



# PIONEER RECORD

Newsletter for the Midland Genealogical Society

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## In This Issue

My Recollections of Floods in the fourth ward of Midland	1
The Presidents Letter	2
Editorial Comments	2
Membership	3
Websites of Interest	3
Books For Sale	3
The Greatest Flood Ever Known in the History of Midland	5
Les Coureurs de Bois et les Voyageurs	6
Genealogical Oddities: One Families Journey	8
Coming Events	9
Murder at the St James	10
Looking Back in Midland County	11
MGS Officers & Society Information	12

## Midland Genealogical Society Programs for 2011 - 2012

*Meetings are scheduled on the third Wednesday of the month unless otherwise noted..*

*Programs for the meetings are as follows.*

### Feb 15, 2012 7:00 pm Library Lounge

"Michigan Troops in Gettysburg" by Wilma Diesen

March 21, 2012 7:00 pm Library Lounge  
"49ers Round the Horn - Life of the Gold Rush Miners and their trip around Cape Horn" by Ruth Ann Casadonte

April 18, 2012 7:00 pm Library Lounge  
"Ephraim William, A Midland Fur Trader - A First Person presentation" by Kyle Bagnall

May 16, 2012 6:00 pm "My Family Secret: An exploration of Genealogical Surprises" by Nancy James. Annual Meeting and Potluck to be held at the Carriage House on Cook Road.

## MY RECOLLECTIONS OF FLOODS IN THE FOURTH WARD OF MIDLAND,

by Thomas L. Bowen

Located at the confluence of the Chippawa and Tittabawassee rivers, the city of Midland, Michigan has a history of flooding along the rivers. Some of the extraordinary floods occurred in 1838, 1893, 1904, 1907, 1912, 1942, 1948 and 1986. The flood that rampaged in Midland on January 20, 1907 was described in the headline of the Midland Republican as the "greatest flood ever known in the history of Midland." The article describes the resulting travail of the residents and their livestock and the loss of property, including the destruction of the 36 year old wooden Benson Street bridge over the Tittabawassee River. This bridge connected the businesses on the north side of the river to the residents in the fourth ward on the south side of the river. In the next big flood of May 1912, the water rose to 25 feet above normal, exceeding previous records. My grandfather Glen Bowen arrived in Midland County soon after the 1907 flood, in December 1908. He came from Indiana with his wife Martha Snyder Bowen and four young children, including my father Herbert F., aged five. After following his occupation of farming, he moved with his family into the fourth ward in 1913, undeterred by the threat of flooding. Like many other Midland residents of that time, Glen became an employee of the Dow Chemical Company. His home was at the corner of Tittabawassee and Pine streets. Pine street was later renamed Towsley Street. This location was just southeast of the point where the Chippewa flows into the Tittabawassee, reached by crossing the "new" Benson Street bridge. Glen and Martha remained in that neighborhood until the 1940's when they went to St. Petersburg, Florida for their retirement years. Their son Herbert purchased a home on Towsley Street in the 1920's and lived there until 1970. He and many other fourth ward residents were long time homeowners

who did not mind enduring the frequent floods, perhaps enjoying the excitement. In his youth, he saved a boy from drowning near the Benson Street Bridge, written up in the following article:

The Midland Sun, 3 August, 1916, p. 1:

### BOY SCOUT SAVED DROWNING LAD

Nelson Guyn Brought from Bottom Unconscious by Herbert Bowen

Only the courage of youthful Boy Scout Herbert Bowen came between Nelson Guyn, aged fourteen, and death Sunday shortly after noon.

Several boys were bathing in the Tittabawassee river below the Benson street bridge when Guyn, whose home is in Mt. Pleasant, ventured into water beyond his depth and being unable to swim, went to the bottom. Bowen promptly went after the lad and succeeded in bringing the unconscious form ashore. Charles Towsley tendered first aid and the lads life was saved.

Guyn at present is making his home with Charles Knapp of this city.

The boy, when passing my father on the street the next day, gave him a nickel for saving his life, his sincere gesture of thanks.

As I was growing up, floods were occurring every year or two as a result of spring thaws and rains. It was always a time of anticipation and great excitement as preparations were made. Our house had a garage built under the bedrooms at one end

(Continued on page 4)

## The President's Letter

### PACKING LIST

As we approach the spring and summer months, many of us will be thinking of heading out for family visits and reunions. It goes without saying that we will take along our cameras – but also packing tape recorders and video cameras helps to collect memories dredged up by other relatives, often stories you may never have heard before.

If you have your genealogy files handy for take-along on a laptop or other portable file, it's a great way to show others what your

own research has turned up and perhaps inspire others to join in. You may have to teach a few basic techniques for research, recording and verification of records, but that's how families learn to do good compilations of family history. If you have old family photos to show off, you may find others have similar photos to share and you may be able to work out a way to identify and share them.

I personally enjoy finding new relatives to exchange information with. There are almost always some enthusiastic newcomers who need to be alerted to the fact that not everything they find on the internet or in published materials is necessarily correct. Teaching the novices some

of those basic approaches to genealogical research helps to keep the records straight for everyone. So pack your genealogy bags and enjoy the months ahead.

Happy hunting,  
Wilma

### GENE TOONS by Wendell Washer



You may want to spell out terms for clarity.

### MEMBERSHIP DUES 2010-2011

The collection of MGS Membership dues for 2011-2012 has concluded. The MGS Treasurer and Membership Chair have been collecting dues since early August. If your dues are not paid, this will be the last issue of the Pioneer Record that you will receive.

Midland Genealogical Society, PO Box 2421, Midland, MI 48641-2421. Dues for an individual are \$14.00; for a family they are \$17.50.

