

Roxanna (Hummel) Claflin

Born about 1802-1808 in Youngstown, PA¹

Died 10 June 1889 in Doughty House, Richmond, Surrey, England.²

Buried 12 June 1889 in Highgrove Cemetery West.³

Grandmothers memory was prodigious She could repeat the bible backwards
If you quoted the bible incorrectly she could put your right chapter & verse
The world is working out its curses through my family
What brought in the sinning relatives Descended from one Margaret
--Zula Maud Woodhull⁴

As the matriarch of the Claflin family, Roxanna, or Anna, Hummel was by far the most emotionally fragile member of the family, yet she was an ever-present and central character in the drama of her children's lives. Although she was illiterate, she had a sharp memory, as evidenced by Zula Woodhull's reminiscence, above. Her daughter, Victoria, was also said to have had a similar ability of total recall. Anna was the family member who least understood of her daughters' (Tennessee and Victoria) embracement of the free-love movement. Always reacting emotionally, she would not accept, and devoted her life to, countermanding their philosophies at every chance. Anna was the one who was primarily responsible for the destruction of the marriage of her daughter, Victoria, with Col. James H. Blood as she doggedly hounded both him and her and railed against their politically radical positions. A deeply religious woman, Anna was like many of the time who were shocked and scandalized by the much-misunderstood free love beliefs.

In the end, she did win, when a physically and mentally exhausted Victoria capitulated and divorced Blood. However, Victoria, who was already closer to her father than her mother, seems to have never forgiven her. After Anna's husband Buck died, Anna was sent to live with her more accepting daughter, Tennessee, to live out her years.

Anna's birth can only be calculated from census entries and her origins have been widely misrepresented in the various biographies of her daughter. Her legitimate Pennsylvania Dutch parentage can be established through the few vital records of her father and siblings, jotted notes written by her husband, census entries,⁵ as well as circumstantial evidence.

Honnis Moyer

R.B. Claflin was married in 1825. My wife was Anna Hummel daughter of John Hummel who married Margaret Moyer whose parents descended from Germany.

¹ Calculated from census entries, 1850 Homer, Burlington Township, Licking Co., Ohio (1807); 1860 Cincinnati, Hamilton Co., Ohio; 1860 (1808); Anderson, Madison Co., Indiana (1805); 1870 New York, New York (1) (1802); 1870 New York, New York (2) (1808); 1881 Census of England & Wales, Kensington, Middlesex (1802).

² General Register Office, Richmond, S 2a 195 June-August 1889; "Women of the World," *Butte Semi Weekly Miner*, 20 July 1889: "Mrs. Anna Claflin, widow of the late Reuben Buckman Claflin of New York, mother of Lady Cook and Mrs. Victoria Woodhull Martin, died on the 10th ultimo, in her eighty-fifth year, at Doughty house, Richmond, the residence of her son-in-law, Sir Francis Cook."

³ www.deceasedonline.com for a fee.

⁴ Victoria Woodhull Martin Archives, Southern Illinois University, box 1, folder 6.

⁵ 1850 US Federal Census of Decatur Township, Mifflin County, Pennsylvania, where John Hummel is living with his youngest son, Elias; 1850 Federal Census of Derry Township, Mifflin County, Pennsylvania for eldest daughter Margaret Hummel Kline and family (Margaret's husband, Abraham, was the informant for John Hummel's 1854 death.

--Reuben Buckman Claflin⁶

Anna's father died in 1854 in Mifflin County, Pennsylvania, at the home of his youngest son, Elias Hummel.⁷ He was 94 and had been a widower for years. His death record lists both of his wives as well as his children, of which "Rosanna" is the youngest. Abraham Kline was the informant. That "Rosanna" was "Roxanna" is easily answered by John Hummel's probate, finalized on 24 October 1854.⁸ Abraham Kline and John Hummel⁹ were the executors. Kline had married Margaret Hummel, the eldest daughter listed on the father's death certificate, and Elias Hummel was the youngest son on the certificate. Paired with Buck's note, Anna's heritage is established.

G Hummell VW's mother's father was ~~immensely~~ rich he owned 8 large farms in Buffalo, his brother owned Hummel's Farm.

--Zula Maud Woodhull¹⁰

While it is true that John Hummel did own farms and an inn and tavern, he was far from "immensely rich." At the time of his death, he left only \$2,436.23 to his heirs over and above his real estate. John Hummel lived for many years in Buffalo Valley, Union County, Pennsylvania. His eldest daughter, Margaret, was baptized there on 20 January 1794, and both of his wives died there, Margaret in 1827 and Eve in 1840.

