

BRIEF FAMILY HISTORY OF THE MICHIGAN WALLINS

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The Wallin pedigree is very short. Charles C. Wallin, our father, located in the Township of Buchanan, Berrien County, Michigan, on McCoy's Creek, in 1835, and brought his family of wife and four children in 1836.

Very little of interest can be learned of his father, Joseph Wallin, who was a reputable farmer in the town of Butternuts, Otsego County, New York, except that he was an Englishman from Warwickshire and spelled his name Walling at first. No reason is given for the dropping of the g and he probably was not aware that it would cause confusion to genealogists, who, guided by the spelling, would try to trace the family into Sweden.

He was a good man and prosperous farmer, and left a good estate for that time, none of which (however it was so) came to my father. Indeed it seems there must have been a coolness between them as I never heard of a letter and my father rarely spoke of him, though he was friendly with his brothers Alfred and William and sister Mrs. Heslop, and in his later years visited them several times.

My father always had an intimacy with the Gilbert family of Gilbertsville, his native place. It seemed there were ties between them never explained to me. I met some members of the family in Florida and elsewhere who treated me very cordially.

My grandmother Wallin was a Curtis. She died before I was born. Her family came from England early in the last century, settling at first at Utica, and the descendants are very numerous. Charles H. Curtis of Chicago, my father's cousin, was one of our most intimate friends there for many years, and a prominent and highly respected business man. I think of him as the best friend I ever had, and also the most intimate associate altho he was nearly twenty years my senior.

Our mother was Dorothy Stronginthearm, and this line we can trace farther back. The name is prominent in the parish church and churchyard of Hamstall Ridware, Staffordshire, England. The church is very old, and a lengthy description of it is given in a book entitled "Sketches in and Around Lichfield and Rugely" by Alfred Williams. My brother Franklin visited it in 1895 and I in 1896, and both wrote some brief account of what we saw there.

Our great grandfather, Thomas Strong-in-the-arm, occupied the farm on the site of the old Blythbury priory, founded in the twelfth century. A memorial building still marks the place.

Our grandfather, Thomas Stronginthearm (or Strongi'th'-arm) was born and reared on this place and came to America in 1803 and located in Otsego County, New York, but returned to England and was married, and came again in 1806.

Our grandmother was Maria Hollis, and I think came from Utoxeter, England. Several of her relatives came over about the same time or soon after and settled in Otsego County. They were educated people,- some professional men among them, and strong characters.

No effort has been made to trace the family history farther back, but the parish registers and the tombstones at Hamstall Ridware show the names of a good many, some of which are named in the accounts before mentioned made by my brother and myself.

A seal and some silver buttons with monogram came to me with the family name. They were brought over, by our grandfather and probably date much farther back. Also a letter of introduction signed by Edward Cooper and others are among my relics.

A grandfather's clock brought over in 1806 is with our cousins, the Cassons, in Pennsylvania, and probably other household relics as our grandparents made their home with them until grandmother died.

Our father's boyhood and youth was much of it spent in the City of New York and he was much attached to it and lived there for over fifteen years after he retired from business, boarding with his wife at Canda House on LaFayette Place most of the time. He remembered the War of 1812, and saw the first steamboat on the Hudson and celebrated at the opening of the Erie Canal.

In his later years he knew Roosevelt when he began to enter politics and used to predict his greatness. He was a whig and a republican in politics. He studied medicine, but I cannot locate the years; have heard him speak of Fairfield, Connecticut, and Castleton, Vermont, and a Professor Tully whom he much admired. I have seen his diploma, but it was doubtless destroyed in the great Chicago fire, as his most valuable household stuff being boxed and stored was burned at that time while he and his wife were out West. This is probably why we have so little written history of his early life.

He spent a year or two in Western Pennsylvania, where my brother Franklin Bogue was born; Bogue I have heard was a minister whom they much admired. Father was accompanied by Grandfather Strongitharm in his first trip to the West in 1835. He visited Chicago but the place did not look fit to bring his family to, he preferring the almost unbroken forest of Michigan. His purchase of pre-emption rights included a saw mill and he afterwards erected a small grist mill and a shingle factory about one-fourth of a mile from the mouth of the creek, about half a mile from the present Village of Buchanan.

