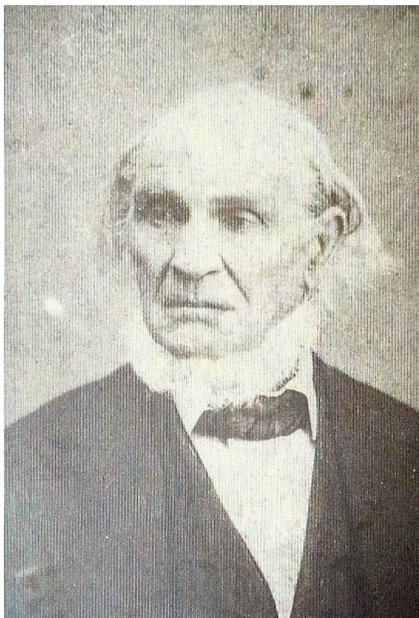


Robert & Rita Lowell
Hastings, MI 49058

I interviewed Rita Lowell on March 23, 2004. She is the great great granddaughter of Burr Caswell who was the 4th Lighthouse Keeper of Big Sable Point from January 8, 1874 to July 17, 1882.



Aaron Burr Caswell was born in Glenn Falls, New York in 1807. In 1837 he married Miss Hannah Green and they had four children; George A, Edgar B, Helen, and Mary.



Burr Caswell came to the Pier Marquette Lake, what is now known as Mason County, in 1845 to explore the area. He returned in 1847 with his family. Rita said Burr shoved the cattle overboard to swim to shore while the family came to shore by rowboat. They built a shanty out of driftwood to live in.

In 1849 a large frame home was constructed of lumber and timbers picked up along the beach and built by Burr Caswell and his sons for their home. It was started in 1849 and finished in 1852. It was originally built facing Lake Michigan and the old Indian trail along the bluff. After 1870, when the Lakeshore road was built, it was moved to its present location in White Pine village.

In 1855 the Caswell family moved upstairs and the first floor was used for government purposes and as a courthouse. It soon became a familiar and friendly stopping place for new settlers, circuit riding judges, lawyers, tax collectors, and traveling missionaries. Mrs. Caswell's kitchen became the first store and post office. The basement served as a temporary jail when necessary.

Burr made a living for his family by cutting shingle bolts. The bolts were shipped on "The Ranger", a boat that could carry no more than 20 cords. He worked in a sawmill with a single upright saw.

Hanna passed away April 11, 1870. Burr then moved to Ludington and married Sarah Billing on November 11, 1871.

Burr Caswell was the Big Sable Point Lighthouse keeper for 9 years from January 9, 1874 to July 17, 1882. His oldest daughter Mary married Richard Hatfield in 1854. They were the first white couple to be married in Mason County. They had 14 children in 28 years. At Mary's death in 1882, there



The Burr house in White Pine Village as of 2011

were 5 children remaining, Nettie, Nellie, Mary Mae, Ida, and John. Rita Lowell's grandmother, Nettie Marie Hatfield Ossenheimer (daughter of Mary Caswell and granddaughter of Burr Caswell) was one of the 5 remaining children.

Richard Hatfield planted one of the first orchards on 80 acres of land on Benedict Road. He built a 16 x 18 foot log cabin to live in while building the frame house across the road. He finished it in 1872. Today, it is remodeled and stands as a beautiful home.

George Caswell the oldest son was a captain of a tugboat on Lake Michigan. Helen married Sewell Moulton, who was sheriff of Mason County for many years. Edgar fished for a living with his brother George until George passed away. He then joined the infantry until the end of the war, after which, he opened a plumbing, steam and gas fitting business on James Street in Ludington, Michigan.

One of Rita's fondest memories, told by her grandmother, was how once a year she would insist on a trip back to Ludington and to stop at the roadside park on old 31. How they made that trip must have been by horse and buggy, or the old Dodge car Grandpa had in later years.

Burr Caswell died September 15, 1896, and Dick Hatfield died March 9, 1897.

My time spent with Rita Lowell was very enjoyable in her home, along with the Worth's was such a relaxing atmosphere and there is much history available at the White Pine Village in Ludington, MI. that I am anxious to visit soon.

Gerry Thornton
Historian for SPLKA