



Making Kelleys Island History Everybody's Business

Kelleys Island Historical Association

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Coming home—a family's return to their roots

By Claudia Brown ©

What is it? Does every family have a hometown that they long to return to? Or is it something special about islands? Every summer Kelleys Island welcomes back former residents and their children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. Kelleys Island has been a tourist destination almost since its initial development by the Kelley family. Many years have passed since that beginning and many people have

come to feel that Kelleys Island was their home. From the mid-Twentieth Century forward the majority of those having an affinity with Kelleys Island have a summer or part-time relationship with it. Every once in a while de-



This is the Kastning family in front of the Kastning house, left to right: Steven, Logan, Ray, Linda, Owen, Dale, and Don .

scendants from one of the early families return. They may have lived here in the past, or they may have just heard about Kelleys Island generation after generation, handing down the ancestral homeland like a piece of fine silver. And sometimes they bring a treasure with them to share with everyone else.

April of 2012 was such a time, when the **Kastning Family** returned and brought a treasure with them. No one lives on Kelleys Island today with the surname of "Kastning" and so you may be pardoned for not recognizing it, even though several generations of Kastnings raised their families here and became related to other notable early families, many whose surnames also will not be found in the current phone book.



The former Kastning Home on the West side of the island (just past West Bay Inn).

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Final William S. Webb Civil War letter

It is a fond farewell we bid-- with this letter we finish the series of letters that Wm. S. Webb wrote to his family during his service in the Union Army, representing his country during the Civil War.

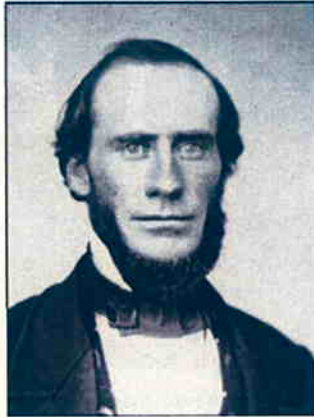
We thank the descendants of William Samuel Webb for preserving his correspondence to his family and we especially thank his great-great-grand daughter Katia Alice Webb Duey for transcribing the letters in 2006, and for the family's contribution of a copy of the letters to the Kelleys Island Historical Assn.

This is the 27th and final letter. It begins at Point of Rocks, Virginia.

**In Camp near Battery 4, Pt. of Rocks, Va.
Sunday Eve. July 17th, 1864**

My Dear Wife & Children—Sarah, Belle & Charlie

I wrote to you on or about the 14th I think the last time, and as we had learned that communication was cut off by the Reb. Raid on the B.&O. R.R. concluded to hold on for a day or two, until communication should be restored, or until I had received a letter from you. The last letter from you was dated the 6th (although I rec'd a package supposed to be tea, not yet opened) postmarked the 8th. The 6th & 7th are the latest received from the Island until today when a letter postmarked the 11th for Michael Hughes. As he has not been in camp since I do not know what the news is by that.



William S. Webb

Yesterday morning we received orders to be ready to march at 7 o'clock A.M. but did not make much move towards obeying the order as the Col. said he should endeavor to get the order countermanded. We did not feel very much disposed to leave as we had just got our camp all fixed up and everything in order for comfortable living. However at 12 o'clock the order came to be ready in two hours and at the expiration of that time we were off. I did not march with the Reg't as I did not wish to march through the dust and heat. I staid with our baggage and arrived at the new camp just at dark...

Our new camp we found in an open Sand plains without a particle of shade exposed to the sun in all its power. You may be assured that the "Army of Flanders" found imitators in our Regiment. The Colonel characterized it as an "outrage" and "let out" a little worse than I ever heard him.

Our former camp was in a grove of pines and though dusty was pleasant otherwise and shady. A Negro Reg't took our places. This perhaps made it a little more aggravating. Well we learned today that our order was a mis-

take, not as to our removal but as to the location of the new camp, so we move back about a mile tomorrow, near Battery 8. Our position is now well to the right, about 1 ½ mile from James River. We are a little nearer the front than before. The Rebel line of Intrenchments and the Reb. Fort being about 1 mile from Battery 4, at which we are located. At this point our picket line is only 10 to 40 Rods distant from that of the Rebs, and both lines are plainly seen from our camp (as plainly as you would see from "our home" to the store). The Reb Fort and Intrenchments are also plainly seen, so plainly that the guard on their Breastworks are in full view. Last night being a bright moonlight night, the gleam of the moonlight on their bayonets was plainly distinguishable.

