

Francis, Elizabeth, Eliza, Lizzie & Sarah

Two Sisters. Suddenly motherless. Now Fatherless? Alone, except for each other. Father was still alive but this dark evening, just a few short weeks after Mother passed, he placed both of them here, together, then slipped back into the shadows of the San Francisco night.

They heard him tell the Matron he was unable to do much for their support... "*Francis Elizabeth and Sarah Jane*", he repeated their names as they were transcribed into a large ledger. 9 year-old Francis, born in New Orleans, black hair, black eyes and dark complexion. Sarah's blue eyes, brown hair and light complexion were in contrast to her sister, 3 years younger, born in Chicago where they used to live, before here. The foghorns were new to their ears, and the chill in the night air was a surprise. This would always be the City where their mother died and Father disappeared. The matron asked if they had eaten, but Francis said they weren't hungry, just tired... very tired. Led into a large darkened room, bunk beds cradled other children sleeping. One small girl in a far bed waved hello. Despite the number of children Sarah and Francis felt alone and sad... very sad.

A multitude of children's voices awakened them from their fitful sleep. So many girls and boys, all ages, shapes and sizes. Francis held Sarah's hand as they followed the others to a room with long tables and bowls of oatmeal. In the events of last night, they had forgotten to eat, then when offered food, they were too tired... too sad... too confused to have an appetite. It was hard to understand... it all happened so quickly, watching their father leave. Francis pulled Sarah to a table full of giggling girls. They reminded her of their friends back in Chicago. The tenement building they lived in with several other families was a rabbit warren of belongings, hanging laundry and cooking smells, both good and bad. There were plenty of playmates their age, and lots of noise, happy and sad and everything in between. Her older brother, Daniel and sister, Mary were away all day working. They seemed older than their years and rarely shared many stories about their jobs. When they did, Father hushed them, so Mama wouldn't weep. These new girls asked their names. "*I'm Sarah and this is my big sister Francis*" "*Please call me Elizabeth.*" Sarah blinked.

Sarah still called her Francis on occasion, but she rarely answered, so she played along, addressing her by her middle name. They did not appear to be sisters or related. Elizabeth was dark-skinned with black eyes, while Sarah's light brown hair and blue eyes set her apart. They naively used their birthplace— New Orleans for Elizabeth and Chicago for Sarah, to explain the visual contradiction when anyone asked. No matter, their abbreviated family history was a strong bond. The loss of their sick

Mother to diphtheria and the loss of an overwhelmed Father unable to support them clung to them... as they clung to each other. Because one of their parents was still alive, they were considered half-orphans. The designation offered a slim hope of being reunited. As time went by and they grew older, they were learning to exist in a world where hope was just a wish, that may never be granted. In a sea of other orphaned or abandoned children, their new family had even sadder stories. They focused on the generosity bestowed upon them by the benevolent matrons. Slowly settling into the daily routines designed in their best interest; they ate well-cooked meals served in a noisy dining hall full of well-fed children, wore clean clothing that matched their cohort and were properly schooled in the Asylum's classrooms. The girls spent hours learning domestic skills, sewing and cooking, while the boys honed their vocational talents in woodworking classes.

Time moved both swiftly and slowly at the Asylum. It seemed measured by the overnight loss of close friends by adoption to couples with and without children of their own. For those left behind, dreaming was waiting for such a lightning strike of luck... to depart with a family of their very own.

Rambunctious boys regularly ran away, a few were retrieved, more returned on their own to the familiarity of a faux family. By choice or circumstance, no one was guaranteed forever in their future at the Asylum. At age 16, the eldest aged out of its care and shelter and were given a gift of seed money to give them a leg up on their new journey.

By far the most intriguing and confusing were those being indentured. Depending on the new guardians, one could be drawn into a thriving family business... or essentially enslaved to do the menial tasks in their new home. While the managers did their best to interview and assure a vetted matchup, not everyone has the same definition of family... or work suitable for a child... or punishment when expectations are not met. Times were tough as folks struggled to survive. With no blood ties, a youngster had no assurances of safety or long term security once they left the everyday embrace of the Orphan Asylum.

5 years and a lifetime passed on the inside for Sarah and Elizabeth. The routine of school classes, homework, and chores expected of them filled their days. Drawing, dancing and music lessons were also offered for those so inclined.

She had become Eliza to fit her growing confidence and varied moods... so Sarah obliged once again. Three years older and a young adult-in-training gave Eliza an unspoken authority over Sarah. Sometimes she generously filled the gap her mother left behind in their lives, despite an abundance of maternal care and concern in the nurturing

surroundings of the Orphanage. The San Francisco Protestant Orphan Asylum founders, board of managers, and staff were all women. Most were from upper class circumstances in San Francisco society, yet all felt duty-bound to sustain those less fortunate with the *“Protestant ethics and rectitude of the times”*. Even their board meetings turned into sewing circles to complete the mending needed for the children’s clothes. It was natural to have favorites and both sisters agreed it was Mrs. Swain. They treated her with the respect she deserved. Her focused attention was unflagging in kindness and wise counsel for not only the sisters, but for every child in her stead.

