

## The Marriott-Webb Farm and Farmhouse on Thomas Road

by Joellen Gilchrist



The image of the house turns up with some regularity. Its photo is before me now: a white clapboard nineteenth century farmhouse, with a porch the entire width. A white rail fence is in front, with the gate open. Four people are inside, two women, one sitting in a wicker chair, a not-grown young man, a black man holding a horse; and a balding, mustached man leaning on the outside. The standing woman, with long sleeves, long skirt and apron, arm carefully posed on the fence, is my great-grandmother Emma. The man, turned, it appears, to look at her, his legs apart, right hand on hip, left arm (a straw hat set down next to it) leaning against the other side of the fence, is her husband James. The boy is their son, Joseph Frederick. This is the house Emma was born in, and where she lived all her life.

It is my birthplace as well. After Emma died, and the house stood empty, my father and mother, married only a few months, moved from an apartment in Detroit in the depth of the depression, and ended up living there for nine years. It is the place of my first memories, and in my brother and my baby pictures, it and its surrounding yard and property are the backdrops for our poses. Later, my parents chose an 1850 home similar to it, and my present home is reminiscent of it as well. We all, it seems, tried to get back there.

My father, Joseph Frederick Webb, Jr., was born in the "Thomas house" which was south of and across the road from this house of his grandparents Emma and James Webb. He was the fifth child of Joseph Frederick Webb, Sr., the young man on the far side of the white fence. It is listed on my father's birth certificate that his father was a farmer, which was true, but he also was lawyer who graduated from the University of Michigan Law School.

### Joseph Marriott

The builder of the farmhouse was Emma's father, Joseph Marriott, sometimes spelled Marriot and Meritt, (b. 1805) who had come from Sheffield, England sometime between 1840 and 1850, after the Erie canal opened and Michigan land was being offered to settlers for \$1.25 an acre. Purchasing 66 acres from Elihu Drury on Thomas and Morgan roads in section 22 of Pittsfield Township in Washtenaw County, he then traveled here from the east in a covered wagon. He first built a log cabin on the land (which later became the house's woodshed), cleared the beech-maple-basswood forest except for two

swampy corners, a bog, and a long section on the west, and later built the fine white frame farmhouse with porch and white fence.

The census of 1850 reports "Joseph Merritt has 6 acres of improved land and 60 acres of unimproved land with a total value of \$3000. He has 2 horses, 4 milch (sic) cows, 3 other cattle, 24 sheep and 4 swine with a livestock value of \$225. He produced 110 bushels of wheat, 110 bushels of Indian corn, 50 bushels of oats, 80 lbs. Wool, 20 lbs. Irish potatoes, 200 lbs. Butter, 20 tons of hay." (Pittsfield archives) Joseph was married to Ann (Fox or Tyler, b. 1810), the older woman sitting behind the fence in front of the white farmhouse, and they had three daughters--twins Mary Ann and Martha born in 1844, and Emma, born in 1846, who married James Hadley Webb. By 1856, Marriott had acquired a total of 320 acres, from Benjamin Earl and Cornelius Brink, 40 acres each, south of him; and 80 acres from Albert Squire across the road from him.

Marriott must have died by 1870, though, because he is not listed on the Federal census, and Ann is listed under the James H. Webb household. In 1874 his property is listed in the names of J. Webb, Thomas Smurthwaite, and Mrs. Thomas on the Pittsfield map.

After their father's death, the farm was divided between the daughters. Emma and James lived in the farmhouse with her mother, who lived with them until 1894 at least. Mary Ann and Dr. Henry F. Thomas of Augusta Twp. (which is five or so miles SE), who married April 20, 1869, lived in the "Thomas" house (which had been Squires') and later moved to Allegan; Martha and Thomas Smurthwaite, who had been schoolmates at Town Hall School and married Oct. 30, 1869, never built on her portion, which had been Brinks' and then Earl's. In later years, after the death of their mother, the twins had a conflict over either \$100 or \$600 in gold, which was "stolen," and did not speak for years; all necessary communication was through Emma. My father said that later on, his grandmother would talk to Mary Ann Thomas but not to Martha. The twins died before Emma, and their land returned to Emma, who remained on it until her death in 1932 at 87.