The family came in the fall of 1836 and we lived in a one room log house, as did all our neighbors. There was not a frame house in the Township. Our house was built and occupied, before we came, by Charles Cole. At the saw mill above was John Hatfield, and the mill was tended by Andrew C. Day, whose family lived at the site of the present town of Buchanan. Another saw mill at the mouth of the creek was run by a man named Russell McCoy, and afterwards Henry Vanderhoof.

A little down the river was a family named Cathcart, with four children (same as ours) - William, Julius, Mary and Thomas, with whom we were most intimate. About a mile West was a family named Dragoo; across the river from the mouth of the creek was Madren and Wease, and an old woman Adkins who was good to us in our sickness and distress later.

Toward Niles was John Willett and family, late from Maine, including a sister Sarah, who became our first school teacher and fifteen years afterward our stepmother. These were our nearest neighbors and include our longest time friends.

Half a mile or so across the creek and through a belt of woods and near a boiling spring was an Indian Village of Pottawatimies, whose chief was an old man named Squaga; and down the river a mile or so another whose chief was named Moccasin. Some of them occasionally came to our house and we knew several of them quite well and learned a good many words of their language.

In that direction also lived Sanford, Swift, Smith, Harlan and Weemer. The Weemer family were among the earliest of the emigrants to California, and claim to have discovered the gold which Marshall got credit for.

Our first school was over that way,— a small log house not far from the Indian Village, and Miss Willett was the teacher. The seats were long benches made from slabs with two inch auger holes near the ends for legs; the desks a wide shelf around the outer walls, placed at a slight incline. A huge fire place, two small windows and a large door, generally open, gave us most of our light. The floor was very rough and open and we often lost little things down its wide cracks. Our first four years of school were in this house and another similar, but a little better, up nearer to the Days.

I much regret that the books we then studied have disappeared. I have only an old "Murray Reader" printed in 1815, such as I then used. My first books, as I remember, were a "Columbian" spelling book, and I had a "Cobb" spelling book, a "Smith" grammar and a "Daboll" arithmetic.

Our father lost his investments on McCoy's Creek through the governor's unlawful manipulation of a land grant made

by Congress to the State of Michigan for University purposes.

Having authority to take any unoccupied lands, he privately instructed the Commissioners to ignore the "squatters" and select the most valuable lands, and a good many pieces were taken on the "reserve", as our section was called, from settlers entitled to pre-emption rights.

Father, with some others, spent a winter in Detroit to get relief and did get a bill through the Legislature which was vetoed by the Governor, Stephen T. Mason, who considered a few poor squatters in a distant corner of the new state of small importance compared with the interests of the great University to be established with this fund.

Mason was a young man just out of college, and a protege of General Cass, I think. He was said to be vain, arrogant and shallow and became very unpopular in Michigan and at the end of the term soon dropped out of sight. Of course these squatters were very bitter against him and father always held a pique against Ann Arbor University as built with money which was robbed from us and our poor neighbors. The price of the land was placed at twenty dollars per acre, which was far beyond its current value, government lands being then sold at one dollar and a quarter per acre. So the University lands were practically out of the market for many years.

The summer of 1838 was long remembered as the "Sickly Season", and our family got it about as bad as possible and live. In fact it has been a wonder ever since with us how we did all get through. Fever and ague or chills and fever and bilious fever raged in every household. Our poor mother, who had been the pillar

of strength, had it rather the worst and lay for weeks scarcely able to get out of bed. I was eight years old and the oldest of the four children and as sick as any. All lying in one room hardly able to help each other to a drink of water; no help from outside possible as all the neighbors were in the same case. Father, as I remember, kept up the best. He had begun to take up practice and did a good deal that summer and fall in the neighborhood, but was very much hampered by lack of medicine. "Roots and herbs" were much depended upon by all and many people would not use anything else. Even the children came to know a good deal of their medicinal qualities. But father preferred quinine and much of the time could not get it.