An 1872 story published in a paper called Hummel "a respectable old squire," which is probably an accurate description. The story went on to relate that John did not approve of his daughter marrying Reuben Claflin because he was poor and "he wanted to start his daughter out fairly provided for." To convince his future father-in-law, Buck filled his pockets with counterfeit money and threw himself into a river. When he was miraculously "rescued from a watery grave," he appeared at the Hummel household. Telling them his incredible ordeal of near death, he emptied his pockets of the drenched money. Thus, Anna's father was conned into believing Buck was wealthy, "and so Buck Claflin is said to have won his wife."¹¹

Apocryphal story aside, the couple married in 1825¹² in Shamokin Dam, Snyder County, Pennsylvania.¹³ They moved to Streetsboro, Portage County, Ohio, before Hebern's birth in 1835.¹⁴ Anna's first appearance in legal record was in the 1850 Census of Homer, Ohio;¹⁵ however, she was most certainly in the town in 1838 when Buck purchased land in that village and when her daughter, Victoria, was born.¹⁶ Anna had five daughters in Homer, but only

⁶ Victoria Woodhull Martin Archives, SIU, box 2, folders 5-6, written in his own hand.

⁷ John Hummel's 1854 death certificate (Registration of Deaths in the County of Mifflin, State of Pennsylvania for A.D. 1854, record number 47). The record gives his place of birth as Berks County, Pennsylvania. Hummel died 28 September 1854 of old age. His son-in-law, Abraham Kline, husband of John's eldest daughter Margaret, was the informant of death.

⁸ Register's Dockets, Mifflin County, Pennsylvania Probate Records, p. 190.

⁹ Johannes' son.

¹⁰ Victoria Woodhull Martin Archives, Southern Illinois University, box 1, folder 6.

¹¹ "Vic Woodhull and her Sister Tennie," Clearfield (PA) *Republican*, 11 Dec 1872, p.1.

¹² Victoria Woodhull Martin Archives, Southern Illinois University, box 2, folders 5-6, op cit. Eldest child Margaret was born in 1827. Charles Henry Wight, *The Genealogy of the Claflin Family* (1903), p. 124.

¹³ "Vic Woodhull and her Sister Tennie," Clearfield (PA) *Republican*, op cit,

¹⁴ Wight, op cit., p. 125.

¹⁵ 1850 US Federal Census of Homer, Burlington Twp., Licking County, Ohio.

¹⁶ Licking County Deeds, GG:285, Licking County Hall of Records, Newark, Licking County, Ohio.

Victoria, Utica, and Tennessee survived childhood. In the late summer or early fall of 1852 the family moved to Mt. Gilead for a time and then was in Cincinnati by 1859¹⁷ where they shared a home with eldest son Malden and his family.

By December 1860, Buck, Roxanna and their daughters Tennessee and Utica were at the Scott House in Pittsburgh where Tennessee was advertised as the “Wonderful Child” clairvoyant.¹⁸ Tennessee was about fifteen years old and had been the family’s primary source of income for four or five years.¹⁹ The child clairvoyant’s practice was augmented by homemade oils and elixirs.²⁰ In March 1861, Anna, Buck, Tennessee and Utica were arrested in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on the charge of “humbuggery and imposition.”²¹ *The Baltimore Sun* noted that several patients complained they became worse under the Claflins’ care and that one died. As of now, records have not revealed the outcome of the arrest, though the punishment could not have been too severe because the family was soon on the move again.

In the early spring Anna, took her two daughters to Lewistown, the county seat of Mifflin County, Pennsylvania, near her family.²² Buck did not accompany the women, and she may have been seeking refuge. She also had reason to see her family: her sister, Margaret (Hummel) Kline, was widowed in March, and her brother John had died shortly before May 1861.²³ By July 1861, Anna, Utica and Tennessee had unclaimed letters in the Lewistown, Pennsylvania, post office, so had likely moved on.²⁴ Buck was not with them and seems to have separated from the family, particularly his wife, a practice which he continued throughout his life.²⁵

Soon after their stop in Lewistown, the trio of women dissolved. Anna is not found in any record during these years, but was most probably with one of her other daughters or with Buck.²⁶

Tennessee had rebelliously run away and married John James Bartle in September 1861 in Syracuse, Illinois.²⁷ The marriage only lasted for several weeks; the couple began quarreling and, for a payment of \$20,000, her husband agreed to disappear, as he later described it.²⁸

¹⁷ In August 1852, Buck and Anna paid off the mortgage on and quitclaimed their house. (Licking County Deeds, GG:177-8); 1860 US Federal Census, Cincinnati, Hamilton Co., Ohio; she is also enumerated on the same day in the 1860 US Federal Census, Anderson, Madison Co., Indiana. According to later accounts by Tennessee, the family spent some months in Columbus as they migrated south toward Cincinnati.

