

## 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).<sup>1</sup> 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 Catharine, Mary, and James were three 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.

There is no evidence that sibling James McNelly ever attempted migrating westward. He 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 were three of their children and one New York-born daughter-in-law, who differentiated from James and Nancy by spelling their last name "MacNelly." (The Duncan, McNelly, and Hood family history is well documented.)

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<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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. Four years later she was married to 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.<sup>3</sup> 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. (The Barnes family history is well documented.)

**1834-1860:** The older brother of Thomas Barnes, Jeffrey Samuel Barnes, had already married and left home by the time his parents and siblings left Sharon, Litchfield County, Connecticut, for Aurelius, Cayuga County, New York sometime between 1810 and 1820. In 1820, Jeffrey's family lived near, perhaps next door, to parents Connecticut-born Aaron and New York-born Martha (Eggleston) Barnes in Aurelius. However, by the time of the 1860 Federal census, Jeffrey, New York-born wife Lucretia, and two of their known three children (all born in New York) were farming at Niles Township, Berrien County, Michigan. They would later move to Butler, Branch County, Michigan, and finally to Quincy, also in Branch County. Son Moses married Ellen Lane, a woman from Cork, Ireland, and they had five children. Moses and Ellen's children were all born in Michigan—the first in 1860. Thomas and Jeffrey's sister Sarah married Hampton Granger, and they settled at Ingham, Ingham County, Michigan between 1840-1847.

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<sup>2</sup> 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."

<sup>3</sup> 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. Sittser/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 the now-international fraternity was held September 18 in Clara's room.

**1855-58:** 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. Presumably, the New York-born Page sons William Henry and Riley Preston immigrated with their parents.

William Henry Page and English-born wife Mariah's first of nine children was born in New York in 1857, but their second child was born in Michigan in 1860.<sup>4</sup> 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.

[**Exodus**] After William's death, which occurred at Sturgis, St. Joseph County, Michigan, November 21, 1906, most of the nine children left the state. The firstborn son Jay D. took his family to a farm at Three River Point in Clay Township, Onondaga County, New York by 1910. 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 both Syracuse, Onondaga County, New York and Coral Gables, Dade County, Florida their homes. Jay's sister Chloe Bertrius (Page) and 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 Lizzie and her husband Albert Haybarger settled at Saskatchewan, Canada by 1912. 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 married Frances (Himebaugh) but died childless in 1902, 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. Gragg, 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 Hollenbeck were married February 23, 1859 at Burr Oak, St. Joseph County, Michigan. Their first of three children 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.<sup>5</sup> The second child was

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<sup>4</sup> Mariah's given name was variously spelled "Maria," "Marie," or "Mari."

<sup>5</sup> 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

born (1864) back at Webster, New York, and the third was born (1868) back again in Michigan. Riley would ultimately have six children, the additional three by his second wife Michigan-born Sarah M. (Keyes). Of these six, three would die of diphtheria in 1879 within a two-week time span.

[**Exodus**] Riley later divorced Sarah and returned to Webster, leaving his surviving family behind. Years later he married Emma (Conant) Wright, and they spent the last years of their life with Emma's daughter Elizabeth in the East Rochester, Monroe County, New York area. Though all of Riley's surviving children remained in Michigan, some members of later generations left the state. His firstborn daughter's only child settled in Oneida, Knox County, Illinois in 1916 after marrying her second husband, and her only child Helen, though born in Michigan, spent most of her life in Knox County. Some of the descendants of Riley's last child lit out for other states like California, Minnesota, Connecticut, New York, and Virginia, while a few others chose Florida as their winter residence only. (The Riley Page family history is now well documented.)

**1851:** Shortly after Wilbur's 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, Kalamazoo County, Michigan. Four more children would be born to the family, including Sarah M., before Reverend Orlando Keyes died of illness after serving as Chaplain to the 12<sup>th</sup> Michigan Veteran Volunteers in the Civil War. Orlando, the youngest son of Hannah and Lyman Keyes, was by trade a cooper, or barrel-maker, before his ordination.

**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 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.

**1860-1870:** The entire family of New York-born Adam F. and Mary Ann (McClellan) Hubbard and at least three Bliss siblings eventually immigrated to Michigan from New York—the Bliss siblings from Wayne County and the Hubbards from Cayuga County. Charles Hubbard, the first child, had already settled in Michigan by 1860. That year, he and Michigan-born wife Charlotte (Wilsey) 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.

Second-born Helen M. (Hubbard) and 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 B. Bliss and Mary S. Williams, settled at Tekonsha, Calhoun

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listed as a carpenter in Bronson Village and "Reyley" Page was listed as a farmer. (It has taken me thirty years to unravel this account from the maze of location and name changes. C.W.P.)

County, Michigan. These Bliss siblings were children of New York-born Calvin Hall and Seraph (Bothwell) Bliss.

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 H. and Louisa Bliss migration to Farmville, Prince Edwards County, Virginia around 1869. Samuel and Phillipia's only child Lelia was born there in 1874. Samuel's firstborn son Brooks Mason Bliss ultimately would have seven Virginia-born children by his English-born wife Sarah (Langslow).<sup>6</sup>

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

Of the Bliss half siblings who left New York, the tendency was for them to settle in Prince Edwards County, Virginia rather than Michigan. They were the New York-born children of Calvin Hall and New York-born Louisa (Tuttle) West Bliss. Calvin Hall, Jr. made Virginia his home, marrying Virginia-born Harriett E. after wife Caddie (Addleman) died. In the 1880 Federal census of Farmville, Prince Edwards County, Virginia, 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. She taught at the Clyde high school until 1896, and then removed 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 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, surviving all of her full and half siblings.<sup>7</sup>

Third-born Daniel 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

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<sup>6</sup> "Brooks Mason" was named after Calvin Hall Bliss, Sr.'s grandfather—Anna (Mason) Bliss's father.

<sup>7</sup> 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.

adulthood, and they made Castleton, Barry County, their home for several years. Sometime after 1880 they removed to Albion.

Fourth-born Levi Bartlett Hubbard married Michigan-born Margaret Ann (Wilson) in 1879 at Kalamo, Eaton County, Michigan, and they settled at Castleton, Barry County.

Fifth-born Thomas Hubbard married Michigan-born Mary (Wilson) in 1879, also at Kalamo, and they also settled at Castleton, Barry County.

Adam F. and Ann M. Hubbard settled in Michigan between 1860 and 1870. They were present in Albion at the time of the 1870 Federal census. In 1880, Adam married Maria (McCarthy) in Calhoun County, Michigan.

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