "the Little House Next Door," submitted in our recent Girls' College Prize Competition, was not found to be a prize winner, still it appealed so strongly to us that we wish to use it in the Journal. I will have a check for one hundred and seventy-five dollars sent to you in payment for it tomorrow which is our regular day for making weekly settlements.¹⁷

Mrs. Aldrich related that her mother, who was visiting when the letter arrived, insisted that she must have misread the amount her daughter was to receive—that it must be \$1.75 instead of \$175.¹⁸ Needless to say, the young writer and her family were elated by this success, and it provided Mrs. Aldrich with the stimulus and the confidence

in her ability to continue writing. Subsequently, she entered two more *Ladies Home Journal* contests and received prizes of one hundred and one hundred fifty dollars, respectively, for "The Greatest Experience of My Life and How I Met It" and "How I Knew When the Right Man Came."¹⁹

For several years Mrs. Aldrich received numerous rejection slips, mostly from popular women's magazines, but she did sell a few stories. The *Ladies World* took "Why I Am Ashamed of My Wife" for its February, 1913, issue, and the *Modern Priscilla* paid \$20.00 for "The Heart of the Giver" after the writer had submitted the story unsuccessfully twenty-three times to various magazines. "Mollie Porter" appeared in the December 19, 1914, issue of *Harper's Weekly*, and "Grandpa Statler" in the June 26, 1915, issue. "Mother O'Earth" and "The Cat Is on the Mat," published in the July and October issues of the *Delineator*, were selected for honorable mention in *Best Short Stories of 1916* edited by Edward J. O'Brien.²⁰

Mrs. Aldrich's first real success as a short story writer came in 1918 with the sale of "Freedom from Her Mountain Height" to the *American Magazine* for one hundred dollars. John M. Siddall, editor of the magazine, praised the story as being one of the finest pictures of a mother he had read in a long time.²¹ This, the first of the Mother Mason series, appeared in the December, 1918, issue under the title "Mother's Dash for Liberty." Later Mrs. Aldrich received a two hundred dollar check for "Tillie Cuts Loose."²² For the final story, "Father Mason Retires," the check was for three hundred dollars. Siddall was jubilant in his praise of the story:

Father's story is a bird. It is a fitting climax to a perfectly wonderful series. . . . Just what percentage of our readers live in small towns I don't know, but it is a large one. That is why your stories carry such universal appeal. . . . You don't merely create characters, you create people with whom we are familiar.²³

It is possible that the Mother Mason series was a literary first—a series of short stories built around not

just one individual but the members of an entire family. The characters were convincingly real both singly and in groups. Furthermore, as typical Americans, the Mason family was "universal, not local, in its humanity."²⁴

There is also the possibility that Tillie Horn was, and still is for that matter, a contribution to American literature. Blanche Colton Williams, formerly head of the English department at Hunter College in New York City and an instructor in short story writing at Columbia University, points out that domestic helpers such as Tillie represent the unattached spinster of the period who lived with a family and worked for a small wage and a home not only in the West but in the East and South as well. There were hundreds of such women over the United States, she says, who devoted "their homely rugged bodies and sardonic minds to families with whom they have an affiliation of one sort or another."²⁵

After the Mother Mason series ended, Mrs. Aldrich undertook a group of stories centering around the Cutter family for the *American Magazine*. As these stories captured the attention of the reading public, the figures on the author's checks grew in denomination. The *American Magazine*, a good market for Bess Streeter Aldrich, also purchased an autobiographical sketch for three hundred dollars. Entitled "How I Mixed Stories and Doughnuts," it appeared in the February, 1921 issue. Editor Siddal wrote that the great charm of Mrs. Aldrich's writing lay "in its absolute naturalness, its spontaneity, its freshness."²⁶

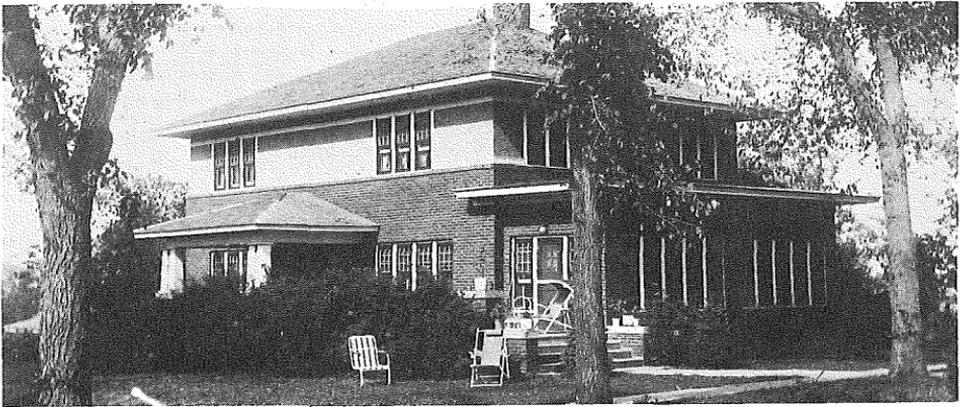
Meanwhile Mrs. Aldrich was selling stories to magazines other than the *American*. The *Ladies Home Journal* took "Ginger Cookies" and wanted more boy stories when the first proved a success. *McCall's* likewise requested that the author submit stories to them and paid five hundred dollars each for "Easy Money" and "I Remember" in 1924.

Also in 1924 D. Appleton and Company of New York accepted the Mother Mason stories for publication in book form under the title *Mother Mason* and offered Mrs. Ald-

rich a royalty of ten per cent.²⁷ Rutger Bleecker Jewett, vice president of the company, wrote this friendly advice to the author:

Be prepared for sneers from the high brow Semitic critics. It is far too wholesome for their palate. On the other hand, your story will bring joy to thousands of American readers. Your bubbling humor and common horse sense should make the book worth while, even if you had not a good story to tell, which, however, you had, and told it.²⁸

Mother Mason appeared in book stores early in 1925. This was a year of sorrow for the Aldrich family because of the sudden death of Mr. Aldrich. After living with diabetes for some time, he suddenly collapsed during Sunday morning worship services in Elmwood.²⁹



"The Elms," the Aldrich home in Elmwood, Nebraska.

Until this time Mrs. Aldrich had written only as a "serious hobby." Now the sole financial support of her four children, she undertook writing as a full time profession.³⁰ Her first novel, *The Rim of the Prairie*, was published by D. Appleton and Company before the year ended. The title of the book was a phrase Captain Aldrich had frequently used in describing the rise of land east of his wife's study window. The novel was dedicated to the memory of "Captain Charles S. Aldrich, who loved the hills that rim the prairie."

