

# An Evening with Rachel Field and Sammy Sanford

An original play by Hugh L. Dwelley

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at the Annual Meeting of the Great Cranberry Island Historical Society

## Introduction

Reader: *Tell briefly who Sammy Sanford and Rachel Field were.*

## Scene I (Approx. 3 minutes)

*Setting: A sunny summer afternoon. An old man (Sammy Sanford) sits whittling on a stump or bench under a tree. Young woman (Rachel Field) emerges from a nearby patch of bushes where she has been picking raspberries. Young woman appears startled.*

Sammy Now, now there dearie, don't ya be afeared, ye'r as safe with me as iff'n yer was in God's Pocket!

Rachel Oh, I've been . . . I've been picking these berries. Am I trespassing?

Sammy No no, dearie. Everybody picks berries here. All ov this used to be my grand dad Sam Hadlock's prop'ty but he's long dead. He built that house up there -- the big 'un -- fer my grandma the Proosian Lady.

Rachel *(approaching)* My name is Rachel Field and we've been summering over there on Sutton for several years. I like to row over here and walk around now and then, and today I saw this beautiful patch of berries. They'll drop on the ground if they're not picked soon.

Sammy No harm dearie. There's lots ov roospberries on this island. Lots ov brush's been burned where wood was cut. That's where they grow ya know. Lots of roospberries, an' blueberries too, a couple of years after brush has been burnt.

Rachel There aren't many berries on Sutton this year.

Sammy That's cause they ain't been cuttin' much wood an' burnin' brush these days. There ain't many folks winterin' over there now-a-days.

Rachel Was all this land your Grandfather's? What did he do?

Sammy Yup. Purty nigh all yer can see. Grandpa Hadlock went in fishin' and tradin' vessels but he was quite a showman too. One time he took some Eskimos ta Europe an put on shows fer the rialty. It was four years afore he come home.

Rachel Really?

Sammy Yup, and that's where he met my grandma. Her born name was Dorethea Albertina Wilhelmena Celeste Russ an they was married in Proosia. Grandpa called her Hannah Caroline but most of the neighbors hereabouts called her the Proosian Lady.

Now you go on dearie an fill yer dish. It's gettin' late and I got to go home ta

feed the cat an fix muh supper. I got a little piece of codfish that'll do for both ov us.

Rachel Mr. Sanford, I'd like to hear more about your grandfather and grandmother.

Sammy Come by any time yer want dearie. I live right down there and I'm a bit gimpy so I ain't doin' much most ov the time.

*Rachel goes back into the bushes and Sammy walks off slowly with a driftwood cane.*

## Scene II (Approx. 7 minutes)

*Setting: In Sammy's modest one-room house. Room fitted with a small iron stove, a small table, oil lamps, two or three chairs (one a rocking chair) and a narrow bed neatly made with a quilt. Flowers and a few dishes on the table.*

Rachel Am I disturbing you, Cap'n Sanford?  
*(at the door)*

Sammy No deerie, come on in. Call me Sammy, everyone else does.

Rachel How are you feeling today, Sammy?

Sammy Tolerable.

Rachel Would you, perhaps, tell me more about your grandfather's adventures?

Sammy Well, it began when he took one ov the vessels that he owned with his father and went up North, ta Newfoundland sealin'.

Along with the seals, Gramp brought back a couple of Eskimos an a papoose. He probably sailed right by here to Noo York or Philadelphie to sell them skins. He rit his Dad from Philadelphie mentionin' the Eskimoos. Then he went up to Noo York an put on some shows with the Eskimoos there.

Rachel What kind of shows, Mr. Sanford?

Sammy I don't know. I guess Grampa had some stuffed animals -- ya know -- seals, walruses, polar bears and such and, if'n there was any water around, the Eskimo man did some pretty fancy paddlin' an tricks with his kayak. I suppose both of the Eskimos and the Papoose was quite a sensation. I guess the poor little Papoose died in New York but Gramp didn't have him when he died.

Rachel What do you mean?

Sammy Well, the Noo York paper said that some ov them missionary folks got Gramp put in jail anf they took the Eskimoos. The Papoose died while they had 'im and then the judge said Gramp hadn't stole the Eskimoos and they let him go. Them papers said that thousands of people had seen Gramp's show.

Rachel Really. When did he go to Europe?

Sammy I don't think Gramp came back here. When he finished up in Noo York, he took his stuffed animals an the Eskimoos and their gear and sailed fer England. That was back in 1822, I think, and he didn't come back 'til 1826 just after my Mom was born. She was born in Paris, France ya know.

From the time they landed in England, Gramp rit in a Journal. I got it right over there aside the bed.

Rachel Really, well that's interesting. What did they do in England?

Sammy Well, they stayed there fer most ov two years travlin' mostly around country

fairs in England and up into Ireland. I guess them fairs was quite somethin' and Gramp did well. In winter though, they holed up in one of them cities. Gramp went to some of them theater shows and liked em a lot. He rit that London had lots ov big museums and churches.

Some time while they was doin' the fairs, the Eskimo woman died. The Journal doesn't say how but there's a few pages missin'. Anyway, Gramp needed her for his show so he got a Gypsy woman to take her place. After a few shows, Gramp paid the Gypsy and she got drunk and caused so much ruckus that the police came after Gramp and he had to run fer it with the Eskimo and his stuff. That's when he decided to take his show to France.