### **Dr. Nathan Webb**

Emma's husband James Hadley Webb was also a child of an early settler of Pittsfield. His father, Dr. Nathan Webb, (b. January 25, 1808) had come from Rushville, New York in 1846, several years after his older sister Mary, Mrs. Hiram Cady, moved to Michigan in 1833. (Her husband was an early settler of Niles, Michigan.) They were two of eight children born to Nathan Webb, (b. 6-13 or Jan. 1768; d. 9-26-1807 in Middlesex, N.Y.) and Polly Pratt (b. 5-23-1773, d. 1821). Orphaned at 13, young Nathan worked at all and everything, got a public school education, and attended Syracuse College. He taught school starting at 16 in Ontario County from 1824-32, surveyed in the summers, worked as a seaman on an ocean vessel for a year, then studied medicine while he taught school again. In 1835 he married Laurinda Enos (born 2-12-1815) in Erie County, Pa., got his medical degree in 1836, moved to Warren County where he practiced for four years, and then returned to Ontario County until they decided to move to Pittsfield Township.

He bought 180 rolling acres in section 25, at the corner of Crane and Merritt roads (north of Merritt and on both sides of Crane), about four miles SE of the Marriotts, after whom the road may have been named. Dr. and Mrs. Webb had six children, James being the fifth, and the first born at the Pittsfield farm. Dr. Webb's medical practice was throughout this sparsely settled section of the state, necessitating long travel over poor roads "under the hot summer sun or through the winter's cold" to

those in need. During the Civil War, he enlisted for three years as assistant surgeon at Covenant Hospital in Frederick City, Maryland, but served only a portion, and returned to his practice. Three of his sons also fought in the war, Hiram H., Frederick S. (who died from wounds at Antietam, near Alexandria, Va., and was buried at Arlington) in the 17th Inf., Co. E, and James Hadley, in 24th Inf., Co. K.

A social, active man, Nathan was a board member of the Pioneer Society of Washtenaw County, township committee member of Town Hall School, township supervisor for two terms, and elected to the Michigan Senate in 1860. Dr. Nathan Webb died 12-3-1884 at 76, Laurinda four years later, 1-3-1888, at the same age. Their son Hiram took over the property, and much later died falling from a hay wagon onto a pitchfork.

### **James Hadley Webb**

Nathan and Laurinda's son and Emma's future husband James Hadley, called both Jamie and Jimmy, was born July 14, 1848. He attended to Town Hall country school with her (which was moved in 1987 to Eastern Michigan University's campus, home also to a war monument with James' name), to high school in Ypsilanti, and into the Union Army February 25, 1865 when he was 17. He mustered into Co K, Captain WM Wight (Wm Dodsley at his discharge) 24th Mich. Infantry Regiment Col. Henry Morrow, 1 Brigade Gen. Meridith, 1 Div. Gen. Wadsworth, 1 Corps Gen. Doubleday, Army of the Potomac, Gen. Mead, on Feb. 28 at Ypsilanti, and joined his regiment at Springfield, Illinois on March 30.

A letter to James from his mother written on March 12, 1865 reads, "My dear son, This is Sabbath evening and I am all alone seated by the table near the north window in the front room, and what do you suppose I am thinking about? Need I tell you that it is my soldier boy that his welfare has occupied my thoughts and my whole mind all day. I wonder how you and the other boys have spent this day; did you think of home and of the meeting and Sabbath school at Stoney Creek?"

"We heard that you left Jackson last Wednesday. We got that one and the one you wrote the day before both on last Thursday, one containing twenty dollars. While I think of it is Thomas Glicken with you and did you get your Sabbath Bell and your flute and Johnny Cook's bible? We sent them by Timmy Glicken. Last Wednesday night we got a letter from your uncle John or rather from his daughter saying he was not expected to live but a short time and wishing Pa to come there immediately. He started the next day. I don't know how long he will be gone. Mr. Shuter has worked for Mr. Nichols four days of last week so there has been only Haddie, Kate and me in the family. It has been oh so lonely here it hardly seems like home here.

