

Mary Belnap Moulton (Darlington Groninger)

Mary Belnap was born a long way from the site of (soon to be) Lucasville in Randolph, Vermont, in 1814. That was the year the old Revolutionary War Captain, William Lucas, died on land that was to become Lucasville. His son, John, inherited much of his father's land and soon platted Lucasville in 1819. Meanwhile, Mary was growing up in Vermont. When she was 12, John Lucas died, and Lucasville almost died with him. Very few lots had been sold.

But 1825 was also the year that with careful leadership by Robert Lucas, John's brother, the Commission to construct canals was created with the canal finishing in 1832. In Vermont, Mary's brother, Daniel, was studying to become a doctor and looking for a site in which to practice medicine. He was learning all about the Erie Canal. And Mary, after marrying Norman Moulton, began rearing children, Daniel, Sarah, and Chandler Julius.

Ten years after the canal was in operation in 1842, Dr. Daniel Belnap heard that Lucasville was in need of a doctor. He brought his family to our little village and began practice. What he found was that lots in Lucasville could be had for \$10 apiece. After settling here, his father died in Vermont, and he began urging his mother, Sarah Belnap, to join him and his family. No doubt, Sara, although 60 years old, probably didn't need too much urging. She must have been worried about her son being so far from home. After talking with her daughter and son-in-law, Mary and Norman Moulton, and her son, Giles, she got them to agree to come with her. Sarah and her family put all their possessions on a canal boat and traveled to Lucasville arriving here shortly before 1848. The family had traveled via the Champlain Canal across New York to the Erie Canal then coming south to here.

What a shot in the arm of Lucasville this family provided! Sarah purchased all thirty remaining unsold lots in 1848 from John Lucas' son, John William Lucas. Sarah built a two-story log cabin on what is now called Back Street. One of the first things that Sara and her son, Daniel, did was give a lot for a church. Daniel's wife, also named Mary, collected funds to build a church – The Methodist Episcopal Church which opened in 1849. Mary, wife of Norman, started the first Sunday school.

But then, tragedy struck. Mary's husband, her brother Giles, and her mother, Sarah, died within a month of each other the same year that the church opened. A year later, her brother, Dr. Daniel, and her 15 year old son, Daniel, died. In 1850 Mary and her children, Sarah and Chandler were living in the household of William Kendell Jones and his wife. In 1851, she married William Marion Darlington and had another daughter, Rebecca. But, she lost this husband as well.

After Mr. Darlington's death, Mary married Leonard Groninger in 1855. Leonard had previously been married to Susannah Clark, granddaughter of William Lucas. He and Mary were married 30 years until his death in 1885. Mr. Groninger had a farm. At some point, the house on Main

Street which sat beside the Moulton Store was built, and the family moved there. The store was built and opened in 1867.

Mary watched with pride as her son, Chandler, attended one year at Ohio Wesleyan College and go in agriculture. When the store opened, Chandler and his mother, Mary, ran it together. Then in 1875 Chandler married Mary Celia Smith. Census records show that they had six children, Frank, Arthur, Mabel, Jane, John and Earl. Arthur, known as Art, continued working in Moulton's Store, Frank became a lawyer, and Jane married Branch Rickey. Chandler was twice elected as state representative to the General Assembly. But this election occurred in 1900 and Mary had died four years earlier in 1896.



Mary also watched with pride as her daughter, Sarah Moulton, married Dr. John Beverly Warwick, and have children. Dr. Warwick was long considered the "Grand Old Man" here in Lucasville and is a legend in his own right.

Mary died at the age of 82 knowing that her family had survived their tragic beginning where so many were lost. And from that survival, her descendants live on contributing to life in Lucasville.