From The Editor • • •

*Spring will soon be here! Many of you will be making rounds to all of the cemeteries to pay your respects to the deceased and place some flowers at the grave site. There is a cemetery that many of you probably haven't found yet. That cemetery is called findagrave.com. It's a virtual cemetery found on the internet.*

*If you haven't used this site before, let me explain. The site is free and free to register. Once you register on this site, you can create a memorial for an interment in the cemetery where your loved ones are buried. The person that creates the memorial has ownership to that record. If you want to take the ownership you must request it from the owner.*

*What can you do with it? You can enter the birthdate, birth place, deathdate, death place, include a biography of the individual, upload a photo of the individual, or a picture of the cemetery marker.*

*You may link their memorial to the memorials of their parents. You may also link to the spouses memorial including all spouses.*

*If you find one of your relatives memorials, you can place a virtual bouquet. If you need a photo of the grave marker, you can request a photo. Someone in the area will take the photo and post it.*

*If you are looking for other researchers to find you, this can be a great place to put your mark.*

Walt Bennett  
Editor

## Membership

Greetings to new members: Conrad Latuszek, a regular visitor to the Genealogy Room of the library; Robert & Pamela Kirchhoff of Midland; Yvonne Ashworth of Florida, our latest contributor to the Pioneer Record. We would like to include your areas of research in the Pioneer Record.

We're sorry that Janet Miller from Argyle, Texas & Johanna Frohm from Midland have dropped their membership. We still have 7 people have not renewed their membership: six local & one from out-of-state. Total membership as of this date is 117.

Reminder: Genealogy queries are welcomed from members, and will be printed in the Pioneer Record as space allows. MGS pins are still available for \$5.

Membership Committee

*Betty Bellous & Marion Berry*

## MURDER? At the St. James

Robert E. Dempster

Published Date : May 13, 2011

From: "The Baltimore American" Sunday, September 8, 1901

"LOST HIS BOAT, ENDED HIS LIFE"

Suicide of Capt. W.S.Eldredge, of the New Orleans

"Blows out his brains in his room at the St. James Hotel-Stood before a mirror when he fired the shot -he had been employed by the Merchants and Miners Transportation Company, but was dismissed for failing to be on hand when his ship sailed, despondent and distressed, he took his life."

This was how the death of my great grandfather, Walter Eldredge, was characterized by the Baltimore newspapers in 1901. The Baltimore American, The Baltimore Sun and the Baltimore Sunday Herald all reported the event in varying details. There was always some suspicion in family circles regarding his death, and there is ample reason to believe foul play may have been involved. After looking into the details from newspaper accounts,

and other sources, I am inclined to believe a murder most foul was committed.

Walter Eldredge was born on the Cape in 1850, and was descended from a long line of Cape mariners. The Eldredges were among the earliest settlers of Chatham, and Walter's heritage included Mayflower passengers as well as Royal descent. He married Emma Cecilia Crosby in 1872; she was the daughter of Elijah Crosby, another well known Cape mariner. Walter went to sea as a young teenager, and his exploits and feats of strength were well documented. On one of his earliest voyages, on the barque HARVESTER, the crew became embroiled with native Africans in the Gulf of Aden, who overtook the vessel. Young Eldredge saved the crew when the boat they were lowering to escape was swept away by heavy seas. He plunged overboard, swam for the boat and brought it back for the crew.

The life of Walter Eldredge was full of these daring stories, attesting to the character of the man, who never walked away from adversity. He eventually earned his masters papers and was captain of several vessels, including the barque, Stillman B. Allen. As the days of sail gave way to steam, Walter became captain of these ships. Eventually he was hired by the Merchants and

*(Continued on page 10)*



## B O O K S F O R S A L E

The following books, published by the Midland Genealogical Society, are available for sale at any meeting, at the Midland Genealogy Room, Grace A. Dow Public Library or by mail. Price of each book is \$20.00 plus \$3.00 for postage and handling.

Midland County Obituary Index (#1) – 1872-1927. The book consists of 16,000 abstractions covering 55 years from the Midland Times (1872 -1875), The Midland Sun (1892 -1924) and the Midland Republican (1881-1927). The soft bound 238 page book is 8 ½ by 11 inches.

Midland County Obituary Index (#2) – 1928-1950. The book consists of about 8,000 abstractions covering 22 years from the Midland Republican (1928 - 1937) and the Midland Daily News (1937 - 1950). The soft bound 238 page book is 8 ½ by 11 inches. Note: Both Obituary Books (#1 & #2) are available as a package of \$35.00.

Midland County Obituary Index (#3)-1951-1982 This book consists of 30,900 entries including about 4000 maiden names covering 22 years extracted from Midland Daily News. The 387 page, 8½ by 11, soft bound book consists of two volumes A through L and M through Z. The set costs \$40 plus \$5 postage and handling.

Midland Pioneers, edited by Ora Flaningham. This book is a compilation of the most interesting genealogical, historical and humorous reprints from newspapers published in the Pioneer Record. The book is 6 by 9 inches, soft bound, 259 pages. (Out of print, but orders being compiled at Genealogy desk.)

Midland County, Michigan Marriage Records 1855-1910 including Groom & Bride Indexes. The book is 8.5 by 11, soft bound, 320 pages. \$30.

A collection of "Some Midland Michigan County Records" have been compiled and extensively indexed by Ora L. Flaningham. It is available in PDF format on a compact disc from the Midland Genealogical Society. The collection is mainly out of print books from our society, Harold Moll, and Ora Flaningham. Included are: "Midland County Cemetery Records" 1981, "Midland County Michigan Census 1850-1894 (1983)", "Midland County Michigan Obituary Index 1872-1927 (1994)", "Midland Pioneers", vol 1 (1999) & vol 2, "Midland County Michigan Probate Index 1850-1900", Early Saginaw Valley History", Bethany Indian Mission 1843-1855", Bethany Indian Mission 1851-1868", "In the Wilderness With the Red Indians", "Account Book of Charles H. Rodd", "Indian Build a Birch Bark Canoe", and Index to First Families of Midland County". The cost of this CD is \$25 shipping included in US.

To ORDER A BOOK write: Midland Genealogical Society BOOK: P.O. Box 2421, Midland, MI 48641-2421.



