



# The Mysterious Girl-Boy: Gender, Sexuality, and Madness in Victorian Vermont

*Just as Emma Sands challenged contemporary expectations of women’s behavior, gender roles, and sexuality, so too does her story present questions of gender and identity for modern readers to ponder.*

By ELIZABETH A. ALLEN

**E**mma Sands lived a hard life. Though she and her family moved from England to Essex Center, Vermont, hoping to improve their lot, misfortune followed. Emma’s father’s death in the Civil War left five people—Emma, her mother, and three sisters—supported by a meager widow’s pension. At twenty-four, Emma juggled work as a domestic, a farmhand, and a teacher to support her family. Despite a supposed “hysterical” tendency, she was thought by those around her to be reliable, hardworking, modest, quiet, and feminine—in short, the model of a young white woman of her age and class.

Suddenly, in June 1879, Emma abandoned her responsibilities. She ran away from her position as a farm laborer, dressed in boy’s clothes, cut her hair, and headed south along the banks of Lake Champlain. Sightings of “the mysterious girl-boy,” as she was called in newspaper headlines, indicated that Emma was on the run. Nevertheless, most people .....

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who knew her kept searching for her corpse in the nearby woods, convinced that she had been raped and murdered. A fascinated public struggled to make sense of her actions.

I argue that, by running away and adopting a masculine identity, Emma deviated from the Victorian standards of demure, quiet, domesticated femininity for her social class. In particular, her actions contravened expectations of heterosexuality for young women in her position, raising suspicions of queerness that news coverage tried to downplay. Her transgressions caused people, both the community around her and the medical staff at the Vermont Asylum for the Insane, where she was eventually sent, to label her mad. Just as Emma challenged contemporary expectations of women's behavior, gender roles, and sexuality, so too does her story present questions of gender and identity for modern readers to ponder.

Because this paper investigates the labels and diagnoses imposed upon Emma, it is only fitting that I explain some terms used throughout. *Queerness* is a general term encompassing sexual behaviors and sexualities other than heterosexuality: gayness, lesbianism, bisexuality, and so on. *Trans*, most often employed as an adjective, refers to people who change their gender from what it was assigned at birth. When I talk about trans possibilities for people like Emma, I call such people collectively *assigned female at birth* or *AFAB* to include cisgender and trans people. Cultural expectations and standards for AFAB people are called norms of *femininity*.

Emma was AFAB, referred to by feminine pronouns, and assumed to be a girl or a woman her entire life. This paper draws no conclusions about her gender, but I do use feminine pronouns for Emma throughout. I do not use third-person plural pronouns because I believe that doing so would implicitly assume a nonbinary gender for Emma. Feminine pronouns for Emma draw attention to the gender she was assigned and consequently to the related standards of femininity that her actions contested.<sup>1</sup>

Emily Ann Sands, who usually went by Emma, was born in early 1855 in Downham Market, Norfolk, England.<sup>2</sup> Her parents were twenty-two-year-old Susannah Fretwell Sands and twenty-six-year-old Edward D. Sands. Emma was second oldest in a family of daughters. The eldest, Sarah, was about two years older than Emma, while Mary Ann and Susannah Jr. were about two and four years younger, respectively.

When Emma was five, her father Edward left Downham Market in April 1860<sup>3</sup> and established himself in the United States in Essex, Vermont. He was counted as a "farm laborer" in the 1860 US Census, living with his employers, the Weston family.<sup>4</sup>

Emma, her mother, and her sisters ended up in the Downham Union Workhouse shortly after Edward departed. They were listed in the 1861 English census as “paupers.”<sup>5</sup>

Emma and family languished over six months in Downham Union Workhouse. In summer 1861, a year after Edward’s departure, they finally left England from Liverpool. Along with more than four hundred other passengers, they boarded the *Constitution* and sailed for the US.<sup>6</sup> They joined an estimated twelve million people who left the United Kingdom between 1860 and 1913 for countries outside Europe.

All together again in Essex, Vermont, the Sands family gained a daughter, Agnes, in 1862, but lost a father soon after. Edward enlisted as a private in the Union army at the end of 1863<sup>7</sup> and died in early May 1864 at the Battle of the Wilderness in Virginia, a conflict with heavy casualties and an inconclusive outcome.

Edward’s death afforded a widow’s pension for Emma’s mother, a minor’s pension for the physically disabled Mary,<sup>8</sup> and private-school education at Essex Classical Institute (ECI) for Emma. She was listed in ECI’s catalogue for the 1869–1870 school year, when she was between fourteen and fifteen. ECI was a coeducational institute that mostly served Essex residents like Emma. It offered a three-year secondary education roughly equivalent to today’s high school education. Emma followed the basic curriculum, without classics, French, music, or drawing, all of which cost extra.<sup>9</sup>

Emma was constantly working as well in a variety of grueling jobs to support her family. Her mother Susannah had a history of both vision loss<sup>10</sup> and mental health challenges,<sup>11</sup> so Emma, the oldest daughter still living at home, was probably the family’s primary wage earner. She taught at public schools in Grand Isle<sup>12</sup> and Huntington.<sup>13</sup> She also did housework<sup>14</sup> and farm labor for hire and worked as an itinerant peddler. She and Mary sold “Yankee notions,” a period term for small sewing supplies.

Emma abandoned all of this in June 1879, when she ran away from Westford. As Mary told the papers, she and Emma left Essex on May 29, planning to peddle their Yankee notions around Richmond and Waterbury. On Sunday, June 8, they visited in Cambridge with a farmer that Emma had worked for the previous summer. Then Emma and her friend Alida Cilley took Emma and Mary’s team of horses to the Hobart farm in Westford. Mary was told that Emma decided to spend the night at the Hobarts’ with Alida.