The Intrenchments of both parties are built on high ground, ours a little higher than the Rebs, the space intervening being lower than that at the Intrenchments. This makes the distance seem shorter than it really is and makes objects on the works more plainly visible. We can with the naked eye see the Gun Ports or embrasures in their fort. Every movement on either side is in view of the other. The Reb pickets are very friendly and assure our boys they will in no case fire on them unless ordered to do so, and if obliged to, will fire over them the first time to give our Boys time to get into their Rifle pits. Where there is a little brush or wood between the lines they will get together meeting halfway, shake hands and talk by the hour. But let an alarm be given or a shot fired and each man of both "dives" into his hole or rifle pit and takes care not to show his head until the alarm is over. The Reb Officers allow no talk or trading and the Reb Pickets caution our own boys to retire when an officer is coming. The consequence of this amicable state of feelings is, there is no picket firing along the lines. Neither party must show a gun but must be unarmed. Thus you will see from the Breastworks at my tent both lines standing looking at each other, the watch being more on their Officers than on each other. Is not this a singular state of warfare?

Tomorrow we move at 4 o'clock A.M. again to another Camp... These latter at this point are very strong, having heavy abatis (brush and small trees piled with the snapped limbs entwined) along outside of the outside ditch and a wire stretched on stakes about 1 tree high just at the edge of the ditch and inside the abatis.

Monday 12 o'clock N. July 18th It became so dark last night as I wrote the last words above that I had to quit. We went to bed at the usual hour and at about 1 o'clock were all called to the Breastworks as an attack was looked for at any moment, but that moment didn't come. Daylight found the 62nd & 67th Veterans, the 130th, 132nd, 142nd, & 134th at the works, but no "Reb" any nearer than the night before, and when the fog cleared up they were to be seen leisurely pacing their Beats as if all unconscious that they had thus kicked up so much of an excitement in our camp and to all appearance not at all belligerently inclined. If they should attack here nothing could save them

Cont. on Pg. 5

Coming home, from Pg. 1

Around 1855, **Frederick Kastning** wed the girl next door on Kelleys Island, **Sophie Dodge**. He built his house on the west side next to his in-laws. He raised grapes and had a wine cellar in the basement of his home. They had twelve children. Many married into other Kelleys Island families making a large relation which includes the names of **Gerlach, Roswurm, Emlinger** (aka **Emlinger**), **Catanaugh, Brown, Dwelle, Titus, and Huntington**. You will recognize some of these names from traveling our roads.



Two of Frederick Kastning's children were **Henry and Anna**. Anna married the boy next door—**Otto Brown**, thus uniting all the land from Division Street west to

the lake by marriages. The land was all in grapes. Otto Brown also had a winery, the **Otto Brown Winery**, which changed names many times- **Sweet Valley Winery** and lastly **Monarch Winery** (operated by a relative of Otto's). Frederick's son **Henry** married an island girl **Barbara Emlinger** and had seven children, three of which were **Gaylord, Clint, and Donald**.

Those three sons and Anna figure in the April gathering, where some of their grandchildren and great grandchildren met for the first time. The descendants and their spouses gathered from Washington State; Mentor, Ohio; Saskatchewan, Canada; and Kelleys Island. The Kastning relatives that met are **Owen Kastning, Raymond Kastning, Steven Kastning** and his son **Logan Kastning, Linda (Kastning) Stephenson, Don Kastning, Dale Kastning, and Claudia Brown**. We spent several days together, the cousins and spouses, and finished feeling connected by blood and stories.

Curiously, **Henry Kastning** had moved from Kelleys Island to Saskatchewan, Canada and raised his family there. Then several of his sons returned to the United States as adults and raised their families in Washington and Ohio.

Owen Kastning preserved the treasure. His grandfather Henry had taken his Kelleys Island Band uniform to Canada with him and Owen had ended up with it and kept it safe for many years. In April Owen brought the uniform and his grandfather's drum sticks back to Kelleys Island and together with his cousins gave it to the Kelleys Island Historical Assn.