After the death of her husband, Mrs. Aldrich and her children continued to live in "The Elms," their home in Elmwood. A large two-story brick and stucco house, it was surrounded by a spacious lawn bordered with elm trees. In the study the children and their friends played while Mrs. Aldrich wrote.³¹ Although she had part time help with the cleaning and yard work, the mother continued to cook for her family. Her children and her writing became her two main interests, but always her children came first. The young Aldriches shared a great pride in their mother's writing, which became a part of their lives.³²

During the next year, 1926, the *American Magazine* paid the now professional writer six hundred dollars for "He Whom a Dream Hath Possessed," and *The Cutters*, the Cutter family series, appeared in book form. Film rights to "The Woman Who Was Forgotten" were purchased by Richard Thomas Productions, Incorporated, of Hollywood for five hundred dollars, and the story was subsequently made into a motion picture—"an American epic on the school teacher," according to Thomas. Twenty-five per cent of the net proceeds from the picture were to go to the National Education Association for the building of homes for retired and aged teachers.³³

Among the fan letters which Bess Streeter Aldrich treasured was one from Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., who sent Mrs. Aldrich a copy of *The Cutters* which she wished her to autograph. Mrs. Roosevelt explained that she had written the return address on the inside of the wrapping paper "so that it can be turned over and used for the return of *The Cutters* and I hope I am not giving you too much trouble." The letter continues:

I gave the book to my mother-in-law who loved it. Later she sent a copy to Rudyard Kipling to prove to him that there is something in our country that is not shown in "Babbit" and "Main Street." He wrote her that while he had found the book interesting and charming he could not believe there were any people as nice as that in the world today.³⁴

Bess Streeter Aldrich's family stories bring into focus her ability to portray the people found in the small towns of America. Her characters are not people who perform unusual acts of heroism or self-sacrifice, but they are recognizable for their universal human traits. Although Rudyard Kipling might disagree, many readers and writers feel that the Nebraskan possessed a sensitive and perceptive ability to see people as they actually are. Perhaps Mrs. Aldrich's most outstanding character sketch is found in "The Man Who Caught the Weather," a short story which first appeared in the *Century Magazine* for July, 1928. This is the story for which the persistent author received twenty-eight rejection slips before it was finally sold. Ironically, "The Man Who Caught the Weather" was then selected as one of the *O. Henry Memorial Award Prize Stories of 1928*, was later included in several anthologies, was syndicated, resold to a British magazine, and read on various radio programs.³⁵

A Lantern in Her Hand, the novel that was to make its author internationally famous, was published in August, 1928, and immediately became a best seller. By December the book had gone into its twenty-first printing.³⁶ It is well known that the inspiration for writing the novel as a tribute to pioneer women came to Mrs. Aldrich after reading about the dedication of a statue, "Pioneer Mother," in Oklahoma. Mrs. Aldrich also wanted to create a monument to the pioneer mother, "not in marble, but through the only medium I could use—the written word."³⁷

The novelist admitted spending fourteen months gathering material for the book and only five months actually writing. Earnestly desiring to be absolutely authentic in dates, places, living conditions, clothing, modes of transportation, and historical events, Mrs. Aldrich obtained information regarding the early days in Nebraska either from settlers themselves or from their first generation descendants. On February 23, 1926, she made an appeal over radio station KFAB for "true incidents of pioneer life." Many of the details and events which later appeared

in her book were assembled from the letters she received as a result of this broadcast. One letter, written by Lydia (Mrs. Arthur) Weaver of Oakland, Nebraska, relates:

. . . when my father brought my mother out to his homestead from Omaha they rode in a lumber wagon the box of which was an old boat. Even at this early date this sight was so unusual that it amused anyone who saw them. I have many times heard my mother speak of that as her wedding trip.³⁰

As this idea was incorporated into the book, Abbie and Will Deal have just crossed Weeping Water Creek when:

On the other side of the stream there stood a team of oxen hitched to a covered wagon so odd-looking, that even Abbie sat up in interest. The wagon-box was a rowboat painted a gaudy blue, the bow curving toward the stolid oxen's buttocks, the stern forming the base of the rear canvas doorway.³⁹

Mrs. Aldrich also wrote letters to many individuals in quest of authentic information. G. W. Noble of Omaha responded to her letter of inquiry regarding Weeping Water Academy, which plays a part in this same novel. He wrote:

Answering your questions, the school started with about thirty tuition paying pupils.

Probably half the pupils were from the town of Weeping Water, the rest from the country. . . .⁴⁰

In *A Lantern in Her Hand* the author says of Weeping Water Academy, which Margaret Deal attended: "Margaret's school was a wonderful experience. There were thirty tuition pupils, about half from the town of Weeping Water and half from farm homes."⁴¹

As her reputation for creating popular, appealing stories expanded, the author's checks from periodicals likewise grew. She sold an article on the Covered Wagon Centennial to the *Christian Herald* for five hundred dollars.⁴² The *Delineator* paid eight hundred dollars for the short story "Rose Leaves in a Jar."⁴³ *Country Gentleman* purchased "Pie" for one thousand dollars.⁴⁴

Busy as Mrs. Aldrich was with her writing and children, she became literary editor of the *Christian Herald* in December of 1930,⁴⁵ reading the many books sent to her by various publishing companies and reviewing them on "The Month's Best Books" page. Nebraska's famous author was now given a medal for distinguished service to her state by the Lincoln Kiwanis Club. Four hundred Nebraskans, including many leading government and university officials, as well as newspaper editors from all over the West attended the presentation dinner. Mrs. Aldrich was recognized as one "who had stamped deep on the literature of the nation the true picture of pioneer life, and thereby had contributed service to a pioneer state."⁴⁶

During the summer of 1931 Mrs. Aldrich helped plan her daughter's wedding to Milton Beechner of Lincoln. She was at the same time writing *A White Bird Flying*, the novel featuring the descendants of Abbie Deal. *Appleton's Book Chat* for the week ending November 21, 1931, carried a reprint from the *Scholastic* of October, 1931, which noted the famous author's work, past and present:

Bess Streeter Aldrich writes some of the most wholesome and sympathetic fiction on this side of the Atlantic, at a time when most authors are doing flippant, sordid, or sophisticated work. . . . Mrs. Aldrich says, "The trend, of course, has been to write of the fast, high-strung, disintegrating home. That type of home . . . no more represents America than does my type . . . There are not many of us who are writing of small-town financially comfortable, one-man-for-one-woman, clean, decent, and law abiding families. . . . I suppose the idea is that there isn't any drama in that sort of family. But there is birth there, and love, and marriage, and death, and all the ups-and-downs which come to every family in every town, large and small." In addition to more than a hundred short stories she has written five novels (all published by D. Appleton and Company), of which "A Lantern in Her Hand," a picture of Nebraska's pioneers, has gone into thirty-five printings. The latest is "A White Bird Flying."⁴⁷

A White Bird Flying was third in sales for the entire country in its publication year, being topped only by Pearl Buck's *The Good Earth* and Willa Cather's *Shadows on the*

Rocks.⁴⁸ All three of these top selling novels were written by women, two of whom were Nebraskans.