The next day, Monday, June 9, Mary went to the Hobarts’. Mrs. Hobart reported that Emma and Alida had not stayed over. In fact, Emma had started back toward her former employer’s farm, accompanied by

Alida, at about 8:30 PM the previous night. A French Canadian laborer on the Hobarts' farm, James Larocque, followed them, even though Emma was disturbed by his presence. The last person to see Emma was Larocque, who encountered her around 9:30 PM heading toward the Hobarts'—going in the opposite direction from when he had last seen her.<sup>15</sup>

As soon as Mary and others realized that Emma was missing, news traveled quickly to Essex. Search parties were organized and foul play suspected. James Larocque was promptly arrested on Monday in connection with “the abduction or murder” of Emma.<sup>16</sup> He was released within two days for lack of evidence.<sup>17</sup>

The public's anxiety over Emma heightened. Large groups of men hiked through the woods of Westford trying to find her. Local waterways, including the Lamoille River, were dredged without result.<sup>18</sup> “All sorts of stories are in circulation in regard to the matter, and the whole affair is enveloped in a good deal of mystery. . . . The absurdest thing is that some of the good people of Westford have sent a man to Boston to interview ‘Sleeping Lucy,’ the alleged clairvoyant,” the *Burlington Free Press* reported with obvious disgust on Friday, June 13.<sup>19</sup>

Finally a clue turned up. On the evening of Tuesday, June 10, the night watchman at the Central Vermont Railroad depot in Burlington found a young woman in man's clothes resting in a passenger car. The watchman and coworkers questioned her and directed her to wait in the ladies' waiting room, but she ran away. When shown photos of Emma, the watchman identified her as the young woman they had seen.<sup>20</sup>

At this point, more circumstantial evidence and sightings filled in Emma's route and activities on June 9. Early Monday morning she was seen entering Winooski. She made her way to the barber shop of P. H. McMahon in downtown Burlington, where she requested to have her hair cut like a boy's. “As he [the barber] did so, she wept, saying she did not think she would feel so bad to have it cut off,” reported the *Burlington Free Press* of June 17, 1879. The barber also identified Emma from a photo as the woman whose hair he had cut.<sup>21</sup>

From Burlington, Emma caught a ride heading to Charlotte. At the Charlotte–Essex, New York, ferry crossing, she met up with “a black-eyed, handsome boy” of fifteen years old, with “intelligence and knowledge of the world beyond his years,” according to the *Burlington Free Press* of June 18, 1879. The two took McNeil's ferry from Vermont to New York, boarded a canal boat, and continued south, pursued by police officer Westley Drew and J. C. Salisbury, Emma's acquaintance.<sup>22</sup>

Around 3:00 AM on Thursday, June 19, six miles below Fort Ann and seventeen miles from Whitehall, New York, Salisbury and a Whitehall

police officer apprehended the canal boat with Emma and her companion on it. Salisbury recognized Emma, but when asked who he was, she said, "Some damned officer, I suppose!" She insisted that she was not Emma Sands of Essex Center, but Charlie Thomson of Rochester. She did, however, allow herself to be taken back to Vermont by train.

Back in Burlington, Emma's sisters waited anxiously for her return. She met them around noon and tried to bolt, saying that she did not recognize them. When she was "properly clothed" in women's garb, three male doctors and several medical students examined her. She was exhausted and emaciated, unable to remember anything before her travels. Pronounced insane, Emma was left in the custody of her family.<sup>23</sup>

Contemporary news coverage about Emma's flight showed the ways in which people around her struggled to make sense of her behavior. Besides actual information about Emma, newspapers also included rumor, speculation, and the personal opinions of the reporters about the case. All news coverage contained judgments both implicit and explicit about how Emma measured up to contemporary standards of white, heterosexual, middle-class femininity.

We can see those standards of femininity in the characterization of Emma before she ran away. At that point, she was considered a respectable part of the local social fabric. The *Burlington Democrat and Weekly Sentinel* of June 28, 1879, described her as "well known by nearly everyone for miles around, as her business brought her in contact with everybody."<sup>24</sup> The article characterized her as someone with a definite and respected place in the community. She was "well known," which implied that she was both popular and approved of, and she did her job well. She was thus considered to conform to her expected social role.

Emma was also believed to be an appropriately feminine person. In the same article, the *Burlington Democrat and Weekly Sentinel* assured readers that she also had "a good reputation, [was] not subject to freaks, and [was] strongly attached to her family." "A good reputation" implied that she was modest, chaste, and unassociated with any history or rumor of sexual transgression. As someone who was "not subject to freaks" or sudden impulses, she was portrayed as steady, reliable, and trustworthy. Being "strongly attached to her family," she showed proper affection and devotion to her mother and sisters. She was also said to be "very religious," suggesting that she observed Christianity as she was expected to. With her family and her faith central to her life, she was implied to be a moral exemplar of Christian womanhood who embraced the domestic sphere. Up until she ran away, then, Emma was largely believed to be a demure, dutiful daughter and a friendly, hard-working, successful citizen. These traits made her a virtuous woman in the public perception.

There were, however, some cracks in Emma's façade of virtue. The same *Burlington Democrat and Weekly Sentinel* article that praised her so highly also cast doubt on her perfection. Some "people from Grand Isle" claimed that she was "excitable and at times hysterical, sometimes being 'out of her head.'"<sup>25</sup> This description highlighted Emma's instability, emotional excess, and possible mental disturbance.

Emma's community expected one of two narratives for her as a young runaway woman. First, she had been victimized by a man, who had abducted, raped, murdered, and abandoned her body. This prospect obsessed people, prompting the arrest of James LaRocque, based on no evidence whatsoever, for her abduction and murder. Additionally, despite reputable reports that Emma was wearing men's clothes and heading south, citizens of Westford and nearby areas combed the woods for her corpse. The specter of sexual violence riveted the public imagination.

People worried that Emma would end up, as the *Burlington Free Press* put it on June 16, 1879, like "the outraged and murdered Marietta [*sic*] Ball of St. Albans."<sup>26</sup> Marietta Ball, also a young schoolteacher, had been raped and killed five years earlier in 1874. A French Canadian, Joseph Lapage, was convicted of her murder and executed in 1878. In this context, LaRocque's arrest for Emma's murder and abduction seems clearly motivated by xenophobia and recall of the Ball case.

The second narrative that people envisioned for Emma was that she had fled her home to rendezvous with a secret male lover, whom she would then marry. When Emma met her companion in Charlotte, the *Burlington Free Press* said on June 18, 1879, "It now seems that there is a man, or rather a boy, in the case," implying that Emma's flight was to meet him.<sup>27</sup> When Emma and her companion continued further south, proving that meeting each other was not their final goal, even the *Boston Globe* admitted on June 20, 1879, that "it was not an elopement, as at one time supposed."<sup>28</sup>

Speculation about Emma's destiny was shaped by her imagined sexual encounter with a man. Her possibilities, assumed the public, were solely heterosexual. Emma, however, startled the public by making choices associated with a queer possibility—by traveling with someone who was possibly also assigned female at birth (AFAB) and using a masculine identity and clothing. We can detect changing attitudes toward queerness in the news coverage of Emma's flight.