(Continued from page 1)



1945 Flood, Bowen house on Towsley St.

of the house and two other basement rooms with dirt floors. As the water rose and came up the gravel driveway, it would finally rush down the ramp into the garage and then fill the other rooms. Preparations would include moving everything on the garage and basement floors to a higher level. The rowboat would be taken from the garage and tied to the porch in front of the house. The porch had several steps to reach the floor level. Only in 1948 did the water reach up to the top step and come within a foot of reaching the floor level of the house. Apparently the expected water levels were taken into consideration when the house was built. The original house of my grandfather had been modified by raising the floor to a higher level. The 1948 flood waters were said to exceed the record flood of May 1912 when the river was 25 feet above normal. My father always used his boat to navigate down the road to reach higher ground, usually at the Benson Street bridge about two



1945 Flood, Hettie Bowen with Tom and Bob

or three blocks away. He and my older brothers gave rides to neighbors when needed to help them out. In 1951 at the age of ten, I began delivering daily and Sunday newspapers in the neighborhood, a route I inherited from my older brothers Don, Jerry and Bob. During the course of the floods, the papers continued to be delivered by boat when necessary. Cars were usually parked on high ground, usually across the bridge in town, although I have seen a 1945 picture of our family car in the driveway surrounded by water. Dikes had been built along the Tittabawassee and Chippawa, but in spite of this, water came in from further downstream near Dow Chemical property. With my older brothers and neighborhood friends, we would frequently check the water level on the side of the dikes by putting in sticks to monitor the changes. In fact, my brother Bob has told the story of the time in 1945 when he and Jerry walked on the dike up the Chippawa River until they reached the place where water was gushing over the dike near what they called the "spookhouse." The water became knee deep and they nearly lost their balance. They were able to joke about their close call later, calling the gushing water "Big Rapids" and "Grand Rapids" But at the time, our parents were furious, as it was nearly impossible to keep track of the risks the kids would take. I remember that my mother could not believe it when I told her years later that I once opened a valve allowing water to cross under Poseyville road near the bridge to help along the flooding process. It caused little additional flooding and I believe the statute of limitations has long ago run out. As the water receded, our collie named Lady seemed to find the carp that were trapped in low areas. She must have loved the terrible aroma she picked up, which could not

be tolerated by any human. The neighborhood kids would sometimes be found spearing carp or clubbing mice from a boat, probably not a proper pastime, but don't forget, this was long ago.

Better flood control reduced the flooding in more recent years, but after I had moved away, the biggest flood of all, I am told, occurred in 1986. The Benson Street bridge was also taken down in due time to be replaced by the Mark Putnam Bridge. But the biggest change was discovered one day when I returned to my neighborhood. Virtually the entire neighborhood had disappeared. I was left with a sense of loss and sadness as I remembered delivering newspapers to the many homes in the neighborhood, all gone now. Gone was the house I grew up in, all the



Glen and Martha Bowen and children. Circa 1913

neighbors' homes and the Patterson Street School that I attended through the third grade, all victims of a wrecking ball in the name of progress. I do not know the years this transformation took place nor do I know whether it was a project of the city or perhaps the Dow Chemical Company. I have only heard talk about the apparent need for it. All I know for sure is that the people who owned the homes over the years did not seem to have a yearning to leave the neighborhood; but others must have seen the need to replace the neighborhood with park area. One old abandoned home, that of my childhood friend, remains standing where the "new" Tridge crosses the Chippawa into the neighborhood. A baseball diamond now occupies the site of my old home at 429 Towsley street. Many people are probably now enjoying recreational opportunities in the old fourth ward neighborhood where an earlier generation grew up or grew old.

The Midland Republican, January 25, 1907, page 1:

## **GREATEST FLOOD EVER KNOWN IN THE HISTORY OF MIDLAND**

**Inundates Thousands of Acres, Destroying Buildings and Personal Property. Miles of Wire Fence Broken by Weight of Ice. Damage Will Reach Thousands of Dollars. Water Eight Inches Higher Than Ever Before. Families Almost Frozen.**

### **THE BENSON STREET BRIDGE SWEEP AWAY**

Forty eight hours of a continuous down-pour of rain and unusually warm temperature accompanied by the heavy thaw Friday and Saturday, sent the old Tittabawassee river river on the fiercest rampage it has ever known. In less than eight hours it tore over its banks, swept over the surrounding fields and bore down on the defenseless inhabitants. Never before had the flood advanced so rapidly. The water rose four inches in one hour, on the level.

#### **Benson Street Bridge Swept Away**

Sunday morning the raging torrent was full of immense cakes of ice a foot thick which attacked the center pier of the Benson Street bridge with terrible force, grinding and crunching against the unprotected piles. In a short time several of the piles were broken away and about eight o'clock the bridge was inclined nearly 17 inches up stream, the trembling and swaying could be easily noticed by the crowd on shore as each piece smashed away at the weakening pier. Many crossed on foot and in carriages all the morning, until 11:15 when the last vehicle passed over. At 11:30 the old bridge, which has so nobly withstood the ravishing floods of 36 years, gave up its struggle to maintain a safe footing on the banks of its persecutor and with a mighty final punch from a massive chunk of ice, fell with the groaning and shrieking of the parting timbers and broke in pieces, one of which swung around close to the bank and another lodging against the bank a short distance below. One piece the fishermen at Smith's Crossing are said to have caught.

Great excitement prevailed throughout the city and the young hurricane which blew bitterly cold from the west, made things seem worse. Three people had a

very narrow escape from certain death. Chas Schwartz, a young man endeavoring to get to his home in the fourth ward had proceeded on the bridge nearly ten feet when the crash came. He saved himself by jumping. Charley and little sister Harriet Towsley started to cross over intending to go to Sunday school, but were stopped by Ed Ostrander who told them it was not safe; just then the bridge fell.

#### **Great Suffering: Loss of Live Stock**

Sunday night and Monday morning was the time of greatest suffering that was ever known to residents on the south side of the river. Never before in the history of Midland had the water risen so high and in so short a time cut off all source of supply and much needed assistance. To add to the intense suffering of those who had to stand on tables and chairs or squat in low garrets without a fire in the house and icy water from one to three feet deep on the floors, the wind blew a piercing gale and the mercury hovered around the zero mark. Many cries for help could be heard Sunday night but few dared venture out into the inky blackness and fight against the wind and current through an inch or so of ice.

