

# FALCONERS IN ALLEGAN COUNTY, MICHIGAN

by  
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October, 2011

In 1873 two brothers, Daniel and Thomas Falconer, settled in Saugatuck Township, in Allegan County, Michigan, along with their wives, their younger children, and their widowed mother, Ann (McGlashan) Falconer. This is the story of these Falconer families and their kin who made their homes in the Saugatuck area in the 1870s through the 1920s<sup>1</sup>. There were other families named Falconer in the area, including a John Falconer, who obtained a 320 acre federal land grant in neighbouring Barry County in 1839, but no relationship has yet been established with those other Falconers.

## The Saugatuck Area of Allegan County

The villages of Saugatuck and Douglas, in Saugatuck Township, are picturesquely situated at the mouth of the Kalamazoo River on Lake Michigan, in Allegan County, in southwest Michigan. Immediately north of Saugatuck Township is Laketown Township. The Saugatuck area attracted many settlers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, first mainly Americans from eastern states, hungry for rich agricultural and timbered lands as low as \$1.25 per acre. The largest single cohort of foreign immigrants was from Holland, starting in the late 1840s, and many Dutch names are still found in Allegan County. The second largest immigrant group, starting somewhat later, was from Canada. Among the Canadian immigrants were the Falconer families.

Allegan County experienced successive economic booms in lumbering, fruit growing and ship building<sup>2</sup>. Fruit growing benefited from Lake Michigan's moderation of the local climate, as well as access to Chicago and other major Great Lakes markets. The chief fruit crop in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was peaches. The ship building industry flourished, as hundreds of ships were built for the upper lake trade after the decline of the lumber industry<sup>3</sup>.

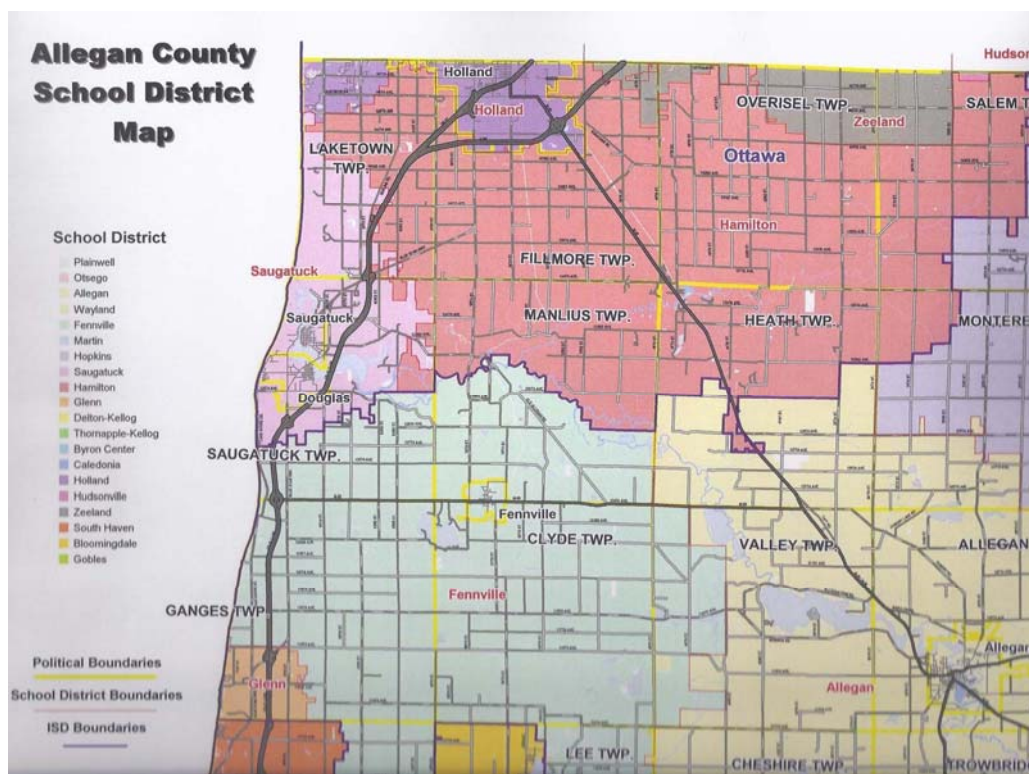
Allegan's lumbering and ship building industries have mainly disappeared, but agriculture (still including extensive fruit growing) remains strong, as well as light industries and tourism.

