

## **A letter from Alonzo (Lon Maxwell) Williams to Elder Downer of Arkansaw**

Note: The following letter was taken from the July 29, 1881 edition of the Pepin County Courier. The letter had been written about a month earlier from Alonzo (Lon) Williams to Elder Downer.

Elder Downer was the minister who had married Lon Williams and Fannie Hussey, and he also officiated at the burial service for Fannie in late June of that year. Lon Williams obviously respected Elder Downer and was concerned about how he felt about the death of Fannie, and specifically, Lon's absence at the time of Fannie's death (she died during childbirth). This letter is being added to the web page to give insight into the mental state of Alonzo (Maxwell) Williams at the time of the shooting, Sunday evening,  
July 10th, 1881.

Following begins the background for the article published in the Pepin County Courier, July 29, 1881. (taken verbatim)

Lon Williams made the acquaintance of the girl he married, Fanny Huzzy (sic), while at Hersey, and his frequent trips to her stepfather's house, Mr. Thompson, offered him opportunities to become acquainted not only with the forests, but the farmers residing in that country. That he was devotedly attached to his wife, and felt as sincere a desire to reform as was possible for a man of his instincts is evidenced in the following letter to Elder Downer, of Arkansaw. It was delivered a few days after the 26th of June, to the elder in Menomonie, by an unknown boy. It was written in a cramped hand, but showed better penmanship than is ordinarily achieved by laboring men:

Sunday night, June 26, 1881

Mr. Downer, Sir:

I have been wanting to speak with you ever since I came back, and not having the opportunity I will have to transfer my thoughts to paper. I want to say this (although it isn't much), that what few of the neighbors and acquaintances of mine that respected me in the least when I was first married, I want to keep their respect. I know at the present time that I have very few sympathizing friends. The majority doubtless say I pitied his wife, but HIM-let him go to the dogs.

Now, as far as I am concerned, I want to say this-that when folks say about me I don't care so much for as this: The talk was started that I married Fanny with the intentions of leaving her. I want to say that no man was ever more honest in dealing with or profession to a woman than I was with her. Circumstances placed me in such position that I could hear nothing of the way things were going up here till I finally came up. But too late. She was dead.

Oh, this has been a terrible shock to me, although few believe it. They doubtlessly say this, "He is glad of it;" but, Mr. Downer, you had better buried me than her, for I now am a ruined man. My life is wrecked and I care no more for it. I was always alone in the world till I got her, and now I stand alone again, with nothing to live for and no object in view. It almost sets me crazy when I hear of anyone saying, "He intended to leave her in the spring anyway." But, Mr. Downer, if my word is good for anything believe what I have said. It can now make no difference to me what people say, only it seems as though I had ought to say it for her sake but not my own. I know she was too good a woman for me; I knew it but still I know as well how to appreciate her as any one could, and now that she is dead I want to clear her memory of every chance of reproach because she was as innocent as any angel could be; and now, Mr. Downer, she has been torn from me, it might have been the will of God, but I think it was the doings of men, and my desire to retaliate is fearful strong-nothing but respect for her holds me back; but now if they come for me again I won't run for them.

I have nothing to keep out of their way for. When Fannie was alive I kept out of their way for her sake, but now they have done all they could; they have driven me away from her, and I'll never see her again now. All they can do is to come and take my life, they can take it easy if they know how. Mr. Downer, my life is so wrecked that I almost want them to come on to me that they can see

what a desperate wreck they have left. Now, Mr. Downer, I simply tell you all this because I know you to be a man of principle. I mean this just for yourself, and if justice were done me, no charge would be brought against me. I merely wanted to help my brother, and that ruined me. If it is not asking too much of you, I wish you would pray for me. A petition to God from some one, for I can't do it myself.

Farewell.

Respectfully,

L. D. Williams

Two Sunday nights later, July 10, 1881, the shooting of the Coleman Brothers took place in Durand.

### **Fanny's Tombstone**

The text reads:

**Fannie B. daughter of B. & W.E. Hussey  
and beloved wife of Alonzo Maxwell  
Died June 13, 1881**

**Aged:  
17 Yrs. 2 Ms. 26 Ds.**

**Message at the bottom is too weathered by time to read.  
It begins "Dear Fannie,"**

