

YPSILANTI GLEANINGS

PAST SCENES and OLD TIMES

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THE HAMMOND-MOVIUS PAPERS (MICHIGAN PIONEERS)

A Recent Find: The Hammond-Movius Papers

A couple of years ago, when the Shaefer Toy Store was being repaired, workmen came upon a box of old letters in the attic. Carl Elliott, the contractor, realized the value of the find to the community and rescued the letters. He had studied History at Eastern Michigan University and, his curiosity aroused, he took home the dirty old papers, many encrusted with dried bees' nests, the dust of 130 years etc.. He carefully read through them and decided that the Ypsilanti History Museum should have them for its archives. I have spent some time now--off and on over the months--in reading and classifying them getting rid of dust and dirt, and trying to see what this chance discovery of a few bundles of letters and business papers from the 1830' will tell us about early Ypsilanti and what it was that concerned people during that time period.

The 1830's we remember as "The Age of Jackson," a time when President Andrew Jackson was the dominant figure. The new American nation was only in its sixth decade, and there was a question, growing ever more insistent, as to whether such a large republic as the United States could last. Such an ambitious experiment as launched by the Founding Fathers had never before been tried. The question remained while the people were busy settling the West and building up the economy; indeed, Michigan was passing from territorial stage into statehood in the middle of that decade, in 1836, to be precise.

Because someone evidently forgot them in an attic, these papers belonging to two families--Hammond and Movius--tell us about Michigan pioneers otherwise long since forgotten.

Taking the Hammond letters first, let us consider Sereno C.

Hammond. Born in 1813, one of ten children--he was number six--he

left clerking at the store of one A. Baldwin in the village of Sherburne, New York, to go west and seek his fortune in business. Mr. Baldwin furnished the young man with a form letter of recommendation addressed individually to a number of leading mercantile establishments including that of James J. Roosevelt and Co. of New York City. Baldwin's character reference, dated Sept. 26th, 1834, read: "The bearer Mr. S.C. Hammond has been a clerk in my store for the last year and about to commence business for himself in Tioga County, Pennsylvania. If he should want goods on a credit, I think there is no risk as he is of steady habits and from very respectable & wealthy parents." (Good credentials for any era, it would seem!)

But for reasons unrecorded, Sereno Hammond went beyond western Pennsylvania into northern Ohio, where in December of 1834, as a struggling young store keeper in Charlestown, near Cleveland, he received a gossipy letter from his father Chester Hammond, from Smyrna, New York, which is where most of the large brood of Hammond children had been brought up on the family farm. The father, descended from old line New England stock, set the tone for his God-fearing family and imparted religious advice, as follows:

(We were) really glad to hear that God had not left you to plunge into the lake or fall a victim to outrage--or in other words that no adverse Providence has befallen you but that God has watched over your life and seated you in the heart of our dear friends in Ohio. It is pleasant if providence has had you to locate yourself among friends and in the midst of privileges but we are never to shun duty if attended with inconvenience or even great peril, but if duty heeds and providence directs to friends and safety we ought to be thankful, for these mercies do not come by chance.

After getting off that good article of Calvinist philosophy, the patriarch of the Hammonds had further advice for his son, who was just embarking on his worldly calling, "I hope as you are commencing business you will let honesty, integrity and uprightness mark all your

ways. (Consider) your religious privileges and improve them. Follow the direction of the Apostles, 'be faithfull in business, fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord.' "

Probably his father's letter caught up with him about the time Sereno moved north to Ypsilanti. Also, a married woman (Mrs. H.) from Charlestown, Ohio, wrote Sereno a letter that no doubt was most disturbing to the young man. It seems that she had been accused by her neighbors in that Ohio town of having uttered "unchaste language" in his presence. Sereno wrote her at once and absolved her of the charge, declaring that her remarks were not at all offensive or even unchaste. But soon another woman from Charlestown, a cousin of Sereno, sent him a chastening letter for his having given Mrs. H. any aid whatsoever. His cousin referred to the local Moral Reform Society which had brought charges against Mrs. H., a member. For her part, Mrs. H. denied all before the board of the Moral Reform Society. Sereno's woman cousin concluded somewhat cattily, "It may be amusing to you to know how Mrs. H. felt and what she did after her first interview with the Board... She started, it being near sunset, and rode over through the ___ Street hailing men and women and did not return til almost midnight and went alone besides... All eyes, all ears are waiting for your reply." Sereno, in keeping with the Roman quality of his name, calmly summarized his recollections of the allegedly scandalous occasion, "Mrs. H. had made a remark that she would not act upon a second consideration make further." That seems to have put an end to the Ypsilanti-Charlestown correspondence.

