

CHAPTER 8 – PART A

DESCENDANTS OF WILLIAM BELL JR. AND SALLY BEACH

ROBERT

Robert Bell (1826-1879) and Margaret Weston (1826-1892)

William Bell Jr. was a week shy of 25 and Sally Beach, 19, when their first child, Robert, arrived on Wednesday, August 23, 1826. They were farming with Will's parents at the time, and Robert was going on four when they started a farm of their own a mile northwest of there. It overlooked a shady lane that later became "Beach Road", named for Sally's birth family. Robert's only brother, Milo, showed up in January 1831, followed by four sisters over the next 17 years, and when the one-room School House No. 4 opened down by the lane in 1832, Robert became one of its first students. The school year was just 135 days long, so he spent most of his days feeding chickens and livestock, gathering eggs, milking cows, shelling corn and mucking out stalls. By the time he finished the 8th grade, he also had learned how to split wood, plant and harvest crops, mend fences, dig ditches, shave logs, repair buildings and equipment, shear the sheep, and make a profit selling those and a few swine every year. He slaughtered some, too, along with chickens.

On Sundays they and all their kin attended the Mentz Church a quarter mile northwest of the farm. Robert's parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles all had taken part in building it on land they bought from the Weston family, and several Westons still farmed north and northwest of it. Nathan and Chloe Weston had a daughter named Margaret, who was born the same year as Robert and grew up with him at both the Mentz Church and School House No. 4. Males and females sat on opposite sides in each place to avoid sinful familiarity, but romance (or something akin to it) eventually triumphed and Robert wed Margaret in 1847, the year they turned 21. (*Cf. Map 8A*)

The newlyweds lived with his or her parents the first year, and then, following the birth of their son, Delavan, moved in October 1848 to the modest 31-acre farm right next to Robert's parents. Will Jr. had bought it from his brother, John, five years earlier for \$1,560 and now, together with Sally, passed it on to Robert and Margaret as a gift, citing that same \$1,560 value in the deed. Robert and Margaret then sold it on April 7, 1851, to their neighbor, John Myers, for \$1,400 while simultaneously closing on an 80-acre farm a mile to the northeast, for which they paid Isaac and Ellen Trufant \$3,200. The new place was at the three-way intersection of what are now known as Mills, Kernan and Moody Roads, and they never moved again. (*Cf. Chp 7*)

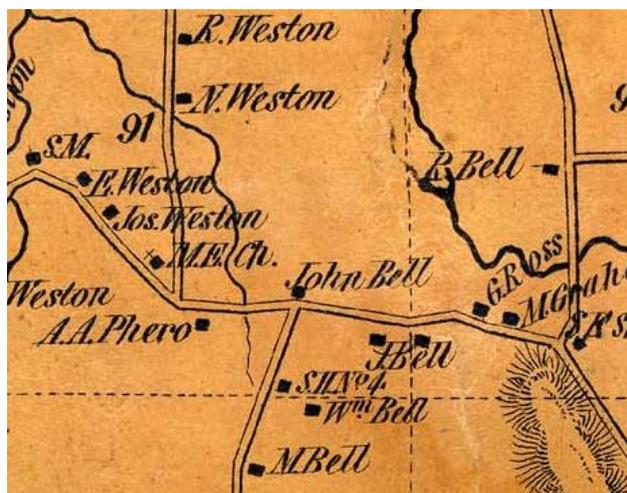
Cast of Characters – Robert

<u>Robert Bell</u>	<u>(1826-1879)</u>	<u>m (1847)</u>	<u>Margaret Weston</u>	<u>(1826-1892)</u>
❖ Delavan Bell	(1848-____>	m (1879)	Delia Hamm	(1863-1884)
• Bertha Bell	(1881-1884)			
• Unnamed child	(1883-1883)			
<u>Then</u> Delavan Bell		m (1893)	Stella Gutchess	(1866-____>
❖ “Hattie” Weston (adpt)	(1855-1856)		(adpt) = adopted	
❖ Robert Ferris Post (adpt)	(1866-1913)	m (1891)	Carrie I. Sayer	(1870-1954)

Other Notable Figures

- ❖ William Bell, Jr. (Will Jr.) and Sally Beach – Robert’s birth parents
 - Milo and Margaret Bell – Robert’s brother and his wife
 - Electa Bell and Jacob Post – Robert’s eldest sister and her husband
 - ✓ Sally “Bell” Post, Maggie Post, **Robert Ferris Post**, and Ordie Post
 - Lavinia Bell and Frank Albro – Robert’s second sister and her husband
 - Mary C. Bell and Frank McKone – Robert’s third sister and her husband
 - Martha S. Bell and P.W. Ross – Robert’s youngest sister and her husband
 - William Henry Harrison Bell – Robert’s half-brother
 - Mary Delano Hoagland Bell – Will Jr’s second wife
 - Romain Hoagland – Robert’s step-brother
- ❖ Nathan and Chloe Weston – Margaret’s birth parents
 - James Weston and Hattie Dresser – Margaret’s brother and his wife (Little Hattie’s parents)
- ❖ Edward Hamm – Delavan’s brother-in-law
- ❖ William and Sarah Gutchess – Stella’s parents
- ❖ Sarah and Tobias Schermerhorn – Stella’s grandparents

Will Jr. and Sally later bought the 31-acre farm a second time and, on April 1, 1853, deeded it to their younger son, Milo, who had married and become a father by then. Map 8A from that year shows Robert and Margaret's farm relative to those of their parents, Milo, and other kin. "S.H.N° 4" is the schoolhouse. (Cf. "R. Bell", upper right)



Map 8A - Bell & Weston Farms – 1853

Female life expectancy was just 20 years in 19th century America, so Sally had enjoyed a comparatively long life when she died just shy of 47 in November 1853. A swirl of other family transitions soon followed, the first of which was directly related to her demise. Along with his farm and community obligations, Will now had sole responsibility for the welfare of his four daughters, who ranged from 5 to 19 years. To address the needs of the two youngest, in particular (and his own needs in general), he married the widowed and far younger Mary Delano Hoagland the following June (1854), whereupon she and her three children moved in with his daughters and him. Five months later, right around the first anniversary of Sally's death, Milo moved to Michigan with his own wife and son. Then, Robert's eldest sister, Electa, married a farmer named Jacob Post two days before Christmas and, within a few years, they followed Milo. Robert and Margaret, meanwhile, stayed right where they were, tending to their son and their farm; but their lives were about to change, too.

Couples of the prior generation often had six or more children, but nine years into their marriage, Robert and Margaret had only Delavan. By contrast, Margaret's younger brother, James Weston, and his wife, Harriet "Hattie" Dresser, already had three sons and, in November 1855, added a daughter, whom they named after Hattie. The elder Hattie then died the following May, leaving James even worse off than Will Jr., with sole responsibility for a seven-month-old daughter and three sons under age seven while also running a farm. Robert and Margaret had only Delavan to care for, so they stepped in and adopted the baby. But then, in October, a month shy of her first birthday, baby Hattie died, too. A few days later, the Bell, Dresser and Weston families gathered at the Mentz Church Cemetery and buried her alongside her birth mother in the same soil her Weston ancestors had once owned. Sometime afterward, they erected a headstone reading:

**Little
Hattie C.
d. of J.M. & H.
Weston,
adopted dau of
R. & M. Bell
d. Oct 22, 1856
ae 11 months.**

Robert was thirty-four at the onset of the Civil War in 1861, so he registered for the draft; but as a farmer with a wife and young son, he was exempt from service. Thirteen-year-old Delavan, in any event, had chronic health issues and would have been of limited help to Margaret in running the farm without Robert. They also had a farm hand, a young Irish immigrant named William Carbury, who was living with them as the war got underway. Carbury then married and bought a farm of his own nearby, whereupon Robert's sister, Lavinia, by then in her late twenties, moved in with Robert's family. She had been at the Beach Road farm with Will Jr's blended family in 1855, but her whereabouts between then and mid-1865 are unknown. While living with Robert and Margaret, she identified herself as a "tailoress", a common occupation among females. Then, in January 1869, she married Civil War veteran Frank Albro and moved to Auburn, leaving Robert, Margaret and Delavan alone on the farm again. (Cf. "Lavinia" in Chp 8, Part B)

Auburn newspaper snippets show that Robert had followed his father, grandfather and uncles into freemasonry. Most of his Masonic activities are unknown, but as his lodge's newly elected secretary, he himself posted this notice in the *Auburn Daily Bulletin* on Christmas Eve, 1872:

**MASONIC.—At the annual election
of Montezuma Lodge No. 17, F. &
A. M., held Dec. 21st, 1872, the fol-
lowing officers were chosen :**

**Preston W. Ross, W. M.
Horatio Mack, S. W.
J. W. Stanton, J. W.
Charles F. Filkin, Treas.
Robert Bell, Sec'y.
Dr. C. E. Chase, S. D.
L. W. Thompson, J. D.
William Wright, S. M. C.
Grove Shook, S. M. C.
William Gutchess, Tiler.**

Its mundane purpose aside, the list illustrates a common feature of fraternal organizations in small, rural communities, namely non-masonic interconnections among the members. For example, Preston (P.W.) Ross (identified as "W.M.", meaning "Worshipful Master") was married to Robert's sister, Martha, and J.W. Stanton's niece later married Robert's half-brother, Henry. Charles Filkin worked as a stage driver for Robert's stepbrother and brother-in-law while rooming with them and Robert's sister, Mary C. Then, 20 years down the road, the last man on the list, William Gutchess, would become Delavan's second father-in-law (at least, technically). The next slate of leaders came out almost a year-to-the-day later and included Robert, his father, his son and a brother-in-law. A web of interrelationships like that can foster social stability in a small community at the expense of diversity and innovation, but Masonic camaraderie also can bring comfort and support in times of loss and grief, as it did for the Bell clan that very decade.

The deaths included Robert's stepbrother Romain Hoagland, brother-in-law Frank McKone, and over in Michigan, his sister Electa, followed by her husband Jacob Post. All four of Electa's children were under 18 when orphaned in 1877, so Robert, Milo and their youngest sister, Martha,

each “adopted” one, and a cousin took in the fourth. Robert’s 11-year-old namesake, Robert “Ferris” Post, came to live with them and would spend the next decade there. Over time, Ferris also became close to Aunt Lavinia and her family over in Auburn. (Cf. “Milo” and “Electa” below, plus “Lavinia” in Part B)

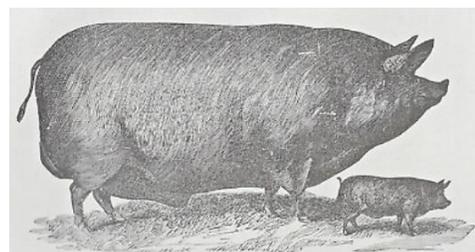
Robert was a familiar figure at the Cayuga County Fair, participating on committees, directing events and, one year, serving as overall Chair. One of his Durham bulls also won a blue ribbon three years in a row during the 1870s, which bumped up the price at auction time. The *Auburn Morning News* of October 4, 1878, said the bull weighed an impressive 2,430 pounds. Robert’s weight wasn’t mentioned. (Image below – for those who wouldn’t know a bull from a kumquat: “1853 Durham Bull”. *Antique Print of Cow Breeds*, public domain)



A year later, Delavan, by-then 31, travelled 230 miles east to sparsely populated West Taghkanic (pronounced “Taconic”) in New York’s Columbia County, no doubt taking a train rather than the far slower Erie Canal. Taghkanic was around 10 miles from where his step-grandmother, Mary Delano Bell, had been born 61 years earlier – which, so far as we know, had absolutely nothing to do with his journey. He went there simply to woo a certain young woman he had never met. After a brief return home to confer with his parents, he made his way back to Taghkanic and married Delia Hamm, who recently had turned 17. (*Evening Auburnian*, October 9, 1879) ¹

It was right about then, as Delavan returned with his child bride, that Robert contracted typhoid fever. With antibiotics still a decade away, people typically suffered three to four weeks before succumbing. Robert was 53 when he died on Monday, November 10, just over a month after the wedding. The following Thursday, his family and friends (including Milo, who came from Michigan) interred him with Masonic Honors at the Mentz Church Cemetery. His was the last of several deaths in the extended family that decade, but others were on the horizon.

Delia’s 20-year-old brother, Edward Hamm, had come to live with them by the summer of 1880, and she and Delavan welcomed their first child, Bertha (a popular name at the time), in 1881. Delavan’s Essex boar (think: enormous male pig) then won a “1st Premium” ribbon at the Cayuga County Fair that October. Life was going well. And then it wasn’t.



(*Essex Boar*, 1911, Public Domain)

A second daughter arrived on Wednesday, September 12, 1883, but died that Saturday without receiving a name (*compare with "Electa", below*) and, seven months later, Montezuma's village reporter, "St. Elmo" (a pen name), wrote that both Delavan and Delia were "quite sick". Delavan then recovered whereas her condition deteriorated. Auburn's first hospital opened that same year, but had only 13 beds, and medical care was both expensive and still rather primitive. Delia chose instead to return in early May to her father's home in Taghkanic, hoping perhaps that a change of environment might help. It soon became clear, though, that she was dying. Delavan went to be with her, and Margaret soon followed – stopping along the way to leave Bertha with a friend in the river city of Hudson. Delia's brother, Edward, might have made the journey, as well, leaving 18-year-old Ferris to tend the farm on his own. Ferris's sister, Bell, as it happened, had died at a similar age a year earlier. Once in Taghkanic, Margaret served as Delia's primary caregiver. A physician must have been involved, too, but Delia's unnamed affliction finally took her on Sunday, July 13, at age 21. Someone, perhaps the Rev. G.C. Wood, their pastor at the Mentz Church, shared the news with St. Elmo, who wrote this account for a countywide newspaper.

Sunday morning, July 13th, at the residence of her father at West [Taghkanic], Columbia Co., while visiting at the home of her childhood, Mrs. Delavan Bell died aged 21 years and 5 months. The 6th of May Mrs. Bell left home to spend the summer in Columbia Co. She has been in poor health for some time, and it was thought that a change of climate and scenery would have a beneficial effect upon her health. But it was not so to be. She returned to the paternal home to die. Her husband and her mother-in-law Mrs. Margaret Bell came to her bedside, and medical skill and unremitting care were powerless to change her condition. An amiable wife, a good mother, a cherished daughter and sister, a kind neighbor and friend has fallen asleep, and leaves a fond husband, father, brothers and a large circle of relatives to mourn her death. She leaves one child to journey through life without a mother's love and care. Her funeral services were held at the Mentz church, Tuesday noon. Rev. G.C. Wood officiated. May He who tempereth the wind to the shorn lamb bless and comfort the bereaved mourners and friends. (*St. Elmo, Cayuga County Independent, July 1884*)

A few weeks later, Delavan and Delia's three-year old daughter, Bertha, died, too, after which the family laid her alongside Delia and Robert. Then Delavan, Margaret, Ferris and Edward returned to the farm and, somehow, forged on.

Lavinia's family had moved to Scranton, Pennsylvania, in 1883 and, upon turning 21 in 1887, Ferris joined them and started a new life there. Edward, in turn, moved to Auburn, leaving Delavan and Margaret to run the farm all on their own, which was a problem. She was now in her early sixties and beginning to slow and he was still struggling with the affliction of his childhood. The situation became so dire by late January 1891 that Delavan hired 23-year-old William Gable to handle the primary farm work in return for room, board and some pay.² Then, after declining still further that summer, Delavan spent the last four months of the year confined to the house. Halfway through the confinement, his father's brother, Milo, died over in Michigan at age 60.

Gable was still with them in 1892 but paying him to do all the work created a cash flow problem that fall. Delavan owned 53 of their 133 acres and Margaret, the remaining 80, so in October, she bought his acreage, which somehow enabled him to continue paying Gable and other bills. Margaret herself, however, was struggling with some unnamed ailment at that point and died in De-

ember – ten days after the thirteenth anniversary of Robert’s death. Her name and birth year already were on the family headstone – a large granite pylon – but Delavan never added her date of death, so her obituary appears to be the only record of when she died, and the only confirmation that she’s buried alongside Robert at the Mentz Church Cemetery.