Very early Monday morning the work of rescue was begun by the more fortunate ones, no assistance from the north side of the river could be given, there being no way to get across.

In the small one story house of Frank Briggs was found Mr. Briggs standing waist deep in the water and an aged father, a wife and three small children on a table where they had been during the night without a fire.

Mr. and Mrs. Frank Hovey, who are nearly 60 years of age, were gotten in safety, Mrs. Hovey being taken from the chamber window and Mr. Hovey rescued from a beam in his barn, where after several hours of exposure he was so numb he could scarcely speak. Ward Brooks and a cousin A. B. Bullen also rescued from this barn, two cows, a yearling and a horse after cutting a channel a half a block long through three inches of ice and swimming them to a place of safety. The animals had been standing with their bodies nearly frozen in the ice. One calf had to be killed in the barn and all poultry was lost.

The only cow of Mrs. Wm. VanFleet died from the effects of standing in the icy

water.

The several cows and horses of DeBolt's on the T. J. Dunn farm were saved by piling bundles of corn stalks in the stalls enabling them to stand out of the water. Dunn and W. J. Owen did this job.

Moses Abbey successfully swam two of his three horses out of his barn, one other suffering so that it had to be killed.

Albert Smelzer who had just moved here Saturday from Indiana, having purchased the Brown and Vance farms of John McGregor, was taken out of the upper window of the Brown farm house Monday morning with his large family of ten who had been spending the night cramped on a little garret about 12 feet square in which there was not even standing room. He says they would have all been frozen if they had stayed there much longer.

A. L. Bellinger, rural carrier No. 2, who had recently moved from his farm in Homer to the brick house on Benson street, lost his 40 fine chickens, some furniture, provisions, etc. The water rose nearly to the top of the first windows. He saved his three horses.

Sunday night after many hours of fatiguing and extremely dangerous work in the dark the families of Ed Post and Albert Moll were rescued by H. D. Holden and Mr. Post and taken to the Holden home where 20 persons were in refuge Monday and Tuesday. Some of the two families were nearly frozen when reached. Longer delay would have meant death.

Probably the most trying and dangerous experience was that of Wm. Booth the baggage master Monday morning. After breaking open four bales of hay and tearing down a shed with which to make a scaffold for a cow and two calves which were nearly floating in the barn, he worked in a boat cutting a four-foot channel in the ice a distance of 40 rods so that he might swim his horse to a barn of Nelson Dean's. The channel froze over at one end before he had cleared out the other. Mounting the horse he headed it into the channel. Though the barn was reached without serious accident, the animal tired and stopped a few times, the rider then expecting to go down in ten or twelve feet of water. Mr.

(Continued on page 9)



# Les Coureurs de Bois et les Voyageurs

by Gloria Kunding

The exploration and settlement of much of Canada and the United States was a direct result of the fur trade. Beaver pelts were in high demand in Europe. Their fur was used to make felt for various styles of men's hats during the 1600s to the mid 1800s. Obtaining these valuable furs from Indians living in interior regions became the job of an adventuresome group of men known as *coureurs de bois* and *voyageurs*.

The fur trade began in the 1500s between French fishermen then later the French explorers and the Indians living along the eastern coast of Canada and the United States. Weapons, iron kettles, and tools were traded for furs trapped by the Indians. In the early 1600s, beaver fur became valuable to the Europeans for making men's felt hats which were very much in fashion.

The city of Quebec became the first fur trading center in 1608. Fur trading spread westward to the Great Lakes along the St. Lawrence River as fur bearing animals became scarce in the east. To the French trading posts, Indians brought pelts that they had trapped themselves or ones they had bartered for with other Indian tribes living in North American British or French territories.

As the fur trade became profitable for the region of New France, many immigrant young men who had settled in farming areas near Montreal left for the interior regions to independently trade with the Indians on their own turf. Some of these men were the half-Indian children of earlier white settlers. Skilled in business as well as wilderness survival, they were

adept at paddling a canoe. These men were known as *coureurs de bois* or "woodlands runners." By the end of the 1600s, over five hundred men were trading in the Lake Superior area.

The French officials in Montreal did not approve of the *coureurs de bois* because they flooded the market with pelts, took business away from the Montreal traders, and left the officials unable to regulate what was traded. Trade goods consisted of guns, cooking utensils, trinkets, and clothing—not alcohol that some traded illegally. To quell the financial loss and control who could trade, the French colonial government issued trading licenses which left the *coureurs de bois* up a creek without a paddle. They still existed but were considered "unlicensed" unless they had a connection with a merchant who held a permit.

Hired for modest wages by permit-holding trading companies, the *voyageurs* were considered licensed. *Voyageurs* or "travelers" were under contract to work for a company for one to three years. After this time, they could hire on again. The work was dangerous and hard, but they were a hardy group and liked the adventure.



*Voyageur Canoe*

To reach the Indian tribes living in the Canadian wilderness, both the *coureurs de bois* and *voyageurs* traveled by birch-bark canoes similar in style to those of the Indians. The canoes of the *coureurs*

*de bois* were lighter and smaller with a length of twenty-five feet. They were paddled by a crew of five or six men. The canoes of the *voyageurs* held eight to ten men and were thirty-six feet long and six feet wide. Known as the Montreal canoe, it could hold three tons of trade goods besides the crew. Because of the size of their canoes, the *voyageurs* were limited to travel on larger waterways.

Each man proudly carried his own paddle. Their paddles were individually decorated and treated like a good-luck charm. Some paddles were heirlooms handed down from a *voyager* ancestor and blessed by the area priest. The men sang as they paddled their canoe with strokes matching the song's rhythm.