¹⁸ “Miss Tennessee Claflin a Natural Born Clairvoyant & Healing Medium,” *Pittsburgh Daily Post*, 18 December 1860.

¹⁹ Although in her later accounts, Tennessee said the family traveled throughout the United States, until 1860, the only other state the family is known to have been in was Pennsylvania. They were in Williamsport in 1858.

²⁰ “A ‘Natural Clairvoyant’ In Trouble,” *Baltimore Sun*, 20 March 1861.

²¹ Ibid. The article notes that the Claflin father, mother and two daughters were arrested. Tennessee was certainly one of the daughters because the article focuses on her clairvoyant and healing activities. The second daughter is not named; however, she was clearly Utica. The other Claflin daughters are accounted for elsewhere.

²² Notably her brother Elias Hummel and sister Margaret Rebecca (Hummel) Kline.

²³ Abraham Kline’s gravestone in the Yeagerstown Lutheran Cemetery, and Mifflin County Probate Index, 1861, p. 206, line 3, for John Kline’s probate.

²⁴ *Lewistown Gazette*, 3 July 1861, p. 2.

²⁵ “Vic Woodhull and her Sister Tennie,” *Clearfield (PA) Republican*, op cit. In 1871, after Annie brought suit against Colonel James H. Blood for alienation of the affection of her daughters, Anna was living with her daughter Mary (Burns) Sparr and Buck was living with Victoria and Tennessee.

²⁶ Margaret (Claflin) Miles was still in Mt. Gilead, Ohio and Mary Claflin Burns had married her second husband, Benjamin Franklin Sparr in December 1861 in Cincinnati.

²⁷ Register of Marriages, De Kalb County Clerk, De Kalb County, Illinois, 30 September 1880. See also the *True Republican* (Sycamore, Illinois) 24 May 1871.

²⁸ “Tennie was His Bride,” *The Inter-Ocean* (Chicago), 2 July 1899, p. 33.

Tennessee claimed that her father helped her to gain a divorce in Chicago shortly after the marriage.²⁹

Around this same time, Utica married a man surnamed Kelley,³⁰ though nothing is known about him other than his surname. She was called a ‘straw widow’³¹ while living with her brother Hebern in Quincy in 1865.³² She married again to a local man, Thomas H. B. Brooker, in 1866, indicating her “straw widow” status was a divorcee.

Buck reappeared in June 1863 in at the home of his sister and brother-in-law in Ottawa, Illinois, proclaiming himself the “King of Cancers” and very shortly after the family took rooms at the Geiger House Hotel in that town. Tennessee, now back in the fold, resumed her work practicing magnetic healing and Anna was with the family. A published testimonial advertising Tennessee’s skills described “an old lady, by the name of Mrs. Claflin, who was there taking care of her sick son.”³³ In February 1864, Enos Miles, Anna’s blind son-in-law, became the proprietor of the Fox River House in Ottawa, so the family moved and set up shop in that establishment.

On June 4, 1864 the case that ended the business and hovered over Tennessee for the rest of her life was published. One of the patients was suffering from breast cancer. Rebecca Howe wrote a scathing letter condemning Tennessee’s skills as a physician and claiming that her health was declining rapidly. She died three days after the letter was published.³⁴ Tennie was charged with manslaughter and bolted for sanctuary with her brother Hebern in Quincy.³⁵ Utica also was with Hebern. Claiming their parents were dead, the two sisters remained in Quincy until 1867 when Hebern sold his house.³⁶ Their sister, Victoria, was occasionally visited, first with Canning Woodhull, and later with her second husband James H. Blood. Buck and Anna were not welcome and never visited.

Where Buck and Anna went after Howe’s death is unknown, although they probably went to Chicago or Cincinnati, where their other children were living.

They were in their seventies by this time and Buck seems to have retired from direct involvement in the business of magnetic healing. Tennessee had established her own business in Chicago and was soon joined by Victoria (and both of her husbands). Quickly Tennessee’s

²⁹ It is not clear if they actually ever were divorced. However, it is known that her husband joined the military shortly after their separation, in the spring of 1862 from Chicago, and at the time gave his status as “married.” See the pension records of John James Bartle, file #945.832 and #701.516.

³⁰ There seems to be no record of Utica’s first marriage, other than the record of her second. See “Marriages,” Chicago Tribune, 1 December 1866. “In this city, in the 28th inst. By the Rev. R. B. Hatfield, Mr. Thos. H.B. Brooker, of Quincy, and Mrs. Utie V. Kelley, of Chicago.”

³¹ Can mean either a woman who is separated, divorced or lives apart from her husband or a woman whose husband is away from home frequently. In Utica’s case it was likely referring to a divorce.