MONTEZUMA, Dec. 19 (1892) – Amid the closing days of the fleeting year, death has been busy. Thursday morning at 10 o'clock, Dec. 10th, Mrs. Margaret Bell, mother of Delavan Bell, died at her late residence in Throop aged 66 years, 6 months and 24 days. Mrs. Bell has been in feeble health for the past year, but hopes were entertained that she would rally. For many years her son Delavan has been in feeble health and the loving mother has been faithful in the discharge of every duty which his sickness demanded. An excellent woman, a loving mother a cherished sister, a kind neighbor, has closed her life's work and has gone home to her rest. Her husband, Robert Bell, died thirteen years ago and for these years she has managed her farm. She leaves a devoted son, two sisters, Mrs. J. K. Gray, Miss Clara Weston, a brother, Wallace Weston and a large circle of relatives and friends to cherish her memory. The funeral services were held at the Mentz Church Sunday. There was a large attendance. Rev. G. A. Pearsall preached an appropriate sermon. Kind and loving hands laid her body down to rest beside her companion. (*Auburn Weekly News and Democrat, December 19, 1892*)

The next March, the Cayuga County Surrogate Court named Delavan’s brother-in-law, Edward Hamm, as executor of Margaret’s estate. Executors arrange the inventory and disposition of a decedent’s property, along with the payment of outstanding debts. Soon after his appointment, Edward filed what appears to have been a friendly lawsuit against Delavan to resolve some tangled issue with the estate. In the end, Delavan inherited the farm in two distinct chunks: his parents’ original 80 acres in November 1893 and, in February 1894, the 53 acres he had sold to Margaret. The Court then invited Delavan, Edward and some of Margaret’s Weston kin to a session that June to assign the remainder of the estate.

On July 14, six weeks after that final hearing, Delavan married Estella A. “Stella” Gutches in nearby Weedsport. He was 46 by then, twenty years older than the median for grooms, and she was 27, four years older than the median for brides – yet four years younger than Delia would have been, had she survived. Stella’s parents, William and Sarah Gutches, had farmed in Mentz until Sarah’s death in the early 1870s. Shortly afterward, William, a lodge brother of Robert and Delavan, left the children with Sarah’s parents and ran off to Michigan, where he remarried in 1876 and remained the rest of his (one hopes) miserable life. The grandparents, Sarah and Tobias Schermerhorn, then reared Stella and her siblings at their own farm, two miles east of Delavan’s.

The affliction Delavan had endured since childhood and that kept him confined to the house for four months in 1891 appears to have been diabetes. His paternal uncle, Wm. Henry Bell, who, as it happened, was eight years younger than him, later developed the same degenerative disease. Prior to the development of insulin in 1921, Henry – and other diabetics who could afford it – sometimes found temporary relief by wintering in Florida, which, as it happens, is where Delavan and Stella moved four months after their wedding. (*Auburn Argus, November 30, 1894*)

They prepared by selling off all their property in Cayuga County. Stella had inherited 19 acres of her grandparents’ Port Byron farm and, on September 22, 1894, sold them to her sister’s husband Gary Wm. Bell

for just \$35. Delavan, in turn, sold his family's farm – which his parents had bought in 1851 – on December 18 to his second cousin, Robert L. Gilmore. Then, within the next ten days, he and Stella left for what an Auburn paper called their “summer home in Monte Vesta, Florida”.³ The following June (1895), a Cayuga County probate notice clarified that they were in Lake County's town of Monte V_ista (not V_esta), which is now a combination agricultural and recreational area south of the Florida communities of Groveland and Clermont.

On January 21, 1903, seven and a half years after arriving there, they bought a ten-acre plot for just \$75 – an astonishingly low price in comparison with the cost of land back in Cayuga County. The most surprising feature of the transaction, though, is that the deed identified them as residents, not only of Lake County, Florida, but also of Jackson County, Michigan. As a legal document, that carries more weight than, say, a newspaper report, but searches of property records in Michigan's Jackson County have found nothing so far to confirm they ever owned land there. Nor do their names show up in Michigan census reports, local directories, property maps or cemetery lists. In fact, their names have yet to appear among the death notices and cemetery records of any state whatever. Assuming they fell somewhat short of immortality, knowing where and when their lives ended could at least clarify what became of them after 1903. As it is, they just seem to have vanished, as if swallowed up by the Florida swamp ... or its inhabitants.

ENDNOTES FOR ROBERT

¹ We have no way of knowing how Delia herself pronounced her name, but the most common options were DELL-ya, DEEL-ya, and de-LEE-ya. If you can't pronounce “Hamm”, you need more help than we can provide here.

² Auburn News and Daily Bulletin, February 6, 1891.

³ *Auburn Argus*, which published only from 1891 to 1897. “Monte Vesta” was, in fact, “Monte Vista”.

MILO

Milo Bell (1831-1891) and Margaret Wright (1824-1901)

Milo, the first person ever born at the Beach Road farm, arrived January 13, 1831. After following Robert at S. H. No. 4, he continued his schooling through June 1850 and then, between August that year and February 1851, he married his second cousin, Margaret Wright. She had been born outside Belfast, Ireland on August 21, 1824, making her a bit more than six years older than him. Her mother, Margaret *Gilmore* Wright, was a first cousin of Milo's father and had been the child left behind in Ireland when the Gilmores and Bells came to America in 1798. She didn't see them again until she emigrated in 1843 with her husband, Robert, and nine of her own ten children. To distinguish Milo's wife from her mother, and each of them from Robert's wife, Margaret Weston Bell, we're calling Milo's wife "Meg" and her mother "Grandma Wright"; but, to be clear, there is **no evidence whatever** they, in fact, went by those names. (*Cf. Chps 1 and 9*)

Meg gave birth to a son, William ("Bill"), on November 30, 1852, and four months later, Milo's parents, Sally and Will Jr., gave them the same 31-acre farm they had deeded to Robert and Margaret in 1848, even citing the same nominal price of \$1,560. Five months later, Milo and Meg sold it back to them for \$1,000 while paying \$1,716 for the 43-acre farm of James and Susan Gardner – neither of who could read or write. The new farm was on the east side of present-day Lasher Road, halfway between Moody and Henvy and a mile east and half mile north of Robert and Margaret. Their nearest neighbor was Milo's cousin, Orrin Paddock, who farmed a quarter mile north across the road. It was a big step, but by the time his mother died that November, Milo was pondering a far more significant move. (*Cf. p. 35 re: Orrin Paddock*)

John and Samuel Gilmore, who were first cousins of both Milo's father and Meg's mother, had left Cayuga County for the Michigan Territory in 1835, two years before it achieved statehood, and they had been sending letters home ever since, relating their frontier adventures and extolling the region's virtues. Now, 20 years after they arrived, railroads and by-ways crisscrossed the state and there were several large ports on the Great Lakes. The Lower Peninsula alone comprised more than 40,000 square miles of opportunity. So, on November 1, 1854, Milo and Meg sold their 43-acre farm to their mutual cousin Eliza Gilmore and her husband Robert Glasgow for \$1,758 (a profit of \$42), loaded up their belongings and headed west with 23-month-old Bill, Meg's siblings Nancy and Robert Wright, Robert's wife, Lydia, and their son. (*Cf. Chp 9*)

Their aim was to build larger farms on fertile virgin soil, so the most likely scenario is that they 1) loaded their most crucial and/or prized furnishings, equipment and personal belongings into horse or ox drawn covered wagons, 2) took everything west on the Erie Canal from Port Byron to Buffalo, and then 3) transferred to a steamer heading southwest across Lake Erie to the city of Monroe on Michigan's southeastern shore. Trains were available for the final leg, but it was simpler and less expensive just to hitch up the wagons again and set out on the primitive back roads for the Gilmore farm outside the village of Hillsdale in Hillsdale County. If the roads were passable and they had no breakdowns, the final 70-mile trek would have taken some three days. ¹

Cast of Characters – Milo

Milo Bell	(1831-1891)	m (1851/2)	Margaret Wright	(1824-1901)
❖ William Joseph Bell	(1852-1937)	m (1875)	Harriet “Hattie” Smith	(1858-1915)
<u>Then</u> William Joseph Bell		m (1877)	Florence I.(?) Mensch	(1853-1879)
<u>Then</u> William Joseph Bell		m (1888)	Mary Isabel Scrivens	(1863-1929)
• Lynn E. Bell	(1883-1959)	m (1923)	Ida-May Van Auken	(1897-1990)
• Hugh Bell	(1885-1967)	m (1911)	Helen E. Knowland	(1892-1962)
• George M. Bell	(1887-1966)	m (1914)	Charlotte Rutherford	(1895-1975)
• Donald R. Bell	(1893-1920)		Never married	
• Doris M. Bell	(1895-1984)	m (1923)	Glenn B Arnold	(1891-1952)
❖ Samuel Wright Bell	(1859-1888)		Never married; died by drowning ²	
❖ Ordie Jacob Post (adpt)	(1869-1942)	m (1895)	Maggie Best	(1871-1946)

Margaret Gilmore	(1795-1878)	m pre-1819	Robert Wright	(1772-1846)
❖ Mary Jane Wright	(1819-1873)	m <1840>	Samuel R. Moffett	(1805-1889)
❖ Elizabeth Wright	(1820-1884)	m (1850)	Delano A. Edson	(1818-1887)
❖ Robert M. Wright	(1821-1908)	m 1851	Lydia Crofoot	(1833-1892)
❖ Margaret Wright	(1824-1901)	m (1851/2)	Milo Bell	(1831-1891) ^{G1}
❖ Joseph A. Wright	(1827-1897)	m (1862)	Mary Jane Bell	(1840-1918) ^{G2}
❖ John Wright	(1829-1875)	Never married		
❖ William R. Wright	(1831-1919)	m (1868)	Martha M. Hosmer	(1844-1921)
❖ Samuel Wright	(1833-____)	Never married		
❖ Nancy Wright	(1835-1920)	Never married		
❖ Sarah A. Wright	(1837-1867)	Never married		

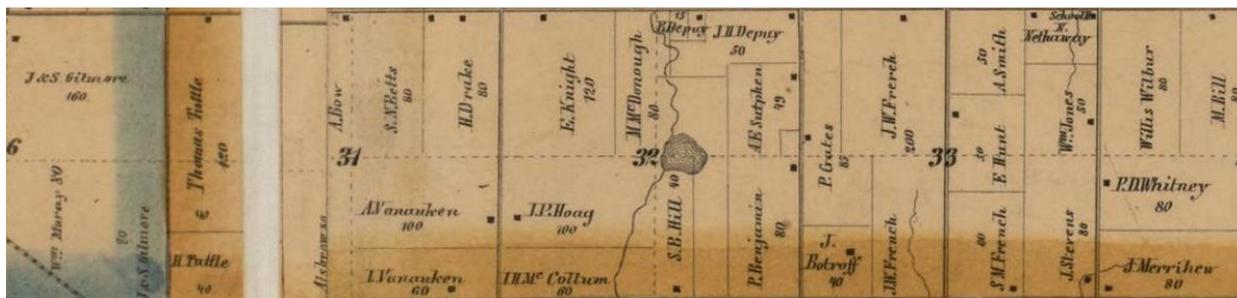
For more on the Gilmore and Wright families, see Chapter 9.

Other Notable Figures

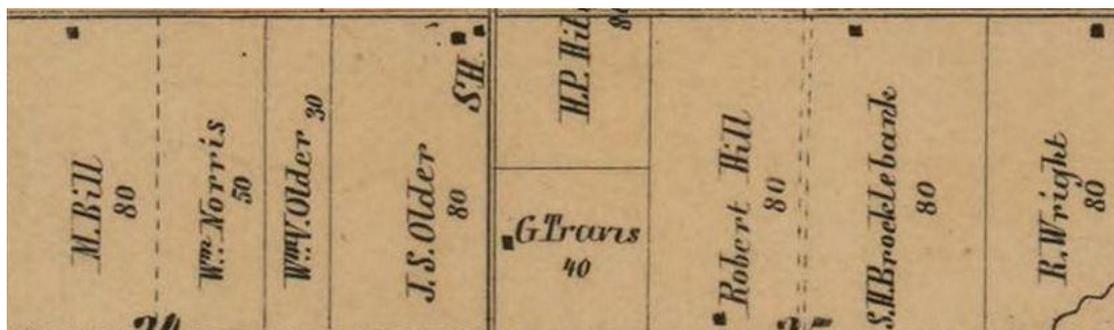
- ❖ William Bell, Jr. (Will Jr.) and Sally Beach – Milo’s birth parents
 - Robert and Margaret Bell – Milo’s brother and his wife
 - ✓ Delavan Bell – Robert and Margaret’s son
 - Electa Bell and Jacob Post – Milo’s eldest sister and her husband
 - ✓ Sally “Bell” Post, Maggie Post, Robert “Ferris” Post, and **Ordie Post**
 - Lavinia Bell and Frank Albro – Milo’s second sister and her husband
 - Mary C. Bell and Frank McKone – Milo’s third sister and her husband
 - Martha S. Bell and P.W. Ross – Milo’s youngest sister and her husband
- ❖ Mary Delano Hoagland Bell – Will Jr.’s second wife
 - William Henry Harrison Bell – Milo’s half-brother
 - Romain Hoagland – Milo’s step-brother
- ❖ John and Samuel Gilmore – Second cousins of both Milo and Meg
- ❖ Cynthia Brown – Milo and Meg’s live-in “servant” and Bill’s “bond agent”
- ❖ Orrin and Mary Paddock – Milo’s cousin and his wife who took in Bell Post
- ❖ Henry “Hank” Taylor and Jane Hinston Taylor – North Adams blacksmith and his wife
- ❖ Lyman G. Morey – classmate and friend of Samuel “SW” Bell
- ❖ Frederick A. Dean – classmate and friend of Samuel “SW” Bell

The Gilmore brothers lived at the southeast corner of what, at the time, was still part of Fayette Township, some 16 miles north of the Ohio border. They had bought 320 acres (half a square mile) sight unseen back in 1835, then made their way to the heavily forested site the following year and built a rudimentary log cabin before clearing enough of the trees to plant crops. By the time the Bells and Wrights showed up, the younger brother, Samuel, was married with two children and living in a house they shared with his brother, John. The Hillsdale House hotel was a mile northwest in the village, but the cost of renting rooms, along with having two toddlers, two wagons full of cargo, and teams of draft animals on their hands make it more likely the newcomers stayed with the Gilmores awhile, even sleeping in the barn if necessary. (Cf. Chp 9)

Milo and Meg then paid \$600 on December 12 (1854) for 80 acres in adjacent Adams Township. The site was three and a half miles east of the Gilmore farm on what is now East Bacon Road (which had nothing to do with pig farming). Nine days later, Robert and Lydia paid the same amount for 80 acres a mile and a half farther east. Neither parcel had any structures, so the families might have joined in building a temporary shelter or two just to get through the winter – another reason for making the journey together. Map Segment 8C from 1857 shows the location of the Gilmore farm (*left*) relative to the Bell farm (*mislabeled “M. Bill” at right*). Segment 8D, enlarged from the same map, then shows the Bell farm in relation to the Wright farm, each of which was a quarter mile wide by a half mile deep. The tiny black squares represent houses, almost all of which were located alongside roads. By the time the map came out, both families had erected permanent houses and outbuildings (e.g., barns, sheds and corn cribs) and cleared enough land to grow more than they themselves consumed (a surplus). Meg’s sister, Nancy, who was 19 when they arrived, lived with Milo and Meg and continued to do so for more than three decades.