"I don't know when I can send this to you as I will have to wait for you to give us your address which I hope we will receive soon. I thought that I would have a letter ready to start immediately and then Hadley and Kate have gone down to meeting this evening and I am here with my thoughts far away trying to imagine just what you are doing; it is eight o'clock now and I must not neglect my promise to you the witness where of I trust you will never take from your finger but let it be a token that every evening your mother will pray to God for his blessing to rest upon you but my greatest desire the one above all other desires is that you put your trust in him that you ask him daily for strength to resist evil and temptations and for your eternal salvation.

"That oyster supper came off at the church last Tuesday evening it was quite a success received over \$90 pretty well for Stoney Creek. There was a kind of fair with it, a good many bouquets sold. Jannett Lyon

sends you a geranium leaf which I enclose. "Harriet carried those letters which you boys wrote at Jackson and told the circumstances of your writing them which created a good deal of mirth and they were speedily taken at twenty cents each with many thanks for them besides.

"Well Jamie it is Sabbath evening again the 19th. We did not get your letter until yesterday but we are glad enough and thankful that you are well. Do you have tents or barracks? What kinds of beds what kind of food and what fare generally? Who are your captain and colonels? Tell me all about your circumstances. Pa got home yesterday your uncle was buried last Friday the 17th. Pa went to uncle Chapin's. They are well but Carrie's husband is selling out his store and going to the regions in Penn. If he buys there I think uncle Chapin will go too.

"What kind of weather do you have there? Was it any warmer in Springfield than in Jackson? Have you been on guard yet and are all you boys all in co. K? Be sure and write often. L.E. Webb Write often and answer all of my questions. John Crawford has gone home. We are sorry you lost your portfolio, was there any money in it? Hadley says that you must keep your money in your pocket or it will be stolen. We have got a west door cut through between the windows, tis both pleasant and very convenient. Last week was very stormy here. News items: Married some time in February Wiley Pierce aged 62 to Rose Linsly aged 22 just found out. L. E. Webb"

James and the other 23 men never got very far, and never saw action. Their company had been part of the "Iron Brigade" at Gettysburg (which had taken a beating at McPherson's Woods on the first day of battle, June 1; they survived and went on to win on the third day -- this, however, was two years before James joined.) They went to Camp Butler, Ill., separated from the Iron Brigade, and increased in number. On April 9th, Lee surrendered; on April 15th Lincoln was assassinated; and some of the 24th were the honor guard at Lincoln's funeral in Springfield. James was discharged "by reason of S.O. No. 126 War Dept; No objection to his being re-enlisted is known to exist" on June 30, 1865 when the hostilities ended. He was described as "5'10, light complexion, blue eyes, auburn hair, and a farmer." He was two weeks away from his 18th birthday.

### **After the Civil War**

James returned to his father's farm, and married his neighbor and former schoolmate Emma Marriott (b. 7-20-46) when he was 22 and she 24 on April 6, 1870. He moved into the white farmhouse with her and her widowed mother, who were living there together. They began their "domestic life," producing their only child Joseph Frederick a year later, and prospered on the 110 acre Marriott farm, which was painstakingly maintained and improved. Emma had their horse unhitched at the road and the carriage pulled to the barn so there would be no tracks across the lawn, and my father told of his grandfather who took a different path to the outhouse so as not to make a beaten path. They grew crops and raised stock. James served as town clerk (1883), school commissioner, drain commissioner and justice of the peace. My father said James "went out to get a pail of water one day, and didn't return for a couple years." He apparently decided to take another path and went out west, "cowboying," claimed his granddaughter Ruth, and thereby deserted Emma and Joseph (who would have been 15) for an unknown length of time. A letter from William Smurthwaite in November, 1887, to Robert Geddes states, "You spoke of Emma Webb in your letter (of May 22), how are they getting along, and what was the reason for Jimies' leaving them."

