

OUR QUAKER GRANDMOTHERS' LEGACY



Brigid Mulloy 12/ 2020

Clare's Trunk

It was the summer of 2020 when the Covid 19 Pandemic was new and surging. The news was full of the social justice reckoning with our unexamined and suppressed history of slavery and racism in the aftermath of the death of George Floyd. Black Lives Matter protesters were filling the streets across the country and in Michigan armed vigilantes were attempting to take over the state's Capital. Here in Hawaii we were under a shelter at home order as we weathered the first wave of fear and insecurity of the pandemic.

In an unusual frenzy of cleaning and organizing I discovered that the inside of an old steamer trunk, that had belonged to my great grandmother Clare Pemberton Mullett, was being eaten by bugs. Yes, I live in Hawaii and we have bugs and I had time on my hands. I began to scrape and sand to dislodge the tiny beetles that had made a home for themselves in Clares' trunk. Her trunk was given to me by my mother Emily in 1969 when I went away my freshman year to Wilmington College in Ohio. It is covered with stickers from hotels in England, souvenirs of a trip Clare made in the 1930's. Cleaning and refurbishing the trunk consumed me and thinking about Clare consumed me too. I began to wonder what her life had been like who had been her people back in Michigan? She died in 1960 when I was ten years old, I remember her but she lived in Michigan and we lived in Wyoming. We were only together briefly during summer visits to our grandparent's lakeside cottage in Michigan. According to family lore my sister Kathy had asked Clare if there were dinosaurs when she was a little girl.... Now I was wondering the same thing, what had life been like when Clare was a little girl in Michigan, who was her grandmother?



Clare Pemberton Mullett's trunk with some family treasures

After weeks of sanding, filling bug holes and painting, the trunk seemed salvaged and I started to think about what I would put in it. I got the idea of collecting items from Clare Pemberton

Mullett's family to store there as sort of a genealogy treasure chest. I admit I was also thinking, if the house burns down I'll have all the family treasures together in one place where I can grab and rescue them. By now the nation's news was full of homes and entire towns destroyed by climate change fires in California, Oregon, Colorado, and Wyoming.

I pondered what to put in the trunk and decided a copy of Clare's genealogy was primary. The inspiration to research and share her story turned into a months long journey into our family history. I discovered a story worthy of a historical novel or mini series.

I had some files and photos about Clare Pemberton's family that my mother Emily Ross Mulloy put together and that is where I started. People who know me will be surprised that I hadn't already investigated thoroughly this line of ancestors as I have various others. The truth is I had focused on our family Quaker connections back in the 70's and I thought I understood it based on the resources available at the time. I had lived in a Quaker community in the mountains of Costa Rica and in fact I was there because of my interest in our family Quaker history. I stayed there for almost two years teaching at their small Quaker school. I felt then that I had found my people and have maintained a lifelong deep heart connection with the families of Monteverde. Only now, years later, I realize because of my research, that there are connections through my ancestors to the very people who became my friends at the Monteverde, Costa Rica Friends Meeting.

When I started to research the story of our Quaker Grandmothers, not surprisingly I found that the most well documented ancestor was one of the grandfathers. My mother Emily had read his journal and created a chronology of dates and events so it made sense to start with Charles Osborn (4x great grandfather). {When I first mention an ancestor I will note what their relationship is to me and you can figure out what their relationship is to you. Also note the family genealogy charts attached at the end.}

North Carolina Osborns

Charles Osborn was born on August 21, 1775 in Guilford, North Carolina and raised in the New Garden Society of Friends settlement. They called themselves The Society of Friends but others called them Quakers as I will from here on. Still part of Colonial America, one of the battles of the Revolutionary War was fought on the road between their Quaker Meeting house and Guilford Courthouse. The New Garden Meeting house was converted into a hospital where both Patriot and British soldiers were treated, the dead were buried along the road. Such horrific events must have impressed 6 year old Charles and his pacifist Quaker parents Daniel Osborn and Margaret Stout (5x great grandparents). Both of Charles' grandparents had been born in Quaker settlements in Pennsylvania and great grandfather Matthew Osborn (6x great grandfather) arrived from England to America as a stowaway on a British ship in 1681.

At the New Garden Quaker Meeting school they provided both general education and religious training that focused on reading and interpretation of scripture. Evidently Charles took full advantage of both. Charles' parents like most Quakers were against slavery and undoubtedly Charles grew up well aware of the realities of slavery. After independence there was an increase in plantation agriculture and slavery became even more common. Levi Coffin, a Quaker abolitionist who grew up in the New Garden Meeting after Charles, recounts seeing lines of slaves chained together being taken down the road to be sold at slave auctions.

In 1795 when Charles was 19 years old he left North Carolina with his parents and siblings. They were part of the first wave of Quaker pioneers to cross the mountains into Indian country. In 1779 a small group of Quakers from North Carolina had traveled West over the mountains to make "Religious visits" to the Indians. Within a few years Quaker families followed who cleared wilderness land and built small homesteads and communities in areas not yet officially open to settlement. These Quakers left North Carolina just as the invention of the cotton gin was transforming agriculture and the economy in a ways that intensified the use of slave labor on large cotton plantations. Grieved to see so many of their fellow humans toiling under the lash, Quakers abandoned North Carolina by the thousands and headed West. They left not just in search of open spaces on the frontier but because of divisions about slavery that were developing among Quakers in the meeting. Few Quakers owned slaves but many were profiting from the industries that were built around slavery. It was illegal in North Carolina for a slave owner to free a slave, except under special circumstances and also for any freed slaves to remain in the state. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1793 imposed heavy fines for sheltering fugitive slaves and helping them escape, something Quakers were often suspected of doing.

The Osborn family and many others, discomforted by the situation, moved out of the state to settle across the Blue Ridge mountains in Eastern Tennessee. Charles's parents were among the first who settled in a Quaker community called Hickory Creek in what would later become Knox County, Tennessee. Charles' frontier life must have originally focused on building a log cabin, planting corn and a kitchen garden and hunting with his muzzleloader. He worked with his parents and 4 brothers and 2 sisters to convert the hilly mountain land into a sustainable homestead. As a young man we know, according to Hickory Creek Quaker meeting records that Charles was "led astray from plainness and simplicity in manner and address" and was thus dismissed from the Quaker Meeting. In 1798 when he was 23 years old Charles

married Sarah Newsom who had never been a Quaker. Soon after their marriage Charles “repented his apostasy” and both he and Sarah joined the Hickory Creek Quaker Meeting.

Quakers are organized with meetings for worship on Sunday and Wednesday and once a month a business meeting called Monthly Meeting that involves both silent worship and discussion of issues and events in their Quaker community. Quarterly Meetings and Yearly Meetings included representatives of meetings from a broader geographic area. The Quaker Meetings in Tennessee at this time were still affiliated with the North Carolina Yearly Meeting. Much of the information I have been able to gather about our Quaker ancestors is because these Quaker Meetings kept detailed records that were carefully maintained.

As was their Quaker custom, these pioneers gathered in silence for worship and after a period of group meditation anyone who received spiritual inspiration to speak would do so. Most Quaker meetings did not have a minister but community elders and members gifted with knowledge of Quaker principles and biblical teachings were often those who spoke. As a young man Charles Osborn exhibited gifts as a spiritual orator and by 1806 when he was 31 years old he was officially recognized as Quaker minister.