The United States from the mid-eighteenth through the nineteenth century accommodated various trans and queer expressions for AFAB people. Some adopted masculine identities, maintaining those identities their whole lives and seeking female partners. Enough AFAB people

pursued this course to spark a minor subgenre of news articles in which one partner in an apparently straight marriage was exposed as a “female husband.”<sup>29</sup>

AFAB people also assumed masculine identities temporarily, particularly in wartime. In the Revolutionary War, Deborah Sampson saw military action as Robert Shurtleff and was honorably discharged. She then resumed her earlier feminine identity, married a man, and eventually received a military pension.<sup>30</sup> In the Civil War, up to one thousand women assumed masculine identities and enlisted in the Union and Confederate armies, in some cases to follow husbands, friends, or lovers.<sup>31</sup> While quite a few were found out and dismissed, others survived the war undetected, like Cathay Williams, a formerly enslaved Black woman who fought for the Union, but was denied a pension.<sup>32</sup>

Girls and women also established passionate bonds with each other, sometimes expressing romantic and even erotic devotion.<sup>33</sup> Poet Emily Dickinson’s decades-long connection with Susan Huntington Dickinson, who was Dickinson’s girlhood friend and eventually her sister-in-law, provides a well-known example of such emotional intimacy.<sup>34</sup>

As women’s colleges opened across the country from the 1830s onward, higher education offered another avenue for relationships between women. Infatuation between students, also called “crushes”, “pashes” (from “passions”), and “mashes,” became a standard experience at these institutions<sup>35</sup> and ubiquitous in popular fiction about college women.<sup>36</sup>

Women sometimes set up house together and lived as de facto married couples. For example, Vermonters Charity Bryant and Sylvia Drake of Weybridge, whose partnership lasted from 1807 to 1851, were one duo whose relationship was accepted by their community.<sup>37</sup> Later in the nineteenth century, academics like Mary Woolley and Jeannette Marks of Mount Holyoke College and Katharine Bates and Katharine Coman of Wellesley College also lived together in long-term partnerships.<sup>38</sup> In general, this wide variety of relationships indicated that, while the ideal relationship was a heterosexual one in which a man and a woman married and reproduced, alternatives were tolerated.

By the time Emma ran away, however, anxieties had arisen about gender expression and sexuality for women and AFAB people. Loving friendships between young women received suspicious scrutiny as supposed hotbeds of masturbation, tribalism, and lesbianism.<sup>39</sup> A romantic and sexual attachment between two women was viewed as a threat to a fulfilling heterosexual marriage and motherhood.<sup>40</sup> An AFAB person’s assumption of a masculine gender and identity was interpreted as unfeminine, “mannish,” and associated with lesbianism.<sup>41</sup> As the boundaries of white, middle-class, heterosexual femininity became more rigid,



trans and queer activities, though not fully pathologized and unilaterally condemned, were perceived as less acceptable.

When Emma's running away followed neither expected heterosexual narrative, the public reacted with shock and disbelief to her haircut and men's clothes. "She is represented by every one who knew her as a girl of irreproachable conduct and morals, and a most unlikely person to start off on such a masquerading trip," the *Burlington Free Press* commented on June 16, 1879.<sup>42</sup> Even Emma's mother and sisters had trouble crediting Emma's adventures, as the *Burlington Free Press* said the following day, "We understand that the girl's relatives are beginning to believe that the girl-boy is the missing Emma."<sup>43</sup>

Besides being shocked and amazed at Emma's flight, people were also displeased. "The result is very unsatisfactory to thousands . . . who have been searching in the woods," concluded the *Boston Globe* on June 20, 1879, when Emma was recovered, suggesting that people were perhaps disappointed and angry at the outcome.<sup>44</sup>

Public outrage at Emma implies that, in some sense, people would have been pleased—or at least satisfied or vindicated—if she had either ended up like Marietta Ball or she had run off to get married. In either case, she would have been doing what she was expected to do as a young, white woman of the period. While abduction, rape, and murder were perceived as horrible and tragic, neither they nor marriage challenged contemporary ideas of feminine virtue. If they had to choose between Emma being appropriately feminine and dead and Emma wearing men's clothes and alive, people in Emma's community apparently would rather have chosen the first option over the second.

Emma's actions incited public ire because they completely repudiated the norms of femininity that she was expected to follow. Her actions negated the public perception of her as an honest, affectionate, obedient daughter. By fleeing her job, she demonstrated subterfuge and unreliability. By abandoning her family and claiming not to recognize them, she showed that she was self-centered and disrespectful. She had also abandoned the domestic sphere believed to be the special province of women. Her assumption of short hair, men's clothes, and the identity of Charlie Thomson indicated that she was not only rejecting ideals of feminine virtue but also a feminine gender as well. She was transgressing gender binaries, and the *Burlington Free Press* picked up on this, calling her "the mysterious girl-boy" in several articles.

Beyond all of this, I think that public anger and offense at Emma's flight also arose because the companion that she met in Charlotte embodied queer alternatives that Emma's community did not want to address. Emma's companion may have been another AFAB person in men's



clothing, thus implicating homophobia in the contemporary negative reactions to Emma's flight.

Emma's companion was depicted in the *Burlington Free Press* as a boy of about fifteen years old. But Emma had no reason to associate with a boy in his teens, and her companion might have been older. After all, Emma's experience illustrates in detail how a woman in her early twenties could have passed as a teenage boy. Similarly, Emma's companion may have been a fellow AFAB person using men's clothes and a masculine identity to travel unnoticed. Emma's companion's supposedly precocious intellect could be explained by the fact that this person was in their twenties rather than a boy in his teens. This possibility seems much more likely than Emma running away to meet a teenage boy.

My hypothesis is bolstered by contemporary evidence of AFAB people wearing men's clothes for reasons other than meeting young men. For example, in 1878, Emma might have read an article in the *Burlington Free Press*, picked up from the *Buffalo Express*, about Mary Ann Schafer, also known as William Freeman. Schafer/Freeman was a twenty-three-year-old farm laborer who "took to dressing in boys' clothes because she believed that she could do better as a boy than as a girl." "The astonishing discovery . . . that William Freeman was" AFAB occurred only during a medical examination when this person was released from jail.<sup>45</sup> In 1879, shortly before she ran away, Emma may have been amused to read about Susan Johnson of Uniontown, Kentucky, who went to sea in boy's clothes and revealed her gender when she got scared of a rat.<sup>46</sup>

The most pertinent proof of young AFAB people wearing men's clothes for reasons besides heterosexual liaisons comes from several young women in Plainfield, Vermont, during Emma's disappearance. "The disposition of some females to 'wear the breeches' is proverbial," commented the *Montpelier Argus and Patriot* on June 18, 1879. "Therefore it is not surprising that young ladies should sometimes amuse themselves . . . by putting on mens' [*sic*] and boys' clothes. The fact that three were recently seen thus disporting themselves out in the woods . . . gave rise to a rumor that one may have been Emma Sands."<sup>47</sup> Schafer/Freeman, Johnson, several young women from Plainfield, and Emma herself showed that young AFAB people of the period cut their hair, donned masculine garb, and even assumed masculine identities for reasons that had nothing to do with running away and getting married, including entertainment, adventure, and practicality. Likewise, Emma's companion could have been one such person.