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<sup>1</sup> A full annotated family tree, including Falconers and kin who did *not* settle in Michigan, can be found at <http://dunkelfalconer.tribalpages.com/>

<sup>2</sup> J. Armstrong and J. Pahl, *River & Lake: a sesquicentennial history of Allegan County, Michigan*, 1985, published by the 1835 Committee to commemorate the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the founding of Allegan County, Michigan, September 1, 1835.

<sup>3</sup> K. Lane, *Built on the Banks of the Kalamazoo*, 1993, Pavilion Press, Douglas, MI.



Western half of Allegan County, including Saugatuck and Laketown Townships  
 [from *Allegan County Parcel Atlas and Gazetteer*, 2007, Allegan County Land Information Services. Used with their permission.]

### List of the Main Characters

**Daniel Falconer** (1829-1897)

**Thomas Falconer** (1823-1890), his brother

**Ann (McGlashan) Falconer** (1799-1879), their widowed mother

**Mary Ann Jane (Foster) Falconer** (1852-1924), Daniel's third wife

**Jane (Speers) Falconer** (1825-1875), Thomas's first wife

**Elizabeth (Caithness, Miller) Falconer** (1840-1918) Thomas's second wife

**George Miller** (1838-1875) Elizabeth's first husband

**James Caithness** (1848-1931), Elizabeth's brother

**Sarah Jane Falconer** (1852-1916), Daughter of Thomas and Jane and wife of David McClellan

**Mary Falconer** (1856-1933), Daughter of Thomas and Jane and wife of James Caithness

**John Falconer** (1864-1944), **Minnie Falconer** (1867-1912), **Jacob Alexander Falconer** (1869-1928), Younger children of Thomas and Jane, who came to Saugatuck..

**John E. Falconer** (1863-?), **William Falconer** (1866-?), **Daniel Falconer** (1870-1956), Children of Daniel Falconer's second marriage, who came to Saugatuck

**James A. Falconer** (1876-?), **Allen L. Falconer** (1878-1962), **Henry B. Falconer** (1880-1882), Children of Daniel and Mary Ann Jane, born in Saugatuck.

## **Ann McGlashan**

Ann McGlashan was the mother of Daniel and Thomas. She was born in Little Dunkeld Parish, Perthshire, Scotland on Dec. 10, 1799. In 1822 she married Duncan Falconer, and they had five sons between 1823 and 1832 in Perthshire and neighbouring Angusshire, including the oldest, Thomas, and the third, Daniel. Another son named John died in Canada in 1861. Details on the other sons, James and William are unknown. Ann's husband Duncan was a gunsmith, as had been his father Thomas. The Falconer family emigrated to Canada West (which later became the Province of Ontario) in 1842, where Duncan continued his trade as a gunsmith, and later as a farmer and nurseryman in Perth County, Canada West, in partnership with his sons Daniel and John until his death in 1866. His widow Ann moved to Saugatuck Township in 1873 with Daniel and his family. She died there on Feb. 12, 1879, and is buried beside Daniel in Riverside cemetery, Saugatuck Township.



Ann (McGlashan) Falconer

## **Daniel Falconer**

Daniel Falconer is profiled in "Portrait and Biographical Record of Kalamazoo, Allegan and Van Buren Counties, Michigan", published by Chapman Brothers, Chicago, in 1892<sup>4</sup>:

"Daniel Falconer, most generally known as a fruit-grower and nurseryman in Saugatuck Township, Allegan County, is also engaged in farming. His landed possessions include sixty acres, which are beautifully located in Section 10. He is making a success of life and is ranked among the well-to-do citizens of his township.

Daniel Falconer is the son of Duncan and Ann (McGlashin) [sic] Falconer, natives of Perthshire, Scotland, where the subject of this sketch was born in April, 1831<sup>5</sup>. His father was a practical mechanic and was in the employ of the British Government for many years in the armory. He was commissioned to go to Canada

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<sup>4</sup> <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/g/genpub/BAD0952.0001.001/445?rgn=full+text;view=image;q1=Falconer>

<sup>5</sup> Records of the Parish of Forfar show that Daniel was actually born there in April 1829.

in 1842, and was given charge of the Ordinance Department at Toronto. Daniel was reared in Toronto and given an excellent education in the city schools. He remained under the parental roof until reaching his majority when he started out to battle with life on his own account.

In 1850 our subject was married to Miss Mary Ann Baker, by whom he had three children, one of whom is living, Duncan, who now resides in Nevada. Mrs. Falconer died October 31, 1860. Our subject again married, this time to Agnes Sutherland, May 1, 1861, by whom he had four children: John, William, Anna M. and David<sup>6</sup>. His second wife passed from this earth September 10, 1870. March 12, 1873, our subject was married to Mary A.J. Foster, daughter of John R. and Mary (Patterson) Foster, natives respectively of Ireland and Canada. Mrs. Falconer was born in Canada, February 28, 1852. Their union has been blessed with two children: James A. who was born in February, 1876 and Allen L. in 1879. They are both at home with their parents<sup>7</sup>.