In the year 1840 father gave up all hopes of holding on to his Buchanan interests and we moved to Berrien, the County Seat, and he devoted himself to his profession. One reason for the move was better schools.

We were doubtless very poor and I remember pants and jackets worn by brother Frank and I that were spun, woven and made up by our mother, and that a man upon the street once made jokes upon them. But we were not distressed by our poverty. We lived in a small, poor house but it had three rooms and a small unfinished garret and was much finer than the one we had just left, and there were plenty others no better.

Our school was open six months in the year and our first teacher was Amos Grey,- one large room planned to accommodate about sixty I guess, but often had more. They were of all sizes and numerous classes, and some were reciting about all the time, with frequent interruptions for explanations to individual scholars,

corrections, punishments or making a pen; we wrote with quill pens which teacher was to make and repair as called on, also write a copy at the top of the page in the copybook and help us when we could not make our "sums" come right. I can now appreciate what a strenuous job it was.

During the succeeding four or five years I probably spent about one-third of the time in school, and remember most distinctly one Wanzer and two Bennetts as masters. The scholars spent most of their time on the three R's, spelling and geography; a few got into grammar and a very few, of which I was one, took some algebra and natural philosophy.

My parents would gladly have given me more schooling but I was badly needed for work. I learned to chop wood, drive oxen and do general farmer work on some land we had near town, and occasionally did days' work for others, getting twenty-five to thirty-seven and one-half cents per day for it.

In the autumn of 1846 father made a dicker with Father Sorin, President of Notre Dame College (then just beginning) to give me half a year at the college and take a black mare, his only horse, at sixty dollars in payment. A copy of my bill for that five months is among my relics. I had no overcoat, - never had worn one, and I think but one coat of any kind, and I have a recollection that it was the coldest winter I ever experienced. A number of the boys had their feet and fingers frozen sitting in the study room. My feet were so swollen I could not get my boots on for some months. But my recollections of the place are on the whole agreeable.

I was well acquainted with the leading men who founded

the institution, Father Sorin, the President, Father Cointe, Father Gousse, Father Shaw, Brother Gatian and some others whose names don't come to me, were professors, most of them Frenchmen. "It was a French College then but it is an American College now", President Morrissey said to me when I visited there a few years ago.

Father Shaw was an Englishman who fought at Waterloo and had a sabre cut across the nose, and was fonder of telling stories than giving lectures. The others were very frenchy in speech and manners, and very earnest, devoted men.

I had never come in contact with Catholics before and my ideas about them were much changed and broadened, for which I have been thankful all my life. So far as learning goes, of course it was almost nothing. I only found one man who could teach me algebra,- Brother Gatian, and I think he was not much ahead of me. They were great in languages and music and I have always regretted that I did not devote myself to French, as it was a fine opportunity. More French than English was spoken even on the play ground.

My closest friends were Engle from St. Joseph, Michigan, and Gillespie from Lancaster, Ohio, a relative of the Sherman family. He was very restive when he came; didn't want to come or stay, wasn't a Catholic, he said, but he did stay and he became Vice President of the college. I knew all the boys there as we occupied the same study room and dormitory, ate together and played together.

On my return home I was given a job in the store of Stevens & Landon, Berrien. It was on the east side of the river and we did business with river boats as well as farmers.

The trade was mostly traffic of which butter and eggs was a large factor. There was a warehouse connected, and in the winter we handled pork and some grain, etc., and sent it to St. Joseph by teams. There was only one small dwelling house on that side of the river, occupied transiently by a teamster, and thinking of it now, it was a very remote and lonely place. I was the only clerk or helper that Mr. Stevens had and I slept in the store alone.

I was expected to have the store opened and swept by seven o'clock, or in winter by daylight, and kept open until nine o'clock at night. I was paid eight dollars per month and board the first year, and ten dollars the second year, which was not completed because my health gave way.

