

# Sherbondy Hill of Akron, Ohio

by Jeanette E. Sherbondy

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Sherbondy Hill was a real place and not just an imaginary invention of our storyteller ancestors. It was a part of Akron, Ohio. Sherbondys were among the very first ten families that settled Akron and they made their mark on Akron history.<sup>1</sup> John and George Sherbondy were early trustees of Portage Township: John was also Assessor and George was the Director of the Infirmary.<sup>2</sup> Their brother Peter and sister Rosannah also settled there. Sherbondy descendants were inventors of a pneumatic tire and cofounders of the Diamond Rubber Company.

The first Sherbondys to live there were John Sherbondy (1791-1866) and his brother George Wallace Sherbondy (1792-1870). George Wallace and John arrived in Portage Township with their families in the spring of 1817. "They traveled from Pennsylvania with only one large wagon for the two households."<sup>3</sup> Their younger brother Peter Sherbondy (1797-1870) joined them later bringing with him their father Johann Melcher Sherbondy (1769-1850).

George Wallace Sherbondy was in the Pennsylvania militia in 1813. From April 23 to November 8, 1813 he was in Captain William Craig's Company which took part in Perry's victory on Lake Erie. The company was awarded silver medals from the state of Pennsylvania. "[He] was guarding prisoners on a march up through Ohio and came back exuberant that Ohio had the finest farming country he had ever seen. Good land was very high in Western Pennsylvania so when [the brothers] got the chance to take bounty land in Ohio, they left quickly."

Melcher Sherbondy had been farming in Huntingdon Township, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania since he had left his father's farm and mill in eastern Pennsylvania as a young man. His sons had been born near what is today Smithton, Pennsylvania. The Sherbondys in Akron were descendants of these three brothers.

George Wallace, John, and later Peter with their father Melcher Sherbondy settled on a hill that is now bordered by the intersection of I76 and I 77. It was originally bordered on the east by the Portage Path that gave the county its first

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<sup>1</sup> The other nine families in 1817 were those of Avery Spicer, Paul Williams, Samuel Newton, Phelps, John Hawkins, Ayres, Samuel Nash, King, and George (Perrin 1881:819).

<sup>2</sup> Lane 1892:287-304; Perrin 1881: 327-329.

<sup>3</sup> Perrin 1881:819.

name. The portage was an important Indian transportation route and later Europeans and Americans used it to travel from Lake Erie via the Cuyahoga River to the north, then portage to the south to the Tuscarawas River, from where they could reach the Ohio River via the Muskingum River. The area was organized as Portage Township in 1808 and then incorporated into Summit County when it was created in 1840. Perrin in his *History of Summit County* tells the story of the portage path:

In the first place, it constituted a portion of the ancient line of separation between the confederated Six Nations and the Western Indians. By the treaty of Fort McIntosh, near where is now Beaver, Penn., in 1785, the United States acquired from the Indians all the territory beyond the Ohio River and east of this line. When the great Northwest Territory, including this and more, was established in 1787, by ordinance of the Continental Congress, the Governor and three Judges thereof were appointed by Congress. These men entered upon their duties with headquarters at Campus Martius, now Marietta. Their first act was to create the county of Washington, July 27, 1788, named in honor of Gen. George Washington. Its western boundary was the Cuyahoga River, the old portage path, and the Tuscarawas River as far south as the southern line of the Western Reserve. This was practically the western border of the United States and so remained until the year 1805.

In the early days of cars, Sherbondy Hill was famous locally. My uncle Bill Sherbondy once drove to Akron in search of Sherbondy Hill. He stopped at a gas station to ask where it was and the attendant told him he was on it! He related that people used to test their skills driving up it.

