

Goodbye to Grandfather

By Janet S. Porter

The Life and History of Phineas Wolcott Cook, p. 2, 8-9

CHARACTERS (3 males, 2 men and 1 boy)

Phineas W. Cook (PWC, age 10-12)

Phineas Sr. (his father)

Jonathan Churchill (his grandfather)

PWC: Pa, I've been to school four years and I'm tolerably smart. But school is starting again, and I want to go another year.

Phineas Sr. You're almost ten years old, Phin. You could go winters, but spring and summer I need you on the farm. You can do half as much as any man, and I can't do without you.

PWC: Can I still go with you to fish through the ice in the winter?

Phineas Sr. Yes, and you can also fish in the summer. You're good at catching eels. I've watched you thread worms onto a broom straw and then jerk out the eels when they bite the worm. We've had many a meal from your fishing.

PWC: It's true, some nights I can catch a bushel basket full, but only if I remember to bring sawdust so my hands aren't slippery.

Phineas Sr. It's only in the spring and summer when there's water in the creek that we can use the sawmill, and I could use your help there too. You've learned the sawmill almost better than I know it, and you're only a boy.

(Grandfather Churchill comes in)

J Churchill: Young Phin, I feel a little better today. Would you like to walk with me to the oval rock over west of the barn. I think after being sick for so long, I'd do better if someone went with me while I go for a walk.

PWC: Sure, Grandpa. I'd like to go with you.

(Phineas Sr. leaves the stage. Grandfather and PWC walk to a table or something representing the rock)

J Churchill: Here we are at the rock.

PWC: It's a huge rock, almost as big as our front yard.

J Churchill: Yes, I would say it's at least 12 rods around the outside edge. You don't see many rocks this big.

PWC: I think it has been here a long time.

J Churchill: Do you see all the cracks and seams in this big rock?

PWC: Grandpa, what would crack this rock like that?

J Churchill: The cracks were made long ago, Phin. At one time it was a smooth rock, all solid and in one piece.

PWC: And what broke it up?

J Churchill: Long ago Jesus Christ was crucified, and the world came into commotion. Even in America there were terrible earthquakes.

PWC: That's when this rock was broken?

J Churchill: That's right. The earthquakes were so terrible many rocks broke up and many mountains fell. I always think of Jesus Christ when I see this rock.

PWC: I will too, Grandpa. I'll try never to forget Him.

J Churchill: I hope you never do, Phin. Now let's get back. I'm getting tired again.

(They leave the stage. After a few seconds, PWC and his father come to the stage.)

Phineas Sr. I have some bad news for you, son.

PWC: What is it, Pa?

Phineas Sr. Your grandfather just died. You won't be able to go on your walks with him any more.

PWC: Grandfather taught me a lot about God and Jesus Christ. I'll never forget him. His memory will always be dear to me.

Phineas Sr. There's more bad news.

PWC: What's wrong, Pa? You look really sad.

Phineas Sr. Even though your Grandpa gave us some money to make the payments on our farm, we don't have enough money for the rest of the year. I've taken a job out of town.

PWC: But Daniel will still run the farm, right?

Phineas Sr. Daniel is leaving too. He ran the farm for us for several years while I worked. But now he has taken another farm so he can earn enough money to buy his own farm.

PWC: So who will run our farm if Daniel is gone and you're gone?

Phineas Sr. It's up to you, son. Your brothers are all gone. You're the only one left. But you're the best worker I've ever seen. You're only ten years old, but you work as well as most men.

PWC: I'll do my best, Pa. I'll make sure we have plenty of hay and corn. I'll take care of the animals and keep the barn clean. And I'll get the maple syrup in the winter, just like you used to do. When we need lumber, I'll run the sawmill, and I'll catch fish—just like I used to do when I was very young. I know how to do it all.

Phineas Sr. You'll have to quit school.

PWC: It's okay, Pa. I can read and write, and that makes me happy. At least I can read the Bible.

Phineas Sr. You're a good son. Maybe we can save our farm.

PWC: I'll do my best, Pa.

Phineas Sr. And so will I. We'll just do our best.

Family Discussion

How did Phineas Wolcott Cook grow up with the desire to sacrifice what he wanted to help his family?

How do the values of grandparents affect children?

Children usually grow up with the values of their parents and grandparents. If they see family members giving up everything they want for the good of the family, they will be more willing to make sacrifices themselves. While families in the Nineteenth Century were different from families today, there are principles we can learn from the family of Phineas Wolcott Cook.

Children were expected to work, even from a very young age. The youngest son Phineas learned it well. His whole life he was the hardest worker anyone had ever seen.

All members of the family contributed to the production of food and the protection of the home. It was an automatic response for Phineas to think more of his family than of himself.

Religion and Bible reading were a part of the Cook family, and young Phineas accepted it personally.

Sacrifice was a part of life. In modern times people believe they're cheated if there are not big rewards for hard work and good behavior. While that is always the hope, the Cook family did their best and then, rather than expect a fair world, considered new options when things went wrong.

Members of the Cook family had integrity in their work, in their financial affairs, and in their interactions with other people. We know that from the life of Phineas Wolcott Cook.