This all may appear to be trivial, but the episode does illustrate the constant struggle that went on between the forces of moral conformity and those rough souls committed more to frontier democracy and at the same time dead set against the local Establishment with its

concern for strict moral standards. The Revolutionary War itself had been fought at an earlier time when patriots assumed that a Republic could only live if its people were virtuous (we are now in the Bicentennial period being reminded of the phrases the Founding Fathers borrowed from the supposedly virtuous Roman Republic of antiquity which had been described for them by Cicero and others, phrases that celebrated virtue, self-sacrifice, non-materialism and innocence. The American Revolution had been won, but there was to be a no "Republic of Virtue", because too many people forgot about public virtue and self-sacrifice as they concentrated on their own individualistic, materialistic goals. But to achieve some minimal measure of virtue, there were influential church people who combined their religious concept of morality with the shibboleths of the new democratic society and put into motion certain pressures to force all citizens to accept their norms of morality. The results were uneven, but the effort generated a host of agencies and instrumentalities for inculcating moral concepts thought necessary for the well-being of a Christian republic.

Ypsilanti--a struggling pioneer village--was no more immune to all of this kind of controversy than that comparable little Ohio town that badgered Mrs. H. For instance, in the Mark Norris letters for this decade, Rowenna Norris (the mill owner's wife) wrote her son Decatur (then attending a private school in Marshall) to the effect that the boys of Ypsilanti had collected together and instituted a search for a certain youth, whom they planned to tar and feather. He had allegedly abused his dear mother, but (fortunately for the intended victim) he was nowhere to be found. The lad grew up to become a leading merchant of the village.

Also, Rev. Harvey C. Colburn in his history of Ypsilanti tells o

a law and order group founded in 1838, "The Ypsilanti Vigilance Committee," formed to counter a wave of lawlessness and terror. Apparently it was successful in its mission. Neither Rev. Colburn or Sister Maria Hayda, whose perceptive University of Michigan doctoral dissertation on Ypsilanti to 1850 found any records kept by such a group. The best citizens were members. Possibly there were no records kept by the organization, but there still just might have been (whose attic might they be in?).

Evidently they did need a law and order society. Frontier Ypsilanti was not immune to demonstrations by the rough and ready element. Just a few years before the Vigilance Committee was created, an unruly mob in 1835 set upon the acting-governor of the state, Mr. Horner, who had come to Ypsilanti to pay the town a visit, and Mr. Horner was a debonair Virginian with charm and tact. But, flaunting his best intentions, the mob threw stones through the window of the tavern and Governor Horner had to sleep on the floor to be safe, and the landlord charged him for damages!

To return to our friend Sereno, who had just removed to Ypsilanti. The papers Carl Elliott discovered are from the decade of the 1830's and are spotty some years and more complete other years. There are a few letters and records for 1833, 1834, 1835, 1836, 1837, and there are many more for 1838 and 1839. It appears that Sereno Hammond quit possibly was engaged in the milling business from about 1835 to 1836. We have an affidavit signed by a brother, Charles G. Hammond, dated Oct. 10th, 1836, authorizing Sereno to settle all interests in the milling business at Superior and Lowell. On July 4th (presumably the same year) Sereno inventoried the mill property, listing some 17 names owing money totalling \$60 and estimating the investment at \$400.00. Around the mill dam he noted such tangible assets as lumber, saws,

fanning mill etc.; possibly it was a saw mill combined with flour-grinding apparatus on the same premises.

But a letter from his partner, Julius Movius, written to Sereno from Detroit on October 22nd, 1837, gives us a handle on the problem as to what Sereno and his partner were doing in Ypsilanti.

Dear friend Hammond: Our goods arrived yesterday on the schooner "Virginia."I shall load at Woods Boat tomorrow morningI want you to go immediately on the receipt of this to Mr. Wyards and start him with one or two teams; do not for any thing neglect this. You may also mention it to Mr. Norris and perhaps he will send his team. I think I can load three teams with Box goods. I expect some money either by mail or from Mr. Bloss, upon which I must depend. I have made a curious trade and do not know but what you will scold about it. Mr. Brooks would not give me any encouragement when he would or could pay the note; since he had not collected any thing on the property sold & by what he said I concluded if we push it at all, he must take the extent of the law for it, & in view of these gloomy prospects, I have succeeded with a good deal of trouble, to trade off his note for a lot of firstrate gaitor boots & 2 boxes best coarse boots at New York prices. Gaitor boots I could not obtain in New York and there is always a great demand for them in the fall & winter; moreover, I think there is not a pair in the village - if you want to I could at any rate wait till I get home. Do not say anything of this trade to anybody, and the gaitors came from New York. I feel at a loss about sugar. They ask me $11\frac{1}{2}$ & 12 cents for a good article cash. Thompson is wavering, he is a jumbled man, cannot make up his mind as to what to do. I shall try once more tomorrow morning to buy of him & hope to try with success. I wish if you have time to set Harlow to cleaning out the cellar. Pitch all the empty and kegs up in the south west corner of it, get Allen Stewart to have the door in the cellar made without fail.