³² “Tennessee Claflin’s Death Recalls Old Times in Quincy,” *The Quincy Daily Herald*, 22 February 1923, p. 3., col. 1.

³³ Most certainly, this was Malden who died in late 1864 of unknown causes.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ *Ottawa Free Trader*, vol. 52, no. 40, 10 May 1890, p. 1. “A telegram from New York appeared in Thursday’s Chicago Tribune stating that threats have been made to revive the Claflin indictments of the sixties, unless . . . Tennie C. Claflin Clark [sic], now Viscountess Montserrat, hand \$100,000 to a hidden blackmailer . . . the Claflin sisters [sic – Victoria was not implicated] in the sixties for manslaughter, one indictment was brought for the alleged killing of the late Mrs. Howe, through the application of poisonous drugs at the so-called Woodhull-Claflin infirmary, the Old Fox River house . . . That the indictments can be reinstated upon the docket, representative attorneys have no doubt, but they are agreed that they never will be reinstated at the instigation of a blackmailer, and that even if this point should be carried a conviction would be very improbable, if not impossible.”

³⁶ See biography of Hebern Claflin.

business ventures extended not only to Chicago, but also St. Louis and Cincinnati, so it is probable their elderly parents were living with one or more of their children in one of those cities.

At the end of 1868, Victoria, Tennie C. (as she was now calling herself) and both of Victoria's husbands were living at 17 Great Jones St. in New York City where they had opened the "Magnetic Healing Institute and Conservatory of Mental and Spiritual Science."³⁷ Buck, Anna and the families of the other parasitical Claflin sisters soon descended upon them and took up residence. Victoria later said that Anna lived with them in this place for almost a year; "I do not know exactly where she was before that; in Chicago, I believe, for some time, and travelling throughout the country generally."³⁸ Tennessee said:

"they did not live peaceably with us ... I told them to go. They wouldn't. They said if I tried to put them out they would make it hot for us in the papers."³⁹ Her strategy was to go a judge to have them evicted. "He sent an officer who told them to clear. They told him to clear, else they would throw him out of the window." So, her next option was simply to terminate the lease whereupon they were all evicted. Tennie triumphantly said, "We were put out, all in due form, and it was the funniest thing you ever did see."⁴⁰ In the midst of this melee, she asked the marshals with a payment of ten dollars each to kick the family out, except her mother. "I thought if they held her till I could get my arms round her, that she would submit to me. But I had to let her go with them because the Marshals wouldn't cooperate."⁴¹

The episode reveals two things. First, Tennessee and Anna had an unusually close relationship. Second, Anna's emotional and intellectual weakness made Tennessee protective of her mother and not willing to let her go live with her sister Mary, who was equally unstable and who was in possession of a vicious mean streak. Anna did go and live with Mary and her husband after the infamous 1871 trial when the Sparrs and Anna sued Col. Blood for the alienation of the affections of her daughters as well as the threat of bodily harm. Tennessee continued to pay for the lodging of her mother, and the troublesome family moved in with Anna.⁴² Victoria also bemoaned the fact that Anna was not able to return to their household after the eviction, and that despite her fragile mind, she still exhibited motherly concern. "I did not wish her to leave; this man Sparr and his wife induced my mother to leave for their own protection and to excite public sympathy; I have always pitied my mother; she always seemed to have a desire to have her own way, and seemed to know better what her children wanted than they did themselves."⁴³ The result was that Anna, depending on her frame of mind, alternating living with Tennessee and her daughter Mary Sparr. Buck remained in the household of Victoria and Tennessee, observing at the time that his "wife had nothing to complain of but much to be thankful for."⁴⁴

³⁷ "Magnetic Healing Institute and Conservatory of Mental and Spiritual Science," *Buffalo Daily Courier*, 14 Dec. 1868, p. 1.

³⁸ "The Woodhull War," *New York Herald*, 17 May 1871, p. 10, col. 1-2.

³⁹ "Female Financiers' Feuds," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 8 May 1871, p. 10, col. 2.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² During the trial, Tennie interviewed her nephew Duke Miles. "Miss Claflin: Duke, where does your grandmother eat? Duke: At the restaurant; Miss Claflin: Who pays her bills there?; Duke: I know that you do." *Ibid.*

⁴³ "Blood, Woodhull, Claflin. The Great Scandal at Essex Market," *New York Herald*, 17 May 1871, p. 10, col. 1-2.

⁴⁴ "Woodhull, Claflin & Co. A Serious Charge against J.H. Blood," *New York Clipper*, 13 May 1871, p. 4, col. 3.