Charles began to be invited to travel to “bear testimony” at the small Quaker gatherings throughout Tennessee and Western North Carolina. Later he was chosen to represent his small meeting at the Yearly Meetings of Friends in North Carolina, Indiana and Pennsylvania. Quakers Ministers were not paid for their ministry although it seems clear that they were supported when traveling with food, lodging and transportation.

Eventually Charles’ calling to preach the Quaker principles came to involve extensive travel that kept him away from his homestead in Tennessee for long periods of time while Sarah and their 5 children remained in Hickory Creek. Traveling ministers were welcome visitors as they provided news and communication between the small Quaker meetings in remote areas of the

frontier. Charles was a skilled orator who spoke to his Quaker community about their shared values: humility, simplicity, temperance, non violence and plain living. Charles spoke of sin, redemption and salvation and the challenges facing individual Quakers and the young Nation. As his voice developed, his passion and testimony came to focus on the suffering of black African slaves. He viewed slavery as the gravest of sins. In 1808 the transatlantic slave trade was prohibited by the new United States government, but slavery and buying and selling of slaves was actually increasing. According to the first federal census in 1790 there were 697,897 enslaved Africans and by 1810 there were 1,191,354, a number that tripled in the next 50 years.

LOST CREEK, TENNESSEE

Charles always traveled with a companion when he went away to preach and often it was his friend Eilhu Swain (5x great grandfather). They traveled together to the North Carolina Yearly Meeting in 1809 and in 1810 to Kentucky, Indiana, Ohio and Pennsylvania. Eilhu and his wife Sarah Mills (5x great grandmother) were Quakers who lived with their 10 children on a homestead farther west on Lost Creek in central Tennessee. In 1811 Charles and his wife Sarah relocated there where they lived near the Swain family. The Quaker community in Lost Creek was already well established having been founded in 1787 and their Quaker Meeting house was built in 1802.

In August of 1812 within a year of their move to Lost Creek, Charles's wife Sarah Newman died. She was only 38 years old and the mother of 7 children. The oldest James was 12 and the youngest Elihu was 2 ½. We do not know the cause of her death. It must have been a terrible time for Charles and his children. They were fortunate to have their neighbors the Swains and others from the small Quaker community to help care for the children. Even during

this tragic time Charles felt called to travel and preach, leaving his children to be cared for by neighbors.

“We were out this journey, six months and nine days ,traveling about two thousand five hundred miles. Had many trying scenes to pass through, but, I think, we may venture to say, we were favored to get through to general satisfaction. And, O Lord! Enable us to render praise to thee.” Charles Osborn Journal June 3, 1813

Soon after his return to Lost Creek on September 9, 1813, Charles Osborn married Hannah Swain (4x great grandmother). She was the daughter of his Quaker neighbors Elihu and Sarah Swain. At their marriage 23 year old Hannah became not just a new bride but the stepmother of 7 children ranging in ages from 14 to 3. Likely she had already been helping care for these children while Charles was traveling after Sarah’s death. The only comment in the historical record about the marriage, except the fact of its date, is the following quotation “The issue of Charles Osborn’s children having been resolved, he was now again free to travel and preach”. By February of 1814 Charles was back on the road to South Carolina, returning to Lost Creek in time for the birth of Hannah’s first child, a daughter Narcissa on the 24th of June of 1814. At the beginning of their marriage the responsibility of caring for her step children, six sons and a daughter must have been overwhelming. As the children grew they undoubtedly became a valuable resource as they helped Hannah shoulder the heavy work and responsibility that must have been involved in managing their often fatherless frontier household. Fortunately Hannah also had a surprisingly large group of family in Lost Creek that included her aunt Alice Mills who was married to Mordicia Mendenhall and their children and John Mills and Sarah Millikan (6x great grandparents), Hannah’s grandparents. John and Sarah had been founding members of Lost Creek Meeting. Hannah obviously had a large extended family as her support system and probably the whole Quaker community felt a responsibility to make sure she and her children were taken care of when her husband was away preaching.

When I first started to learn about Hannah and Charles and tried to understand their early married life in Tennessee, what kept coming into my mind was “Born on a mountaintop in Tennessee, Home of the brave and Land of the free” lyrics from a childhood song about Davy Crockett. I envisioned Charles the frontiersman with a muzzle loading rifle and a coonskin cap. Imagine how excited I was about 3 months into this project to find that Davy Crockett had lived in Lost Creek on land that belonged to one of Charles’s Quaker friends John Canady, who helped found the Tennessee Manumission Society.

Manumission Society of Tennessee

Charles Osborn, Hannah’s father Elihu Swain and her older brother John Swain were all early Quaker abolitionists. In 1813 they formed the “Manumission Society of Tennessee”. The organizational meeting took place in Elihu’s cabin on Lost Creek. There were eight founding members (John Canady, John Swain, Elihu Swain, Charles Osborn, Jesse Willis, John Underhill, David Maulsby, John Morgan) This was the first organization of its kind in the State of Tennessee. Manumission, the act of a slave owner freeing slaves was illegal in most slave states and Tennessee had been admitted to the Union in 1796 as a slave state. The expressed mission of their society was “To procure for that oppressed part of the community that inestimable jewel, freedom”. Manumission societies, though often started by Quakers, were open to all members of the community concerned with slavery and how it could be ended. Tennessee Manumission Society members were required to put a placard in a prominent place in their house that read “Freedom is the natural right of all men; I therefore acknowledge myself a member of the Tennessee Society for the Manumission of Slaves”.

Charles understood that it would take a miracle to end slavery and he felt it was his moral responsibility as a Christian and a Quaker to do everything he could to hasten the day of freedom for slaves. Indeed during the next few years small Manumissions Societies began to spring up across Tennessee and North Carolina in communities where Charles preached. These societies increased and at their peak included over 2000 members who met for both local meetings and yearly conferences.

We have no way of knowing what experiences led Charles Osborn to feel so deeply the plight of slaves that he would dedicate his life's work to promoting their emancipation. Whatever the reason Charles developed a life long firm and unwavering moral conviction of the deep evil of slavery. The immediate and unconditional manumission of slaves was the central element of Charles's personal conviction and his motivation for starting the first Manumissions Society.

Charles also believed that it was inconsistent to decry slavery without also refusing to participate in the economic system that benefited from the labor of slaves. Charles preached against the use of products produced by slaves, considering them "stolen goods" because a slaves' labor was stolen by their master. In order to live in complete consistency with his principles he refused to wear any garments made of cotton, nor eat cane sugar, because slave labor was used in their manufacture.

During 1815 Charles was again off preaching. This time, together with Jesse Willis he traveled more than 3000 miles and spoke at 166 gatherings in Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana and Pennsylvania. When Charles returned to Lost Creek early in 1816 he was feeling increasingly dissatisfied with conditions there. The Lost Creek Manumission society that he had helped to start was now supporting views he couldn't agree with. In the mountains of Tennessee with its small farms and homesteads slaveholding was uncommon, but the sentiments of his neighbors

were definitely becoming more pro slavery. Large cotton plantations were expanding in the more open land in the Western part of the state. As the membership in Manumission societies grew they started to include more slaveholders who generally held different views and different priorities. Proposals for gradual manumission of slaves paired with plans for sending emancipated slaves out of the state and possibly back to Africa became the focus of many Manumission Societies. The feeling among many people in Tennessee and North Carolina was that a large number of free blacks could not be tolerated and that when freed they must move out of the state and preferably out of the country. Charles remained unwaveringly committed to unconditional immediate emancipation and his incessant preaching against colonization schemes started to cause tension with his Tennessee neighbors.