Newspaper articles of the time did not know what to do with Emma's companion. Articles at first attempted to cast the companion as Emma's

illicit beau, but soon gave up. The Burlington-area papers pursued no investigation into who the companion actually was. After Emma was cornered with her companion in a canal boat, the companion disappeared from the narrative. I have been unable to determine anything conclusive about that person's identity.

Maybe Emma's companion exited the narrative because the public was deliberately ignoring this person. They could cope with Emma alone. One young woman who transgressed gender norms could be characterized as crazy and thus safely explained away. The possibility, however, of more than one mysterious girl-boy intimated a pattern, a trend, a fault-line in the carefully constructed binary of gendered expectations. Two such persons together offered a shocking and queer alternative to the societally expected partnership of a runaway young woman meeting with her secret male beau. Faced with implications like these that threatened their beliefs in heterosexual outcomes for young women, Emma's community drew on their abilities to deny circumstantial evidence and tried to deal with her companion by pretending that the person did not exist.

Though Emma's community strenuously ignored her companion, they could not ignore Emma herself. Immediate action was required to contain Emma, whose runaway behavior flouted the conventions of gender and sexuality for young women. She was institutionalized in the Vermont Asylum for the Insane (VAI; now known as the Brattleboro Retreat) in Brattleboro.

The VAI, privately endowed but publicly supported, began with lofty intentions. It was founded in Brattleboro in 1834 as "a hospital for the relief of insane persons," in the words of its bequestor Anna Marsh, a New Hampshire doctor's widow.<sup>48</sup> The VAI's treatment of mentally disturbed people followed the principles of "moral treatment," developed earlier in the century in Europe. Proponents of moral treatment believed that, if given useful, diverting activities and medical attention in a peaceful, orderly psychiatric facility, patients would return to sanity and ultimately become healthy enough to go home.<sup>49</sup>

When Emma was committed, the VAI's treatment was based on what remained of ideals of compassionate care and intellectual engagement for patients. Between November and May, "the inmates [were brought] together for amusements or instruction" twice a week, featuring "all the best entertainments in the village." Emma and others could join an orchestra, use an on-site library with reading room, and attend Christian services on Sundays.<sup>50</sup> Lavish holiday celebrations included a battle re-enactment, patriotic speeches, a reading of the Declaration of Independence, and a parade for July Fourth.<sup>51</sup> Roast goose and a holiday dance were offered at Christmas.<sup>52</sup> Members of the public often showed up at

these events. Each activity, according to laudatory coverage in the *Windham County (VT) Reformer*, was chosen to “work towards soothing mania—and awakening normal mental action.”<sup>53</sup>

Though the staff at VAI believed that they were providing beneficial enrichment in the vein of moral treatment to asylum residents like Emma, the reality was more complex. By the time Emma was institutionalized, the paternalistic care of moral treatment competed with an increasingly suspicious, negative view of people with mental illness. The Victorian concept of heredity suggested that mental illness, along with poverty, alcoholism, criminal behavior, and other societally undesirable traits, could be handed down through families. In other words, social problems were regarded as biologically based instances of personal moral failure.<sup>54</sup> People began to believe that poor, mad criminals needed to be sequestered so they did not contaminate the sane, law-abiding, bourgeois masses.<sup>55</sup>

In practice, the period’s porous distinctions between insanity, poverty, and criminality drastically increased the number of Vermonters considered to belong to those categories and consequently the number of patients at the VAI. At the beginning of Emma’s institutionalization, the asylum held 447 patients, 329 of them Vermonters. Emma was one of 305 Vermonters who could not afford their own care.<sup>56</sup> Collectively referred to as “the indigent insane,”<sup>57</sup> these patients were sponsored by either their hometowns or the state.

The increasing asylum population strained the Brattleboro facility. The VAI was overcrowded with poor and/or mentally disturbed people banished there to be out of sight and out of mind of their sending towns. Historian Constance McGovern summarizes this period by observing that “the hospital had moved from routinely curing the insane to merely incarcerating them.”<sup>58</sup>

In other words, Emma entered an institution whose tenets of personal dignity and autonomy for residents conflicted with its dehumanizing, prison-like practices. Because she could not afford her own care, she was deemed poor and thus susceptible, in the eyes of the asylum staff, to hereditary defects including insanity.

Along with these strikes against Emma, the censorious societal judgments from the coverage of her running away also followed her into the VAI. She was labeled insane because she was not performing femininity according to the expectations for her race and class. She was supposed to be quiet, undemonstrative, and heterosexual in her desires, and she was not.

The doctors at the VAI diagnosed Emma as having “mania.”<sup>59</sup> They observed her to be “excited, noisy, violent” and “unable to control herself for two or three hours” on one occasion.<sup>60</sup> Once she apparently ru-

ined her belongings or vandalized others' property while being very loud, for she was put "under restraint for destroying and secluded in her room on account of noise."<sup>61</sup>

Emma was not always in a manic state, however. The asylum reported that she alternated between mania and depression. When depressed, she stayed in bed constantly and "complain[ed] of nothing but want of life."<sup>62</sup> In fact, by 1881, doctors noticed a seasonality to her symptoms, concluding, "Doubtless this will be her experience for the future, excited and depressed about dividing the year."<sup>63</sup>

VAI psychiatrists determined that the "assigned cause" of Emma's "mental disease" was hysteria.<sup>64</sup> Hysteria was perhaps the quintessential white women's disease in the nineteenth century. This catch-all disorder originated in Ancient Egyptian and Classical Greek ideas that a supposedly self-repositioning uterus could cause physical and mental havoc in its owner.<sup>65</sup> Hysteria's symptoms included everything from nervousness, excessive emotional displays, abdominal pain, irritability, and abnormal sexual desire to disinclination to marry.<sup>66</sup> The symptoms covered many normal expressions of women's sexuality and feelings.<sup>67</sup> By implying that demonstrations of lust and statements of feeling were medical problems, the diagnosis of hysteria turned many aspects of women's sexuality and emotional lives into a dangerous disease—a disease that, in the eyes of Emma's contemporaries, she had.

