

The Genealogy Of The Gray-Hort Family

I would like to dedicate this bit of meager work to Mrs. Ruth Ann Strong from whom I received almost all my information about her family. She is truly interested in the studies of family histories; a facet of our nation's past. These people, descendants of common but vital characters of the past, concern us.

Mr. Henry Gray, Sr., settled in Fairfield, Connecticut, by 1643. He was appointed Deputy of Fairfield in April of 1643. Henry Gray married Linda Frost, daughter of William. William's will of 1645 named her, her husband and children one of the Five Farmers of Maxamus. Their children were Henry, born about 1645, Jacob and Mary.

The eldest son of Henry Gray, Sr., Henry Gray, Jr., born in about 1645, married Margaret Patchin and later, Hannah, widow of Sam Gunn and daughter of Andrew Sanford. Their sons Samuel, Isaac, William, and David lived in Westport, Conn., as children.

Samuel Gray was baptized January 25, 1704, and married twice during his life. His first marriage was to Eleanor Sturgis on October 24, 1734, daughter of Christopher Sturgis who died in 1762, in his 58th year. His second wife, Joanna Stone of Providence was more fruitful with five children. Their children were Sanford, born September, 1735, died November, 1735, Hannah, born Nov. 12, 1736, Hezekiah, born November 14, 1738, Sam and Mary.

Hezekiah, son of Samuel, born November 14, 1738, died at Bedford, New York, by 1784. He married Abigail Waterbury in 1760. His children were David, 1770, Abigail, 1761, Lucy, 1763, Ellen, 1765, and Hezekiah, 1767.

David Gray came to Oswego County in 1812 and died the next year, 1813. His gravestone is still in the Rural Cemetery, Oswego. David settled on Lot 21, in 1812 in Oswego Village. William Moore and Paul Whitte from Onondaga Valley came at the same time. The first clearings and improvements in this locality were made by them. There were no roads or even marked trees to the village of Oswego.

"David D. Gray cleared part of Lot 21 where Mr. Parkinson,

from England in 1833, resided in an early day. William Moore was the first surveyor and laid out the Fifth Street Road, in 1813. Mr. Jesse Gray informs us that it was a terrible road and though the distance was only three miles, the first time he attempted to go to Oswego he got lost and had to stay in the woods over night." 1816 marked the "Cold Summer" when there were frosts every month and crops were a complete failure. Breadstuffs rose to forbidden prices and only the great number of deer, salmon, and other game, and fish, saved the people from famine.

David Gray married Clarissa Patchin. They were parents of David, Jr., George, Jesse, Abigail, Harvey, and Clarissa. The eldest son, David, took over the family when his father died in 1813, at the age of fifteen.

David Dunham married Sophia Meade. They sometime later, became parents of William L. who fought for the North in the Civil War. He was born in 1835, Isabella was born in 1835, Nathaniel, a newspaper correspondent for the South in the Civil War, born in 1838; Frederick born in 1840, who fought for the North, Mary Louisa was born in 1843, and Harlon born in 1845, who died as an infant in 1848. Since William L. and Frederick fought for the North in the Civil War and Nathaniel for the South, quite a bit of correspondence was sent home to mother and sisters from the brothers. A great deal of conflict passed through these letters. Frederick and Nathaniel were very adamant on their views of the splitting of the Union. The next pages of Nathaniel's and Frederick's letters express their strong philosophical ideas and stands on the war, the people and the griefs.

Some excerpts from Nathaniel's letters during the war were as follows:

May 11th, 1861--

"Since last I saw you, great events have taken place in the government of this country. Little did we dream in childhood days, that the once loved and powerful country of our birth, which was a guiding star to all other nations throughout the universe, would so soon be o'verted--and this through a fanatical clique: yet still such is the case--the seeds of discord have been sown, now the harvest is being reaped--and one exceedingly unpropitious garnering it is to one side in particular. A few short months, and these states were united together--but the

whirlwind was brewing, which was to burst forth over this beautiful land and scatter terror and famine amongst its inhabitants. A few short months, and ten of those 'bright particular stars,' that once were emblazoned upon the banners of a now defunct government, and whose 'broad stripes and bright stars' were wafted to the breeze from the tall mastheads of our beautiful shipping throughout the entire commercial world, and the sight of which has made every American's heart leap to the mouth with Joy--I say ten have been obliterated from the one and placed upon another banner somewhat similar, with the exception that there are not so many stripes in the latter, as there were in the old, or former."

The next quote is from the same letter explaining recent occurrences in the city of Pensacola, Florida.

"Great excitement is prevailing in this city--everything has a military aspect; companies arriving, going, drilling and parading; new ones being formed daily; marshal streams of music--even at this writing I can hear a fife and drum. It is hourly expected that Fort Pickens will be attacked by the Confederate troops. The blockade of this fort has commenced, as you are well aware, I suppose."