Leaving Tennessee

Other Lost Creek Quaker families had already started to leave Tennessee seeking areas in the free West like Ohio, Indiana and Michigan to start Quaker settlements. During the first quarter of the 1800's the Quakers populations in North and South Carolinas, Virginia and Tennessee decreased significantly as Quakers moved away from slave states. Hannah's parents Elihu and Sarah Swain and her younger siblings left Lost Creek in 1815 for Indiana. Charles and Hannah decided to move West to Mt. Pleasant, Ohio where there was already a larger community of other Quaker families from North Carolina. They were looking for more like minded neighbors and better schools for their children. Charles made arrangements for Hannah, who had by then given birth to their second daughter, Cynthia, and the other eight children to make the trip a journey of about 3 weeks by wagon during the following fall while he would be away on a preaching trip.

In July of 1816 while in West Branch Iowa Charles wrote in his journal

"As I traveled through this land of slavery, my mind felt much distress from this source...I see a dark cloud gathering over this land on account of it. I talked considerably about the condition of the poor Africans. Their suffering situation claims my attention almost constantly, at least a share of it. Oh that I could be made an instrument to do something that might prove advantageous to this suffering race of mortals-monuments of American disgrace"

Mt Pleasant, Ohio

By October of 1816 The Osborn family reunited in Mt. Pleasant Ohio where they created a new home. Charles, motivated to share his views and perhaps have a livelihood that kept him home, decided to start a newspaper. His paper called **The Philanthropist** was a community forum that covered local news and articles about agriculture and economy but its unique focus was slavery, war, Indian suffering and related evils.

Charles used **The Philanthropist** to vehemently oppose Colonization, the ascendant plan for ending slavery. First promoted by Thomas Jefferson and later adopted by many abolitionists the idea was that once manumitted blacks should be sent out of the US. Haiti, Florida and Texas were all suggested as possible alternatives but an African Colony became the favored plan. There were deep fears among whites that free blacks could never become part of American society. They were feared as labor competition and as a source for encouraging rebellion among those still enslaved. Charles was deeply disappointed that many Quakers and abolitionists came to support colonization. He believed that colonization was, aside from its immorality, impractical logistically, financially and a distraction from the deep moral issues of slavery. He said "The colonization of Africa can never remove from our country the evils of

slavery , nor atone for the injuries we have done and are doing”. Charles believed, and history proved him right, that any delay in full emancipation for enslaved blacks would cause a civil war. Charles firmly contended that only the immediate emancipation of the slaves was acceptable.

Because of **The Philanthropist** Charles emerged as one of the leading abolitionists in Ohio. The newspaper enjoyed a wide circulation, principally in Ohio and Pennsylvania and Charles made sure it was made available in Southern Ohio where sympathies ran high for the slaveholder. Publishing an abolitionist newspaper was by no means a low risk occupation. In 1837 Elijah Lovejoy, the publisher of a similar paper in Illinois, was murdered by a pro-slavery mob who then dismantled his printing press and threw the parts into the Mississippi river.

It was while publishing **The Philanthropist** that Charles first collaborated with Benjamin Lundy, a fledgling abolitionist who wrote articles for *The Philanthropist* and became its assistant editor. Later after Charles’ paper ended publication Lundy started his own abolitionist newspaper “**The Genius of Universal Emancipation**” taking its title from an editorial in **The Philanthropist** written by Charles. Isaiah Osborn, Charles’ son, learned the printing business while working on the *Philanthropist* and later worked as assistant for Lundy’s paper.

In 1822 “**The Genius of Universal Emancipation**” moved to Maryland where it and Benjamin Lundy’s anti-slavery lectures began to reach a wider audience. In 1828, William Lloyd Garrison, who later became a prominent abolitionist, heard Benjamin Lundy speak and was so convinced by the argument for immediate and unconditional emancipation that he decided to dedicate his life to the abolitionist cause.

Wayne County, Indiana and the Founding of Economy

By 1819 Charles must have decided that printing a weekly newspaper wasn't compatible with his calling to travel and preach nor was the paper a financial success. Charles' 10th child Gideon was born in Mt. Pleasant, Ohio and Hannah was pregnant when they again headed West, this time to Wayne County, Indiana. Hannah's parents and many families they knew from North Carolina and Tennessee were already settled near where Charles bought land to start a farm. The family had barely arrived in Indiana, when the new baby was born and named Charles after his father. Charles almost immediately set off again on a long preaching trip. This time he was away from home for a full year, traveling to Pennsylvania, New York, Rhode Island and New England. When he returned at the end of 1820 he stayed home to work on the farm for the next two and a half years. During this unusually long home stay two more boys were added to the family: Parker in October of 1821 and Jordan in August of 1823.

By July of 1824 Charles was again feeling the call to preach. He was away for six months speaking at Quaker meetings in Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Kentucky. Over a 35 year period Charles preached his anti-slavery message at virtually every Quaker meeting that existed at the time in the US and Canada. When he traveled Charles also spoke wherever a group of people could be gathered to listen to his anti-slavery message. When on the road he usually stayed with Quaker families who would arrange a venue for him to speak. He spoke to small groups in their homes, to the general public in churches of all denominations, in a barn or under a tree in the town square. There is almost no record of what he said because he always spoke extemporaneously just like they did in a Quaker meeting. He spoke the message he was inspired by the holy spirit to share and usually about the sins of slavery. In his journal he sometimes expressed satisfaction that his message seemed to be heard and he often wrote of his lack of confidence in himself, his audience and his loneliness.

How Hannah and the children managed setting up a farm and making a living by themselves with all the tasks of farm life on the frontier is astonishing. Hannah's step children, Sarah's six

older boys, were practically grown men and were undoubtedly well able to manage the farm. The older girls likely shared the farm and house work plus childcare for their younger siblings. In Wayne County they were again part of a Quaker community that included Hannah's parents and some of her siblings as well as many Quaker families known to them who would become family as their children grew and married.

Levi Coffin, also a Quaker abolitionist originally from Gilford, North Carolina moved to Wayne County in 1826 with his young family. Levi left North Carolina because he felt the increasingly oppressive laws about slavery made it impossible for Quakerism to prosper.

Levi opened a store and he and Charles who were like minded about ending slavery founded the Free Produce Association. The idea was to get people to stop buying, selling or using any products produced by slave labor. Charles had already been advocating this and trying to apply it in his personal life. The industrial economy of the North was dependent on the cheap products of slave labor and it was almost impossible to avoid participating in the economy of slavery. By boycotting slavery produced products, cotton, sugar, rice, molasses and tobacco, Free Produce advocates sought to forge an economic weapon to strike at slavery.

Wayne County became the focus of Free Produce activities in the West. This was the beginning of an enterprise that would later lead Levi to run a store and wholesale warehouse in Cincinnati that stocked and sold only free trade products. This was a very challenging enterprise. Almost all cotton grown in the US was produced with slave labor and cotton was used for everything. Factories in the North spun cotton thread and manufactured fabrics used for all kinds of clothing, bedding, upholstery, wicks for lamps and candles, batting for quilts and mattress, even currency bills contained cotton fibers. Almost all sugar was also produced by slave labor, while back in the Tennessee mountains the Quakers made a sugar substitute of the same corn syrup their neighbors were distilling into corn whiskey.

