

# **Helen Newberry Joy – An Informal History**

**By Karen Olsen-Bolz**

**In Honor of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Helen Newberry Joy Hospital 11/10/15**

## **The Journey Begins:**

It all started with the painting of a beautiful woman, in a gorgeous dress and tasteful but elegant jewelry in the waiting room at Helen Newberry Joy Hospital in Newberry Michigan. The picture had a plate on it announcing “Helen Newberry Joy - Beneficiary and Humanitarian.”

Looking at that picture numerous times, my curiosity was piqued. Who was this woman, really? Why was this hospital named for her and not for her father, for whom the town of Newberry was named?

Looking at Helen Newberry Joy’s portrait by Kay Burnett Hill, Helen did not look like other women’s pictures from this area and era.

This curiosity has taken me, accompanied by my best friend Taffy (Verneda) Stonehouse, to a Detroit cemetery several times, the Grosse Pointe Historical Society and the Edsel and Eleanor Ford Estate in Grosse Pointe over the course of the last couple of years. Fortunately, we met with others who were pleased with the interest in one of their own, who was not forgotten!

This article is based on information gleaned and provided by the wonderful women at the Grosse Pointe Historical Society, Isabelle (Izzy) Donnelly, Director of Education & Collections Manager, Penny Soby, President and Kay Burt-Willson, Vice President – Education. Izzy and Penny allowed me to come in during a day their Society was closed, talk about Helen, look at, and copy many interesting items. Kay Burt-Willson helped find the artist of Helen’s painting, Patricia Burnett Hill, which opened another interesting aspect. On the quest for something found during the meeting at the Grosse Pointe Historical Society, the journey progressed to another site in Grosse Pointe, the Eleanor and Edsel Ford House. Generously, Cindy Olsen (no relation), Collection Information for the Edsel & Eleanor Ford House afforded us access to a unique display. Another generous gift of time and additional materials were provided by Sterling McGinn, whose obvious knowledge of Luce County history was apparent at the reception for the opening of our Emergency Department and the Time Capsule in November 2014. The other supporter of these many jaunts is my husband, Rick Bolz. His support for my many trips south as well as time spent glued to the Internet has been truly appreciated!

## **Helen – Who was this woman?**

Interestingly, doing much of my initial research via the Internet, there is no real biography of Helen. When you search her name, you find the men in her life, but little about Helen. This fact encouraged me to pursue this further.

So, what follows here is my journey, with a few side trips, in finding out more about our Benefactor! Please excuse any errors you might find. If you have other information, feel free to share!

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A starting point for me was my monthly Michigan History subscription; in particular one issue from November / December 2010 which highlighted a cemetery in downtown Detroit: Elmwood Cemetery.

This cemetery, established in 1846, was designed by the famous landscape architect Frederick Law Olmstead. As you enter and meander through the grounds, you can see names of families that are familiar in the Upper Peninsula. Alger, Houghton, Joy, McMillan, Moran, Newberry, to name a few.

It is the oldest non-denominational burial ground in Michigan. Of further note, it is the earliest integrated cemetery. Elmwood Cemetery is the final resting place of many veterans, of all ranks, from the Civil War onwards. The first “Decoration” Day, now known as Memorial Day was held May 30, 1868 at the Elmwood Cemetery.

Doing a bit of on-line research, “Find a Grave” helped me find the site of the Joy family burial plot. With this information in hand, accompanied by my wonderful friend, we went in search of Helen and her family.

At Elmwood Cemetery, we found the **JOY** family plot. This plot contains the graves and monuments of Helen and her husband, Henry and their children, including a headstone for their lost baby.

## The Newberry Family:

A number of our Upper Peninsula counties, townships and cities are named for Detroit area businessmen as well as notable figures; men who made their fortunes investing in business and industry in the Upper Peninsula.

Helen’s father, John Stoughton Newberry, was one such businessman. Originally, from Waterville, New York, John was a University of Michigan graduate and studied law in Detroit. He was great friends with James McMillan. Together they were in business with a number of ventures in Detroit as well as the Newberry area. One source sites that one of his partners in the Detroit, Mackinac and Marquette Railroad was also William B. Moran. Another source, Wikipedia, includes James McMillan as a partner. Among his ventures was the Vulcan Furnace Company, Newberry, Michigan, which needed the rail service to transport product.