Nathaniel felt strongly about splitting the Union and did not fail to express his views, even though the letters were censored.

Frederick's letters were somewhat different, more of a friendly, newsy letter, but in certain parts he told of immediate happenings and army movements such as those included in the next quote.

"Since I last read your letter we have marched from below Yorktown a distance of fifty miles and are camped eighteen miles from Richmond. Palmer's brigade have marched six miles yesterday and we are within a short distance of the Rebels. We left Newkent Court House, Saturday and are twelve miles from there now. I wrote a letter to Henry Lewis while there. The eighth cavalry were encamped there. Henry Jenne was with us while there; he is well and looks healthy as a Rocky Mountain Ranger, that's the way all of us soldiers look now mostly. The weather here is pleasant today and there is a fine cool breeze whistling through our camp; we are encamped in a beautiful place now, we camped here last night; don't

expect to stay long. The Rebels keep retreating as fast as this Army of Potomac advances and I think before long we will have them surrounded here at Richmond. That is what our general is after. That is General McClellan's plan I think."

Fred formed his own opinions and didn't mind expressing them, unlike many soldiers during the Civil War.

A daughter of David Dunham Gray born in 1813, Mary Louisa, changed the Gray name to Hort, by marrying Henry Hort. Mrs. Hort was very learned for a woman in her day and enjoyed writing. An excellent example of this was her essay on Education--

"What can be more important than to obtain a good education? Without it what would a person be good for? It strengthens the moral principles. It prepares us for a future sphere of actions and makes us contented with our lot. It walks with us in the rule of years and does not leave us till we die. It fits us for a better world where all the good of every nation meet and dwell forever. And why should we not strive to obtain that good education?"

Mary L. Gray

Mary Louisa Gray, soon after leaving school, married Henry Hort, the branch through which this Gray family was traced.

Mary and Henry had two children. Nathaniel, born November 26, 1878, first Hort in World War I, and Arby L. Nathaniel was an interesting person in himself as his Captain relates to his brother Arby L. after Nathaniel's death on October 4, 1918, at the Battle of Argonne Forest. The newspaper article published in the Oswego Daily Times is as follows:

"Tells how Lt. Nathaniel Hort was killed. His captain pays high praise to former Oswego boy.

Arby L. Hort has received a letter from Captain J. S. Douglas, of the death of his brother in France. The letter follows:

'Your letter relative to the death of Lt. Nathaniel H. Hort received a few days ago. It will be a great pleasure to give you the information desired, as I am sure it will be in a way consoling to relatives and friends left behind to receive something more than an official notice, "killed in action."

Lt. Hort joined my company about the first of May, 1918...

Our regiment arrived at Brest on the wonderful ship Leviathan on May 30th after a thrilling brush with "subs" just off the harbor...

Going into our first big offensive on September 26th on the Verdun front, our brigade, the 159th, was in support subjected to artillery fire until October 1st, when we moved up in attack. Our batallion made an attack on October 4th on a piece of wood that was heavily defended by machine guns and had been causing a lot of trouble.

Lt. Hort was hit in the leg by a machine gun's bullet that afternoon. It was not severe and he refused to go back to the dressing station. Shortly afterward the Boche put down a fearful counter barrage, and we were forced to fall back about 600 yards to a trench for protection. We made the trench after suffering quite number of casualties.

I was writing a message to my commander when a big shell skipped the top of the trench, killing Lt. Hort and one of my sergeants. He was not over six feet from me and though I couldn't even stop to think of it then, I assure you the unfortunate death of my friend and tried and true comrade in arms was a great shock to me after we had been relieved and I had time to reflect.

Your brother was an affable gentleman, one of the most conscientious and loyal officers I have ever met.'

His body is buried in the Bois de Feye, near Nate-lois, France.

Arby L., born July 28, 1881, his younger and only brother, was a resident of Oswego all his life. He owned Hort's newsroom on West 1st Street for fifty years.

Arby married Ruth Adams, having two children. Ruth Ann, a daughter, and John A., a younger son.

Ruth Ann, a nurse, married Robert Strong and resides at 213 East 9th Street, Oswego. She compiled most of the information concerning the genealogy of the Gray family.

John A. is a Lt. in the United States Navy, now stationed in Tokyo, Japan. He is a member of a very select military advisory group to Japanese missilemen. He is married to Faith Greeney. They have a son, John, Jr., and a daughter, Rosemarie, who is adopted.

Ruth has five children, Robert, adopted, Lynn, Lucinda, Susan and Ruth.

Over the years the Grays displayed a sense of longevity for only four generations have evolved since David Gray came to Oswego.

Bibliography

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