Although Bess Streeter Aldrich was now much engrossed in novels, she did not abandon short stories. The *Ladies Home Journal* purchased "The Runaway Judge" for its July, 1932, issue for two thousand dollars,⁴⁹ and the *Cosmopolitan* agreed to take at least four of six stories submitted by Mrs. Aldrich, paying twenty-five hundred dollars for each story printed. "The Silent Stars Go By" in the Christmas issue was one of these.⁵⁰

In 1932 Mrs. Aldrich made the first of several trips to Hollywood in attempts to sell the motion picture rights to her stories. As early as 1919 she had begun to contact film production companies, but "The Woman Who Was Forgotten" was the only story which had been sold. This three-month visit was principally a business trip, although the novelist and her eleven-year-old son Bob, who accompanied her, took in the usual tourist attractions. Mrs. Aldrich sent her other three children vivid accounts of Catalina Island, San Juan Capistrano Mission, old Olvera Street, the Ambassador Hotel with its Cocoanut Grove, "where the stars dance and where it was \$25 per plate on New Year's eve," and Forest Lawn Cemetery, of which she wrote:

I don't see a bit of use in passing on through it to Heaven,—one might just as well stop there and stay through eternity for if there can be anything prettier or more restful anyplace else St. Peter would have to show me.⁵¹

Bess Streeter Aldrich's name was not unknown in Hollywood; consequently the announcement in the newspapers of the Nebraska writer's arrival resulted in "scads of invitations" to club meetings and literary luncheons. Mrs. Aldrich was thrilled to rub elbows with celebrities such as Louella Parsons, Mrs. Mary Roberts Rinehart, Maureen O'Sullivan, the four Marx Brothers, and Jack Oakie, these being a few of the names she mentioned in her first letters after arriving in California. As one might expect, she autographed books at both Robinson's and

Buffum's department stores. She found the quaint tea-rooms and attractive restaurants of the Los Angeles area delightful and reported in detail to her children:

We . . . found a place called the Sandwich mill with cute clean tables in several little rooms. The sandwich idea isn't their only service as you can get any thing in the way of soups, hot vegetables, and always three hot meats from which to choose. 35 cents gets us a fair amount of food and 45 stuffs you and very palatable. Yesterday at noon for 45c I had two grilled pork chops just cooked lovely, creamed potatoes, and a plate of whole wheat toast and butter, coffee and a piece of high fluffy lemon pie. Can you beat that? Food is so reasonable unless you go where you pay for music and extra service.⁵²

Mrs. Aldrich was honored at several functions in Hollywood. One was a luncheon given by Mrs. James Madison, a book reviewer and a great admirer of Mrs. Aldrich. There the Nebraskan met Mrs. Ben Lyon, Sr., the mother of actor Ben Lyon and the mother-in-law of Bebe Daniels. On a later occasion, Mrs. Lyon, who was attracted to Mrs. Aldrich, took her riding about the city in Bebe Daniels' Rolls Royce. Mrs. Aldrich became very fond of Mrs. Lyon, who she concluded was just as interested in Ben and Bebe as she (Mrs. Aldrich) was in Milton and Mary.⁵³

Before returning to Nebraska Mrs. Aldrich engaged Ivan Kahn, a Hollywood agent, to sell the movie rights of her stories. She informed her son "Chuck," then a student at the University of Nebraska, of her "Jewish movie man," who was pushing *A Lantern in Her Hands*

Mr. Kahn . . . stopped here this morning in his grand big car and don't ask me what kind,—but just huge and shining with no top—he was on his way to Mexico for the weekend. He thinks that something may break before long and next week I am meeting, everybody from Joseph Scheck to Irving Thalburg to Carl Laemmle. He's getting different ones to read it and wants me to go with him to all the studios for several days, one or two a day, and meet those men, tell them about the size of my sales, etc., etc. Hotsytotsy?⁵⁴

Four days later Mrs. Aldrich again reported to her son:

Prospects good. Have been in Universal—M.G.M.—Warners First National and Fox. Everyone gracious in discussing my stories with me. The two best prospects are R.K.O. for Ann Harding and M.G.M. for Helen Hays. Frank Lloyd director put his O.K. on Lantern for Ann Harding and sent the book to Wm. LeBaron the R.K.O. producer to read. His word is final.⁵⁵

Early in April Mrs. Aldrich and Bob returned to Nebraska. The author believed her picture prospects were very good and that Ivan Kahn was sincere and genuinely interested in selling her stories; therefore she was going back to Elmwood "nonchalantly on the theory that a watched pot never boils and maybe something will come to a head."⁵⁶

During the remainder of the year Mrs. Aldrich continued writing and spent part of the summer at a resort in Minnesota where the Aldriches frequently vacationed. Usually able to bring in larger catches than her sons, Mrs. Aldrich especially enjoyed the fishing. Her daughter recalls that on a particular occasion, after one of the sons had taken his mother out for an angling session in the morning, he turned her over to another son in the afternoon, saying, "You take her this time. She wore me out this morning."⁵⁷

In January, 1933, Bess Streeter Aldrich sold "Why I Live in a Small Town" to the *Ladies Home Journal* for one thousand dollars.⁵⁸ This, likewise, was the year in which *Miss Bishop*, the novel that apotheosized a woman school-teacher of the epoch between 1880 and 1930, was published. Through this book the author made her readers aware of the many Miss Bishops of the world and of their service to humanity. Blanche Colton Williams wrote soon after the appearance of *Miss Bishop*:

No novel hitherto has had the courage to make of a teacher's life a full-length novel, though stories of the old-fashioned governess from *Jane Eyre* downward had directed incidental attention to this despised and lowly human being

who might, on occasion, rise from her humble status to become the wife of some more powerful male of the species. The teacher has been despised, and still is despised and neglected, of fictionalists.⁵⁹

Miss Williams further explains that such a study had not been possible previously since the first American colleges for women were not established until the late seventies and early eighties. "Mrs. Aldrich," she says, "is the first to reflect that the time had arrived when a woman professor was old enough to be laid on the shelf, thrust in the background after years of service."⁶⁰ By her novel Mrs. Aldrich may have initiated a change in the public's feeling toward the schoolteacher which is continuing to the present time.