When John passed in 1887, he left a sizable fortune and many businesses. This fortune continued to afford his family a more than comfortable life-style. Helen was 18 years old at the time of her father’s passing.

Several streets around the Helen Newberry Joy Hospital are named for Helen and her siblings. Those names are in **bold**.

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- **Harrie** was her half-brother, from her father's first marriage to Harriet N. Robinson. Harriet passed away a year after their marriage in 1856, just ten days after Harrie's birth. From documents reviewed from a variety of sources, Harrie lived an adventuresome life as a civil engineer and diplomat; passing in 1909 in Dover, England. Ironically, Harrie also married a Harriette!
  
- Helen's father remarried in 1859 to Helen P. Handy. Together, they had three children.
  - **Truman Handy** Newberry was named after his maternal grandfather.
    - **Phelps** Newberry, Truman's son, which was the maiden name of his great-grandmother.
  - **John S.** Newberry named after his father.
  - **Helen** Hall Newberry Joy was born June 9, 1869 and passed away March 13, 1958.

## Helen – Fascinating Life

Helen was born into a wealthy family in 1869. Her family lived in a 30-room mansion built in 1876 on Jefferson Avenue, Detroit, MI. The home was "filled with silver door hinges and Tiffany light fixtures and carved mahogany balustrades" The home featured an Aeolian pipe organ, installed approximately in 1900. The Tiffany fixtures installed in 1892, when electricity became available. (Detroit Free Press, Sunday, January 8, 1961)

Helen, though, was not idle in either her mind or her efforts. Her mother seems to have been a wonderful role model for her interests in community, civic pride and duties.

## Interjecting a bit of history . . .

In the last decades of the 1800's, after the Civil War, the need for trained qualified nurses was apparent. Formal training programs, focusing on science and medicine were established. One of the first in Michigan was Grace Hospital in Detroit. Significant funding (\$100,000 from each) was provided for the hospital, some sources report, from James McMillan and John Stoughton Newberry, Helen's father for the creation of Grace Hospital in 1886.

According to elderweb.com, Grace Hospital actually started as the Newberry Training School for Nurses in 1889! The history of Grace Hospital states it was named after James McMillan's daughter, Grace McMillan Jarvis.

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Helen opened her parent's home, Newberry House, built in 1876 on Jefferson to the League for the Handicapped. There were workshops and a sales office located there. It was razed in 1961.

In those days, it was not appropriate for single women to live independently from their families. Helen's mother, Helen Hardy Newberry, stepped in to build the "Helen Newberry Nurses Home" at 100 East Willis Avenue, Detroit, Michigan. This building is in the Medical Center in Detroit and close to Wayne State University. This residence was built in 1898 and is being renovated into apartments.

Her mother also endowed "Newberry Hall" the Christian Association of the University of Michigan, in honor of her husband, Helen's father, in 1890. The building, including furnishings cost \$40,000 and the Newberry family donated \$18,000.

Helen and her siblings also built Helen Newberry Hall at the University of Michigan in 1915, an all-female residence, in memory of their mother.

Alma College has a "Newberry Hall," constructed in 1961, after Helen's passing. It was constructed in Helen Newberry Joy's to honor her many contributions to Alma College in her lifetime.

Helen's children, entrusted with the Helen Newberry Joy Foundation, continued in her path and that of their Newberry grandparents, according to the Luce County History, by providing an initial \$240,000 in funding the Helen Newberry Joy Hospital. This was due to Mr. Sid Foster of Newberry contacting Henry B. Joy directly. In 1974, the HNJ Foundation also provided another \$500,000 for a Cardiac Care Unit for Helen Newberry Joy Hospital.

The Foundation continued their generosity, when Wayne State University was awarded \$400,000 in 1960 for the building of the school's first Woman's Dormitory, \$1.1 million 250-student facility.

The Helen Newberry Joy Foundation also provided for the first Doctoral Nursing Student Fellowship in 1996 (udmercy.edu – message from the Dean Winter '02)

There continues to be the Helen Newberry Joy Endowed Scholarship at Wayne State University College of Nursing.

Another building, the Helen Newberry Joy Middle School in Detroit was closed in 2006 due to declining enrollment.

My personal reflection is that the endowments and organizations Helen founded and / or was a member of were spurred on not only because of her mother's influence but also from Helen's own experience in the loss of her first child at birth (1893). It appears that Helen's mother also experienced the loss of an infant boy. Her father also provided an example in his efforts, perhaps fueled from the loss of his first

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wife just ten days after the birth of Helen's half-brother Harrie. Their familial interest in healthcare for their fellow citizens is quite evident both then and now over a hundred years later!