Levi Coffin, 23 years younger, was influenced by Charles Osborn's radicalism and Charles was influenced by Levi's activism. Neither hesitated to put their beliefs in freedom for slaves into concrete action. Wayne County was on a route along which freedom seekers passed to free territory and this may have been the reason why Levi moved there. While still in Guilford, North Carolina as early as 1819, Levis and his cousin Vestal Coffin helped freedom seekers escape. Levi and his family became deeply involved in sheltering fugitive slaves and arranging for their transportation north. Later history would credit Levi Coffin with the title of "president" of the Underground Railroad and his home as "Union Station" because of the many runaway slaves who sought temporary refuge there.

As More Quaker settlers were moving West, Charles decided to subdivide his farmland into lots that eventually formed the town of Economy, Indiana. Many of the Quaker families like the Swains, Bonines, Easts, and Bouges families that later would live in Cass County Michigan lived near Economy during this period. Two of Charles sons were elected trustees of the newly established town of Economy. Isaiah also became the town's Justice of the Peace and tax assessor.

Shortly after subdividing the land Charles moved his family again, this time to Clinton County, Ohio near the town of Wilmington where they stayed for several years. Benjamin was born just before they left Economy and Sarah Swain Osborn (3xgreat grandmother) was born 2/21/1828 in Clinton County near Wilmington Ohio. By 1830 the family were back in Economy where Hannah celebrated her 40th birthday and Anna Birthwaite Osborn her 9th and last child was born. The family stayed in Economy for the next 12 years and Charles continued his travels.

During 1832 and 1833 Charles was away from home for 18 months on an extensive preaching trip to England, Ireland, Scotland, France, Germany, Switzerland and Holland.

After Charles returned home to Economy, Narcissa, his and Hannah's eldest daughter, became ill in November of 1834. Narcissa Osborn died in August of 1835 at the age of 21. One of the few examples of Charles' writing that has survived is a memorial presented in the Springfield Monthly Meeting and later published entitled "Memorial of Narcissa Osborn". At the time of Narcissa's death her siblings at home included Anna 5, Sarah 7, Ben 10, Jordan 12, Parker 14, Charles 16, Gideon 18, and Cynthia 20.

Cass County, Michigan

In 1839 at the end of what would prove to be Charles' last long preaching trip he wrote in his journal that he crossed from Canada near Niagara Falls and traveled on into Southern Michigan where he stopped in Cass County to visit family. Evidently several of his sons were already living in the Quaker community there. Within the next few years Charles and Hannah and a number of their children would make permanent homes on farms and in the small towns of Cassopolis and Vandalia in Cass County, Michigan. Like many of their family moves we don't know the details or reasoning. One historian of the Underground Railroad described the move to Cass County, "Charles Osborn, like many active abolitionists, moved North where he created a safe haven for hundreds of self emancipated men and women".

William Lloyd Garrison, the prominent abolitionist, who has himself been credited as being the father of the abolitionist movement, called Charles Osborn "the father of all of us abolitionists". In Cass County Charles Osborn was literally the father and grandfather of abolitionists. His sons and daughters, their husbands, wives and children were all likely involved in helping freedom seekers. It was said "Find an Osborn and you will find a friend of the slave." Cass County Quakers sheltered and transported many freedom seekers on their way across the border into

Canada or helped them settle nearby. Cass, County became home to a large community of freedom seekers and free blacks who disproportionately chose to live near Quaker neighbors. By 1860 there were more than 1000 free blacks living in Cass County, Michigan who counted on their Quaker neighbors for legal and other kinds of support.

Anti- Slavery Friends

Charles Osborns continued singular preoccupation with the abolition of slavery conflicted with the conservative temperament of many of the members of his beloved Quakers community. Political tensions across the country were increasing and slavery had become a divisive political issue. The Indiana Yearly Meeting, where Charles was a respected elder minister and a long standing member, experienced a deep philosophical divide in 1842. The conflict developed between the Quakers like Charles Osborn and Levi Coffin who were active and radical abolitionists and the more conservative members of Quaker Meeting leadership who preferred to maintain a purely “religious testimony” against slavery. A new set of advice was sent out by the conservative leaders that instructed Quakers not to participate in abolitionist groups with non Quakers and forbid the use of Quaker Meeting houses for abolitionist lectures. Charles, Levi and other radicals were accused of not complying with the new recommendations and forced out of important committees and the leadership positions that they had long held in the Indiana Yearly Meeting.

An incident occurred at this time that from the point of view of the Abolitionist Quakers exemplified the conservative leanings of the Indiana Yearly Meeting. Henry Clay, the Senator from Kentucky, then a presidential candidate, was invited to sit with the Quaker elders at the Indiana Yearly Meeting. Clay, the owner of fifty slaves and president of the American Colonization Society, had just the day before given a speech strongly admonishing citizens

against helping runaway slaves. Shortly after Henry Clay's visit the meeting leaders refused to allow Fredric Douglas to speak at the Quaker meeting house. Charles and Levi were outraged and deeply disappointed that their fellow Quakers leaders were coddling slaveholder politicians while rejecting their own abolitionists heritage and responsibilities.

Within a year Charles and about two thousand like-minded Quakers seceded from the Indiana Yearly Meeting and formed the Indiana Yearly Meeting of Anti-Slavery Friends. New small Anti-Slavery Meetings sprung up across Indiana and southern Michigan. Communities of Quakers all over the region were affected by the split and long standing personal and community relationships were strained.

Hannah and Charles Osborn were now living back in Cass county Michigan in a small house on the property of James E. Bonine. There Quakers with strong abolitionist feelings voluntarily withdrew or were involuntarily dismissed from the Birch Lake meeting and started a new Youngs Prairie Anti-Slavery meeting. This new group met at the home of Stephen and Hannah Bogue and Charles Osborn was their minister. The meeting also started their own school where Charles Osborn's son James was the teacher.

The new meetings were set up exactly as all Quaker meetings, the only difference was that they made a deeper commitment to living their Anti-Slavery principles. The Meetings African Committee instructed their members to commit to "living down the unrighteous prejudice" and encouraged social discourse to let their black neighbors know "we esteem them as brethren".

In Cass County blacks could testify in court, vote in local elections and buy land.

In 1853 James E. Bonine purchased land and invited free blacks and freedom seekers to settle there. In exchange for clearing the land they could build a cabin, garden, send their children to school and go to church. The settlement of about 30 cabins came to be called Ramptown named after the wild onions that grew in the area. The residents of Ramptown

could earn their own money and many prospered and bought their own farms. Descendants of these early black residents still live in Cass County. One historian says "the interdependence of these groups created a unique environment that helped minimize racism, promote cooperation between the races and create an African American community unique to the North".

Underground Railroad in Cass County

The story of the Underground Railroad in Cass County is one of cooperation, respect and mutual trust among Quakers, free blacks, freedom seekers and other abolitionists to combat the hated institution of slavery. The activity of the Underground Railroad in Cass County was increasing as more freedom seekers passed through Michigan on the way to Canada. In **"The Underground Railroad in Michigan"** by Carol E. Mull there are frequent references to the Quaker families who worked together to shelter, protect and transport freedom seekers. The members of the Anti-Slavery Friends meeting that included Charles and Hannah's sons Josiah and Parker, grandsons Ellison and Jefferson, Sarah's future husband James Bogue Bonine (3x great grandfather), his step father Stephen Bogue and mother Hannah East Bogue (4x great grandmother) as well as many others in their extended family who lived in Cass county at the time were likely involved in helping freedom seekers. Because of the clandestine nature of the Underground Railroad network even the operators and freedom seekers didn't know any more than necessary who was involved. It is estimated that over 1,500 freedom seekers passed through Cass County, Michigan in the years before the Civil War.