Don't take River Raisin & Lake Erie RR money. It is not worth anything here. Adieu. My love to your sister and cousin. Tell the latter to be contented a little while longer & she shall have work enough. Adieu. J M Movius. NB I wish you would send me one of your brother's horses, if work do them good. I think there is no danger of his coming down. Send it by Bloss.

Now, to interpret the best we can some of the references. Hammo and Movius Company ran a warehouse business, renting same from Mark Norris, and presumably it was located in the depot town area. Movius often went east to buy goods for a store they also operated. He was the buyer for the firm. Allen Stewart was Sereno's brother-in-law.

Note the problems they were having with uncollected notes, worthless money etc. - the famous Panic of 1837 was on and business was precarious.

By this time, Sereno Hammond had married; the bride was Rebecca Pardee, daughter of Ariovistus Pardee, who had come from eastern New York State to settle a farm in the Ypsilanti area. He served also as treasurer of the village from 1835 to 1839. The Pardees, like the Hammonds, were an old stock New England family. Among the six children of Ariovistus and Eliza Platt Pardee were: (1) Mary Ann, who married William R. Post, who in turn was the father of Samuel Post, who owned the house that sheltered these musty papers under its roof, and (2) Juliet, who married Dr. Allen Stewart (we have had the reference to Allen, the man who was going to make the cellar door; the daughter of Allen and Juliet was Frances, who later served as postmistress of Ypsilanti in the 1880's, and, of course, child number (3) Rachel, who was 24, just 3 years the junior of her husband Sereno when she was married in January of 1838. They had two children, a boy and a girl.

Very few of the letters contain personal observations on the day to day problems they experienced. In fact, most of the papers we can label Business Correspondence. But there is one letter from brother Charles Hammond of Union City, Michigan--out to the west and not far from Coldwater in a region that was really more frontier than Ypsilanti. Charles wrote the newly weds in October of 1838 and passed on some personal observations: "Glad to hear Rachel is growing. Charlotte (his wife) says hope you are housekeeping and enjoying it well. She would like to peek in and see you. 'Tell Sereno to bring a pail of water now and then and all the wood if Rachel does her own work.' "

Sad to relate, business in Ypsilanti was really not Sereno's cup of tea. He helped Movius run the warehouse and store but he seems to have hunkered for greener pastures. He heard from Paul F. Pettit in

June of 1838, and Pettit wanted \$2500 for his interest in a furnace in Mishawaka, Indiana (near South Bend). The plant had ample water power available tools and patterns. A few months later Pettit wrote that he had been swindled out of his property by his partner; not only that but also Pettit owed little sums of money he had borrowed while visiting Ypsilanti W.R. Post \$10, Drs. Robert Morse and Francis Rexford \$2.50 each. He wanted to go South.

So did an uncle of Sereno's want to go South. A. Goodrich, his sophisticated and worldly uncle from Brooklyn, New York, wrote him in 1835 and suggested that Sereno--then in Ohio--pitch in with him and go to northern Florida. Uncle Goodrich had it all figured out:

The habits of the people in most of the Northern & Western states are parsimonious & it is difficult to make money in the generality of cases, among them when competition too is discouraging. But it is otherwise in the cotton producing part of the country. There, the maxim of A short life & a merry one seems to be acted upon & lends to more liberality in all dealings, gives more scope in many respects & not to say most enormous profits there. I should think (it) would be the place decidedly for a young man to succeed the best & get on the fastest - & to such a region I now most decidedly commend you & with temperate & prudent habits I have not the least doubt your health there might be preserved & not only that but it might be essentially improved.

Which seems to suggest Sereno endured ill health, but there is no other reference in all the papers to his health. Uncle Goodrich was of the opinion a study of the Florida map might show one where a railroad or canal should be built, and he felt that the spot where either would cut across north-south rivers might well become a great metropolis.

