

The Centennial Farm of David & Margy Makley (*The Old Horace & Rebecca Curtis Homestead*)

By Pamela K. Swiler



This farm located at 7428 Barnum Road, Woodland, Barry County, Michigan, was recently certified as a Michigan Centennial Farm dating back to 1907¹. The first family to own it in this line of ancestors was **Horace and Rebecca Curtis**. A certified farm is one that is 10 acres or more that has continuously been owned by the same family for at least 100 years. The Historical Society of Michigan is currently in charge of this program for the state of Michigan which was once managed by the electrical cooperatives of Michigan and Detroit Edison Company, Consumers Power Company.

David & Margy Makley are the current owners of this farm. For the purposes of this article, however, the connection to the Curtis family is where the interest lies. A documentation of data collected will hopefully connect to one of the Curtis lines in the Curtis/s Family Society. The information will go from the current to the past.

May 8, 1940 - **David Makley** is the son of **Von K. Makley** and **Marleah Barnum**² in the 1940 United States Federal Census residing in Woodland, Barry Co., MI. Von is listed as a pattern maker in a machine shop. He is age 25 and Marleah is listed as age 22. David tells us that there were 3 boys and 2 girls born to this couple.

Marleah Barnum is the daughter of **Leon John Barnum** and **Nellie R. Curtis**.

Nellie (Curtis) Barnum is the daughter of **Horace Curtis** and **Rebecca Osborne**. She was born 1885 and died 1960. She is the wife of **Leon John Barnum**. They were married November 6, 1906. She is buried at Woodland Memorial Park, Woodland, Barry County, MI. ⁴

August 21, 1971 - **Sylvester Horace Curtis** dies.⁵ He is buried at the Woodland Memorial Park Cemetery, Woodland, Barry Co., MI. Photos of the headstone and Sylvester can be found at FindAGrave.com. It is also noted that the birth year recorded for Sylvester is 1888.⁶ His wife is **Vera Ena Ehert** according to information received from Patricia A. Hoxie who is researching this line. Vera died June 16, 1965.

May 9, 1940 - United States Federal Census record for Woodland Twp., Barry County, Michigan shows **Sylvester H. Curtis** with his wife, and there are three additional children not

listed in the 1930 census. They are Joyce E., age 10; Glendon O., age 8; and Barbra J., age 6. His son Kendall, age 28 now, is still not married and works as a day laborer.⁷

March 28, 1939 – **Horace C. Curtis** has died in Kalamazoo, Kalamazoo Co., Michigan and is buried at the Woodland Memorial Park Cemetery, Woodland, Barry Co., MI. Records indicate that he is the son of **John Nelson Curtis and Mary Cunningham Curtis**.⁸

April 10, 1931 – The Golden Wedding Anniversary of **Mr. & Mrs. John Nelson Curtis** is announced in an invitation to attend the celebration at their home in Bellevue, Michigan. Another newspaper article tells of the couple renewing their vows in front of about fifty of their friends and neighbors. The time was spent singing old songs and playing music.

April 25, 1930 – United States Federal Census record for Woodland Twp., Barry County, Michigan shows **Horace M. Curtis** residing alone on the farm at the age of 72 in dwelling number 184. His wife is not listed with him; however, it does not say that he is widowed so it is unknown where she is at the time of the census. She may be visiting relatives elsewhere, in a hospital, or there could be an error in the census and she could be dead. Further research will show the answer to this question.⁹

Sylvester Curtis is listed with his wife, Vera and a large family of children in dwelling number 183. They are as follows: Kendall, age 18; Violet, age 16; Nellie, age 14; Gertrude, age 12; twin daughters, Artie & Alta, age 10; Elwin, age 8; Mildred, age 7; Letha, age 4 10/12 mo.; Ivan, age 5 9/12 mo; and lastly, Carl, 2 8/12 mo. Sylvester was age 20 when he married Vera, who was 17 at the time. Neither Sylvester nor Horace are veterans of any foreign wars.

January 24, 1920 – United States Federal Census record for Woodland Twp., Barry County, Michigan shows **Horace and Rebecca Curtis** residing there. Horace is born in Michigan, and so is Rebecca. His father was born in Pennsylvania, and his mother is born in Ireland. Horace is age 62, making him born ca. 1858. The census indicated that Horace owned the home, and was able to read and write. He and his wife are the only ones living there at this time and Rebecca is listed as being age 55.¹⁰

Horace and Rebecca are residing next door to **Sylvester and Vera Curtis**. It is believed that this is a son to Horace and Rebecca. Sylvester is age 30 and his wife is age 28. The birthplace of Sylvester's parents is listed as Michigan, which is where Horace and Rebecca are born. Both Horace and Sylvester are listed as farmers.

September 12, 1918¹¹ – **Leon John Barnum** is listed as married to Nellie R. Barnum, residing in Woodland, Barry County, MI. He is born October 9, 1884. He is described as tall, medium build with brown hair and brown eyes.

June 5, 1917 - **Sylvester Horace Curtis** is registered for World War I.¹² On his draft registration card his date of birth is listed as May 3, 1888. He is medium height & medium build, with brown eyes and dark brown hair. It is interesting that he wrote 1888 for his birth year instead of 1889. He is married and has 5 children at this time and resides in Woodland, MI. Is it possible that he lied about his date of birth in order to join the military? This was not an uncommon occurrence. Or is it just an error in the transcription of the dates?

