

# **THE CURTIS FAMILY OF NEGAUNEE**

Researched and written by David Curtis



Thomas Curtis, 1831-1887

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## **PART 1 – INTRODUCTION**

The Curtis surname, of Norman origin, most likely was derived from the word *courteous*, but it could also have come from the middle English word for a man's short stockings.

This family history covers from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Of special importance is the two-generational period from the birth of my great-grandfather Thomas Curtis in 1831 to the death of my grandfather John Carter Curtis in 1917 as it ushered my family into a new way of life in America.

The Curtis direct lineage covered is William Curtis & Dinah Rogers – John Curtis & Mary Bastian – William Curtis & Jane Kitchen – Thomas Curtis & Louisa Tucker – John Carter Curtis & Caroline Heisel – Leland Curtis & Elsie Kannianen.

Also included are a one-page background paper on the Cornwall region and a half-page summary of the ancient origins of the family derived from my DNA analysis provided by the Genographic Project of the National Geographic Society.

As I was researching the *Negaunee Iron Herald*, I came upon considerable information on members of the Curtis family outside of the direct line of descent who deserve their places in history for contributions made during the period 1890s-1920s.

In these pages, you will meet Thomas Curtis (1831-1887) an adventurer, who lived to the fullest and died tragically; John Carter Curtis (1874-1917), the consummate professional miner, whose uncharacteristic mistake cost him his life; Thomas Curtis (1866-1949) whose oldest son, Thomas Jr. was a hero in his own right; Joseph Curtis (1874-1937), the socialite forever in the public eye; Louisa and Caroline Curtis, unsung heroes until now for each raising three sons on their own after their husbands' deaths.

For additional information on those families who married into the line of direct Curtis descent, please consult the following titles

contained on this website: *Tregear Family History*, *Heisel Family of Negaunee* and *Kanniainen Family of Negaunee*.

By researching my background, I have increased my sense of family. Those people who have gone before me are as alive in my eyes as they can be. I have been so fortunate to have been at the right place at the right time to have heard the stories.

## **PART 2 – BACKGROUND ON CORNWALL**

Our journey starts out on the southern coast of Cornwall, across the English Channel from Brittany, France. Located on the southwest peninsula of England, Cornwall is one of the country's thirty-eight counties. The weather on the southern coast is milder and sunnier than the rest of Cornwall, and the geography is less abrupt.

During the most-recent glacial period, occurring from approximately 75,000 to 15,000 years ago, Cornwall was south of the ice sheet and was also attached to the European Continent. The Neanderthals were the sole occupants there until about 40,000 years ago when the Homo Sapiens arrived. By about 24,000 years ago, the Neanderthals were no longer around.

When the ice-sheet retreated, the subsequent sea level rise, which created the English Channel, separated Cornwall from the rest of Europe. The Cornish coastline thus created was occupied by hunter-gatherer bands of Homo Sapiens.

Agricultural development in the area, starting about 5,000 years ago, brought about an increase in population. An influx of people skilled in working the plentiful tin and copper resources available in Cornwall brought about additional settlement.

The dark-skinned Iberians originally inhabiting the Cornwall area were overrun by the Celts around 500 B.C. The subsequent invasions of the British Isles, first by the Romans in 60 B.C. and then again by the Anglos, Saxons and Jutes in 410 A. D. pushed the Celts to the fringes of the territory, including Cornwall.

## **PART 3 – ANCIENT ORIGINS of the FAMILY, DNA ANALYSIS by THE GENOGRAPHIC PROJECT, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY**

The ancient history of the members of the Curtis clan began when the homo sapiens species evolved in Africa about 200,000 years ago.

Our very first male direct descendant was born about 50,000 years ago in the Rift-Valley region of Northeast Africa at a time when the Homo-Sapiens species, numbering about 10,000 individuals, were on the move north out of Africa due to the retreat of the ice sheets. As luck would have it, our lineage was the only one to survive, making him the first direct descendant of every non-African male living today.

Over the next 20,000 years, our ancestors expanded their range into the Middle East and then Central Asia and finally Europe.

Our relatives survived the European Ice Age of 20,000 years ago by occupying the warmer climates of what is now Spain, Italy and the Balkans. When the ice-sheets retreated about 15,000 years ago, the more northerly areas of Europe were repopulated. (1)

From that distant time of nameless relatives, we now begin our history of our known direct descendants, beginning in the 18<sup>th</sup> century with William Curtis.

#### **PART 4 – DIRECT LINE of DESCENT**

William Curtis married Dinah Rogers (c. Feb. 23, 1739) on November 9, 1762, at Breage Parish, Cornwall, England, located near the city of Helston.

The Cornish parishes were named after saints who spread the faith to all of Britain. Breage Parish was named after St. Breaca, who was in Cornwall in the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> century. The church that stands today was built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The richest tin mine in Cornwall, Wheal Vor, was located within its boundaries as was the first mine to use gunpowder.

William's parents lived during the Jacobite uprising of 1715, a dispute that arose upon the death of Queen Anne over who was the rightful heir to the throne, George, the son of Sophia, granddaughter of James I or James Stuart, the son of James II. When George was proclaimed King, the followers of James rioted across Britain, including Cornwall.

William and Dinah were young children when John Wesley made the first of his forty visits to Cornwall, ultimately resulting in Methodism becoming the predominant religion in Cornwall. They were teenagers when a tsunami, generated by an earthquake in Lisbon, Portugal, hit the Cornish coast in 1755, causing the sea to rise ten feet all along the coastline from Penzance to Hayle.

They grew into adulthood during the Seven-Year-War (1756-1763), a conflict that included all the major countries of Europe. During their lifetimes, too, the Cornish dialect faded from use until it was extinguished altogether at the death of Dolly Pentreath, the last known person who spoke it, in 1777.

John, the first-born child of William and Dinah, is our next direct descendant.

### **Next generation of direct descendants**

John Curtis (c. May 14, 1765) married Mary Bastian on April 12, 1784. They were newlyweds when the 1789 bread riots in Cornwall occurred in response to the sharp rise in the price of bread due to a sub-standard grain harvest. During the couples' child-rearing years, they felt the ground shake due to the 1796 earthquake at St. Hilary, near their home parish.

William, the last-born child of John and Mary, is our next direct descendant.

### ***Next generation of direct descendants***

William Curtis (c. June 2, 1796) married Jane Kitchen (c. Sept. 11, 1798) at Breage Parish on July 5, 1823. They may have lived in a cob cottage, the most common type of house back then, with walls of clay and straw and a roof of sod or shingles. It was heated only by the hearth.

In 1851, they were residing at Choone, which is located southwest of Penzance, closer to Land's End. The census that year listed William as a fisherman and farmer, vocations that qualified him to be among the poor working class in Cornwall. Fishing, farming and mining were the principal vocations in Cornwall at that time.

Fishing was a natural pursuit because of Cornwall's proximity to the sea and miles of coastline with numerous bays and coves. The

primary fish caught were pilchards (large sardines), which were eaten fresh or salted. They were so dependent on this food that a bad fishing season was a serious set-back for the community.

The Cornish farmer, working at a subsistence level, grew mostly potatoes in the acid soil along the coast. It was a reliable crop and easily stored for long periods of time. Wheat, barley and oats were not widely grown. Since the general population couldn't afford a great variety of butchered meat, they relied on goats for meat and milk. The small farmer had difficulty adapting to the changes in agricultural marketing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, including the high transportation costs of shipping food to overseas markets.

The county had been engaged in the tin-trade as early as 300 B.C. The 19<sup>th</sup> century's industrial revolution increased the demand for tin. By 1850, the world looked to Cornwall for copper too.

Mining was a way of life in Cornwall, and the mine was the center of many of its communities. Children would sometimes begin work at age of seven. The boys would work with their father below ground, fastened together by ropes. The women and girls would work above ground, hammering the ore into pieces. By the middle decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, fifty-thousand miners were plying their trade in Cornwall.

Tin miners worked close to the surface while copper miners toiled in deeper mines. Miners worked eight or more hours a day, often six days a week. The primitive sanitary conditions and the ever-present possibility of an accident made his job unhealthy and hazardous.

As thriving as the business was during those times, miners were still poor. They fared little better after adopting a tribute method of mining that consisted of a small number of miners who worked together in a contractual arrangement with the company to break the ore, bring it to the surface and prepare it for selling for a guaranteed percentage of the profit.

The mining business went through periods of great upheaval, too, such as the poor economic conditions of the 1830s that caused the mass migration of Cornish miners, leaving their former thriving communities empty and their women and children on relief. The only

alternative for these people was to seek work abroad, particularly in America.

William died of phthisis (an illness of lung and throat) at the age of fifty-five and was buried August 6, 1851 at Kenneggy in Breage Parish. He was a farmer at the time. His brother Francis, present at the time of his death, signed the death certificate with his mark, not his signature, which was common back then. Many Cornish people of similar social standing never went to school at all.

Jane outlived her husband by seven years. She was buried March 1, 1858, at Kenneggy, Germoe Parish at the age of sixty-two.

William and Jane Curtis had seven children. In order of birth they were John (c. September 14, 1823), William (c. January 9, 1825), Francis (c. April 20, 1828), twins James and Caroline (c. May 31, 1829), Thomas (b. 1831, c. July 8, 1832) and Mary Jane (b. 1834). According to the Cornwall census, all of the sons were miners in their early years. According to oral testimony, they worked at other occupations later in life and lived in vastly different locations too.

John immigrated to America, became a rancher in Montana and was wounded in a gunfight.

William remained single and became a sailor. His job in the navy was flogging men. He was demoted many times because of his habit of getting drunk just before he had to perform his cruel duty against his fellow sailors. He died of malaria and was buried in the Red Sea.

Francis immigrated to South Africa and, in his 70s, sided against England in the Second Boer War (1899-1902). After the Boers (Dutch settlers who had established colonies in South Africa) had re-established the independence from Britain in the First Boer War (1880-1881), they were returned to British rule in the Second Boer of War (1899-1902).

Thomas, the sixth-born child of William and Jane, is our next direct descendant.

### ***Next generation of direct descendants***

Thomas Curtis was born in 1831 at Breage Parish and christened on July 8, 1832 at Germoe Parish.

Germoe is located halfway between Helston and Penzance and is bounded on the north, east and south by Breage Parish and on the west by St. Hilary Parish. The name is derived from Saint Germoch (or Germogh), who may have been an Irish king and one of the companions of Breaca. Although primarily a mining parish, it also had some good farms.

At the age of nineteen, Thomas was a tin miner and still living at home. Sometime during the period 1852-1860, he moved to Spain, where he worked in the mines and in the orchards near San Sebastian. He also served in the Spanish Navy. But when he returned home, the English Navy wanted to draft him. When Thomas refused service, he was thrown in jail. Upon his release, he left for America, perhaps for the first time. Passenger lists of 1856 and 1860 do list a Thomas Curtis arriving in Philadelphia, but there is no telling if it was our Thomas.

In 1861, Thomas was back in Cornwall, at Kenneggy Downs in Breage Parish. On May 4 of that year, he married Louisa Tucker (b. Apr. 14, 1839). Thomas signed the marriage certificate with a mark, instead of a signature. One account gives Louisa as being six-foot tall. Another says she was of average height. Prior to marriage, she had been a resident at Pentreath in Breage Parish, which was little more than a farm and its surrounding cottages. The same could be said for Kenneggy Downs.

Sometime after his marriage, most likely during the period September 1861 – March 1863, Thomas, unaccompanied by his wife, made another trip to America to work in the Keweenaw Peninsula of Michigan.

He arrived in St. Ignace during the dead of winter. Since water was the main mode of travel to the Keweenaw, Thomas had to find an alternate way to get to this destination. He accomplished the trip by hitching a ride by U. S. Mail dog sled to the Copper Country. On the way, he became sick and was healed by an Indian in Munising.