Sereno had another uncle who we know did go south--to Missouri. This uncle, Charles Hammond (not to be confused with Sereno's brother Charles C. Hammond) wrote Sereno's father...Chester...in 1835 a letter that has its middle missing, so that one has to surmise much of his meaning, but is clear from the reading that Uncle Charles had left hi

family. He wrote, "I am like a reed dried and shaken," but even so, this dried and shaken reed waxed eloquently about the timber and coal prospects of Missouri and apparently he was hoping to go into business there.

In many ways Sereno was like both his uncles, none too successful in his undertakings; and this was the burden of a letter written to him by his brother Charles G. Hammond in October of 1838. Sereno was told "Buffalo or Detroit would want more funds than you have got now. Get things straight first. Don't always be looking for something nice until you can wind up some of the old Sams (whatever old Sams were.) Not a single one that you have spun has been yet wound up."

If Charles G. talked turkey to him regarding business aspirations Sereno had another brother, Henry Laurens Hammond, who became a minister and who wrote long epistles filled with spiritual advice. Then a student on holiday from the brand new college of Oberlin, Henry Hammond attended the wedding of Rachel Pardee and Sereno Hammond in 1838. He had his first ride on a train from Tecumseh to Toledo, from which point he and two other travellers chartered a sleigh across the Black Swamp of northern Ohio as he returned to Oberlin. The Hammonds had been intimately tied into the evangelical crusades of the Rev. Charles Finney, the famous Hell-fire and damnation divine who had electrified New York State, the "burnt-over" region. Finney lived awhile with Charles G. Hammond, Sereno's brother, when Charles was in business in Canandaigua, New York, before coming on to Michigan. Henry's letter reported how Rev. Finney was exposing the Mormons in the Cleveland area. Years later Charles, too, was a severe foe of Mormons when he was a railroad builder in the west, out on the Union Pacific line. Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormons, was like the Hammonds a native of New York State and no doubt this intense opposition to the Mormons

originated with struggles against them in the "burnt over" region of New York earlier in the 1830's.

In this particular letter Henry requested of his brother Sereno that he ask Mr. Movius, his business partner in Ypsilanti, to send to Henry the written Hebrew alphabet with some examples of the compositions of the letters. He explained, "Some of my friends are anxious to see it and learn to write it." One can hardly picture Oberlin College so primitive, without adequate text books or library resource relying upon a German merchant from Ypsilanti for the Hebrew alphabet. Rev. Henry L. Hammond, after graduation from Oberlin College in 1838 and subsequent theological seminaries served as Congregational pastor in Michigan--in Homer and in Detroit, also in Grand Rapids, and he preached in other states as well. He became the treasurer and prime mover of the Chicago Theological Seminary, retiring to end his days in 1893 as a businessman. He married four times, and the wife who outlived him was the sister of the famous anti-slavery martyr, E.P. Lovejoy of Illinois.

There are a few letters from Andrew Goodrich Hammond, a younger brother. In 1836 he became a cashier of a branch of the Michigan State Bank in Kalamazoo. He was elected as a Whig to the Michigan legislature in 1836 and wrote Sereno to ask if his family could come to Ypsilanti to live with Sereno and Rachel until they could find a suitable boarding house. Inasmuch as the legislature met in Detroit, Andrew did not want to leave his family so far away out on the Michigan frontier. He finally decided to let them stay in Kalamazoo. Andrew Hammond was also a land agent for the federal government at the federal office in Kalamazoo. In 1840 he moved to New England, where he died in 1856.

Mention has been made a few times to Charles G. Hammond, the older brother. His life was the success story that eluded the less favored Sereno. Born in 1804 in Smyrna, New York, Charles was converted by an evangelical minister during the revivals of 1816. He taught lower school, rising to head Whitesboro Academy as a very young man. As already stated, the famous evangelist Rev. Charles Finney lived with Charles and his newly wed wife in Canandaigua, New York, where Charles Hammond was engaged in business. Coming to Detroit in 1834, he was a land speculator and did well as the principal developer of Union City. He persuaded his father Chester Hammond to come there and obtained for him a partially cleared farm. His father, who had founded a Congregational Church in Smyrna, promptly founded another one in Union City. About this time Charles Hammond, the son, sold out his interest in the Superior Mill of Ypsilanti. Moving from Union City to Detroit, Charles was successively a member of the legislature, Auditor-General of the state, and collector for the port of Detroit. He became a business associate of James Joy, the head of the Michigan Central Railroad, and Joy approved his being selected as the general superintendent of its western section. Then from 1854 to 1865 Charles was the general superintendent of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy. He must have been an associate of Ypsilanti's Daniel Quirk Sr., whose railroad career somewhat paralleled his own. From 1869 to 1870 he was superintendent of the Union Pacific and gained a reputation as a builder second only to that of his predecessor, the noted General Grenville Dodge, and it was said long after he departed the railroad scene that there were men on the western lines who proudly referred to themselves as Colonel Hammond's men (the "Colonel" must have been an honorary title). Obviously a man of means, he was the part owner of a steam boat on one of the western rivers. He was a director of several

