

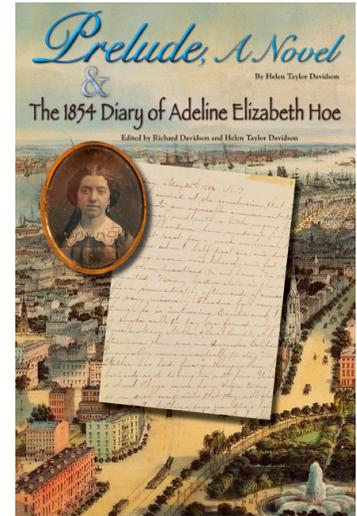
**For release, April 2013**  
**Prelude, A Novel**  
**& The 1854 Diary**  
**of Adeline Elizabeth Hoe**

Peter E. Randall Publisher  
Publication date – August 2013  
\$24.95, 296 pgs. Hardcover, 6” x 9”  
Jacketed, Illustrated  
Distributed by UPNE/Dartmouth  
ISBN 13# 978-1-931807-80-7

By Helen Taylor Davidson  
Edited by Richard Davidson Ph.D. and Helen Taylor Davidson

*In the spring of 1854 seventeen-year-old Adeline Elizabeth Hoe began to keep a daily diary...years later her descendants brought it to life.*

- 1850s New York comes to life through the eyes of the 17-year-old daughter of Richard March Hoe, an inventor whose “Lightning” rotary printing press revolutionized the printing industry.
- Two titles in one volume; **Original source material**—*The 1854 Diary of Adeline Elizabeth Hoe*, fully annotated and edited by the Davidsons, and *Prelude, A Novel*, written by Helen Davidson, inspired by the enigmatic references in her ancestor Adeline’s diary.
- Themes— social activism, abolition, slavery, the Underground Railroad, and 19<sup>th</sup> century daily life.
- Diarist meets **painter William Sidney Mount, choral director William Batchelder Bradbury, piano maker Robert Nunns, mentions violin player Anthony Hannibal Clapp, and many more.**



**Filled with six months of the details of a young girl’s life**, the diary offers a wonderful window into the mind of an educated young woman from a well-to-do family living in Lower Manhattan in the turbulent decade before the Civil War.

Helen Davidson transcribed and annotated the diary with her husband, Richard, through many years of research. The diary records the active social life of a young girl on the cusp of adulthood and includes interactions with numerous **notable** people and events of the day.

The novel *Prelude* commences in the spring, when Addie and her older sister Emilie travel to summer destinations in the countryside just as an epidemic breaks out in the city. Throughout the summer, they move in a great circuit around the city, staying with family and business associates of their famous father, inventor Richard March Hoe. Adeline recorded her experiences and reflections in delicate script during the summer that proved to be the prelude to her adulthood and the coming fate of the nation.

**Advance Praise for *Prelude & The 1854 Diary of Adeline Elizabeth Hoe***

*“Diaries are a tool for history, both for recording events and providing context: showing not only how contemporaries viewed the event but sometimes how opinion began to change. And one such tool for the history of nineteenth-century New York City is The 1854 Diary of Adeline Elizabeth Hoe.... In Prelude, Davidson has written a novella sparked by a hint of romance in the Diary.”*

– George W. Martin, Historian and Author of *CCB: The Life and Century of Charles C. Burlingham, New York’s First Citizen, 1858–1959*

**About the Author**

Helen Davidson, a music teacher, choral director, dramatist and writer, transcribed and annotated the diary with her husband, Richard, through many years of research. Dr. Richard Davidson is an English professor, former dairy farmer, author and essayist. He has written for *Down East* magazine and the *Christian Science Monitor*. They live in Plainfield, NH.

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**Q & A with Helen Taylor Davidson**

**1. The story behind *Prelude, A Novel & The 1854 Diary of Adeline Elizabeth Hoe* begins with a remarkable document—an original diary your ancestor kept when she was only seventeen. How did the diary drive you to uncover more about her?**

While raising a family, the diary lay untouched except for a truncated effort on my part to transcribe a page or two of it. The diary of Adeline Elizabeth Hoe is a legacy left to me by my mother, the wife of her oldest grandson. I conjecture that my Grandmother Taylor wanted the diary to be a treasure, not something neglected, and so she entrusted it to her daughter-in-law, a person not connected to her by blood. That is to say, AEH's marriage later was not happy. A good portion of the family might say she was abused. Grandmother, however, knew that the experiences her mother recorded in her youth were precious, no matter the outcome of the rest of her life. Whatever the skeletons in the family closet, Adeline's diary needed to be saved for a later time.