Because the American Civil War was active at the time, the Union Army sought to turn the Cornish immigrant miners into soldiers. If this was the case with Thomas, he avoided conscription. An attraction of the Upper Peninsula for Cornish miners was that it was located in a remote area far from the action.

One of the mines at which he worked was the Phoenix, which began operations in 1863. The average price for copper reached a high point of 46.3 cents per pound in 1864. The high prices and the small labor force present brought many Cornish miners to the Keweenaw Peninsula. While working at the Phoenix, he may have made extra money by picking up pieces of silver that were lying on the ground. Most miners supplemented their income in this way.

Living conditions were not the best in the Keweenaw during this time. The long winter meant a severe depletion of food and supplies since the supply boats couldn't run. A typical breakfast was dry wheat bread and water with a little milk in it. When fresh supplies finally arrived by boat after the thaw, the men would celebrate by getting drunk.

A few months later, he was back in Cornwall, working as a tin miner again. During this period, the couples' first two children died, Thomas at two months old in 1864 and Mary Jane, at four months old in 1865. Their causes of death are unknown. Lack of sanitation and disease caused many infant deaths in Cornwall. Children under the age of five had a high mortality rate. (2)

The 1866 collapse of copper prices in Cornwall brought by foreign competition caused a quarter of a million people to face starvation in Cornwall. In the Helston district, where the Curtis Family resided, public relief increased two-fold.

Most likely, Thomas and Louisa were among the first waves of Cornish mining families to depart by boat for America, seeking a better life there. They stayed for a time with Louisa's relative, Jimmy Andrews, in Dover, New Jersey. Jimmy was a son of Grace Tregear, Louisa's cousin on her mother's side, who had married William Andrews and moved to Morris County, New Jersey. The residence was a boarding house at the time. Their first surviving child, Thomas, was born on March 20, 1866, at Dover while living with the Andrews Family. (3)

Thomas could have worked in the mines around Dover, but instead he successfully homesteaded in New York State.

They interrupted their stay in New York to have their baby christened at Germoe Church in Cornwall on May 13, 1867. The gold mining prospects in California eventually lured Thomas to Grass

Valley and Gold Hill, though. After having done so well at homesteading, he remarked, after making the decision to go to California, that he was giving up gold to gold mining.

Grass Valley was one of the richest and most steadily productive gold-mining areas in California. An individual Cornish miner could find his profit to be equal to the profits of twenty miners in Cornwall. Grass Valley is located in a scenic area in the foothills north of Sacramento and is named for its luxuriant fields of grass. The names of the mines there were North Star, Eureka, Idaho, Maryland and, the biggest and deepest of the mines, the Empire. The entire valley was honeycombed with shafts and tunnels. This area attracted the experienced Cornish miner, most coming directly from working in the depressed mines of Cornwall. The population of Cornish in California peaked between 1860 and 1870.

The family moved to California probably during the period 1868-1870. Thomas made the journey there alone by railroad and stage coach, followed by Louisa and their son, Thomas, at a later date when the child was old enough to travel. It is understandable why Thomas wanted his family with him in California. However, most miners, as they anticipated making their fortunes quickly, left their families at home. It was really no place for a woman and a child. But after women and families arrived, a more civilized life did develop based on chapel and school instead of saloons.

Louisa and son went by train to Salt Lake City and then took a covered wagon to Grass Valley. She became ill during the trip with the symptoms lasting eighteen months. The diseases encountered when traveling across America included small-pox, mountain-fever and dysentery. While she was sick, her son was nursed by an Indian woman.

Upon reaching her destination, Louisa had their son Tom baptized again. For the ceremony, he wore a silk head-band of various colors.



Louisa (Tucker) Curtis and son Thomas. Photo taken when residing in California circa 1868

Thomas gave Louisa a gold ring made from the first gold that he mined at Grass Valley. For relaxation the family listened to the famous Cornish choir or attended wrestling matches. However rough life was at Grass Valley, it still fared well when compared with other mining locations. It could even be quiet and respectable, especially during activities associated with church.

At this time, America was experiencing economic hardships. By 1871, the family was back in Cornwall, living at Higher Kenneggy.

Louisa bore twin sons, William and Joseph on May 23, 1872, at Roseudgeon (higher Kenneggy), five miles from Penzance and within the boundaries of St. Hilary's parish, which was bounded on the east by Breage and Germoe Parishes.

The parish is named after St. Hilary of Poitiers, a fourth-century bishop. Its original church was 13<sup>th</sup> century, but it burnt down in 1853. The area abounded in mines, the most remarkable being Wheal Fortune. In this parish is Prussia Cove in Mount's Bay, which played an important role in smuggling in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. (4)

William survived to, at least, five months since he was christened on October 14, 1872. Beyond that date, though, I could

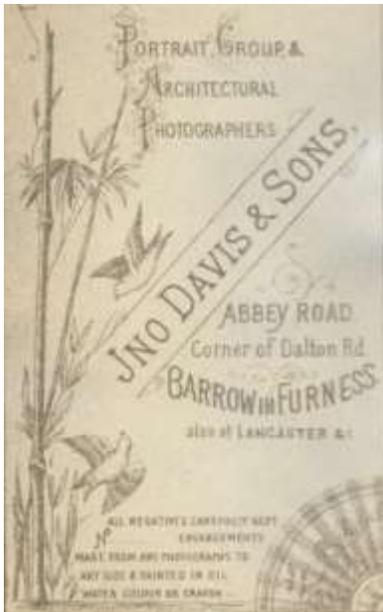
find neither record nor mention of him. Most likely, he passed away early in life too.

On May 5, 1874, their youngest son John Carter, was also born at Roseudgeon. Louisa was thirty-six years old at the birth. She made a mark, not a signature, on the birth certificate. Of their six children, only three survived childhood. (5)

In 1873, there was a slump of tin-mining in West Cornwall and an early development of iron mining in the Lancashire region of Northern England. Sometime after the birth of John Carter in 1874, the family packed up and moved north to a city called Barrow-in-Furness.



Thomas Curtis. Photo taken when residing in Barrow-in-Furness, England. (see card below). Circa 1875-1886.



Back of above photo. (Note reference to Barrow in Furness).

There, Thomas acquired the title *Dancing Tommy Curtis of Northern England*. As much as he may have enjoyed that pastime, though, it was an art form that Louisa considered against the family's religion. Consequently, she made him give it up. Sometime during the period, he was a fisherman and owned boats, but he had to abandon the pursuit because he went broke. Apparently, they remained living in this region for about twelve years. Their oldest son, Thomas, remarked once that he had spent sixteen consecutive years in England with his parents (four in Cornwall and twelve in Barrow-in Furness).

In 1887, Thomas accompanied a number of Cornish miners who left the Furness area of England for the iron mines of Negaunee, Michigan, where conditions were more prosperous.

Negaunee is a Chippewa Indian word meaning foremost or pioneer. The name was coined by J. P. Pendill when he platted the village in 1865.

As early as 1830, P. B. Barbeau, of the American Fur Company, had knowledge of iron ore around Negaunee. Government surveyors under William Burt made the official discovery, though, on September 19, 1844, just west of the present business district, aided by Marji-Gesick, a Chippewa Indian Chief.

The first log cabin at the Negaunee location was built in 1846, which was the year that mining began there. In 1855, the community had six log houses situated near the original Jackson Mine. The food staples of the inhabitants were salted meat, wheat flour, dried apples, molasses and tea.

One-hundred and four companies prospected for minerals in the region in 1846. Out of these, only four were successful: Jackson, Marquette Iron, Cleveland Iron Mining and Iron Cliff. The reasons for failure of many of these ventures included such factors as winter, remoteness, wilderness and lack of labor. The greatest problem was transportation costs, which was eventually solved by the extending of the railroad to the ore docks in Marquette. The railroad and the opening of the Soo Locks in 1857 brought transportation costs down.

Thomas came to Negaunee at a time when ore production and population were entering a boom period. The years 1885-1910 comprised a second period of major expansion of the industry. The first period of growth between 1846-1885 came as a result of open-pit mining. The second period had to do with extracting ore from deep underground. After 1880, open-pit mining decreased substantially. Beginning 1887, because of diamond drilling, massive ore bodies were discovered underground. At this point, shaft-mining gained precedence over open-pit.

Shaft-mining brought great changes to the industry and caused the miner to considerably alter his methods of work. The companies also had to devise means whereby the ore bodies could be accurately located and identified underground. Because new expertise was needed for this type of mining, the Cornish miner was in demand. Miners like Thomas had the experience, knowledge and willingness to work underground. The Cornish miner was long used to mining deep in the earth. Some miners felt that Northern Michigan was more like Cornwall than Northern England.

Thomas was received into membership of the Mitchell Methodist Episcopal Church of Negaunee on June 26, 1887, when G. C. Squire was pastor. He may have applied for membership in the church immediately upon arriving in Negaunee.

The organization of the Methodist Church in Negaunee occurred in 1865. The original building was erected in 1869. On

February 26, 1897, fire broke out in the parsonage, and it burnt down. Most of Rev. Wilcox's possessions were destroyed. The adjoining church was damaged by water but, otherwise, came through it intact. At this time, the board decided to erect a new church. Capt. Sam Mitchell, major owner of Jackson mining property, contributed over \$8,000 to the structure. It was common for mining magnates in both Michigan and Cornwall to give direct financial assistance to churches. The old building was moved to the west side of the property and brick-veneered to become an integral part of the new building. The church was renamed Mitchell Methodist Episcopal Church at this time.

Thomas's arrival in Negaunee preceded his family's so that he could make arrangements for them. Louisa and son arrived by ship to New York and then by rail to Negaunee. I was told that Thomas made seven separate trips to American, five of which I have mentioned in this book. I have found Louisa making the trip to American three times. Her first visit to Michigan in 1887 was her last.

Their emigration to Negaunee was the beginning of the permanent establishment of the Curtis Family in America. And as such, they were among those who introduced the Cornish way of life, customs, traditions, folklore, religion, dialect and mining techniques to American society.

The family lived in Cornish Town at 725 Snow on the south side of the street between Merry and Barn Streets. Living apart from other nationalities was common for the Cornish. They were conservative and clannish, resulting from provincial isolation in their homeland. Their distinctive brogue further set them apart. But Cornish Town was not the only distinctive ethnic communities in Negaunee. French Town, Swede Town and Finn Alley also existed. Only the years caused these ethnic boundaries to fade away.

Shelter took a larger part of the miner's pay check in America than in Cornwall. However, the mining communities often would provide housing and medical care for their employees. Most houses were composed of wood because of the abundance and cheapness of the timber in the Upper Peninsula. The roofs were usually steeply pitched, too, because of the heavy snowfall. These houses were quite different in outside appearance from the miners' cottages in

Cornwall. However, the interiors were quite similar. There was much rough furniture. Even boxes were used for tables and chairs. The miners in America had American stoves instead of the Cornish ranges and used wood or coal for heating and cooking.

Negaunee in 1887 was situated on three railroad lines: The M.H. & O, the M & W, and the C & N.W. The Pioneer Furnaces were located in Negaunee as well as the Union Ore Construction Works from New York, which had begun in 1882 for the reduction of ores. Negaunee also had one of the largest steam saw mills in the county.

In 1887, there were five churches in Negaunee, representing the Presbyterian, Catholic, Methodist and Episcopal faiths. The city supported a weekly newspaper, an opera house constructed at a cost of \$15,000 with a seating capacity of seven-hundred people and had fine school facilities. There was an excellent system of water supply and a good fire department. The best-known firms in 1887 were the Jackson Iron Company, First National Bank, druggist P.B. Kirkwood, attorney John Q. Adams and the Buffalo Mining Company.

A private telephone line was established in 1881 from the Marquette Mining Journal to the Excelsior Mine. A telephone exchange for the Negaunee community was established in 1882. Negaunee had a street light system, installed in 1885, of twenty-five gas lights.