corporations, including the Pullman Palace Car Company. Like his brother, Rev. Henry L. Hammond, he was connected with the Chicago Theological Seminary; in his case, he was a lay benefactor and he endowed its library, still known in his honor as the Hammond Library. Retiring in Chicago, he was an active philanthropist, helping to organize relief for the victims of the great fire in that city in 1871. The author of the Hammond genealogy thought perhaps he was the most widely known member of that family at his death in 1884. The minister preaching his funeral oration referred to him as a true son of Puritan New England, a liberal benefactor of schools and colleges. Actually his link with Ypsilanti had been slight--the small mill he owned briefly. Yet he was close to his brother Sereno and there are a number of letters written to Sereno by the fast-rising Charles, including the one admonishing Sereno for the indecisiveness that was causing him to fail in the field of business endeavor.

While Charles Hammond was shining in the business, political and church circles of Detroit, he was a partner of brother Sereno, who moved there also, probably in the early 1840's. An 1850 Detroit directory lists both Sereno and Charles as insurance agents. After that date, however, there seems to be no further reference to Sereno, Rachel or the children. Perhaps they went back east, or maybe north or south.

Among the brood of Hammond siblings Sereno grew up with in New York and kept in contact with in Michigan, there was a sister Ellen (actually Eleanor Eustace), born in 1817 and still living in 1897. Her letters to her brother Sereno were warm and gossipy. Caught out there on the farm near Union City, she was asked to teach school. Hated it. She wrote Sereno and Rachel and asked them to send her certain books; Ypsilanti at that point of time was within the pale of

civilization, whereas Union City was on the cutting edge of the frontier. Ellen offered to make her brother Sereno some shirts if he would send her cloth; presumably the undated letter was written to Sereno before his marriage; but maybe not, for she seemed very fond of Rachel, and Ellen was certainly a good sister, and there did not seem to be any further role for her to play in that era when women were expected to be domestics or school teachers.

To summarize the Hammond letters, what do we have? Well, we have an incomplete body of correspondence for a few years of the 1830's decade, but we have enough to sense that this was an energetic upper class Yankee family, quite literate, quite religious, for the most part. All the brothers were eager to succeed in business or the ministry and the whole family was quite closely knit as a unit. It is disappointing they never described the new village of Ypsilanti, and Sereno, who was the only one to live here, seemed eager to move on to a larger urban area where there would be more opportunity, and he finally did move to Detroit. They made almost no reference to politics (though some were involved), preferring to exchange information about business and religious interests. One wonders why the mother of the family--Mrs. Chester Hammond, nee Fanny Goodrich, described in the Hammond genealogy as "well-educated and a lady of literary tastes" is never mentioned, and there are no letters from her. Most of the children had left home, so she must have had time to write. Perhaps it was enough in those days that the old squire attended to the family correspondence. Come to think of it, Rachel never wrote either, leaving it up to Sereno. But still, it is curious.

The rest of the letters in the collection pertain to that somewhat mysterious gentleman, who up to now has been only a name among many from the past of Ypsilanti when it was a tiny village. Julius

Movius was a German immigrant. We have referred to him as the Ypsilanti merchant who was going to be asked to send the Hammond brother at Oberlin College the Hebrew alphabet. Whether he had been a Jewish convert to Christianity as perhaps an educated German who had earlier demonstrated his knowledge of Hebrew Orthography to young Henry Hammond, we simply lack any further firm evidence on this point. In any case, he attended the Episcopalian Church. He seems to have come from Germany by way of eastern New York State, and for a time was a protégé of the Mark Norris family, also York Staters. He was the senior member of the Movius-Hammond Warehouse Company and handled most of the business correspondence. He was the buyer, often going to New York City to replenish the stock of merchandise for the store. He also went to Europe on occasion, both to buy and to visit relative

