

MEMOIRES
of
THE WILLIAM AMERY FAMILY

This tape of the William Amery Family is being prepared by Frances Amery Larson, granddaughter of William Amery and daughter of Phillip Francis Amery, the youngest son of William Amery.

William Amery, my grandfather, preceded me in time by at least three generations - - he being born in 1830 - I being born in 1920. My father, Phillip, was born on July 4, 1875, the youngest of 8 children. I was the youngest of 5 children born to Phillip Francis Amery and Elizabeth Isabella Montgomery. My mother, Elizabeth Montgomery Amery, was a naturally talented historian and teacher. She continually presented the stories and facts of our progeny. Many things have been told to me about my grandfather William Amery and his wife, Sarah Hackett Amery. They were two people who lived beyond their times and foresaw many necessary things that a person would need to know to carry on in the future.

My father, Phillip, was only 12 years of age when his father passed away. William Amery, before his death had set aside enough money for my father to attend college. This was a rare occurrence in those days; to go on to college at the completion of high school. Phillip Amery was in the Class of 1895 at Michigan State College at Lansing, Michigan. He was in R.O.T.C., football and boxing. Gavin McKerrow, founder of the Milwaukee Golden Guernsey Dairy, was a friend and classmate; both were active in the Alumni Association.

Following Michigan State, my father went into farming; first with his mother, Sarah Amery, on the St. Croix Falls - Dresser Junction Farm contingent with Burgers Lake and the St. Croix River; and later on his own farm at St. Croix Falls, Wisconsin. Because of his ^{farm's} proximity to the Polk County Fair Grounds and his knowledge of the needs of live stock he was asked by the county board to build most of the buildings on the Polk County Fair Grounds.

At one time, William Amery was reputed to be the largest land owner in Polk County; during which time, he donated land for the St. Croix Falls Cemetery for which he was given the honor of choosing a selected family plot at the top of the hill. He designed a monument consistent with the design of The Washington Monument in our Nation's Capitol. The source of this report is from the late Nels Simonson, as told to Cmdr. Harvey L. Larson (husband to Frances Amery) in the year of 1945.

My grandfather, William, and grandmother, Sarah, lived on the St. Croix Falls - Dresser Junction land that involved the St. Croix River and Burgers Lake. My father, Phillip, was farming the extreme Dresser Junction portion near the railroad depot in 1903 when his cousin, Leopold S. Amery, who then was a reporter for the London Times on special assignment to Montreal, Canada, got off the train and walked up to my father and asked him "where he might find Phillip Amery?" Leopold Amery was later to become a member of Parliament: House of Commons, and Viceroy to India - known in India as "Lord Amery". He was a boyhood friend and classmate of Winston Churchill - attending Harrow together. It was reported that the two of them had had a fight, and Leopold Amery had to "clean-up" on Winston Churchill. A regular fist-a-cuffs ensued and Leopold Amery threw Winston Churchill into the lake there at Harrow. All during the years of World War I and World War II they remained close friends and colleagues. In 1903, as a reporter, Leopold S. Amery had journeyed into the United States from Canada to investigate why there was a town here named Amery. There is a Mt. Amery in Canada.

As a boy, my father Phillip Amery, living on the Amery Family holdings, witnessed the last war between a band of Sioux Indians and a band of Chippewa Indians at a stream between Burgers Lake and the St. Croix River. The stream thereafter became known as "Bloody Run". My father had to climb a tree to hide. It was a double dilemma for him because he was returning home with his

father's muzzel-loading match-lock musket that had been loaned to a "notoriously mischievius" friend. Had the occasion demanded, he was afraid to fire it because he felt that the gun probably had been dangerously "over-charged" with black powder. When he arrived home, he found out that this was most certainly true: after he skewered out the lead ball and packing, he found out that there was at least 3 times the maximum load of black powder in the gun: The last battle between the Sioux and the Chippewa has been written up in the Minneapolis papers. It took place probably between 1887 and 1890.

My father, Phillip, had a very large Indian arrowhead collection. These were found and gathered throughout his boyhood, the loss of which still remains a mystery.

The William Amery Family, like all the families in those days, had to maintain their own roads running past and through their lands. The Amerys' owned their own adjustable-blade, horse-drawn road grader - - including a horse-drawn, stone-ballasted V-shaped snow plow for clearing the roads in the winter time.