On September 26, 1933, D. Appleton and Company reported advance sales on *Miss Bishop* of over thirty thousand copies. "A jolly showing," Jewett commented, "especially in these hard times."⁶¹ The Metro-Goldwyn company of Hollywood took a two-month option on the book for one thousand dollars but in November relinquished their rights without buying it.⁶²

Literary honors, obviously, had become abundant. An academic honor was to come next. The degree Doctor of Letters was conferred upon Bess Streeter Aldrich at the commencement program of the University of Nebraska in June, 1934.⁶³

Also during 1934, D. Appleton and Company financed trips to Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Detroit, where Mrs. Aldrich attended book fairs and autographed books.⁶⁴ The Curtis Publishing Company purchased "Bid the Tapers Twinkle," a Christmas story, for twenty-five hundred dollars.⁶⁵

Early in January, 1935, Mrs. Aldrich returned to Hollywood for a second visit. This trip was occasioned by an offer from Merritt Hulburd, head of the scenario department of Paramount Productions, "to expand and develop the outline" of *Pioneer Woman* for the screen. Al-

though this was not one of Mrs. Aldrich's stories, Hulburt thought she could bring "the characters to life." Her salary was to be two thousand dollars per week for two weeks and fifteen hundred dollars per week thereafter until the work was completed.⁶⁶

Mrs. Aldrich and Bob lived at the Hollywood-Knickerbocker Hotel "to be in the center of things" and to be in possible contact with film production companies for the sale of her stories. On January 8 the author wrote to her children:

When I want a taxi to go to the studio, as I did this A.M. in the pouring rain, instead of an old yellow cab I have the Knickerbocker limousine which has no sign on it at all,—has a liveried chauffer who drove up to the canopied entrance and the door man took me across the sidewalk under the umbrella and then I got out in state at the studio with no payment then, just put it on my bill. By the way we are 55 cents worth away from the studio. And the nicest chauffer,—we went past the LaCone school this P.M. and I told him I wish we could pick up Bob and he drove up in front of the schoolhouse and stood there for ten minutes until school was out. No more charge than the 55. Bob said he was ashamed to come out and get in that limousine with the liveried chauffer.⁶⁷

Mrs. Aldrich was assigned an office and stenographer at Paramount, and in less than two weeks she had completed her work on the script of *Pioneer Woman*. To her children she apologized during this time for "spending money like a drunken sailor," but she explained:

I have to live where I'm comfortable, have to live where its "being done" which means some one of the better known places, and have to ride to the Studio each day,—55 cents each way, count it \$1.10 for taxi per day . . . However I'm feeling pretty good about some things and one is that I'm almost ready to believe that there will some sale of other things come while I'm here.⁶⁸

Because Mrs. Aldrich had lost faith in Ivan Kahn, who had not succeeded in selling anything for her, she now changed to the agent team of King and McCormick, "one of the best-known in Hollywood," who promised better pro-

motion of her works.⁶⁹ Hoping that something would come from this association, the Nebraskan stayed on in California after her assignment with Paramount was finished and spent the greater share of her time writing. She did, however, enjoy several literary and social affairs.

The author attended a celebrity luncheon given by one Mrs. Valley, "the best book reviewer on the west coast, very influential in getting club women to read books." There she shared honors with Dr. Lloyd Douglas. Mrs. Aldrich described the "new blue outfit" she wore for the first time:

It is a jacket sort of dress with open work white at the top of the vest and white cuffs, navy blue and I have a new navy blue spring hat with a bunch of light blue cornflowers on the crown and new white gloves. So I felt very much dressed up with my hair newly fixed, and carrying my blue bag that Mary and the kids gave me last mothers day.⁷⁰

The novelist and Bob attended the Santa Anita races in company with Mrs. Aldrich's niece and family, who lived in Beverly Hills. The day was a memorable one:

We left about 11:45 and stopped near Glendale at the place called the Tam O'Shanter to eat our lunch, which by the way was the very first place I ever ate out when I was here before. The girls all dress in kilts—there are Scotch jokes on the menu etc. Well, you should see the great Turf Club and the tracks and the cars parked there etc. Bob and I decided it looked like the entrance to the Century of Progress as the buildings are modernistic. Such a hullabaloo of selling the programs, the horses being walked up and down, people excited and all. It cost \$1.10 per ticket We had excellent seats in the grand stand. Now kids,—we didn't bet,—but I can see how people get the bug and lose money, and when I tell you that if we *had* bet on the very horses which we picked we would have between us made about fifty dollars you will see how excited people get. It beats the old nickel slot machine. This is what we did,—just before every race we chose a horse after they had pranced around in front of the grandstand, and Marguerite wrote each of our names on the program by the horse we had bet upon. There are two dollar bets,— five, ten, twenty five, and fifty. Those are called parimutuel bets and its

what Mr. Sorenson, the Attorney General of Nebr. stopped them doing in Omaha. Well, Bob the little wart, had the best luck. He picked one that won, and two that came in second, Marguerite picked on a horse called Head Play—one of eight in the race,—it came in first and if she had put a two dollar bet on it she would have won \$33.50. Isn't that awful? Well it was real exciting. . . .⁷¹

About this time Mrs. Aldrich did a "bold, bad thing": She wrote a "courteous note" to Mary Pickford inquiring whether the actress might be interested in producing *Mother Mason* for United Artists. The novelist wrote impulsively after reading in the newspaper that Miss Pickford was to produce two pictures ("not play in them") of the type of *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*. Mrs. Aldrich stated that she hoped it had not been unethical to call the matter to Miss Pickford's attention, but she had discovered in fifty years of living that when one was sincere and honest in motive, ethics "took care of themselves." Miss Pickford replied on "dainty blue and white stationery (typed),"⁷² in which she thanked the author for her letter and her interest and promised to obtain a copy of *Mother Mason* immediately. Her handwritten postscript added, "I do hope I shall have the pleasure of meeting you."⁷³

When Jewett of D. Appleton-Century Company died in 1935, John L. B. Williams took his place as consultant to Bess Streeter Aldrich. Williams flew from New York, an unusual event in 1935, to visit with the novelist in Hollywood regarding the writing of a new book. In a letter to Mary, Mrs. Aldrich reflects the reliance she placed upon her daughter's judgment:

. . . I am to start a new book and rush it through before September. . . . Mary, Mr. Williams thinks that soap kettle idea is a whole book instead of a short story,—to be done in four sequences,—and is very crazy about that title "Spring Came on Forever" and thinks it fits in with old Amalia and the soap kettle and the meadow larks and all. What do you think?⁷⁴

Assured by her agents that the motion picture rights to *A Lantern in Her Hand* would soon be sold for thirty thousand dollars, Mrs. Aldrich remained in Hollywood until

the first of May. She conferred with her agents and worked on *Spring Came on Forever*. This novel, covering three generations in the state from the 1860's to the 1930's, has been characterized as a "saga of Nebraska history."⁷⁵

But there was no sale of film rights. In a letter to Mary, the novelist conveyed her mixed emotions of disappointment and confidence:

Well, I see I'm coming home without a picture sold but I do feel the Lantern will sell some day. McCormick is so sure of it. But he doesn't get up a bit of enthusiasm for the Masons and that makes me mad because I know they could be used.⁷⁶

Mrs. Aldrich returned to Elmwood, where she finished *Spring Came on Forever* and sent it to the publishers. On November 26 the busy mother and now happy grandmother revealed the status of her family in a hastily written business letter:

I am in the midst of getting ready for all my young people to come home tomorrow,—my young daughter, her husband and *new* baby (the new title of grandmother is still giving me thrills), my twenty-two year old son from New York whom I havnt [sic] seen since last New Years day, my Nebraska U son, and my sophomore High School boy who is still at home!⁷⁷

During the next three years Bess Streeter Aldrich spent most of her time on *Song of Years*, a novel that dealt with the settlement of northeast Iowa and which ran serially in the *Saturday Evening Post* before it was published in book form. On July 20, 1938, the *Post* sent her twenty thousand dollars for the story.⁷⁸ As published by D. Appleton-Century Company the novel retailed for \$2.50 instead of \$2.00, which had been the selling price of Mrs. Aldrich's earlier books, and the author received fifteen per cent royalties instead of the ten per cent she had received previously.⁷⁹

Mrs. Aldrich spent the summers of both 1936 and 1938 in Hollywood. Frank Lloyd was interested in using Irene Dunn in *A Lantern in Her Hand* and visited with Mrs.

Aldrich about the novel in 1936, but he decided not to take the story.⁸⁰ Two years later, Samuel Goldwyn and David Selznick read *Song of Years* but, like Lloyd, decided not to buy.⁸¹

In 1939, after *Song of Years* had appeared in book form, the Nebraska novelist visited Boston, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Hartford, Detroit, and New York to autograph books and help with advertising. *Song of Years* went immediately onto the best seller lists, being "9th-6th-5th (for 3 weeks)—and now 4th" on the *New York Herald-Tribune's* list, as the pleased author reported to her children.

While Mrs. Aldrich was in New York, she attended a cocktail party at Margaret Widdemers. The conservative Midwesterner quieted any misgivings she imagined her children might have:

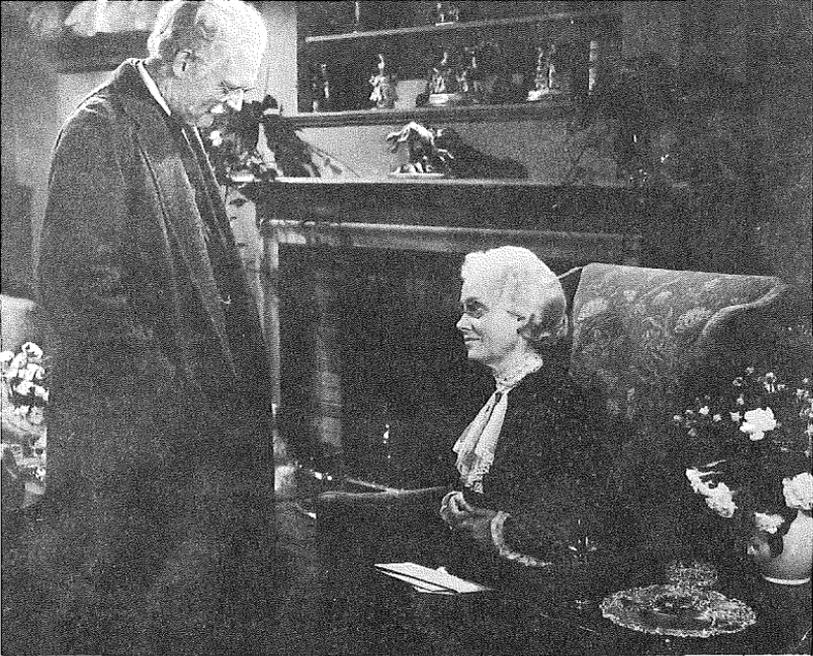
They serve tea too, so dont get excited and dont be misled. . . . From Miss Wid's we are going to a tea given by the New York newspaper women for the judges of their recent newspaper contest.⁸²

That same year, 1939, was an important one for Bess Streeter Aldrich. She sold the motion picture and radio rights of *Miss Bishop* to Richard A. Rowland for fifteen thousand dollars.

Again she returned to Hollywood, this time to complete arrangements for the sale. On July 13 she communicated her excitement:

Well my children dear, this is the day I long have sought and grieved because I found it not. I *guess* I've sold a picture. . . . I would rather it had been a big going concern in some ways but as Landy says this might be a wedge for the sale of others later. It's a shot in the arm, is the way he put it.⁸³

In the fall of 1940 Mrs. Aldrich once more visited Hollywood—this time to serve as a consultant to the producer during the filming of *Miss Bishop*, now re-titled *Cheers for Miss Bishop*. Her mood during these days was a mixture of elation and humility:



A scene from the movie version of "Miss Bishop" starring Paul Muni and Martha Scott.

Well, the phone just rang and it was Mr. McHenry from the Rowland office, whoever he is. He said they were going to do their first shooting tomorrow and he would call me in the morning about 9:30 and then send a car for me to come to the studio about ten or 10:30. . . . Well, Mary-girl (Abbie-girl) how does it seem to think of Mamma frying corn-meal mush in the old white cottage kitchen in a blue kitchen dress with all the little boys in their overalls coming in to eat . . . and having a car sent from United Artists for me to come and see the first rushes on a picture? "The mills of the gods grind slowly,—but they grind exceedingly small."⁸⁴

Mrs. Aldrich sent day by day reports of the happenings at the studio to her family. In one letter she wrote:

It was all quite thrilling to hear all the conversation on all sides of you about those old familiar names of my characters. . . . I couldn't quite believe that the story written under such hard circumstances that spring when the bank business was so worrisome was really coming to life all around me. . . . Oh say I corrected one thing. They have a boy in the script take Amy to a drugstore to get an ice cream soda. I told them "soda water" but not ice cream soda—no such thing at that time.⁸⁵

On another occasion the author-consultant reported:

. . . imagine us all sitting around and eating cracker-jack between scenes. A woman by the name of Sue Moore

is Stena and a very good one too,—she looks so Swedish. But Mary they are calling her Stenna with the short sound. I told Miss Heilbron it was a contraction of Christena and pronounced Stena as in easy, but as they had taken several scenes and called her that, we decided it wasn't a big enough mistake to report.⁸⁶

And in a third letter, Mrs. Aldrich said:

One fault I do myself find in my own mind but wouldn't say to them.—(Miss Heilbron, and others connected with the filming) in the book with a long story and the many years Ella Bishop lived, it wasnt that she had more than one affair,—but here on the screen she seems to hop from one to another immediately, not much like the average Louise Pound or McFee [sic] . . . ha. ha. There'll be criticism on that score, believe you me. . . .⁸⁷

Louise Pound and Marguerite McPhee were both English professors at the University of Nebraska. With their years of service to students, they might well have been the models for Miss Ella Bishop of Bess Streeter Aldrich's novel.