By running away, resisting a return home, claiming not to recognize her sisters, and acting disruptively at the asylum, Emma rejected modesty, meekness, domesticity, and the feminine decorum expected of her. She came across as loud, threatening, and pathological: hysterical. There was something wrong with her. She had to be mad.

Emma acted in a way that was considered unfeminine, and that, in the eyes of asylum staff, signaled the depth of her madness. In November 1879, for example, Emma "talked very strangely with much profanity. Claim[ed] to be a boy and conducted herself so unladylike that she was moved to 4th hall" (likely a location for obstreperous patients).<sup>68</sup> In this note, both Emma's "profanity" and her claim "to be a boy" were examples of her talking "very strangely." Emma's bouts of excited swearing were recorded in other notes, however, and these other notes and her adventure as Charlie Thomson demonstrated that her symptoms were not strange in context; in fact, they were two characteristic features of her mental disturbance that the asylum staff should have been familiar with. In this passage, then, Emma's talking "very strangely" might better be interpreted as Emma's speaking in a way that shocked her listeners, an interpretation borne out by the note's conclusion that Emma "conducted herself so unladylike that she was moved" to other quarters. The senti-

ment evinced in this note applies to Emma's experience in general. She ran away, cut her hair, insisted she was a boy, and otherwise "conducted herself so unladylike that she was moved" from her regular life to the VAI.

The asylum staff disapproved of Emma's loud self-assertion and worked hard to suppress it. When Emma was deemed "unmanageable from her excited ways," staff were "obliged to seclude her by herself."<sup>69</sup> She was put in solitary confinement on more than one occasion. Later in her stay, she was "kept under [potassium] bromide, which seem[ed] to exert a control over her very sensitive nervous system."<sup>70</sup> Potassium bromide was prized in the Victorian age for its apparent tranquilizing effect on nervous disorders and sexual desire, though its popularity was beginning to wane in the 1880s.<sup>71</sup> Besides her diagnosis, both the medications and quarters Emma was given combined to isolate and silence her socially unacceptable behavior.

Emma spent several years in and out of the asylum. Shortly after her first commitment, her mental condition improved; she recognized her sisters and asked to see her mother on June 21, 1879.<sup>72</sup> She headed back to Essex on June 22, but could not stay there, returning to the asylum in early August.<sup>73</sup> She was apparently institutionalized when her symptoms heightened and released when they abated. She was finally discharged from the asylum on October 24, 1882,<sup>74</sup> after a stay (with interruptions) of more than three years.

Just around the time Emma returned to Essex, seemingly in better health, her mother Susannah declined.<sup>75</sup> Susannah behaved erratically, destroying her belongings and even attacking her daughters.<sup>76</sup> Her hostility toward her children suggests that she may have been upset and ambivalent about Emma's return from the asylum.

Emma sought freedom from this unstable household. With one of her sisters, Emma headed to Belmond, Iowa, where their uncle John Drozier Sands lived. On January 29, 1883, when she was twenty-seven, she married her first cousin, twenty-two-year-old Theodore Sands, son of John Drozier and Emily Sands. By the time Emma's mother was committed to the VAI in April<sup>77</sup> and died there from uterine cancer on July 1, 1883,<sup>78</sup> Emma had long since escaped.

Emma and Theodore, called Teed, set up house in Belmond. Between 1883 and 1901, they had eight children, one of whom died in infancy<sup>79</sup> and another at age two.<sup>80</sup> For nearly twenty years, Emma preoccupied herself with birthing, nursing, and caring for her offspring.

Life in the Midwest was apparently calmer for Emma. Excluding the infant deaths mentioned above, the local news covered no dramatic events for her family beyond visits to family and friends.<sup>81</sup> Though the

*Eagle Grove (IA) Times* often recorded Teed seeing his parents, Emma, like other women, played an important role in the custom of visiting. Going over to others' houses, a task often performed by the female members of a family, maintained social connections and cultivated a network of mutual obligation that people could call on in times of need.<sup>82</sup>

Emma also participated in other traditionally feminine activities. In summer 1891, she was one of two women elected to maintain the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) booth at town and county fairs.<sup>83</sup> Widely popular among middle-class US women, the WCTU advocated social reforms related to temperance. Members of the Iowa WCTU tried to ban alcoholic drinks, petitioned the legislature for a women's reformatory, organized a home for unmarried mothers, and otherwise promoted the social purity movement.<sup>84</sup> Married to a man, raising children, visiting relatives, and advocating social reforms in an acceptably feminine manner, Emma seemed to be fulfilling societal expectations of white, middle-class, heterosexual womanhood.

Emma and her family moved to Horton, Minnesota, by 1900<sup>85</sup> and then to Framnas, Minnesota, where her last child was born in January 1901.<sup>86</sup> Shortly thereafter, Emma's mood took a downturn. She evinced violence toward others and suicidal tendencies. She was physically restrained, confined to her own home,<sup>87</sup> and eventually committed to Fergus Falls State Hospital in Fergus Falls, Minnesota. After some time, she "got better" and returned home.<sup>88</sup> She was, however, recommitted in July 1904.<sup>89</sup> As in Vermont, Emma was hospitalized when her symptoms escalated and released to her home and family when her symptoms subsided.

Teed and the children eventually left Minnesota—and Emma too, although this is uncertain. By 1910, Teed lived in Eagle Harbor, Washington, with sons Edward and William but apparently without Emma. He informed the census taker that year that he was a widower, though he was still legally married to Emma.<sup>90</sup>

Emma remained in psychiatric care for much of the rest of her life. In January 1935, when she was nearly eighty, she was transferred to Anoka State Hospital in Anoka, Minnesota.<sup>91</sup> She died there on October 3, 1943, at the age of eighty-eight, having been institutionalized for thirty-eight years of her life.

Emma Sands's turbulent life begs for explanation. When she ran away from Essex, her family and community perceived her as an enigma requiring a solution. Agreeing with the *Burlington Free Press* of June 20, 1879, which described Emma's adventure as "a crazy girl's masquerade,"<sup>92</sup> the public decided that Emma's sudden departure from Essex represented a whimsical desire that nevertheless threatened the social order.

.....