The first Amery Family help for the Amery Library was initiated by Miss. Elisabeth L. Amery with the assistance of Frances Amery (Mrs. Harvey L. Larson); Elisabeth L. Amery was the daughter of William Amery's second child, Charles Amery in marriage to Lillian Kersch. Elisabeth is always very lovingly referred to in the Amery Family as "Cousin Bess". Her history of the Amery Family is recorded in the Osceola Sun, August 12, 1976. However, I wish to refer to her here in a very special light. Cousin Bess was a resident of Baltimore, Maryland: living in a 1700 English 3-story Brick Town House. In 1957 she retired as Home Economics Supervisor for the State of Maryland. For 23 years in this particular position, she devoted her time and life to educating young ladies in the art of home and family living, traveling throughout the state

helping and advising teachers: immediately preceeding this, she was with the Wisconsin State Department of Instruction working in the same area - also working with the State Department of Agriculture in establishing the beginnings of the 4-H program. At the time of her death, July 21, 1976, the State of Maryland set up a memorial to her for the further education of young women. In 1962 she became interested in helping the personnel in the development of the Amery Public Library - a very promising Amery Library.

Further Amery Family help for the Library came from Evalyn Amery Colvin McLean and husband Admiral Gordon McLean: Evalyn is the daughter of William Amery's youngest daughter, Eva Victoria Amery Colvin. On a special visit to the Amery Library in 1976 from Seattle, the McLeans' commissioned the purchase of the present Glass Artifact Cabinet.

Grandsons of William Amery and sons of Phillip F. Amery are working on presenting separate contributions to the family history and plan to attend the Amery Centennial: William J. Amery of Albuquerque, New Mexico - retired Criminal Psychologist and George R. Amery of Deltona, Florida - retired Mechanical Engineer from the duPont Company.

The Great Grandson of William Amery, the son of William J. Amery, is William W. Amery III, Laboratory Administrator at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota demonstrates interest in the Family History and the Amery Library and will probably be depended upon to carry on the Amery Family records, benevolences and traditions.

In the last portion of this tape, I wish to repeat a brief history of William Amery as was written and recorded for the Amery Centennial.

William Amery was born in Devonshire, England. He attended school at the Chumleigh Academy: there winning several prizes in Mathematics. At the age of 20, he left England by sailing vessel destined for St. Louis, Missouri to pursue his trade as a millwright. He traveled by a less frequented course,

landing first in the Port of New Orleans. There, he boarded a river boat going up the Mississippi River. To escape a Yellow Fever epidemic, then raging in St. Louis, he continued as far as he could up the river, landing in Stillwater in 1851.

In 1852 William Amery preempted tracts of land in Polk County, Wis.; some at St. Croix Falls-Dresser Junction. It was there that he took his bride, Sarah Hackett, born in County Clare, Ireland of English ancestry. She had reached Stillwater, Minnesota in 1852. They were married in Stillwater in 1855.

It was for William Amery in 1887 that Amery, Wisconsin, then a village now a city, the largest community in Polk County, was named. The reason given for the choice: "because of his prominence and progressiveness".

In addition to practising as a Millwright, Farmer and Surveyor, he was an early Treasurer of Polk County. When he died in 1887, he was serving his fourth term as Chairman of the Town of St. Croix Falls and had served as Chairman of the Polk County Board.

During the illness which preceeded William Amery's death, prominent citizens came to see him and asked his permission to name their growing village for him. He gave them his permission by saying, "I would be honored, although, I will never live to see it". William Amery passed away in 1887.

Those who have heard of William Amery will remember him as a great help to the early settlers, assisting them in the carrying out of their affairs, particularly in the area of writing personal and legal letters where proper and precise communication form was necessary; including surveying to settle land entitlement disputes.

For more detailed information on William Amery, family and offspring:

1. Portrait of William Amery and Daguerreotype of Sarah Amery - Amery Public Library.
2. Amery Family Tree posted in the Amery Public Library

3. William Amery's handprinted book of Mathematical formulas.- Amery Public Library
4. "Amery Doll" donated by Elisabeth L. Amery - Circa 1850 Amery Public Library
5. Eye glasses, Candle snuffer, Diamond glass Cutter and a cabinet square in the library - donated by Evalyn Amery Colvin McLean and Frances Amery Larson.
6. William Amery's Polk County Ledger book as Treasurer - Donated by William J. Amery. Amery Public Library
7. Articles in The Osceola Sun, August 12, 1976 through September 9, 1976 - THE SPIRIT OF ELISABETH AMERY RETURNS TO THE VALLEY OF THE ST. CROIX.
8. Cemeteries: Amery Family Plot at St. Croix Falls, Wisconsin: William Amery and most descendants.
 - Osceola Cemetery: Elisabeth L. Amery (Cousin Bess), Frances S. Amery (Aunt Fannie) Jane Amery Hansen (Aunt Jane)
 - Seattle, Washington: Eva Victoria Amery Colvin
 - Big Timber, Montana: William K. Amery Belle M. Amery Gordon M. Amery - WWII Veteran Killed in Action - Leyte, P.I.