## **Continuing with Helen . . .**

Helen married Henry Bourne Joy in 1892; remaining married to him until his death in 1936. Henry was a friend of Helen's brother, Truman Handy Newberry. The two men also served together in the Spanish- American War. On a trip to New York City, Henry and Truman, in 1902, witnessed the speed of two Packard vehicles chasing a horse-drawn fire engine and were very impressed. They approached the owners of Packard in Ohio; brought together a group of investors and brought the Packard Motor Car Company to Detroit. It is notable that the factory in Detroit was designed by the famous architect Albert Kahn, a favorite of Henry Ford's factories as well. The Packard was well known for its engineering innovations, including the V-12 engine.

Another of Henry's great friends was none other than Abraham Lincoln!

There is significant irony of her husband being president of Packard Motor until 1926. It was in Helen's choice of transportation! More on that later.

Helen and Henry did have three other children: Helen Bourne Joy Lee (1896-1977); Marian Handy Joy (1899-1910); and Henry Bourne Joy (1910-1976). It was Henry Bourne Joy, the son, who was responsible for the donation to provide matching funds for the establishment of Helen Newberry Joy Hospital in 1965.

Helen's upbringing was within the finest society circles of Detroit. Although she did not attend college since most women did not at that time, she did receive a broad education through her schooling, family and travels.

Helen's primary home as a child was the magnificent mansion on 1363 East Jefferson, Detroit, MI, built in 1875/1876 described above. Her father's friend and business partner, James McMillan, had a similar mansion at 1411 East Jefferson, Detroit, MI, built 1873-1870. The two men then built side-by-side "summer" mansions in Grosse Pointe, MI. The Newberry's home was "Lake Terrace."

Helen and Henry's summer home at 301 Lakeshore was named "Fair Acres." To get to their summer residences, the family would take carriages to their private steam yacht. Their yacht could take several leisurely hours for the journey. The boathouse is now the Crescent Sail Yacht Club. Henry liked to sail and would sail for hours on Lake St. Clair. To call her husband home for meals, Helen would ring the "Joy Bells". This 15-bell / three-tiered set of bells are an impressive sight and sound still today. Even though the homes are gone, the bells reside in Joy Bell Park in Grosse Pointe and are still chimed.

## **Helen's Contributions to Society . . .**

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Besides using her family's wealth for memorial buildings, Helen was involved with not only Grace Hospital but also Hutzel Women's Hospital in Detroit, MI.

She was awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Arts from Wayne State University in 1948 and made an honorary alumna of the University of Michigan in 1954.

Two different accounts state that she was a part of over 70 (or 83 (Detroit Times, Sunday 3/16/58) organizations. This was a woman of action and commitment. A Memorial Document stated organizations included: The Daughters of the American Revolution, the Colonial Dames of America, the Society of Mayflower Descendants, the Needlework Guild of America, the Thompson Home for Old Ladies, the Women's Hospital of Detroit (Hutzel), and the Cottage Hospital of Grosse Pointe. She was present at the first meeting of the Michigan Society of the Red Cross in 1905; sent supplies to help the San Francisco disaster in 1905; directed surgical dressing stations in Washington in 1917 and organized occupational therapy classes in Newberry House in Detroit.

She was very active in the arts in Detroit, being a founding member of the Fine Arts Society of Detroit and Detroit Symphony Society. She enjoyed acting in various plays even in her early eighties!

## **Other Interesting Notes . . .**

Helen's portrait was painted by Patricia Hill Burnett. Patricia, in fact, donated the portrait and attended the Helen Newberry Joy Hospital dedication ceremony November 6, 1965.

Kay Burt-Willson, VP of Education of the Grosse Pointe Historical Society had heard of my visit with Izzy and Penny, looking into information about Helen. In our correspondence, she informed me that Patricia was alive and living in Bloomfield Hills, MI, a suburb of Detroit. A letter of introduction and invitation to lunch with Kay and me was sent December 16, 2014. There was not a response until a call came from Patricia's daughter, Terrill Hill Burnett, in February 2015 letting me know that her mother had passed December 29, 2014. She did tell me though that her mother would have LOVED to lunch with us.

Patricia was a noted artist whose portraits were of internationally known business people and politicians. She was also commissioned for twenty (20) portraits exhibited in the Women's Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls, NY.