A psychological reason for Emma's actions readily presents itself to modern readers. She was dealing with many challenges at home. As the default head of household, she watched over her mother, who was sometimes incapacitated because of her own unstable mental health, and for her younger sisters. She was also the family's primary breadwinner, working odd jobs and traveling around northwestern Vermont since her late teens. Running away gave her a rare, though temporary, chance to cast off her responsibilities and care only for herself. The possibility that Emma could have wished to escape the constant labor, financial anxiety, and familial responsibilities she bore was, however, unexplored by her contemporaries.

Whatever motivations Emma had for running away, her mental health also played a role. For much of her life, Emma struggled with seasonal swings between manic and depressive states. Her depressive symptoms after the birth of her last child in 1901 may have been a manifestation of postpartum depression. From a retrospective point of view, Emma's drastic flight and change of identity in 1879 might best be interpreted as actions she took when she was in a manic state.

Furthermore, Emma's mental health could have had a genetic component. Her mother Susannah also demonstrated at least one episode of uncharacteristic, unexpected behavior when, near the end of her life, she physically attacked her children. Susannah, who, like Emma, was also confined to the Vermont Asylum for the Insane, could have passed down to Emma a disposition to mental illness.

Emma's desire to escape and her chronic mental health problems may have catalyzed her flight, but they do not explain her assumption of masculine dress and identity and her meeting with a mysterious companion. At the time, the public viewed these actions as signs of a temporary aberration. They assumed that Emma was probably traveling in men's garb for expediency to meet a male lover, at which point she would revert to feminine garb, marry her paramour, and live heterosexually ever after as a woman and a mother.

Emma did eventually do all that, passing nearly twenty of her evidently most stable years in a heterosexual relationship; but she did not return to femininity as smoothly as everyone expected. First of all, when she ran away, she did not meet up with a male paramour. Her companion, who resembled a young boy, could have been another AFAB person in men's clothes. Second, Emma had difficulty renouncing her masculine identity. When she was first apprehended, she said that she was Charlie Thomson of Rochester. Even after she was institutionalized at the VAI, she stated on at least one other occasion that she was a boy.



With her possibly queer companion and a masculine identity that persisted beyond her flight (at least until she was taught, in all likelihood, to suppress such statements), Emma was apparently not just affecting a masculine appearance so that she could travel freely. Perhaps she was using a masculine identity to explore an alternative to heterosexuality with her mysterious companion, to break out from restrictive expectations of feminine behavior, or to find a more fitting gender identity. Whatever the case, her behavior elicited a flood of newspaper coverage, a diagnosis of insanity, and questions about her identity, gender, and sexuality that remain to this day.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Thank you to the following individuals and institutions that made this work possible. The Chittenden County Historical Society generously gave me a grant to cover research expenses. Diane Gotlich, Robin Higgins, and the health information management staff at the Brattleboro Retreat furnished me scanned records of Emma's stay in that institution as well as her mother Susannah's. Kathy Lester, independent genealogist, got me noncertified copies of Emma's marriage certificate, as well as noncertified birth and death certificates of some of her children in Wright County, Iowa. Linda and other volunteers at the Belmont Historical Society filled in details about Emma and her married life in Iowa. Reference librarians at the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS) did a search for me of state hospital patient index cards, and MHS reference librarian Jennifer Wagner helpfully explained the information recorded on Emma's card. Pam Erickson, independent genealogist and historical researcher, got me documents relating to Emma's institutionalization in Minnesota state hospitals. Michael Sherman, editor of *Vermont History*, and an anonymous reviewer offered suggestions that improved the quality of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> *England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915*, 1855, Q1-Jan-Feb-Mar, letter S, s.v. "Sands, Emily Ann," digital image, ancestry.com. The index only specified that Emily was born in January, February, or March 1855.

<sup>3</sup> *New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820–1957*, 21 April 1860, *Cultivator*, microfilm serial M237, 1827–1890, line 27, list 298, passenger 285, s.v. "Edward Sands," digital image, ancestry.com.

<sup>4</sup> US Census Bureau, 1860 United States Census, Essex, Chittenden County, Vermont, dwelling 2038, family 2038, marked "page no. 385" in upper left and "337" in upper right, s.v. "Sands, Edward," digital image, ancestry.com.

<sup>5</sup> 1861 England Census, Norfolk, Downham Market, District Downham Union Workhouse, class RG 9, piece 1259, folio 86, page 12, line 9, GSU roll 542785, s.v. "Emily Sands," digital image, ancestry.com.

<sup>6</sup> *New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820–1957*, 11 June 1861, *Constitution*, microfilm serial M237, 1827–1890, line 24, list 539, passenger 115, s.v. "Emely Sands," digital image, ancestry.com.

<sup>7</sup> United States Civil War draft registration records, 1863–1865, for Vermont, vol. 2 of 3, 325, s.v. "Sands, Edward," digital image, ancestry.com.

<sup>8</sup> United States Civil War pension index for Edward D. Sands, widow's pension 62058, minor's pension 661288, filing date 2 June 1864, s.v. "Sands, Edward D.," digital image, fold3.com.

<sup>9</sup> *Catalogue of the Officers, Instructors, and Pupils of Essex Classical Institute, Essex, Vermont, 1869–70* (Burlington, VT: Free Press Book and Job Office, 1870).

<sup>10</sup> See "Cambridge," *Morrisville (VT) News and Citizen*, 31 May 1877, 3, where Susannah was called "blind Mrs. Sands." See also US Census Bureau, 1880 United States Census, Essex, Chittenden County, Vermont, supervisor's district illegible, enumeration district 75, dwelling 287, family 303, line 18, marked "page no. 28" in upper left and "209" in upper right, s.v. "Sands, Susan," digital image, ancestry.com, where Susannah was marked as blind.

<sup>11</sup> Susannah was "reported to be insane" in "The Missing Girl. Unavailing Search for the Missing Lace Peddler of Vermont," *Burlington (VT) Democrat and Weekly Sentinel* (hereafter *BDWS*), 28 June 1879, 8.

<sup>12</sup> “We hear that people in Grand Isle, where Miss Sands taught school, say she was very religious.” “Missing Miss Sands. The Latest Budget of Facts and Gossip. The Mysterious Girl-Boy,” *Burlington (VT) Free Press* (hereafter *BFP*), 17 June 1879, 3.

<sup>13</sup> “The school in district No. 8 of Huntington, taught during the past term by Emma A. Sands, closed the 10th of this month.” “Huntington,” *Montpelier Vermont Christian Messenger*, 6 September 1877, 2.