On 2 May 1871 at the Essex Market Police Court, at the instigation of Benjamin Franklin and Mary Sparr, who were co-plaintiffs, Anna brought criminal charges against Colonel Blood for controlling and ruining her daughters Victoria and Tennessee, for not keeping the books for the brokerage firm (and accusing him of pocketing the money made), as well as for physical abuse. In the ensuing press reports – both mainstream and alternative—Anna claimed that Blood threatened to put her in a lunatic asylum and threatened to take her life.⁴⁵ At the police station, one reporter noted:

She bore the haggard looks of one who had been subjected to the cruel and terrifying treatment detailed in her affidavit, from which her helpless old age, if no more Christian sentiment, should have shielded her ... The poor woman then left the court accompanied by one of her daughters, Mrs. Sparr, and her counsel, with her mind evidently relieved from the burden of great trouble.”⁴⁶

Sparr and his wife submitted affidavits supporting Anna’s claims and maligning the character of Blood, saying “he is a man of low and contemptible character.”⁴⁷ Colonel James Blood’s by then well-known reputation was quite the opposite and the judge declared, “The worst thing specifically charged against you is living with your wife, and not agreeing with your mother-in-law. The complaint is dismissed unless you insist on a trial.”⁴⁸ Blood wanted to continue with the trial so that the defamation of his character by Anna and the Sparrs could be stopped for good. “May it please the Court, I ask that the complaint be not dismissed. I ask that it may be continued, so that I can make these persons prove, or so that I can disprove the charges against me. Let it be adjourned till such time as I can prepare my case.”⁴⁹

Blood had good reason to air the accusations, however, he would have to tread carefully. B.F. Sparr had discovered the Colonel’s and Victoria’s 1865 marriage was bigamous. Not only did Blood not have a divorce from his first wife until July 1866, he had been living a double life. He was the St. Louis city auditor and president of a local railroad. At the same time, as “Prof. J.A. Harvey” he had a business running a magnetic healing clinic, a position that, if the respectable elements of St. Louis found out, would have been scandalous.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ *New York Tribune*, 6 May 1871, p. 2, col. 1.; *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 8 May 1871, p. 10, col.2.; *New York Clipper*, 13 May 1871, p. 4, col. 3; *The New York Times*, 16 May 1871; *New York Herald*, 16 May 1871, p. 3, col. 5; *The Sun*, 16 May 1871, p. 1, col. 3; *The New York Herald*, 17 May 1871, p. 10, col. 1-2.

⁴⁶ “Woodhull, Claflin & Co; A Serious Charge Against J.H. Blood,” *New York Clipper*, 13 May 1871, p. 4, col. 3.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ “Female Financiers’ Feuds,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 8 May 1871, p. 10, col. 2.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ The Woodhull’s were in St. Louis early enough to be listed in the St. Louis City Directory at 41 South Fourth Street (published 1 March 1864). By the 26th of March Canning had unclaimed letters at the St. Louis Post Office (*Daily Missouri Republican*, 26 March 1864). Blood resigned his military commission on 2 April 1864, and said later that he had met Victoria very soon after. Canning was back in St. Louis, advertising that he was at the same address he had been in March, implying that Victoria had remained in St. Louis while Canning was absent. As Dr. J.A. Harvey, physician, at 99 Washington Avenue, St. Louis, Blood was in the 1 March 1865 St. Louis City Directory. He was listed in the same directory, as James. H Blood, at 453 Pine Street. On 1 July 1865, Blood and Victoria were married in Cincinnati. The Sparrs were in St. Louis in time to be in the 1866 City directory as having their practice at 44 South Fifth Street. James H. Blood, in the same directory, was boarding at Washington Avenue, his offices as President of the St. Louis Railroad company were at 12 South Fifth Street. On 10 May 1866, Blood placed his last ad as Prof. J.A. Harvey, with his business and residence at 99 Washington Avenue. Five days later Margaret Miles, from Cincinnati, swore an affidavit that Benjamin Franklin Sparr, aided by his wife Mary Burns Sparr, were attempting to blackmail James H. Blood on account of his bigamous marriage to Victoria Woodhull

The trial was a media frenzy with a packed courtroom and press coverage around the country. Anna continued with her accusations during the trial:

Judge, My daughters were good daughters and affectionate children till they got in with this man 'Blood' he has threatened my life several times, and one night last November he came into the house in Thirty eighth street and said he would not go to bed till he had washed his hand in my blood. I'll tell you what that man Blood is. His is one of those who have no bottom in their pockets; you can keep stuffing in all the money in New York; they never get full up. If my daughters would just send this man away, as I always told them, they might be millionairesses and riding around in their own carriages. I came here because I want to get my daughter out of this man's clutches; he has taken away Vicky's 'fection and Jennie's [*sic*] 'fection from poor old mother. s'help me God, Judge, I say here and I call heaven to witness that there was the worst gang of Free lovers in that house in Thirty- eighth street that ever lived- Stephen Perando [*sic*]⁵¹ And Dr. Woodhull and lots more of such trash.⁵²

Important for the defense was Anna's mental instability. Interestingly, she called herself a widow,⁵³ which she obviously was not. Buck was alive and even testified at the trial.