From the correspondence and business records, we get clues about Movius. In 1837 the firm of Movius & Hammond handled a variety of goods. An advertisement in the Ypsilanti Republican (actually for 1839) reads: "Julius Movius & Co.: Forwarding and Commission Produce, Grocery & Staple Goods Merchants, agents for the New York and Michigan Central at the Rail Road Depot." The Warehouse was in full operation by 1838 (the town seems to have had a second warehouse run by one Compton). Merchants from southeastern Michigan towns sent teamsters to pick up goods stored in Ypsilanti. The business letters reflect all of this. Fargo of Manchester asked for his flour and wanted to buy mill gearing. Fitch & Gilbert of Marshall forwarded orders for salt. Brown of Kalamazoo wanted his medicine shipment sent on to him. Taylor of Yankee Springs needed his boxes of nails. There are letters with instructions from Keeler & Powers of Concord, Barney of Homer, R.R. Thomas of Tecumseh, and Bronson Crocker of Oswego, New York, all asking Movius & Hammond to buy wheat for them for the

New York market. The firm of Movius & Hammond was in debt to Erastus Corning, a powerful political figure from Albany, New York, who was to later build the New York Central Railroad; in 1838 Corning renewed their notes of over \$2600. That year the Michigan Central Railway reached Ypsilanti, where Mark Norris had used his influence with his co-partner in land deals, United States Senator Lucius Lyon of Detroit. These two skilled operators made sure the depot in Ypsilanti would be located on the Norris property. Now the goods forwarded from Detroit came over the rails to the warehouse. Shippers complained about delays and reported they had seen their goods loaded onto cars in Detroit, and they knew they were in the warehouse; so they asked, why the delays? For 1838-39 there are a great many receipts signed by Thomas Clark, the railway agent in Ypsilanti, receipts for goods shipped, especially for wheat and flour that came out of Ypsilanti.

In 1839 the country was beginning to pull out of the depression that began a couple of years before, though in February the Bank of Ypsilanti failed and a lot of local name calling took place, but it did not involve Mark Norris or Julius Movius. Norris, who barely survived the financial panic, sold his tavern to Abiel Hawkins for \$9500 in April. In November of 1839 Mark Norris wrote his son Decatur that he had taken back the warehouse from Movius and Hammond, who had been renting it, and was himself shipping his own flour from the warehouse. Evidently the railroad ruined the forwarding business, for as the tracks moved westward across the state, there was far less reason to have goods stop at Ypsilanti to be forwarded over land by teams of horses. In April of 1840 Mrs. Norris reported to her son by letter that Movius & Hammond had purchased the stock of goods belonging to McMath & Co.. Her letter cited a number of local people going into the mercantile trade. Apparently, good times were on hand. However,

the worthy lady was unable to get any pin money for her schoolboy son until Julius Movius came along and loaned her three dollars. He evidently still lived in the Norris residence.

In the summer of 1838 Mark Norris went to Washington, D.C., to take out a patent on a railroad pile-driving machine. He discovered there were already two such labor-saving devices patented. While in Washington he saw President Martin Van Buren, whom he unflatteringly portrayed in a letter home. A good Whig, Norris would not even meet the President when offered the chance to do so by his host. Going back to New York City to purchase merchandise for resale in Ypsilanti he looked for Julius Movius whom he had left there when enroute to Washington. Not finding Julius, he presumed he had sailed.

On January 1st, 1839 Julius Movius wrote from Baltimore to his partner Sereno Hammond about his trip to Europe and poured out a tale of woe, as follows:

My dear Sereno: Happy New Year to you all, my good friends. The recognition of my hand-writing has told already by looking on the outside of this letter that again I am in 'the land of the Brave & free.' But unfortunately not in good health and spirits, as when I left it. I arrived in this port on the 30th last after a passage of most 9 weeks, & certainly one of the most boisterous ones that was ever made across the Atlantic--add to this severe indisposition the last 10 days, in dreadful cold weather, without a stove & medical assistance, & almost all comforts, which we so much need, in time of sickness. I am yet under the Doctors care. But recovering very fast, & if I continue to do so shall be able to start in about a week. I am boarding with a German family, who are very kind and "attentive to all my wants, but still it is being sick among strangers, & those that have not experienced it, do not know how to sympathize with me. And as "misfortunes never come singlehanded," so with me, owing to not being able to attend to my Baggage, when leaving the ship & in the tumult occasioned by all the passengers having their Baggage on board at once, I lost a little trunk, containing clothing, & many articles of value--among these two pieces of silk, 4 pieces of fair German linen & many other little notions which I purchased in Germany. I would rather have lost almost anything else, on many accounts, yet I thank God that my life is spared and that I am recovering my health again. Mis-

fortunes of various kinds have beset (me) ever since I arrived in Germany. But I hope they have come to an end now. I am not in humor to write much...I shall hasten home as fast as possible. Give my love to all my friends, & assure them that none are forgotten, particulars of everything that you may wish to hear shall be reserved till we meet. Adieu, Yours as ever, Julius Movius."