Jimmy headed west. He was gone for quite awhile. There is a card from Farmers' Hotel in Larned, Kansas, 308 miles west of Kansas City, which lists Meals 20 cents; lodging 20 cents; team to hay at night 20 cents; dinner and team to hay at noon 25 cents. There is a memorandum pocket notebook in which the back page reads, "James H. Webb has relatives in Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti Mich. Should anything happen me (sic) while amongst strangers, a letter addressed to J.F. Webb, Ann Arbor, Mich. or to H.H. Webb, Ypsilanti, Mich. notifying them of the fact would be thankfully received. Am a member of B.F. Larned Post No. 8 D.W. of Kansas GAR." He also starts a calendar, "came to Seeleys Thurs m April 22, 1886" listing the jobs he did at various ranches or farms: whitewashing, painting, chimney repair, etc. (and his monthly pay of \$20.00) between April and August of 1886. He also has a page where he writes ".it stopped raining 1/2 hour after leaving Burdett but the roads were very muddy from there to Larned. Arrived at L about half past two. Could not get my horses attended to in time to take the fore o'clock that came. Took the Cannonball at 4 next morning. Heavy rains had fallen and the ground was saturated or covered with water all the way from S to Topeka and corn and crops was looking splendid between there and KC. It appeared dried out and I took a C B & I car co. for Chicago."

In his collection of memorabilia are several mementos of G.A.R. Annual Encampments: There is a brochure among his effects for a grand reunion of the G.A.R. (Grand Army of the Republic) on August 3, 1886, at San Francisco, with special transportation on the Union Pacific Railroad, starting at Omaha, Neb. July 30th, and returning by way of Portland, Ore. for an additional \$12.50. He probably went there from Kansas. He returned home at some point, probably in 1887.

He attended an encampment in 1887 at Adrian; in 1892 at Ann Arbor; in 1897 at Buffalo; in 1898; at Flint in 1901; and at Detroit in 1902. There is a ribbon for the 17th Michigan Volunteer Infantry Reunion, Antietam, Maryland 9-17-1862; Ypsilanti, Michigan 9-17-1890 (This was probably brother Hiram's, who was in the 17th Inf. along with his brother Frederick S. who died of a head wound at Antietam); and a War Relief Committee 9th Convention from April 19 through 21, 1892 in Ann Arbor where James Hadley Webb is listed on the Hotel & Accommodations committee. He again was township clerk from 1891-1894, and his Pittsfield residence was listed in a regiment compilation in 1903.

His granddaughter Ruth wrote of her early memories of her life on the farm, one of which was her grandfather removing bees from the Town Hall School. A letter dated September 28, 1909, written to Mrs. James Webb, alluded to a recent visit to her and her husband, which must have been when he was dying, and mentioned James' pleased reaction to it. His son Fred, daughter-in-law Cora, and grandchildren James and Ruth were living with him when James Hadley Webb died October 3, 1909 at 61, in the white house behind the fence he so confidently leaned against decades before.

### **Emma Marriott Webb**

Emma lived the rest of her life on the farm, keeping meticulous order and wrapping family heirlooms in pristine condition with carefully written notes where they had come from. On a book she wrote, "A book I have owned since I was a young girl. I do hope God will always care for children," and on an oath of identity for the war she wrote, "Just to be kept for a souvenir for the coming generation. A paper I wish to be cared for. It belonged to my husband James H. Webb. I have kept it years since he died & I wish my grandchildren to care for it. It is so nice to let a child know about their parents and grandparents. Emma Webb."

Ruth Burgar Alford MacFarlane, who lived as a child in the Thomas farm and whose father leased land from Emma's sister and husband (the Thomases in Allegan) from 1924 to 1935, wrote of her neighbor Emma, who was then very old. Emma told her stories about her son Fred's return from the Spanish-American War. Ruth's brothers mowed Emma's lawn for \$2, which took them two long afternoons. Gordon Burgar remembers Emma as nice, bringing them water and cookies, and rarely ever mentioning her husband. She gave them old coins: a three cent piece, a half dime and a half penny. He noted her beautiful furniture, some of it bird's eye maple. There was a well in the basement. The barns held cows, chickens and a horse team. Some of her and James' possessions still in the family are Emma's wedding dress, a gun and spoon and knife set carried in the civil war, an ironstone tureen, a blue and white transferware teapot, a red winged chair, a veneer chest of drawers with white porcelain knobs, a cherry drop leaf table, a walnut two drawer small drop leaf table, a small Boston rocker with rockers removed, a nickel-plated oil lamp, a watch of Ann Marriott's, and a walnut turned-post 3/4 bed. Other heirlooms are Cynthia's white dishes and ring, and a round walnut table (which was built by Cora Bussey's father.)

