

DODGES Hiram & Amanda & Elizabeth

Hiram Dodge was born in Calais, Vermont on 5/19/1821, His parents were James Dodge and Harriet (Peck) Dodge. James was the first male child born in East Montpelier to settlers Solomon and Polly (Taggart) Dodge in 1759, among of the earliest Montpelier settlers.

Hiram married Amanda White in 1840. Amanda's parents were Suel and Hannah White who lived in the brick house that still stands at 720 Templeton Rd in East Montpelier. The couple is listed in the 1840 Census in Calais on the Montpelier Turnpike which I assume is County Rd.

A newspaper notice says Lucas & Dodge have dissolved their partnership in a boot and shoe repair shop in Barre in 1841. I know of no other Hiram Dodge so this must have been an early business in Hiram's life. It's probably that Hiram worked in Amanda's brother Joel White's Sash and Blind¹ Business on Templeton Rd.

They started a family.

Hiram and Amanda's Children: Orville Adial Dodge (1842 - 1913), Clara Electa Dodge (1845 - 1906), Edwin Hiram Dodge (1847-1910) , Emma Amanda Dodge (1849 - 1893)

There were pretty predictable spaces between babies in the 1800s since most families I have studied had at least 6 children at roughly two year intervals. Diseases such as Diphtheria, Consumption, Cholera, Pneumonia, Typhoid Fever and Puerperal Erysipelas (Child Bed Fever) were common dangers in the New England area in the 1800s and large families were hoped for.

Sadly Amanda died on July 11 1849, 4 months after the birth of Emma Amanda in March. My guess is Amanda died of Child Bed Fever which was spread from household to household by family members and doctors before the importance of hygiene became known. There were many cases in the 1840s. In November of 1849 Hiram married his second wife Elizabeth Hersey (1831-1880 thru 1886), daughter of Elijah and Eleanor (Slayton) Hersey who lived in Calais, possibly up Long Meadow Hill Rd that used to go through to Worcester. She was 18 and he was 28, and baby Emma Amanda was only motherless for 5 months.

As to Elizabeth's family the 1873 Beers Calais map shows N.S. Hersey and N.S. Hersey JR along Longmeadow Hill Rd. These were 2 Nathaniels. The Sr was Elizabeth's uncle and lived at the NW corner of Long Meadow Hill and Robinson Hill Rds, where no buildings remain. The JR was Elizabeth's cousin and lived at the existing house at 874 Long Meadow Hill Rd. But I'm not sure about Elijah, her father, who died in 1854. It took me awhile to find more on Elizabeth than census records and one marriage certificate. After some help from a Facebook Genealogy group we found Elijah's will which listed Elizabeth Sophia Hersey, the only place I ever found her whole name. Her older brother was Samuel O. Hersey.

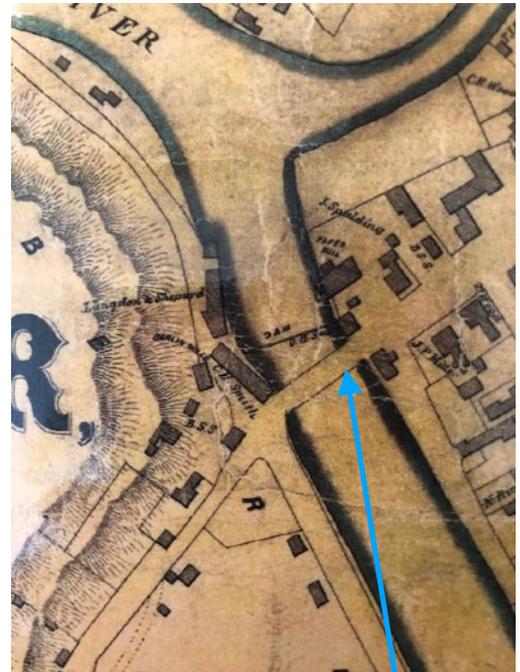
¹ Sash = wooden window mullion | blind = interior wooden window slat blind

Hiram and Elizabeth had two more children:

Hiram and Elizabeth's Children: Lucius Orville (1851 - 1909), Lucia (1853 - 1884)

In the early 1850s Hiram Dodge and his brother in law Samuel O. Hersey started a sash and blind² business together in an old building next to the "Old Arch Bridge" a covered bridge over the Winooski at the foot of Main St in Montpelier. But in 1853, the year their sixth child was born, tragedy struck when the building caught fire and Hiram lost his tools. Samuel lost a "large store of lumber". The next week a fund raiser for Samuel was announced featuring the Montpelier Brass Band.

