

RECOLLECTIONS ON THE SWAIN FAMILY

by

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Isaac Swain

About 1793 Isaac Swain applied to the property authorities to be relieved from the public office which he held. His application was denied and a detail was sent to prevent his leaving England. It reached the dock just after the boat had sailed for America with Isaac, his wife and seven children. For a time after reaching America the Swains lived in Philadelphia where President George Washington was often seen riding his white horse through the streets of the Capital city. The next move was to Loyalsock, Pa. Then Isaac, a land surveyor came with Robert Morris into New York State. Here Isaac decided to settle on the Niagara Frontier. In 1805 he cut a trail through the forest from the Devil's Hole on the Niagara River to where the present Military Road crosses Gill Creek. Here he partly cleared 30 or 40 acres and built a log house which he sold to John Witmer. He built a sawmill there in 1817.

In 1807 Isaac bought 80 acres which was the southern half of a lot. On this 3 mile reserve he built a log house in back of the old cobblestone. Youngstown did not develop its name until 1808 when John Young opened the first store in the village.

Isaac Swain and Samuel DeVeaux (founder of the DeVeaux School, Niagara Falls) had a contract to supply Fort Niagara with meat and farm products during the War of 1812. During the War he rented a log cabin on the river side of the road, to the government who stored arms and ammunition for Fort Point Battery which was partly built on the Isaac Swain's property. There was a sunken road leading to it. I remember playing in it when I was a small child. When it seemed certain that the English troops would invade the Niagara Frontier (in retaliation for the burning of Newark) Isaac sent his family back into the country, towards Lockport. He remained. On December 19, 1813, Isaac and his dog

RAILROAD IN YOUNGSTOWN

On October 21, 1855 the Niagara Falls and Lake Ontario Railroad ran one train to Youngstown then took up the track. The road bed was cut through the Swain property from the south end and crossed the River Road in front of the old stone house. It ran north west to the river then north to the dock where the riverboats landed. The big stone turntable was on the flat near the southern end of the Bloody Run. We children used to play around it. A bridge over the Railroad cut was used to get from the front end of the farm to the back part.

THE OLD SWAIN HOUSE - OLD COBBLESTONE

After the death of Isaac Swain in 1838, the widow continued to live in the cobblestone house with her young sons, George and William. She always made her home with George. The years went by. In 1847, William married Sabrina Barret and brought his bride to the cobblestone house to live. During the gold rush in 1849, he left his wife and tiny daughter and brother George, and went to California.

George wanted to go but somebody had to look after the family and business. A few years ago William's daughter, Sara Sabrina Swain covered the same ground that her took in and wrote a book covering her father's California experience.

On his return trip from California, William was very sick with Panama fever. George went to New York to meet him. On the way the railroad car George was in went rolling over the bank of the Delaware River. As a result, George was so covered with bandages that when he met William in the New York hotel lobby it was difficult to tell which brother looked worse.

On their way home, at the top of the Lewiston Hill, William stood up waving his arm over the plain below the mountain, and said, "Gentlemen, I have traveled from the Atlantic to the Pacific and there is the most beautiful sight I have ever seen!"

After a few years in the old home, William moved his family to a log house in the Grove at the southern end of the Swain property which joined the first place north of the Ayer home. His daughter Sara was born there, George and his mother lived in Old Cobblestone.

In 1857, George married Cardelia Stansbury Cornwell of Henrietta, N.Y. whom he met when in the Custom House at the Bridge. He brought his bride to the stone house. His son Daniel C. was born there. Then George moved to Lockport when elected sheriff of Niagara County. William moved back into the stone house where he lived and passed on in 1904. His son Lincoln was born there.

William held various public offices - assessor, school trustee, etc. He had one of the first of three peach orchards in Niagara County.

The site of the house is on part of the battlefield of LaBelle Famille which resulted in the French surrender of Fort Niagara to the English on July 24, 1759. Two tablets on the property attest to this. One is from the National Society Daughters of American Colonists and the other from the New York State Department of Education.

In the hearth before the living room fireplace is the sole relic of the first original house - a side of a Franklin stove. The last "Swain" to call the old stone house "home" was William Swain's daughter, Sara S. Swain. It was sold to Mrs. Warren Perry in 1946, after 110 years of Swain occupancy, and now July 1956, it belongs to Thomas Hooker.

* (then Dr. Mrs. Edwin Kraft
in 1780 Mrs. Mrs. Poley Hammer)

GEORGE SWAIN SR.

The river bank lot opposite the Presbyterian church in Youngstown was bought for a school site from John Young for \$100. A small wooden building was erected on it in 1819. It was the first school house built in the town of Porter. It was used for religious purposes until the First Presbyterian church was built.

About 1840, the villagers felt the need of a better building and decided on brick. So the little school house was moved to the southwest corner of Lockport Street/^(in the woods) to what is now Third Street. Here George Swain (then about twenty) taught school. In 1840, when the brick building was finished, there was a rush for seats which were decided by George Swain, the first and only teacher in the new building. That year ended his teaching although he was always much interested in all school affairs. He was a school inspector when he was twenty-one. Over fifty years afterwards, his daughter Jessie C. was one of the two teachers in the brick school house. She was one of three teachers in the new brick school house on the northwest corner of Lockport and Third Streets which was authorized in 1892 as it was felt the "littlebrick" had outlived its usefulness. It was sold for a dwelling. Even the new school building soon had to be enlarged. Now a fine new Lewiston-Porter Elementary and Junior-Senior High Building will be ready for September 1956 occupancy; a far cry from the school-in-the-woods in 1840.

George Swain attended Lima Academy in Lima, New York. He studied law in the Holmes office in Lockport, N.Y. He was Collector of Customs at Suspension Bridge (Niagara Falls and Youngstown) for many years. Many times supervisor, he also held many other public offices.

To him was given the credit of the town of Porter's not being bonded when the Rome, Watertown and Ogsdenburg Railroad was built across Niagara County in 1874. George Swain was the first president of Youngstown, New York in 1854. He was at one time an officer of the First Presbyterian Church. For a time he and a partner operated the old stone mill on the river shore. It was located at the foot of the hill on the west end of Lockport Street. Wheat was brought by boat from Canada then ground into flour and shipped out in barrels.

He was sheriff of Niagara County during the Civil War. While living in Lockport his little son died. Later his daughter, Jessie was born. On returning to Youngstown, the family lived in the Presbyterian manse then moved into the log house in the grove where George Jr. was born. Isaac's widow died there.

The Swain brothers dissolved partnership, William taking the north part of the property with the buildings on it and George took the south part with no buildings but more acreage. There he built a house and other buildings.

Here his children George Jr. and Jessie grew up. After years of occupancy, the family moved to (and still own) 210 Main Street, Youngstown. George Sr. died there. This home was bought from Judson Eaton who bought the George Swain place up the River Road, now called Kincaid place.

The house on 210 Main Street is the last bit of the Niagara River and still held by any of the pioneer, Isaac Swain's descendants.

(My earliest recollection of Dr. Skinner's office was where Mrs. A. Bullock now lives - I never heard of any other. I remember hearing older members of the Root family tell of seeing him go by old Dr. Root's home when he first came to Youngstown, with his two little daughters.)