The *voyageurs* traveled from May to October when the lakes and rivers were not frozen over. In those five months, they traveled a route that was over 3,000 miles—stretching from Montreal to Lake Athabasca in Alberta. A trading post was located at Grand Portage by Lake Superior. There the *voyageurs* from Montreal

traveled a 1,000 mile route to meet the northwestern *voyageurs* who had come 2,000 miles from Alberta. The Montreal group would swap their trade goods and other supplies for the furs the Alberta men had brought.

The northwestern *voyageurs* were called "the men of the north." They traveled in lighter canoes like the *coureur de bois* which made their many portages easier to negotiate.

The long journey was difficult. There were dangerous rapids that the men had to portage around. Sometimes to save time, they chose to run the rapids which could cost lives if the canoe overturned in the process. Small white crosses along the shore were reminders of those who didn't make it.

The bales of trade goods the canoe carried weighed ninety pounds each. During a portage, the voyageurs carried two of these at a time on their backs with the aid of a tumpline wrapped around their foreheads. They carried their loads for ten minutes (almost a half mile) to a place called a "pose." There they left their loads then returned to the canoe for another until everything was unloaded at that pose. From there, the bales and canoe were transported to the next pose. This was to protect their cargo from being stolen by Indians or other traders. Some portages were a short distance while others could be as long as twelve miles with rough going.

Besides death from drowning while on the route, occupational hazards consisted of broken bones from falls, slipped discs, and hernias. Cuts, bruises, and knife wounds during fights while in Montreal or Grand Portage were also common. To keep the canoe's bottom from being damaged when they stopped, they had to get out and pull it ashore. Sitting in cold wet clothing from a canoe landing or running the rapids in cold weather gave the men rheumatism. Sleeping on the ground in the rain didn't help either. The men grew beards and long hair for relief from mosquitoes and other insects they encountered.

They traveled about eighty miles a day. Every hour when they were in calm water, the men would take a five minute break from rowing. They would light their pipes during this time. A day's travel was measured in pipes. The men ate only two

meals a day consisting of dried corn or peas and fat salted pork. The dried corn was cooked for several hours into a mush called hominy. Pemmi-can (dried meat flakes mixed with fat) along with wild rice was the common fare for the men of the north. Stomach problems were common probably from rancid lard.

There were not many white women in North America during the early years of the fur trade. It was common for the traders to have an Indian wife. They were able to cement alliances and friendships with the Indians by marrying into the tribe. The earlier weddings consisted of a contract with the bride's family after the groom paid for her in trade goods. There was little ceremony. Marriages were common law. Traveling clergy didn't exist in the wilderness before 1818. Missionary priests would bless the union of many common law couples and baptize their children at the same time.

An Indian wife was a necessity to the coureur de bois or voyageur. They possessed the skills that could not be found in a white woman. Wives made and mended the men's clothes, sewed moccasins and pemmican bags, and strung cord on snowshoe frames. Most husbands did not know how to make snow shoes which were a wintertime necessity in the Canadian wilderness. The wives prepared food by drying berries and meat for pemmican. They also made the pine-gum tar used to repair the men's canoes.

The fur companies expanded their territory westward in search of more furs until they reached the Pacific Ocean. The traders helped open up new territory to settlement. Names like Jean Nicolet, Pierre Esprit Radisson, Etienne Brule-Valiquette, and others were famous explorers who were originally coureurs de bois.

In the 1830s, silk hats had become

fashionable in Europe. The demand for beaver pelts took a dive. With the building of railroads to the western areas of Athabasca and Edmonton, Alberta, in the late 1800s, the voyageurs lost their jobs. Many took up farming on small plots of western land.

The fur trade started to fade out as more settlers began to farm the land in the west. By then, many of the fur-bearing animals were on the decline as well from years of over-trapping. Even though a remnant of the fur trade exists in our century, the majority of fur trading ended in the 1870s. However, its importance to the settlement of North America will live on in history along with its colorful men known as coureurs de bois and voyageurs.

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## Genealogical Oddities: One Family's Journey

Written by Yvonne L Florance Ashworth

After much procrastination, this past October, I finally embarked on a journey through my late husbands ancestry, for the sake of our daughter. With little more than a few names, I quickly became engrossed in the project, to the extent that I was spending 18 hour days in front of the computer, amassing notes and information, photographs and files. I was amazed at the disparity between his maternal and paternal sides of the family, which ran the full gamut. There were original settlers in the NC and VA Appalachians, some of which had faced premature death at the hands of the Mingoe Indians, with several perishing in barn-raising accidents and other tragedies, to original proprietors of Southold and Mattituck, Long Island NY, descended from royalty, some having faced death in gales and hurricanes, either on the Atlantic or on Long Island Sound. I found farmers and cabinet makers and church clerks on the paternal side, lawyers and justices and church deacons on the maternal side. What I didn't expect to find, were links between my daughters ancestors from her fathers side, and my own ancestors.

One afternoon while delving into a few postings on a popular genealogy site, I came upon two surnames which immediately caught my attention. The thread was in reference to a marriage between a female Seely and a male Satterly. On my mothers side are Seely's and on my daughters side are Satterly's, so I made the decision to follow up on the thread to see if I could find any association between the individuals listed, and my mother and daughter. I went into the offspring of these individuals, viewing names that were very familiar. Even more suspicious with respect to a common link, was the fact that the off-

spring were born in a common geographical area with that of my mothers ancestors. I went on to cemetery records, and then I hit gold. My mother and my daughter shared several direct line ancestors via the Seely/Satterly connection. They are cousins, several times removed!



Lion Gardiner Statue

Further findings include another ancestral grandfather on my daughters side, and my mothers 7th great grandfather who were associated with one another via being original proprietors of Old Saybrook, CT. While on a genealogical trip back in the late 1990s my parents had visited the area, photographing a founders monument bearing her ancestors name, and the statue erected in honor of my daughters 8th great grandfather, Lion Gardiner, never dreaming he would have ties to the family. This would become uncanny given the fact that on this same trip, my parents had discovered a lifelong friendship between my fathers 7th gr grandfather and my mothers 7th gr grandfather, who lived side-by-side their entire lives and were listed side-by-side in the will of Joshua Uncas (Last of the Mohicans) where he had bequeathed them land with several other Old Saybrook friends.