Rachel Does the Journal say much about France?

Sammy Yes indeede! Gramp sure liked Paris. I don't know what he did with the Eskimo but Gramp did the town and took in some shows. He thought that Paris was a great place. But when warm weather came, he was invited to go to some of them Chatoos an' put on his show to entertain the Rialty an' their guests. His Journal says that he did mighty well at some of 'em.

Rachel When did he meet his wife, the Prussian Lady?

Sammy In 1825, I think it was, Gramp took his show down into Proosia an' some ov them other countries. In a place called Charlottenberg, Gramp went to see an official to git a permit to put on his show. The official's daughter caught Gramp's eye an' that was that. They got married and Gramp bought a fine carriage to travel in after that.

The Eskimo, Gramp called him George, died near the end of 1825, and Gramp closed down the show and went to spend the winter in Paris with his new wife. That's where my mother, Jane Matilda, was born in March, 1826. Soon they came back here to Maine and Gramp built the house up there.

Rachel Well that's quite a story but I've got to be going. We'll be going home next week so I won't be able to see you again until next summer. I hope that you'll have a good winter Sammy.

Sammy I hope that you'll come ag'in, that ain't quite all the story.

## INTERLUDE

*Reader reads Rachel Field's poem North of Time which describes her visit with Sammy Sanford.*

### Scene III. (Approx. 5 minutes)

*Setting: It's early summer and Rachel Field approaches Sammy's house on a dark day. She meets a local woman (Mrs. Rose Wedge) coming from the house.*

Rachel Mrs. Wedge, is Cap'n Sanford at home?  
(*approaching the house*)

Mrs. Wedge Yes, Miss Field but he's feelin' pretty poorly. I just fixed him some breakfast an' left a samwitch fer his lunch, an' I'll come back at supper time. He'll be

glad ta see ya though.

*(Rachel knocks on the door and goes in to find Sammy on his cot with a quilt over him and a chamber pot beside the bed. There is a sandwich and a glass of milk on a table where he can reach it.)*

Rachel Sammy, I hear that you aren't feeling too well. Do you mind if I visit a bit?

Sammy I'm only fair ta midlin but it's good ta see ya. I hope ya had a good winter. Pull over one ov them chairs.

Rachel I had a good winter and I've been thinking that I might write a bit about your Grandpa and Grandma. That is, if you don't mind. That was quite a story you told me last summer.

Sammy Well, that weren't quite all of it. After Gram and Gramp got back here an the house was built, my uncle Epes was borned so there was five kids in the house. Three of em was Gramp's with his first wife that died.

For a couple ov years, Gramp went fishin' around here and out ta the Banks. He also collected some big birds and good seal specimens an' stuffed 'em out in the shed behind the house. He spent lots of time in that shed when the weather weren't good fer fishin'. The story was that he'd promised to take Grandma back to visit with her family in Proosia and he planned to take some stuffed animals along to show and to sell.

Then, come the spring ov '29, an Gramp took his father's schooner MINERVA an' sailed off fer up North ta the ice ag'in. Said he wanted ta git some better specimens. I wonder ifn he planned ta git some more Eskimoos too. Anyway, the MINERVA an her crew, they never come back. 'Bout four years later, Cap'n Stanley out ov Nor East Harbor, was up North an he seen Gramp's initials burned in the butt of a rifle bein' carried by some Eskimoos. Them Eskimoos told Cap'n Stanley that the MINERVA got friz in the ice an Gramp went out on a hunt an got lost in a blizzard and friz ta death. Said they helped the crew bury him under the ice an' then the MINERVA went out when the ice melted.

Rachel Lord, that was awful. Did the MINERVA come back?

Sammy No, she never come back. She had a crew ov nineteen all from around these parts. One of 'em Grandpa's oldest boy by the name of Sam'l Taylor Hadlock. He was fourteen year old. One of the Stanley women over ta Islesford kept a candle in her winda every night fer the four years the MINERVA was missin'.

Rachel What happened to the Prussian Lady?

Sammy When the word came that Grandpa was friz, she was in a temper. She borried a horse an' a cart from one ov the neighbors an loaded up all ov them stuffed birds an' animals out ov the barn an' hauled 'em ta the wharf an' dumped 'em over. It took lots ov trips but no one could stop her. Later on she married ag'in and moved ta the mainland. I don't think she ever did git ta go back ta Proosia tho.

Rachel That's quite a story, Sammy. Do you mind if I write about it?

Sammy No, write what ya want. Why don't ya take this here Journal that tells the story bette'en me. Ya can borry it as long as ya need ta. Professor Sawtelle's got some of Gramp's stuff over at his museum on Islesford. Probably he'll let ya look at that too. I think there's a picture ov Gramp an' a snuff box that the king of Proosia give to im.

Rachel Why, thank you Sammy. I'll take good care of this Journal. I'm afraid that

I've tired you. Is there anything that I can get for you before I leave?

Sammy No thanks. I'm feelin' a bit gimpy but I'll be all right.

THE END

*Postscript: Reader reads the poem And the Place Thereof... by Rachel Field that records Sammy's death three days after their last meeting.*

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