Anna testified that it was Blood who convinced her daughters she was insane;⁵⁴ however all involved noted her irrational behavior, referring to her as "a peculiar old lady."⁵⁵ Their Great Jones Street landlord said "I was acquainted with Miss Claflin's mother. Her manner was such as to convey to my mind the impression that she was a little crazed."⁵⁶ Both Victoria and Tennessee claimed that their mother was not of right mind, "my mother is a very old lady, whom I believe to be insane" Tennessee said in her testimony.⁵⁷ The judge pointedly asked Victoria for the evidence of her mother's insanity. Victoria explained,

Sometimes she would come down to the table and sit on Mr. Blood's lap and say he was the best son-in-law she had. Then again she would abuse him like a thief, calling him all the names she could lay her tongue to, and otherwise venting her spleen—all without any cause whatsoever. The whole trouble was that mother wanted to get Tennie back from, going around the country telling fortunes and Sparr and his wife were always telling mother that as long as Blood was around she could not get the girl back.⁵⁸

Blood, Victoria, and Tennessee countered that the Sparrs had been blackmailing them for years. Blackmail letters were produced.⁵⁹ Margaret Miles gave sworn testimony that Mary had come to her in 1866 when she lived in Cincinnati and revealed the plot to blackmail Blood about

("Female Financiers' Feuds," *The Brooklyn Eagle*, 8 May 1871). In June 1866, Blood resigned his position as city auditor and left St. Louis with Victoria. On 10 July 1866, Blood's first wife filed for divorce on grounds of adultery. It was granted ("Law Intelligence," *Chicago Tribune*, 10 July 1866). On 14 July 1866, Blood and "Victoria Claflin" filed for a marriage license in Dayton, Ohio.

⁵¹ Stephen Pearl Andrews.

⁵² "Blood, Woodhull, Claflin. The Great Scandal at Essex Market," *New York Herald*, 16 May 1871, p. 3, col. 5.

⁵³ "The Family Relations of Woodhull and Claflin," *New York Tribune*, 6 May 1871, p. 2, col. 1. She may have viewed herself as a grass widow.

⁵⁴ "Claflin Family History," *The Sun*, 16 May 1871, p. 1, col. 3.

⁵⁵ "Blood, Woodhull, Claflin. The Great Scandal at Essex Market," *New York Herald*, op cit.

⁵⁶ "Woodhull, Claflin & Co. A Serious Charge Against J.H. Blood," *New York Clipper*, op cit.

⁵⁷ "Female Financiers' Feuds," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 8 May 1871, op cit.

⁵⁸ "The Woodhull War," *New York Herald*, 17 May 1871, p. 10, col. 1.

⁵⁹ "Female Financiers' Feuds," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, op cit.

his bigamy. “Sparr is bound to it and I can’t stop it” Mary said.⁶⁰ Finally, evidence was presented that the Sparrs took advantage of Anna’s weakened mental condition to accomplish their ends and were also blackmailing clients of Woodhull, Claflin & Co.⁶¹ One of those who received one of the notorious blackmail letters testified that:

Yesterday I received another (letter) in the same way, and an old woman came in who said she was your mother. I believe from what she said that she was crazy. She said that she had been told to get \$300 out of me for that letter, but as she couldn’t read, I believed that she did not know what she had been put up to...I asked her why she didn’t go to you. She said Sparr told her that if she did you would send her to the Island. I write this to you to put you on your guard, because the parties behind your mother mean you harm.⁶²

Tennessee acknowledged that the blackmailers are “working through and by my uneducated and feeble-minded mother.”⁶³ She admitted she was Anna’s favorite and said “my mother and I always got along together till Sparr came to the house. Sparr has been trying to blackmail people through mother.”⁶⁴ She wanted to rescue her mother, “I want my mother. I am willing to take my mother home with me now, or pay two hundred dollars a month for her in any safe place.”⁶⁵ At this point in the court room, a physical tug of war ensued over Anna between Tennessee and Mary until Colonel Blood stepped in to soothe Tennessee and advised her to calm down in an inner room.⁶⁶ What an ironically appropriate demonstration of how Anna was stuck in the middle of her children!