In the summer of 1846 our mother made her first and last trip East. Her mother had died and when she came back she brought her father along, who lived with us until his death in Chicago.

Berrien Springs was the most interesting place in the world to me, as the home of my boyhood and youth and is the best remembered. There was a large distillery in the town conducted by Robert E. Ward, an educated and accomplished man from Albany, New York, living in a fine house with columns in front.

Then Doctor Murray and the Bostwick family. The Kimmels were the largest land holders and old George Kimmel called the wealthiest man in the county. He had several grown up sons, and his sons-in-law were Murdock, Dougherty, Kephart and Stevens, whom I worked for; also a widowed daughter, Mrs. Graham, and they all had large families of children of my generation.

The Kimmels were "Pennsylvania Dutch" from Somerset

County, and well educated and refined for the times, especially the women who all married rather high grade men.

There were Mr. and Mrs. Richardson and Alonzo Bennett's family, who came to be lifelong friends. The Hall boys, the Fords, the Smith boys, the Grahams, Murdocks, Gardner, Tudors, Feathers, St. Johns and Nichols were my most intimate associates. The Lemons, Shoemakers, Farley, Bronson, Watson, Essich, Defield, McComber, Wilkinson families were friends whose names I recall. I knew everybody round there, young and old, at the time I left.

It must be the spring of '48 that my father went back to Buchanan to live. A town had grown up about a grist mill built on our old friend Day's farm. Father bought forty acres in the edge of town with a small house on it. My brother Franklin had been living there some years, learning the tanning business of "Deacon Enos" and living in his family.

During the summer I came home and father set me digging out the oak grubs, four to eight feet high, which covered most of the place, and in the fall sowed about twenty acres of wheat on the place. I grew strong and well rapidly.

During the year father bought the little one horse tannery where Frank was working and he took charge of it with me as only helper. It was indeed a day of small things. About that time the ten hour law was made in Michigan and we mechanics adopted it promptly.

We soon made connections with a shoe shop and a harness shop and father was made Postmaster, and I had a good deal to do with that work though did not tend the office much. Father de-

voted himself chiefly to his practice and grandfather helped in taking care of garden and land, while Frank and I carried on the other things.

I had one absence of a couple of months to help take care of the store of W. G. Ferson in Niles, while he went East for goods. While there I saw the first train of cars come into that town which was then the terminal of the Michigan Central Railroad.

Of course I knew most everybody in Buchanan but can now recall but few. Hamilton and the Rosses were the prominent millers and merchants. Our old friend Day had become rich (by our standards) through the building of the town on his farm. Then came Alexander, business associate of Ross. Three brothers from Terre Coupe Prairie named Reynolds, rich farmers, came there and opened stores. Doctor Harrison was a conspicuous figure and active rival for professional business.

There was also a Doctor Barnard who prescribed only simples which many people preferred to the "pothecary stuff". Henry Vanderhoof was one of our oldest and closest friends, engaged then in building the railroad along there. He went to California in 1849 and died of cholera en route, as did some others whom I knew.

My personal associates were Fox, two Smiths, "Jucks" Warner, "Jim" Reynolds and Binns, and I kept up my intimacy with Berrien boys. I spent a part of one winter at New Buffalo (then the terminal of the Michigan Central Railroad) with Alonzo Bennett, previously of Berrien. He was doing a general store business and furnishing steamboats with cordwood by rail, and I sometimes was conductor on a wood train. His son Ammi was one of my intimate friends.

During the summer of 1850 we opened social relations with Charles H. Curtis' family in Chicago, which led to father taking up the notion to go there. He disposed of the tannery and little farm that year and in the fall made his first trip East, visiting Washington and New York. Fillmore, the President, was a personal friend, also Hall and Haven who were former law partners of the President. I think both were in the cabinet.

Before he returned our dear mother died after a short illness of erysipelas contracted while nursing a sick neighbor, and using a suction tube to clear the patient's throat. She was a woman of high qualities and through her energy, industry and sound sense was the leading factor in family affairs, although father was always recognized as the "head of the house".