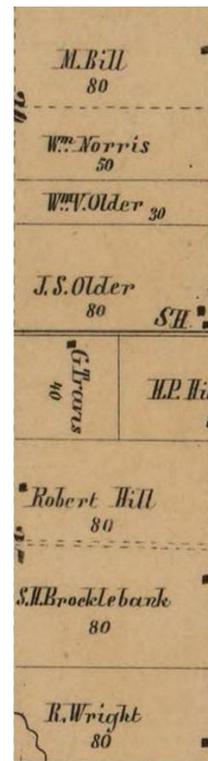


Map Segment 8C – Gilmore farm (far left) and Bell farm (far right) – 1857



Map Segment 8D – Bell farm (far left) and Wright farm (far right) – 1857
(Map 8D is enlarged here for clarity. All map segments are in public domain)

Map Segments 8C and 8D at Approximately the Same Scale



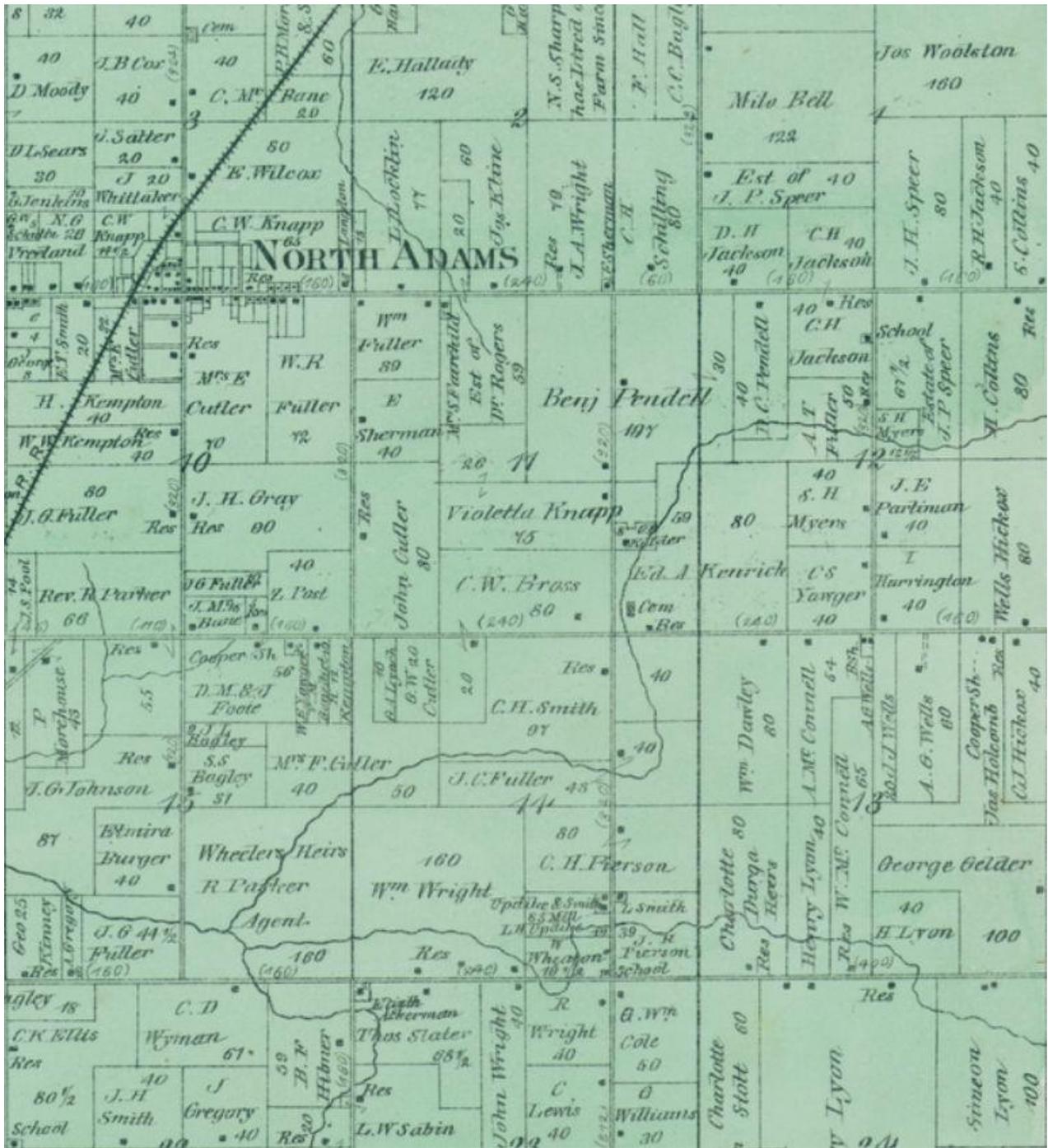
Meg was 35 when she gave birth to a second son, Samuel Wright Bell, in November 1859, the same month their first son, Bill, turned seven. They had named Bill after Milo's father, and both Milo's stepmother, Mary Delano, and his sister, Electa, had named their first sons after their eldest brothers. Meg, however, named this second son after her *youngest* brother, who had been 10 years old when the Wrights arrived from Ireland in 1843. He seems to have died before 1850, though, which would mean Meg named their second son in his memory.

Milo, meanwhile, was delving into real estate, just like his father. He had purchased Robert and Lydia's farm in December 1858 and leased it back to them. Then, two years later, he bought 40 acres from the Sackett family across the road and, again, leased it right back to them. Still later, he bought the Sacketts' remaining 40 acres and leased those back, as well. He and Meg then sold their own farm in March 1863 and moved to one of 82 acres some four miles north. It lay a mile east and half mile north of the village of North Adams and they added another 40 acres in November of the following year, giving them 122 acres in all. Milo listed 88 of those as "improved" (i.e., ready for planting) on the 1865 non-population census, 30 as "woodlands" and the rest as "unimproved" (e.g., untilled pastures, streambeds and wetlands). The Sacketts also had moved to North Adams by then, so Milo and Meg sold the former Sackett farm to Robert and Lydia.

Public relations were an important part of farming, too, beginning with participation in community events such as the annual County Fair. Before his brother Robert's Durham bull won prizes back in Cayuga County, Milo had a bull that took first place at the Hillsdale County Fair three years in a row, 1866-1868. In 1867, he also had a two-year old heifer that won a blue ribbon and, in 1868, a "Best bull calf" and a "Best one-year old heifer". (*Hillsdale Standard, Oct. 16, 1866, Oct. 15, 1867 and Oct. 20, 1868*)

Meg's brother, William, who had been twelve when the Wright family arrived from Ireland, later studied to be a teacher before setting off in the 1850s to explore America from one coast to the other. Then, in late 1859, he joined Meg, Robert and their families in Adams Township, where, on February 4, 1860, he bought 160 acres about halfway between the Bells' first and second farms. He then married, fathered two sons and, in time, built his own farm into one of the most impressive in the township. Within three years of his arrival, Grandma Wright came from New York with Meg's siblings, John and Sarah. Those three then moved in with Milo, Meg, their two sons and Meg's sister, Nancy. Though now home to seven people, the Bells' farmhouse must have felt deserted compared to the Wrights' household of twelve back in Ireland. (*Cf. Chp 9*)

The Civil War was well underway by then, so Robert, William and John all went over to the village (now city) of Hillsdale in June 1863 and registered for the Draft. Robert went on his own and William accompanied John another day. Despite having to register, farmers were exempt from service, so neither Milo nor any of those three had any direct role in the war. That enabled John, who'd been helping his brothers and Milo, to buy 40 acres of his own a year later. His parcel was directly across the road from William's farm and abutted a 40-acre parcel Robert had bought. Map 8E from 1872 shows a house on John's parcel (*bottom center*), but he went on living with Milo and Meg, three miles to the north (*top right*).



Map 8E – North Adams Township, Michigan – 1872
 Atlas of Hillsdale County, Michigan by D.J. Lake
 Michigan County History and Atlases - Public Domain

Milo Bell – Top Right
 J.A. (Joe) Wright – Top Center
 William, John and Robert Wright – Bottom Center

(Females appeared on plat maps only if they held sole title to the property)

In January 1867, four years after arriving with John and Grandma Wright, Meg's sister, Sarah, died at age 29. She was the youngest of Meg's nine siblings and one of four who never married. Their brother Joe was still in New York at the time, but Sarah's death apparently prompted him to join the others in North Adams, leaving just two siblings back east. On April 1, not quite three months after Sarah's death, Joe paid \$5,000 for a 79-acre farm just southwest of the Bells and moved there with his wife, Mary Jane Bell, and their children. Mary Jane was a first cousin to Milo and, like him, a second cousin to the Wrights. If not for the woods at the northeast corner of their land, they could have seen Milo and Meg's place from their own. They were the last of the Wrights to move to Hillsdale County, but more of Milo's own siblings would arrive in Michigan over the next two decades. (*Cf. Map 8E, plus Chapters 8-B, 10 and 11*)

The four Bells were sharing their home in 1870 with Grandma Wright, Nancy, John and a "servant" named Cynthia Brown. That year's census lists Nancy and John as a separate family unit within the house, meaning they lived independently of the others in some way.² Cynthia was the same age as Meg and had come to work for them after divorcing her husband, Benjamin Brown, who still lived with their five children in neighboring Wheatland Township. She and Benjamin remarried that November, but divorced again by 1880, after which she worked for a family near Hanover, ten miles north of North Adams. She was still close enough to the Bells, though, to chaperone their elder son Bill on an odd journey out east in 1877. (*Cf. "Bill" below*)

While still living with the Bells in 1870, Meg's brother, John, worked his own 40 acres three miles south. He kept two oxen and three cows there and produced 185 bushels of grain. Milo, by contrast, had more than 120 sheep and swine that year and reaped three times as much grain from three times as much land; but then, he had Meg, Nancy and two able-bodied sons working along with him. John, moreover, had become involved in a real estate venture, paying \$2,600 in March 1868 for an 80-acre residential tract in what had become the "city" of Hillsdale. The tract was part of a larger housing development and already subdivided into at least thirteen lots when he bought it. Whether he ever built anything there is another matter. The Hillsdale College football stadium and a few other campus buildings now occupy what had been his portion of the site.

The Bells attended the M.E. Church in North Adams, but a fire destroyed all the church's early records, so there's no way to know when they joined or in what capacities they served, e.g., as teachers, trustees or temperance leaders. The village also had a Congregational church, post office, blacksmith shop, hardware, dry goods store and several other businesses, along with



quite a few houses. Then came the railroad. Tracks already crisscrossed the county when some Hillsdale entrepreneurs launched the Detroit, Hillsdale & Indiana Railroad (DHI) in 1869. The new tracks angled across the western end of North Adams, heading northeast to other small towns

and a junction at Manchester, where they connected with a line going east through Ypsilanti into Detroit. The company added a North Adams depot in 1871 and installed telegraph wires all along the route, thereby connecting the village to the larger world through the latest in both transportation and long-distance communication. Those improvements, in turn, inspired a surge in local investment to the benefit of townspeople (“townies”) and farmers alike. Milo, for his part, would soon make extensive use of each system. (*Undated photo above: North Adams Depot, Alan Loftis Collection, michiganrailroads.com. Cf. North Adams on Maps 8E and 8F*)

His sister Electa and her husband, Jacob Post, had followed Milo and Meg to Michigan in the late 1850s and were farming 45 miles north, near the village of Leslie. They already had four children – two daughters and two sons – when Electa gave birth to a third son in the spring of 1874. The child died two months later, though, and then Electa died a month after that. She and Milo had been especially close, so we can be certain he and Meg attended her funeral; but, as Map 8F illustrates, getting from North Adams to Leslie by train was a roundabout adventure. The options were: a) boarding at North Adams (*lower left*) and heading northeast to Manchester, then transferring to one bound northwest through Jackson and on up to Leslie or b) heading southwest to Hillsdale, switching to a train arcing northward to Albion, then changing to an eastbound to Jackson and, again, to a northbound to Leslie. Either route was preferable, though, to wending their way north along well-rutted dirt roads with a horse and buggy. Milo would come to travel whichever route they preferred several times over. (*Cf. “Electa” below*)



Map 8F: Railroad Map of Michigan (partial)
 G.W. & C.B. Colton & Co., Philadelphia, 1876, c1874.
 Library of Congress, Public Domain

Meg's own sister, Mary Jane Moffett (not to be confused with her sister-*in-law*, Mary Jane Bell), had died in Virginia a year earlier. Then, in October 1875, her brother, John, who lived with Milo and her, died at 46, and they laid him alongside Sarah over at the Northlawn Cemetery. The disposition of his subdivision lots over in Hillsdale is long lost, but his 40-acre farm went to his mother and six surviving siblings collectively. The following May (1876), his brother, Robert, who owned the parcel right next to John's, ceded both his acreage and his share of John's farm to Grandma Wright. She, in turn, filed a quit claim in July, ceding all that plus her own share of John's acreage to her daughter, Nancy – the youngest of her surviving children and last of the four who never married. John's other surviving siblings – Elizabeth (in New York), Joe, Meg and William – each ceded their shares to Nancy the same day as Grandma Wright, making Nancy the sole owner of the 80-acre tract (Robert's 40 plus John's 40). It was the only land she ever owned and represented an assurance on the part of her family that she would be financially secure once they were gone. She then went on living with the Bells while drawing an income from the farmers who now rented her acreage. (*Cf. both "John Wright" and "R. Wright" on Map 8E, above*)

In late November that year (1876), Milo's widowed brother-in-law, Jacob Post, drafted a will naming Milo as future executor of his estate and guardian of Jake and Electa's four children: Bell, Maggie, Ferris and Ordie. Upon Jake's death the following January, Milo brought the children to North Adams. Hosting all four would have expanded his household to an unwieldy ten people, so the two girls, Bell and Maggie, might have stayed a half mile to the southwest with Joe and Mary Ann Wright. Milo then used the telegraph and post office in North Adams to arrange homes for the older three with kin back in New York, while he and Meg agreed to rear Ordie themselves. Because Ordie was the youngest, their own commitment promised to be the longest – and it was. (*See Probate Court Order, next page. Also cf. "Electa", below*)

The inventory of the Post estate didn't begin until April, so Milo might have escorted the older three children to New York in February or March, taking Ordie along so they'd have more time together before going off to their separate homes. There were no kin left from their father's side in Cayuga County, so all those awaiting the children's arrival were from Electa's side, either by birth or marriage. Milo's youngest sister, Martha, is the only one we can be certain the children already knew because she had visited Jake and the children the previous November. Lavinia and Mary C might also have visited at some point, and the children had heard stories about others and seen some of their photographs; but it's highly doubtful they had ever met their grandfather, Will Jr., or uncles, Robert and W.H. (Henry). Meg's sister, Elizabeth Wright Edson, also was still living in Cayuga County at the time, so Meg might have gone along for a rare visit with her.

The four Post children were the center of attention when they arrived at the Auburn train station, but those who welcomed them into their homes were the saints. Milo's cousin and former neighbor, Orrin Paddock, took in 17-year-old Bell, Aunt Martha "adopted" 13-year-old Maggie, and Ferris, who was 11, went home with his namesake, Uncle Robert. It was an awkward, perhaps even frightening, time for the children, but the reception assured them they were among people who cared about them and that their lives would go on. (*Cf. "Robert" and "Electa" in Part A, plus "Mary C" and "Martha" in Part B*)

State of Michigan,
County of Ingham } ss.

Probate Court for said County.

In the Matter of the Estate of Jacob Post Deceased.

Know all Men by these Presents, That we Milo Bell ^{30 days} ~~three months~~ Oliver Edwards and Theodore H. Stettin ^{survives}

within the State of Michigan, are holden, and stand firmly bound and obliged unto

W. B. Chatterton Esq., Judge of Probate in and for the said County of Ingham in the full sum of Five Thousand

Dollars, lawful money of the United States of America, to be paid unto the said

W. B. Chatterton, his successors in the said office, or assigns, to the true payment whereof we do bind ourselves, and each of us, our and each of our heirs, executors and administrators, jointly and severally, for the whole, and in the whole, firmly by these presents. Sealed with our seals:

Dated the 17th day of April Anno Domini one thousand eight hundred and seventy seven

Whereas, the above bounden Milo Bell has been appointed Executor of the Estate of Jacob Post late of said County deceased: Now the condition of this present obligation is such, That if the above bounden Milo Bell

shall well and truly perform, observe and keep the conditions following, to wit:

1st. That he shall make and return to the Probate Court aforesaid, within ^{30 days} ~~three months~~ a true and perfect inventory of all the goods, chattels, rights, credits and estate of the said deceased, which shall come to his possession or knowledge, or to the possession of any other person for him

2d. That he shall administer according to law all the goods, chattels, rights, credits and estate of the said deceased, which shall, at any time, come to his possession, or to the possession of any other person for him and out of the same pay and discharge all debts and charges chargeable on the same, or such dividends thereon as shall be ordered and decreed by the said Probate Court aforesaid.

