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Letter Fragment, April 20, 1950

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Spokane, Washington
April 20, 1950

Dear Mr. Austin:

I do not remember too much about my birthplace -- a little farm near Jenny Lind, Arkansas. I recall that it was a happy sort of place, with lilac blooms, an orchard aflower, a crystal spring, and hickory, pecan and walnuts in autumn; with persimmons after frost, and opossums, sweet potatoes and corn pones to our liking.

Sometimes I have wondered if these memories were not motivated more from hearing them recalled than from infancy recollections.

This I remember definitely, my very first memories of my parents: I had run away and a search was in action. I could hear voices calling me; yet, frightened by my own mischief, I did not answer. The searchers came very close to me, and I began sneezing violently. My father called to the others that he had found the baby. I could not have been very old to have been "the baby," as a little brother came to take my place when I was eighteen months old. Then twins came, and I began my duties as a foster mother. Every new baby was more adorable and more welcome than the one before, and I had a glorious time with these laughing, crying, squirming babies.

The little Arkansas farm, with all its charm, had croppings of coal here and there. Father was not versed in geology; he had just chosen this quiet place for a home when he returned, a young veteran from the Civil War. The coal was no hindrance -- it really helped, as, with the aid of a few neighbors, enough was mined and hauled to Ft. Smith to provide sustenance for the family needs. And everything went well until father was stricken with the Western urge.

Several neighbors were going to Washington territory -- that place out in the Northwest bordering on the "Nowhere Land." And father felt the call terrifically. Then one day someone with vision came along, and father sold the farm, coal croppings and all, for a few hundred dollars. Father was thought quite rich to be able to purchase a farm out West. Yet, he always had a longing for the old home place in Arkansas, and often visited there after the farm had been honeycombed by coal mining operations. There is a model of a coal mine near Jenny Lind at the Smithsonian in Washington, D. C.

At the time of fathers going away, thirty years after the sale of this Arkansas home, a coal miners' strike was being waged on

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