Recreationally, the miners and their families could indulge in snow shoeing, tobogganing, sleighing, skating, church socials, dances, concerts, camping, fishing and hunting. The Cornish Cousin Jacks also staged wrestling matches.

Negaunee seemed to hold out the prospect of quite a nice life for the Curtis Family when they arrived in 1887. Thomas was employed at the Cambria Mine, which was located not too far from where he was living. But working the mines was very hard and physical. The hours were long and the mining captains demanding. In Cornwall, according to the tribute system, the miner could go at a slower pace. In America, the entire eight or ten-hour shift had to be worked with only breaks for meals. All jobs in Negaunee seemed to require long hours. The miner was known for his dirty face and hands. His mining clothes and boots were normally torn and shabby.

The miners worked in pairs. In single-jacking, one man held the drill while another man struck the drill with a sledge hammer. Double-jacking was when two men struck and one held. After 1888, compressors were used for this work.

Thomas, though, was never able to take advantage of a compressor in his work because ten weeks after his arrival, on September 9, 1887, he was killed at the age of fifty-six, in the Cambria Mine, which was located along current U. S. 41 about one mile west of Teal Lake Avenue. He was carried out of the mine by a man whose son, Will Ford, married into the Curtis Family at a later date.

Thomas's death was reported, as follows:

*FATAL MINING ACCIDENTS. Thomas Curtis was killed by a blast at the Cambria Mine Friday evening. He attempted to light the fuse and under the impression that he had not done so returned to the hold just as the explosion took place. He was a good man, good citizen and good miner. A double funeral (Thomas Sandercock too) took place at the Methodist Church Sunday afternoon. (6)*

His funeral was also described in the following account:

*The funerals of Thomas Sandercock and Thomas Curtis, the unfortunate men who were victims of the mining accidents Friday occurred Sunday afternoon. The services were held at two o'clock at the Methodist Church. A large number of members of societies to which the deceased men belonged marched in the funeral procession. (7)*



The above card reads: In memory of Thomas Curtis. Beloved husband of Louisa Curtis. Died September 9<sup>th</sup>. 1887. 56 years. Interred in Negaunee Cemetery on the 11<sup>th</sup>. We shall sleep but not forever. There will be a glorious dawn. We shall meet to part, no never, on the resurrection morn.

Louisa and children, who apparently had moved to Negaunee just ten days previous to her husband's death, lost her main means of support at a time when they were just settling into a new community. Life was hard enough for the women of Negaunee without losing a husband too. The morning would begin as early as 5:30 when family members and animals had to be fed. It would take all morning to prepare enough food for the next day. The afternoons were generally spent in cleaning.

Louisa was, by nature, very self-sufficient. Her oldest son, Thomas, was twenty-one and most certainly would have helped Louisa support the family through this very difficult transition period. After the funeral, a man rented Louisa a cow for one dollar per month. To make up for the loss of family income, Louisa took in borders at her house on Snow Street.

Her other sons, Joseph and John Carter, at the ages of fifteen and thirteen respectively, may have contributed financially to the family as well since under-age help in the mines was common.

After only having been in Negaunee for a short while, what prompted her to remain living there is unclear, but the prospect of her sons working the rich iron veins of Marquette County during a period of rapid growth and productivity may have had something to do with

it. This boom period offered them a long and reliable period of employment, something that had been rather uncommon for them.

It was an exciting time to live there, too, with the population growing, the area of the platted city increasing and the quality of life improving. Homes were even congregated outside of the platted areas, near the mines and access roads.

Perhaps there had been too many moves in her life as well. The Cornish were known for moving frequently, seeking better employment opportunity and improved working conditions. Although they dreamed of finding their fortunes in the mines, the common miner, including Thomas, seldom achieved it.

Even though Louisa must have missed her husband greatly, her life was anything but lonely after her husband's death. Her three boys, each approaching marriage age, would ensure an active family life.

In the 1900 census, Louisa was a housekeeper. By this time, she was literate. Living with her at the house at 725 Snow Street were sons John Carter and Joseph and granddaughter Ethel. After all of her children were married, Louisa lived alone for many years at her house on Snow street.

In Louisa's older age, the family took good care of her. Billy, her grandson, would take milk to Louisa every day and also vegetables from the garden. Louisa lived with her granddaughter Ethel when she married Will Ford in 1915.

During her years in Negaunee, Louisa had fifteen grandchildren from her son's four marriages.



Louisa Curtis with T. Andrew (standing in the doorway to the right). Hancock, Michigan. Ethel Curtis in group of children. Circa 1904

Louisa died March 10, 1917, of chronic endocardia (inflammation of the membrane of the interior of the heart). Another account states that she took an overdose of liver pills that rendered her a terrible stomach ache for two days until death.

*TWO PIONEERS PASS. Mrs. Louisa Curtis and John Hancock called by death. Two Negaunee pioneer residents were called by death early Saturday morning. Mrs. Louisa Curtis, a resident of the city for over thirty years, dying shortly after midnight...Mrs. Curtis was eighty years old and had been ailing for the past several years. She was born in England and came over with her family a number of years ago. Surviving Mrs. Curtis are three sons, Joseph, John and Thomas, all residents of Negaunee. The funeral will be held this afternoon at two o'clock from the residence of the former on Case Street. Rev. R. L. Hewson pastor of the Mitchell Methodist Episcopal Church, will conduct the services. (8)*

*MRS. LOUISA CURTIS DEAD. Mrs. Louisa Curtis, a respected resident who had made her home in Negaunee for upward of thirty years, passed away early Saturday morning at the home of one of her sons, Joseph Curtis, on east Case Street. Mrs. Curtis had reached the age of four score and her advanced years has made themselves manifest during the past year and particularly so during the past few weeks. Deceased was a native of England and the family came to this country in the 80s, her husband meeting death in one of the mines a few years later. There survive three sons, Thomas, Joseph, and John Carter Curtis, all residents of Negaunee. The funeral was held Monday afternoon and many of the old-time friends of the family gathered at the home for the services, which were conducted by Rev. R. L. Hewson, pastor of Mitchell Memorial Church. She is buried in Negaunee Cemetery, next to her husband. (9)*

John Carter, the youngest son of Thomas and Louisa, is our next direct descendant.

### ***Next generation of direct descendants***

John Carter Curtis was born on May 5, 1874, at Roseudgeon in St. Hilary's Parish. He may have been named after the famous smuggler John Carter, who operated out of Prussia Cove in Cornwall during the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Prussia Cove was very close to the area where the Curtis Family resided, and John Carter was the same generation as Thomas's parents, William and Jane Curtis.

John and his brother Harry Carter were known by their countrymen as honest men. John kept a public house, which he called the *King of Prussia*. In the fish storehouse below the public house, he kept contraband. He also kept cannons there. One day he made the mistake of firing at a naval ship, the Fairy. The navy in turn invaded his premises, temporarily putting King John, as he was called, out of business by confiscating his smuggled goods. John, in turn, raided the customs house in Penzance to take back that which the government had seized because he had promised his customers those items.

In Cornwall, smuggling was a widely accepted, and even respected, form of adding to the family income. Many of the Cornish families who came to America had been involved in smuggling in Cornwall or, at least, had no qualms about keeping the cargoes of shipwrecks that washed up on their shores. No evidence exists that our Thomas Curtis or his father William engaged in smuggling. But they most certainly didn't frown upon the practice and even considered the smugglers good men.

In 1894, at the age of twenty, John Carter Curtis was accepted into membership of the Mitchell Methodist Church of Negaunee, like his father seven years earlier. Gillespie H. Whitney was the pastor at the time.

That same year, he was affiliated as S. C. R. with the Odd Fellows, Iron Mountain Lodge while his brother Thomas was Treasurer. This English fraternal organization offered the Cornishman companionship with kindred souls. (10)

The year 1894 was notable for another reason as well, as reported in the newspaper's gossip column in September.

*John C. Curtis was hit in the eye by a baseball Saturday, since which time his optic has been in mourning. (11)*

John was working as a miner by then. In that capacity, during the summer of 1898, at the age of twenty-four, he tried his hand at gold mining on the Fraser River in British Columbia. Two months later, he was back in Negaunee no better off than when he had left. The reason he gave for his return was that he couldn't agree with the climate. (12)



John Carter Curtis, circa 1901

On October 3, 1901, John, age twenty-seven, married Caroline Heisel, a woman five months older than himself. Caroline was born in Negaunee on October 17, 1873. Her gravestone, though, gives her birth year as 1875.



Caroline Heisel Curtis and John Carter Curtis, circa 1901

The Heisel Family immigrated from Germany to Chicago in 1865. After the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, they moved to Negaunee. They were Presbyterians, but a congregation of that faith didn't form in Negaunee until eight years after their arrival, and it was two years after that before those followers of John Knox had a sanctuary on the northeast corner of Case and Pioneer Streets, one block from the Methodists. The Presbyterians and Methodists frequently worshipped together, shared ministers and had a united Thanksgiving service.

When the Presbyterian Church disbanded, some of the congregation, including Caroline, became Methodist. This may be how Caroline and John Carter met. She played organ for the church, and he was in the choir.



Church class – Caroline Heisel, second row, from the top, 4<sup>th</sup> from the left, seated. Circa 1888

They were a striking couple. She was five feet, nine inches tall, thin and had beautiful posture. He was tall, dark and muscular.

Prior to marriage, Caroline was a music teacher, living on Teal Lake Avenue with her parents. John had been working for the Oliver Iron Manufacturing Company, but after marriage he was a store clerk. For the first two years after marriage, the couple lived with John's mother, Louisa, on Snow Street, where their first child, Carter Carlton, was born on December 29, 1902.

By 1903, they were living at 501 Cherry Street, which would become their family home. That year and the next, he worked as a timberman.

On March 24, 1905, their second child, Kenneth, was born.

*Mr. and Mrs. John C. Curtis, who live in Cherry Street, rejoice over the arrival of a bright baby boy at their home last Friday evening.*  
(13)



Curtis House at 501 Cherry St. Left to right: Caroline with Ken on her lap, Carter, John Carter. Circa 1907

At this point in his life, John was working as a shift boss in the mines, a position he held in the various mines he worked until his death.

In November of 1905, while working at the Hartford Mine, John sustained a bad cut to the head and bruises to his nose and arms, caused by the heavy timber of the partition in a drift falling upon him, which laid him up for a couple weeks. He congratulated himself that it was no worse. (14)

The couple's third son, Leland, was born on August 31, 1908.



Leland, Kenneth, Carter Curtis, circa 1911



Leland, Carter, Kenneth Curtis, circa 1911

John left his job as shift boss at the Hartford in May of 1911 for a similar position at the American Mine under Capt. Elijah Toms. (15)

The following summer, John served on the Sons of St. George's local planning committee in charge of the entertainment and accommodations for its 24<sup>th</sup> annual reunion. His brother, Joseph, was Captain of the event. (16)

In September of 1912, he was mining for gold on Michipicoten Island, off the northeastern coast of Lake Superior in Ontario, Canada. He was back in Negaunee by December, though, with nothing to show for his efforts. (17)

The same month two years later, his youngest son, Leland, had a life-altering accident while playing with a hammer in front of his house.

*A lad aged six years, the son of Carter Curtis, who resides on Cherry Street, found a dynamite cap while playing Monday evening with the result that the thumb and forefinger of the left hand were blown off. Other injuries to both right and left hands were caused, as well as minor ones to the face. The injured digits were amputated at Dr. Robbins' Hospital. (18)*

Leland remembered waking up in the bloodied sink of the house. A ring that he was wearing on his left hand at the time of the accident severed that digit down to the palm. His father found the ring in the street and from that time forward carried it with him wherever he went. When he died, his wife placed it in the vest pocket of his burial suit.