<sup>14</sup> “Emma Sands, the missing girl [*sic*] was well known here, she having served as a domestic in several families about town.” “Items from Correspondents,” *BDWS*, 21 June 1879, 4.

<sup>15</sup> Information in the previous two paragraphs comes from Mary’s account of events, which first appeared in “The Missing Girl,” *Burlington Free Press* (hereafter *BFP*), 16 June 1879, 3.

<sup>16</sup> “That Mysterious Disappearance,” *BFP*, 12 June 1879, 3.

<sup>17</sup> “That Missing Girl No Trace of Her Yet Found,” *BFP*, 13 June 1879, 3.

<sup>18</sup> “The Missing Girl,” *BDWS*.

<sup>19</sup> “That Missing Girl,” *BFP*.

<sup>20</sup> “A Clue Discovered. A Woman Dressed in Boys’ Clothes, Answering to Miss Sands’s Description, Seen in This City. Is This the Girl?” *BFP*, 14 June 1879, 3.

<sup>21</sup> Information in this paragraph is from “Missing Miss Sands.”

<sup>22</sup> Information in this paragraph is from “Emma Sands. The Mystery Deepening. A Boy in the Case. The Pair Cross the Lake to Essex. Officers on the Track,” *BFP*, 18 June 1879, 3.

<sup>23</sup> Information from the three preceding paragraphs is from “At Last. The Mystery Solved. The Missing Emma Sands of Westford Found near Fort Ann, N.Y., at Three O’clock Thursday Morning. Not a Tragedy, But a Crazy Girl’s Masquerade. She Is Quite Bereft of Reason. Reduced Almost to a Skeleton,” *BFP*, 20 June 1879, 3.

<sup>24</sup> “The Missing Girl,” *BDWS*.

<sup>25</sup> Quotes from the three previous paragraphs come from *ibid*.

<sup>26</sup> “The Missing Girl,” *BFP*.

<sup>27</sup> “Emma Sands.”

<sup>28</sup> “Emma Sands. She Is Found on a New York Canal-Boat in Male Attire and Thoroughly Insane,” *Boston Globe*, 20 June 1879, 5.

<sup>29</sup> Jack Halberstam, “Perverse Presentism: The Androgyne, the Tribade, the Female Husband, and Other Pre-Twentieth Century Genders,” in *Female Masculinity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 25–74.

<sup>30</sup> Alfred F. Young, *Masquerade: The Life and Times of Deborah Sampson, Continental Soldier* (New York: Knopf, 2004).

<sup>31</sup> Elizabeth D. Leonard, *All the Daring of the Soldier: Women of the Civil War Armies* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999).

<sup>32</sup> Philip Thomas Tucker, *Cathy Williams: From Slave to Female Buffalo Soldier* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2002).

<sup>33</sup> Lillian Faderman, “The Nineteenth Century. A. Loving Friends,” in *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (New York: Quill, 1981), 145–230.

<sup>34</sup> Ellen Louise Hart and Martha Nell Smith, eds., *Open Me Carefully: Emily Dickinson’s Intimate Letters to Susan Huntington Dickinson* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1998).

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, the historical discussion in Rona M. Wilk, “‘What’s a Crush?’: A Study of Crushes and Romantic Friendships at Barnard College, 1900–1920,” *OAH Magazine of History* 18, no. 4 (July 2004): 20–22.

<sup>36</sup> Sherrie A. Inness, “Mashes, Smashes, Crushes, and Raves: Woman-to-Woman Relationships in Popular Women’s College Fiction, 1895–1915,” *NWSA Journal* 6, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 48–68.

<sup>37</sup> Rachel Hope Cleves, *Charity and Sylvia: A Same-Sex Marriage in Early America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>38</sup> Mindy Lu Gaffney, “The Intimate Collaborations of Female Faculty in Select Women’s Colleges, 1890–1930: Women’s Early Attempts to Create the Closet” (PhD. diss., Syracuse University, 2018).

<sup>39</sup> Marylynn Diggs, “Romantic Friends or a ‘Different Race of Creatures’?: The Representation of Lesbian Pathology in Nineteenth-Century America,” *Feminist Studies* 21, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 317–40.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, how same-sex activity between women was characterized as a danger in Martha Vincinus, “Lesbian Perversity and Victorian Marriage: The 1864 Codrington Divorce Trial,” *Journal of British Studies* 36, no. 1 (January 1997): 70–98.

<sup>41</sup> Lisa Carstens, “Unbecoming Women: Sex Reversal in the Scientific Discourse on Female Deviance in Britain, 1880–1920,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 20, no. 1 (January 2011): 62–94.

<sup>42</sup> “The Missing Girl,” *BFP*.

<sup>43</sup> “Missing Miss Sands.”

<sup>44</sup> “Emma Sands,” *Boston Globe*.

<sup>45</sup> “A Woman in Male Attire,” *BFP*, 13 May 1878, 4.

<sup>46</sup> “Fact and Fancy,” *St. Albans (VT) Daily Messenger*, 17 April 1879, 4.

<sup>47</sup> “Plainfield Paragraphs,” *Montpelier (VT) Argus and Patriot*, 18 June 1879, 3.

<sup>48</sup> Quoted in Constance M. McGovern, “The Insane, the Asylum, and the State in Nineteenth-Century Vermont,” *Vermont History* 52, no. 4 (Fall 1984): 205–24.

<sup>49</sup> Joseph P. Morrisey and Howard H. Goldman, “Care and Treatment of the Mentally Ill in the United States: Historical Developments and Reforms,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 484 (March 1986): 12–27.

<sup>50</sup> Quotations in the previous two sentences are from “Local News: Asylum Matters,” *Windham County (VT) Reformer*, 29 October 1880, 3.

<sup>51</sup> “Local Intelligence: Brattleboro,” *Brattleboro Vermont Phoenix*, 9 July 1880, 2–3.

<sup>52</sup> “Local Intelligence: Brattleboro,” *Vermont Phoenix*, 26 December 1879, 2.

<sup>53</sup> “Local News: Asylum Matters.”

<sup>54</sup> John C. Waller, “‘The Illusion of an Explanation’: The Concept of Hereditary Disease, 1770–1870,” *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 57, no. 4 (October 2002): 410–48. For a fuller discussion of the shift toward hereditarian concepts of illness and disease, see Nicole Hahn Rafter, ed., *White Trash: The Eugenic Family Studies, 1877–1919* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988). For details on how this change affected Vermont’s policies, see Mercedes de Guardiola, “*Vermont for the Vermonters*”: *The History of Eugenics in the Green Mountain State* (Barre: Vermont Historical Society, 2023).

