

The Year Our Family Came to Michigan An Encapsulation of Historical Events

1830-1855: James and Catharine (McNelly) Hood, with the first five of their eventual ten children, were part of a great Hood family migration to Michigan's Wayne, Ypsilanti, Oakland, Livingston, and Lenawee counties in the first half of the 1800s. A vast majority of these Hoods came from Seneca County, New York, especially from the Romulus (Fayette) and Varick areas. Most were the descendants of five brothers who settled in those locations from Pennsylvania near the end of the 1700s. Their names were George, William, Robert, John, Jr. and Andrew. They were the sons of John Hood, Sr., who died in Turbot Township, Northumberland County, Pennsylvania in 1796. New York-born James was the son of Robert, who apparently died about 1800 leaving his wife Jane (or Jean) and children James, Elizabeth and Jane (or Jean).¹ According to James and Catharine's Michigan-born descendant William Hood Barnes, "They came to Novi-Oakland County in April 1835." Earlier, Catharine's Scottish-born uncles Alexander and James Duncan had left Pultney, Steuben County, and Ovid, Seneca County, New York, respectively, settling in Oakland County with their families: Alexander in 1830 and James in 1833.

Pennsylvania-born Mary, William, Catharine and James were four of five children born to Irish-born John and Scottish-born Isabella (Duncan) McNelly. Mary (McNelly) and Irish-born Samuel Waddell arrived in Oakland County, Michigan, in 1835, probably arriving with the Hoods. Soon the Waddells bought land and settled at Howell, Livingston County, where Samuel died in 1837 after being mortally injured in a construction accident. Mary returned to Pulteney, Steuben County, New York with their seven children, where her widowed mother Isabella (Duncan) McNelly had married Irish-born John Ellis. Catharine's twin and spinster sibling Isabella McNelly was living with them. Mary would later marry the New Jersey-born Dutchman and widower John Coryell, have two more children, and never again join the westward migration. In 1880, at age 80, Mary and 84-year-old John were still living in Pulteney. Living with them was the daughter from their marriage, Charity (a.k.a. "Chatty" and "Chat"). In 1855, Mary and Samuel's New York-born son Andrew Waddell returned to Howell, Michigan, where he married, became a lawyer, a civic-minded and prominent citizen, and a Civil War veteran.

It does not appear that siblings William and James McNelly ever attempted migrating westward. William, a saddler by profession, and Pennsylvania-born wife Catharine lived at times in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and nearby Camden, Camden County, New Jersey. They variously spelled their surname McNelly, McNella, MacNelly and McNally, and raised at least nine children. James, a farmer, and New York-born wife Nancy usually spelled their last name McNella and raised six children. In 1880, James and Nancy were still living at Pulteney. Also in the household that year were three of their children and one New York-born daughter-in-law, all of whom differentiated from James and Nancy by spelling their surname "MacNelly."

¹ In his will, Robert Hood spelled the name of his wife and daughter "Jean." However, considering the frequent use of the name "Jane" in family names, including one of James and Catharine's daughters, the name "Jane" was probably intended. Further proof is that a "Jane Hood" appears as head of household in an 1800 census of the area, living near some of the other Hood brothers.

1835: New York-born Hannah (Francis), widow of Lyman Keys, left Cambria, Niagara County, New York for Michigan with two of their sons.² On September 22, 1835 she bought eighty acres of land in the east one-half of the northeast one-quarter of Section 17 in Climax Township, Kalamazoo County.³ “A school was taught by Mrs. Hannah Keyes, at her residence on section 17, in 1836, before the district was organized....” A few years later she married Pennsylvania-born widower George Fletcher of Prairie Rhonde, also in Kalamazoo County.

1843: New York-born Sarah (Sittser) Barnes, the only daughter in a family with six sons, inherited one-seventh of her New York-born father David Sittser’s considerable estate in 1841.⁴ She and Connecticut-born husband Thomas Barnes, with their seven children, left Seneca Falls, Seneca County, New York in 1843, settling in Jackson, Jackson County, Michigan on October 24. Before and after their arrival, Thomas and Sarah (a.k.a. Sally) were involved in numerous land transactions.