The day Mrs. Swain introduced Elizabeth to the Carrs was a mixture of exhilaration and sorrow. The couple was looking for help with their tailoring business. Eliza, now Lizzie, had shown great promise in her sewing classes so she seemed a perfect fit. Nicholas Carr was from England, as were her parent’s origins. His wife Ann shared her mother’s name. Was this meant to be? There would be a 6 month trial period of living in their home in the Mission district and if all went well, she would be taken on as an indentured apprentice to learn the finer points of his trade. It felt like her last best chance as she neared her 16th birthday. She would be expected to leave the familiar safe harbor of the SFPOA to be on her own at that age, if she was not successfully placed.

Here was a viable way to earn her keep, in a home, with adults to guide her. A far cry from a dormitory, where the children far outnumbered the guardians. As for sorrow, she was leaving Sarah behind. Tearful parting promises between the two sisters were made; to stay in touch and reconnect whenever possible. Lizzie assured Sarah she was next in line to find a forever home and family. After all, they would be just blocks away from each other in this small town. Bravely wishing her good luck, Sarah still felt a nagging sense of being abandoned and alone again.

Lizzie planned to be on her best behavior to impress this young couple. She would follow Mrs. Swain’s advice to be friendly, polite, helpful, and do what was asked of her. These were potential employers if she met their criteria as a live-in apprentice. They were not her parents... yet. Perhaps a family relationship would be forged with them over time. Their home was picturesque. Set back from the busy street, its small well-kept yard behind a white picket fence gave it a warm welcoming feel. A street car rumbled past the 2-story house on 24th Street. She could hear a working windmill nearby and the pastures that dotted the landscape fed goats and cows. Mission Street still had horse drawn carts carrying goods for deliveries. A noisy train crossed diagonally a half block from the front door on its way to the Embarcadero bringing produce and

livestock from further distances down the peninsula once a day and back again. Situated a half block from Mission Street, just a few blocks south of the edge of the City, the entrance opened to his tailor shop and workspace. The living quarters upstairs had a small bedroom set aside for her trial period. It all felt like a dream.

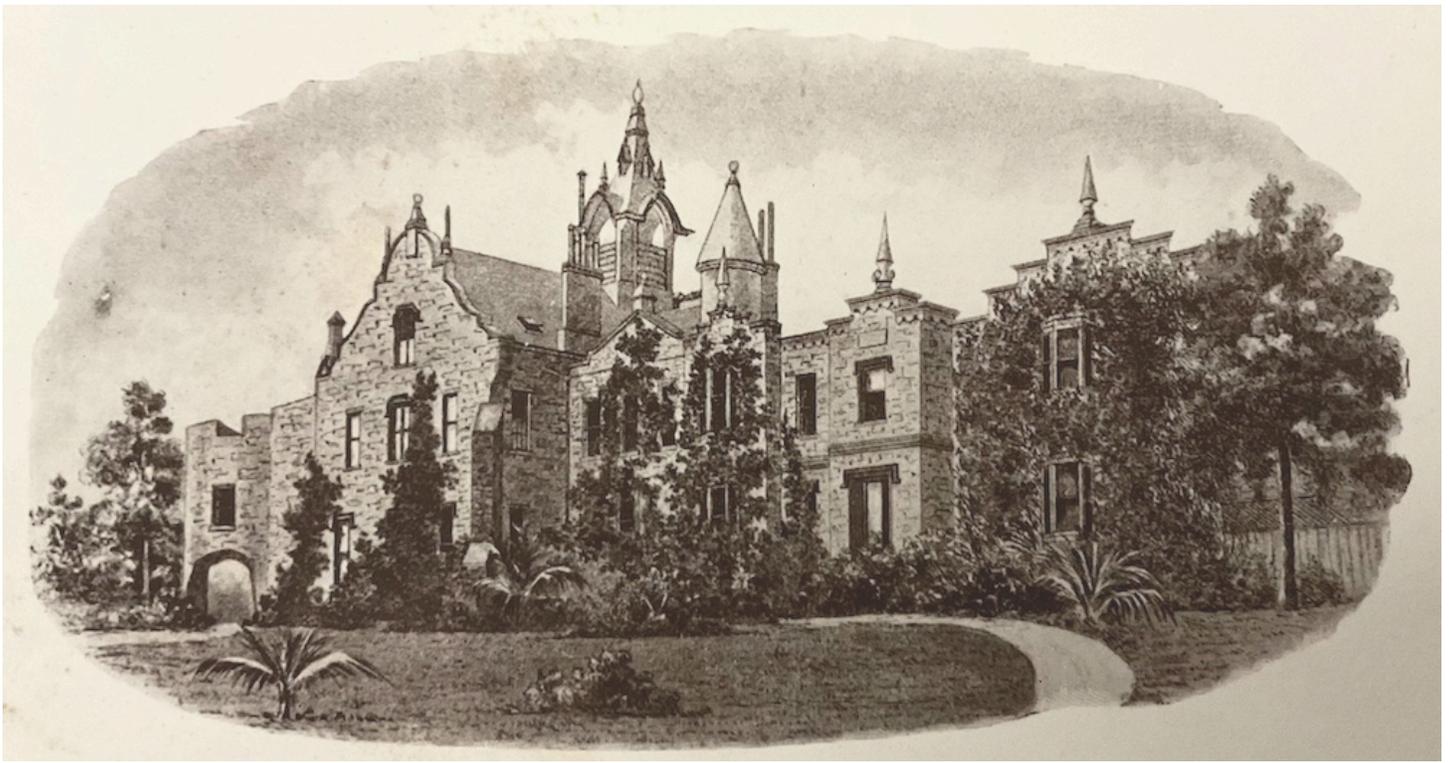
It was a good omen... a month before the end of her trial period, the Carrs were eager to sign her indenture contract. Their Lizzie was learning fast to ably follow her mentor’s directions. Mr. Carr was an especially kind and patient teacher, attentive to such an earnest student honing these vest-making skills for her future. They had an easy working relationship, because she brought a youthful energy into his shop. For the most part, he and his wife had been on their best behavior too. They may have had an occasional marital squabble but that was not Lizzie’s concern. She was happy being treated like an adult, after all she was 15 years old. At the end of her 5-year term she would be given \$175 dollars and two suits of clothes’. No doubt Mr. Carr would tailor those suits himself, perhaps with her finishing touches. As the contract stipulated, the Carrs had already *“provided her with good and sufficient food, comfortable lodging, proper washing, and suitable apparel for working and holydays”* and the tailor shop was not a *“Restaurant, Boarding House, Hotel, Theatre, or any other establishment where spirituous liquor was sold.”* She believed *“her moral character was not endangered”* nor had she *“been treated cruelly”* these last 5 months.

