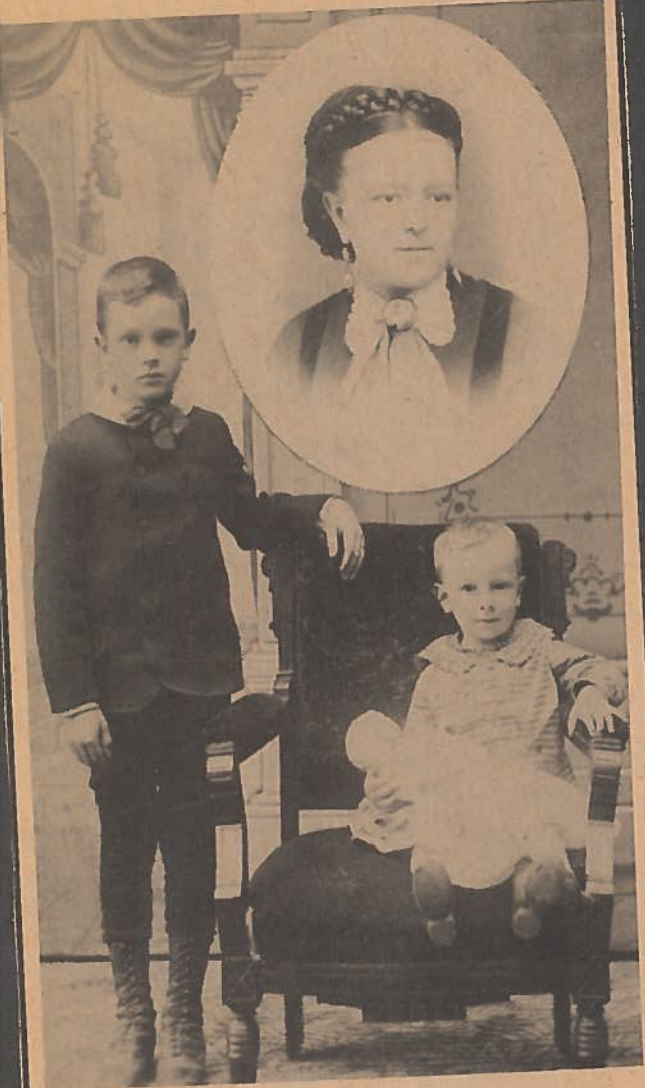


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THE GUMAER FAMILY — ANOTHER SLANT

This is a story which I never intended to write -- at least not until some supplementary information came to my attention since last week's column entitled "The End of a Family". It is with special thanks to Mrs. Beryl Taylor of Eagle Harbor that I am able to compile more on this family. Mrs. Taylor has generously loaned the pictures here for us to see, of Mrs. Frances Bennett Gumaer (1847-1920) and her two sons Albert Gumaer (1878-1901) and Edward Gumaer (1883-1915). "The End of a Family" was a story which was actually written at least thirty years ago by Marc W. Cole, Sr. As stated last week, these were his recollections, and I might add, recollections which went back for over fifty years at the time he wrote the story. I believe this story which he wrote properly described is what would be called folklore. Perhaps too, his story was embellished with certain details to make it more interesting.

Mrs. Taylor has now given us another slant on the Gumaer family not only through pictures but by some archival material. Frances Gumaer was described in the story as "...the mousey, shy kind, not much to look at..." Well, here is her portrait circa 1875. You can be the judge, but I'd say she appears to be a rather attractive woman for her times. The portrait of the children Albert and Edward is actually quite charming and they would appear to be intelligent. Certainly nothing in their faces would indicate that either of these boys was demented in any way. Mrs. Taylor's supplementary information indicates that Albert's body was discovered by Wm. Grapes, not Charlie Cole, on the Thomas Root farm woods in Gaines during December of 1901, rather than in their own barnyard. This was after he had been missing since September 1901. Mr. Grapes was cutting wood at the time and found a piece of clothing sticking above the snow. He dug down and discovered the corpse. Albert's decomposed body was identified by his father Jerome B. Gumaer (1845-1913), who had been a prisoner of war in Libby Prison for five months. The coroner, Dr. J.E. Sutton, figured Albert had been dead about two months and gave the leading cause of death as starvation although exposure played a part. As Marc Cole stated "What happened to Albert Gumaer never came out..." which is probably mostly true since it will always be a mystery as to why Albert left home seeking refuge in the wood, eventually succumbing to starvation. As to Edward Gumaer the brother, his latter days were spend in the Rochester State Hospital where he died in 1915.

Frances Gumaer also had a sister and two brothers. They were descendants of the Farr Family, early settlers in the Town of Gaines. Prior to the birth of Albert Gumaer, Frances had given birth to a still born baby. In 1915 she had her home at Eagle Harbor wired for electric lights, one of the first in that area. She also owned a fairly prominent piece of property in downtown Albion. Upon her death in 1920, she left a bequest of over \$2000.00 in memory of her father Albert Bennett and herself, to the Arnold Gregory Memorial Hospital. From what I can glean from remaining bits of information the Bennetts and Gumaers must have been fine people, especially Frances, who was able to carry her own. We can certainly feel sorry for her and her plight in life. She out-lived her husband and three children and was the end of her family. Frequently we hear of "the good old days" but I'm not so sure that they were really that good. People had their serious family problems back then just as we do now as this story serves to point out. When all is said and done, "life just ain't easy."