1844-1860: Jeffrey Samuel Barnes, the older brother of Thomas Barnes, left Sharon, Litchfield County, Connecticut, for Mentz/Aurelius, Cayuga County, New York in 1816 along with his parents and siblings. Jeffrey later settled near his parents: Connecticut-born Aaron and New York-born Martha (Eggleston) Barnes. However, by the time of the 1860 Federal census, Jeffrey, New York-born wife Lucretia (Storke), and some of their six children (all born in New York) were farming at Niles Township, Berrien County, Michigan.⁵ They later would move to

² In our family line, the surname “Keys” and its alternate spelling “Keyes” are pronounced “kies,” as in skies. This differentiates our family line from others pronouncing their last name of similar spelling(s) “kees.”

³ Hannah purchased her land from the US government, Patent #71, which became the Keyes farm. It grew in size over the years and was held by Hannah’s descendants into the 20th century.

⁴ Sarah’s brother Peter and sister-in-law Emeline Sittser were abolitionists and part of the famous Underground Railroad. At the time of the 1860 Federal census they were living at Throop, Cayuga County, New York. Staying with them was the fugitive slave family of Charles and Betsey Ferguson and child Maria. Charles was 38 years old and born in Virginia.

New York-born Adelbert J. Sitsler/Sittser, Sarah’s nephew and son of sibling David Sittser, Jr., traveled to Michigan with a cousin in about 1861 to hunt birds professionally, and was there when the Civil War broke out. According to his great-grandson Douglas Norton Sittser, he “joined the 13th Michigan Infantry in 1861 at Hillsdale Michigan. Mustered in Berrien Co., Michigan in 1862 and marched south to various skirmishes in northern Kentucky. At Shiloh his eyes were burned by three days of gunpowder in the air and he was sent to Benton Barracks hospital near St. Louis, Missouri; later transferred to Detroit Barracks. While recovering he was signed up by the Custer brothers into the cavalry, as he was a combat vet. they put him into the 1st U.S. Cavalry, Co. A. His first major action was Gettysburg. He was injured several times until mustering out as a sergeant at New Orleans in mid-1865. He was given land in North Dakota...” Adelbert would spend his last days at the home of one of his sons in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Another great-grandson, Gerald Lawson Sittser, is a Professor of Religion at Whitworth College in Spokane, Washington, and has written a number of inspirational books and articles.

New York-born Clara (Sittser) Williams, Sarah’s grandniece and a granddaughter of sibling John Sittser, was one of ten women attending Syracuse University at Syracuse, New York, who founded the *Alpha Phi* women’s fraternity in September 1872. The first meeting of what today is called the *Alpha Phi* International Fraternity was held September 18 in Clara’s room. Today it can be found as both a women’s fraternity and as a sorority.

⁵ Jeffrey and Lucretia’s firstborn daughter Julia L. remained in New York after marrying farmer Philetus Chamberlain of Rose, Wayne County, New York, and later, Mendon, Monroe County, New York. Their son Philetus, Jr. began a dynasty of attorneys that continues into the 21st century: Philetus, Jr., Arthur Van Doorn

Butler, Branch County, Michigan, and finally to Quincy, also in Branch County. Son Aaron had a total of seven children, all born in Michigan, by his two wives: Maria D. and Elizabeth “Lizzie” (Ferguson). Another son Moses married Ellen Lane, born in Cork, Ireland. They had five children all born in Michigan—the first in 1860. Thomas and Jeffrey’s sister Sarah married Hampton Dexter Granger and they settled at Ingham, Ingham County, Michigan by about 1844. They had three children, the first two born in New York and the third in Michigan.

1855-57: Chloe (Thayer) Robinson Page’s son Luther Robinson, the third of five children (all born in New York) by her first husband, Massachusetts-born James Robinson, immigrated to Indiana during the early 1840s but had returned to New York by 1852, probably bringing glowing reports of the western territories. By 1855 Luther, New York-born wife Maria, and family once again left New York, this time to settle at Bronson, Branch County, Michigan.

About 1857, English-born William Henry and Massachusetts-born Chloe (Thayer) Robinson Page sold their land at Webster, Monroe County, New York and immigrated to Michigan, where they, also, settled at Bronson, once again taking up farming. The New York-born Page sons William Henry and Riley Preston immigrated to the same area of Michigan about the same time.