Mrs. Aldrich was amused at the censorship of a scene by the Motion Pictures Producers and Distributors of America, then under the "czarship" of Will H. Hays. She told Mary of the incident:

They've got to get around one scene with delicacy on acct of the Hays office. Isn't that the biggest joke in creation, that your mother who has been classed with the unapproachables in clean stories, has had a blue pencil in the Hays office? I could laugh myself sick. Where Dell runs off with Amy for the evening, you know. They blue penciled Amy saying "He'll have to marry me now."⁸⁸

In January, 1941, *Cheers for Miss Bishop* premiered simultaneously in the Stuart and Nebraska theatres in Lincoln. Some of the scenes had been filmed on the University of Nebraska campus, and about fifty college students had been hired at "the whopping rate of five bucks a day" as extras.⁸⁹ A dozen guests from Hollywood attended the premier. The principal speaker was Irving Cobb, who "praised the Americanism of the people portrayed in the picture," and held it up as a worthy reflec-

tion of the qualities of "honesty, perseverance and chastity that made our nation great."⁹⁰

Mrs. Aldrich went to New York in March for the movie's opening at the Radio City Music Hall, where it ran for thirteen weeks. She wrote to Mary:

In an hour "Cheers" will open at the grand Music Hall. . . . Well I never thought I'd live to see my name in the subway at all the underground waiting stations but there it was yesterday even if *smallest* under Scott's and Gargan's big printed names.⁹¹

In spite of Bess Streeter Aldrich's engrossment in *Cheers for Miss Bishop*, the writing and publication of her stories continued. "The Drum Goes Dead," first printed in the *Cosmopolitan*, was resold to the *American Magazine* for its October, 1941, issue. It was also reprinted in a small book for the Christmas trade. *A Lantern in Her Hand* went into a reprint edition limited to one hundred thousand copies. John L. B. Williams wrote, "Just think of an edition limited to 100,000 copies. That shows what a novel you wrote."⁹²

The film and radio rights to this popular novel were not, however, finding a market. Mrs. Aldrich's agents reported: "The Hudnut people turned down *A Lantern in Her Hand* for radio purposes because they wanted 'something more sexy.' It was also tried on the Palmolive people but they came back with the same answer."⁹³

Now Mrs. Aldrich was also working on *The Lieutenant's Lady*, the last novel she was to write. Williams reported on the publication date, September 25, 1942, that Margaret Widdemer, who had read an advance copy of the book, appraised it as "having what few books created about a true personality have—livingness and drive."⁹⁴ The story is based on the diary of a young woman who traveled by riverboat up the Missouri from St. Louis into the Dakota and Montana territories in 1866 and 1867. A copy of her diary and that of her soldier husband, whom the young wife met at Fort Berthold in the Dakota Territory after her long and dangerous voyage, are among three



Cover design used for the book "The Lieutenant's Lady."

files of material pertaining to the novel in the Nebraska State Historical Society. Mrs. Aldrich spent almost a year researching *The Lieutenant's Lady* in order to make each detail as authentic as possible.⁹⁵

This last novel, according to Mrs. Aldrich, was not quite so big a seller as *A Lantern in Her Hand*, *A White Bird Flying*, and *Song of Years*. Nevertheless, it was on the best seller list for twenty-two weeks, even though it "slipped down the list toward the end after a few weeks."⁹⁶ The *New York Herald-Tribune's* column "What America Is Reading" for November 1, 1942, placed *The Lieutenant's Lady* seventh on its list.⁹⁷

For twenty-one years after the death of her husband, Bess Streeter Aldrich continued to live in Elmwood, where citizens said she was "as nice and as common as could be."⁹⁸ They felt that Elmwood, like Mrs. Aldrich, would live forever through her writings. Mrs. Aldrich participated in community and civic activities and attended the Methodist church, taking her turn at entertaining her church circle. She belonged to many state and national organizations—professional, cultural, and honorary—and was especially fond of her P.E.O. sisters of Chapter DL in Lincoln. Mrs. Aldrich traditionally entertained them at their first meeting of the year in September by inviting them to The Elms for a fried chicken dinner which she herself prepared. The well-known author frequently spoke before club and literary groups, was a charter member of the Nebraska Writer's Guild, and served as its president in 1928.⁹⁹

In 1946 Mrs. Aldrich realized she was spending as much time in Lincoln at the home of her daughter as she was in Elmwood. Moving to Lincoln, she built a rambling colonial-style house at 1000 South Fifty-second Street, next door to her daughter. There she lived the remainder of her life, writing, attending club meetings, enjoying her grandchildren, and doing needlework. Mrs. Aldrich and Mary ran back and forth through the pines to each other's homes many times each day. Mrs. Aldrich always took her needlework with her when she went to the Beechners, even for a few minutes, and thus kept her hands busy. She often remarked humorously that she had begun with cross-stitching and had graduated to lazy-daisy. Her hands, she pointed out, were a product of her mind, and the needlework was a product of her hands.¹⁰⁰

Needlework, however, did not displace writing for Mrs. Aldrich in her later years. At a kidney-shaped desk in her large upstairs bedroom she did most of her work. After first writing her manuscript in longhand, she swung around on her swivel chair to type the second copy. She hired a girl to type the final draft.¹⁰¹

As the years advanced, more short stories and articles appeared. In 1947 "Journey into Christmas" was sold to the *Christian Herald*.¹⁰² The next year Theodore M. Purdy, who had replaced John L. B. Williams at the D. Appleton-Century Company, suggested that Mrs. Aldrich assemble a Christmas book which would include "Journey into Christmas." It was agreed that James Aldrich, who was now an artist in New York, should illustrate his mother's book and receive half of the twelve per cent royalties.¹⁰³ While Mrs. Aldrich was engaged in assembling the Christmas stories, she wrote "Star Across the Tracks" and sold it to the *Saturday Evening Post*.¹⁰⁴

The book, *Journey into Christmas and Other Stories*, made its appearance in November, 1949. A volume of twelve stories and sketches, it reflects Bess Streeter Aldrich's love of Christmas, her belief in the values of strong

family ties, and her regard for the spiritual significance of community and home life.

In October, 1949, a month before the publication of the Christmas volume, Mrs. Aldrich sold "The Great Wide World of Men" to the *Woman's Home Companion* for two thousand dollars.¹⁰⁵ The People's Book Club used *The Bess Streeter Aldrich Treasury* as a dividend and premium in 1950.¹⁰⁶ And all of this time, Mrs. Aldrich remained a judge of books for the "Family Bookshelf" of the *Christian Herald*.

From 1951 to 1953 the author stayed with her work. She sold "The Story Behind 'A Lantern in Her Hand'" and "The Outsiders" to the *Christian Herald*. A manuscript on cancer entitled "I Made My Own Diagnosis" is in the Historical Society files, but there is no indication that it ever sold, although it was submitted to several periodicals.