Young Elvira Norris wrote her brother Decatur on January 20th, 1839, "Julius has returned from Germany in fine health and spirits. He brought me a large Anneul the Keepsake with 12 very fine engravings."

The hapless voyager returned to Ypsilanti, apparently none the worse for his adventures (whatever they had been). In the spring, romance seems to have come into his life. A young Miss Mary Vibbard from Waterford, New York, visited the Norris family. Mrs. Norris wrote Decatur, her son, that on that very afternoon Elvira, her daughter, and Mary Vibbard took a ride to Ann Arbor, again with Julia and Miss Pardee. The Vibbard girl attached a postscript to the letter telling Decatur that Elvira was going east to visit her. She added, "We are learning to sing German," but neglected to say who was teaching them. There were references to several parties given for Miss Vibbard.

But in a few weeks Julius was back in New York, looking for a vessel to sail on. Mark Norris wrote from New York that he thought Julius would embark on the "Great Western."

We do not know how he fared on that trip. But in December of 1839 Mary Vibbard wrote Mrs. Norris that she was sorry Julius had to travel so much and was also sorry he got the blues so much but glad that he had given a party. She referred to a young David Wakeman of her town Waterford whose father Stephen Wakeman was a merchant in New York City. Young David Wakeman for awhile had a stock of goods he was selling in Ypsilanti. She was trying to conceal from the youth the

fact that she was carrying on a correspondence to Movius, and she noted that Wakeman on one occasion had remarked that Movius was not a favorite of his, saying "He is an eccentric fellow," but adding, "though a pretty decent sort of man." In the same letter Mary Vibbar asked Mrs. Norris if she thought Julius would like to go into business with her father. She was evidently starting to plan his future.

Meanwhile, Movius & Hammond together had contracted in July of 1838 with Charles Stuck, builder, for the construction of a house, 26' X 26', to be completed by January 1st, 1839, about the time Julius would be returning from his disastrous voyage. The location of the house was off Michigan Avenue, somewhere in the vicinity of Ainsworth Circle. It can be surmised that after Hammond moved on to Detroit Movius took over the house.

Probably the most interesting letter Julius Movius wrote was sent from New York City in May of 1840 to Mrs. Mark Norris. Recuperating from a long illness (he did not identify the malady), he remembered how kind the Norris family had been to him in the past. He referred to various friends from Troy, New York, who had visited him, and, as was not at all unusual in those days, he credited his religious faith for helping him during his brush with death:

O it is trying indeed to be sick among strangers. Yet I had one friend dearer than all, who never for a moment deserted me--Christ the blessed Redeemer. You know my dear friends, I have many strong ties which bind me to earth--parents, relatives, and my dear friends--yet blessed by God. I was never left for one moment to mourn over my Sickness, even when my whole system was experiencing excruciating pain. I would rejoice in God, my saviour & never in my life enjoyed such calmness of mind--it was perfectly tranquil. I felt willing--nay even at times was led to exclaim 'to die is gain' in the highest fever. My reason never left me one moment, and for hours together, I enjoyed the presence of God as I never did before. Mr. Allen always read the Bible to me & prayed with me. My memory of the Bible seemed to be far beyond anything I ever thought it was. I selected chapter after chapter out of the old & new Testaments, as if by rote.

Further descriptions of his recovery process followed, and he then outlined his plans:

I work hard from 8 a.m. till 7 p.m., get very tired of course but experience no other inconveniences from it. I have nearly completed my purchases, bought many more goods than I thought I should. They are so cheap. I expect to leave here Wednesday & spend one day at Troy--to return calls--one day at Waterford--one day at Utica--one day at Albany & then hurry home. I worked very hard today to buy goods. The season requires a good deal of calculation. The credit of one store is at its lowest ebb and if in the fall we don't elect a democratic legislature we shall be worser yet. What reasoning, I hear you say. I have not bought any fancy goods, but a large assortment of staple--about 200 pieces of calico etc. etc. Tomorrow I shall attend Church twice, God willing. Episcopal in the morning, Presbyterian in the afternoon. I expect to spend a delightful Sabbath. My mind is preparing for it.

I wish you could see my now longer than ever visage--I look very delicate, which makes me appear rather interesting & by adding a little languishing & Sentimentalism I am just the thing--well, well--vain as ever, I hear you say, but it is human nature to think well of one self--and I have so much of it, as anybody....