3d. That he shall render a true and just account of his administration to the Probate Court aforesaid, within one year, and at any other time when required by such Court: And

4th. That he shall perform all orders and decrees of the Probate Court aforesaid, by the said Milo Bell to be performed in the premises: Then the before written obligation to be void and of none effect, or else to abide and remain in full force and virtue.

Signed, Sealed and Delivered in Presence of

Milo Bell
Oliver Edwards
Theodore H. Stettin



Ingham County, ss.
County, holden at Mason on the 17th day of April A. D. 18 77

At a session of the Probate Court in and for said

I have examined and do approve of the foregoing bond, and order the same to be filed and recorded in the Probate Office of said County.

W. B. Chatterton
Judge of Probate.

In his dual role as executor and guardian, Milo also paid Jacob Post's outstanding bills and managed the estate on behalf of the children. That included leasing out the farm in Leslie, investing income from that and other sources, paying for the children's food, clothing and shelter, and sending them allowances until they turned 21, died or, in the case of the females, married. The 1877 court document above outlines Milo's obligations as executor, and the account statement below (the last of many before Ordie turned 21 in October 1890) lists reimbursements to Milo and another person for guardian-related activities. The reimbursement statement must have been prepared by a clerk because the handwriting differs from that on Milo's unrelated request for a receipt (*bottom*). Compare, for example, the capital 'M' and lower case 'e' in "Milo Bell" from each document.

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS—Executor, Administrator and Guardian—11-03-01: 612

In Account with the Estate of *Jelly B. Post, Maggie Child*
and Robert F. Post, Orla J. Post, Minors Cr.

	Dr	Guardian	Cr
1890 Milo Bell Guak			
Oct 22 To amount in his hands at date of last account (April 22 nd 1890)	\$95.71	By P ^r paid out for said Minors as follows: Building (annual payment)	\$1.13
Oct 21 To Recd. of J. Ralph for m ^o ly paid up to this date	50 ^c	Oct 20-22 By paid R.R. fare to Mass. & return	\$2.00
	\$145.71	Two days time Oct 21 st & 22 nd	2 ⁰⁰
		Expense on first settlement	50.3
		Oct. 22 nd 1890	1.50
		22 nd Expense time &	
		27 R.R. fare for bill at first settlement	5.70
			\$12.23

Mr Miller I send you seventy five cents to day please send me a receipt
 Milo Bell

Grandma Wright was 82 when she died at Milo and Meg's farm in June 1878 – almost exactly eighty years after her parents had left her behind in Ireland. She had outlived her husband, four of her ten children and at least three grandchildren when her family laid her alongside her son, John, and daughter, Sarah, at the Northlawn Cemetery. The year after that, Milo's brother, Robert, died back in New York, followed by his father, Will Jr., in 1881 – and Milo returned for each funeral. The 1880 Census enumerator, meanwhile, had put a check alongside Meg's name under the category "Maimed, crippled or bedridden", and we have no idea how that applied to her.

Then, in 1883, 23-year-old Bell Post died in New York. Her sister, Maggie, was back in Michigan by then, having moved to Ypsilanti with Martha's family the year before. Ypsilanti was 70 miles northeast of North Adams by rail, so Milo and Ordie detoured there to collect her on their way to the funeral. Martha evidently remained behind with her three small children, but Maggie's beau and future husband, George Hadden, was still in Cayuga County to offer solace in the loss of her sister. Bell's obituary mentioned only Milo, Lavinia and Henry by name, but there's no doubt her three siblings and other family members also attended. Afterward, Milo, Maggie and Ordie accompanied Bell's remains back to Leslie, where both Milo's family and Martha's joined them in laying her alongside her parents. She was the last of Electa's family interred there.

Once home, Milo resumed his occasional forays into North Adams for supplies and chats with townies and other farmers. One of the townies was Henry "Hank" Taylor, a tall, muscular blacksmith who had been born in Virginia in 1848 to an enslaved woman and her owner. Upon arriving in North Adams in the late 1870s, he worked with another blacksmith and boarded with his family. Then, in 1881, he married Jane Hinston, a former slave from Georgia, and they moved with her young son to a home of their own. Hank, Jane and another man were the only former slaves among the village's 433 residents and, along with Jane's son, the only residents listed on the 1880 census as anything other than "White". They also could neither read nor write. Jane gave birth to a daughter in the early 1890s, then divorced Hank in 1901 and moved to Detroit. There's no document linking the Taylors directly to the Bells, but in a community that small, they certainly knew one another. Hank shoed farmers' horses and repaired their equipment, and Milo socialized with townies whenever he stopped at village stores or worshipped on Sunday. Unless they moved elsewhere, farmers and townies also became permanent neighbors at the Northlawn Cemetery, where Hank, Milo and most of Milo's household ended up. Hank was well-known for a lot of reasons, but especially, for his astounding strength, as related here:

A large man, about six feet four inches tall and all muscle, Hank weighed between 260 and 270 pounds and wore a size 14 boot. He was a good citizen and probably the largest man in Hillsdale County at the time. In 1880, while several people were gathered around the village hardware store, J.M. Williams, the proprietor turned to Hank, the blacksmith, and said, "If you can carry that round heating stove out of here, I'll give it to you." When Taylor was ready to leave, he threw his long powerful arms around the belly of the stove, lifted up the awkward three to four hundred pounds of metal and carried it home. Another time, Taylor took eight hundred pounds of iron upon his back and shoulders and carried it from the depot to his blacksmith shop, a distance of about 20 rods [i.e., 6/10 of a mile]. He could pick up an anvil, tuck it under his arm and walk off as though it were a box of crackers. He was [60]-years-old when he died in 1909 and was buried in the [Northlawn] cemetery. (*Marie Davis, Hillsdale Daily News, November 10, 1984*)

While all that was unfolding, Milo and Meg's sons, William and Samuel, had grown to manhood and were pursuing adventures of their own. Milo and Meg had followed Irish tradition in naming William after Milo's father – with his middle name, Joseph, a tribute, perhaps, to Meg's brother. There's no documentation of him using the diminutive "Bill", but it was in common use by then and helps to distinguish him here from the multitude of other Williams in the extended family. Samuel, on the other hand, set himself apart from other Samuels by using just his first and middle initials, "SW" – a fad among younger men of his generation. For example, his uncle, William Henry Harrison Bell, who was just three years older, often identified himself as "WH". At least two of SW's close friends also went by their first and middle initials. (*Cf. below*)

The age gap between Bill and SW, along with the cultural diversity of their three-generation Irish-American home, contributed to them having quite different personalities, interests and life trajectories. Bill's aim was to become a family farmer like his father and most other men in his extended family, but the industrial revolution was making family farms ever harder to sustain. He also had to try three times before he had a family of his own. SW, on the other hand, was more interested in literature, education and exploration. Like Bill, he never quite realized his grand vision, but he certainly pursued it.

Bill launched his own quest by marrying Harriet ("Hattie") M. Smith on February 25, 1875. He was 22 at the time and she, the eldest of seven children, had turned 17 just five days earlier. Her parents, Charles H. and Mary Smith, farmed a bit north of the village and, like the Bells, attended the North Adams M.E. Church. The current pastor there, the Rev. E.D. Bacon (again, no relation to pig farming), officiated the wedding, with a couple named Lewis and Carolyn Updyke serving as witnesses. It was common at the time to hold first weddings in the home of the bride's parents, but they might have held theirs just about anywhere. Apart from Hattie's age (or, possibly, because of it) the most notable aspect of the marriage itself was its brevity. It was over almost before the pastor's "Amen" had faded. Whether the dissolution came through annulment or divorce is an open question, but they both eventually remarried.

Having evidently exhausted the local supply of eligible and marginally adult females for the moment, Bill extended his renewed search for a mate a little beyond sparsely populated North Adams to a region called "North America". Long before the advent of online dating sites like Tinder, Bumble and Hinge, men and women desiring to improve their marital prospects sometimes turned to matrimonial agencies, newspapers and magazines. Advertisements ranged from terse solicitations to poetic invitations to join in lifelong romantic adventure. Some even included photos. Here are two from that era.

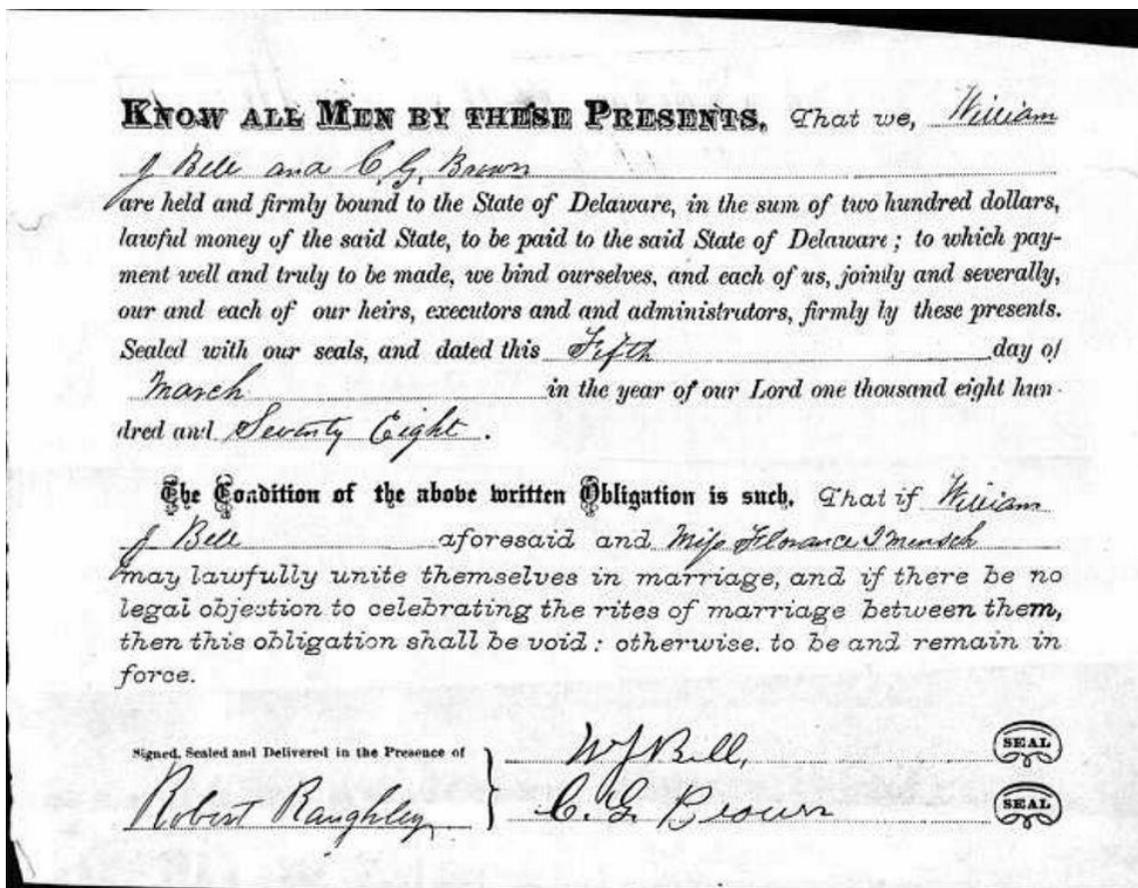
A gentleman of 26 years of age ... wishes to correspond with a refined and beautiful young Protestant lady of about 20 years; good character; references exchanged; view to matrimony. This is no humbug.

I am young and lonely, have no fortune save my good looks and a warm heart. Any gentleman who could appreciate these few qualities will find me an affectionate and devoted wife. Do your best for me.

Whatever method Bill used seems to have worked because, in early March 1878, he took a train 625 miles east to the state of Delaware in the hope of marrying a woman he had never met. His cousin, Delavan, did something similar seven months later. Cynthia Brown, the family's former live-in servant, went along as Bill's "bond agent" and character reference. The intended bride, 25-year-old Florence Mensch, lived with her parents and six siblings on a farm outside the village of Camden, not far from Dover – and it's possible she and/or her parents initiated whatever communication brought the couple together. "Mensch", as it happens, is a Yiddish word for "a person of integrity and honor".



After meeting Florence and her family, Bill and Cynthia paid a \$200 bond to the State of Delaware, whereupon a government official posted a notice of the impending marriage in the local papers, tacitly inviting anyone with legal objections to come forward prior to the event. If no one raised a fuss, the wedding would go forward and the bond returned, which is what happened. The couple married on March 10, then headed to North Adams by train – with Cynthia tagging along as a kind of honeymoon chaperone. It was akin to going on a promising blind date while his mother watched and listened from the rear seat. Very romantic. (Photo above: Delaware RR, George Gardner Rockwood, 1870, public domain)



Marriage Return.

TO THE RECORDER OF KENT COUNTY:

In compliance with the provisions of an Act of the General Assembly of the State of Delaware, I return the following Certificate of a Marriage solemnized by me:

Full name of Husband,	William J. Bell.
Residence,	North Adams, Hillsdale Co., Michigan
Age when Married,	4 Twenty Six
Full maiden name of Wife,	Florence L. Mensch.
Residence,	Near Camden Kent Co Del.
Age when Married,	Twenty Five.
Time when parties were Married,	March 10 th 1878.
Color of Parties,	White
Name of person who solemnized Marriage,	Rev. E. H. Dieffenbacher
Ceremony employed,	Of The Reformed Church in U.S.
Wyoming, Del. A. D. 1878. E. H. Dieffenbacher	

Florence became pregnant later that year (presumably after Cynthia went home), but on March 17, 1879 – a week to the day after their first wedding anniversary and a few weeks after she turned 26 – she died giving birth. ³ There’s no evidence she delivered a live infant, so she might have died from complications related to an early-stage stillbirth. Her grave at the Northlawn Cemetery is a short distance from those of Bill’s other family members, and the marker includes no reference to a child.

Another two and a half years passed before Bill married his third wife, Mary Isabel Scrivens, on October 17, 1881. He was 28 by then and she was 18, the second youngest of his three brides and the most distant from him in age. In fact, she had been just twelve years old when he married his first wife, seventeen-year-old Hattie. Mary’s parents, Jennie and George Scrivens, had migrated from England to Ohio, where she was born, and then north to Michigan, where they had three more children. By 1880, her father, who had an unspecified disability, was working as a tailor in North Adams and 17-year-old Mary was teaching school. The then-current Methodist pastor, Morton Carrel, officiated at the wedding, with Mary’s parents as witnesses. Mary then moved to the Bells’ farm and, over time, gave birth to five children there: Lynn Everett (b 1883), Hugh Samuel (b 1885), George Milo (b 1887), Donald Richardson (b 1893), and Doris (b 1895). ⁴ In addition to the celebration of those births, though, the larger family endured some painful losses.

On Wednesday, August 8, 1888 – the year after they welcomed their third grandson – Milo and Meg lost their own son, SW, at age 28. The Hillsdale Historical Library includes an undated and unattributed clipping from a local paper that says, “A telegram was received here on Sunday stating that S.W. Bell, youngest son of Milo Bell Esq., of Adams, had been drowned in Northern Michigan. Since then, we learn his body had been found.” As it happened, SW and a friend both drowned in Burt Lake (then called Burts’ Lake), 20 miles east of Petoskey (cf. *Map 8G*). The local paper, *The Petoskey Record*, was a weekly, so details didn’t emerge until August 15. (*See attached article, below*) ⁵



Map 8G: Petoskey and Northern Tip of Michigan, including Burt Lake
 Railroad Map of Michigan – O.W. Gray and Son, Philadelphia – 1876 (public domain)
 The large body of water to the left is Lake Michigan and the one at upper right is Lake Huron

In addition to SW, the key figures in the story were Lyman Morey, F.A. Dean and F.A.’s sister, Agnes. The three men had been classmates in the Literary Department at the University of Michigan. The school’s “General Catalogue of Officers and Students, 1837-1890” lists SW as a “non-graduate” (i.e., underclass student) for 1885-1886. A 1902 supplement then included these separate notations: “Samuel Wright Bell...drowned in Bear (*sic*) Lake, Mich. Aug. 8, 1888” and “Lyman Gideon Morey 80-81 drowned in Burt Lake, Cheboygan Co., Mich., Aug. 8, 1888.”