<sup>55</sup> Andrew T. Scull, “Madness and Segregative Control: The Rise of the Insane Asylum,” *Social Problems* 24, no. 3 (February 1977): 337–51.

<sup>56</sup> “The Vermont Asylum,” *Vermont Phoenix*, 29 October 1880, 2.

<sup>57</sup> See throughout *The Vermont Asylum for the Insane: Its Annals for Fifty Years* (Brattleboro, VT: Hildreth & Fales, 1887).

<sup>58</sup> McGovern, “The Insane, the Asylum, and the State,” 205.

<sup>59</sup> Brattleboro Retreat intake form (hereafter BRIF) for Emma Sands, case no. 4636, serial no. 5949, 1.

<sup>60</sup> Brattleboro Retreat history record (hereafter BRHR) for Emma Sands, case no. 4636, serial no. 5949, entry dated 10 August 1879, 1.

<sup>61</sup> BRHR for Emma Sands, entry dated 1 January 1882, 1.

<sup>62</sup> BRHR for Emma Sands, entry dated 1 March 1880, 1.

<sup>63</sup> BRHR for Emma Sands, entry dated 14 December 1881, 2.

<sup>64</sup> BRIF for Emma Sands, 1.

<sup>65</sup> Mark J. Adair, “Plato’s View of the ‘Wandering Uterus,’” *Classical Journal* 91, no. 2 (December 1995–January 1996): 153–63.

<sup>66</sup> Mark S. Micale, *Approaching Hysteria: Disease and Its Interpretations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).

<sup>67</sup> Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, “The Hysterical Woman: Sex Roles and Role Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America,” *Social Research* 39, no. 4 (Winter 1972): 652–78.

<sup>68</sup> BRHR for Emma Sands, entry dated 3 November 1879, 1.

<sup>69</sup> BRHR for Emma Sands, entry dated 1 October 1880, 1.

<sup>70</sup> BRHR for Emma Sands, entry dated 1 July 1882, 2.

<sup>71</sup> Susan Lamb, “(Not) A Bromide Story: Myth-Busting Bromide of Potassium to Create a Case Study of Change and Continuity in Nineteenth-Century Medicine,” *Pharmacy in History* 60, no. 4 (2018): 108–23.

<sup>72</sup> “Miss Emma Sands is decidedly better. Her reason is partially restored, and Saturday she recognized her sisters . . . and asked to see her mother.” “Miss Emma Sands,” *BFP*, 23 June 1879, 3.

<sup>73</sup> Emma “was taken to Brattleboro on Wednesday afternoon where she will be placed in the asylum for medical treatment . . .” “Miss Emma Sands,” *BFP*, 9 August 1879, 3.

<sup>74</sup> BRHR for Emma Sands, entry dated 24 October 1882, 2.

<sup>75</sup> BRIF for Susan Sands, case no. 4898, serial no. 5284, noted on page 1 that the “duration of this attack [of mental illness] before admission” was “6 months,” suggesting that the beginning of Susanah’s symptoms coincided with Emma’s return home from the asylum.

<sup>76</sup> BRHR for Susan Sands, case no. 4898, serial no. 5284, entry dated 18 April 1883, 1.

<sup>77</sup> BRIF for Susan Sands, 1.

<sup>78</sup> BRHR for Susan Sands, entry dated 1 July 1883.

<sup>79</sup> The Iowa Registry of Deaths record for “Baby Sands” is difficult to decipher. “October 29 /90” was recorded as “Date of Report,” but in actuality was probably the child’s date of birth, given his age at death of 15 days and the date of death as 13 November 1890.

<sup>80</sup> “Mr. and Mrs. T. L. Sands are mourning the death of their baby daughter, little Etta Adel, . . . the sorrowful event occurring on Wednesday morning, Aug. 19th.” *Eagle Grove (IA) Times* (hereafter *EGT*), 22 August 1891, 5. The death record for Etta A. Sands agreed with *EGT* on Etta’s name, age, parents, and month of death, but put the year as 1890. Because the Iowa Registry of Deaths was compiled from other documents, I judge that the transcriber made an error and that the newspaper gave Etta’s correct year of death.

<sup>81</sup> See, for example, *EGT*, 3 March 1896, 1, which reported that “T. Sands with his family, was visiting his parents, the Rev. Sands in Belmond last week.”

<sup>82</sup> Jean Marie Pederson, “The Country Visitor: Patterns of Hospitality in Rural Wisconsin, 1880–1925,” *Agricultural History* 58, no. 3 (July 1984): 347–64.

<sup>83</sup> “W.C.T.U. Officers,” *EGT*, 4 July 1891, 4.

<sup>84</sup> “Women’s Christian Temperance Union of Iowa,” ArchivesSpace at the University of Iowa, [http://aspace.lib.uiowa.edu/agents/corporate\\_entities/423](http://aspace.lib.uiowa.edu/agents/corporate_entities/423).

<sup>85</sup> US Census Bureau, 1900 United States Census, Horton Township, Stevens County, Minnesota, supervisor’s district 7, enumeration district 259, sheet 7, dwelling 77, family 77, s.v. “Sands, Theodore,” digital image, ancestry.com.

<sup>86</sup> “Born to Mr. and Mrs. T. L. Sands, of Framnas, on Jan. 18, a son.” “Born,” *Morris (MN) Tribune*, 26 January 1901, 1.

<sup>87</sup> Examination on charge of insanity of Emily Sands, Stevens County, Minnesota, 1 November 1903, 1–2. The history given during Emma’s examination was incomplete and possibly unreliable. Emma’s depressed state was characterized as a “first attack” of symptoms and her youthful institutionalization omitted. I think that Teed, the likely informant, knew about Emma’s earlier mental illness and chose to keep it secret, for, as we will see, this was not the only time that he supplied partial information to officials.

<sup>88</sup> Certificate of jury in the matter of the insanity of Emily Sands, Stevens County, Minnesota, 25 July 1904, 1–2.

<sup>89</sup> “Mrs. Theodore Sands was on Monday re-committed to the insane hospital at Fergus Falls.” *Morris Tribune*, 30 July 1904, 5.

<sup>90</sup> Because he edited the truth here, I believe that he also edited the truth earlier about Emma’s history of mental illness.

<sup>91</sup> Patient index card for “Sands, Emily,” Minnesota state hospital system, no. 2756. This record is in the collections of Gale Family Library, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, MN.

<sup>92</sup> “At Last,” *BFP*, 20 June 1879, 3.