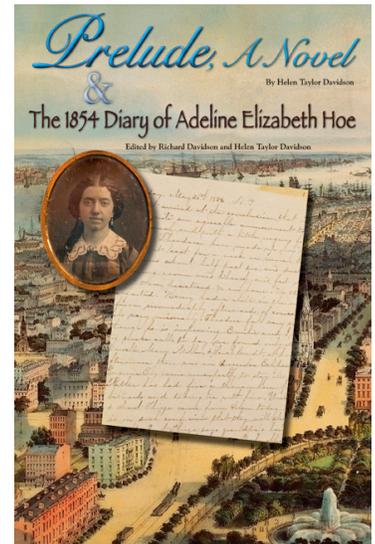
**2. What light do you think Adeline's diary can cast on the interior, private lives of mid-nineteenth-century American women? In what ways are her observations a product of her time, or in what ways are they unique to her?**

Certainly much of what she writes concerns daily tasks, washing muslins, sewing, dusting and helping care for her baby half-sisters. The question of race she treats with delicacy. When an acquaintance goes to find "a girl" to work for her, is that person a black girl? She does not say. However, confronted with a gravestone of a much-revered black fiddler, she includes details showing she is clearly impressed with his close connection with the Mount and Seabury families she visits. Like most 17-year-old girls she comments on how her friends and new acquaintances look. She clearly takes careful note of her aunt and uncle and their relationship at their wedding. Marriage is on the horizon for her, she may assume, and she presents herself with decorum, a young lady toting the line, observing the proprieties. She comments on her sister Emilie becoming 20, and jokingly calls her "quite aged." Was she suggesting it was time for her older sister to find a mate? Another fact in her life is the prevalence of illnesses, both specific in the household and general, as when she mentions the cholera epidemic.

**3. The footnotes to the diary are amazing in what they reveal about life in the nineteenth century as well as in the Hoe family. Was there a particular discovery that surprised you most in the course of your research?**

Discovering the connection between the *SS Arctic* disaster and the *Titanic* was particularly surprising. In 1854 the steamship *SS Arctic* sank in the North Atlantic resulting in the deaths of more than 300 people. The crew commandeered the lifeboats. The furor from survivors and relatives ashore brought about new laws that meant that many more passengers were saved when the *Titanic* sank. Adeline's son-in-law, Charles Burlingham, a maritime lawyer, 58 years later would be involved in the settling of claims after the *Titanic*. The connections such as those between the two catastrophes, discovered while reading and sorting out her faint and fading handwriting, were fascinating.

One confusion caused by her handwriting involved Adeline's experience on a boat, when she mentions beautiful music played by "two violins, a bass viol and [horns]". A visit to the Long Island Museum in Stony Brook corrected my thinking. The painting by William Sidney Mount, whom she meets on a visit to the seaside town, clearly revealed that the "horns" were "bones," a folk percussion instrument, being played by a handsome black man. The painting, completed by Mount in 1856, just a year and a half after Addie is writing, is located today in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.



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**4. *Prelude, A Novel* is a fictional adventure about the Underground Railroad inspired by references and notes in Adeline’s diary. How did you decide on this topic? What was your process of fleshing out Adeline’s friends in the diary—especially the mysterious “Joe”—to create such memorable characters?**

First of all, Joe is the only person not in Adeline’s family who appears consistently throughout the journal. He takes her out for ice cream. He sends her a sketch and a newspaper. He writes to her, not to her older sister Emilie. He comes and goes in the Hoe household almost daily.

The mention of negroes occurs in the journal, albeit rarely. Adeline was likely to be aware of the rising friction over slavery since her father Richard March Hoe, whose Hoe and Company manufactured the increasingly popular “lightning” rotary printing press, was selling presses to newspaper publishers throughout the North and South and abroad. The week that Joe sends her a sketch and a newspaper in July of 1854 the *New York Tribune* featured on the front page the story of Elizabeth Jennings, who is rudely forced off the omnibus labeled “For Whites Only” by the police. Some consider her the 19<sup>th</sup> century’s Rosa Parks. Researching the history of slavery in New York I found that because slavery had been outlawed in the state since 1828, African-Americans led a relatively free life, coming and going from where they might live and work on Long Island into the city. The conflict created by the federally mandated Fugitive Slave Act passed in 1850 injects a new element of anxiety into what had been a less combustible social scene.

**5. The piano was especially dominant in nineteenth-century middle-class social life, something you capture in the book, starting with the title itself, *Prelude*. Do you feel your background as a pianist and piano teacher gives you unique insight into the culture of the time? How about insight into Adeline?**

Yes, engaging with music seemed natural. There is an advantage that I had in possessing several well-worn, hard-bound books of music with Adeline’s name embossed on the covers. They reveal the importance of dancing in her life and what classical music, both solo and for four hands, she played at that time. The volumes, bound no doubt with her father’s oversight, include popular songs as well as operatic transcriptions and European classical pieces. It was no accident that her daughter Grace, my grandmother, studied piano with Frank Damrosch and was a concert pianist performing in New York and in homes in the Cornish Colony of which she was a member.

**6. What do you hope readers come away with after reading *Prelude, A Novel & The 1854 Diary of Adeline Elizabeth Hoe*?**

Although the life of 18-year-old Adeline in 1854 was circumscribed by her strong sense of obligation to family, she writes of a world that includes an increasingly diverse population whom she is encouraged to confront. She is as fascinated with having her image replicated in a daguerreotype, as a modern young person is to appear on Facebook. She communicates frequently, almost daily writing letters and calling on friends and relatives. She entertains herself and others with music and novels. In these ways, she presents a universal young person who can speak to us today.