The *Petoskey Record* article, however, makes clear that both SW and Lyman drowned in Burt Lake, which is close to 10 miles long and up to five miles wide. ⁶ Whoever entered Samuel’s information in the UM General Catalog apparently misread a reference to “Burt Lake” as “Bear Lake.” The Petoskey reporter himself got a few things wrong, though, saying for instance that Lyman’s “people” lived in St. Johns, a town north of Lansing, when, in fact, he was from Lima, New York. His widowed mother and sister were still living there at the time of his death and they buried him near his father in the Oak Ridge Cemetery outside of town.

U of M's General Catalog lists F.A. Dean as both "Frederick Alva Dean, '84-86. A.B. (Harvard Univ.) 1887" and "Frederick Dean ('87), Cong. Clergyman. Cameron, Mo". After earning his divinity degree from Harvard, he completed another degree at U of M while serving a church in Clayton, Michigan, 20 miles southeast of North Adams. The "Mrs. Dean" in the article was, in fact, his unmarried sister, Effie Agnes Dean, a school teacher who went by "E. Agnes Dean". At the time of the drowning, she and another unmarried sister, Lelia Florence Dean (who went by "Flora L."), were living at the intersection of Michigan and Waukazoo streets in Petoskey, which is on the shore of Lake Michigan. FA, SW and Lyman had been staying with the sisters while exploring some of the many inland waterways nearby when the drownings occurred. Milo and Meg did not believe in showy monuments, so after burying SW at the Northlawn Cemetery, they marked his grave with a simple stone, reading: "S.W. Bell 1859-1888".

Three years later, on October 24, 1891, Milo himself died at age 60, apparently from a heart attack. Back in New York, a note in the *Auburn Argus* said, "Milo Bell, a former resident of [Montezuma], son of the late Col. Wm. Bell, and for many years a well-known and highly esteemed citizen of Michigan, died very suddenly at his late home last week of heart disease." The funeral would have been a big deal in little North Adams, attended by all the Wrights, his neighbors, friends, and three of his surviving siblings – Mary C, Martha and Henry, all of whom had moved to Michigan by then. Lavinia and Ferris, on the other hand, were 600 miles east in Scranton, and Ordie and Maggie, 600 miles west in Minneapolis, so it's doubtful any of them managed to be there. Ordie would have had a strong desire to return, but had just started a new job and it's highly unlikely his employer granted him time off to attend an uncle's funeral in another state. If any of Electa's children made it to the service, it was probably Maggie.

Gary Wm. Bell

THE AFTERMATH OF WEDNESDAY'S GALE.

Two Promising Young Men Lost on Burt Lake.

Mr. S. W. Bell, of North Adams, Mich., and Mr. Lyman Morey, late telegraph editor of the *Minneapolis Evening Journal*, whose people live in St. Johns, have been for some weeks boarding with Mrs. Dean, corner Michigan street and Waukazoo avenue, the former being a friend and classmate of Mr. F. A. Dean. Last week they made preparations for a trip through the inland route, and up St. Mary's River to the "Soo," in a small sail boat belonging to Capt. Atkins. They left Oden, on Crooked Lake, on Wednesday forenoon, and were seen to make a landing on Indian Point, west side of Burt Lake, about 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

The young men were inexperienced and although the wind was high, being under the lee of the timber on the west shore, they probably had no idea of the force of the wind further down the lake, and the heavy sea their small clinker boat would have to encounter. At all events they got into the boat again, and got away with the wind on the starboard quarter. They were observed later far down the lake in a heavy sea with both sails still up, and then were lost to view. On Thursday the boat was found on the east shore about two miles from the outlet into Indian River, badly stove on the rocks, but with some articles belonging to the young men still in her.

Mr. F. A. Dean chartered a tug on Saturday and spent the day making a careful hunt through Burt Lake. He identified the boat and property of the unfortunate young men, but could gain no tidings of them from the people living on the shores of the lake. It is therefore a sad certainty that they were capsized, and, though both good swimmers, being unable to keep their hold on the boat in the heavy sea running, became exhausted and went down.

There are times when the coolest, bravest, and most experienced sailors are overwhelmed in the boiling waters; but such a loss as that of these young men is wholly due to ignorance and rashness that is born of ignorance.

Parties of young men desiring to go on an expedition like that planned by these young gentlemen should have a competent sailor, acquainted with the waters to be traversed, and able to gauge the weather accurately.

LATER.—Since writing above the bodies of both the unfortunate young men have floated ashore and been recovered by their friends. They were taken to Cheboygan to be embalmed.

Sometime after Milo's demise, now widowed Meg and her sister Nancy moved into the village, where they were sharing a house in 1900 with their brother, Robert, who himself had been widowed. Meg died a year later of "chronic dyspepsia" and her family held her funeral right there at the house. Someone paid \$75 for a casket and her burial alongside Milo at the Northlawn Cemetery; but, as with Robert Bell's wife, Margaret, back in New York, no one seems to have arranged for a grave marker. Although carefully etched stones identify the graves of Milo, SW and Florence, as well as those of Meg's mother, siblings and in-laws, there is nothing to show that she lies there, as well. Like his cousin, Delavan, Bill just seems to have ignored the issue.

He might have been focusing instead on the fact that neither his parents nor brother left any wills. Milo, Jacob Post's executor, had been acutely aware of the need to provide clear instructions for the disposition of an estate, but evidently put it off on the assumption he would live longer than he did. As a result, a plat map published more than two years after his death labeled the farm, "Milo Bell Est.", meaning no one else had yet become the legal owner. Nor have any probate records yet surfaced showing Meg took possession. Shortly after her death in 1901, Bill filed a claim in Probate Court seeking official recognition as sole heir to his brother and parents, and the Court granted his claim. The court order, though, doesn't include a precise description of the property, so there's no way to know exactly what acreage was at issue. Bill sold a small parcel in 1906, but the ultimate disposition of the larger 120-acre farm is unclear. ⁷

In 1904 – three years after Meg's death and thirteen after Milo's – Bill, Mary, their children and Mary's sister, Minnie Scrivens, all moved to 119 North Hamilton Street in Ypsilanti, a house that remains standing today. It was a few blocks north of where Bill's aunt, Martha Bell Ross, lived with her family, and both households attended the Ypsilanti M.E. Church, which was considerably larger than those in North Adams and Montezuma.

Now in his fifties, Bill had acquired a wide range of mechanical and bookkeeping skills on the farm, and had been intrepid enough to travel all the way to Delaware to find a bride in 1878, but in Ypsilanti, he held only low-paying, unskilled jobs. As of 1910, he was a night watchman for the renowned Ypsilanti Underwear Company, which made one-piece union suits, called "Ypsilantis", that covered wearers from neck to toe. One of its slogans read, "If love grows cold, do not despair. There is always Ypsilanti Underwear". The company also had a landmark billboard featuring a curvaceous 15-foot woman in her tight-fitting Ypsilantis. It overlooked the main railroad tracks through the city and became a renowned attraction for passengers – except, of course, for proper Methodists, who considered it scandalous.

Four of Bill and Mary's five children eventually married and moved on, but Donald died unmarried in 1920 at age 26 or 27. Their eldest son, Lynn, played professional baseball for a while and his children became national lawn tennis (i.e., badminton) champions. While their heirs were spreading out, Bill and Mary remained right there on North Hamilton Street. They had been married 48 years when she died at 66 on August 2, 1929, and Bill followed on July 24, 1937, at 84. The J.E. Moore funeral home handled both services and buried them at Ypsilanti's Highland Cemetery. ⁸

ENDNOTES FOR MILO

- ¹ History of the Great Lakes, Vol. 1, J.B. Mansfield, ed., Chicago: J.H. Beers & Co., 1899. “A Transcription for the Maritime History of the Great Lakes”, Walter Lewis and Brendon Baillod. <https://www.maritimehistoryofthegreatlakes.ca/documents/hgl/default.asp2003>.
- ² United States Census Bureau. 1870 Census Instructions to Enumerators: The following text is from page 13 of Measuring America: The Decennial Censuses From 1790 to 2000. 1870 Questionnaire – Instructions to Marshals and Assistants (Schedule I – Inhabitants): “Numbering – Dwelling houses and families will be numbered consecutively, in order as visited ... By ‘dwelling house’ is meant a house standing alone, or separated by walls from other houses in a block. Only such buildings are to be reckoned as dwelling houses as have been used as the entire habitation of a family ... Families: By “family” (column 2) is meant one more persons living together and provided for in common. A single person, living alone in a distinct part of a house, may constitute a family; while, on the other hand, all the inmates of a boarding house or a hotel will constitute but a single family, though there may be among them many husbands with wives and children. Under whatever circumstances, and in whatever numbers, people live together under one roof, and [eat] at a common table, there is a family in the meaning of the law.
- ³ Michigan Death Index, Hillsdale County, 1875.
- ⁴ Hillsdale County Marriage Index 1835-2000, and the “Official Marriage Records of Hillsdale County”. The two sources disagree on Mary’s age and middle name.
- ⁵ “Petoskey Record”, Thursday, August 15, 1888. The Hillsdale newspaper’s use of “Esq.” after Milo’s name was purely honorific and might have referred to a position in freemasonry. There’s no evidence at hand, though, that Milo followed his father and brother into the masonic order.
- ⁶ “General Catalogue of Officers and Students, 1837-1890”, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1891 and 1902.
- ⁷ Register of Deeds, Hillsdale County, Michigan, 1835-1928.
- ⁸ See 1910 and 1920 Census and Atlas of Hillsdale County, Michigan, 1919.

ELECTA

Electa Bell (1833-1874) and Jacob Post (1827-1877)

Sally and Will's eldest daughter, Electa, celebrated her 20th birthday in July 1853, and her life changed dramatically before she was thirty. Her mother, Sally Beach, died that November and her father remarried the following June. Then she herself married two days before Christmas 1854 and moved to the farm of her groom, Jacob Post, who lived with his widowed mother. His mother seems to have died within the next few years because, by 1859, they had relocated without her to an 85-acre farm outside the village of Leslie in Michigan's Ingham County. It was some twenty miles south of Lansing and 45 north of Milo and Meg down in North Adams.

Electa gave birth there in March 1860 to a daughter they named "Sally Bell" after Electa's mother. They called her "Bell" right from the start, to which faulty record keepers sometimes added a final 'a' or 'e'. A second daughter, Maggie Electa, showed up in January 1864 and, two years after that, a son, Robert Ferris. The name "Maggie" honored Jake's mother and "Robert" was a tribute to Electa's eldest brother. They seem to have pulled his middle name, Ferris, out of a hat, but that's what everyone called him throughout his life. When a second son arrived in 1869, they baptized him "Ordis Jacob", which soon became "Ordie". He himself so preferred the latter to the odious "Ordis", he eventually had it inscribed on his tombstone; but then, he didn't have a lot of options. Variations like "O Jacob" and "Jake Jr." had their own drawbacks. ¹

Their farm was five miles northwest of the village, at the intersection of what are now Tuttle Road and Plains Road. The current farm on that site includes a modern house and outbuildings and appears to be thriving in a bucolic setting that, apart from having a lot more cropland and a lot less woodland, has changed little over the past 130 years. As of 1870, the Posts had 45 "improved" acres and 40 wooded, worth some \$3,200 in all. Their \$600 of livestock consisted of four horses, two "milch" cows and five other cattle, 18 sheep and six swine. They also paid someone \$30 for labor that year (the price of a saddle), and their crops produced 150 bushels of wheat, 180 of Indian corn, and 175 of oats, which were about average for the neighborhood.

Another boy arrived in February 1874 but died unnamed on May 13 of "fits". Prior to the 20th century, infant mortality was so high that people often considered a newborn as more of an 'it' than a person until the child lived long enough to receive a name at baptism, which this one did not. ² Then, on June 11, Electa herself died of "paralysis", which is as ambiguous as "fits". Milo might have been the only sibling present when they laid her beside her unnamed child at Leslie's Woodlawn Cemetery. Then, two and a half years on, Jake learned that he, too, was terminally ill. Electa's youngest sister, Martha, was visiting from New York when a lawyer drew up Jake's will on November 21, 1876, and she signed as a witness. After Jake died on January 22nd, a young farmer named Mull Armstrong transported the remains into town and laid him alongside Electa. As before, Milo and his family might have been the only relatives there apart from Jake's children, but this time, he also was there as executor of Jake's estate and guardian of the four children. Jake's will and a few other documents appear below. (*Cf. "Milo", above*). ³

Cast of Characters - Electa

<u>Electa Bell</u>	<u>(1833-1874)</u>	<u>m (1854)</u>	<u>Jacob Post</u>	<u>(1827-1877)</u>
❖ Sally Bell Post	(1860-1883)		Never married	
❖ Maggie Electa Post	(1864-1940)	m (1887)	George R. Hadden	(1862-1950)
• Ruth G.R. Hadden	(1898-1910)			
• Kathryn Hadden (adpt)	(1905-1988)	m (1937)	Guy E. Allen	(1894-1979)
❖ Robert “Ferris” Post	(1866-1913)	m (1891)	Carrie I. Sayer	(1870-1954)
• Belle M. Post	(1892-1965)	m <1919>	Willard F. Jones	(1890-1958)
• Mary Sayer Post	(1894-1971)	m (1914)	Col. John R. Harris	(1894-1971)
• Robert J. Post	(1897-1972)	m <1922>	Irene Richter	(1898-1990)
❖ Ordis “Ordie” Jacob Post	(1869-1942)	m (1895)	Margaret Alelia Best	(1871-1947)
• Dorothy Isabel Post	(1896-1972)	m (1918)	Earl R. Sawyer	(1893-1971)
• Howard Hadden Post	(1899-1969)	m (1922)	Gertrude Mason	(1905-2006)
• Wayne Ronald Post	(1902-1981)	m (1929)	Helen Shirley	(1905-1998)
• Florence Alberta Post	(1903-1969)	m (1928)	Frank R. Carlson	(1906-1976)
• Merton Audean Post	(1908-1975)	m (1936)	Helen L. Brown	(1912-2008)
❖ Unnamed Infant Son	(1874-1874)		Died at two months	

Other Notable Figures

- ❖ William Bell, Jr. (Will Jr.) and Sally Beach – Electa’s birth parents
 - Robert and Margaret Bell – Electa’s eldest brother and his wife who took in Ferris Post
 - ✓ Delavan Bell – Robert and Margaret’s son
 - Milo and Margaret Bell – Electa’s second brother and his wife who took in Ordie Post
 - Lavinia Bell and Frank Albro – Electa’s eldest sister and her husband
 - Mary C. Bell and Frank McKone – Electa’s second sister and her husband
 - Martha S. Bell and P.W. Ross – Electa’s youngest sister and her husband who took in Maggie Post
 - William Henry Harrison Bell – Electa’s half-brother by Mary Delano
- ❖ Orrin and Mary Paddock – Electa’s cousin and his wife who took in Bell Post

I Jacob Post of Leslie Township
County of Ingham and State of Michigan
being of sound mind do make this my last
will and Testament in manner following
to wit

First I appoint Miss Bell of North Adams
Township County of Hillsdale and State of
Michigan my sole Administrator and request
that she be appointed Guardian of my children
after my decease.

Second I give and bequeath unto my children
if they shall remain in general good health equal
shares of all the property both real and personal
of which I shall die seized after paying my
just debts and funeral expenses except the
provisions made in the clauses following.

Third In case any one of my children shall
become an invalid it is my wish and I do
will that should more than one or all of them
become so dependent that they need it that the
entire income or proceeds of my property both real
and personal be appropriated to his her or their
benefit and further if the entire of my income or
proceeds of the property of which I shall die seized
shall not be sufficient then in that case I wish

and so will that a portion of the same or even the whole property be sold and expended for his her or their benefit as the case may be.

Fourthly I give and bequeath unto my two girls Sally Belle and Maggie Thota all the wearing apparel now in or that may be in my possession at my decease also six ^{to} be divided equally between the two above mentioned girls the property last mentioned being the property left by my wife my deceased also all the carpet that may be in the house.

Fifthly I give and bequeath all of my wearing apparel unto my two Boys Robert Curtis and Ordas J.

