

BOWN 4/14/40  
ac1

April 10<sup>th</sup>.

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1059 Harvard Street Rochester, N. Y.

Col Solbert

Dear Sir -

acknowledged 4/15  
on receipt.

I am sorry to have delayed in sending you this little interview but we have had serious illness and a death in the family and it was overlooked in the confusion.

I am never very accurate in my stories so hesitate to have you quote me; but I had my sister Mrs Barrows and my husband read the interview and they vouch for my stories. X

The one regarding the initiation came from Mrs Harold Gleason

Bown, Harriett



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As Mr Eastman told her the story and showed the scar on his wrist during a luncheon at Mr Eastmans house.

Mrs Gleason told me this story afterwards and she told me at the time that Mr Eastman said my father was nicer to him than the other boys so quote Mrs Gleason when you tell that story

yours very sincerely  
Harriett S. Bown.

Bown, Harriett



*Very great and my father always wanted the emigrants (excepted the fabricator) of his own set & BOWN*

Interview with Mrs. Carlton F. Bown,  
1059 Harvard Street

2/19/40

*recd 4/15/40*

Mrs. Bown believed that George Eastman as a boy lived in a world which was rather harsh and unfriendly. This impression had been gained from her father, E. Darwin Smith, Jr., who was a chum of George Eastman in the second grade of old Number 3 School. A Mr. Cook was principal and M.D. Rowley was a teacher there.

Rochester in the 'sixties was hardly more than a frontier town with all the boisterous crudeness of a young community. Mrs. Bown's father said there were "a hundred" saloons on Main Street (which then extended, approximately, from the Pennsylvania Railroad Station to Clinton Avenue) and probably his exaggeration was not great. Boys of that time were generally rougher and tougher than boys of today, she believed. Mrs. Bown's father told her that when the new principal came to Number 3 School, a bunch of the livelier boys went to the third floor and spattered drops of ink down the stairwell upon Mr. Cook as he entered. Mr. Cook, like "Mr. Chips" in the story, eventually won the respect and friendship of the irresponsible lads *and was beloved by all his pupils*

*as he was principal for many years.*

George Eastman did not engage in such pranks and the boys, while they may not have disliked him, did not seem to consider him particularly as being "one of the bunch." He was gentle and refined and this cut him off from his fellows. George Eastman's straitened circumstances, apparently, did not lessen their regard for him,

*The social life in R. at that time was more brilliant than at any time following very large balls & receptions were the style then and the weddings were splendid social affairs. (The contrast between the saloons & society were contrast 2.1)*

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but the threat of poverty worried him and tended to turn his thoughts inward rather than outward to his fellows.

E. Darwin Smith, Jr. was George Eastman's closest friend in public school, the reason possibly being that "opposites attract." Darwin was a lively, boisterous scamp and his facility in getting in and out of schools was amazing. He seemed so incorrigible that his family took him out of public school and put him in a girls school (where he was the only boy!) but this proved so impossible that he was sent to a private or tutoring school. From then on he was "kicked out" of some of the best schools in the country. Darwin, however, had a big heart and an honest soul and, in spite of being so different from George Eastman outwardly, he instinctively appreciated and liked him. George, in turn admired (and possibly envied) this boy who had no shyness and who seemed at ease with others and to get much enjoyment from living. *I heard my father say many times that*

The only boyhood escapade of George Eastman, which Mrs. Bown recalled from her father's conversation, was <sup>not</sup> a very mild one. One day three or four boys in their early teens, who were friends and neighbors of E. Darwin Smith, Jr., came to his house on South Washington Street to play. They obtained a washtub and filled it with water and then sailed their little toy boats in it. George Eastman sailing his with the others. (Possibly George had made one or more of these boats for he was always clever at handiwork.) As they became enthused at their play they splashed the water until Mrs. Smith's kitchen was quite a mess. Before the place was entirely "flooded," the cook came in and chased the boys out with blows from a big iron spoon. Subsequently George Eastman and the other would-be-navigators sailed their boats out-of-doors.

*now Mrs. Eastman could buy out any of the 2500 glad he could.  
the old crowd that had snubbed him & he was glad*



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Mrs. Bown told of the neighborhood boy's club which met in the barn behind the Darwin Smith home in South Fitzhugh Street. As an example of their fun: they invited the girls to a "play" in the barn and offered them "box seats" in the loft to which they climbed by a ladder. When they were seated, the boys removed the ladder and threatened not to replace it. After the girls were in semi-hysterical tears they "relented" and the performance was given.

Mrs. Bown believed the acceptance of George Eastman into the club was due more to the fun obtained in initiating him than to a desire to have this shy quiet boy for a member. One of the initiation rites was that the candidate for membership stand on the barn floor while an officer stood on the loft above with a lighted candle in hand and let fall drops of the hot wax upon the outstretched bare arm of the candidate. Mr. Eastman showed self-control even in those early days for he stood firm and unflinching while the hot wax burned the skin of his forearm. This was a time when his quietness was admired, and his status was raised in the opinion of the other boys. When Mr. Eastman was an old man he proudly showed the little scar on his forearm, caused by the initiation rites. He enjoyed the recollection of the occasion, for it marked him as "one of the boys."

↓ my sister Mrs Barrows corrected this.  
They had the girls up in the loft took the ladders down. and built a fire in one of the troughs. The smoke frightened the girls terribly & aroused the neighborhood, and also aroused indignation among the parents of the girls. and they made

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some trouble for the boys -

This story was told by my father  
Mrs Edwin Medcalf (nee) Dewey & Mrs Fred Alling (nee) Clements  
as they were among the girls at the show.

My husband who listened and appreciated  
my father's stories because of the humor corrects  
this one.

He says that the boys flooded the kitchen  
which had a kind of slate floor and that they  
were having a wonderful time sailing their boats  
all through the big kitchen when they were rudely  
interrupted by the cook who chased them out with  
an iron spoon. She caught my father and gave him  
a good blow on the arm, the scar on his arm  
was his proof when <sup>my father</sup> he told the story. I might add  
that my father's stories were always lively but we  
children believed in them thoroughly.