Within a week Anna was missing. Utica told the *Sun* that her mother had been missing for four days and she smelled “foul work.”⁶⁷ Anna reappeared days later, “A white-haired matron, with a shawl over her head in lieu of a bonnet, rang the door-bell of the Washington Hotel,”⁶⁸ the hotel Tennessee had arranged for her to live and where her daughter Utica and son-in-law Thomas Brooker were also staying. Her tale was a harrowing, outlandish, story. On the day of her disappearance she said she went to Victoria and Tennessee’s home to speak to her husband then she went on to the Catholic Sisters of Charity for a visit. On her way home she was abducted by two men, thrown into a carriage, her head covered with her shawl and one of her captors snapped, “Keep quiet! We all know about you. You know you’re insane, and you’re making too much mischief. The sisters can’t do business—you will break them up . . . If you don’t keep still I’ll take you down to the river and throw you in.”⁶⁹ A two-hour carriage ride later, they arrived at her place of imprisonment, up three flights of stairs and into a sparse bedroom with a sky light and a woman who provided her with one slice of bread a day. Anna said she was held for three days and three nights.⁷⁰ Suddenly, and with no explanation, her jailers

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ “The Woodhull War,” *New York Herald*, 17 May 1871, p. 10, col. 1-2

⁶⁵ Ibid. She is implying that the Sparr household is anything but safe and a caring environment. This was an astute assessment as events unfolded over the next few weeks.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ “Mrs. Claflin Missing,” *The Sun*, 25 May 1871, p. 1.

⁶⁸ “Woodhull and Claflin,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 1 June 1871, p. 2.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

released her and took her, again blindfolded, to the Harlem Railroad Depot from where she could make her way to the Washington Hotel. It fell to Utica to nurse her mother back to health.⁷¹ Anna adamantly implicated Blood as the instigator in her kidnapping.

The following week, Anna created another very public scene. The door to the sisters' house was flung open with Anna in hot pursuit of Blood just as a reporter from the *Herald* arrived. Victoria and Tennessee ran, too, but in the opposite direction. Anna headed straight for her son-in-law:

Mrs. Claflin crossed his path like an avenging Nemesis. In a moment the quiet air of the morning was pierced by the cries of 'You bloody ruffian! You imp of the devil! You candidate for hell! You vile free-lover! You have ruined my da'ters! I'll have yer life!'⁷²

After Blood's escape, Anna sat on the front stoop of the house to wait for the return of her daughters. The reporter sat down with her and talked her through her fury. Her pitch and agitation heightened throughout the conversation until, her touch on reality loosening, she said that Victoria feared Blood, too, and was afraid he would "pour hot lead in her ears at night."⁷³ Victoria and Tennessee returned and calmly tried to tell the other side of the story. Tennessee said her mother "would come and behave well for two or three days, till Mrs. Sparr would call on her," inciting a raving fit in Anna. At just this time, Anna's son-in-law, Benjamin Sparr, was found dead in French's Hotel in New York under very mysterious circumstances.⁷⁴

Sparr's death raised many unexplained issues; not the least of which was whereabouts when Anna disappeared. He had – the stories vary – gone to visit his sick sister in Cincinnati or had gone to ask his sister for money. The most unusual aspect of his death was that, despite having telegraphed his wife that he would be home, he checked into the hotel in the newspaper district of New York and signed the register in an uncharacteristic way.⁷⁵ Despite the unusual circumstances of the death, the coroner ruled it was natural causes.⁷⁶ While Anna played no direct role in the investigation of his death, the timing and suspicious circumstances of Sparr's death do suggest there was more at play in Anna's mysterious disappearance.

Sparr's death removed one malevolent character from the clan, and things were fairly quiet for Anna in the subsequent two years.

On 9 July 1873, Anna's daughter, Utica, died of Bright's disease.⁷⁷ Ten days after Utica's death and burial, Anna, this time with Buck, struck another blow against Colonel Blood. They accused him of poisoning Utica.⁷⁸ The lawyer refused to institute an inquiry before the Grand Jury,⁷⁹ and let the coroner's findings stand.

Later in the same year, Anna again made waves, this time at a Spiritualist meeting at Robinson Hall in New York City.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² "The Claflin Clan," *The New York Herald*, 8 June 1871, p. 6, col. 4.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ See Biography of Mary "Polly" Claflin (Burns) Sparr.

⁷⁵ As "Frank Spohor" rather than his usual signature of "B.F. Sparr."

⁷⁶ Pulmonary apoplexy was the cause.

⁷⁷ Utica Brooker, Death Certificate.

⁷⁸ "Spicy Spiritualism; A Sunday Tongue-Fight in Robinson Hall," *Chicago Tribune*, 19 July 1873, p. 8; *The Indianapolis News*, 19 July 1873, p.1.