Once again I would return to my research, this time concentrating on England. Sifting through many church records and cemetery records. Three days later, two surnames would again grab my attention and I would reach for the ancestry book my father had published to seek out more information. Flipping through many pages I would gasp in amazement. There in black and white were several of my fathers direct line ancestors being shared with my daughters fathers side of the family. Now my father and daughter are cousins, several times removed, as well! So essentially, by unwittingly marrying a distant cousin, I had given birth to--a cousin!

Considering the fact that there was great geographical distance between later generations in these ancestral lines, these oddities were intriguing. I had been born in MI, my late husband in NY, and we met in FL. What are the chances of actually meeting, much less marrying a distant cousin? Genealogy can surely be an interesting excursion. For this family it has proven that it is, indeed, a small world.



Thomas Birchwood Founders monument  
Hartford, Connecticut



## Coming Events

Feb 2-4, 2012, "Rootstech Family History & Technology Conference", Salt Lake City, UT. "Innovation through Collaboration". Rootstech.org.

April 12-14, 2012 "OGS Annual Conference", Cleveland, Ohio, "History and Genealogy: Finding clues to ancestral lines" www.ogs.org

April 27-28, 2012 "Gene-a-Rama" Green Bay, Wisconsin. This seminar has 5 lectures, Behind the cheese curtain: A look at Wisconsin genealogy resources, Facebook for genealogists, Managing your genealogy data, They're alive—searching for living persons, Genealogy party line—Hung up on technology" wsgs.wetpaint.com.

April 28, 2012 "Indiana Genealogical Society Annual Conference", title not yet available, Fort Wayne, Indiana. Wwww.indgensoc.org.

May 9-12, 2012 "National Genealogical Society Family History Conference", to be held in Cincinnati, Ohio. The theme "The Ohio River: Gateway to the Western Frontier". Ngsgenealogy.org.

June 22-24, 2012 "Upper Peninsula History Conference", Sault Sainte Marie, Michigan. Presented by the Historical Society of Michigan. Wwww.hsmichigan.org.

July 13-14, 2012 "2012 Abrams Genealogy Seminar", Archives of Michigan, Lansing, Michigan. Further details at a later date. Mimgc.org.

August 29-Sept 1, 2012 "Federation of Genealogical Societies Annual Conference", Birmingham, Alabama. Wwww.fgs.org.

Sept 28-30, 2012 "State History Conference", Monroe, Michigan, presented by the Historical Society of Michigan. [www.hsmichigan.org/](http://www.hsmichigan.org/)

(Continued from page 5)

Booth had his foot and fingers of one hand frozen. Mrs. Booth who had remained in bed up stairs to keep from freezing was then taken to the home of Ward Brooks. Before she had proceeded out of their yard the ice gave way and she capsized in eight feet of water.

The largest rescue mission was gathered at the home of Arthur James on Water street near the ice house where 34 persons were housed in a small one story building from Sunday night to Wednesday. In spite of the very crowded condition and the fact that the water was within an inch of the floor, the best of spirits prevailed. The following are the names of the families at the house: Mr. and Mrs. Arthur James and two children, Mr. and Mrs. A. L. Kenyon, and seven children, Mrs. Wm. Shaw and two children, Mrs. Thos. Shaw and two children, Mrs. Hattie Baughner and four children, Mr. and Mrs. Thos. Shaw Sr. and two daughters, Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Burch and child, the Misses H. and C. Hepner and Geo. Holley.

A peculiar and almost amusing condition of affairs prevailed at the residence of Thos. Shaw Sr. which is now the property of J. Q. Matzinger. The rear bedroom of the up stairs was occupied, during the flood by a horse and a cow and a yearling which apparently made themselves perfectly at home. The three animals were first taken into the back part of the house but the water raised to such a height that they were shown the way to the second story. Altho the stairway was narrow and uncommonly steep the horse made its way to the top with ease. After much coaxing the cow made the flight but not so with the yearling, they had to show him, so he was dragged up.

Mr. Low's loss amounted to nearly forty chickens, the rest of his stock being taken to a place of safety.

Many other families had similar trying and exasperating experiences.

The Sturgeon bridge is said to be turned on its side in the ice so that is impassable.

Monday and Tuesday only three of the eight rural carriers could operate, and not until Thursday were they all able to make the usual runs.

Had it not been for the intensely cold weather which has prevailed since Sunday,

the suffering in the flooded district would have been greatly increased. As early as Monday noon people were crossing the river on the ice. Many could be seen skating in and out of the inundated dwellings. Later on ice was seen flying out of buildings where house cleaning was in progress.

The fourth warders have still to look forward to the regular spring freshet in March.

### Saved Most of the Hay.

The fifty tons of baled hay which was stored in the barn of Ralph S. Coon belonged to Joel Roe, represented here by Ford White; three tons were damaged, the lower tier being in a foot of water. Mr. Roe will continue in business here, using the ferry in crossing the Tittabawassee.

Accompanying the main article was a picture of the old bridge, which did not copy well on the microfilmed copy of the newspaper. The caption was "Benson Street Bridge Destroyed January 20." It was followed by a description of the bridge: "The Benson street bridge was built in 1871 by Geo. F. Keep, then a resident of Midland. It was a two span structure, 303 feet in length, with two driveways in the middle and a sidewalk on either side, although only one of these walks has been in use during the last several years. The bridge was reshung last spring at an expense of several hundred dollars."

The Midland Sun, January 20, 1921:

### BENSON STREET BRIDGE WENT OUT 14 YEARS AGO

Fourteen years ago today, January 20, 1907, the Benson street bridge was destroyed when, after a sudden thaw, the river rose to an unusual height and an ice jam formed against the bridge, which was an old wooden structure, and had seen service a great many years.

Following the going out of the bridge the river froze up again and an approach was cut down on the banks and teams drove over the ice until it went out in the spring when a ferry was constructed by the city and this was used until the present bridge was completed.