One month after his son's accident, in October of 1914, John was among a party of fifteen miners who helped sink a shaft at Lyon Mountain, New York, in the Adirondacks for the Chateauguey Iron Company. He returned from that task in March of the following year. (19, 20)



Post card sent by John Carter Curtis (third standing from left) from New York to his brother Tom. Note on back: 3/14. Some of these men are Slavs and Poles. With best wishes from Carter. Give this one to Tom. Circa 1914.

Louisa's three sons maintained a close family relationship. John used to visit his brother Tom every Sunday on his day off of work. Sunday was meant to be free of work at the mines and at home. The day was set aside for church and visiting. Very often the Curtis Family get-togethers were music fests with Thomas and Caroline playing the instruments. John, as member of the church choir, could carry a tune.

John Carter liked to call himself Carter, but he was also Uncle Jack to his nieces and nephews. John was a very common Cornish first name. More often than not, John turned into Jack over time. In Negaunee and other mining towns, the term *Cornishman and Cousin Jack* were synonymous.

John's social life also included taking a drink or two. Leland remembered his father setting him on the counter of the local drinking establishment while he downed a shot of whiskey. Although John did not drink to excess, many miners did. Bars outnumbered churches three to one.

During the course of his mining career, John earned a reputation for his physical strength. He could lift mining rails that were too heavy for anyone else to manage. When it came to fighting unionism in the mines, his physical prowess proved useful.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, unionism began to play a role in Upper Peninsula mining. However, because of the

Cornish rugged sense of individualism, which perhaps can be best seen in their contract work system, the Cornish miner was not a great believer in unions. John inherited this distaste. One day as he was walking home from work, he was jumped by two Finns who wanted to unionize the mines and did not appreciate John's opposition. He handled both men without too much of a problem and only refrained from the struggle when restrained by others.

John was very popular with his fellow miners. Fluent in Italian, German, French and Swedish, he could talk to co-workers in their own languages. One day, a fire broke out in the Hartford Mine, and the foreman wanted to put it out by spraying water down the shaft. John advised the foreman of the danger of drowning that the spraying would cause to the men down in the mine. When the foreman ignored him, John picked him off his feet and held him over the shaft until he agreed to not use water. John was fired because of the action.

During his mining career, he witnessed the perfecting of shaft mining, the decline of open-pit mining, the opening of the eastern ore bodies, the final shaping of geological knowledge essential to efficient exploration and expansion, unprecedented increase in ore production and the completion of the railroad net. By 1910, the iron-ore industry had passed from a period of vigorous expansion to one of steady resource exploitation. John's job was made easier than his father's by being able to use superior hoisting machinery and mechanical drills in shaft-sinking and level-driving.

Six months after his mother Louisa's death, the mine whistle, which was sounded when a miner was injured or worse, blasted once again. John Carter Curtis was killed in a mining accident on September 7, 1917.

*CARTER CURTIS IS ACCIDENT VICTIM. Well know mining man killed instantly at Breitung Number One Mine. Carter Curtis, one of the best know mining men in Marquette County, met instant death yesterday morning at three o'clock at the Breitung Mine, where he had been employed as shift boss for the past several years. Curtis was riding on a motor and in standing up his head struck against a cross piece in the drift crushing his skull at the base of the brain. The*

deceased was employed as shift boss at the Baraga Ore body in the Breitung Number One mine of the Breitung Mining Company. Shortly before three o'clock he got on the motor to ride out to the shaft. Attached was a trainload of ore and when the motor had gone about half the distance to the shaft, one of the cars in the train had become uncoupled, attracting attention. He stood upon the motor to look back over the train to ascertain what the nature of the trouble was, and in doing so violated one of the rules of mining: Never to stand up on a motor. Before he could get back in his seat, his head struck the cross piece of timber, which is used to carry the motor trolley wire. He fell to the ground dead. Mining men acquainted with Curtis claim that he was one of the most careful of workmen underground and the nature in which he met his death caused much surprise. The motor trolley wire and the supporting cross pieces are only seven feet from the rails making it extremely dangerous to stand up while on the motor, so motormen are instructed to remain seated until they bring the train to a stop, no matter what happens. Coroner William Press was called yesterday morning and with a jury of six examined the body of the unfortunate man. The inquest will be held in Judge William Jones's office Monday morning at nine o'clock. The coroner's jury will be as follows: Stephen Thomas, Peter Rasmussen, William R. Davey, John W. Goudge, William H. Jones and Edward Brandt. Carter Curtis was forty-three years old and had been a resident of Negaunee for thirty years. He was a very widely known mining man having worked at many mines in the Upper Peninsula in various capacities. He was always known as a careful and faithful worker and was held in high respect by his employers. The deceased is mourned by a widow and three sons, Carter J. age fourteen, Kenneth and Leland, the latter ten years old. Two brothers, Thomas and Joseph, both residents of Negaunee also mourn his loss. He was a member of Iron Mountain Lodge of Odd Fellows and English Oak Lodge of the Sons of St. George. The funeral will probably be held tomorrow under the direction of the Odd Fellows. (21)

**J. CARTER CURTIS KILLED.** John Carter Curtis, a shift boss at the Breitung Hematite mine and one of the most-widely known mine employees in the city was killed about 3:30 this morning as a

*result of an accident to an underground motor train upon which Curtis was riding. The precise manner of the accident has not been determined, but it appears that Curtis, together with the motorman, was riding on the head car of a four-car train. The coupling behind the first car broke, leaving three cars in the detached portion. After continuing for what appeared to be a safe distance, the motorman brought the head portion to a stop. Curtis rose from his position at the rear of the first car, presumably to ascertain the position of the detached cars. The latter, however, had not lost their momentum and crashed into the front portion before Curtis had time to squat down in the car. The impact sent the first car forward, Carter's head being caught by a timber. He was instantly killed due to a fractured skull. The body was taken in charge by Elliott & Dave and removed to their undertaking rooms. Arrangements will be made later for an inquest.*

*Deceased was forty-five years of age and is survived by a widow and three children, the family home being on Cherry Street. Mr. Curtis's mother died only a few months ago, and there survive two brothers, Joseph and Thomas Curtis. Deceased was a member of the Sons of St. George and Odd Fellows Lodges. The funeral arrangements have not been complete, but it is probably that the services will be held Sunday. (22)*

*Accident no. 11. J. Carter Curtis was almost instantly killed at 3 p.m., Sept. 7, 1917 on the second level of the Breitung Hematite Mine of the Breitung Hematite Mining Company of Negaunee. Curtis was employed as shift boss, and at the time he met with the accident that cost him his life, he was riding on the back end of the motor, which was pulling a train of four loaded cars to the shaft. The cars were equipped with automatic couplers. In some manner, the coupling between the first and second became uncoupled. The motor man slowed down for the cars to come up to him, and when they struck, stood up on the motor the back of his head coming in contact with the piece of timber carrying the wire, crushing his skull. The wire in the level is 7 ft. 4 in. high, the drift at this point being in solid rock and 8 by 8 feet inside, the hangers carrying the timber support the wire being wedged in drill holes. The piece of timber carrying the wire is about 3 feet long by 4 in. wide. Curtis was English, married, age 43.*

*Verdict of the jury that then said J. Carter Curtis met his death by riding a motor, according to the evidence produced, which was purely accidental. (23)*

The inquest was held in Judge W. H. Jones's courtroom brought in a verdict of accidental death.

The funeral was held the afternoon of September 9 from the home on Cherry Street and was largely attended. The whole town mourned his death. Rev. R. L. Hewson, pastor of the Mitchell Methodist Church, conducted the services. The members of Iron Mountain Lodge of Odd Fellows and English Oak Lodge Sons of St. George attended the funeral in a body.



John Carter Curtis at around the time of his death, Circa 1917

The Iron Mountain lodge published their tribute in the newspaper.

*The following resolutions were unanimously adopted by the members of Iron Mountain Lodge...in memoriam of their beloved brother, John Carter Curtis...*

*...whereas our beloved brother John Carter Curtis was called to his eternal rest Friday, September 7<sup>th</sup> and...resolved that our lodge*

*charter be draped in mourning for a period of thirty days and a copy of these resolutions be furnished the widow... (24)*

He was buried in Negaunee cemetery.

Caroline Curtis was left with three sons to support, just as Louisa had been thirty years prior. At the time of their father's death, Carter was fifteen, Kenneth twelve and Leland nine years of age.

As the sole parent of three vigorous children, Caroline became very strict out of necessity. She set an example of ethical behavior for her children and raised them to take their responsibilities seriously.

One rule she enforced was not speaking at meals. A very proud woman, too, she was reluctant to take charity even to the point of refusing to accept a cake that her son Carter had won in some contest.

She balanced her discipline with kindness, though. Ethel Curtis, Caroline's niece, fondly remembered the time when Aunt Caroline had explained to her the history of the plates she owned. She supported her family with little outside help by being frugal and giving piano lessons at her house.

Under her guidance, her sons Carter and Kenneth excelled at Negaunee High School. Carter was an honor student, and after high school, he attended Ferris State University.

Kenneth was valedictorian of his junior class in 1922.

*Selection of valedictorian and salutatorian is determined by class standing throughout the school course, and Kenneth Curtis won his place by a scholastic standing of 93.4. Miss Salo was but little behind, and her standing of 92.87 gave her the salutatorian standing. (25)*

All three boys supplemented the meager family income by doing odd jobs like shoveling snow, carrying miner's lunch pails for them and hauling water in buckets to the mines. The miners paid them by flipping coins in their direction.

In 1927, Caroline and Leland, who was nineteen at the time, moved to Detroit. From that point on, she lived alternately with her

three sons, Carter and Leland in the Detroit area and Kenneth in Baltimore, Maryland.

Carter was taking care of her when she developed cancer. She died at his home in Royal Oak, Michigan, on January 2, 1947.

*Died in Detroit – Mrs. Carrie Curtis was a former resident. The body of Mrs. Carrie Curtis, a former Negaunee resident, who died in Detroit, will be received here this (Friday) afternoon and taken to the Perala Funeral Home.*

*Mrs. Curtis was the widow of the late John Carter Curtis who met his death in a mining accident in the Breitung Hematite mine in September 1917.*

*Three sons survive, Carter and Leland of Detroit and Kenneth of Baltimore, Md; also five grandchildren.*

*Funeral services will be held in the funeral home at 2 o'clock Monday afternoon with the Rev. Arthur B. Howard, Pastor of the Mitchell Methodist Church officiating. Interment will be made in the family lot in the Negaunee Cemetery. (26)*

Her son Carter, who had been working in Detroit since 1923, became a member of the Detroit Police Force in 1924. After marriage, he changed the spelling of his last name to Curtiss. Among his other ventures, he was owner of the Red Run Trailer Park in Madison Heights, Michigan. He died in that city in 1967 at the age of 64. (27, 28)

Kenneth, after high school, moved to Detroit to find employment. He was a long-time employee of Coca-Cola in Baltimore, Maryland. He died in 2006 at LaBelle, Florida at the age of 101.

### ***Next generation of direct descendants***

Leland, the youngest child of John Carter and Caroline, is our next direct descendant.

At the time of Leland's youth, Negaunee was a rough mining town in the wilderness. He childhood was an active, hardy one. He spent much time outdoors, hunting and fishing.

Negaunee's winter climate was severe in every sense of the word. The snow drifts would reach as high as the roofline. He skied off rooftops and tunneled through snow from his front door to the street.

His mother had wanted him to become a medical doctor, but instead he quit high school after he finished the ninth grade in 1923 and then immediately set to work doing odd jobs. When he was old enough, he worked on the crew that constructed the first concrete road between Negaunee and Marquette. Before he was twenty, he was seeking employment in Detroit, where he began his long association with General Motors. While living in Detroit, he visited Negaunee yearly on summer vacation and also to deer hunt. His closest friends in Detroit were from the Upper Peninsula.