Dawne Crotts, a George Wallace Sherbondy descendant who still lives near Akron. She grew up on Sherbondy Hill and remembers when it was a neighborhood of the Sherbondy families. She says, "The City of Akron has changed Sherbondy Hill and re-named Wooster Avenue--disregarding the history . . . The original Sherbondy house [built by George Wallace Sherbondy] was a log cabin."<sup>4</sup> Later the house at the top was replaced by a Dutch colonial style house:

The house was very nice and had very special woodwork and beautiful fireplace etc. My cousin remembers the house well. I remember the outside as it was standing when I went to S[outh] A[frica] (just married) but I had not lived on Sherbondy Hill then for some time. The house was unfortunately sold before I retired as my great aunt, Delilah Sherbondy Erdley then owned

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<sup>4</sup> Letter from Dawne Crotts dated January 20, 2004.

the house and had died. The new owner tore it down and built a rental property. My father was living then.<sup>5</sup>

This is a photo of Dawne as a baby with her mother and other Sherbondy relatives setting on the porch of the house. Dawne's great grandfather George H. Sherbondy (b. 1864) is sitting on the porch steps with his second wife and with his niece Irene Levine Deacon, Dawne's mother. Dawne Deacon (Crotts) (b. 1911) is the baby on her lap. Dawne's cousin Belle Snyder (Martine) is the little girl sitting on the top step between George and his wife.<sup>6</sup> The picture must date to about 1912.



Perrin in his 1881 *History of Summit County* states that "of the [first] nine families [of Summit County] only three persons are now living, Avery Spicer, his wife and Enos, son of John Hawkins." However, the Sherbondys were numerous and their offspring

are at the present time occupying most of the land originally purchased by their ancestors. John Sherbondy was elected Trustee of Portage Township fifteen years in succession; he was also Assessor for many years; he died March 22, 1866, at the age of 76; Rosannah his wife died August 12, 1852; they were the parents of fourteen children, six died before maturity, eight raised [their own] families.<sup>7</sup>

Sherbondy homes are marked and identified on an old map of Portage Township from 1874. You can view the map on the Sherbondy Hill web page. The property of Levi Sherbondy is located at the top and southwest of it are the homes of John Sherbondy, Uriah Sherbondy, and Ruben Sherbondy. To the southeast are the properties of M & C Sherbondy, David Sherbondy, and George Sherbondy. Farther

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Dawne Crotts sent me a copy of the photo and the explanation included above.

<sup>7</sup> Perrin 1881:819-820.

east is the land of another Sherbondy. On the southern edge, south of Wooster Avenue are the lands of Uriah Sherbondy and George Sherbondy. Uriah's plot is on the border between Portage Township and Coventry Township.

The lands to the east of Levi Sherbondy's belonged to Joseph Perkins, a descendant of Colonel Simon Perkins. Col.Perkins established a sheep and wool business in 1844.

To carry out his plans, he employed a sheep expert to stock his large farm, just west of Akron, with several thousand head of the best fine-wooled sheep that money could buy. The expert he employed was John Brown, the man who was destined to become a world-renowned [knowned] abolitionist . . . As time went on, Brown won the reputation of being one of the best judges of wool in the United States. . . . Coming to Akron in 1844, John was provided with a frame house just south of the Perkins mansion and moved into it with his wife and many children.<sup>8</sup>

The history of John Brown and the Sherbondys is intertwined. Dawne told me that once when John Brown was being pursued, George Sherbondy hid him in his haywagon. One of John Brown's sons married a Sherbondy woman. In 1847 Jason Brown married Ellen Sherbondy, Peter Sherbondy's daughter.

Dawne Crotts told me that the house on Sherbondy Hill was at the top of the hill. It was given to the city by the Sherbondys to be a school. Ex-sherif Samuel A. Lane writing about the early school in Akron, stated that there were several separate school districts including "the Sherbondy neighborhood."<sup>9</sup>

This must be the same school called Portage Twp. School District No. 3 in a school census for 1834. It was an "enumeration of white unmarried youth between the ages of 4 & 21" which included several Sherbondys. The list of names are the fathers or guardians and the corresponding numbers indicate how many children he had in the school. For John Sherbondy there were 5. For George Sherbondy there were 5 and for Melcher Sherbondy there was one. Other surnames in that school at that time were Root, Nash, and King.<sup>10</sup> In 1836 John Sherbondy had 4 children in the same school, Peter Sherbondy had 2 and George Sherbondy had 4.<sup>11</sup> The same school district in 1838 had children of George Sherbondy: Salina, George H. and

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<sup>8</sup> Grismer n.d.:120.

