A House at Winter Quarters

By Janet S. Porter

The Life and History of Phineas Wolcott Cook
pp. 43-44, using his own words

CHARACTERS (4 – 2 males, 1 female and 1 Narrator)

Phineas Wolcott Cook (PWC)

Ann Eliza (his wife)

Father Pate

Narrator

PWC: There, I've almost finished our house. Look at it. And to think I finished it in just one month since we arrived here at Winter Quarters the middle of October.

Ann Eliza: And thank goodness for it. The weather has already turned cold. We have our wagon box in the side of the hill where you dug out a place for it, and that helps, but I'm anxious to have a fireplace to keep us warm.

PWC: The fireplace is made of sod from the prairie. It will keep us warm, but there's no door. I've been hauling logs on the running gears of my wagon with Brother Dykes, but that doesn't help much with a door frame. Now I have no money to buy cut lumber. I guess I'll have to cut slabs out of a log so we can have a door.

Ann Eliza: I've already planned the house. It's 14 feet square, which will allow a bed in each corner at one end for us and for Brother Pate, and a small table and chairs next to the fireplace. If you put shelves on the sides of the cabin I'll have a place for our clothes and dishes.

PWC: It will all take time, but I can make shelves after we have a door to keep out the cold. Here, I'll begin right now to hew this piece of timber for a door jamb.

Ann Eliza: Be careful. Remember what happened at home before we were married.

PWC: I can't forget that. I stuck the hatchet right into my leg. I almost bled to death.

Ann Eliza: I'll leave you to your work, but you don't have to hurry. We're all right in the wagon.

PWC: I'll try to work carefully. Here's a piece of log about the right size. I'll start on it.

(Ann Eliza leaves and Phineas begins whacking at a log with a hatchet. Suddenly he hits his foot with the hatchet.)

PWC: Oh, no! I did it again!

(Ann Eliza runs on stage)

Ann Eliza: What, what did you do?

PWC: I cut myself again. I ruined my boot. Help me get it off.

Ann Eliza: Oh, it's filled with blood. This is terrible.

PWC: I don't understand why I'm so clumsy. It isn't that hard to hew timber. How I wish I'd had the money my Pa took from me so I could have bought cut wood the right size.

Ann Eliza: There, I've put clean rags on it to stop the blood. I'll clean the wound, but you'll have to lie down and put your foot up, or you might just lose it. Get your foot up. Be a good patient.

PWC: It's too cold to be a good patient. Now what will we do?

Ann Eliza: We'll be thankful you still have two feet, and God will help us. Somehow we'll be all right.

PWC: I'll do my best. I am resolved not to complain, come what will.

(Ann Eliza leaves Phineas with his foot propped up, and then returns.)

PWC: It's been three weeks since I hurt myself.

Ann Eliza: We all thought you would lose that foot. I'm not sure you know how lucky you are to have both feet.

PWC: I do feel lucky, and haven't failed to be thankful for the blessing. But I don't dare try to hew wood again, so today I tried to buy some wood pieces for the door.

Bro Pate: I'll bet he didn't give them to you on credit.

PWC: How did you know, Father Pate? I can't even get a brother to trust me a single farthing--and winter is on hand, I'm still lame and not able to work.

Bro Pate: I know his family has a good warm house. He's just sawing lumber to sell, not to give away, but he should help people.

PWC: But I resolve not to complain, come what will.

Bro Pate: Have you heard the Indians finally burned all our hay?

PWC: That means I'll have to hire someone to take my oxen. And I have no money to pay them.

Bro Pate: You'll have to give them something. Right now I'd suggest giving them your broad axe. You won't need it for a while. Then if you pay them at the end of winter, they'll give you back your axe.

PWC: I'm going to see if they'll give me credit. Brigham Young has asked me to work for him, and I'll have money as soon as I'm back on my feet.

(They leave the stage. Phineas and Ann Eliza return, but Phineas is limping badly)

Ann Eliza: Now just lie down again. You should have stayed right here where I was doctoring you before. Put your foot up. I'm going to get some bread and milk for a poultice.

Bro Pate: Brother Cook, you're laid up again. I thought you were out building a floor for Samuel Snider so he would take your oxen up the river with the other herds.

PWC: I tried. I worked almost four days, but I had to quit because my foot was so swollen and inflamed I was obliged to quit work and go home. I sent for Brother Telshaw and Addison Everett to anoint my foot and lay hands on it.

Bro Pate: You told me if I helped you I could live with you for the winter. I think I'd better just finish the whole house. But I have no money for lumber either.

PWC: I guess we'll both have to wait. It seems when you try to serve the Lord, nothing is easy. I came all the way from Michigan to be with the Saints, but here we are, living in the snow and cold the end of November, and I have no way to make a floor or a door on my cabin.

Ann Eliza: It's all right. The children haven't cried from the cold yet, and there have been times we could go to the neighbors to get warm for a few hours.

PWC: It seems hard, but I know God will help us. I've said it before, and I'll say it again: I resolve not to complain, come what will.

Narrator: Phineas and Ann Eliza and their three children and Brother Pate moved into the cabin the middle of December. There finally was a door, but no floor, and Phineas made only 75 cents per day for work on the Winter Quarters Mill so there wasn't much food either. Somehow they survived through the winter, but in the spring, Ann Eliza took sick with scurvy and malnutrition.

PWC: It was a hard time for us. We came near to being discouraged, but I resolved not to complain, come what will.[1]

[1] This last statement is a direct quote from Phineas. The Life and History of Phineas Wolcott Cook, Second Edition, published by the Phineas Wolcott Cook Family Organization, p. 44, line 22.

Family Discussion

It seems as if the Cooks had plenty of reasons to be discouraged. How did Phineas and Ann Eliza keep from complaining?

Often all we can think about are the troubles in our lives. Nothing seems fair, and we are all caught up feeling sorry for ourselves. And really, we may have good reason to do so. But feeling sorry for ourselves will never help us or anyone around us. Rather, we will just spiral downward until we are lost in negative and self-defeating thoughts.

Dieter F. Uchtdorf taught us that there are ways to shift our thoughts from the negative to the positive. Phineas and Ann Eliza were good at it.

Below is a card to make for each member of the family for their wallets. Teach them to t read it when they feel critical or feel sorry for themselves. They can remember the importance of having a good attitude rather than complaining or becoming bitter or feeling like a failure. Learn to get to work on changing things instead of waiting for someone to make it better.

Replace negative thoughts With positive thoughts

"During (hard) times, it is easy to get caught up in everything that is going wrong and to make our troubles the center of our thoughts.

"The temptation is to focus on the trials we are facing instead of on the Savior and our testimony of truth.

"But that is not the best way to navigate through our challenges in life." (Dieter F. Uchtdorf)

Wallet card, front and back

1. **List your automatic negative thoughts.**
2. **Explore the causes and stimulus of your negative thought patterns.**
3. **Think and record your thought patterns:**
   "I always make this mistake."
   "These people will never like me."
   "I'll never succeed. I'm a failure."
4. **Choose realistic or positive explanations.** Force yourself to consider (realistic) reasons why the positive explanation must be correct
5. **Acknowledge what you are grateful for.**
6. **Purposely shift off negative thoughts.**

On the next two pages are pictures of an Axe front and back.

You can cut out and paste the front and back together or place them on pieces of wood to give them strength.