William Henry and English-born wife Mariah (Patch) Page’s first of nine children was born in New York in 1857, but their second child was born in Michigan in 1860.⁶ They initially settled at Bronson but would be living in Ovid, Branch County, by 1880. Occupations listed for William Henry, Jr. were carpentry and farming. For much of his early life he went by the name “Henry,” probably to differentiate himself from his father. After 1870 he used William H. William and Mariah later moved to Coldwater, Branch County, and later still to Sturgis, St. Joseph County.

[**Exodus**] After William’s death, which occurred at Sturgis November 21, 1906, most of his and Mariah’s surviving children left the state. The firstborn son Jay D. took his family to Syracuse, Onondaga County, New York about 1907. They also kept a farm at Three River Point in Clay Township, same county. After Jay’s death March 31, 1912, only a month and a half after that of his mother Mariah, Jay’s Virginia-born widow Susie V. (Chappell), settled in Washington, DC sometime between 1916 and 1920, later removing to Arlington, Virginia. Jay and Susie’s daughters Eleanor and Genevieve, and Genevieve’s husband Russell B. Clapper, also settled in Arlington. Jay and Susie’s wealthy son Robert E. and daughter-in-law Ruth Steinwald (Kuntzsch) Page made Syracuse, New York, and Coral Gables, Dade County, Florida, their homes. Jay’s sister Chloe Bertrius (Page) and her husband Harry A. Lee would also settle in New York, around 1910, choosing Charlotte, Chautauqua County. Their sister Maude Lela (Page) and husband William G. Purdy settled at Jamestown, also in Chautauqua County. Sister Elizabeth Bella “Lizzie” (Page) and her husband Albert Monroe Haybarger settled at Fort Saskatchewan and Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, between 1907 and 1911. The youngest sister Nellie G. (Page) and husband William H. Gilson were living in New Albany, Floyd County, Indiana, by 1900 but had moved to Chicago, Cook County, Illinois by 1910. The other two brothers remained in Michigan. Frank had married Frances (Himebaugh) but had died childless in 1900, and Thomas married Blanche A. (DePuy), but after a long marriage they, too, were childless. Only two sisters remained in Michigan: Lillie M. (Page) and husband Frank P. Gregg,

Chamberlain, Philetus Mason Chamberlain, etc. Julia and Philetus, Sr.’s daughter Louisa went to Michigan in 1877 to marry Horace Field, widower of Louisa’s first cousin once removed Martha Louise (Barnes).

⁶ Mariah’s given name was variously spelled “Maria,” “Marie,” or “Mari.”

and Hattie I. (Page) with husband Perry R. Harris. After 1920 the widow Hattie Harris joined her sister Chloe and brother-in-law Harry Lee at Charlotte, New York.

Riley Preston Page and New York-born Elizabeth Adelaide Hollenbeck were married in 1859 at Burr Oak, St. Joseph County, Michigan. Their first of their three children, Carrie Bell, was born in Michigan in 1860. That year the family was living at Matteson, Branch County. By 1870 the family had moved to Batavia, Branch County, and all three children had been born.⁷ The second child, George Hudson, was born (1864) back at Webster, New York, and the third, Elsie Adelaide, was born (1868) back again in Michigan. Riley would ultimately have six children, the additional three, Bernice May (1874), Harvey Judson “Juddie” (1876) and Charles Orlando (1878), by his second wife Michigan-born Sarah M. (Keyes), whom he married in 1873 at Charlotte, Eaton County, Michigan. Of these six, Elsie, Bernice and Juddie would die of diphtheria in 1879 within a two-week time span. Charles had it too but surmounted.

[**Exodus**] Riley and Sarah later divorced and Riley returned to Webster in the mid-1890s, opened a shoemaking and shoe repair shop in the village, and purchased the house belonging to his widowed half-sister Chloe M. (Robinson) Smith. Riley’s ex-wife Sarah and her new husband Harvey Olmstead Cline took the surviving Cline and Page children still living at home to Angola, Steuben County, Indiana, for ten years before settling in Ingham County, Michigan, where Harvey became county sheriff. In 1905 Riley married Emma (Conant) Wright at Webster, and they soon moved to Ontario Center, Wayne County, New York, where they spent many years. Their last years were with Emma’s daughter Elizabeth (Wright) McMillan Merrill in the areas of East Rochester and Fairport, Monroe County, New York. Though all of Riley’s surviving children remained in Michigan, some members of later generations left the state. His firstborn daughter Carrie’s only child Lola Mae (Richards) settled in Oneida, Knox County, Illinois, in 1916 after marrying her second husband LaVergne Benjamin DeForest, and Lola’s only child Helen Elizabeth (Milliman), though born in Michigan, spent most of her life in Knox County, Illinois. Some descendants of Riley’s last child, Charles Orlando, the only of Riley’s children to bring forward posterity more than a couple of generations, lit out for other states such as California, Connecticut, Minnesota, New York, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia.