<sup>9</sup> Lane 1892:110.

<sup>10</sup> Enumeration of Youth and Partial Census for School Districts in Portage County, Ohio 1832-1838, prepared by William Cumming Johnson II, in 1982 from original records in the American History Research Center, Kent State University Library, page 34-17.A copy is located in the Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, page 36-20.

Peter. Peter Sherbondy had four: John, Wesley, Melkiah and Eleanor. John Sherbondy had three: Reuben, John, Jr. and MaryAnn Sherbondy.<sup>12</sup>

The school was also used as a church later. The Sherbondy Hill Church of Christ was organized on 1 February 1891 and as of July 1891 there were 21 members and 100 Sunday School scholars, under the leadership of Rev. Wellington Besaw.<sup>13</sup>

### The Sherbondys of Sherbondy Hill

The original Sherbondy in America was probably born in France and was known as Jean Cherpantier and then as Johann and as John Sherbondy by the time he died. He settled initially near Stroudsboung, Pennsylvania where he married Maria Catharina Bossert. They had several children. The eldest was Johann Melcher Sherbondy, born in 1768 in Hamilton Township, Northampton County [now Monroe County] Pennsylvania and died on the 15<sup>th</sup> of December of 1850 on Sherbondy Hill, Ohio. In the early 1790's Melcher and his wife Anna Maria were farming in East Huntington Township, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania. They had eight children, John, George Wallace, Jacob, Catherine, Peter, David, Rosannah, and Sarah.

John (b. 1791) and George Wallace (b. 1792) were the eldest. They were the ones who settled Sherbondy Hill first. Jacob (b. 1794) was a private in the Pennsylvania militia during the 1812 war, in regiment 137 (Marlin's Regiment). Catherine (b 1796) married Alexander Reagan and stayed in Pennsylvania. Peter (b. 1797) joined his brothers at Sherbondy Hill and later brought their father Melcher to Sherbondy Hill as well. David (b. 1799) was a contractor, farmer, Methodist pastor and justice of the peace and lived out his life in Pennsylvania. Rosannah (b. 1801) went to Ohio also. On July 10, 1828 she married Ezekiel Charles Parker in Portage County.<sup>14</sup> Sarah (b. 1806) probably lived in Pennsylvania all her life.

The old map of Portage Township shows the following Sherbondy residences: Levi Sherbondy's is at the top. Below him, from west to east are John Sherbondy, Uriah Sherbondy, Reuben Sherbondy, [Ephraim ?] and east of them from top to bottom are M & C Sherbondy [Melchiah and Celina], David Sherbondy, George Sherbondy, and Mary Ann Callender [Mary Ann Sherbondy, widow of

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid, page 38-37.

<sup>13</sup> Lane 1892:213. A picture of it on page 121 shows an attractive small house. The caption reads, "Many years later the house was enlarged and used as a club house by Akron's first golf players. The building is now owned by the Summit County Historical Society which keeps it open for the public."

<sup>14</sup> Marriage records of Portage County in Akron County courthouse.

Amos Callender]. Below them on the other side of Wooster Avenue which borders their land on the south, lies the property of George H. Sherbondy and Uriah Sherbondy.