In 1857 Samuel Hersey handled a claim against Amanda's father Suel for the benefit of the children. The same year the family was started to split apart and move. Some were going west as pioneers. I think they made the trip by train and boat across New York State. Hiram took the family to Omaha, Nebraska to start another sash and blind business. But then he took a stab at gold mining in the Pike's Peak area and I found newspaper articles in the Montpelier papers about the lure of gold mining. Often they were followed within a few months by articles describing the disappointment of the miners when they actually arrived at the mining areas. Hiram and Elizabeth then moved on to Oregon along the Oregon Trail by ox cart, joining the stream of Vermonters going west. Oregon was admitted to the Union as a state in 1859. Joel T White, Hiram's first wife Amanda's brother, would also start west around the same time, landing in Wisconsin.



1853 Map showing Main St bridge.

By the 1860 census the Dodge family was spread all over the place. Hiram and Elizabeth were with Lucius, 10 and Lucia, 6 in 15th Mile, Oregon east of Portland, towards the end of the Oregon Trail. Hiram started a new sash and blind shop on 15th Mile Creek. Unlike sawmills that cut logs, sash and blind shops could use a smaller water power source than a big river. The area was near the Columbia River and The Dalles, Oregon where more of the family would settle. According to the 1860 Census Hiram and Elizabeth had a neighbor, George W Stone, a farmer.

Orville, 18, was working on his young cousin George White and wife Lydia's farm in back in Calais, Vermont.

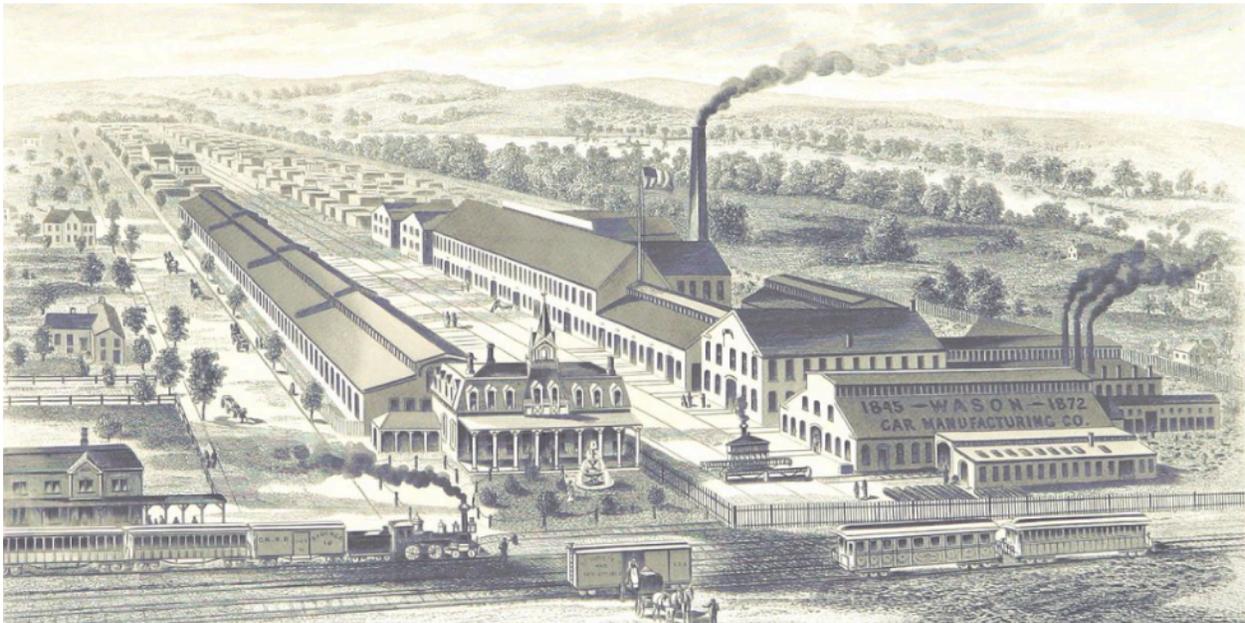
Clara Electa 15, and Emma Amanda, 11 were with George and Norma Ritchie in Omaha, Nebraska. The census calls them relatives.

Edwin, 13 was with Beniah and Lavin Short on a farm that is now a rebuilt house at 1073 Tucker Rd in Calais. The Shorts' daughter Calista was married to Edwin's step uncle Samuel O. Hersey.

² Sash: window part that holds panes. Blind: interior movable wood slats.