### **Joseph Frederick Webb**

Emma and James' only son, the grandfather I never knew, the young man standing behind the rail fence in front of the white farmhouse, Joseph Frederick Webb (but called Fred) was born there on April 22, 1871. He, as I, never knew his grandfather and namesake. Fred attended the same one room schoolhouse as had his parents and aunts, Town Hall School, across from the township hall, a quarter of a mile to the north on Thomas and Morgan Roads. He appears about 15 in the picture of the farmhouse, with his father who apparently had not left for Kansas yet. He attended Ypsilanti High School, which was seven miles away. (A picture of the 17-year-old Joseph Frederick Webb, Sr. and my brother David look remarkably alike at the same age.)

Fred graduated from University of Michigan Law School in 1892 and married Cynthia Hurd, whose family also lived in Pittsfield, two years later when they were both 23. At 27 he enlisted in the 31st Michigan Infantry for the Spanish American War of 1898. He and the other local boys trained at Island Lake, near by. In Atlanta, Georgia, in a miserable situation in which the woolen uniforms were inappropriate for the stifling heat and humidity, he contracted malaria while training, and was cared for by a family named Craven. He went on to fight in Cuba. This war was later considered to be a manufactured war by business interests, and laws changed afterwards thwarting similar attempts. After he returned (with a parrot), Cynthia became pregnant with their first child, but died in childbirth on September 4, 1900 and was buried with her infant son in Forest Hills Cemetery in Ann Arbor.

### **Cora Belle Bussey**

A year after Cynthia's death, on August 29, 1901, Fred married my grandmother, Cora Belle Bussey, who was 19 years old. Cora had been born on May 11, 1882 and grew up in Salem Township on a farm on Territorial Road west of Godfredson Road northeast of Ann Arbor. Her mother, Evaline Kingsley (who had two ancestors on the Mayflower, Quaker Stephen Hopkins and ne'er-do-well John Billington) died at her sister Eva's birth two years later, and Cora had a difficult life growing up with housekeepers. When she finished the local country school, she moved to Ypsilanti and lived with friends of the family while she went to high school. Cora met Fred Webb, who was then a practicing lawyer, and a very recent widower. Her father disapproved of her seeing a man almost a dozen years her senior, so they left messages for each other in a Chinese laundry near Fred's office. They married, moved to Boston for a year where Fred invested heavily in a trading stamp firm, suffered losses and sold out to Sperry (S&H

Green Stamps) Corp. They returned to Ypsilanti, and had three babies: an infant son died November 19, 1902; son James Craven was born November 18, 1903; and daughter Ruth Mildred on August 25, 1905. Cora's father, William Kelly Bussey, lived with them until his death December 18, 1905. In 1907 they moved to Milan where Fred ran a movie house, and then moved back into Emma and James' farmhouse where the six of them (including the parrot from Cuba) lived until 1912. Three years after his father's death, they moved to the Thomas farm. My father was born there on August 23, 1913. His mother was 30 and his father 41.

This probably was a happy move, a bit away from Emma, who was considered domineering by Cora and Fred. On the way home from Sunday dinner at Emma's, Cora would complain to her husband of her mother-in-law's attitude. Emma was living alone then, a widow, still in the white farmhouse she had inherited from her parents.

After Fred married my grandmother, Cora Bussey, his career seems to be one of near misses and unattained potential. There was the bad investment in Boston, and the brief Milan movie house experience. When they were on Thomas Road, he leased land to Ilhan New, a Korean from U Of M who grew soybeans, and Fred helped him and his partner with legal assistance in setting up what is now La Choy Food Products. He ran for circuit court judge as a Republican on March 7, 1917 claiming he "represents no class, clique or faction," but lost by 20 out of 5650 votes cast. In 1919, during WWI, he moved to Detroit with Cora and my five-year-old father, leaving 14 and 16-year-old Ruth and James behind, living in the small cabin west of the farmhouse of their grandparents, Emma and James.

Fred and Cora moved to a house owned by Mrs. Sherman on 12th Street, and he worked at Dodge Brothers. My father started school there, and Ruth and James joined them later. Ruth went to Central High School, now Old Main of Wayne State University. Fred opened a law office at Forest and 14th near Grand River. There was much illness in the family at this time -- diptheria, mumps, scarlet fever. My father was hospitalized with scarlet fever.