### John Sherbondy's Children

John Sherbondy (was born on 19 March 1791 in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, married Rosannah Ritchey (1792-1852) in Pennsylvania apparently, and had eight children, many of whom were active in Akron civic life.<sup>15</sup> Their first son was Ephriam Sherbondy, born in 1812 in Pennsylvania. He married Elizabeth Edwards on the 10th of August 1846 in Logan County, Ohio. In the 1880 census for Summit County, Ephriam is 69, a farmer and his wife Elizabeth is 54. They had nine children<sup>16</sup>: Amanda, Wallace, Justus, Ada, Eunice, Rosa, John, Jennie (Giney), and Lida (Lydia).<sup>17</sup> "Ephriam . . . received a very meager education in his youth. He worked on his father's farm until 20; then at the carpenter's trade for fifteen years, during which time he was employed repairing the canal for the State."<sup>18</sup> In 1881 Ephriam owned "some 24 acres of land, and has been a farmer since he left the Ohio canal."<sup>19</sup>

John's second son was Uriah, born in 1813 in Pennsylvania. He was a farmer in Sherbondy Hill, figuring in the 1840 census and the 1880 census. Uriah was appointed to fill a vacancy as township trustee in 1879. His wife was Elizabeth West (b. 1818), also from Pennsylvania. They were married on October 20, 1836 in Portage Township. They had two daughters, Louisa (1839-1890) and Charlotte (b. 1860).

John's third son was Levi Sherbondy, born in 1814 in Pennsylvania, died in 1900. He was a farmer. He appears as the owner of the house at the top of Sherbondy Hill in the old map of Portage Township. He married Elizabeth Smith (1819-1870) on December 28, 1842 in Summit County, Ohio. They had six children: Charles (b. 1843), Sara (abt. 1844-1920), Homer, Esther (b. 1851). Joseph P. (b. 1860) and Thomas (b. 1858-1941).

Reuben Sherbondy was born on Sherbondy Hill in January of 1825 and died in 1904. He was a farmer and in 1856 he served as assessor of Portage Township.<sup>20</sup> He married Caliste Mist on December 23, 1847 in Summit County. They had eight

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<sup>15</sup> John was listed on the 1830 census for Portage Township, Portage County, Ohio (NARS M-19-Roll 138, p. 184) and on the 1840 census for Portage Township, Summit County, Ohio (NARS M704-Roll 428, p.366).

<sup>16</sup> Perrin 1881:820

<sup>17</sup> 1880 census for Summit county, Portage Township, 8 June 1880, NARS T9-Roll 1069.

<sup>18</sup> Perrin 1881:820

<sup>19</sup> Perrin 1881:820

<sup>20</sup> Perrin 1881:328

children: Walter J. (b. 1848), Frank (b. 1848), Sarah (b. 1853), Alice E. born 1853), Joseph (b. 1858), Reuben J (b. 1861), William (b. 1864) and Edward L. (b. 1867). In the 1880 census two of his sons were working in the rubber shop, Joseph and William. Reuben's sons, William, Walter J. and George F.<sup>21</sup> worked for Goodrich Company and later formed their own rubber company. Grismer in his history of Akron wrote:

Something entirely new in the way of competition began developing in the early spring of 1894--and right next door to the Goodrich plant. Diamond Match had begun to move its plant to Barberton and a group of Akron men rented one of the abandoned buildings and started a rubber company. The Diamond Rubber Company, it was called.

Frank Reifsnider, a former Goodrich salesman and at that time secretary and manager of the Globe Sign Company, was the key man in the new company. Associated with him were three other Goodrich employees--George, William and Walter Sherbondy, members of an old Akron family, and a deputy county auditor, Park B. Johnston. The Sherbondys had invented new types of single tube pneumatic tires and Reifsnider had succeeded in getting their inventions patented.

Diamond Rubber was incorporated on March 26, 1894, with a capitalization of \$50,000 and on the following day officers were elected: Reifsnider, President; George F. Sherbondy, vice-president; Johnston, secretary and treasurer, and Walter Sherbondy, superintendent."<sup>22</sup>

John's next child was Sarah Sherbondy, born in Ohio, married Jacob Smith and died in 1889 in Copley, Summit County, Ohio.

John Sherbondy, Jr. was born in 1827 in Ohio as well. He married Eleanore Austin on December 31, 1850 in Summit County. He was a farmer and he died in 1906. They had five children: DeWitt Clinton Sherbondy (1856-1937), Austin J. (b.1858), Zureka (Zuleika) born 1865, Eleanore (Nora) born 1868 and Amelia, born in 1871.