In late 1846 a slave catching association was formed in Covington, Kentucky with the purpose of recovering and returning to their "rightful owners" slaves that had been stolen away by 'rascally abolitionists'. It was believed that there were 100 freedom seekers in Cass County many who came from plantations in Northern Kentucky. In the dark of night in August of 1847, 13 heavily armed Kentuckians, funded by this association, swept into Cass County intending to capture blacks and return them to slavery. These slave catchers were from Bourbon County, Kentucky near Lexington and were looking for a specific group of slaves that had escaped from the plantation of a close friend of Henry Clay, the Kentucky Senator.

These slave catchers had a well funded and organized operation with horses, wagons and arms. A few weeks earlier they sent a spy who pretended to be an abolitionist to Cass County to assess the situation and map where the Quaker farms were and where free blacks lived and worked. A few days prior to their arrival in Cass County these same ruffians had attempted a raid in Battle Creek, Michigan but they had been recognized as slave catchers and were run out of town. They retreated across the Indiana border and a few days later made a strike on Cass County. Intending to arrive undetected they left the wagons, crossed the river and rode in small groups planning to strike three Quaker farms at the same time. They were well prepared with maps of roads and farms detailing where the cabins of their intended victims were.

The first raid was at Charles Osborn's son Josiah Osborn's farm where an old man and his two sons were taken. Though they were unable to put up any resistance, alarm spread like wildfire throughout the neighborhood. At Stephen Bogue's farm a man resisting recapture by his "master" was hit on the head with the handle of a whip severely injuring his ear and the side of his head. Another man was able to escape his pursuers and ran through the cornfield to alert Stephen who promptly jumped on a horse and rode to spread the alarm in Cassopolis. Stephen's wife Hannah East Bogue (4X great grandmother) hid the terrified man upstairs where he was able to view the unfolding events from the window. A woman with her baby and several more people were taken from the nearby farm of Rachel and William East (5x great grandparents).

The Kentuckians who were discovered waiting for their fellow ruffians were soon surrounded by a crowd of about 200 angry and armed neighbors and abolitionists. The Kentuckians' plan to take their victims over the border into Indiana was foiled and the crowd was able to force them into town to face the Cass County judge.

The raiders expected to have the recovered slaves turned over to them because they had papers proving that they were their "rightful property". Instead the judge, who was also an abolitionist, declared an adjournment and delayed the case for three days. The Kentucky slave catchers themselves were arrested on charges of trespassing, assault and kidnapping. They were able to post bond and were released. The nine freedom seekers, who had been kidnapped, were taken into the safety of court protection.

On the day of the trial the Cass County judge refused to recognize the documents of the Kentuckians because they did not also have notarized documentation proving that slavery was

legal in Kentucky. Soon all the freedom seekers and other members of their families, a total of 39 people were safely on the Underground Railroad headed to Canada.

This crisis in Cass County was over but it proved to have lasting consequences. Over the next few years suits were brought in the district court of the United States in Detroit, Michigan by the slave owners against the Quakers who harbored the freedom seekers. The publicity from that long and protracted trial fanned the flames of anti-abolitionist feeling. Meanwhile back in Washington, Henry Clay, because of pressure brought to bear by his aggrieved plantation owner neighbors, fought hard to put more teeth into a new Fugitive Slave Law as part of the Compromise of 1850. Underground Railroad activity around Vandalia was so well known that it was called by Henry Clay on the floor of the US Congress "that hotbed of abolitionism." The Kentucky Raid incident may have had something to do with Charles' and Hannah's next move.

Porter County, Indiana

In 1848 Charles along with Hannah and their youngest daughter Anna, now almost 20, made Charles' final move to Clear Lake in Porter County, Indiana. There they joined the Clear Lake Anti-Slavery Friends Meeting where their son Jordan, his wife Isabel and their baby daughter already were members. It is likely that Jordan Osborn was a conductor on the Underground Railroad Station near Clear Lake, Indiana and that is why Charles relocated there. In the fall of 1848 Sarah Osborn married James Bogue Bonine (3x great grandfather) in Cassopolis and they moved to Harmony, Indiana.

Charles, in poor health and deeply discouraged by the divide among his beloved Quakers, never wavered from his position on immediate and unconditional abolition of slavery. In January of 1850 the US congress began debating the Fugitive Slave Act, part of complex compromise legislation promoted by Henry Clay and intended to maintain the balance of power between free and slave states within the US government. The final version of The Fugitive Slave Act required all US citizens to assist in the recovery of fugitive slaves and denied

a fugitive's right to a jury trial, essentially sanctioning and incentivizing the kidnapping of both free blacks and freedom seekers. Also as part of this "1850 compromise", the largest and most profitable slave market in the nation was to be closed down: a still active slave market that was situated along the National Mall, in the nation's capital near the White House.

In March of 1850 Anna the youngest of Charles and Hannah's 16 children married Jessie East, a cousin of her sister Sarah's husband James Bogue Bonine. The wedding in Porter County, Indiana was probably the last family gathering before Charles' death.

The Fugitive Slave Act became law in September 1850. For self-emancipated black men and women attempting to build lives in the North, like the community in Cass County, Michigan, the new law was a disaster. Free blacks and freedom seekers were completely defenseless as they could be captured and sent south into slavery with no recourse. As many as 20,000 free blacks fearing for their lives fled from the US to Canada after the 1850 legislation was passed.

Charles's last writing was in condemnation of The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850.

"The late acts of Congress, in favor of Slavery, can not fail to bring great additional infamy and reproach upon the people of our whole nation.... ***If Satan's seat is not now in the City of Washington, who can tell where it is?*** Will not retribution for this high-handed wickedness fall with the greatest weight upon the Pro-Slavery clergy... in that awful approaching day, when inquisition will be made for blood?"

"In reflecting upon the wicked laws lately passed by Congress, for the extension of Slavery and for recovery of fugitives, I apprehend that if they are enforced they will have the tendency to draw the line of distinction between Anti-Slavery Friends and Pro-Slavery Quakers."

Charles Osborn

In the last months of his life, Charles labored preparing a response to Congress denouncing the Fugitive Slave Act. He also wrote extensively in his journal about the free produce movement and how he could not understand how Quakers could continue to use products produced by slaves. According to one of his descendants, Julia Osborn, "At the end of his life he was poignantly concerned with finding a suitable burial suit, one which was not made by slaves. By that he meant that no fiber was to be raised, spun or woven by slaves and of course no slave was to have cut the fabric or stitched the suit."

When Charles Osborn died on December 29th, 1850 he was 75 years old.

Levi Coffin, Charles' intimate friend and leader of the Underground Railroad, wrote:

"We had no new doctrine to preach; we advocated immediate and unconditional emancipation as we had done all our lives. This we understood to be the doctrine and testimony of the Society of Friends for generations past.... Charles Osborn, that faithful servant of the Lord, who preached no new doctrine, had experienced no change, but followed the same course and advocated the same Anti-Slavery doctrine that he had for forty years".

In March 1852, the Society of Anti-Slavery Friends adopted a memorial that read, in part, that "in endeavoring to lay the foundation principle of the societies, he, at an early age (1814) advocated and maintained the only true and Christian ground -- immediate and unconditional emancipation."



Charles Osborn was buried in the Clear Lake Meeting Cemetery in Porter County, Indiana.