September 15, 1890 – **John Nelson Curtis** (pictured to right with his wife Mary) dies and is buried in the Woodland Memorial Park Cemetery.¹³



May 3, 1889 – **Sylvester Horace Curtis** is listed in the Michigan Index of Births and Christenings as being born the son of Horace Curtis and Rebecca Curtis. ¹⁴

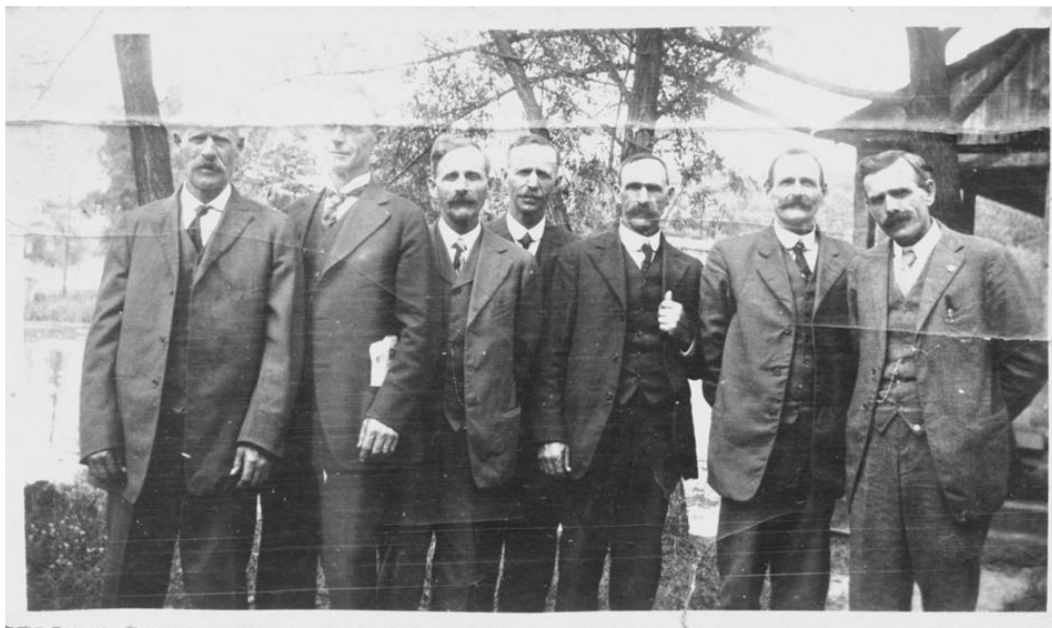
November 6, 1885 – **Horace Curtis** marries **Rebecca Osborne** in Woodland, Barry County, Michigan.¹⁵ Horace lived in Woodland and Rebecca lived in Castleton. He was 27 years old and she was 20 years old. They were married by Samuel M. Kidder, Minister of the Gospel. Witnesses were Orville and Olive Kidder, both of Woodland. The record was recorded on January 29, 1886.

June, 1880 – The United States Federal Census list Horace Curtis residing in Woodland, Barry Co., MI with his father, John N. and siblings: Alfred, Leonard, Elmer and Aaron. His mother is not listed with them, and his father is listed as widowed at this time. ¹⁶

June 8, 1870 – The United States Federal Census lists Horace Curtis residing with his father, John and mother, Mary and 7 other siblings. The census is very difficult to read, but the names appear to be as follows: Horace, Head of Household; Mary, wife of Head; 7 sons: Lorenzo, Martin, Horace, John, Alfred, Aaron and Leonard; and one daughter, Olive. Lorenzo is noted to be born in “Canada West” and is age 17. This may be a clue that this family came to Michigan through Canada. All the other children are born in Michigan. ¹⁷ It should be noted that Horace is listed as being age 10 here.

July 26, 1860 – The United States Federal Census for Woodland, Barry Co., MI lists the family with the spelling with two ss’s – **Curtiss**. **Nelson Curtiss** (without the first name, John) is listed as head of household with his wife, Mary; son, Lorenzo D., Martin E., Horace, and “infant” who is less than a year old. The daughter, Olive is included. ¹⁸

April 18, 1858 – **Horace C. Curtis** is born the son of **John Nelson Curtis** and **Mary Cunningham** in Michigan. ¹⁹



The 7 sons of John Nelson Curtis – Ca. 1915

Photo courtesy of FindAGrave.com

Left to right: Lorenzo, Martin, Horace, John, Aaron, Leonard and Elmer

Endnotes

¹ Chronicle, Historical Society of Michigan, Vol. 36, No. 2, Summer 2013, page 30.

² Maiden name is not listed in the census. This information came from the son, David Makley.

³ Family group sheets provided by Patricia A. Hoxie

^{4, 5, 8 & 13} FindAGrave.com

⁶ Note: Family group sheets provided by Patricia A. Hoxie show his date of birth as May 3, 1888.

⁷ Ancestry.com U.S. Federal Census records

⁹ Ancestry.com U.S. Federal Census records, 1930

¹⁰ Ancestry.com US Federal Census records, 1920

^{11 & 12} Ancestry.com World War I Registrations

^{14 & 19} Ancestry.com Index of Michigan Births and Christenings.

¹⁵ Family Search: Marriage Record no. 1370

¹⁶ Ancestry.com U.S. Federal Census records, 1880

¹⁷ Ancestry.com U.S. Federal Census records, 1870

¹⁸ Ancestry.com U.S. Federal Census records, 1860