Mary Ann Sherbondy was born in 1832.

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<sup>21</sup> I am not sure if George F. is Reuben's son or a nephew. I have not been able to identify his parents. He is 24 in the 1880 census and is married to Clara B. They have an infant son Bertie. George F. is employed in the rubber works.

<sup>22</sup> Grismer n.d.:315

Homer K. Sherbondy was born on October 2, 1836 in Akron and married Catherine M. Bort from New York. They married on August 22 1857 in Bureau County, Illinois and had six children: Byron (b. 1859), Florence (b. 1861), Genevieve (b. 1866), Adalade (b. 1867), Marguerite Myrthle ((1875-19430 and Warren Eugene (b. 1875). His wife must have died because Homer married his second wife on April 27, 1876 in Summit County, Ohio. He must have taken her west with him. He died in Des Moines, Iowa on May 23, 1909.

#### George Wallace Sherbondy's Children

George Wallace Sherbondy (1797-1870) married Esther Tarr in Westmoreland County and they had four children: David (1814-1882), Selina (1821-1896), Mary Ann (1822-1873) and George H. (1823-1895). The eldest, David, was born in Pennsylvania on June 6, 1814. He was a farmer, married Elizabeth Smith (1821-1913) in 1840; and they had four children: Celina (1840-1930), Sophia (1842-1915), Francis David (1848-1921), and Curtis Charles (1853-1911).

Selina Sherbondy, George Wallace Sherbondy's second child, was born on August 10, 1821 and married her cousin Melkiah Sherbondy on April 24, 1840. Melkiah was the son of Peter S. Sherbondy. They had four children: Mary Ann (d. 1869), Easter (1849-1920). Ella (1855-1929). Martin B. (1860-1882) and Mattie (b. 1861).

Mary Ann Sherbondy was born in 1822 and died on August 13, 1873. On 6 March 1845 she married Amos Callender. In the 1880 census, she is a widow, age 62.

George H. Sherbondy was born in 1823 and died on 9 October 1895. He was a farmer and married Delilah E. Cahow. They had five children: Delilah (b. 1851), George H. (b. 1864), Nettie (b. 1867), Laura, and Elsie (d. 1921).

#### Peter Sherbondy's Children

Peter Sherbondy was married twice and had many children. His first wife was Martha Reagan, who died in 1841. Their children were Melkiah, Alexander Wesley, John, Ellen, Esther, and Peter S. Sherbondy.

Melkiah was born on January 10, 1818 in Pennsylvania and died on the 20 of January 1882 in Ohio. Like his uncles he was a farmer and active in civic affairs. He was a trustee for Portage Township in 1858.<sup>23</sup>In 1870 he was a juror for the final hearing of the trial of Vendruth Washburn for the murder of Charles Peoples.<sup>24</sup> He married Celina (Selina) Sherbondy, his first cousin. She was the daughter of George

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<sup>23</sup> Perrin 1881:328

<sup>24</sup> Lane 1892:689



Wallace Sherbondy. They had five children: Mary Ann (d. 1869), Easter (1849-1920), Ella (1855-1929), Martin B. (1860-1882) and Mattie (b. 1861).

Peter's second child was Alexander Wesley Sherbondy, born 12 October 1819 and died 3 December 1904. He married Rebecca Ann Buckman and they had no children.

Peter's next child was John Sherbondy who was born about 1822. His wife was Christina.

Peter's fourth child was Ellen Sherbondy, born 22 October 1827 in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania and died on 15 August 1895 in Akron. She married Jason Brown, one of John Brown's sons. Jason was born on 19 January 1823 in Hudson, Ohio and died on December 24, 1912 in Akron. The couple was married on July 11, 1847 in Summit County, Ohio. Their children were Austin (1851-1855), Charles O. (1853-1927), an infant who was born and died in 1859, and Frank J. (1862-1875).

