

Mary (Polly) Wiswell Andrews: 1831 – January 27, 1881

by John Andrews

The year Mary Wiswell was born, the President of the United States was Andrew Jackson. Joseph Smith had just published the *Book of Mormon* and established the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. He, and his followers, suffered such severe persecution in New York state and they were forced to flee. And, in a dispute over an attempt by the state government to extend its jurisdiction over Cherokee territory, Chief U. S. Justice John Marshall denied Indians the right to court protection because, he reasoned, they were not subject to the laws of the constitution. The year was 1831 and as these events were unfolding Mary was born in the town of Worthington, Franklin County, Ohio. She was the first of seven children born to Amasa Wiswell, Jr., and his wife, Rebecca Lockwood Wiswell.

At the age of 18, Mary married Ray W. Andrews in Worthington, Ohio. The union, officiated by William Davis, occurred on the 18th of October, 1849. Three children were born into the Andrews family: Ella Andrews, born about 1851 in Ohio; Douglas A. Andrews, born in September of 1853 in Illinois; and Colonel C. Andrews, born about 1858 in Illinois.

The 1850 census has Ray and Mary living in Sharon Township, Franklin County, Ohio. Mary was a housewife and her husband worked as a farmer to provide an income. Three other Andrews' families lived in the same township.

On March 14, 1850, Rebecca Miller (widow of Amasa Wiswell and wife of Oliver Miller), Oliver Miller, Ray W. and Mary (Polly) Andrews, Theodore and Isabel Wiswell, Daniel F and Colista A. Wiswell sold 33 acres of land in the U. S. Military District of Union County, Ohio, to a Mr. Charles Holmes for \$600.00. That land had belonged to Amasa Wiswell since 1826. At the same time, Theodore Wiswell also sold adjoining land to Mr. Holmes for \$100.¹

In 1852 Ray and Mary gave possession of 20 acres of land in Ohio to an A. J. Douglas; and then, sometime between 1852 and 1855 they moved to the town of Onarga in Iroquois County, Illinois, where Ray became very active in public life. He was elected to the post of Supervisor in Onarga and served on the Iroquois County Board of Supervisors from 1856 to 1861. He was also an active member of the Masonic and Odd Fellows Lodges, and helped organize the first agricultural fair in Onarga. He, along with a Joseph Thomas, owned the Middleport Weekly Press for a period of time. Ray also continued to farm during this time.

Mary was busy raising her children, caring for their home and she helped Ray farm. The census of 1860 shows Ray and Mary living with a daughter Ella, 9, sons Douglas, 7, and Colonel, 3. Ray owns land worth \$8,000 and has personal property worth \$600.

¹ Page #126 of the Union County, Ohio, Clerk and Recorder records.

When the Civil War broke out in 1861, Ray enlisted in the Union Army. He enlisted on June 4, 1861, and was attached to the Illinois Volunteers, 25th Regiment, Infantry, for a term of three years and was given the rank of Captain. Mary was left alone at home with the children. Ray saw action at the Battle of Pea Ridge and suffered an injury when he received a severe blow on his right hip from the effects of an exploding cannon ball. His medical certificate of November 16, 1862, indicates he was unable to resume his duties and he was apparently discharged from duty.

Mary's mother, Rebecca Wiswell Miller, may have lived in Iroquois County in the 1850s and/or the 1860s. On September 15, 1866, Rebecca and her husband, Oliver J. Miller (the records list his name as Andrews J. Miller), sold 40 acres of land in that county to a Mr. William F. Hunt for \$600 and a mortgage on the property for \$900 which Mr. Hunt was obligated to pay.

It is unclear what Ray and Mary's marital status was following Ray's discharge from the military. One land transaction recorded in the Iroquois County records indicate he was living in the Montana Territory. On December 6, 1865, Ray, living in Helena City, County of Edgerton, Territory of Montana, sold some property. The last payment on that property was to go to his wife, Mary Andrews. In another transaction, Ray sold lots 5 and 6 of block 14 in Onarga to a Mr. Thomas J. Wood on March 20, 1866. The next day Mary bought the same lots from Mr. Wood. Rays' residence at the time of that transaction was not listed. It appears that Ray and Mary were separated.

The 1870 census lists Mary Andrews living in Onarga, Illinois with her daughter Ella and sons Douglass (sic) and Colonel; and she is now the owner of \$3,000 worth of real estate and \$400 worth of personal property.

Then the 1875 census of Olathe, Kansas shows Ray and Mary living together again. Ray is 51 years old and Mary is 42. Douglas and Colonel are also living with their parents. Douglas' occupation is listed as a printer and he possesses \$130 of personal property. That census indicates that Ray came to Kansas via the Montana Territory. That same census has Mary's mother, Rebecca, living in Olathe, Kansas with her son, T. (Theodore) L. Wiswell.

Five years later, the 1880 census indicates that Ray and Mary are again living apart. Mary Andrews, age 47, is living in Olathe City, Johnson County, Kansas, 5 households from Ray W. Andrews. Colonel C. Andrews, Mary's son, lives with her.

Mary died on January 27, 1881 and was buried in Olathe, Kansas.

Mary's mother, Rebecca Lockwood Wiswell Miller, died on December 21, 1888. Her will recorded on January 2, 1889, distributed her estate to her surviving family and left \$100 to cover the cost of a monument at the head of the grave of her daughter, Mary; to pay her funeral expenses and to cover the expense of a monument at the head of her grave. She was buried next to Mary and only one stone was erected. That stone contains both her name and Mary's name. Cemetery records indicate that a "Ray Wiswell" is buried between those women; however, no stone marks that grave.