The Children Who Stayed East - Massachusetts

Two of Hiram and Amanda's children reversed course in this story of pioneers and moved back to southern New England where their ancestors had started their journeys to Vermont 100 years before. Orville A Dodge married Elsie Guernsey, daughter of Sylvanus Guernsey of Calais in 1863. She had been working in the Lowell Mills in Massachusetts before that. Orville served in the Union Army in the Civil War for four years in Heavy Artillery. After that they settled in the Springfield, MA area. Orville worked in the Wason Railroad Car Company for 30 years and would have been working there when it built the first railroad cars for the Transcontinental Railroad. He shared a patent for a device to square soft bricks. Later he and Elsie moved to Chicopee what they farmed, growing corn, oats, rye, potatoes, apples. I guess he retired to the life he had left in Vermont as a young man.



Edwin H Dodge was also in the Union army for four years and went from private to sergeant. Then he and his wife Sarah Williston followed Orville to Springfield, MA where Edwin was a cabinet maker. They later farmed in Worthington MA and took in boarders.

Back to the Pioneer Families

In 1864 Emma Dodge had married James Alger, a farmer and they settled in 15th Mile close to Elizabeth.

By 1870 Hiram Dodge was away from his family, working at mining in Union, Oregon. Elizabeth was living with Lucius and Lucia in The Dalles, Oregon near 15th Mile. But she was now living with George W. Stone, a farmer, but they weren't married. Lucius was also listed as a farmer. Elizabeth and Hiram would be divorced within a year and she married George Stone in 1873.

Clara Electa Dodge had married Samuel O Swackhamer³ in 1862 in Omaha. Clara Electa and Samuel went west to settle in La Grande, Oregon. Native Americans were being driven out of many areas at the end of the Oregon Trail and they had been driven out of Le Grande in 1862. The town was east of 15th Mile and The Dalles, near Union where Hiram was now mining. It had become a hub for miners and farmers, and Samuel was sheriff there for years. The railroad would reach the town in 1884, providing an alternate option to the Oregon Trail.

In 1879 Clara and Samuel tragically lost five of their six children to Diphtheria⁴ within a few months, with only the oldest, Clara Nevada surviving. A new baby, Walter was born that year and then Arthur and Chester Ray in the next six years. Diphtheria causes fever and sore throat along with swelling of the mucous membranes, including in the throat, that can obstruct breathing and swallowing. It peaked in the early 1920s but waned in the mid 1920s when several vaccines were developed.

Union Sentinel: An affliction that has befallen our respected citizen, Sheriff Swackhamer, has cast a gloom over the entire community. On last Sunday his youngest child was buried beside the fresh graves of its brother and three little sisters. But one child, the oldest of a family of six, remains; the others all lie side by side in the silent home of the dead, the victims of that fell destroyer, diphtheria.

Elizabeth and Hiram's children Lucius and Lucia both married in 1876. Lucius married Adelia Cartright in Portland, Oregon where they would live from then on. He made a living repairing musical instruments. Lucia married John Mcfayden, a doctor, and they settled in Rohnerville, California, near Eureka on the Eel River, now the area called the Redwood Coast. The area drew settlers with gold, logging and trapping. The "Indian Wars" had driven out the Native Americans 15 years before.

1880s

Elizabeth and George moved to Ferndale, Ca close to Rohnerville and near Lucia, her youngest. Elizabeth continues to be a problem as to records. I can't find much about her and can only guess that she died between 1880 and 1886. Hiram visited his son Orville in Massachusetts around 1880. Trains were drawing families back together. Hiram died in 1887 back in Portland, living with son Lucius. Hiram Dodge and Conrad Swackhamer share a memorial in the Union Oregon cemetery commemorating their status as pioneers.

I won't follow everyone to their grave sites, but the Swackhamers deserve some more attention. Clara Electa not only lost five children to Diphtheria but she died of it herself in 1908 at age 53.

³ From New Jersey. His father Conrad would show up in state histories as a founding pioneer.

⁴ Bacterial lung infection that causes sore throat and fever. Mucus can croup like cough and airway blockage.

Her surviving daughter Clara Nevada married William Mulhollan, a dentist in 1883 in Union Oregon. They moved to San Francisco for a time and then William started traveling to Juneau Alaska by boat, the only easy way to get there at that time. They settled in Juneau on Dixon St for a number of years, but may have moved back to Union, Oregon where they still had family. Their graves are in the Union Cemetery. I find it poignant that they had no children, after so much loss in Clara's childhood.



Dixon St, Juneau Alaska

Two of Clara Nevada's three young brothers who were born after the tragic death of her five siblings went on to be doctors. Dr Walter Swackhamer was a 1st Lieutenant in the Army Medical Core in WWI. He then served in numerous positions in the Veterans Bureau. His brother Dr Chester Ray Swackhamer was a surgeon in Arizona and served as President of the Arizona Medical Association. After his death his collection of 553 medical science books were donated to the Matthews Library at ASU. They lived in the generation that pushed medical advances to protect people from the dozens of diseases that ravages the parents'