1851: Shortly after Wilbur Keyes’ birth in 1851 the family of New York-born Orlando and Lucinda (Shook) Keyes left Cambria, Niagara County, New York, with their three children and settled at Climax Township, Kalamazoo County, Michigan. They took up and farmed the land that the widow Hannah (Francis) Keyes had purchased sixteen years earlier. Four more children would be born to the family, including Sarah M., before Reverend Orlando Keyes died of illness contracted while serving as Chaplain to the 12th Michigan Veteran Volunteers in the Civil War. Orlando, the next-to-youngest son of Hannah and Lyman Keyes, was by trade a cooper, or barrel-maker, before his ordination as a Methodist minister.

1854-55: New Jersey-born William and Sarah (Welter) Castner began their odyssey in 1835, when they left Morris County, New Jersey, with their firstborn child Elizabeth and settled at

⁷ Riley’s name was spelled “Reyley” during his stay at Batavia. That spelling appears on the 1870 Federal census and in a book written about residents of Branch County published in 1871. In the 1871 book, “Henry” Page was listed as a carpenter in Bronson Village and “Reyley” Page was listed as a farmer. (It has taken me over thirty years to unravel this account from the maze of location and name changes. C.W.P.)

Milo, Yates County, New York, where seven more children were born. The family remained in New York for about nineteen years before picking up stakes and moving to Ovid, Clinton County, Michigan, in 1854. Sarah's sister Sophia and New York-born brother-in-law Edward Coke Potter, who had settled at Starkey, Yates County, moved their family to Ovid, Michigan, in the autumn of 1855.

1859-1870: The entire families of New York-born Adam F. Hubbard a.k.a. Adam Frink Hubbard a.k.a. Adam Frink Hubbart⁸ by his first wife Mary (McClellan) and second wife Ann M. (DeCamp), and three children of Calvin Hall and Seraph (Bothwell) Bliss immigrated to Michigan from New York shortly after the end of the Civil War—the Bliss siblings from Wayne County and the Hubbards from Wayne and Cayuga counties. Charles Hubbard, purportedly the first child of Adam and Mary, had already settled in Michigan by 1859. That year he married Michigan-born Charlotte (Wilsey). The next year they had their first of three known children, all born in Michigan. In 1870 the family was living in Jackson, Jackson County, where Charles was listed as a mason. In 1880 they were still in Jackson, and Charles was now a keeper at the state prison.

Helen M., second-born of Adam and Mary Hubbard, and her New York-born husband Sidney E. Bliss first settled at Galen in Wayne County, New York, in 1861, where they had the first two of their children. Then their family, along with Helen's fifteen-year-old brother Daniel, and the families of Sidney's New York-born siblings John Bothwell Bliss and Mary S. Williams, settled at Tekonsha, Calhoun County, Michigan.

Shortly after their arrival in Michigan, Sidney E. and Helen M. Bliss resettled at Albion, also in Calhoun County, where they had moved by 1870. There they had four more children. They would call Albion their home for the rest of their lives, staying either at the house Sidney built in town or on their farm three miles out.

John Bothwell Bliss and New York-born wife Mariah (Williams) had four known children, two surviving into adulthood, and were still at Tekonsha in 1880. By 1916 the family had moved to Marshall, Calhoun County.

Mary S. (Bliss) Williams was soon widowed, within months of giving birth to Alvin's and her only child. Five years later she married New York-born Cornelius Williams, another sibling of Mariah and Alvin's, who was a widower with young children. Eventually the family would own a store in Tekonsha. Mary's grandniece Jennie (Barnes) Paige remembered frequent visits to Tekonsha as a child, and the Williams family's store.

Bliss sibling Samuel H. did not join the Michigan venture. His New York-born wife Elizabeth (Magraw) died shortly after the birth of their second child, and some years later Samuel remarried to New York-born widow Phillipia (Oles) Corley. The new family joined the Calvin Hall and Louisa (Tuttle) Bliss family's migration to Farmville, Prince Edwards County, Virginia, around 1869. Samuel and Phillipia's only child Lelia was born there in 1874.