While Leland was at his cousin's house in Detroit, he met his future wife, Elsie Kanninen, also a Negaunee native, born on May 11, 1909. One look at this five-foot-two, brunette, flapper girl and Leland turned to his cousin and said, "I sure would like to dip her nylons in my coffee."

Elsie had spent her Negaunee childhood in the sweet embrace of her loving mother and siblings. Out of financial necessity, though, she moved to Detroit after high school to find employment. As a single woman, she made a living by housecleaning and doing odd jobs at factories. She lived with her sister Mae. A petite woman, she wore her brown hair in bangs. Her beauty turned men's heads. Leland called her "my little Indian." Later in life, she expressed regret over her decision to leave Negaunee to come to Detroit. She missed the close-knit family she had left behind.

They married on June 27, 1931, at the Presbyterian Church on Middlebelt in Garden City, Michigan. He was twenty-three at the time and she twenty-two.

The notice of her wedding shower, given to her by her sister, Hilma, showed up in the Negaunee newspaper.

*Complimenting her sister, Miss Elsie Kanninen, who will become the bride of Leland Curtis on June 27<sup>th</sup>, Mrs. Emil Samuelson gave a miscellaneous shower at her home in Van Buren Avenue, Detroit. Miss Kanninen received many beautiful gifts. At midnight,*

*a dainty luncheon was served. Both Mr. Curtis and his bride-to-be are former Negaunee residents, the latter being the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Kanniainen, Prince Steet. Among those present were Mmes. Ralph Snider, John Kanniainen Jr., Clarence Bray, Arthur Guimond, Harold Lasko, Roscoe Snider, Jeffries Jefferson, the misses Emily Jefferson, Nina Lasko, Stella Gauthier, Eline Marjama, Elna Ollila, Marjorie Samuelson. (29)*

With the birth of her first child, Lee, she began the period of her life that she later called the “good old days.” She devoted herself to being a housewife and worked for her family with an ardor that was quite remarkable. She was as busy as a bee, yet as happy as could be in her own “little blue heaven.”

They lived at 159 W. Robinwood Street on the east side of Detroit from 1932-1938. Their first two children, Lee and Sharon, were born while living there.



Elsie and Leland Curtis with baby Lee. Circa 1932

In 1939, they moved to 13802 Collingham Drive, also on the East Side, and lived there until 1948. Their third child, David, was born there.

In those early years, they seemed to have everything they needed for a happy life. They had each other, three healthy children and a close circle of very good friends.

Elsie was a naturally quiet and modest person. In that respect, she was like her own mother, who was the guiding light of her life. Even though each day was like the next for Elsie with doing housework and the like, she was happy with her lot. Her desires never exceeded the satisfaction she received from an honest day's work. She expressed her love for her family by her good deeds. In return, she asked only to be protected and cared for. Her ability in the kitchen was quite remarkable. Pasties, bread buns, meat pies and cookies were symbols of her love of family.

In 1947-48, while living on the East Side of Detroit, Leland built a cabin on Middle Straits Lake, near Detroit, for their next home. He would work his shift at GM and then devote his other hours to working on his home. They moved into the cabin in 1949, and stayed there one year.

In 1950, they moved to a small house at 17550 Huntington on the northwest side of Detroit, which was fairly close to where Leland worked afternoon shift as a mechanic at Detroit Diesel. Living there during the 1950s was a happy time for the family. Elsie loved her new house as it was just the right size for her to manage. For all intents and purpose, she had reached her heaven there. Leland loved his job. They had many good friends who visited often. Leland took special pride in his lawn and gardens, which he always kept well groomed.

After Leland was promoted to a supervisory position, he wanted a nicer house in a better neighborhood. So, he bought a lot, at 17551 Doris Lane, in a new residential district in Livonia, hired a contractor to build the house and spent many hours supervising the construction. This was a period of Leland's life that was notable for the achievement of his highest ambitions: a good job, a house with conveniences and a luxury car.

While living there, Leland had a heart attack and underwent heart surgery for the installation of a pacemaker. The recovery from the operation was painful and slow. Leland spent much of his later recovery time on the screened-in porch, bird watching in his large backyard.

Since returning to work was impossible after such surgery, he retired. Life from this point on was one of planning for and moving to

their retirement home at 7520 N. Huntington in Oscoda, Michigan, situated in a birch forest. While living there, he died of heart complications on April 1, 1973, at the age of sixty-four.

Elsie died one year later on January 21, 1974 in Hemlock, Michigan, at the age of sixty-four.

## **PART 5 – NOTABLE SONS OF THOMAS AND LOUSIA CURTIS NOT IN DIRECT LINE**

### **Thomas Curtis (Brother of direct descendant John Carter Curtis).**

Thomas was born on March 20, 1866, at Dover, New Jersey. Sometime later, he lived with his family in New York State, where his father homesteaded. He was christened at Germoe church in Cornwall on May 13, 1867, and then baptized in California while his father was a gold prospector there. He was the second child they named Thomas born to them. The first one died in 1864 in Cornwall at the age of two months.

At the age of twenty-seven, Thomas married twenty-two-year-old Arlena St. Arnaud on July 11, 1893, in Negaunee at six o'clock in the morning.



Thomas and Arlena St. Arnaud Curtis

Circa 1893

*Mr. Thomas Curtis and Miss Mary Arlena St. Arnaud were united in marriage Tuesday morning at St. Paul's Catholic Church, Rev. Father Wallace officiating. The contracting parties are well and favorably known here, having a host of friends, whom we join in wishing a long life of uninterrupted happiness. (30)*

Arlena was born in Greenwood in Marquette County on March 31, 1871, and her parents were born in Canada. Her mother's name was Mary Louise Keerigan. (The name in French is Karignan.) They were of French and Portuguese ancestry and lived first in Newfoundland and then in Nova Scotia. But when the British tried to dispel the French from Nova Scotia, they took their possessions and fled at night to interior Canada.

At the time of marriage, Thomas was a laborer in the mines, and they were living on the NW corner of Barn and Snow. Their daughter, May, was born while living there on April 13, 1894, and also their son, Thomas, on September 29, 1895.

By 1897, the family was residing in a little log house at the Cambria Location, over-looking Teal Lake. Over the course of the next three years, two of their children were born, John Ubert on Feb. 4, 1898 and William on August 20, 1900. Thomas was working as a teamster at the time.

On March 17, 1901, their three-year-old son, John Ubert, drowned in the back yard of this house. There are two oral accounts of his death. Either he fell into the creek the miners used to water their horses and couldn't be revived or on the way to the backyard with a cup to get milk from the cow, he stopped at the rain barrel to catch his reflection, fell in and drowned. Unfortunately, the newspaper did not publish that year, so which account is true is still up in the air.

During the next seven years, when his father was working as a watchman, the couple had four more children, Alfred on May 21, 1903, Edgar on Apr. 20, 1906, and fraternal twins, Hubert and Georgiana, on October 21, 1908.

At the age of ten months, though, both twins succumbed to cholera during an epidemic in 1909, Hubert dying on August 27 and Georgiana four days later on August 31.

*The infant sons of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Curtis, who reside at the Cambria Location, were buried this week. One died on Saturday and was buried Monday. The other died Tuesday and was buried yesterday afternoon. The twins were about six months of age. (31)*

Thomas and Arlena publicly expressed their appreciation to their friends for their support during this twin tragedy.

*We wish to express our sincere thanks to the friends who have sought to lighten our load of sorrow in our double affliction through the loss of our twin sons. For the sympathy offered and the many kindly deeds performed in our behalf, we are deeply grateful. (32)*

There are discrepancies in the newspaper accounts, though, as they both claim that the twins were males while the name on the tombstone, Georgiana, is clearly a female name. Also, the newspaper states that they were six-months old when they died, but the dates on the tombstones show that they were ten-months old.

In July of 1914, the family moved to 421 Prince Street.

*Thomas Curtis has the foundation completed for the erection of a six-room cottage in the Collins' Addition. Contractor August Anderson has the contract and will push the work to an early completion. (33)*

Thomas was an avid gardener. Many Cornish immigrants to America brought with them a knowledge of gardening as well as mining. Like many of his neighbors, he had a vegetable patch in his yard, but he also owned a four-acre garden in the city and other acreage in the country. During the growing season, he would often rise at four in the morning to work in his gardens.

A musician, too, he played for the Catholic Church and performed with the Negaunee City Band. His instruments included

violin, piano, flute and piccolo. He was so musically talented his father had wanted him to attend a conservatory. Many a family gathering at their house included a lively musical session. Cornish miners had the habit of breaking into song as they went to work and even sang while working down in the mineshaft. Brass and silver bands and choirs were institutions in Cornwall.

In April 1917, the newspaper reported that Thomas accidentally broke his leg while working as a coalman at the City Water Works. An oral account, though, stated that the injury had occurred at a mine when a log rolled over onto him, breaking his hip as well. So, which was it? Or did he break his leg twice? (34)

On June 6, 1922, their son, William, at the age of twenty-one, was electrocuted while working on an auto in the garage at the rear of the family residence on Prince Street.

*YOUNG MAN ELECTROCUTED. William Curtis received a charge of electricity that resulted in his instant death. The current came from an extension lighting cord stretched to an ordinary fixture, and it is presumed that the man's heart must have been weak for the 110 volts normally carried on those lighting circuits would not cause death under ordinary circumstances. Moreover, had voltage by any circumstance risen much above 110, the fuse on the entrance switch would have blown out, thus affording protection against dangerously high voltage.*

*Mr. Curtis, who would have attained the age of 22 next month, had undertaken to clean the carbon from the cylinders of the car that evening and to facilitate the work was using an electric lamp whose cord he is said to have given a twist around the cap of the radiator on the car. Considerable water had drained from the radiator, and Mr. Curtis was standing in a little pool which had formed on the floor, while he proceeded with scraping of the cylinders. In some manner he must have come in contact with a portion of the wire or lamp which was imperfectly insulated, and the water in which he was standing helped to give him the full force of the current. Electricians claim that even so the shock would not have been fatal but for some contributing factor such as a weak heart. There was but one small mark on the body which seemed to have any relation to the accident,*

*and it was believed that this was sustained when the man collapsed and fell to the floor.*

*Physicians were summoned without delay, and pulmotor was brought up from the fire engine house, as well as another from one of the mines' first-aid outfits, but all efforts directed toward resuscitation were unavailing, and this circumstance tends to confirm the theory that weakened heart action was an important factor to the fatality.*

*Deceased was a son of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Curtis, who have made their home here for a great many years. The young man was widely known and in latter years had been employed on the South Shore railroad's local force. Besides the parents, one sister and three brothers survive.*

*Funeral services were conducted at St. Paul's Catholic Church this (Friday) morning and were under the auspices of the Chevaliers de LaFayette. (35)*

Like Thomas and Louisa before them, Thomas and Arlena knew the anguish of losing a number of their children.

Arlena died on Saturday, November 19, 1938, at the age of sixty-seven.

*Mrs. Thomas Curtis. Mrs. Thomas Curtis, who had been ill since June passed away in her home, 421 Prince Street, at 10 o'clock last Saturday evening. Mrs. Curtis was formerly Miss Arlena St. Arnaud, a daughter of Hubert and Louise St. Arnaud. She was born in Greenwood March 31, 1871, and came to this city with her parents when an infant. Her residence in Negaunee had been continuous to that time. She was married to Thomas Curtis July 11, 1893.*

*Mrs. Curtis had always given generously of her time and strength to church activities and only her illness prevented continuation of her service. She was a member of the Altar Society of St. Paul's Church.*

*She is survived by her husband, a daughter, Miss May and three sons, Thomas Jr., Alfred and Edgar, all of Negaunee; a grandson, Thomas James, a sister, Miss Amanda St. Arnaud of Negaunee; two brothers, Fred St. Arnaud of Negaunee and George St. Arnaud of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario.*

*Funeral services were held Tuesday morning when a solemn requiem high mass was sung by the Very Rev. Joseph P, Dittman, the Rev. M. H. LaViolette and the Rev. Fr. Neuhaus, pastors of St. Paul's Catholic Church. The pallbearers were Peter Bessolo, Leo Dodendorf, Arnold Saladin, Bert Jetty, John Kutchie and Edward LaForge. Interment was Made in the family lot in the Negaunee Cemetery. (36)*

Eleven years later, Thomas died on August 10, 1949, at the age of eighty-three.

