

Harriet L. Porter's mother

3. Charity Dubois Porter 1804 - 1877.

Charity Dubois was born June 4, 1804, the second child of Jonathan and Elizabeth Ham Dubois, in Catskill, a town on the west bank of the Hudson River, about halfway between Kingston and Albany.

There were three in the family, the parents and the eldest child, Margaret, born in 1802, when they went from Rensselaer county to live in Catskill, a hundred miles away. It was then rather pioneer country. There was a serious drought and the mother, Elizabeth Ham Dubois, found it so lonely and primitive that she wept continuously from homesickness; so she supposedly "marked" Charity, at that time "on the way." That, in the estimation of her daughters, accounted for the fact that their mother was a very frequent weeper. Asked one time by her daughter Harriet, "Mother, do you know that not a day goes by without your crying over something?", she replied, "Why, child, is it as bad as that?"

Charity's baptism took place on Jan. 1, 1805, the clergyman being Rev. John Bassett. The baptism occurred in the Dutch Reformed church at East Greenbush (on the Hudson, east side, ten miles south of Albany). The family lived then in Schodack, a village adjoining East Greenbush to the southeast.

It was told of Charity as a young woman that she was "the prettiest girl in the village" and that the college boys waited around to see her pass when she went out on her errands. (Union College, Schenectady, May be the college referred to, for later, when Elizabeth Porter (aunt Libbie) "at the age of five years," in 1832, visited her grandparents, Jonathan and Elizabeth Ham Dubois, they were living six miles from Ballston Springs which is about fifteen miles north of Schenectady. It was Union College which Charity's brother Cornelius attended and where later he taught Latin.) A pastel, picture of a young woman, the work of Charity's daughter Harriet, is said to have a resemblance to Charity. She had rosy cheeks, black hair and large dark eyes.

Charity was shy indisposition. When her daughter Harriet in her later years was asked how she came to be such a good conversationalist, she replied, "Mother was too shy to talk to guests, so it fell to me very often to entertain them." In contrast to her elder sister Margaret who could cook a fine meal and at the same time take active part in conversation, Charity needed to be by herself when she prepared a meal.

Charity was an excellent cook and housekeeper and taught her daughters the feminine arts and skills of the day. She was also very thrifty; husband Medad used to tease her, saying that after she had died of starvation there would always be a penny to be found in the house, laid aside for a rainy day.

Charity, brought up in the Dutch Reformed church, which was similar to the Presbyterian, was puzzled and concerned always about the doctrine of predestination.

Charity Dubois Porter passed away Sept. 12, 1877 at her home in Chittenango. With her were her daughter, Elizabeth Porter, resident of the homestead with her, and her daughter Harriet Mott who with her two children, Florence and Mayhew had come from Wisconsin to be with her.