(Continued from page 3)

Miners Line, a steamship line that ran regular service between a number of East coast ports. Walter was captain of the Steamer State of Texas, on the regular run between Baltimore and Savannah.

Typically, these trips took 10 to 15 days round-trip, hauling both passengers and freight. As ship's captain, Walter would have a cabin on the boat, and would not need rooms ashore. In reviewing the records of ship arrivals and departures, we can trace the events leading up to the fateful date of September 7, 1901. There are two events that have a bearing on our story. On April 10, 1901, the Texas rescued the crew of the wrecked schooner Erie off the Carolina Coast. According to one newspaper account, "Her gallant commander, Capt. W.S. Eldredge was congratulated and praised for saving the Erie's crew from certain death."

The second event happened on August 13, 1901. The Texas had been pulled from service a few days earlier for repairs, and replaced on the Savannah run by the steamship New Orleans. Under command of Capt. Eldredge, The New Orleans was leaving the inner basin of the Baltimore harbor, near Ft. McHenry (of Star Spangled Banner fame) when she was involved in a collision with a "bugeye", the Rebecca J. White. Bugeye's were shallow draft sailing craft that plied the waters of the Chesapeake Bay. According to the Wreck Report filed by Capt. Eldredge, the bugeye changed course right in front of the steamship, too late for the helmsman to avoid a collision. According to the report, the New Orleans stopped and offered assistance, but it was declined by the Capt. of the bugeye. As could be expected, the master of the bugeye, John Parks, claimed he held his course when the steamer hit him, and his boat was a total loss, including their cargo of watermelons. Was this sufficient cause to fire a skipper, who was a great hero 4 months earlier?

On August 20, 1901, Capt. Eldredge returned to Baltimore from Savannah as Capt. of the New Orleans. On the following Thursday, it headed back to Savannah, but without Eldredge on board. On Sunday the 25th, Capt. Eldredge registered at the St. James Hotel, in the heart of Baltimore, about 6 city blocks above the offices of the steamship company, and possibly 12 blocks from the Savannah dock. Interestingly enough, he registered with his "wife", whom he had married about 3 months earlier in Boston. Now 3 months earlier and through the spring and summer, he was making his regular run between Baltimore and Savannah, hardly time for a trip to Boston. It is also worth noting that he was still very much married to Emma Cecilia, who was living in

Winthrop, with the family.

Between the 25th of August and September 7th, he was in continuous residence at the St. James, and the steamer New Orleans made 2 trips to Savannah, so there was no reason for him to have missed a sailing, especially in view of the close proximity to the docks. According to the newspaper reports, during this period he made daily visits to the offices of Merchants and Miners. On Sunday, September 1st, the company claims Capt. Eldredge resigned. It would seem strange that this event would have been on a Sunday. On Friday, the 6th, he returned to the hotel from the company office and told the staff he would be leaving on the 30th of September with his next boat.

On Sunday, the fateful day of his demise, he returned from the steamship's office and sent for a carriage, this was about 12:30, and went for a ride with his "wife". They returned shortly after 1 o'clock, and spent time in the hotel office in pleasant conversation with the employees. No one about the hotel had any suspicion that the cheerful, jovial sailor was about to take his life. The Baltimore American's reporter gave this as the wife's account of it.

"After they had entered the room Captain Eldredge threw himself on the bed as if to go to sleep. I thought he was asleep, and I had gone into the bathroom, attached to our room. I had not been in there a minute when I heard the report of a pistol in the room. I rushed out and found he had shot himself."

Dr. F.W. Robertson, who keeps a drugstore under the hotel, heard the report of a pistol and hastened upstairs with the hotel's manager and owner, Louis Sammani. When he arrived in the room Capt. Eldredge was lying on the floor on his back by the side of a small table in the center of the room, with the blood and portions of the brains flowing from a wound in the back of the head behind the ear.

He had taken off his coat; his left hand was badly blackened with powder and extended out from his body, while his right lay close by his side. The pistol was found on the little table. There were drops and splashes of blood between the body and a wall mirror, suggesting he stood in front of the mirror, while he fired the fatal shot. Putting his left hand up over his head, he grasped the barrel of the revolver and held it to his head, while with the right he pulled the trigger, which would explain why there were no powder marks on the right hand. Eldredge was, incidentally, right handed.

The pistol was an old fashioned, six cylinder, .44 caliber that was not self cocking, and fully loaded, with just one cartridge exploded. Coroner Saunders, of the Central district, decided an inquest unnecessary, and gave a certificate of suicide.

And now, the mystery, was it suicide? Inquiries to both the Baltimore Police Department, and Chief Medical Examiner's office were not helpful. Neither agency has any records that exist for this period.

The gun in question, a .44 cal. Revolver, was a very heavy piece. This type of gun, in use in 1901 had a very long barrel, about 7". The Eldredge room was on the third floor of the St. James hotel. This building is no longer in existence, but in its day was a handsome, solid stone structure. There was a drugstore on the ground floor. It is difficult to believe a shot, fired in a room on the third floor of a solid building would have been heard three floors below.

The usual manner in which one kills oneself with a gun, is to take the gun, hold it to your temple or place it in your mouth and pull the trigger. If you take a rather heavy pistol, with a long barrel, it is almost impossible to hold it behind your ear with one hand and pull the trigger with the other, unless you're a contortionist.

A .44 cal. Pistol is an awesome weapon. Knowledgeable people I have talked to, believe if you held a .44 to your head it would blow your head apart, where as there was just a wound behind the ear and the eye was swollen and discolored.

It seems there was a rush to judgment, 2 days later, his body was sent home to Boston, on a ship of the very line that had "terminated" his employment.

And what of the "wife"? She was never identified by any name other than the wife of Capt. Eldredge. She disappears from the scene, never to be interviewed again. If we assume the Captain was having a mid-life crisis, being away from his real family and wife, was this a local girl? Probably not, since the hotel management would have recognized her when she first registered.