In 1953, about a year after the writer had undergone surgery in a Lincoln hospital, she received a letter from John L. B. Williams, then associated with Longmans, Green and Company of New York:

I have always been mighty proud of my association with "A Lantern in Her Hand." Its continued life is very unusual as you know, particularly in these days when people are not reading fiction the way they used to. It goes to show what a good novel can do and continue to do in spite of changing fashions in reading. I'll bet you "The Lantern in Her Hand" will keep on shining for years to come and don't forget how your other good novels continue to sell.¹⁰⁷

After the operation Mrs. Aldrich appeared to regain her strength. However, she became ill again in June of 1954 and returned to the hospital, where she remained until her death on August 3. One of Bess Streeter Aldrich's last comments to her daughter was, "I have written my books. I have raised my family. However this turns out, it will be all right."¹⁰⁸ Thus she expressed her realization of the two goals she had set for herself.

Reflecting the courage, perseverance, and ingenuity of her pioneer ancestors, Bess Streeter Aldrich had been able to overcome obstacles and disappointments. With humility and common sense she had accepted such renown as came her way. Life to her was "wholesome, sane and happy."¹⁰⁹ Mrs. Aldrich knew what she wished to accomplish in life: to rear her family and write her stories. She was forever diligent in these pursuits.

NOTES

¹ Annie Russell Marble, *A Daughter of Pioneers, Bess Streeter Aldrich and Her Books* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., n.d.), 12. This fourteen-page pamphlet is a reprint of an article which originally appeared in the *Boston Transcript*. Bess Streeter Aldrich, *Mother Mason* (New York: A. K. Burt Co., 1924), 84.

² This material, located in the Nebraska State Historical Society, includes: (1) personal letters written by Mrs. Aldrich to her children and other relatives, (2) her business correspondence from 1907 to 1954, (3) autobiographical and biographical papers, (4) fan letters, (5) pioneer data collected by Mrs. Aldrich, (6) original manuscripts of several of her stories and articles, (7) her notes relating to various novels and short stories, (8) copies of magazines in which her stories were published, (9) newspaper clippings, (10) scrapbooks, and (11) miscellaneous items. Hereafter all references to this material will be cited as Aldrich MSS.

³ Bess Streeter Aldrich autobiographical sketch prepared for the use of organizations, Aldrich MSS.

⁴ Bess Streeter Aldrich, "The Faith That Rode with the Covered Wagon," *Christian Herald*, LIII, No. 33 (August 9, 1930), 6; S. B. Humbert, Cedar Falls, Iowa, to Bess Streeter Aldrich, June 18, 1937, Aldrich MSS.

⁵ Bess Streeter Aldrich, "I Remember," *A Bess Streeter Aldrich Treasury* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1959), 445.

⁶ Bess Streeter Aldrich, "Midwestern Writers: Bess Streeter Aldrich," *Prairie Schooner*, I, No. 1 (January, 1927), 80.

⁷ Obituary of James Wareham Streeter, courtesy of Mary Aldrich Beechner, daughter of Bess Streeter Aldrich.

⁸ Aldrich, "I Remember," 452.

⁹ Bess Streeter Aldrich, autobiographical sketch, Aldrich MSS.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Bess Streeter Aldrich, "Advice to Writers of the Future," *Story World*, V, No. 10 (April, 1924), 9.

¹³ Mary Aldrich Beechner to the author, personal interview November 15, 1967, Lincoln, Nebraska.

¹⁴ *The Young Citizen*, II, No. 6 (February, 1903), 281; III, No. 2 (October, 1903), 80; III, No. 6 (February, 1904), 275; III, No. 9 (May, 1904), 413.

¹⁵ Anna C. White, managing editor, *National Home Journal*, to Bess Streeter Aldrich, September 21, 1907, Aldrich MSS.

¹⁶ J. Berg Essenwein, Home Correspondence School, June 27, 1918, Aldrich MSS.

¹⁷ Franklin B. Wiley to Bess Streeter Aldrich, March 13, 1911, Aldrich MSS.

¹⁸ *Omaha World-Herald*, December 11, 1927; February 6, 1921. Mary Aldrich Beechner to the author, January 21, 1969.

¹⁹ Karl Edwin Marriman, Literary Editor, *Ladies Home Journal*, to Bess Streeter Aldrich, March 20, 1912, and February 5, 1913, Aldrich MSS.

²⁰ Ralph T. Hatle, Small, Maynard & Co., Boston, Mass., to Margaret Dean Stevens (pseudonym of Bess Streeter Aldrich until 1918), March 16, 1917, Aldrich MSS.

²¹ John M. Siddall to Bess Streeter Aldrich, May 17, 1918, Aldrich MSS.

²² *Ibid.*, October 28, 1919, Aldrich MSS.

²³ *Ibid.*, February 28, 1920, Aldrich MSS.

²⁴ Marble, *A Daughter of Pioneers*, 11.

²⁵ Blanche Colton Williams, *Bess Streeter Aldrich, Novelist* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., n.d.), 2. Copies of this small pamphlet, which was written at the request of D. Appleton-Century Company for advertising purposes, are in the Aldrich MSS.

²⁶ John M. Siddall to Bess Streeter Aldrich, January 22, 1920, Aldrich MSS.

²⁷ John L. B. Williams to Bess Streeter Aldrich, February 13, 1924, Aldrich MSS.

²⁸ Rutger Bleecker Jewett to Bess Streeter Aldrich, August 8, 1924, Aldrich MSS.

²⁹ Mary Aldrich Beechner to the author, personal interview November 15, 1967, Lincoln, Nebraska.

³⁰ Robert Streeter Aldrich, "Introduction," *A Bess Streeter Aldrich Treasury*, ix.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Mary Aldrich Beechner to the author, personal interview November 15, 1967, Lincoln, Nebraska.

³³ Richard Thomas to Bess Streeter Aldrich, September 2, 1929, Aldrich MSS.

³⁴ Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., to Bess Streeter Aldrich, February 13, 1928, Aldrich MSS.

³⁵ Bess Streeter Aldrich, "Writing Backwards," 2. Original manuscript in the Aldrich MSS.

³⁶ John L. B. Williams and Rutger Bleecker Jewett to Bess Streeter Aldrich, July 8, 1929, Aldrich MSS.

³⁷ "Bess Streeter Aldrich," *The Wilson Bulletin*, III, No. 20 (April, 1929), 608.

³⁸ Lydia Weaver to Bess Streeter Aldrich, March 5, 1926, Aldrich MSS.

³⁹ Bess Streeter Aldrich, *A Lantern in Her Hand* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964), 72.

⁴⁰ G. W. Noble, Omaha, Nebr., to Bess Streeter Aldrich, September 16, 1927, Aldrich MSS.

⁴¹ Aldrich, *A Lantern in Her Hand*, 142

⁴² Stanley High, editor, *Christian Herald*, to Bess Streeter Aldrich, December 10, 1930, Aldrich MSS.

⁴³ Oscar Graeve, editor, *Delineator*, to Bess Streeter Aldrich, May 24, 1930, Aldrich MSS.