Charles Osborn kept a journal of his travels that was published as a memorial to him by the Anti-Slavery Friends in 1854 : **JOURNAL of THAT FAITHFUL SERVANT of CHRIST.** Unfortunately the journal chronicles only his travels and does not shed much light on things that happened at home. Although 472 pages long, it contains very little information concerning Osborn's personal life. There is rare mention of a letter from home or reference to worry about how his family is faring in his absence. The journal does document the often difficult travel

conditions and his emotional struggle with his responsibility for preaching and the frequent illness and anguish he suffered from being so long away from home.

An original copy of Charles' published journal remained in our family line until the 1990's when my mother Emily Mulloy donated it to the Quaker Library at Wilmington Collage.

Cass County Grandmothers

After Charles' death Hannah Swain Osborn, then 60 years old, returned to Cass County to live with her daughter Sarah Osborn Bonine. Sarah and James Bogue Bonine's daughter Laura Ellen Bonine (2x great grandmother) born July 10, 1849. When I first figured this out I felt relieved for Hannah, imagining for her a period of well deserved rest. I was also excited to find three generations of my grandmothers living together.

It took me some deeper digging into the genealogy records to understand that there were more of my grandparents in Cass County. Sarah's husband James Bogue Bonine and many of his family had made the same migration from North Carolina to Wayne County and on to Cass County. James's own father died before he was born and his mother Hannah East remarried Stephen Bogue who became one of Cass county's prominent Quaker citizens. Hannah East's parents William East and Rachel Talbot (5x great grandparents) were also living in Cass County. It is likely that Rachel Talbot is the grandmother featured in the following story.

Several armed men rode up to the house and found Grandma sitting in her rocking chair on the porch. The men of the house had all ridden into town to spread the alarm that slave catchers were in the neighborhood. The vigilantes demanded to know where the slaves were being hidden. They searched the house. Grandma calmly explained she had seen no slaves that

day. All the while the terrified family of fugitives was hiding directly under her. A trap door was hidden under the rug right under her rocking chair on the porch. She always told the truth, she hasn't seen any fugitive slaves today, they had been hidden there since the night before.

The new fugitive slave law was biased toward slaveholders and slavecatchers, it required little documentation and put all blacks at risk for capture and sale into slavery. The legal repercussions, heavy fines and sanctions to anyone providing assistance to fugitive slaves, increased the risk for abolitionists. Undeterred, The Anti-Slavery Friends and Charles's descendants seemed to personally feel their responsibility to put into action his years of abolitionist teaching. Their focus after 1850 became getting fugitives to Canada as it became increasingly dangerous for them to stay in Michigan.

Women of course did more than equal measure of the dangerous and demanding work of helping freedom seekers. Hannah Swain undoubtedly had come across freedom seekers while growing up in the mountains of Tennessee with her abolitionist parents. Each family would have had a plan of where and how to hide people and how to help them on their way. Women and children were often home alone when armed slave catchers were at the door.... Quakers could always say "there are no slaves in the house" and be truthful because "there was no such thing as a slave to a Quaker".

Levi Coffin describes in his reminiscences how his wife Catherine and the other Quaker ladies had an Anti-Slavery sewing circle where they sewed new clothes and disguises for freedom seekers that often arrived with only rags on their backs. In Cass county the Anti-Slavery Friends were undoubtedly doing the same.

Even as the Quaker community in Cass county united in the dangerous business of aiding freedom seekers in the decade after Charles death, without his leadership the Anti-Slavery Friends meeting began to lose attendance. People started drifting back to their original Quaker meetings as the differences between the two groups faded.

Tensions in the years just before the Civil War were unifying most Quakers around the abolitionist cause. Positions held by Charles Osborn and Levi Coffin that had seemed radical several decades before were now more generally accepted. In 1857 the Anti-Slavery Friends closed their separate meetings and rejoined the Indiana Yearly meeting. The Indiana Yearly Meeting welcomed them back but there was never any apology or acknowledgment that Charles Osborn and his associates had been treated unfairly.

Even though most Anti-Slavery Quakers rejoined their local Quaker Meetings and probably Charles' descendants did too, there remained among his close family a feeling of resentment at the way their grandfather had been treated. In future generations many drifted away from Quakerism altogether. The story that I heard in the 1970's from my grandmother Faith Mullett Ross was that our ancestors had been Quakers but were dismissed from the meeting for being abolitionists.

Civil War and the Bonine Family

The Civil War that Charles Osborn had predicted started in 1861. Most of the Quaker men did not join the fighting because of their non-violence and pacifist beliefs. President Lincoln's Emancipation proclamation was announced in September of 1863, 12 years after Charles Osborn's death. Even with their long awaited freedom, conditions for blacks were slow to improve especially in the war ravaged South; conditions were desperate. As freedmen many were evicted from the plantations without food or shelter and continued to make their way towards the North in hope of finding better conditions for their families. These freedmen who

were now both refugees from slavery and war needed the help of the Cass County Quaker families more than ever.

Sarah Osborn and James Bogue Bonine's family grew and they were very fortunate to have grandmother Hannah living with them. By 1863 they had six children, 2 girls and 4 boys and Sarah was again pregnant this time with twin boys that were born in December. In the late summer of the next year a fatal and contagious illness took the lives of both twins and the other two youngest boys. Edward, Justin, George, and William all died within a two month period. The death certificate of one says dysentery was the cause of death. Sarah was 35 and between then and when she was 42 she gave birth to four more boys. Orion who was born the year after the tragedy of his brothers also died at the age of six in 1872.

Sarah Osborn Bonine's oldest daughter Laura Ellen Bonine was 14 years old when her brothers died during that terrible summer of 1864. She and her grandmother Hannah must have nursed the sick boys. I am sure she was deeply effected as was everyone in the family with this terrible loss of life. In 1870 Laura married Michael Pemberton (2x great grandfather) also from a Cass County Quaker family. Michaels' father James Pemberton(3x great grandfather) died when he was a small child and his mother Prudence Osborn Ashby (3x great grandmother) remarried. On April 8, 1871 Laura and Michael's first child Clare Pemberton (1x great grandmother) was born.

Quaker Grandmothers Moving and Staying

My great grandmother Clare Pemberton was the owner of the trunk that began this journey of ancestral discovery. A travel trunk is the perfect metaphor for their experience.

These Quaker women with their families left North Carolina, some staying a while in Tennessee, others passing a few years in Ohio and Indiana and all finally ended up in Cass County, Michigan. They were part of the great Quaker migration from the Carolinas to the Midwest and virtually all of them were born in the United States or earlier in Colonial America. I can trace my direct maternal line through these grandmothers as far back as Rebecca Baker (9x great grandmother) born in 1684 in the Quaker settlement of Pennsylvania where she died in childbirth in 1711.

Between 1871 when Clare Pemberton was born and 1878 when Hannah Swain Osborn died, four generations of my direct maternal line of grandmothers were all living in Cass County, Michigan. This seemed remarkable to me when I first figured it out. Later as I learned more about the genealogy I realized that there were at least 5 other grandparents alive in Cass County during that remarkable few years: Hannah East Bonine Bogue (4x great grandmother) mother of James Bogue Bonine who lived to be 97, Prudence Osborn Ashby (3x great grandmother) mother of Michael Pemberton, Susannah Ashby Pemberton (4x great grandmother) grandmother of Michael Pemberton. In the previous years other grandmothers had also lived in Cass County, Rachel Talbot (5x great grandmother) Hannah East's mother had died in 1851 and Mary Copeland (5x great grandmother), James Bogue Bonnie's grandmother who died 1838.