Patricia and Helen had some similarities, both were well loved and with financial resources to help make a difference in their worlds.

Most accounts of Patricia cite that she was Miss Michigan and first runner-up Miss America in 1942, winning Miss Congeniality! After Patricia met Betty Friedan, the writer of "The Feminine Mystique"

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1963, she engaged in many feminist organizations and was the first President of the Michigan National Organization for Women in 1972. She also did a portrait of Betty!

Michigan History Magazine's November / December 2014 issue featured an article on the very exclusive Scarab Club. This private and exclusive club was exclusively male, until Patricia was accepted as its first woman artist!

She lived with a zest for life, driving her Rolls Royce in the Detroit Dream Cruise in her 80's with her windows rolled down, extolling "Grey Poupon, anyone?" She held weekly luncheons at the Birmingham Midtown Café almost until her passing.

She was a fitting artist to paint our incredible Helen!

**And now the reason for the visit to the Edsel and Eleanor Ford House in Grosse Pointe, MI . . .**

Many of the documents reviewed spoke of Helen's electric car! Her **1914 ELECTRIC CAR!!** Which she drove well into the 1940's. Curious, again, a search revealed Helen's 1914 Detroit Electric Car was on loan from the Detroit Historical Museum to the Edsel and Eleanor House in Grosse Pointe! How convenient! Cindy Olsen had developed an exhibit called "Women who Motor: A Century of Shifting Cultural and Industry Standards." So, it was off to Grosse Pointe again with my best friend in tow! Cindy was kind enough to grant us complimentary tickets to the exhibit and grounds this past summer.

It was amazing to see Helen's black 1914 Detroit Electric car in the Gate House display. It was beautiful and had stickers on it from 1945. This vehicle does not have a steering wheel. And more importantly for a woman who was independent and wanted to come and go as she pleased, it does not have to be "cranked." It was reported, though, on the [detroitelectric.org](http://detroitelectric.org) website that electric cars were mainly used by doctors and women because it did not have to be cranked. Some viewed them as "women's cars" and so declined to use them.

It is driven from a plush seat by a handle. This 1914 Detroit Electric car, produced by the Anderson Electric Car Company in Detroit, could go over 200 miles on a single charge. It wasn't a speedy vehicle like Helen's husband's Packard's, going only 20 miles per hour top speed but usually tooling around Grosse Pointe at about 12-15 miles per hour.

The cab features large 360-degree windows for easy visibility. And a vase for flowers! There is a bench seat at the front right side of the vehicle for additional passengers.

Helen was in good company though as Thomas Edison, Mamie Eisenhower and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. were also owners of these vehicles.

**Summary:**

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Helen Hall Newberry Joy was born June 9, 1869 into a life of privilege and wealth. She was the only daughter of John Stoughton Newberry, engineer, lawyer and businessman who had many businesses including railroads, telephone and car companies. He was also Provost Marshal for the State of Michigan, appointed by President Lincoln in 1862. He was also in Congress from 1879-1881. John Stoughton Newberry left quite an estate to his wife and children when he passed away January 2, 1887, when Helen was just 18 years old. At the time of his death, his fortune was valued at \$4.5 million! Of that, he left \$650,000 to charity!

Her siblings included a half-brother, Harrie, who went on to distinguish himself in international diplomacy; Truman Handy Newberry who was friends with Henry Bourne Joy, Helen's husband and became another successful businessman; and John S. Newberry.

Helen, raised by a mother who encouraged independence, thrived in her environment. She married when she was twenty-three (23) to Henry Bourne Joy. Henry was hard working and enterprising; providing well for Helen and her children. They enjoyed a beautiful home in in Grosse Pointe, Michigan, "Fair Acres."

Helen invested in her family, her faith and her community. Helen, with her mother and her siblings, made their families wealth work for the betterment of their community's health and well-being.

The accounts of her being a part of anywhere from seventy (70) to eighty-three (83) different organizations including the Red Cross, the Detroit Symphony, the Detroit Fine Arts Society and supporting various hospitals and nursing programs are astounding. Helen must have been an extremely well organized woman!

Her portrait, painted by another strong, independent woman, Patricia Burnett Hill, shows her to be elegant! But getting to know Helen over the course of my travels, she was truly a modern woman sharing her heart of gold! It is an honor to be a part of the hospital bearing her name!