***FINAL RITES FOR THOMAS CURTIS, SR. SCHEDULED SATURDAY.***

*Final rites for Thomas Curtis, Sr., 83, well known Negaunee resident, who died at 3:15 Wednesday morning in his home at 421 Prince Street, will be held at 9 o'clock Saturday morning in St. Paul's Catholic Church. Rt. Rev Marg. Joseph F. Dittman will celebrate solemn high mass, assisted by Rev. Fr. Howard Drolet as deacon and Rev. Fr. Frank Hollenbeck as sub-deacon.*

*Mr. Curtis had been in poor health for the past five years. He was born March 20, 1866 in Dover N. J. and came to Negaunee at the age of 21. He was a member of the Modern Woodmen of America.*

*Surviving are three sons, Thomas Curtis Jr. of Detroit; Alfred and Edgar, both of Negaunee; and daughter May L. Curtis of the city; and two grandchildren.*

*Pall bearers will be Leo Dodendorf, Peter V. Bessole, Sr., John Kutchie, Arne Pynnonen, Armi, V. Parkonen and Albert Jetty.*

*Burial will be in the family lot in the Negaunee Cemetery. (37)*

**Children of Thomas and Arlena Curtis**



May, William, Thomas Jr., circa 1903

May Curtis, a single woman all her life, was promoted to the post of chief operator at the local telephone exchange in 1926 after several years of exemplary performance. In that capacity, she was well-known and respected in the community. She retired from there in 1973. She died January 25, 1981, at the age of 86, at Negaunee, Michigan. (38, 39)

Thomas Curtis jr. was a community leader, hero in his own right and a veteran of WWI.

In October of 1914, at the age of nineteen, he was working at the Maas Mine when a slide of sand and mud entered the passageway where five men were working. Upon noticing the unfolding disaster, he grabbed a miner's lamp and descended into the danger zone to warn the men. Because of his action, four of the five men were saved. He was appropriately commended for his deed.

*Curtis showed great courage and presence of mind in thus descending to warn his fellow men of the danger...The jury added the following to their verdict: In regard to the bravery of Curtis. We the undersigned jurors consider it our duty to add our words of praise for the brave act of Thomas J. Curtis Jr. who at the risk of his own life descended farther into the mine and notified his fellow workers, thus undoubtedly preventing further loss of life. (40)*

*Much praise is given Thomas Curtis, who was the first to discover the danger and who at the risk of his own life entered the sub-level to warn the men of the danger and it is probable saved several lives. (41)*

In September of 1917, at the age of twenty-two, he was drafted into the new National Army during the third year of WWI.

*Following is a list of the young men who constituted Negaunee's present draft contingent: ...Henry Choquette, Thos. Curtis Jr., Daniel D. Dowd, etc. (42)*

The United States had remained neutral for the first few years of WWI, but when the Germans began sinking American ships, it officially joined the fray on April 6, 1917. Two million American soldiers fought alongside allied forces in France.

As a send-off, the town threw a parade on Wednesday, September 19, 1917. It was a city-wide event funded by businessmen and with much citizen participation. Members of the parade included the State Mounted Police, Negaunee firemen, Boy Scouts and both the City and Star Bands. Citizens cheered on the sidelines and children waved flags. After the parade, the recruits enjoyed a banquet, where gifts (including smokes) were bestowed and speeches in their honor were presented by the city's prominent citizens.

On Thursday, the recruits were escorted to the draft board in Marquette by a procession of eighty cars, occupied by relatives and friends, with the mounted police in the lead and the two Negaunee bands marching alongside. On the following day, the recruits left for training camp at Fort Custer in Battle Creek.

In July of 1918, during a service at St. Paul's Catholic Church, a flag was dedicated with 138 stars representing the members of that church who were serving in WWI. After the pastor delivered a patriotic sermon, the flag was hung in the church as the choir and church members sang the *Star-Spangled Banner*.

*Those represented on the service flag are...Irving Bean, Thomas Curtis Jr, Louis Chevrette, etc. (43)*

The war ended on November 11, 1918. Five months later, when his services were no longer required, Thomas Jr. was discharged.

*Sergeant Thomas Curtis is expected home soon, having arrived in New York from overseas a few days ago. (44)*

Two weeks later, on April 25, 1919, at age twenty-five, he set foot in Negaunee again after having been away for nineteen months.

*Among the Negaunee soldier boys returning home last Wednesday morning were Gust Leaf, Thomas Curtis and Lennart Willberg. (45)*

In July of 1923, Thomas Jr. started a business, on Iron Street, under the firm name Negaunee Auto Body Works, later changed to the Curtis Motor Company.

In December of that same year, across the street from his new business, he came to the aid of a man who, seized by an apoplectic stroke, had fallen out of the second-story window of his home.

*Thomas Curtis, one of the proprietors of the Negaunee Auto Body Works, located almost directly across the street, saw Mr. Collins as the latter fell, and rushed to his aid. With the assistance of a brother, Mr. Curtis carried Mr. Collins into the house, but it was clear that death had resulted instantly from the shock of the fall. (46)*

The next year, in March of 1924, Thomas Jr. entered politics.

*Delegates who had been selected at People's Party caucuses assembled at Levine's Hall Monday evening for the city convention of the party, and a complete ticket was placed in the field...Fourth Ward Alderman: Thomas Curtis. (47)*

One month later, he was elected Negaunee City Alderman. The final election results were Thomas Curtis Jr. 429, John McNabb 294. (48)

He was re-elected in April of 1926. Election results: Alderman: Thomas Curtis Jr. 489, J. William Parala 361. (49)

In 1941, he closed his auto shop and left Negaunee, probably to work in Detroit. He died August 27, 1976, at the age of 80, at Livonia, Michigan.

John Ubert Curtis died from an accident in 1901 at the age of three.



Edgar, William, Alfred, circa 1911

William Curtis died from an accident in 1922 at the age of twenty-one.

Alfred Curtis worked at the Curtis Motor Company as a mechanic through 1941. After that, he worked at Cleveland Cliffs as a welder, miner and repairman and retired from there in 1972. He died Nov. 22, 1989, at the age of 86, at Negaunee. His stories of the Curtis Family fill these pages.

Edgar Curtis worked as a state safety consultant from 1937-39 and a civil engineer in 1941. Starting in 1945, he worked for Cleveland Cliffs as a surveyor, mechanic and repairman leader, and he retired from there in 1972. He died December 6, 1985, at the age of 79, at Negaunee.

Hubert Curtis died in 1909 at the age of ten months from cholera.

Georgiana Curtis died in 1909 at the age of ten months from cholera.

### **Joseph Curtis (Brother of direct descendant John Carter Curtis)**

In 1872, the year of Joseph's birth, the family was residing at Roseudgeon (higher Kenneggy), in the Penzance registration district and subdistrict of Marazion.

This village is located within the boundaries of St. Hilary's parish. The parish is named after St. Hilary of Poitiers, a fourth-century bishop. The 13<sup>th</sup> century original church burnt down in 1853. This area abounded in mines, the most remarkable of which was Wheal Fortune. Its coastal area, particularly Prussia Cove in Mount's Bay, played an important role in smuggling in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The two parishes on St. Hilary's eastern boundary, Breage and Germoe, played important roles in the Curtis Family History too.

On May 23, Louisa bore twin sons, William and Joseph. Five months later, they were christened on October 14. After that date, though, I could not find further record of William. I can only assume that he passed away, like so many other children of that era.

From 1874-1886, Joseph lived with his family at Barrow-in-Furness in Lancashire County in Northern England, where his father worked as a fisherman and also an iron miner.

In 1887, Thomas brought the family to Negaunee, Michigan, where his skills as an iron miner were in demand. Later in the same year, he was killed in a mining accident. To help his mother make ends meet, Joseph began work as an iron miner. In August of 1892, at the age of twenty, he was involved in a mining accident that altered the course of his life.

*Joseph Curtis, who sustained some severe injuries at the Queen Mine a few days since, is recovering nicely and, unless something unexpected happens, will be able to be up and about within a few days. His numerous friends will be pleased to note the same. (50)*

According to oral history, he fell down a mine shaft and was saved from certain death by a nail, protruding from a timber, that caught on his clothing on the way down. Apparently, he was so shaken by the experience that he never worked in a mine again. His next job was delivery man for Mitchell Brothers Grocery Store.

Joseph married Lavinia (nicknamed Lovey) Jenkins on February 22, 1894, in Negaunee.



Lavinia Jenkins Curtis, circa 1895

*Mr. Joseph Curtis and Miss Lavinia Jenkins were united in the holy bonds of matrimony last evening at the residence of the bride's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Jenkins, on Cherry Street, Rev. G.H. Whitney, of the Methodist Church, tying the knot. The contracting parties are among our best and most popular young people and have a host of friends who the Iron Herald joins in wishing them a long life of happiness and prosperity. They are already comfortably settled in a cozy little home on Snow Street. (51)*

The tall and slender bride groom was twenty-one years old at the time of marriage and Lavinia nineteen. Lavinia was Protestant

and born in England. Many of the marriages of the first generation of immigrants were among their own nationality.

Their first child, Ethel, was born on September 24, 1894. Two years later, on November 12, 1896, Lavinia died of hemorrhaging one day after the delivery of their second child.

*DEATH OF MRS. CURTIS. Mrs. Joseph Curtis died Thursday night in childbirth at her home on Mill Street. She was twenty years of age and had lived in Negaunee since childhood, being a daughter of James Jenkins of Cherry Street. The death of Mrs. Curtis is particularly sad as she leaves two babies motherless. The funeral will be held tomorrow afternoon with services at the Methodist Church. (52)*

*The funeral of the late Mrs. Joseph Curtis, held last Sunday afternoon from the Methodist Church, was very largely attended by relatives and friends of the deceased. The church was not large enough to accommodate all who desired to attend. (53)*



Lavinia Curtis, funeral card. Above funeral card reads, as follows:

*In Loving Remembrance of Mrs. Lavinia Curtis. Died Nov. 12, 1896, Aged 21 Yrs., 3 mos. Call not back the dear departed, anchored safe where storm are o'er, on the border land we left them, soon to meet and part no more. When we leave this world of changes, when we leave this world of care, we shall find our missing loved ones, in our father's mansion fair.*

According to her daughter Ethel, her mother was just too “lovey” to live. A little over a month later, on December 22, daughter Lavinia died, too, of unknown causes. Christmas that year for Joseph and Ethel was a very sad holiday. After Lavinia’s death, they lived with Louisa on Snow Street. In 1897, he was still employed at Mitchell Brothers Grocery as a clerk and delivery man.



Joseph Curtis and daughter Ethel, circa 1898

In March of 1898, at the age of twenty-six, Joseph joined the English Oak Lodge, American Order, Sons of St. George, no. 230. This lodge represented the men, women and their descendants who had come from England in the early days to Northern Michigan.

At the age of thirty, Joseph married Rose Sampson, age twenty-seven, on September 30, 1902. Apparently, they met at her place of employment where she was making clothes for his daughter Ethel.