There is little to support his having been terminated for the bugeye incident, given his long track record of seamanship.

Suppose, his little fling was coming to an end, and he was planning to return to Boston. The scorned woman decides to revenge this affront to her honor, by teaching the philandering Captain a lesson or two. Could there have been two guns involved? The first to do him in, the second a staged affair. The hotel management, not wanting a murder on the premises, goes along with the ploy. How very convenient to shoot oneself, and then very neatly place the gun on a little table before keeling over.

The society has a new  
web page.

Check it out!

MIMGS.ORG

Also find us on Facebook

## Looking Back in Midland County

(Taken from *Portrait and Biographical Album of Midland County, Michigan* 1884 p. 321)

### John A. Wayne

John A. Wayne, Farmer and lumberman section 10, Porter Township, was born in Charlottesville, Norfolk Co., Ont., Jan. 20, 1850. When 17 years old he went to Milwaukee, Wis., and thence to East Saginaw, where he engaged to go into the lumber woods of Saginaw County, and he continued in that employment two years, when he came to Midland County, and again operated as a lumberman. In March 1880, he purchased a farm of 40 acres situated on Pine River. Of this, 25 acres are now under cultivation.

Mr. Wayne is a Republican in political sentiment. He was married Aug. 30, 1874, in Mt. Haley Township, to Martha E. Timmons. She was born Aug. 23, 1856, in Macomb Co., Mich. Her parents removed to Midland County with their family when she was 12 years old, and are both deceased. Of this union five children have been born, four of whom died in infancy. The sole surviving child is named Archie A. Wayne.

Taken from *The Midland Sun* January 8, 1897 p. 8

### Lee

Mart and Albert Cooper are visiting friends and relatives here.

Ernest Nelson called on friends and relatives here a few days ago.

Bertha Hitsman goes to North Bradley, where she begins her school Monday.

Mr. McGraw and family and Mr. Arginbright spent Christmas with Mrs. Mashue.

Alex Murdock and sister from Sanilac county are visiting Mr. Higby and Mr. Hitsman.

The Christmas tree and entertainment were very successful and a very enjoya-

ble time for all.

A number of the young people who attended the dance at Mr. Ricker's after the Christmas tree, report a very nice time.

A load of young people attended the party at Hiram Starks' in Homer on Christmas night and had a very nice time.

### Larkin

John Dwyer visited his parents last week.

Mrs. Schultz is visiting relatives in Detroit.

Miss Emma Jacobs is visiting friends in Detroit during the holidays.

Mrs. E. Wiltse returned to her home at Frost's Corners after Christmas.

May Abbott visited the school last Friday. She spent Saturday with her uncle, Jas. Abbott.

Our school had no holiday vacation so the pupils were busy with their lessons while others were enjoying a play time.

Several from this vicinity attended the Sunday school Christmas tree at the Barrett school house on Christmas night.

The sons and daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Jas. E. Abbott spent Christmas day at the old home in Larkin. The guests were Mr. and Mrs. H. D. Leiphart and sons Erwin and Bert; Mr. and Mrs. Eben Abbott, Mr. and Mrs. David Abbott, and Mr. and Mrs. James Abbott.

### Colden

J. E. Lamay and family spent Christmas with C. Hubbell.

Mrs. C. Bergtold's parents of Clio spent the holidays with her.

J. B. Matthews and wife ate turkey at Joe Dingman's Christmas.

Our school teacher is spending the vacation at home in Bay City.

Geo. Matthews and Robt. Smith attended the dance at Beaver Christmas Eve.

Some one had a fat Christmas, as Noah Dulude had over 40 chickens taken a few nights before.

The result of the election of officers of the K. O. T. M. was as follows: C., M. J. Spencer; L. C., Myron Hubbell; R. K., George Matthews; F. K., Geo. Hubbell; Ph., Dr. McCallum; Chap., C. Hubbell; Sar., Frank Burge; M. of A., M. S. Stearns; 1<sup>st</sup> M. G., Arthur Nelson; 2<sup>nd</sup> M. G., John Webb; S. J., B. Matthews; P. A., P. Erway; Tent Ph. N. J. Clark.

Annie E. Caffin, Dep. G. C., organized an L. O. T. M. hive Tuesday with sixteen members. The officers are: P. C. Angeline Hubbell; C., Nellie Runion; L. C., Hannah Clark; R. K., Mae Spencer; F. K., Mamie Barth; Sar., Rose Hubbell; M of A., Flora Erway; Chap., Lizzie Walker; Sent.; Lottie Stearns; P., Mary Matthews. One more victory for the county line boys.

### Hope

Mrs. Wm. Fillmore's mother is visiting her.

Mrs. Geo. Fraser realized over \$40 from the sale of poultry this season.

Mrs. Wm Young is staying in Midland with her daughter, Mrs. Henry Smith.

Mrs. Patterson (on the Hosner farm) was called to Canada by the sickness of her aged mother.

School district No. 1 will re-open next week with Miss Eva Holmes of Sanford as teacher.

Mr. Clute left for his home in Auburn last week. The kind wishes of the people go with him.

Mr. and Mrs. J. O. Avery of Weston, O., have been visiting Mrs. Avery's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Timothy Fillmore.



*Pioneer Record*

Midland Genealogical Society  
P.O. Box 2421  
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### Information about Midland Genealogical Society

The MGS meets on the 3rd Wednesday of Sept., Oct., Nov., Jan., Feb., Mar., Apr. & May at 7:00 PM in the lounge of the Grace A. Dow Memorial Library, 1710 W. St. Andrews Dr., Midland, MI 48640. Visitors are always welcome. Watch the Midland Daily News or local Midland MCTV channel 5 for upcoming speakers, dates and times.

Membership dues are \$14.00 for single and \$17.50 for a couple and can be paid after July 1, but must be paid by Nov. 25, to continue receiving the Pioneer Record. Dues may be paid at any MGS meeting or may be sent to the Membership Chair, Midland Genealogical Society, P. O. Box 2421, Midland, MI 48641-2421.