Esther Sherbondy was born on April 20 in Pennsylvania and died on 14 April 1891. She married Nelson C. Hawkins on January 30, 1853 in Summit County. They had two children: A Wesley (1854-1928) and Walter N. (b. 1858). Walter, an employee of Goodrich Rubber, was one of the founders of the Diamond Rubber Company.<sup>25</sup>

Peter Sherbondy's second wife was Mary and they had the following children: Hiram, Harrison, George, Emaline and Henry.

Hiram Sherbondy was born on May 31, 1836 in Ohio and died on December 7, 1897. He was a farmer. He married Louisa Sherbondy, the daughter of Uriah Sherbondy and Elizabeth West. Uriah was a son of Peter's brother, John; so Hiram married his first cousin once removed. Their children were Henry Nelson Sherbondy (1858-1934) and Milton Jay Sherbondy (1862-1934). Hiram was a Portage Township Trustee in 1872, 1873, and 1877 and an assessor in 1876 and 1881 (Perrin 1881:328-329). Hiram "was born on a farm on Sherbondy Hill, Summit County, Ohio, and died in his native county, on his own farm . . . Shortly after his marriage he settled on a farm of twenty acres, in Copley Township, which he devoted to truck gardening, and found a ready sale for all his products at Akron. [Doyle 1908:933]

Hiram's son, Harry Nelson Sherbondy (1858-1934) was written up in the *Centennial History of Summit County, Ohio and Representative Citizens*:

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<sup>25</sup> Grismer n.d.:315

Harry Nelson Sherbondy obtained his education in the public schools of Akron, learned the carpenter trade and was employed as a wood-worker until 1905, in the meanwhile paying some attention also to farming. In 1906, he resigned his position as foreman with the manufacturing concern with which he had long been connected. It was with regret that he separated himself from employers and co-workers, between whom and himself existed the most cordial feelings. He had commenced to realize, however, the great possibilities of agriculture and made the decision to devote his future energies to that line. He purchased his present farm and has met with success. He grows corn and wheat to market, and hay, corn and oats for his own use. He feeds eleven head of cattle which he sells to local butchers, and carries milk from the farmers of this section to the Pure Milk Company of Akron. All his activities are in a prosperous condition.

Mr. Sherbondy was married to Mrs. Charles Thomas, of Cleveland. Her maiden name was Flora Bright. . . . Mr. and Mrs. Sherbondy have one son, Milton LeRoy [Sherbondy].

Politically, Mr. Sherbondy is a Republican and on numerous occasions has been sent as a delegate to county conventions. He has served in the office of trustee of Portage Township. Fraternally, he is an Odd Fellow, belonging to Nemo Lodge, No. 746.<sup>26</sup>

Peter Sherbondy's next child was Harrison Sherbondy, born in February 1838 in Ohio and died on Dec, 6, 1906. He married Mary Elizabeth McDoughall in 1862.

George Sherbondy was born in April 1841 and was a butcher. He married Lida Augusta Kidder, who was born in Ohio but her father was born in Vermont and her mother in New Hampshire. They had a daughter Agnes Phebe, born in 1863.

Emaline Sherbondy was born in November 1843. She may never have married. In the 1880 census she is living with her brother Henry<sup>27</sup>

Henry Sherbondy was born in October 1844 and died in 1919. He married Mary M. Werts on June 24, 1873. They had two children who died very young, Frank and Maud.

### Sherbondy Hill Today

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<sup>26</sup> Doyle 1908:944

<sup>27</sup> NARS T9, Roll 1069, federal census of Portage Township, summit County, Ohio on 8 June 1880.

In 2006 a Part of the old Sherbondy Hill was dedicated as a park named Sherbondy Field.



Here are two views of parts of Sherbondy Field. These three photographs were taken by Barbara Crotts, the daughter of Dawne Crotts.



We are always looking for more information about Sherbondy Hill. Please send us your stories, articles and photos of Sherbondy Hill and photos and information of the people who lived there. Thanks!

Sherbondy Family Association  
[www.sherbondy.org](http://www.sherbondy.org)