Claudia Brown had a photo of the Kelleys Island Band with her great-great-uncle Henry Kastning seated next to her grandfather **Henry Riedy**, with all the men in Kelleys Island band uniforms with their instruments. The Henry Kastning uniform is made of dark green wool, with "KIB" embroidered in gold on the hat and "HK" painted in the hat, but it does not appear to be the same uniform as in the photo. Either the band had different uniforms at different periods,



Owen Kastning presents his grandfather Henry Kastning's KI Band Uniform and drumsticks to KIHA president Chuck Herndon.



Claudia Brown's family photo of the Kelleys Island Band. Henry Kastning is seated, far left. ©

or perhaps there was more than one band, each with slightly different uniforms. That story is yet to be unraveled. There are many connections between the older families, when people were less mobile and sons and daughters of neighboring families married and stayed in the same community.

Eventually you have a community, much larger than that of today, where there is a network of relationships and everyone knows everyone else. When the time came for us cousins to part, it was with a fondness and hopes to see each other again, and with a fuller sense of family.

Sturgeon

Claudia Brown

Sturgeon are big fish. Most of us know that sturgeon can still be found in Lake Erie. Every once in a while one is washed up on shore or caught by a sport fisherman. These are generally smaller than the specimens that appear in photographs from the Twentieth Century, such as the one that was made into a postcard and on display at the Kelleys Island Historical Assn.

Sturgeon is a common name for about twenty-six species in the fish family of Acipenseridae. It is a large primitive fish found in the northern regions of North America, Europe, and Asia. Sturgeon include the largest Russian sturgeon called beluga which is found in the Caspian and Black Seas. It can be 13 ft. long and weigh up to a ton. The Pacific sturgeon can weigh up to a half ton and can grow up to 12 ft. in length. The rock or lake sturgeon is found in the Great Lakes and Mississippi valley. They

were more abundant in Lakes Erie and Ontario, and in less numbers in the other Great Lakes. Smoked Sturgeon is a delicacy and sturgeon eggs are used in the better grades of caviar. Besides caviar, another product, isinglass, was made from the sturgeon's gas bladder.

Sturgeon come to us from the age of the dinosaur. Fossil records of sturgeon go back 150 to 200 million years and they have not changed much since then. Lake Erie was formed 10,000 to 12,000 years ago. Sturgeon are mostly cartilaginous, lacking a central vertebral column. The brown-green fish is covered with bony plates instead of scales. The average lake sturgeon's life span is 70

years, but some have been found that lived 125 years. There is evidence that Native Americans ate sturgeon meat and used the thick, tough skin

like fabric, thousands of years ago.

Adult lake sturgeon average about 7 feet long and can weigh 60 to 200 pounds. They start spawning when about 20 years old and in 7 year cycles. They have been listed on the endangered species list. Sturgeon are generally seen swimming alone instead of traveling in groups or schools.

Sturgeon are bottom feeders. They do not have teeth. Sturgeon feed by sucking their food up through protruding lips. They feed on crayfish, snails, small fish, worms, algae, and larvae.

My father told me that my grandfather **Walter Brown** made caviar from sturgeon eggs harvested from Lake Erie sturgeon, caught by Kelleys Island fishermen.

This sturgeon washed up on the Herndon's beach recently.



The 1935 big fish, held up by (L to R) Albert "Scoop" McKillips, Albert Kugler, Sylvester "Sonnee"

Dwelle Brown family photos ©.



Danny Brown with caught sturgeon, Brown family photos. ©

Winter Work

Cindy and Chuck Herndon

Do you ever wonder what work goes on during winter months on Kelleys Island? There is work to be done and care given to "things and places we care about." **Steve James** and **Patti Fresch** were spotted more than once toiling away at the Kelleys Island Historical properties, the museum, chapel, and parsonage doing meaningful projects. Patti actually crawled through the Old Stone Church window as the usual entry was not responding to the key. She saved the day and was able to open the swollen door from the inside. She deserves applause for this noble entry.

Steve spent time going through one of the sheds (used by the **Betzenheimer Family**) and found old sleds and

an ice scooter. **Sis McKillips** remembers this from her childhood. These items will be on display this season. There were a couple of grim discoveries: Steve found giant spiders and a snake on the second floor. Over the winter they began a thorough house cleaning of the parsonage, ripping up and removing old carpet and disposing of an accumulation of debris.

This great team was active in early March (as they have been) where both Steve and Patti were cleaning walls, sweeping, and wiping off dust from cabinets. It smelled so clean. We thank them for their good work..... they made us smile that early spring day.