This will is made and written upon one sheet of paper signed and witnessed by etc this the twenty first day of November in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and seventy six

Martha S. Ross
David D. Boston

Jacob Post

Differences between the formation of certain letters in the text of Jake's will and the formation of the same letters in the signatures at the end suggest that someone other than Jacob wrote the text on his behalf, after which he and the two witnesses signed it. One of the witnesses was Electa's youngest sister, Martha S. (Bell) Ross (cf. bottom left). She was still living in Montezuma, New York at the time, but apparently had come to Leslie upon learning the seriousness of Jake's illness. She herself had been five years old when her mother, Sally Beach, died in 1853, so she might have made the journey to Michigan, in part, to help her nieces and nephews deal with the anticipatory grief of losing Jake and the accompanying uncertainty of what would become of them. What's extraordinary is that she made the 450-mile journey by train while caring for a two-year old daughter and pregnant with another. It speaks to the depth of love and mutual support shared among the children of Sally and Will Jr. – bonds that continued beyond death and endured many tests over the course of that decade.

OFFICE OF
J. F. BROWN
 PHYSICIAN AND SURGEON.

ESLIE, MICH. June 8th 1877

To
 Dr.

Jacob Post
 J. F. Brown

Professional services as follows:

Twelve visits daughter	@ \$2.00 -	24.00
One do. self	" " "	3.
One Prescription do.	amt -	<u>50</u>
		26.50

Dec. 21 st / 76. By 127 1/2 lbs Pork @ 6 1/4¢ =	<u>7.97</u>
Balance due.	18.53

STATE OF MICHIGAN, }
 County of Ingham, }

ESTATE OF JACOB POST, DECEASED. ed. State of Michigan, county of Ingham, ss. At a session of the Probate court for the county of Ingham, holden at the 24th day of April, in the year one thousand eight hundred and seventy-nine Present, M. D. Chatterton, Judge of Probate. In the matter of the estate of Jacob Post deceased.

On reading and filing the petition, duly verified, of Milo Bell, executor, praying that his final account may be examined and allowed, and he discharged from his trust as such executor:

Thereupon it is ordered, that the 3d day of June next, at nine o'clock, in the forenoon, be assigned for the hearing of said petition, and that the heirs at law of said deceased, and all other persons interested in said estate, are required to appear at a session of said court, then to be holden at said place, on any or reason, and said petitioner should not be granted; and it is further ordered, that said petitioner give notice to the persons interested in said estate of the pendency of said petition and hearing thereof by causing a copy of this order to be published in the Ingham County News, a newspaper printed and circulated in said county of Ingham, for three successive weeks previous to said day of hearing.

(A true copy.) M. D. CHATTERTON,
 Judge of Probate

H. K. Dean Foreman
 Publisher.

of the Ingham County News, a newspaper published and circulating in the County of Ingham, being duly sworn, deposes and says: That the annexed printed notice has been published in said paper, once in each week, for three successive weeks, and that the first publication thereof was on the 1st day of May A. D. 1877.

H. K. Dean

Sworn and subscribed before me this 30th day of June A. D. 1877.

Chris Fuller
 Notary Public Ingham County
 Mich.

INVENTORY.

STATE OF MICHIGAN, } ss.

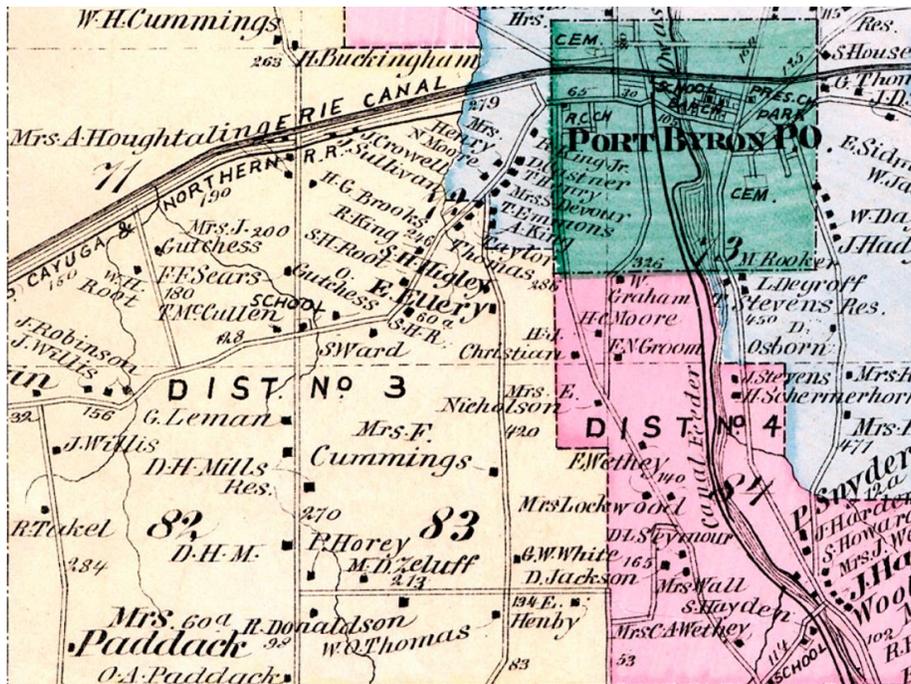
County of _____

A True and Perfect Inventory of all the Real Estate, Goods and Chattels, Rights and Credits of Jacob Post, late of Leslie, in the County of Ingham, deceased, which have come to the knowledge or possession of W. J. Tuttle and Percy Napshorn appraisors of the property of said Jacob Post of said deceased—that is to say: The following

Property		
	one span of horses	130
	one yearling calf	20
17	hogs	20
16	hens	2
	lows	80
4		
3	two-year steers	90
3	calf	15
	one sheep	2
	one Democratic Suggy	60
	one furining mill	5
	one leather	10
	cultivator	2
	one Lumber Wagon	10
	Lumber Sleigh	10
2	plows	8
1	harrow	1
1	manure	10
	lumber	1
2	pumps	1
	grain Cradle	2
	hoss Blanket and robe	2
	double harness	5
	Bakers forks	1
	chairs	1
	carpenter tools	2
	shant cutters	5
	trap pan	1
	kittles	5
25	Cords of wood	10
	3ap buckets	5
	household furniture	15
	one third of grindrill	5 05
		8
		5 7 1/2

The land is charged to Milo Bell as Guardian of the "Post Minors" \$ 559 50

Bell: Following Jake’s death, Milo and Meg took in the youngest child, Ordie, and arranged homes for the older three with relatives back in New York. Bell went to live with Electa’s (and Milo’s) cousin, Orrin Paddock (*alt sp. Orin Paddock*) and his wife, Mary, who still farmed just north of where Milo and Meg had lived back in 1854. Orrin’s mother, Jane Paddock, was a sister of the late Sally Beach, the mother of Electa and Milo. His wife, Mary, died the year after Bell arrived and, by 1880, two of his own children had moved out and a schoolteacher had moved in. That year’s census enumerator listed 20-year-old Bell’s occupation as “housekeeper” and that of Orrin’s 19-year-old daughter, Hattie, as “keeping house”, implying they were sharing the work; but under “relationship to head of family”, he identified Bell as a “servant” rather than as a cousin. Whether or not that coincided with the family’s perception of her is another matter.



Map 8H: Orrin Paddock farm (labeled “O.A. Paddock” at lower left)
 County Atlas of Cayuga New York – Walker & Jewett, New York, 1875 (public domain)

The Paddock’s farm on present-day Lasher Road was around two miles southwest of Port Byron. Bell’s brother Ferris lived a half mile south and a mile west with Uncle Robert’s family, and Maggie was over in Montezuma with Aunt Martha’s family, a five-or-six-mile ride in a wagon or buggy. The Port Byron Free School and Academy, which included a high school, was in the village nearby, but few farm children ever went beyond the 8th grade, and those outside the village paid tuition. Bell was 17 when she arrived, so it’s unlikely she ever attended the school, either with or without tuition. With limited options for meeting people, she became immersed in the Port Byron M.E. (Methodist Episcopal) Church, which enabled her to develop relationships through worship, Bible study, mission projects and social gatherings. She became an official member through a confession of faith in 1879, but how long she remained involved is open to question. (*Cf. Map 8H*)

Three years on, Bell contracted an unspecified illness and, after suffering for close to a year, she died on Friday, February 2, 1883, a month shy of her 23rd birthday. An Auburn paper carried the following eulogy in its “News from Montezuma” column. The author, writing under the pen name “St. Elmo”, had followed Bell’s uncle, Wm. Henry Bell, as the local reporter and wrote in the cloying style typical of the era. S/he also misspelled Bell’s name and misstated her age.

The month of January passed by without hearing the funeral knell. The sexton’s spade has lain idle for one month. But Friday night, Feb. 2d, the pale horse and its rider passed through our village. Miss Belle Post, after a lingering sickness of nearly a year, breathed her last, aged 21 years. Miss Post, some four years ago, made a public profession of religion, and united with the M.E. Church. She lived and died a Christian, and her last words were, “Oh! What a beautiful world I am going to.” One of the greatest evidences of the truth of the Christian religion is that in the hour of death, none of its believers ever recant, or say I have been mistaken. They know in whom they have put their trust. Belle was an excellent woman, a cherished sister and friend. She leaves fond relatives and friends to revere her memory. Her funeral services were held Wednesday and her remains taken to Michigan for interment, to sleep beside her parents until the morning of the resurrection.” (*St. Elmo, Cayuga County Independent, Wednesday, Feb. 7, 1883*)

A few lines above this, St. Elmo mentioned that Milo had come from Michigan for the funeral and that his sister Lavinia, half-brother Henry and their spouses also attended. For the sake of brevity, apparently, s/he left out any reference to Bell’s three siblings or her aunt, Mary C, all of whom also were at the service, as were the Paddocks with whom she had lived. The only close family member who might have been absent was Martha. Although she had witnessed Jake’s will and then “adopted” Maggie, she now had three small children over in Michigan, which would have made a trip to New York difficult at best. She would have joined the others, though, when they returned to Michigan for the interment in Leslie.

St. Elmo’s tribute also failed to clarify that, despite having “united with the M.E. Church,” Bell’s funeral took place at a Baptist church over in Auburn with the Baptist pastor officiating. The *Auburn Daily Advertiser* supplied that little twist, even naming the pastor, which raises the question of what had become of the Methodist affiliation St. Elmo emphasized. No one knows.

Milo, Maggie and Ordie then accompanied Bell’s remains back to Michigan and arranged a graveside service at Leslie’s Woodlawn Cemetery. Meg, SW and Bill were there, too, along with Martha’s family from Ypsilanti and, perhaps, some people from the area who had known Bell and her parents a decade earlier.

Jacob Post had ordered a family monument back when Electa and their infant died in 1874. It’s a dignified granite pylon that now has the names of Jacob and Electa on one side and of Bell on the other, just above a reference to the infant boy. The original engraver had etched “Jacob” in a marginally artistic upward arc so he could fit “Post” on the same line. Whoever added Bell’s name on the opposite side did the same thing, with “Sally” arcing upward and “Bell” extending straight to the right. But the engraver then had to crowd “Post” into what otherwise would have been a blank space immediately below it. It didn’t turn out well. (*Cf. next page*)



Maggie: Maggie Electa Post was 13 when she went to live with her aunt and uncle, Martha Bell and PW Ross. Martha, at least, had visited their farm two months before Jacob's death. They lived in Montezuma with their three-year old, Belle, and then another daughter, Julia, was born the year Maggie arrived, followed by a son, George, so birthing, diapering and wailing were part of everyday life. Maggie had been a small child when her brothers were born back in Leslie, but now, in her mid-teens, was able to help her aunt navigate daily routines.

Like Martha, she also continued past the eighth grade by attending the Port Byron Free School and Academy, some five miles to the northeast. Male and female students sat on opposite sides of the classrooms and had separate entrances to the building, but still found ways to engage one another. Maggie came to know a boy named George Reuben Hadden, whose family lived a mile or two south of Port Byron. They might have taken notice of one another, in part, because Maggie's sister, Bell, was boarding nearby with the Paddock family, and the Paddocks' son, Charles, was

boarding with the Haddens. George's older sister and younger brother both graduated, but he and Maggie seem to have dropped out sometime after the spring of 1880. Students outside the district paid tuition and, like Martha a decade earlier, often stayed just long enough to qualify for work other than farming. Fewer than half the students earned diplomas. Maggie's cousin, WJ McKone (Mary C's son, who was two years younger), also left early to teach school, after which he went on to the State Normal School in Michigan (now Eastern Michigan University) and, in time, became President of Michigan's State Board of Education. (*Cf. Mary C in Part B*).

Martha and PW had been attending the M.E. Church in Montezuma for some time when a project to replace the church building became contentious in 1881. There's no way to know the exact nature of the dispute, but the result was that the Rosses and a few others left the church and the project went forward. The clash became a liability for Martha and her family because they couldn't avoid their adversaries in a community that small, especially since PW co-owned the village grocery. He soon withdrew from the business and, by the summer of 1882, the entire family, including Maggie, had moved to Ypsilanti, Michigan.

Maggie's sister, Bell, fell ill around the time they left, and the closest the siblings came to reuniting after that was the next year, when Maggie, Ferris and Ordie attended Bell's funeral. Following the service, she, Ordie and Milo escorted the remains back to Michigan and laid Bell next to Jake and Electa before returning to their homes. Maggie and Ordie were still 70 miles apart at that point but remained close emotionally. Ferris, for his part, moved to Scranton, Pennsylvania in 1887 and, though they stayed in touch, it's possible they never saw one other again.

Maggie's beau, George Hadden, had moved to Rochester, New York, by 1884, where he had an apprenticeship in electrotyping, a chemical-electrical process for printing and metal sculpture. After that, he landed a job in Milwaukee and, on his way there, stopped in Ypsilanti to marry Maggie on June 22, 1887. He was 24 and she, 23. Maggie's aunt, Mary C. McKone, also had moved to Ypsilanti by then so her son, WJ, could study at the State Normal School, and Maggie asked her to serve as a witness to the wedding. The newlyweds then headed for Milwaukee and, by 1890, had relocated to Minneapolis. After a few years there, they bought a house at 2942 N. Queen Avenue and never moved again. Maggie assumed the traditional role of homemaker while George continued his work as an electrotyper, alternately owning his own business and working for others. The Minneapolis Directory of 1909 carried an advertisement identifying him as President and General Manager of the Hadden Electrotyping Company at 801 S. 4th Street NW.

In January 1898, the month Maggie turned 34, she gave birth to a daughter they named Ruth G.R. The "GR" mirrored George's first and middle initials, but it's unlikely hers stood for "George Reuben". All we know about her is that she died five days before Christmas in 1910, a month shy of turning 13. George's 19-year-old nephew, James Getman (*cf. photo*), was living with them at the time and working for George. He then returned to New York in 1913 and, when the U.S. entered World War I, he enlisted in the Army. While serving as a 2nd Lieutenant in France, he received serious wounds twice before dying in November 1918.



After the death of their daughter Ruth, the Haddens adopted a girl named Kathryn, who had been born in Maine in 1905 (*cf. photo*). George had a sister nicknamed “Kitty” and Kathryn went by that, too. After finishing high school in 1924, she went on living with Maggie and George while holding various jobs, including Telegrapher for Western Union. Then, in 1938, she married a farmer named Guy Allen. They both lived in Minnesota, but married in Iowa, with Maggie and George as their witnesses. When a daughter arrived the following year, they named her “Ruth” after the sister Kitty had never met.



Maggie died at 76 on February 27, 1940, and lies next to Ruth at Crystal Lake Cemetery, a mile north of their home on Queen Avenue. George, who had been born during the Civil War, eventually lived through World War II to the advent of television before dying at 87 on June 10, 1950.

