



Gene Bassage and His Walworth Connections (part 1 of 2)

By Bob Mogray and Dorothy French

(Next issue Gene's Life Story: part 2 of 2)

Meet Gene Bassage – a 92½ year-old gentleman now residing in Sodus Point. Gene is related to several well-known Walworth families, including Bassage, Sherburne, Henning, Blythe, Esley and Wignall.

Gene recently shared with us an extensive genealogy of the Bassage family compiled by Mrs. George (Gwyneth) Bassage for a 1991 family reunion.

Left: 2019 - Gene displaying his 1991 family reunion T-shirt.

The Bassage Family: Gene was born in Rochester on February 19, 1927, to Homer and Josephine (Sherburne) Bassage (1973 right photo). A sister, Barbara, died 15 years ago. His paternal grandparents were Velorous and Winifred (Henning) Bassage. They had three sons: Loyde, George and Homer.

In 1916 Homer played basketball in the Academy's gym. The gym had posts to support it and the guys played around the posts. Grandma Bassage only read German so she was able to help her grandsons with their German language classes at Walworth Academy.



The Sherburne Family: Gene's maternal grandparents were Ulysses William and Charlotte (Lottie Blythe) Sherburne. Ulysses preferred to be called U.W. and was named after President Ulysses S. Grant. Josephine was their only child.

U.W. and Lottie owned and lived on a farm on the south side of Sherburne Road, part of which is now the town park. In 1911 the family moved to 3647 Main Street and bought a large house with a big barn in back where U.W. sold cars, the start of the Sherburne Ford dealership.

Left: At age 14 daughter Josephine knew how to drive a Model T Ford. She taught people how to drive when they bought a car from her father.



As business expanded, it was time to relocate to larger facilities and in 1920 U.W. purchased the building at 235 West Main Street in Palmyra. Father and son worked together until U.W. died in 1938 and Homer took over the dealership. It was the second oldest Ford dealership in New York State. After Gene graduated from Syracuse University in 1950, he worked for his father until 1960 when he became owner of Macedon Ford on Rt. 31. Gene operated the dealership until 1980; it is now a Velero and McDonald complex.

Left: Gene's maternal grandfather U.W. Sherburne, Town of Walworth Supervisor from 1914 until 1921.

After the family moved to Palmyra, U.W. then became town supervisor and later chairman of the Wayne County Board of Supervisors and secretary of the Palmyra School Board.



The Henning Family: Winifred Henning was the wife of Velorous Bassage. A relative, Frank Henning, married Lillian and they had one child, Ethel. The Hennings lived at 1283 Plank Road.

Left: Velorous (V.J.) Bassage, Gene's paternal grandfather

Right: Frank and Lillian Henning – 1929 photo

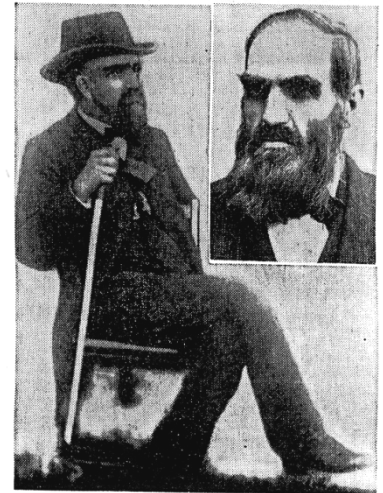


The Blythe Family: Craggs Roller Mill on Walworth-Palmyra Road in Macedon's "Huddle" was owned by Lottie's cousin, Edson Blythe. He was a nephew of John Craggs, who married Sarah Ann Blythe. Edson operated the mill from 1892 – mid 1920's.

Lottie's father was Jabez Blythe. Jabez was a Civil War soldier in the Union army and was injured by a pistol ball in his elbow. His younger brother, James Blythe, had moved south, married a southern belle, and enlisted in the Confederate Army. After the war James and his wife came north with only a horse, wagon and her piano. She taught many Walworth kids how to play the piano.

The brothers and their wives are buried in separate cemeteries in Walworth. Gene said he was told that every year someone places a Confederate flag on James' grave.

Right: James and Jabez Blythe



The Esley Family: Dr. Ernest E. and Mabel Esley were friends of both the Bassages and Sherburnes. The Esley's daughter Beth (her real name was Elizabeth) was a special friend of Gene's Mom, Josephine.

During the 1918 flu epidemic Dr. Esley made many house calls. Gene's dad, Homer, drove a Model T Ford for the doctor when he went on his house calls.

Gene said Dr. Esley drove his vehicle to visit the Bassages and Homer told the doctor something was broke under the Model T. Velorous Bassage, Gene's grandfather, offered his own car so the Model T could get fixed.

Left: Dr. Ernest E. and Mabel Esley 1935 photo

The Wignall Family: U.W. and Lottie Sherburne were friends of George and Carrie Wignall. The Sherburnes spent vacation time in Sodus Point arriving via trolley. In 1916 they bought a cottage on South Shore Road and invited good friends George and Carrie Wignall to join them.

The two couples took alternate turns living in the cottage – one family lived there in July, the other family in August. In the late 1930's they decided to flip a coin to see who had to leave; the Wignall's won the toss and stayed.

George's brothers (Fred, John, Albert) and sister Lash bought property and built near them on South Shore Road. Gene remembers George and Carrie Wignall and their son Bob and his wife Bertha. As a young lad, Gene mowed Fred Wignall's lawn and washed his boat.

Right: George and Carrie Wignall 50th wedding anniversary