In 1923, Fred went to the hospital and never returned home, dying on December 27 of a combination of maladies-diabetes, dropsy, heart condition and syphilis of the ear. He was 51. My father was nine, and never spoke of him, except when I asked him direct questions, and then his answers were tinged with resentment and criticism: Fred was a lawyer who never had a practice, he said (although later his sister Ruth corrected that impression); and he did not know what he died of, "went to the hospital and never came home." He clearly had never been close to his father.

### **Cora and Fred's Children: Jim, Ruth and Joe**

Fred's military stint in the Spanish American War left Cora with a military pension, which was helpful for a widow who was not yet 40 with three children. She stayed in Detroit, where son James was 19, Ruth was 17 and Joseph was nine. Ruth graduated from Central High School in 1924 (Cora bought her a class ring for \$5) and then studied to become an elementary school teacher at Detroit Teachers College (now Wayne State University); Jim was working, and Joe was in 4th grade. Her older brother Thomas moved in with them, who had been briefly married to a woman who moved to Washington. He later taught Joe car maintenance and repair on his early Buick. Thomas later died at Elouise.

Cora bought a Model T Ford and worked in Detroit. Jim was working at General Motors. He met an "older woman," Florence Ahle, who had a 12 year-old daughter whom she passed off as her sister. They married Nov. 19, 1927, and had a son, James Donald, Nov. 29, 1931.

Ruth met Jack Smith Milligan, whose family was from Toronto, Canada, and he too was a teacher. He taught business courses at Redford High School where Joe attended. During the summer, Joe went back to Thomas Road and stayed with his grandmother who doted on him, sleeping in the small cabin. The Burgars remember having dinner with him, an outgoing and handsome young man. During the school year, Joe drove Cora to work each day and then went on to Redford. Having a car, he was often asked for rides by pretty girls, such as Charlotte. Edna Keenhan was living with Charlotte's family in Rosedale Park while finishing her senior year, and was a frequent recipient of Joe's gallantry. They began dating in the school year of 1930-31.

Ruth Webb and Jack Milligan married on Feb. 8, 1930, and spent their summers in Lake of the Bays, Ontario. Edna and her sister Irene stayed in their house during their vacations. Jack introduced a friend, Walter O'Neil to Irene, and they later married. Edna returned to Akron, Ohio, where she had lived until she was 11, because her aunt had found her a job, a rarity in the depression. Joe drove to her grandmother's in Akron many weekends.

By the depression, Emma had been alone on the farm since 1919. Cora was worried about her, now in her 80's. A companion was hired who did not work out. Ruth Burgar wrote, "The companion was a hysterical middle-aged woman who dyed her frizzled hair, hysterically imagined cut phone wires when a summer storm put the lines out of order, and talked about Mrs. Webb as though she were not there." Finally Emma moved to Detroit with Cora, Ruth and Joe (her last listing in the Ann Arbor phone book is Dec 1931), and later to a nursing home on Seven Mile Road, Arnold Home, where she died in 1932. She is buried at Forest Hills next to James.

In 1936 Joe and Edna, both 23, married at a Justice of the Peace in Detroit, with Cora witnessing. Soon after, Joe discussed the opportunity of moving to the empty farm, which had languished since Emma's death in '32. She had sold the farm several years earlier to her three grandchildren, James, Ruth and Joseph, for one dollar. It would mean a long commute to Detroit for Joe, but they moved with great delight.

When they moved into Emma's house, it was filled with furniture and possessions. There was no inside plumbing, and my mother learned to cook on a wood stove. On weekends, their friends from Detroit would come out and stay, enjoying the country. Many of them were living with other family members, or in tiny apartments with few possessions due to the depression. They would read Emma's letters and books, and look in closets and trunks at her carefully packed away collections of important objects. Unaware of their age, my mother was surprised when an older woman visitor told her, "You have many valuable antiques here." She began to research their background, and this began her lifelong interest in antiques, culminating in her becoming a dealer in her early 50's, and continuing into her 70's.

Joe continued working in Detroit for a while, and then attended Ypsilanti Normal College for a couple of years. While he was a student, foster children lived with them, providing them with a small income. They also continued to lease the farmland.