Ferris: Jake and Electa had named their eldest son after her brother, Robert, making Robert and Margaret the obvious family members to take him in after Jake and Electa died, even though the boy went by his middle name, “Ferris”. Having adopted their niece, Hattie, twenty years earlier, Robert and Margaret understood the obligation. Then, when Robert himself died two years later, 30-year-old Delavan took on the role of *proxy* guardian while Milo continued as *legal* guardian. Ferris also grew close to his aunt, Lavinia Bell Albro, who had lived with Robert’s family earlier. The Albros moved to Scranton in 1883 and, upon turning 21 in 1887, Ferris joined them, boarding in their home for four years. He also tried out a different version of his name in each new Scranton city directory: “Ferris R. Post”, “R.F. Post” and then “Robert F. Post”. (*Photo: Ferris, ca. 1910, per Richard Griffith Carlsson on Ancestry.com*)



He identified himself in the 1888 directory as a teamster (a person who drives teams of horses or oxen) and, in later editions, as a drayman (a freight hauler). At mid-life, an unattributed review of Scranton’s “leading citizens” said Ferris had first worked for someone named J. D. Williams and then for a “well known Scranton drayman” named Brown. There’s no way to prove it, but George Hadden’s father, Reuben, a drayman back in Cayuga County, might have inspired Ferris’ interest in that line of work. Because he disliked working for others, though, Ferris soon bought a horse and wagon and started his own business. (*Per his granddaughter, Mary Jane Widler*)

On February 17, 1891, he married Carrie I. Sayer (*photo right, per Griffith*), who had been born in 1870 to John and Mary Sayer of Moscow, Pennsylvania. She herself then gave birth to a daughter, Belle, in 1892, followed by Mary Sayer in 1894 and Robert J. in 1897. They started out at 1116 Jackson Avenue, then moved to 217 N. Chestnut, a few doors from Lavinia’s family in the borough of Dunmore. Once the business expanded and they had several employees, they built a larger house right next door, at 221 N. Chestnut, keeping the draying horses and wagons in a row of barns facing the alley out back (*Widler*). The 1893 advertisement below includes an illustration of one of their wagons, and their ad in the 1916 city directory includes a photograph of the company warehouse on Lackawanna Street. (*Cf. p. 42*)





R. F. POST, DRAYMAN,
 OFFICE :
 14 LACKAWANNA AVE.
All Kinds of Draying.

MOVING SAFES A SPECIALTY.

Residence, 1116 Jackson Street, - SCRANTON, PA.
 Telephone 755 at Residence. Telephone 2523 at Office.

1893 City Directory - Scranton, Pennsylvania

Over 25 years, Ferris built the R.F. Post Draying Company into one of the leading freight businesses in Scranton and became rather prosperous. In addition to running the company, he served as president of the Team Owners Association and belonged to both the Scranton Board of Trade and a local patriotic organization called the P.O.S. of A., No. 178. Like most men on the Bell side of his family, he also was both an active Mason, rising to the thirty-second degree, and a Republican during Teddy Roosevelt's "Progressive" era. Upon marrying Carrie, he had left Methodism to join St. Luke's Episcopal Church, where they baptized all their children. ⁴

The *Savannah Times* back in Cayuga County carried the following tribute to Ferris in 1911. It's a fine accolade, but the two timelines it mentions are inaccurate. Ferris had arrived in Throop 34 years earlier (1877), not 30, and had moved to Scranton 24 years earlier (1887), not 17.

Ferris Post, who after the death of his parents went to live with his uncle, Robert Bell in Throop 30 years ago, and who 17 years ago moved to Scranton, Pa., was in town Saturday. Mr. Post, by his own energy and ambition has established a large and lucrative business as a drayman and has one of the largest plants in Pennsylvania. Ferris is a hustler, is prosperous and happy, has a family, and is a typical American boy who has made his own fortune without marrying a rich man's daughter, or eloping with some start "wider," *a la* Newport fad. *Vive la American boys.* (*Savannah Times*, August 11, 1911)

Two years later, Ferris was dead at age 46. His granddaughter, Mary Jane (Janie) Harris Widler, said in 2005 that he and his crew had been installing a large safe under the floor of the DC&W railway station at the time. They looped the middle of a heavy-duty rope around the safe and then Ferris wrapped both ends around himself, using his body as a counterweight as they slowly lowered the safe into the pit. When the safe came to rest on the bottom, Ferris let go of the rope ends and promptly dropped dead of a heart attack. ⁵ His death certificate, below, supports Janie's account and says his burial was at the Dunmore Cemetery a few blocks from their home. The website "find-a-grave", however, has yet to document either his or Carrie's gravesites.

PERSONAL AND STATISTICAL PARTICULARS			MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF DEATH			
1. PLACE OF DEATH County of <u>Lacka</u> Township of _____ or Borough of _____ or City of <u>Scranton</u>			CERTIFICATE OF DEATH. Registration District No. <u>4</u> Primary Registration District No. _____ (No. <u>STY RR Station Lacka Ave</u> SL)			COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS. File No. <u>92699</u> Registered in <u>1617</u> Ward. _____ <small>[If death occurred in a Hospital or Institution, give its NAME, instead of street and number.]</small>
2. FULL NAME <u>Robert F. Post.</u>						
3. SEX <u>M</u>	4. COLOR OR RACE <u>W</u>	5. SINGLE, MARRIED, WIDOWED OR DIVORCED <u>Married</u> <small>(Write the word.)</small>	16. DATE OF DEATH <u>Sept 8 1913</u> <small>(Month) (Day) (Year)</small>			
6. DATE OF BIRTH <u>Mar 29 1866</u> <small>(Month) (Day) (Year)</small>			17. I HEREBY CERTIFY, That I attended deceased from _____ 191... to _____ 191... that I last saw h... alive in _____ 191... and that death occurred, on the date stated above, at _____ M. The CAUSE OF DEATH* was as follows: <u>Heart failure sudden death</u> <u>over exertion, no autopsy</u> Duration: _____ yrs. _____ mos. _____ ds.			
7. AGE <u>47</u> yrs. <u>5</u> mos. <u>9</u> ds. <small>If LESS than 1 day how many...hrs. or...min.?</small>			Contributory (Secondary) <u>1890</u> <small>(Duration) yrs. mos. ds.</small>			
8. OCCUPATION (a) Trade, profession, or particular kind of work <u>Drayman & Rigger</u> (b) General nature of industry, business, or establishment in which employed (or employer).			(Signed) <u>B. G. Deddoe</u> M. D. <u>9/10 1913</u> (Address) <u>Scranton</u>			
9. BIRTHPLACE (State or Country) <u>Mich</u>			*State the DISEASE CAUSING DEATH; or in deaths from VIOLENT CAUSES, state (1) MEANS OF INJURY; and (2) whether ACCIDENTAL, SUICIDAL, OR HOMICIDAL.			
10. NAME OF FATHER <u>Jacob Post</u>			18. LENGTH OF RESIDENCE (FOR HOSPITALS, INSTITUTIONS, TRANSIENTS OR NOCTURNAL RESIDENCE). At place of death... yrs... mos... ds. In the State... yrs... mos... ds. Where was disease contracted, If not at place of death? Former or usual residence. <u>221 Chestnut Ave</u>			
11. BIRTHPLACE OF FATHER (State or Country) <u>Don't Know</u>			19. PLACE OF BURIAL OR REMOVAL <u>Dunmore Cem</u> DATE OF BURIAL <u>Sept 11 1913</u>			
12. MAIDEN NAME OF MOTHER <u>Electa Bell</u>			20. UNDERTAKER <u>W. Price & Son</u> ADDRESS <u>City</u>			
13. BIRTHPLACE OF MOTHER (State or Country) <u>N.Y.</u>						
14. THE ABOVE IS TRUE TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE. (Informant) <u>Mrs R. F. Post</u> (Address) <u>221 Chestnut St</u>						
15. Filed <u>Sept 11 1913</u> <u>Wm. Keeney</u> Local Registrar						

A posthumous tribute lauded Ferris as a man of...

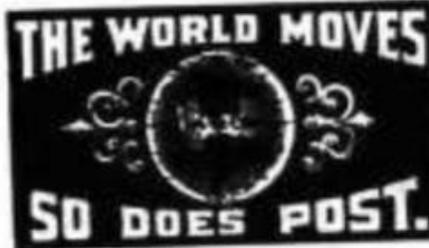
"...earnestness, sincerity and sterling worth, who so conducted his business career that no one, competitors or confederates, could connect him with any associations not honorable and above-board, and none ... envied him his fortune. At his death his absence was regretted as the loss of a man who had learned the true secret of success, one who's cheery presence lightened the dreary burden of business life, and one whose companionship was beneficial and uplifting. His home life held the sacredness and sanctity engendered by pure devotion, and his wife and those of his blood only know the tenderness of his love and the deep sympathy of his nature." ⁶

Carrie then took over the business and built it up even further, switching from draying horses to trucks in the mid-1920s and keeping only a few riding horses in the barns out back. The company logo on the trucks featured a globe surrounded by the words, "The World Moves – So Does Post". According to Janie Widler, Carrie remained in the big house and took in boarders until her death in 1954, making her the last of Electa's children and their spouses to depart. Two of Ferris and Carrie's three children eventually had sons, and each named the eldest "Robert Ferris".

R. F. Post Estate

DRAYING
RIGGING

WAREHOUSE:
36-38-40-42-44
Lackawanna Ave.



STORAGE
WAREHOUSE

OFFICE:
44 Lackawanna Ave.
Both Phones 612



Cartage and Handlers of Freight, Furniture,
Pianos, Safes, Machinery Boilers, Stacks, Etc.

DRY STORAGE

For Furniture, Beans, Peas, Flour, Cereals, Canned Goods, Potatoes, Hay, Etc.

1916 City Directory - Scranton, Pennsylvania

Ordie: The youngest of Electa's brood, Ordie Jacob, made his debut October 9, 1869, then lost his mother at age four and his father at age seven, along with his siblings and everything else that had defined his life up to then. The four now orphaned children had a brief respite down in North Adams before Uncle Milo escorted all four to New York and returned home with Ordie. His new family included Uncle Milo, Aunt Meg, cousins Bill and SW, and Aunt Meg's sister and mother. Then Bill married Florence out in Delaware and she came to live with them, too. It was all novel to Ordie. Aunt Meg and her mother also had Irish accents, and the youngest one in the house other than him was SW, who was ten years older. A bright spot was that Meg's brother Joe and his wife, Mary Jane, who farmed a half mile across the field to the southwest, had three children within a year of Ordie's age: Howard, Libbie and Lewis. Howard became his best friend.

After learning of life's fragility in the most painful way, Ordie had several reminders over the next decade. Grandma Wright, who was not *his* grandmother, died in June 1878 and, the following March, Florence, who had married Bill just a year earlier, died while having a baby – and the baby died, too. Then, between late 1879 and 1883, three relatives died over in New York. Milo took Ordie to the funerals, in part, so he could spend time with his three siblings there. The first was for Uncle Robert, who had taken in Ferris, and the second, for his grandfather, whom Ordie barely knew. The most difficult was the third – the one for his sister, Bell. Milo escorted both Ordie and his other sister, Maggie, to that one and they grieved together with Ferris. Then they returned on a train with Bell's casket and had a brief graveside service up in Leslie, right next to their parents' graves, which brought back yet other painful memories.

The late 1880s brought a flurry of celebrations, each followed by loss and separation. Maggie married George Hadden in Ypsilanti in 1887, then moved 600 miles away. Ordie earned his high school diploma the following spring (a rare achievement in that era), then SW drowned that summer. Finally, upon turning 21 in October 1890, Ordie inherited his share of his parents' estate and soon headed to Minneapolis to be near Maggie. It was the first time since their father's death that they had lived in the same county. Then, a year later, they received word that Milo had died. Milo had been a faithful guardian to all four of Electa's children and a second father to Ordie, so they certainly grieved, but it's highly doubtful Ordie was able to return for his funeral.

He had hired on as a teamster at George R. Newell & Co., the city's largest wholesale grocer, and unless he was a member of the Teamsters Protection Association, asking for time off to attend an uncle's funeral in another state would not have gone over well. Some 30 employees worked in and around the company's combined office and warehouse downtown (*cf. sketch, right*), while a separate sales force fanned out across the region to engage retail grocers. Teamsters like Ordie used horse-drawn wagons to transport bulk item supplies from local providers, rail yards and wharves on the Mississippi to



GEORGE R. NEWELL & CO.

the building downtown, and shelf-ready products from there to the retail grocers. It required muscle and, with neither an enclosed cab to keep out the rain nor a heater to ward off the chill, it could be grueling.

Ordie stayed the first year or two in a boarding house at 35 N. 16th Street, about three-fourths of a mile south of where Maggie and George were living on Royalston Street. As of 1892, one of his fellow boarders was a clerk named Arthur Post. Minneapolis had close to 165,000 residents that year, of which just 10 adult males appeared in the city directory under the surname "Post". The chances that two of the ten (in this case, Arthur and Ordie) would end up in the same boarding house without being related are beyond slim. Arthur's family history is unknown, and what we know of Ordie's Post ancestry extends only to his father's mother. We don't even know if Jacob had any siblings or first cousins; so, for now, Arthur Post is just a curious sidelight.

By the time the 1892 city directory came out, Maggie and George Hadden had moved three miles farther north to Queen Street, where they remained the rest of their lives. Then, within the next two years, Ordie moved 4½ miles northeast to a boarding house at 311 S.E. Eighth Street. Boarding house tenants had private rooms but gathered around a common table each morning and evening for meals served family-style by the proprietor – which is how Ordie came to know widowed Isabelle Best and her three daughters. They were boarding there after having emigrated from New Brunswick, Canada, and Isabelle's eldest daughter would soon become the zillionth Maggie/Margaret to enter the realm of the Bell clan.

Margaret Alelia Best, who went by "Maggie", was born June 30, 1871, in a middle-of-nowhere spot in New Brunswick called Waweig, which is no bigger now than it was then. Two of her five brothers died in 1880, and her father, Martin, a year after that. Isabelle remarried in 1889, but the groom, William Currie, dropped dead after only three months, so she went back to using the surname "Best". Then, in 1892, she and her three daughters boarded a train and headed 2,760 miles west to Minneapolis, where one of her sons already had moved. To distinguish her daughter from Ordie's sister, whose formal name was, in fact, Maggie, we're calling Maggie Best, "Maggie B"

She and Ordie married on May 8, 1895, a Wednesday. Her father had been Baptist and her mother, Presbyterian, but the officiant at their wedding, William Fielder, was pastor of the First M.E. (Methodist Episcopal) Church at 9th Avenue SE and 5th Street SE. Maggie B's sister, Martha Ann, who had turned 14 two weeks earlier, served as a witness, along with James Butler, who had boarded with Ordie and the elusive Arthur Post back at 35 N. 16th Street. Neither Maggie B nor Ordie had been in town long enough to make many friends and the only relatives within 600 miles were Isabelle's brood and the Haddens, so the wedding was rather intimate, as most were in that era. In fact, the bride and groom, two witnesses and the pastor, might have been the only ones to show up, in which case, they could have exchanged vows in the pastor's study or at the parsonage next to the church. The only surprise is that George Hadden wasn't the best man. Ordie held his sister (the other Maggie) and George in such high esteem that he and Maggie B later chose "Hadden" as their first son's middle name.

By the end of the month, the newlyweds were living at 1806 Chestnut Street, just west of the Mississippi River in the city's fourth ward. Ordie had left the George R. Newell Co. by then to become a Switchman with the Minneapolis and St. Louis Railway. A yardmaster was living next door and the M&SL "grounds" (i.e., rail yards), where they switched the rail cars around, were right behind the houses on the north side of the street. The racket would have put a damper on neighborhood prayer meetings and social events. Sleeping in would have been challenging, too, assuming they could sleep at all. On the plus side, Ordie could walk to work.



His job centered on tending the switches that shifted trains from one track to another in the rail yard and along routes. He also coupled and uncoupled the cars and made regular checks to ensure the couplings, axles and wheels were all in good working order. While he was fiddling with all that, Maggie B, who had finished two years of high school (i.e., tenth grade), was keeping their home in order and, in time, gave birth to five children. The first of those, Dorothy Isabelle, arrived February 26, 1896, followed in May 1899 by Howard Hadden. Wayne Ronald came in 1902, then Florence "Alberta" in 1903, and (I kid you not) Merton Audean in 1908. Dorothy, Wayne and Alberta were born in Minnesota, and Howard and Merton in Wisconsin, reflecting the shifting venues of Ordie's employment.⁷

By 1897, they had moved from Chestnut Street to 2023 Thomas Avenue over by Cedar Lake, which was still in Minneapolis. Their house was across the street from the same track that ran through the rail yard over by Chestnut. Then, on May 12, 1899, Maggie B was in a tiny burg called Wilson, Wisconsin, when she gave birth to Howard. With fewer than 200 residents, it was the epitome of a "whistle stop" town, half-way between Minneapolis-St. Paul and Eau Claire, Wisconsin. They hadn't moved to Wilson and the village had no medical facilities, so it appears Maggie B was merely passing through on her way to or from Minneapolis when she went into labor on the train. Incidental as it was, Wilson thereby became a permanent part of Howard's life record, even appearing on his draft card. A railroad track runs through the place to this day.

