William Martin

About 1830 or '31 there passed through Brockport an Englishman with his beautiful young wife and infant son, to the far West, Michigan, where with a partner, he had purchased the township where the city of White Pigeon is now located. He was born in Seven Oaks in 1794. At the time Mr. Martin left England he was a wholesale grocer in London. For years there had been a great deal of agitation in England over the custom of "tytheing," a tax imposed by both Church and State, a heavy burden to both England and Ireland. There is yet a letter preserved in the family, written to Mr. Martin from Paris in 1826 asking him to present a petition to Parliament for its abolishment. He had some years before presented a petition in regard to the currency. This Frenchman says: "It is dishonorable that the greatest commercial state in the world should have only a paper and not a metal currency." So, tired of waiting for these two political measures to be regulated, he left England for the "Land of Liberty." Somewhere between Albany and Brockport, on their way to Michigan, a man with small pox had been removed to the tow-path from a packet that was immediately preceeding the one upon which the Martin family were travelling "to the Far West." A floating germ of the dread disease attacked the little son. When the boat was nearing this village, the father seeing that they must stop, they disembarked and found quarters in the hotel at the east approach to the Main Street bridge which was kept at that time by **Samuel Kingsbury**, father of the late **John Kingsbury**. The father took care of his little son during the six weeks of its illness, of which no one in the hotel knew. These were the days before vaccination, but no none in the hotel took the disease. The occupants of the hotel thought that the Martin family were "awfully queer people." At the end the proprietor thanked them and was very grateful for their "queerness." Arriving finally in Michigan with his partner Mr. Martin started business on a large scale, furnishing a large general store in connection with farming. The Englishman was attacked with violent fever and ague; was unable to attend to business affairs; suffered weeks and months of prostrating illness. His partner proved to be a villain and decamped with stock, equipment and all business papers. Continued illness, diminishing means of support, made it necessary for the family to dispose of their household goods brought from England in order to buy their daily food. Indian tribes passed and repassed their door, walking in as they chose although never molesting them.

Family history lapses and we find them living at Sandy Creek, a flourishing little village and a famous place in those days for dancing parties after sleigh rides by the residents of Brockport. Later they moved to this village where for many years Mr. Martin was bookkeeper both in the firms of Ganson & Gould and of Thomas Roby. Afterward for a long time he served in the same capacity for the Huntley Bowman & Company, reaper manufacturers, and later a member of a number of succeeding firms as financial secretary, until the business was sold to the Johnston Reaper Manufacturing Company. Although Mr. Martin left England for greater freedom of action, he found himself unable to renounce allegiance to Queen Victoria. Hence he was never naturalized. For eight years a lawsuit was carried against the defaulting partner, but was unavailing. Broken in spirit from life's cruel vicissitudes and years of illness, Mr. Martin died in 1874. His daughter, **Charlotte Elizabeth**, (named for members of the **Thomas Roby** family) was born in the home purchased by her father in the late forties, where she still resides. (By Request).

[Martin,C.E.; 1929; p.31-33]

Text Source:
Charlotte Elizabeth Martin; "The story of Brockport for one-hundred years, 1829-1929" Published [Brockport, N.Y.? : s.n., 1929]

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Original document: Rochester Public Library Local History Division
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