I find it quite astonishing that after all the migrating across frontiers and at least 5 states so many ended up living together in this small Michigan community. Cass County Michigan because of a confluence of history, geography and humanity was the place where our migrating Quaker ancestors found an environment to live out their abolitionist values and work to create their vision of a biracial community. These Quaker ancestors left North Carolina and Tennessee in the late 1700's and early 1800's because they could not tolerate living with

slavery and migrated across Indiana and Ohio until they found a community where they could “walk their talk” and live according to their values.

One of the first genealogical facts that I encountered in this investigation was the fact that Charles Osborn was the father of 16 children and he was almost never home. With Sarah’s seven children and Hannah’s nine, I have to admit I couldn’t wrap my mind around how these women could have possibly managed. The images of babies born in log cabins to women who had too many babies closely spaced with no health care made my midwife brain reel. Hannah Swain Osborn became my heroine, her story taught me to view the children as more of a resource and less as a liability and to understand that even on the remote frontier in Tennessee their Quaker communities provided the necessary support. These rugged women developed extensive skill sets of mutual care and service. One of the most remarkable things about the 9 children that Hannah birthed and 7 others that she raised is that they all lived through childhood. This was something not common during this time and certainly not to be taken for granted.

Hannah Swain Osborn lived to be 88 outliving her husband and most of her own children and step-children. Hannah’s daughter Sarah Osborn Bonine died when she was only 57 years old in 1885. Sarah’s husband James Bogue Bonine lived until he was 75 and died in 1900.

Laura Bonine Pemberton and her husband Michael had three more children: Fantine, Inez and Rex. Rex was only six in 1893 when Michael Pemberton died leaving Laura a widow at 44. The following year her oldest daughter Clare married John Harris Forster Mullett (great grandfather). John Harris had a degree from The Veterinary College of Chicago and was part owner of the Cassopolis Drug store. Their first child Victor was born in 1895 and Faith Clare Mullett (grandmother) on March 3, 1898.



Cassopolis, Michigan 1897 Clare, Rex and Inez Pemberton ,(unknown woman sitting), Fantine Pemberton with baby Victor Mullett on her lap (unknown man behind)

Ann Arbor, Michigan 1900

By the turn of the new century everything changed. Our line, the descendants of Hannah Swain and Charles Osborn, all moved on from Cass County where they had lived for over 50 years. Clare Pemberton Mullett, now 29 years old, packed her trunk and moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan. The evidence points to education as the prime reason for the families relocation. Probably Fantine Cozett Pemberton was the first to go as she graduated from the University of Michigan School of Nursing in the class of 1900. The 1900 Federal Census lists Laura as a widowed head of household with her children Fan, Inez, Rex. Both Laura and Fantine are listed as nurses and Inez and Rex as students. John Harris Forster Mullett was a student too at

the University of Michigan School of Medicine. Clare was managing a household with 5 year old Victor, 2 year old Faith and their new baby daughter Elinor who was born in 1900.

Grandma Laura Bonine Pemberton, who had learned nursing while she cared for her sick and dying little brothers years ago, now started a boarding house for nursing students. Fantine after working as a nurse became the superintendent of the University of Michigan School of Nursing. There is no indication that the Pemberton families maintained any connection to the Quaker Meeting after their move to Ann Arbor.

I am ending my part of this story with three generations of our once Quaker grandmothers safely in Ann Arbor Michigan. Of course after 1900 for the Pembertons and Mulletts so much else happens, teaser.... What happened to Inez? Grandma Laura Ellen goes to Panama in 1913 and one of Clare's daughters becomes an Egyptologist. There are many more questions than answers in the past and the future.



First Row: Victor Mullett, Ella wife of Rex Pemberton with daughter, Laura Ellen Bonine Pemberton, Faith Mullett, Elinor Mullett, Row 2: Rex Pemberton Fantine Pemberton, Clare Pemberton Mullett 1912 Ann Arbor Michigan

Circle of Connections

Some of Sarah Osborn's letters as well as some of her poetry and documents that once belonged to her granddaughters Faith and Elinor, are now in the Bentley Historical Library at The University of Michigan closed because of the Covid pandemic. I wish I had been able to access them to personalize her story. A cameo brooch that belonged to Sarah Osborn Bonine has been passed down from oldest daughter to oldest daughter for seven generations and now belongs to my niece Josefina Nahoe Mulloy who will pass it to her daughter.



Brooch passed down our maternal line to each generations eldest daughter. Originally owned by Sarah Osborn Bonine. Reset by Francis Ross the husband of Faith Mullett Ross.

Because Charles Osborn was a historical figure it is possible to follow the family story through his journal and the many reprints of historical books and articles about slavery, abolitionists and Quakerism. Our family is very fortunate to have this documentation paper trail. Quaker meetings kept records of their members all carefully hand written and fortuitously saved for future archivists. I have also greatly benefited from previous genealogy work done by my mother Emily Ross Mulloy and many contributors from internet genealogy records.

There is also a more subtle inheritance from our Grandmothers who from generations to generation nurtured, kindled and sustained the next generation and passed on our families values. Values as I see it, that include humility: we are not better than anyone else, everyone counts, social justice is our responsibility, fairness and equality matter, Black Lives Matter, walking your talk matters, education and service to others matters. Even without having previously heard much of this history/herstory It seems obvious to me that we, the descendants of these remarkable people, by nature or nurture inherited core values from them. This research has helped me to personally understand who my mother and grandmothers were and who I am and a little bit of why.

Tracing the story of these Quakers Ancestors lives has made clearer to me the stark reality that so very much has changed in our country in these last 200 years and that 200 years is really a relatively short period of time when measured by the lives of ancestors.

Just days ago when I thought I was near the end of this research I discovered that there is an Underground Railroad Museum in Cass County and a Bonine Library located in the house that belonged to Hannah East and Stephen Bogue. I am actually glad I only found it just now, it confirms much of my research but I did not miss out on tracking down and reading so many primary sources. More to learn always and more family to connect with....

For me it is now the end of 2020 and I have been working on this project since the summer. The Covid 19 pandemic still rages out of control while the distribution of a vaccine brings some hope. A newly elected president with a more humanitarian agenda and the first woman of color as the vice president will take office in January.

I am sharing this with all the descendants of the Quaker Grandmothers that I am in contact with so they may ponder their roots and our current situation. If you receive this and find it of interest please share it. I would very much appreciate any conversation, feedback, insights and additional resources that this may evoke. I am hopeful that there might be more letters, photos, memories that could fall from the family tree to expand this story.

Brigid Mulloy 12/17/2020

brigid.mulloy@gmail.com

Addendum 12/28/2020

I sent "**Our Quaker Grandmothers' Legacy**" off by email, wanting my family and friends to have it before Christmas. I thought I had put the story to rest and was planning to focus on other things. But my habit of spending time with the grandmothers was hard to break and I couldn't resist turning to the webpage of the Underground Railroad Society of Cass County to read their many articles. I understood immediately that they had a treasure trove of information about our families history. After spending the best part of a day reading, I sent an email to their web page introducing myself. I thought I could get some help trying to disentangle who all the James Bonines were and how they fit in with my family story. I got a reply right away from Cathy LaPoint who told me I had illustrious ancestors! It was such a thrill to find someone who knew about Bonines, Osborns Easts and Swains. She told me how our family fit with the family of the Bonine House and introduced me to their amazing Bonine Library where many more hours of reading awaited. I was just thrilled by this contact and soon was calling my sister about a trip to Cass County once Covid lets us travel again.