Webb letters, cont. from pg. 2

from total defeat, as they would have to advance under the concentrated fire of some 40 Guns all commanding their advance in Grape and Canister range to say nothing of the Rifles of 7 Regiments of Infantry.

After Breakfast the order was given "pack up" which we did and however are upon an open Sandy Plain no better than the Ground we left not a tree nor bush nearer than ½ mile... I have written a number of letters since [Charlie] Mitchell's death that you have not received. You have doubtless thus rec'd the dispatch and letters conveying intelligence of the death of [Andrew J.] Eldred The dispatch was sent the 13th. It is very distressing to be obliged to convey so sad intelligence to expectant friends at home, but I have at least tried to do my full duty by my men.

It is so very bad writing on acc. of dust [etc.] that I must close... Lester [Carpenter] is still under the weather some nothing serious he is excused from duty and shall be until his full strength is restored...

(Afternoon)

I have just had a conversation with the Colonel. He says that Ashley has assurances from Sec. Stanton that we shall go to Toledo to be mustered out as a Regiment. I would rather go there than Columbus if we are to be detained no longer by so doing from home. If the 150th is "ordered" to report at Cleveland on the 10th it is the intention to count their time from the Second of May as it is just 100 days from that date to the 10th...

We feel now that the O.N.G.'s have been "put through" to the extent of their powers of endurance, and the order for Return home will be rec'd with the greatest joy by every individual of the Reg't.

In fact none of the Reg't are more heartily sick of the thing than are our Field and Staff Officers, and circumspect as they are they do not hesitate to so express themselves to the Sen. Officers in private conversation. Our duties have been in the Field to all intents and purposes and have been laboring to their full extent. Fatigue duty (constructing Batteries) during the day and Picket and Breastwork Guard duty during the night when not in Fatigue. The interests of the Island Boys in the draft question must be taken care of should anything occur during our absence, for none of these boys must be compelled to go under draft.

Say to Mrs. Mitchell that I should like very much to see her before she leaves the Island. I could not write her at as much length as I could have wished and therefore depended upon Mr. Holbrook for conveying particulars, which under the circumstances he was far more competent to do than myself.

I am very much pleased that you obtained for her that dress and I of course need not urge upon you to omit nothing that can by any possibility conduce to lighten the deep burden of sorrow ...

Should we go to Toledo to be mustered out I shall try and have the Queen (the boat Island Queen) make a trip up there for the Company if it can be done. I think we shall be met there by some of our friends especially if detained a day or two. There will be such a rush at Columbus that the

Memorials, Donations and Gifts

Marie Ann (Riedy) Wiles has given two Estes School desks to the KIHA Museum. One is from primary grades and one is from the secondary grade level. After Estes School, the desks were used in the Kelleys Island Library when it was started in Iola Riedy's house on Division Street. Iola Riedy was Marie Ann's mother. The desks are in their original state complete with autographs.

Owen Kastning gave his grandfather's (Henry Kastning) green wool Kelleys Island Band uniform and drumsticks to the Museum. (see article in this issue--"Coming Home")

Geraldine Betzenheimer has given an extensive collection of newspaper clippings, including death notices, to the Museum.



Henry Timman presents Ann Kelley's bible to Leslie Korenko who accepted it on behalf of the Kelleys Island Historical Association. The bible was published in 1829 and contains both the Old and New Testament, as well as several pages of family births and deaths. The inscription in the bible reads: "Mrs. Ann M. Kelley's, From her Father R. Millard, Rockport, Nov. 18th 1837."

Claudia Brown donated a new computer case for the KIHA laptop computer.

Leslie Korenko's 3rd book is available in the KIHA Gift Shop—see more about it in our next newsletter!

May 50/50 Raffle winner

John Stare—\$70

chances of detention will be greater I think than at Toledo...

I think my health will hold out good to the end, as it has so far. I learned by Homer Woodford who is on guard at the Pass Hospital that Jas. Titus who went there yesterday is no better, is out of his head occasionally.

I must again close as it is so uncomfortable writing. Hope to be settled by tomorrow.

As ever your Affect. Husband & Father
(see Alfred about the money) **Wm. S. Webb**

**MAKING KELLEYS ISLAND HISTORY
EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS**

Kelleys Island Historical Association
P.O. Box 328
Kelleys Island, OH 43438

A 501(C)3 organization.
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Kelleys Island Historical Association

We're on the web!

helleyislandhistorical.org

Kelleys Island Historical Association

P. O. Box 328

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