*Joseph Curtis stole a march on his many friends Tuesday night and was quietly married to Miss Rose E. Sampson, a young lady of this city. The ceremony was performed at the residence of the bride's sister, Mrs. Thomas A. Pascoe, on West Clark Street, and was performed by Rev. Polkinghorne of Ishpeming. The fact that the blushing young couple had been keeping steady company but a short time leads their friends to think it was a case of love at first sight. Such being true they are readily forgiven and have the best wishes of scores of friends for their happiness and future welfare. Mr. and Mrs. Curtis have settled down in a cozy home on Snow Street. (54)*

*Joseph Curtis and Miss Rose Sampson were married in Ishpeming Tuesday night, Rev. Polkinghorn officiating. They will keep house on Snow Street. Mr. Curtis has been in the employ of Mitchell Brothers for the past ten years. (55)*



Rose Sampson Curtis, circa 1920

Rose was born on February 22, 1875, in Ishpeming. Her mother was Elizabeth Dunn, and her father was George John Sampson. The same year Rose was born, her father died at the age of thirty-five. (56)

In January of 1876, the famous Peter White of Marquette was appointed by the probate court as the guardian for the “property and estate” that Rose inherited from her father. Peter managed the investment of her money and was responsible for approving payouts on a monthly allowance for Rose’s care until she could claim the remainder of her inheritance outright.

While Rose spent her early years in the area where she was born, she moved to the western part of the U.S. after 1884 and then settled in England until the end of the century. In her own words, from a 1901 deposition:

*I lived in Negaunee with my mother until I was about nine years old (1884). From there I went to Park City, Utah, and from there to San Francisco, from San Francisco to Butte City and from Butte City*

*back to San Francisco and from there to England and from England back to Negaunee in (July of) 1900.*

According to family lore, Rose had been sent to England to learn a trade and to become a lady, possibly in 1887. She apparently made the journey with “White’s son,” who was assumed to be the son of her estate guardian, Peter White. However, based on Peter White biographies and census data, it is evident that her travel companion was not Peter White’s son.

The 1891 UK census shows a 16-year-old Rose living in Penzance in Cornwall, England as the stepdaughter of a William Thomas White and working as a tailor’s apprentice. The census also identifies a stepbrother, William Henry White, who was born in Negaunee in 1884 and who was most likely Rose’s travel companion when she went to England.

During the 1890s, Rose’s stepfamily moved from Penzance to Boscreege (St. Germoe parish), Cornwall. Towards the end of the decade, at age 24, Rose had a child. Rose’s daughter, Olive Margaret Sampson, was baptized in Godolphin (Breage parish) on July 29, 1899. Rose returned to Negaunee the following year, leaving her daughter in the care of her stepfather, William Thomas White. At this point, it is unclear whether or not Rose had any further contact with her stepfamily or her daughter, Olive.

During their first few years of marriage, Rose and Joseph lived with Louisa on Snow Street. On July 31, 1903, their first child, Blanche, was born while living there.

In July of 1904, Joseph made a land purchase toward improving the property.

*Joseph Curtis has purchased from the Cleveland Cliffs Company, the old engine on the Pendill Property, near the union depot. Mr. Curtis is tearing down the structure and will use the lumber to build a barn on his property in Snow Street. (57)*

On October 12, 1905, their second child, Lois, was born. During the same month the following year, Joseph resigned his position with Mitchell Brothers Grocery and accepted one as

coachman for Dr. H. W. Sheldon. The year after that, in March, he traveled to Chicago to receive instructions on how to drive the doctor's automobile. Under the doctor's employ, he drove the first Stanley Steamer in Negaunee. (58-59)

By 1908, they were living at 124 E. Case Street, west of McKenzie, in Negaunee, where their third child, Joseph Jr. was born on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November. His birth was a very joyful occasion.

*A bright baby boy arrived at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Curtis early in the week and Joe is "some 'appy" over the event. (60)*

The year 1908 was also a time to celebrate Joseph's elevation to Grand President of the Sons of St. George after his decade-long involvement with the organization. (61)

If popularity is gauged by the number of times one's name appears in the newspaper's gossip column, then Joseph must have been the most popular guy in town. He was constantly in the news for the parties he had thrown, birthdays celebrated, trips taken, jobs accepted and so on. In April of 1909, though, he made the news for something quite different:

*Albert Sleep, a young man who came here from England a few months ago and has been employed in the Blue Mine, was found wandering in the eastern part of the city shortly before noon last Monday, suffering from several wounds, part of the clothing gone and much of his remaining portions being torn. His mental faculties were bewildered, and he was utterly unable to give any explanation of his plight at the time and has not been able to throw much light on the subject subsequently. The circumstances surrounding the case led the authorities to believe that the whole of the story has not been brought out.*

*Sleep went over to Ishpeming Sunday night to attend church and recalls that he missed the street car and decided to walk home. Beyond that point his mind is practically a blank. He is said to have passed the night near the power house, and was found in the eastern part of town late Monday morning by **Joseph Curtis**, who aided him until he seemed to be in shape to start for home. Instead of going*

*home, he continued to wander about until Marshal Bough ran across him and took him to the Negaunee Hospital. (62)*

In July of 1912, the Sons of St. George rewarded Joseph for his years of devoted service by appointing him Grand Marshal of the afternoon parade that was part of group's annual reunion that took place in Negaunee that year. (63)

The reunion was truly a regional event. The delegations arriving from all over the Upper Peninsula were greeted with great fanfare at the train station. There was a parade that included all of the members of the various regional lodges accompanied by their local bands, after which speeches were made by government officials at the band shell. The city-wide celebration included street sports such as a wrestling tournament, a concert at the McDonald Opera House and a dance at Kirkwood Hall. The Ladies of the Mitchell Methodist Church served dinner at Adelphi Rink, and the Ladies of the Swedish Lutheran Church served supper at S. H. & E. F. Hall.

If his involvement with Sons of St. George Fraternal Organization wasn't enough to keep him busy, he was also a member of the Negaunee Lodge, No. 202, F & A. M., the Francis M. Moore Consistory, the Iron Mountain Lodge, no. 122 and the Independent Order of Odd Fellows.

On October 12, 1915, daughter Ethel married William Ford and eventually made her home in Iron River.

*William H. Ford and Miss Ethel Curtis were united in marriage on the 12<sup>th</sup> inst., the ceremony being performed at the parsonage of Mitchell M. E. Church by the pastor Rev. R. L. Hewson and the couple being attended by Norman Stanaway and Miss Ruth Donnithorne. The young people did not announce their marriage until they were ready to depart to Bay City, Mich., where Mr. Ford was a delegate to the grand lodge session of the I. O. O. F. They will begin housekeeping upon their return to Negaunee.*

*The groom is chemist at the Mary Charlotte Mine, and the bride is daughter of Joseph Curtis and has been a valued employee in the store of Levine Brothers for the past few years. Both are estimable*

*people and they have many friends here and at other points in the county to wish them an abundance of happiness and prosperity. (64)*

In May of 1921, while repairing a car, Joseph was injured.

*Joseph Curtis has a limp in his gait for the past few days caused by a heavy piece of machinery falling on one of his toes while engaged in repairing an automobile. (65)*

In January of 1923, he accepted a position as clerk at Tomkins' Pharmacy. (66)

His community involvement even extended to cheering on the Negaunee High School Football team in October of 1924. His son, Joe, was a high-school athlete at that time.

*FOOTBALL IN FULL SWING – Negaunee High School's Blue and Gold triumphed at Marquette last Saturday...Local students are holding a "pep" meeting this afternoon in preparation for tomorrow's contest (Ishpeming High School)...Adele Mall and Joseph Curtis have been delegated cheerleaders and will see to it that the sidelines do their full duty. (67)*

In 1937, when the family was living at 113 N. Brown Avenue, and Joseph was working as an assistant cemetery sexton, two closely spaced tragedies bring this story to an end.

On June 6 of that year, Joseph Jr., died at the age of twenty-nine. He was working in the woods and turned up missing. A search party found his body a while later. Although some people suspected foul play, the death was officially recorded as being due to over-exertion.

#### *FUNERAL HELD TUESDAY FOR JOSEPH CURTIS JR.*

*Joseph C. Curtis who was a member of a camping party last weekend and left the group Saturday afternoon to take a walk in the woods was found dead early Sunday morning in a swamp near Big Shag Lake. Since he had told his companions of his intention, they were not alarmed until about 8 o'clock Saturday evening when he had not returned. A search party was organized and the body was found*

*Sunday morning. Coroner James Hodge is of the opinion that the death was caused from exhaustion, young Curtis having traveled many miles, no doubt, while lost in the woods.*

*Joseph C. Curtis was born November 22, 1908, in Negaunee, a son of Joseph and Rose S. Curtis. He was a graduate of Negaunee High School, a member of the class of 1926.*

*His parents, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Curtis, and three sisters survive. The sisters are Mrs. Ethel Ford of Iron River, Mrs. Blanche Westen of Marquette and Mrs. Lois Bailey of Alpena.*

*The funeral was held from the home of his parents Tuesday afternoon with the Rev. Ernest Brown, pastor of Mitchell M. E. Church, officiating. The pallbearers were Thomas Curtis Jr., Fred and Edgar Curtis, cousins of the deceased and Lesley J. Cory, George T. Collins, and Gordon Johnson, classmates.*

*Out of town relatives and friends attending the funeral included Miss Lillian Pearce of Ishpeming; Mr. and Mrs. T. Pascoe of Marquette; Mr. and Mrs. F. Godlove of Marquette; Dr. and Mrs. E. Tyler; Mr. and Mrs. H. Richardson and Mrs. Carrie Henson, all of Iron River. (68)*

On August 28, 1937, two months after his son had passed away, Joseph, at the age of 65, heart-broken over the loss of his son, passed away too.

#### *Death of Joseph Curtis at Ishpeming Hospital*

*Joseph Curtis, who has resided in Negaunee for fifty years, passed away in Ishpeming Hospital Saturday evening of last week.*

*Mr. Curtis was born in May 23, 1872 in Rudgvaine, near Prussia Cove, Cornwall, England. He was a son of Thomas and Louisa (Tucker) Curtis. He came to Negaunee when he was fifteen years of age.*

*His fraternal connection was with Negaunee Lodge, No. 202, F & A. M., Francis M. Moore, Consistory, Iron Mountain Lodge, no. 122, Independent Order of Odd Fellows and English Oak Lodge, American Order, Sons of St. George. This latter organization he served as past supreme president of the grand lodge.*

*Mr. Curtis was married to Miss Lavinia Jenkins, February 22, 1894, who died in 1896. He married Miss Rose D. Sampson, September 30, 1902.*

*Surviving are his wife, Miss Rose Curtis and three daughters. Mrs. Ethel Ford of Iron River; Mrs. Blanche Westen of Marquette and Mrs. Lois Bailey of Alpena. A son, Joseph C. Curtis died June 5, 1937. Four grandchildren, William Jr. and Dean Ford, and Brodie C. and Charles Joseph Westen, survive. A brother Thomas Sr., of Negaunee also survives.*

*The funeral was held from the home Tuesday afternoon with Rev. Ernest Brown, pastor of Mitchell M. E. Church officiating.*

*The pallbearers were Joseph H. Bath, Oscar Goudge, William H. Richards, Samuel Haines, Sydney A. Northey and Fred Thomas.*  
(69)

After Joseph's death, Rose moved to Marquette. Outliving her husband by fifteen years, she died July 17, 1952.