Sarah Osborn's Dress

Early in our conversations Cathy LaPoint mentioned that they had Sarah Osborn's dress at the Bonine House. I knew exactly what dress she was talking about and I was astounded, thrilled, gratified and hugely relieved. Finding that the dress had made its way to the Bonine House brought everything full circle for me. I felt directly rewarded by the Quaker grandmothers for my efforts to tell their story.



Sarah Osborn's dress at the Bonine House photo credit Cathy LaPoint

In 1969 when I was a freshman at Wilmington College my grandmother Faith Mullett Ross mailed me a package. I was surprised to find that it was an antique brown and white plaid dress

with a beautiful petticoat and Quaker bonnet. Grandma Faith wrote that it was her great grandmother Sarah Osborn's dress and she wanted me to have it because I was the only one in the family still interested in Quakers and Sarah Osborn had been born near Wilmington, Ohio. I admired the beautiful dress and was touched that my grandmother wanted me to have it, but honestly I couldn't imagine what I would do with it. I folded the dress carefully and put it in my trunk, yes the same trunk from the start of this story that had belonged to Clare.

My life got complicated soon after that. In 1970 I went on a student trip to Central America with other Wilmington College students and ended up staying for almost two years in the Quaker Community of Monteverde in Costa Rica. My trunks got shipped home to Laramie, Wyoming and fortunately my mother took custody of Sarah's dress for the next 25 years. In the early 1990's I was living on the Hawaiian Island of Molokai where I worked as a midwife at the small community hospital. My mother back in Laramie was starting to downsize and decided that she should find a place for Sarah's dress back in Michigan where it could be preserved in historical context. She had already donated the copy of Charles Osborn's Journal to the Library at Wilmington College. I am sure she talked to me about it but at that time I was focused on delivering babies, helping other families grow their family trees not on researching my own.

Another twenty five years later when I started working on restoring Grandma Clare's trunk I had Sarah Osborn's dress on my conscious. What had my mother done with it? Why had I not kept it myself ? It would have been the perfect thing to put back in the trunk. Nearing the end of writing up my research on the grandmothers I found in my mothers "Osborn file" the copy of a letter from 1995 she had written to her cousin Ann talking about the dress. She tells her cousin that she intends to bring the dress to her when she next visits Michigan. At last a clue, but Ann had died in 2012 ten years after my mother so probably not to helpful.

When I learned about the Bonine House and the Underground Railroad Society of Cass County I actually thought, if I still had Sarah Osborn's dress, that would be a perfect place for it. It turns out that my second cousins Julie and Polly thought exactly the same thing. Within a few days

Cathy LaPoint had put me in touch with my cousin Julie who had given them the dress and sent me pictures of Sarah's Dress. I printed out a picture of the dress to put in the trunk and have gotten reacquainted with cousins I had not seen since I was a teenager. My Quaker Grandmothers are smiling! Their Legacy indeed!



Cover Photo: Ann Arbor, Michigan 1948 Faith Mullett Ross (50), Emily Ross Mulloy (25), My sister, Kathleen Mulloy (3), Clare Pemberton Mullett (77)

When I look at this photo I also imagine a photo that could have been taken in Cassopolis, Michigan in 1875 with Clare Pemberton as a 4 year old child, Hannah Swain Osborn (85) the older woman, Sarah Osborn Bonine (47) the grand mother and Laura Ellen Pemberton (26) the young mother. Eight generations of our maternal line of Quaker Grandmothers. I now a grandmother myself have joined the line up.

Pedigree Chart for Clare Pemberton

Clare Pemberton

b: 08 Apr 1871 in Vandalia, Cass, Michigan, USA
 m: 22 Aug 1894 in Cassopolis, Michigan, USA
 d: 05 May 1960 in Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA; Heart attack

Michael L Pemberton

b: 04 Apr 1848 in Vandalia, Michigan, USA
 m: 04 Apr 1870 in Cassopolis, Michigan, USA
 d: 03 Oct 1893 in Vandalia, Cass, Michigan, USA; Dropsy

Laura Ellen Bonine

b: 10 Jul 1849 in Vandalia, Cass, Michigan, USA
 d: 07 Nov 1914 in Vandalia, Michigan, USA

Joseph Pemberton

b: 1823 in Ohio, United States
 m: 26 Jan 1843 in Hamilton, Indiana, United States
 d: 1850 around ; ?

Prudense Osborn Ashby

b: 08 Aug 1827 in Henry, Indiana, United States
 d: 16 Feb 1910 in Cass, Michigan, USA

James Bogue Bonine

b: 18 Jul 1825 in Wayne, Wayne, Indiana, USA
 m: 03 Sep 1848 in Cass County Michigan, USA
 d: 1900 in Vandalia, Cass, Michigan, USA; Age at Death: 75

Sarah Swain Osborn

b: 21 Feb 1828 in Clinton County Ohio
 d: 11 Oct 1885 in Vandalia, Michigan, USA; Age: 57

Name:

b:
 m:
 d:

Susannah Pemberton

b: 22 Feb 1802 in Indiana Territory, United States
 d: 1848 in Indiana, United States

John Ashby

b: Ohio
 m:
 d:

Susannah Osborn ?

b: Abt. 1809 in North Carolina
 d: 1876 in Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire, England

James Bonine

b: 28 Dec 1796 in New Hope, Greene, Tennessee, USA
 m: 21 Oct 1824 in Wayne, Indiana, USA
 d: 06 Nov 1824 in Richmond, Wayne, Indiana, USA

Hannah East

b: 16 Dec 1798 in Wayne, Indiana, United States
 d: 26 Dec 1891 in Vandalia, Cass, Michigan, USA

Charles Osborn

b: 21 Aug 1775 in Guilford, North Car...
 m: 26 Sep 1813 in Knox CO., Tenne...
 d: 29 Dec 1850 in Porter, Indiana, US...

Hannah Swain

b: 04 Jan 1790 in Lost Creek, Tennessee, USA
 d: 12 Feb 1878 in Cass County, Michigan, USA

Relationship: Brigid Mulloy to Hannah Swain

Hannah Swain is the 4th great grandmother of Brigid Mulloy

4th great grandmother

Hannah Swain	Charles Osborn
b: 04 Jan 1790 Lost Creek, Tennessee, USA	b: 21 Aug 1775 Guilford, North Carolina, Colony
d: 12 Feb 1878 Cass County, Michigan, USA	d: 29 Dec 1850 Porter, Indiana, USA

3rd great grandmother

Sarah Swain Osborn
b: 21 Feb 1828 Clinton County Ohio
d: 11 Oct 1885 Vandalia, Michigan, USA

2nd great grandmother

Laura Ellen Bonine
b: 10 Jul 1849 Vandalia, Cass, Michigan, USA
d: 07 Nov 1914 Vandalia, Michigan, USA

Great grandmother

Clare Pemberton
b: 08 Apr 1871 Vandalia, Cass, Michigan, USA
d: 05 May 1960 Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA

Maternal grandmother

Faith Clare MULLETT
b: 03 Mar 1898 Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA
d: 13 Aug 1994 Tucson, Arizona, USA

Mother

Emily ROSS
b: 29 Jan 1923 Ann Arbor, Washtenaw, Michigan, USA
d: 12 Nov 2003 Kaunakakai, Hawaii, USA

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