While neither handsome, scholarly, fashionable nor accomplished, she was well bred and popular in the best society of the county. Though constitutionally strong the climatic diseases took severe hold upon her and she was much of the time out of health during her last years, and died at the early age of thirty-eight years.

We came to Chicago in the spring of 1851. The family and goods crossed the lake from New Buffalo, but I drove a horse and buggy around the lake. It was a wild, uninhabited region this side of Michigan City with two or three taverns of evil reputation. There were a few houses on the road now called "Cottage Grove Avenue" and about where Thirtieth Street now is I called at Myrick's tavern to water horse, and asked how far to Chicago. The answer was "about three miles. When you get a little farther out on the prairie you can see it."

Father had bought a cottage on State Street where Number 146 now is, on school land. Sister Lizzy was head housekeeper.

We soon after opened a Flour, Produce and Commission store on Market Street in Lind's Block, and the sign "C. C. Wallin & Son" was first put up about May 1st, 1851. It has been up ever since, and except the addition of a small s for plural, made soon after, for forty-five years was unchanged in its membership, which consisted of our father, C. C. Wallin, my brother Franklin B. and myself.

During that summer I made three trips to St. Louis by canal and river with cargos to sell, and was fairly successful in the ventures. It was then I first met an epidemic of cholera; the people were the most panic stricken I ever saw anywhere.

During the fall father bought a tannery on the north branch west side, a little above Halsted Street, being run by John Taylor on a patent tannage system, with all the patents, mysteries and materials in full operation. Brother Franklin was put in charge with J. D. Marshall as shop foreman.

It was a great wonder the enterprise did not wipe out the little capital father had, which was less than four thousand dollars. It took us most two years to find out that the system was worthless; then we managed to pull out of it with capital unimpaired.

It is not my purpose to write a personal history, but a brief story of the beginnings of a family on the frontier which developed a modest success. I often notice the great interest taken in the beginnings of things; even babies get more attention than the grandparents after the battles of life.

I speak chiefly of events that no one now living

knows as well. The business career of our firm is an open book of which I am not overproud, as several of our competitors far outstripped us in magnitude of operations and money making, but only one who was alongside of us in the first twenty years is still in the business after several changes of firm. We have for many years had credit of being the oldest firm in Chicago.

In my review of our business career my mind rests chiefly upon our utter inexperience at the beginning, and I wonder how we managed to even live. Father had no experience or aptitude as a merchant, and as a man had never done any steady manual labor. He always kept me to the front, and during some rather long illnesses I had in the 60's threatened to close the store.

He quite abandoned it before 1870 and went West to live and tried to persuade me to follow him. In the last years of his life he told me he was aware of his incapacity in business and noticed that it "prospered quite as well when he wasn't round."

He was habitually very conservative, but spasmodically rash and impetuous in business affairs. Patient plodding over details was irksome to him although he tried to work into it.

He was level headed and shrewd, and had good judgment in matters that he was familiar with, and pleasant manners and was respected and popular with the few people whom he cared to meet.

Another thought occurring to everybody is the neglected opportunities we must have had to gain great wealth. In answer I would say we strove steadily for it. We made some ventures outside of our business. In an ambitious impulse father even bought a ship. We built a brick store, corner of Randolph and Clinton,- both

foolish undertakings at the time. We bought a little outside property and narrowly escaped becoming millionaires by refusing some. Father was a charter member of First National Bank, etc., etc.

F. B. was often bringing out something "paying better than tannery" which was generally turned down by his partners, who were unwilling to borrow much for anything. This was an error,— we should have pushed our business harder by more borrowing, especially in the 60's.

Finally we were none of us sufficiently anxious for wealth to put forth the supreme effort. Perhaps not capable of it. We saw our neighbors pass us in the race with great strides and were not much disturbed, but content to be a tortoise; and at last when we had a modest competence in reach ready to quit and give the young men their chance, with the old name and flag still flying.