On July 8, 1940, they had a son, David Frederick Webb, named after the actor David Niven, and born at Beyer Hospital in Ypsilanti. Edna suffered post-partum depression, and after a few months of infant care with no running water, they took an apartment in Detroit for several months, and when indoor plumbing was installed at the farm, they returned.

Back on the farm, life continued, with Joe still commuting to Detroit. When the U.S. entered the war after Pearl Harbor, Joe started working at Ford Motor Company's bomber plant in Ypsilanti. In 1943, Ruth's husband, Jack Milligan, who had moved his family to East Lansing after becoming chief of Business Education for the state in 1937, entered the service. Ruth returned to Detroit and raised their children, Karen (born in 1937) and Richard (born in 1939) and taught elementary school. James Craven Webb still worked for General Motors in the International Division, traveling frequently to India. In 1943, I was born August 19 at St. Joseph's Hospital in Ann Arbor.

James separated from Florence, and started divorce proceedings. By 1945, it was necessary for him to reach a property settlement with her. His soon-to-be second wife, Thelma Brown, was a secretary at GM and pressed James to "settle his estate" by selling the farm, which was still owned by him, Ruth and Joe. Joe and Edna wanted to buy it, but the siblings were unable to reach an agreement, so the house and 110 acres were put on the market and sold to the Carletons for nine thousand dollars. Six acres on the east side of Thomas Road were kept and the cabin was moved there, a somewhat difficult job.

### **After the Sale of the Farmhouse**

Joe, Edna and David and I moved to 803 Collegewood in Ypsilanti. James and Thelma Brown married on June 29, 1946 and had a daughter Mary Patience, born in Ann Arbor on May 13, 1947.

Jack, Ruth, Karen and Richard continued to live in East Lansing.

For the next few years Joe made frequent visits to rummage about in the little cabin, now known as the "shack," and visit the neighbors, obviously missing the farm. A few years later in 1952, after many weekend drives in the country looking at houses, he and Edna bought an circa 1850 white clapboard Greek revival farmhouse with four acres and a barn at the corner of Earhart and Joy Roads in Superior Township, where David and I attended the one-room Sutton School. He and David hunted in the surrounding countryside. He was always agreeable to the acquisition of any animals, and we had cats, dogs, chickens, an orphaned lamb, a pony, and later two horses. The six acres in Pittsfield were sold to the Geddes family.

Cora was living in Pinckney by then. After the death of her boarder Gene Mann, her grandson David, his wife Karen, and infant daughter Wendy lived in her little rental house until she was no longer able to manage her house due to glaucoma. She moved to her son Joe's, and then to an adult foster home in Royal Oak.

James Craven Webb died in 1967.

### **The Farmhouse Burns**

The Carletons lived in the house from 1945 until 1970 when the well ran dry and they had to leave the house. It stayed unoccupied for two years except for a horse and four dogs. In the summer of 1970, the big barn was set on fire.

Cora died at age 89 Nov. 1971 in Lansing, where she'd lived for five years with her daughter Ruth, who had been widowed since Jack's death in 1958.

When daughter Ruth came to Ann Arbor to make burial arrangements, she wrote of driving to Thomas Road and sitting in front of the farm, with "its ancient tired Maples and the house almost past repair." The woodshed, originally the log cabin Marriott had built, she said had been torn down some years previously. Early in the night of March 5, 1972, arsonists burned the farmhouse. Passers-by saw the flames in the north kitchen, and by the time 19 firefighters arrived, flames engulfed the house. The dogs occupying the abandoned house died in the fire. Afterwards the land continued to be farmed, and decades later it was put on the market by Rita Carleton.

### **The Farm's Land Today**

In 2002, Pittsfield Township acquired the property -- as part of 545 acres purchased from a developer -- to preserve as a central park.

The white farmhouse and its abundant land, where five generations of Marriotts and Webbs lived, has been a beloved place to all of its family residents. Their memories, letters, and published resources all indicate and document the pride and affection for the family home of Joseph and Ann Marriott; daughters Martha, Mary Ann, Emma and son-in-law James Hadley Webb; Cora and Joseph Frederick Webb Sr.; children James, Ruth, Joseph and wife Edna; and their children David and Joellen. It is a fitting ending to have its setting live on as a natural historic site -- the fields, the woods, the wildflowers, the huckleberry swamps, the birds and wildlife -- for others to enjoy as much as they have.