⁷⁹ *The Indianapolis News*, 19 July 1873, p.1.

The meeting opened with a speech by Mrs. Claflin, the mother of the notorious Woodhull, who made a frantic denunciation of Col. Blood, and finally got so violent that she had to be stopped by main force. Then a glib young lady, named Dumar, got the floor, and, after sailing along quietly for a few minutes, got mixed up in the Woodhull matter, which again brought Mrs. Claflin to her feet, who called Miss Dumar a liar, and had to be carried, shrieking and screaming, out of the hall.⁸⁰

Mary, who was also in attendance, and took up where her mother left off. Mary was removed in a similar manner.⁸¹ The *Harrisburg Telegraph* also reported on the episode and highlighted Anna's mental incapacities. "Mrs. Claflin, the old and nearly demented mother of the notorious Woodhulls, Claflin sisters, got the floor. She spoke excitedly and disconnectedly upon a variety of topics, and much that she said was unintelligible."⁸² The audience shouted for her removal.⁸³

Little is known about Anna's activities after these dramatic events. She did go to Europe with her daughters on a short holiday in 1874 and returned to the United States aboard the *SS Hohenstauffen* on 17 September 1874 in the company of Victoria, Tennie, Zula and Blood.⁸⁴

In 1875, Anna finally won her battle against Blood over her daughters. An exhausted and demoralized Victoria finally agreed to separate from him after a frenetic lecture tour on which she was accompanied by her mother.⁸⁵ Their divorce was finalized in October 1876, and in 1877, Victoria and Tennessee, with Anna and Victoria's daughter Zula in tow, left America for Britain. Buck followed them a year later with Victoria's son, Byron. While Victoria and Tennessee lectured in England, Anna settled into a quiet life in London.

After Buck's death in November 1885, Anna was sent to live with Tennessee and her new English husband, Sir Francis Cook. In February 1888, Cook had had his mother-in-law shipped back to the United States to live with his wife's sister Mary along with a payment of \$5000, perhaps being unable to tolerate her irrational behavior. In a dictated letter to him days after her arrival at Mary's house and her realization of the circumstances, Anna begged to be allowed to return to England.

Oh! My God, My God I never would have believed that you would ever have sold me for \$5000.00 or sent me across the deep blue sea. You know that Tennie C is my life, and I love her as I do my life although I loaned her to you to make you happy ... Mrs. Sparr is as good to me as any child could be to make me happy but she is not my life Tennie C. I would be willing to live in a room 10x10 or lay on a lounge if I could [missing in fold] darling child once in a while, and I would suffer anything only to hear her speak and see herself again. Now you know Sir Francis I am the best friend you have next to your wife.⁸⁶

⁸⁰ *Alton (Illinois) Telegraph*, 5 September 1873, p. 1.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² "Spicy Spiritualism," *Harrisburg Telegraph*, 19 August 1873, p. 2.

⁸³ This altercation was also covered in the *New York Herald*, 19 August 1873 and the *Sandusky Register*, 22 August 1873, p.2.

⁸⁴ National Archives and Records Administration, Passenger Lists, 17 September 1874.

⁸⁵ "Marital Unhappiness, A Singular Story about Mrs. Victoria Woodhull," quoted from the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, *New York Sun*, 21 July 1876. See also "Woodhull and Blood," *New York Sun* 22 July, 1876,

⁸⁶ SIU Collection. Victoria Woodhull Martin papers, box 2, folder 11.

Anna was ultimately brought back to England where she died on 10 July 1889 in the Richmond home of her daughter Tennessee.⁸⁷ She was laid to rest with Buck 12 July 1889 in Highgate Cemetery West, London, Middlesex, England.⁸⁸ For all the turmoil, lack of education, violent accusations and struggles with mental illness, Anna emerges as a deeply emotional mother, and, of all things, a tender poet. In her plea to Sir Francis Cook to allow her return to England and to her precious, favorite daughter, she dictated:

If all the seas were ink
And all the land was paper;
And every stub were a pen,
Could not write my sorrowful heart
 Down to-day
Oh, that my head were a fountain
 Of water.
And my eyes were rivers of tears.
Its like a great lamentation was heard
 In a chopper
[lost in fold]
 children.
And I can say today great Lamentation
I am morning [*sic*] from my child.
 From your Mother,
 Anna Claflin⁸⁹

⁸⁷ General Register Office, Richmond, S 2a 195- June 1889; "Women of the World," *Butte Semi Weekly Miner*, 20 July 1889, op cit.

⁸⁸ www.deceasedonline.com \$, "Burial Register," scan of burial register, Camden, 12 June 1889.

⁸⁹ Victoria Woodhull Martin papers, SIU, box 2, folder 11.