⁴⁴ Philip S. Rose, editor, *Country Gentleman*, to Bess Streeter Aldrich, July 8, 1929, Aldrich MSS.

⁴⁵ Stanley High to Bess Streeter Aldrich, December 10, 1930, Aldrich MSS.

⁴⁶ Appleton's Book Chat (company leaflet), February 1, 1930, Aldrich MSS.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Unidentified newspaper clipping, Aldrich MSS.

⁴⁹ Curtis Publishing Company to Bess Streeter Aldrich, February 4, 1932, Aldrich MSS.

⁵⁰ Harry Payne Burton, editor, *Cosmopolitan*, to Bess Streeter Aldrich, May 17, 1932, Aldrich MSS.

⁵¹ Bess Streeter Aldrich to her children, Mary, Charles, and James, January 20, 1932, Aldrich MSS.

⁵² *Ibid.*, March 10, 1932, Aldrich MSS.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, February 12, 1932, Aldrich MSS.

⁵⁴ Bess Streeter Aldrich to Charles Aldrich, March 26, 1932, Aldrich MSS.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, March 30, 1932, Aldrich MSS.

⁵⁶ Bess Streeter Aldrich to her children, April 1, 1932, Aldrich MSS.

⁵⁷ Mary Aldrich Beechner to the author, personal interview, November 15, 1967, Lincoln, Nebraska.

⁵⁸ Lorina A. Schuler, editor, *Ladies' Home Journal*, to Bess Streeter Aldrich, January 31, 1933, Aldrich MSS.

⁵⁹ Williams, *Bess Streeter Aldrich, Novelist*, 9.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Rutger Bleecker Jewett to Bess Streeter Aldrich, September 6, 1933, Aldrich MSS.

⁶² *Ibid.*, November 20, 1933, Aldrich MSS.

⁶³ E. A. Burnett, Chancellor, University of Nebraska, to Bess Streeter Aldrich, April 30, 1934, Aldrich MSS.

⁶⁴ D. Appleton and Company to Bess Streeter Aldrich, various letters, 1934, Aldrich MSS.

⁶⁵ Curtis Publishing Company to Bess Streeter Aldrich, September 21, 1934, Aldrich MSS.

⁶⁶ Merritt Hulburd, Paramount Productions, to Bess Streeter Aldrich, November, 1934, Aldrich MSS.

⁶⁷ Bess Streeter Aldrich to her children, January 8, 1935, Aldrich MSS.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Bess Streeter Aldrich to Mrs. John Cobb, February 4, 1935, Aldrich MSS.

⁷¹ Bess Streeter Aldrich to her children, February 11, 1935, Aldrich MSS.

⁷² Bess Streeter Aldrich to her children, February 14 and 20, 1935, Aldrich MSS.

⁷³ Mary Pickford to Bess Streeter Aldrich, February 18, 1935, Aldrich MSS.

⁷⁴ Bess Streeter Aldrich to Mary Aldrich Beechner, February 19, 1935, Aldrich MSS.

⁷⁵ Williams, *Bess Streeter Aldrich, Novelist*, 10.

⁷⁶ Bess Streeter Aldrich to Mary Aldrich Beechner, April 14, 1935, Aldrich MSS.

⁷⁷ Bess Streeter Aldrich to Mrs. James W. Benjamin, Evanston, Ill., November 26, 1935, Aldrich MSS.

⁷⁸ *Saturday Evening Post* to Bess Streeter Aldrich, July 20, 1938, Aldrich MSS.

⁷⁹ John L. B. Williams to Bess Streeter Aldrich, several letters, 1937 and 1938, Aldrich MSS.

⁸⁰ Bess Streeter Aldrich to her children, August 4, 1936, Aldrich MSS.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, July 1, July 31, and August 11, 1938, Aldrich MSS.

⁸² *Ibid.*, March 9, 1939, Aldrich MSS.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, July 13, 1939, Aldrich MSS.

⁸⁴ Bess Streeter Aldrich to Mary Aldrich Beechner, September 24, 1940, Aldrich MSS.

⁸⁵ Bess Streeter Aldrich to her children, September 25, 1940, Aldrich MSS.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, November 1, 1940, Aldrich MSS.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, November 15, 1940, Aldrich MSS.

⁸⁸ Bess Streeter Aldrich to Mary Aldrich Beechner, October 5, 1940, Aldrich MSS.

⁸⁹ "Campus Round-Up," *Nebraska Alumnus*, LXV, No. 1 (January, 1968), 20.

⁹⁰ *Omaha World-Herald*, January 14, 1941.

⁹¹ Bess Streeter Aldrich to Mary Aldrich Beechner, March 13, 1941, Aldrich MSS.

⁹² John L. B. Williams to Bess Streeter Aldrich, September 3, 1941, Aldrich MSS.

⁹³ George Landy, John McCormick Agency, Inc., Beverly Hills, Calif., to Bess Streeter Aldrich, December 3, 1941, Aldrich MSS.

⁹⁴ John L. B. Williams to Bess Streeter Aldrich, September 25, 1942, Aldrich MSS.

⁹⁵ Bess Streeter Aldrich to Elizabeth Dickinson, August 30, 1944, Aldrich MSS.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *New York Herald-Tribune*, November 1, 1942.

⁹⁸ *Lincoln Evening Journal*, December 31, 1963.

⁹⁹ Mary Aldrich Beechner to the author, personal interview November 15, 1967, Lincoln, Nebraska. Aldrich MSS.

¹⁰⁰ Mary Aldrich Beechner to the author, personal interview, November 15, 1967, Lincoln, Nebraska.

¹⁰¹ Eleanor H. Mendelsohn, "Bess Streeter Aldrich," (unpublished MSS, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, La.) 9. The material in this manuscript was authenticated by Mary Aldrich Beechner.

¹⁰² Frank S. Mead, executive editor, *Christian Herald*, to Bess Streeter Aldrich, September 2, 1947, Aldrich MSS.

¹⁰³ Theodore M. Purdy to Bess Streeter Aldrich, October 29, 1948, Aldrich MSS.

¹⁰⁴ *Saturday Evening Post* to Bess Streeter Aldrich, November 17, 1948, Aldrich MSS.

¹⁰⁵ Elliott W. Schryver, fiction editor, *Woman's Home Companion*, to Bess Streeter Aldrich, October 25, 1949, Aldrich MSS.

¹⁰⁶ People's Book Club to Bess Streeter Aldrich, October 9, 1949, Aldrich MSS.

¹⁰⁷ John L. B. Williams to Bess Streeter Aldrich, November 5, 1953, Aldrich MSS.

¹⁰⁸ Mary Aldrich Beechner to the author, personal interview November 15, 1967, Lincoln, Nebraska.

¹⁰⁹ Marble, *A Daughter of Pioneers*, 14.