By the next year, Maggie B and Ordie again had relocated within Minneapolis to a house over on Western Avenue (now called Glenwood), but, for some reason, were back in their first home on Chestnut a year later. Ordie spent a good part of 1902 working in Superior, Wisconsin, while Maggie B remained with the children in Minneapolis, so his name appeared in both city directories that year. Maggie B stayed behind because they now had three small children (including an infant, Wayne) and she was pregnant with a fourth, Alberta, who arrived in early 1903. In Superior, Ordie stayed in a rooming house at 1123 Cumming St., which he shared with a carpenter named Charles Perrin. He would stay there again a few years later, but with his entire family.

He worked as a brakeman during his brief stint in Superior and held the same job after returning to Minneapolis. The title "brakeman" originally referred to a crew member (always a male) who helped slow or stop the train by wobbling along the roof of each car and turning the horizontal wheels sticking up at the ends. He needed, not only to keep his balance up there in all kinds of weather, but to keep an eye out for low bridges and signal arms that could take off his head. By

the time Ordie acquired the job, engineers controlled most of the brakes from the cab, so there was less roof dancing involved. The title was still “brakeman”, but the work now centered on checking couplings and signaling engineers while switching out rail cars or changing tracks. Ordie’s shift to the role coincided with new labor laws capping the number of cars a brakeman could tend at any one time to two, so railroads needed more employees in that role. For the most part, brakemen now travelled in the caboose, from where they could help slow the train by applying brakes at the rear. They also kept watch for shifting or falling cargo, mechanical problems, and people trying to ride without paying. It kept Ordie busy.



His most significant career move came in 1907, when he left the M&SL Railway for the Northern Pacific. He appeared in the Duluth city directory that year as “Post OJ, Brakeman NP Ry”, but by the following year he had moved to Duluth’s twin city, Superior. Superior’s 1908 directory again listed him at 1123 Cumming Street, the rooming house where he had stayed in 1902 when he was still with the M&SL. It was a typically narrow, two-story place with a peaked roof just north of 12th Street and, like every other house on the block, it stood no more than two feet from the one on either side. The difference this time was that Ordie brought his entire family of seven, including Merton, who was born March 8 that year. A telegram company solicitor named J. Robert Daniels also lived there – no doubt in an upstairs flat, marginally removed from the pandemonium of four prepubescent children and a newborn infant.

Prior to 1919, telephones had neither dials nor number pads, so every call had to go through an operator. City directories, in turn, usually listed only names and addresses; but Superior’s 1908 directory included a phone number for Ordie and Maggie B: “PEOPLES PHONE – 4849 Y”. Peoples Telephone, one of two local providers, paid to have its name appear like that with each customer’s number. Having no dials or keypads, though, callers still had to go through operators, and most residents and businesses either used Peoples’ competitor, Douglas County Telephone (which published no numbers), or had no telephone at all. Although Ordie and Maggie appeared in city directories almost every year, that 1908 Superior directory was the only one that ever included their phone number – even after the invention of dial telephones – which means operators were involved in every call they ever made or received while at home.

By 1909, the Posts had moved over to Hughitt Street. Ordie still worked for Northern Pacific, but the city had named the street for Marvin Hughitt, the president of Ordie’s former employer, the M&SL Railway, which reflects the influence Hughitt and other industrial leaders had over municipal operations. Superior and its sister city, Duluth, were mining and shipping towns, replete with railroad tracks, wharfs, warehouses and shipyards – and railroads owned a huge portion of the land. Municipal leaders simply bowed to the wishes of corporations as a matter of survival, as they often do now. The name, “Superior,” of course, came from the enormous lake dominating the horizon from north to east, and “Duluth” honored 17th century French soldier and explorer Daniel Greysolon, *sieur du Luht* (anglicized to “du Luth”), who was “largely responsible for establishing French control over the country north and west of Lake Superior.”⁸

The railroad transferred Ordie yet again in late 1910 or early 1911 – this time to a village called Forest Lake, some 30 miles north of St. Paul. The village and lake share the same name, coined no doubt by some imaginative wordsmith upon realizing he was in a forest. With a lake. Native Americans had lived there for centuries before the Lake Superior & Mississippi Railroad laid tracks through the forest in 1868 and put a fuel stop there. Before long, it was a summer resort for affluent St. Paul residents. The Lake Superior & Mississippi then became the Duluth & St. Paul, which the Northern Pacific acquired in 1900, hence the arrival of Ordie and his family. We know it was in late 1910 or early 1911 because they last appeared in the Superior directory in 1910 and were still there for the U.S. Census that summer.

Forest Lake was too small to bother with directories and the next Census wasn't until 1920, but other sources show the Posts were there most of that second decade. A 1913 obituary for Ordie's brother, Ferris, said they lived there, and another school's yearbook said their son Howard had completed the 9th through 11th grades at Forest Lake High. Their daughter, Dorothy, in turn, married in Forest Lake on March 3, 1918 (five days after turning 22). Then, nine months to the day after the wedding, she gave birth in Duluth, where her parents and siblings had just moved.

That move coincided with the Northern Pacific promoting Ordie to the position of Steam Railroad Conductor, a title he would hold the rest of his career, save for one brief stint as a brakeman and another as a switchman.

The conductor's job involved more than collecting tickets. He was the "captain" of the train. He supervised other train crew, looked out for the safety of everyone aboard, and made sure that every passenger paid the correct fare. The engineer was responsible for signals and speed restrictions en route, but the conductor determined when the train could safely depart a station and was in charge during emergencies." ⁹

Dorothy and her groom Earl apparently lived with her parents and siblings from the day they married in Forest Lake until shortly after the baby arrived in Duluth. Ordie and Maggie B's first home there was at 315 N. 2nd Avenue East, a boxy, flat-roofed duplex on a sloping street that ran straight down to Lake Superior (*cf. photo, right*). By 1920, Dorothy and Earl had moved eight miles south of there to Cato Street and the Posts were sharing their side of the duplex with newlyweds Sam and Bessie Wiener, who were in their early thirties. Sam, a first generation American, was an Army recruitment officer whose parents were Hebrew-speaking Russian immigrants. Bessie had been born to German immigrants in Sweden, and Hebrew was her native tongue, too – as it was for Ben and Lina Davidson, who, along with their three children, occupied the other half of the duplex. Ben had emigrated from Lithuania and Lina, from Russia, and it was probably they who introduced the newlyweds to Ordie and Maggie B, neither of whom could speak any Hebrew whatever. Imagine the fun.



The four younger Post offspring – Howard, Wayne, Alberta and Merton – all attended Duluth's Central High School, although Howard didn't start until a year after they arrived, and then only

for his senior year. After completing the eleventh grade back at Forest Lake, he had dropped out and hired on as a railroad switchman in Hibbing, 75 miles northwest of Duluth. World War I was well underway at that point and, after registering for the draft in 1919, he secured a military deferment by returning to school, graduating from Duluth Central the following June at age twenty-one. His nickname there had been “Buckshot”. It was Minnesota, as in “Lake Wobegon”.

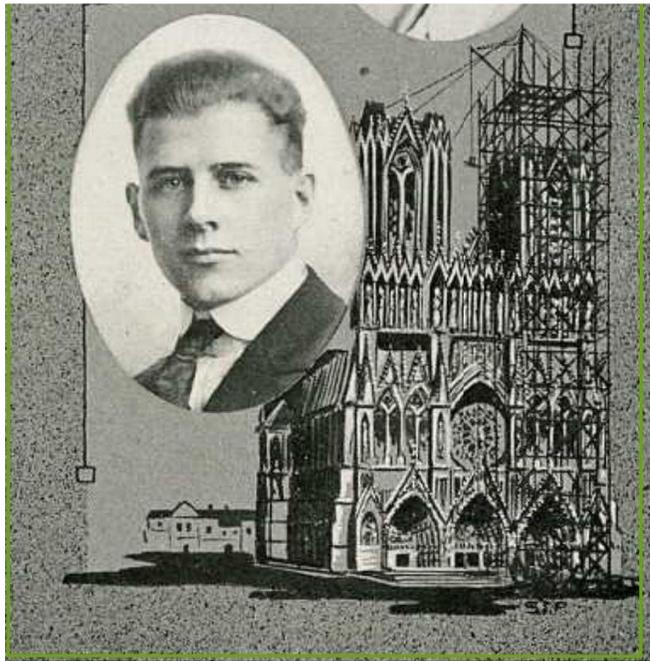
By the time Howard married on February 23, 1922, the family had moved to 1303 E. Sixth Street, and he brought his bride, Gertrude Mason, to live with them there. Then, on October 9, just seven and a half months after the wedding, she gave birth to a daughter. Oops. As proper Methodists, the short time span between marriage and delivery would have been an embarrassment, as Dorothy’s might have been four years earlier. Howard, meanwhile, was again following Ordie’s career path, working alternately as a switchman and brakeman for the Northern Pacific. His brothers were still at home, too. Wayne, who graduated with Alberta that year, went to work as a collection agent for the Oliver Adjustment Company, while Alberta moved over by St. Luke’s Hospital to train as a nurse. She then married Frank Carlson on December 29, 1928, and Wayne married Helen Shirley a few months after that. Merton, the youngest sibling, finished high school that year and, like his brothers, had come to stand six feet tall and weigh 155 pounds.

Over time, Ordie and Maggie B accumulated at least ten grandchildren. Dorothy, Earl and their daughter were still over on Cato Street when Dorothy gave birth to a son in 1925. Then another arrived in 1929, followed by a second daughter in 1932. Like them, Howard and Gertrude added a son in 1925 and, then, Wayne and Helen (who had moved to Indiana) welcomed one son in 1933 and another in 1940. Alberta, for her part, delivered a son in 1934 (sons were showing up everywhere) and a daughter in 1941. Merton, on the other hand, appears to have had no children at all. After high school, he emulated Wayne by 1) working for the Oliver Adjustment Company (a collections agency) and 2) marrying a woman named Helen (on December 6, 1936). Helen No. 2 was from Marquette, Michigan, 250 miles east along Lake Superior, and after they moved there in late 1940, Merton managed an Oliver outpost. He later hired Howard, who moved there with his family when the Depression pushed railroad unemployment as high as 42 percent.

Ordie and Maggie B were still on Sixth Street when he retired upon turning 70 in October 1939. Whatever bliss that inspired was short lived, though, as he died at St. Luke’s on September 29, 1942, ten days shy of his 73rd birthday. Maggie B then sold the house and moved in with Dorothy and Earl, who were on Cooke Street by then (yet another street named for a railroad tycoon). After she died there on January 19, 1947, they placed her next to Ordie at Forest Hill Cemetery.



10



HOWARD POST
(Buckshot)

Mixed Course
Forest Lake High School, 1, 2, 3
As Howard is new we hardly know him well enough to say much, yet we consider him a very welcome addition to the class.



Howard Post
Class of 1920 - Duluth Central High School

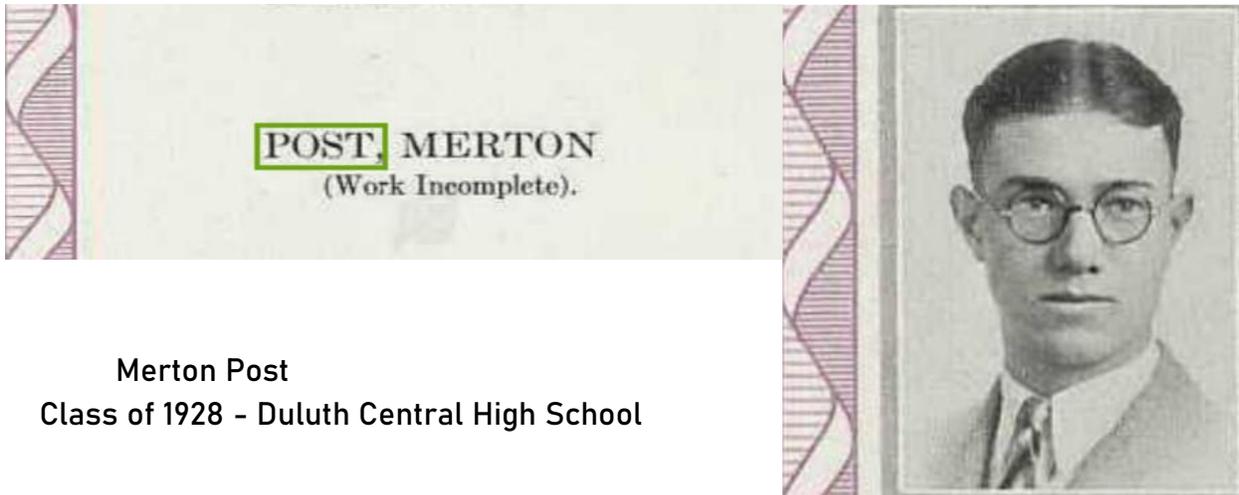
POST, **ALBERTA** 1303 E. 6th St.
Mixed Course. Girls Club—1, 2, 3, 4; Ath. Ass'n.—1, 2, 3, 4; Jazz.—3, 4; Red Cross—1, 2; Glee Club—3; D. O. T.—3;
Alberta does not always speak her thoughts but good thoughts of her are always spoken.

POST, WAYNE 1303 E. 6th St.
Ath. Ass'n.—1, 2, 3, 4.
*He has no thought of coming woes
As trouble comes, so trouble goes.*

POLINSKY, LYLE 2929 E. Sup. St.
Mixed Course. Jawbreakers—3; Nautical Knot



Alberta Post and Wayne Post
Class of 1922 - Duluth Central High School



Merton Post
Class of 1928 - Duluth Central High School

ENDNOTES - ELECTA

- ¹ "U.S. and International Marriage Records: 1560-1900" and "Michigan Surname Index," Vol. II, 1989, both list 1854 as the Posts' marriage year. The latter cites a Helen Post – relation unknown – of Kalamazoo, Michigan, as its source.
- ² McCormick, Al (2010) "Infant Mortality and Child-Naming: A Genealogical Exploration of American Trends," *The Journal of Public and Professional Sociology*: Vol. 3: Issue 1, Article 2. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/jpps/vol3/iss1/2>. Other family members with children who died unnamed include Mary Delano, in 1840, Milo's son, Bill, in 1879, and Robert's son, Delavan, in 1882.
- ³ See Michigan Death Index, Ingham County.
- ⁴ A Biography of Leading Citizens of Scranton, Pennsylvania, Circa 1913: http://www.libraries.psu.edu/do/digitalbookshelf/27843275/27843275_part_122.pdf
- ⁵ Oral history of his granddaughter, Mary Jane Harris Widler, 2007
- ⁶ Biography, part 122.
- ⁷ Dorothy's middle name was a tribute to Maggie B's mother, Isabel Best. Howard's middle name, Hadden, honored Ordie's brother-in-law (i.e., Maggie's husband), George Hadden. Although Ordie knew people named "Howard" and "Florence" during his years in North Adams, there is no way know whether he and Maggie B named their children after those particular people. Similarly, Maggie B's father, Martin Best, appears in one Canadian census record as "Merton", but that almost certainly was a mistake on the part of the enumerator. The inspiration for their son Merton's middle name, Audean, is simply beyond us.
- ⁸ www.britannica.com/biography/Daniel-Greysolon-Sieur-DuLhut.
- ⁹ National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution. See www.americanhistory.si.edu/america-on-the-move/lives-railroad.
- ¹⁰ Undated Photo: The Northern Coast "Limited" leaving St. Paul, Minnesota, drawn by the latest type of Pacific (4-6-2) engine. "The Northern Pacific Railroad – From Failure to Fortune: The Story of a Great Transcontinental Railway". See www.railwaywondersoftheworld.com/northern_pacific.