*Mrs. Joseph Curtis – Mrs. Joseph Curtis, 77, died in her home at 315 West Kaye Avenue at 4:15 yesterday afternoon following an illness of three months. She was the widow of Joseph Curtis, Negaunee.*

*Mrs. Curtis was born Feb. 22, 1875 in Ishpeming, and before moving to Marquette, she had lived in Negaunee over 50 years. She also had lived a short time in San Francisco and in England, and for the past 15 years she had made her home with her son-in-law and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Brodie C. Westen.*

*She was a member of the Mitchell Methodist Church of Negaunee, the Negaunee Chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star and the W.S.C.S and the Past Matron's Club of the W.S.C.S. of Marquette.*

*Survivors are three daughters, Mrs. Brodie (Blanche) Westen, Marquette; Mrs. Ray, (Lois) Bailey, Alpena; Mrs. William (Ethel) Ford, Iron River, and six grandchildren, William C. Ford, Orlando, Fla.; Dean R. Ford, Iron River; Brodie Westen, Jr., in the U. S. Navy in Korea; Charles J. Westen, Marquette; Curtis Bailey and Susan*

*Bailey, Alpena, and two great-grandchildren and several nieces and nephews.*

*Services will be held at 2 Saturday afternoon in the Swanson Funeral Home with the Rev. James W. Wright, pasor of the First Methodist Church, officiating. Burial will be made in the Negaunee Cemetery. Pall bearers will be Ernest V. Erickson, Bert Lampson, Clair Knight, Ellwood Mattson, Ernest Mallgren and Freeman Nebel.*

*Friends may call at the funeral home beginning this evening.*

### **Children of Joseph and Lavinia Curtis**

Ethel Curtis Ford died in 1982 at Orlando, Florida.

Lavinia Curtis died in 1896 at age one month.

### **Children of Joseph and Rose Curtis**



Blanche, Joseph and Lois Curtis, Circa 1912

Blanche Curtis Westen graduated from Northern Normal College with a life teaching certificate in June of 1923. She taught in the Munising Public Schools from 1923-24, the Rolling Mill School in Negaunee

from 1924-25, the Case Street School in Negaunee from 1925-26 and in Idaho Falls, Idaho, from 1926-27. She married Brodie Westen on November 21, 1929. She passed away unexpectedly, at the age of seventy, while visiting her half-sister, Ethel Ford, in Iron River in 1973.

Lois Bailey attended Northern Normal College from 1923-24. She taught in the Painesdale Public Schools from 1925-26 and the Caspian-Stambaugh Schools, close to where Ethel lived, from 1926-27. Her married name was Bailey. After marriage she moved to Alpena. She died October 30, 1955, at the age of 50, and is buried in Alpena.

Joseph Curtis Jr. was in the Negaunee High School class of 1926 along with direct descendant Leland Curtis. He was very active in school activities, social events and sports. He was Class President during both his freshman and junior years. His motto, as expressed in the Negauneensian yearbook of 1926 was *When joy and duty clash, let duty go to smash*. He died from an accident in 1937 at the age of twenty-eight.

## **PART 6 – FOOTNOTES, BIBLIOGRAPHY, SOURCES**

### **FOOTNOTES**

1. The Genographic Project of the National Geographic Society.
2. The actual christening record for Mary Jane gives a date of May 14, 1864. Due to the age at death, this is impossible. The christening date must have 1865.
3. The 1871 English census gives his birthplace as St. Hilary's Parish.
4. Negaunee Iron Herald, September 3, 1937. The spelling is given in the newspaper account as Rudgvaine, near Prussia Cove.
5. Birth record 132, 1874, records town of birth as Rudgvan, or Rudgvaine (see note # 4) is not on the map of Cornwall. Letter from G.T. Knight, County Local Studies Librarian, Cornwall County, states, as follows: *Thank you for your letter concerning*

*Rudgvan. I do not know of, nor can I trace a place called Rudgvan. In all probability it should be Ludgvan, which is not far from St. Hilary. The only other possibility might be Rosudgeon or Resudgeon as it was formerly spelt. The end of the words sound the same. Ludgvan being pronounced by the locals there as Ludg'an, and stress syllable of Rosudgeon being the second one, the "g" being soft in both cases.*

6. Negaunee Iron Herald, Sept. 15, 1887
7. Marquette Mining Journal, Sept. 17, 1887
8. Ibid., March 12, 1917
9. Negaunee Iron Herald, March 16, 1917
10. Ibid., Friday, June 29, 1894
11. Ibid., Friday, September 21, 1894
12. Ibid., Friday, July 15, 1898
13. Ibid., Friday, March 31, 1905
14. Ibid., Friday, November 17, 1905
15. Ibid., Friday, May 19, 1911
16. Ibid., Friday, July 5, 1912
17. Ibid., Friday, December 6, 1912
18. Ibid., Friday, September 25, 1914
19. Ibid., Friday, October 23, 1914
20. Ibid., Friday, March 26, 1915
21. Marquette Mining Journal, Sept. 8, 1917
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## **PART 7 – CURTIS FAMILY CALENDAR**

### *JANUARY*

2 - (1947) Caroline Heisel (wife of John Carter Curtis) died at Royal Oak, Michigan, 1947.

9 - (1825) William Curtis (brother of Thomas Curtis) christened at Germoe Parish.

17 – (1864) Thomas Curtis (son of Thomas and Louisa Curtis) christened at Germoe Parish.

21 – (1974) Elsie Kanniainen (wife of Leland Curtis) died at Hemlock, Michigan.

25 – (1981) May Curtis (daughter of Thomas and Arlena Curtis) died at Negaunee, Michigan.

### *FEBRUARY*

4 – (1898) John Ubert Curtis (son of Thomas and Arlena Curtis) born at Negaunee, Michigan.

22 – (1875) Rose Sampson (second wife of Joseph Curtis) was born at Ishpeming.

22 – (1894) Joseph Curtis married first wife Lavinia Jenkins at Negaunee.

23 – (1839) Dinah Rogers (Married to William Curtis) christened.

### *MARCH*

1 – (1858) Jane Kitchen (wife of William Curtis) dies at age 62 at Keneggy Downs, Germoe Parish.

2 – (1980) Suzanne Curtis (daughter of David and Jan Curtis) christened at Iron Mountain, Michigan.

16 – (1864) Thomas Curtis (infant son of Thomas and Louisa Curtis) was buried at St. Hilary Parish, Cornwall.

17 – (1901) John Ubert Curtis (son of Thomas and Arlena Curtis) died at Negaunee.

20 – (1866) Thomas Curtis (son of Thomas and Louisa Curtis) born in Dover, New Jersey.

24 – (1905) Kenneth Curtis (son of John Carter and Caroline Curtis) born at Negaunee.

28 – (1982) Melinda Curtis (daughter of David and Jan Curtis) christened at Iron Mountain, Michigan.

31 – (1871) Arlena St. Arnaud (wife of Thomas Curtis) born at Greenwood, Michigan.

#### *APRIL*

1 – (1973) Leland Curtis (son of John Carter and Caroline Curtis) died at Oscoda, Michigan.

12 – (1784) John Curtis married Mary Bastian.

13 – (1894) May Curtis (daughter of Thomas and Arlena Curtis) born.

14 – (1839) Louisa Tucker (wife of Thomas Curtis) was born at St. Hilary's Parish.

20 – (1828) Francis Curtis (brother of Thomas Curtis) christened at Germoe Parish.

20 – (1906) Edgar Curtis (son of Thomas and Arlena Curtis) born at Negaunee.

#### *MAY*

4 – (1861) Thomas Curtis married Louisa Curtis at Hellston, Cornwall.

5 – (1874) John Carter Curtis (son of Thomas and Louisa Curtis) was born at St. Hilary Parish.

11 – (1909) Elsie Kanniainen (wife of Leland Curtis) born at Negaunee.

13 – (1867) Thomas Curtis (son of Thomas and Louisa Curtis) christened at Germoe Parish.

14 - (1765) John Curtis christened at Breage Parish.

14 – (1865) Mary Jane Curtis (daughter of Thomas and Louisa Curtis) christened at Germoe Parish.

21 – (1903) Alfred Curtis (son of Thomas and Arlena Curtis) born at Negaunee.

23 – (1872) Joseph (son of Thomas and Louisa Curtis) born at St. Hilary Parish.

31 – (1829) James Curtis (brother of Thomas) christened at Germoe Parish.

31 – (1829) Caroline Curtis (sister of Thomas) christened at Germoe Parish.

## *JUNE*

- 2 – (1796) William Curtis christened at Breage Parish.
- 6 – (1922) William Curtis (son of Thomas and Arlena Curtis) died at Negaunee.
- 6 – (1937) Joseph Curtis (son of Thomas and Louisa Curtis) died at Negaunee.
- 9 – (1839) Louisa Tucker (husband of Thomas Curtis) christened.
- 27 – (1931) Leland Curtis married Elsie Kanniainen at Garden City, Michigan.

## *JULY*

- 5 – (1823) William Curtis married Jane kitchen at Breage Parish.
- 7 – (1917) John Carter Curtis died at Negaunee.
- 8 – (1832) Thomas Curtis christened at Germoe Parish.
- 11 – (1893) Thomas Curtis and Arlena St. Arnaud married at Negaunee.
- 17 – (1952) Rose Sampson Curtis died at Marquette.
- 31 – (1903) Blanche Curtis (daughter of Joseph and Rose Curtis) born at Negaunee.

## *AUGUST*

- 3 – (2006) Kenneth Curtis (son of John Carter and Caroline Curtis) died.
- 6 – (1851) William Curtis (husband of Jane Kitchen) died at age 55 at Breage Parish.
- 10 – (1949) Thomas Curtis (husband of Arlena St. Arnaud) died at Negaunee.
- 20 – (1900) William Curtis born at Negaunee.
- 27 - (1909) Hubert Curtis (son of Thomas and Arlena Curtis), died.
- 27 – (1976) Thomas Curtis (son of Thomas and Arlena Curtis), died.
- 28 – (1937) Joseph Curtis (husband of Rose Sampson) died.
- 31 – (1908) Leland Curtis (son of John Carter and Caroline Curtis) died.
- 31 – (1909) Georgiana Curtis (daughter of Thomas and Arlena Curtis) died.

## *SEPTEMBER*

- 9 – (1887) Thomas Curtis (husband of Louisa Tucker) died.
- 11 – (1798) Jane Kitchen (wife of William Curtis) christened at Germoe Parish.
- 14 – (1823) John Curtis (son of William and Jane Curtis) christened at Germoe Parish.
- 15 – (1865) Mary Jane Curtis (daughter of Thomas and Louisa Curtis) died at Breage Parish.
- 24 – (1894) Ethel Curtis (daughter of Joseph and Lavinia Curtis) born.
- 29 – (1895) Thomas Curtis (son of Thomas and Arlena Curtis) born.
- 30 – (1902) Joseph Curtis married Rose Sampson at Ishpeming.

### *OCTOBER*

- 3 – (1901) John Carter Curtis and Caroline Heisel married.
- 12 – (1905) Lois Curtis (daughter of Joseph and Rose Curtis) born.
- 13 – (1956) Sharon Curtis (daughter of Leland and Elsie Curtis, and Ralph Jones) married.
- 14 – (1872) William Curtis (son of Thomas and Louisa Curtis) was christened at Breage Parish.
- 14 – (1872) Joseph Curtis (son of Thomas and Louisa Curtis) was christened at Breage Parish.
- 17 – (1875) Caroline Heisel (wife of John Carter Curtis) was born in Negaunee.
- 21 – (1908) Hubert and Georgiana Curtis, fraternal twins, (sons of Thomas and Arlena Curtis) were born.
- 30 – (1955) Lois Curtis died.

### *NOVEMBER*

- 9 – (1762) William Curtis and Dinah Rogers married.
- 11 – (1896) Lavinia Jenkins (daughter of Joseph and Lavinia Curtis) born.
- 12 - (1896) Lavinia Jenkins (wife of Joseph Curtis) died.
- 19 – (1938) Arlena St. Arnaud (wife of Thomas Curtis) died.
- 22 – (1908) Joseph Curtis (son of Joseph and Rose Curtis) born.
- 22 – (1989) Alfred Curtis (son of Thomas and Arlena Curtis) died.

### *DECEMBER*

16 – (1967) Sharon Curtis married Norman Fritz.

20 – (1902) Carter Curtis (son of John Carter and Caroline Curtis) born.

22 – (1896) Lavinia Curtis (daughter of Joseph and Lavinia Curtis) died.