⁸ Adam was named in honor of his father Thomas's friend Adam Frink, who gave written testimony in the early 1800s to help Thomas obtain a Revolutionary War pension. One of Thomas's legs had been wounded during the war which had caused him problems ever since. During the war some Tories had led Indians into the town where one of Thomas's brothers lived. The brother was killed and the wife and children were carried off and adopted by the Indians. Thomas was said to have built many if not most of the early chimneys in the town of Russia.

Samuel's firstborn son Brooks Mason Bliss ultimately would have seven Virginia-born children by his English-born wife Sarah (Langslow).⁹

The eldest Bliss sibling, Susan E., married New York-born Samuel Kelsey and remained in Galen, Wayne County, New York, where they raised three children.

The New York-born children of Calvin Hall, Sr.¹⁰ and New York-born Louisa (Tuttle) West Bliss settled in Prince Edwards County, Virginia, rather than in Michigan. Calvin Hall, Jr. made Virginia his home, marrying Virginia-born Harriett E. (Hoeman) after wife Caddie (Addleman) died. In the 1880 Federal census of Farmville he was notated as "sheriff of county." At that time his sister Emily Louisa was notated as having "spinal disease." His sister Carrie, a spinster schoolteacher, taught in private schools after immigrating to Virginia in 1869 until returning to Clyde, Wayne County, New York, in 1894 with Emily, her only surviving sister. Carrie taught at the Clyde high school until 1896 and then moved to Wolcott, New York, continuing to teach until retiring in 1916. Carrie was acclaimed for her encyclopedic memory and lived until four days shy of her 90th birthday, surviving all of her full and half siblings.¹¹

Daniel Hubbard, third-born child of Adam Frink Hubbard, worked as a farm laborer in Barry County, where he met his future New York-born wife Ella (Turner). Daniel and Ella had seven children, five of which survived to adulthood, and they made Castleton, Barry County, their home for several years. Sometime after 1880 they removed to Albion. [It has not yet been determined whether Daniel was the child of Mary (McClellan) or of Ann (DeCamp), though it would seem likely that Mary was his mother.]

Levi Bartlett Hubbard, fourth-born child of Adam, by his wife Ann, married Michigan-born Margaret Ann Wilson in 1879 at Kalamo, Eaton County, Michigan, and they settled at Castleton, Barry County. Levi died in Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan, in 1911 due to shock from a surgical operation to clear an intestinal obstruction.

Thomas Hubbard, fifth-born child of Adam, also by his wife Ann, married Michigan-born Mary Wilson in 1879, also at Kalamo, and they also settled at Castleton, Barry County. He died at Albion in 1906 from pulmonary tuberculosis. [It appears that Margaret and Mary Wilson were cousins and not sisters.]

Adam Frink and Ann M. Hubbard were present in Albion at the time of the 1870 Federal census. In 1880, Adam married Maria (McCarthy) in Calhoun County and lived another twelve years.¹²

By Charles W. Paige in Los Angeles, California, last revised April 8, 2013

⁹ "Brooks Mason" was named after Calvin Hall Bliss, Sr.'s grandfather—Anna (Mason) Bliss's father.

¹⁰ Calvin served five terms in the Virginia Senate representing Prince Edward, Amelia and Cumberland counties.

¹¹ Information about Caroline H. "Carrie" Bliss was taken from her obituary in "*The Lake*," a Wolcott, NY newspaper, issue No. 42, dated Thursday April 23, 1936.

¹² At least a couple of generations prior to Adam Frink Hubbard spelled their surname Hubbart. Adam spelled his surname Hubbard at the time of the 1870 Federal census of Albion, Calhoun County, Michigan. Adam's parents Thomas and Silence (Bartlett) Hubbart spent many years in Russia, Herkimer County, New York, which is most likely where Adam was born. Thomas Hubbart had been born in Woodbury, Litchfield County, Connecticut, and Silence at Sharon, same county. Thomas' father John Hubbart spent at least his final years in South Britain, New Haven County, Connecticut. The information about Thomas and Silence Hubbart and several of their descendants was placed online by Marvin G. Miller, who subsequently died in a bicycling accident. This information was originally researched and compiled by Bob Neibling, a descendant of Thomas's brother Elisha.