She gave little notice to the last line of the Indenture’s clause about termination upon *“the death of the said Mr. & Mrs. Nicholas Carr —during said term”*.

It seemed fitting to use her most serious name, Elizabeth when signing this legal document that promised to change the circumstances of her young life. She hesitated at the mistake that aged her down 2 years, to 13. Had the Manager’s of the Orphan’s Asylum done her a disservice or favor? She would be seen as an impressive ‘child’, advanced for her years. Perhaps the Carr’s needs or preferences, did not include ushering a pubescent teenager into womanhood. Being housed and fed until she was actually 20 years old far exceeded the Orphanage’s mandate. The adults in the room must have had their reasons. Nevertheless, she had found her way into their good graces and was anxious to secure this big opportunity within her grasp. There was no need to quibble over a few typos. She had never been happier with such a bright future in in her sights.

I hereby consent of my own free will to be bound as an apprentice to the said *Nicholas Carr* on the conditions and for the term mentioned in the foregoing Indenture. WITNESS my hand and seal, this *Eighteenth (18)* day of *January* 1870.

Elizabeth H. Haley 



"Protestant Orphan Asylum." Formally organized in 1851. In 1853 the two city blocks bounded by Haight, Herman, Laguna and Buchanan Streets were bought at public sale. In March 1854 the first building on this site was occupied. In 1863, with money donated by the Sansome Hook and Ladder Co. and the proceeds from the sale of a lot of ground given by Mr. James Lick, the addition was built known as the Sansome Wing. The building was raised in 1919.

Number	Name	Age	Eyes	Hair	Complexion	Date of Reception	By Whom Received	Place of Birth	Parents	History of Child	Manner & Date of Transfer from Asylum
512	Sarah Shear	9	Blue	Brown	Light	May 5 th 1864	Mrs. T. H. [unclear]	New York	American	Her father was a [unclear] and left the child with the [unclear] wife who promised to care for her.	March 6 th 1868 Sarah was removed to live with Mrs. Lea of San Francisco. May 7 th 68 was given back to her adoptive Mother Mrs. Shear.
513	Frances E. Healey	10	Black	Black	Dark	May 5 th 1864	Mrs. T. H. [unclear]	Madison	England	Her father was a [unclear] and left the child with the [unclear] wife who promised to care for her.	August 5 th 1869 Frances Healey's children were removed by their father and indentured to Mrs. [unclear] to learn the [unclear] making.
514	Sarah J. Healey	7	Blue	Brown	Light	May 5 th 1864	Mrs. T. H. [unclear]	Chicago	England	Her father was a [unclear] and left the child with the [unclear] wife who promised to care for her.	August 5 th 1869 Frances Healey's children were removed by their father and indentured to Mrs. [unclear] to learn the [unclear] making.

Ledger Page 117-118 - Admission of Sarah & Frances to Asylum • May 5, 1864