God bless you all, my dear friends--give my love to all enquiring friends, especially to my dear Grandma & tell her, "The child dear boy has got well again & thinks daily of her--so you take good care of my plants & don't let that Verbena die. Good night, as ever, Julius.

An observation or two is in order in reference to "dear Grandma. It is not very likely with parents in Germany that he had a grandmother in Ypsilanti. He was probably referring to his affianced, Mary Vibba. In her letters to the Norrises she had a pet name for Julius, "my dear Uncle." It seems to have been sort of a code, for she did not want others to know she was interested in the travelling merchant from Ypsilanti. Without doubt, Julius was keeping the charade going.

In September of that year (1840), Mrs. Norris (Rowena) wrote from near Rochester, New York, that they had come to Buffalo by boat and had taken the cars to the falls. Troops going to Sacketts Harbor held them up four hours (the United States-Canadian border had earlier witnessed clashes brought on by the abortive Canadian rebellion). Julius saw the falls, none of the ladies went to the Canadian side.

Mrs. Norris stopped off at Lockport; she had had enough after the train ran off the tracks and shook up all the passengers. Movius went on, presumably to Troy and parts east. Perhaps he was going on his honeymoon--they never really tell us much in their letters and we have to assume much of what the other party already knew.

There are no more letters after this. We do not have a date for the marriage of Julius Movius to Mary Vibbard. The late Lew White, Ypsilanti's city historian, compiled a fabulous card file on the people of Ypsilanti but he found no date for the marriage. He listed the couple's children: (1) Julius, died age one, in 1846 in Ypsilanti; (2) Mary Elizabeth, died in 1847 in Troy, New York, age four; (3) Edward Hallam, born in 1848. There are other scattering bits of evidence that tell us little more than that Movius was alive and well in Ypsilanti. The Ypsilanti Republican's advertising section in 1839 mentioned John Vibbard & Co., selling school books (that would be his father-in-law, who had come on from New York State). In the Ann Arbor Democratic Herald in 1839, John Vibbard & Co. was selling patent medicines; in 1842 Julius Movius & Co. was doing the same thing.

Regarding his civic role, Julius Movius in 1839 was one of a number who signed their names and agreed to pay money to one William Rollo for the purpose of teaching singing school in Ypsilanti at the rate of \$2.50 per evening; Movius was down for five dollars. In 1847 he signed a petition condemning a local doctor of seducing a house maid who later named the doctor on her deathbed as the father of her child. It was a sensational case; the full account is in the Clarke Memorial Library of Central Michigan University. Again, in 1848 his name appeared on a list of subscribers of the Michigan Observer.

It would appear that Movius left Ypsilanti in 1848, since his son--according to Lew White--was born in Troy, New York, that year.

White, without identifying his source of information, listed Movius's death date as 1852. But that just has to be an erroneous listing of the death of a good man long before his time had come. For in 1864, the Ypsilanti True Democrat reprinted its long obituary of one Benjamin Follett, who had married Elvira Norris. Dying in Elmira, New York, where he had gone to take the curative waters, Follett was returned to Ypsilanti on the Michigan Central train, accompanied by his bereaved family and by "the Honorable Julius Movius." The Norris letters refer to Julius coming to Elmira, but there are no references as to where he was living at the time. The newspaper reprinted the obituary because Benjamin Follett was regarded as the leading figure in Ypsilanti for the prior twenty years--and in the 1870's editor Charles Pattison of the Ypsilanti Commercial also testified to the tragedy of Ypsilanti losing Follett, the one person who might well have led the village to greater accomplishments if he had only lived longer. Follett had been mayor of the village, 1860-61. Thus for Julius Movius to return to Ypsilanti as a sort of honor guard with the remains of the village's favorite son was in itself a measure of the respect Movius had earned as one who had lived and prospered awhile in Ypsilanti during its formative years.

But as for any further trace of Movius, there is none. Correspondence with the Rensselaer Historical Society in Troy has elicited no information at all. Mrs. Walsh, the President of the society, did not find him even mentioned in directories, manuscript and archival collections.

In conclusion, if there are letters and papers extant--and that in itself is a big if--and if their owners could open them to research then the history of the early years when Ypsilanti was a village could

be better understood. And more recent materials could shed light on the history of the city. Perhaps someday somebody with reasonably adequate records could give us a reasonable adequate history of Ypsilanti. But until we have more finds like the Hammond-Movius papers, we will continue to know more about ancient Pompeii than we do about old Ypsilanti.

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