In his political creed, he believes in the tenets of the Democratic party. He has never been an office-seeker, but has frequently been called upon by his fellow-townsmen to represent them in offices of public trust. He has served efficiently on the School Board as Trustee, was Highway and Drain Commissioner<sup>8</sup> and is the present Supervisor of Saugatuck Township. He was also the Postmaster for several years. In his church relations, he is connected with the Congregational Society. Socially he is a member of the Free and Accepted Masons and Saugatuck lodge No. 196, I.O.O.F., in which order he is Noble Grand.

The father of our subject died in 1864<sup>9</sup> and his mother passed away a few years later, dying in 1879. Mrs. Falconer's father died in May, 1888. Her mother is still living in North Branch, Lapeer County, this state."

This biographical sketch paints a picture of a multi-faceted man, eager to make a lasting impact in his community. His life and career before coming to Saugatuck in his mid-40s also reflects this assessment. Daniel's family moved from Toronto to Perth County, Canada West, in 1847, where he, his brother Thomas, and their father Duncan leased and purchased farms in Hibbert, Logan and Fullarton Townships. Daniel, Duncan and another brother John operated a successful orchard and nursery<sup>10</sup> in Fullarton Township in the 1850s and 1860s. Various other documents mention that Daniel was also at times a merchant and cattle dealer. In 1866, he moved to Elma Township, where he eventually became postmaster and general store owner in the Village of Newry, councillor in 1869, and reeve (equivalent to supervisor or mayor) of the Township of Elma from 1870 to 1873<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Correct name is "Daniel", not "David".

<sup>7</sup> A third child of Daniel and Mary was Henry B. Falconer, born in 1880, who died of drowning in 1882.

<sup>8</sup> Drains were, and still are, important in Allegan County for managing swampy areas. A "Falconer drain" still exists, and runs under what was Daniel's property in Saugatuck Township.

<sup>9</sup> Correct year is 1866.

<sup>10</sup> *Stratford Beacon*, Sept. 25, 1857.

<sup>11</sup> *History of the County of Perth from 1825 to 1902* by William Johnson

Daniel married his second wife, Agnes (Sutherland) Walkom, on May 1, 1861. She was the widow of William Walkom. She and Daniel's first wife Mary are buried side by side in Knox Presbyterian Cemetery, Mitchell, Ontario, sharing a tall gravestone with Mary's and Daniel's son James.

In April 1873, shortly after his third marriage, Daniel apparently faced insolvency, and to protect his properties in Elma Township from creditors, tried to transfer them to his son Duncan and his brother in law A.P. Foster under peculiar and suspicious circumstances. Ontario Chancery Court records show that the attempted land transfer was fraudulent and void. The court record further states that "on or about the 15th of May, 1873, Daniel Falconer absconded from the Province of Ontario", and a writ of attachment was placed on his lands and property<sup>12</sup>.

Daniel and his family, including his widowed mother, "absconded" to Saugatuck. He came with the young children of his second marriage: John, 7, William, 6, Anna, 4 and Daniel, 2. Three children were subsequently born to Daniel and Mary in Saugatuck: James, Allen and Henry B. Henry drowned in 1882. The surviving child from Daniel's first marriage, Duncan, born in 1851, moved to Nevada and later to California, where he worked as an engineer in silver mines.

The Allegan County Register of deeds shows several land transactions for Daniel in Saugatuck Township and the village of Saugatuck. On August 1, 1873, he purchased five acres on the south side of Allegan Road from H.A.O.W. Durham<sup>13</sup>. On Oct. 15, 1873 he purchased a 20 feet by 64 feet lot in Saugatuck Village from George Wilcox<sup>14</sup>, but defaulted on his mortgage, losing it in a sheriff's sale on July 2, 1875. On 27 Feb. 1877 and Feb. 12, 1881, he and his wife Mary purchased land on the north side of Allegan Road, their immediate eastern neighbour being Daniel's brother Thomas. The land is situated on the present-day Old Allegan Road, east of the Blue Star Highway (A-2) and west of the I-196 overpass. In August of 1886, Thomas Falconer sold his 27 1/2 acres in Saugatuck Township to Daniel's son Duncan, of Eureka, Nevada, who eventually turned it over to his father, so that as shown in a 1895 map of Saugatuck Township<sup>15</sup>, Daniel owned 60 acres on the north side of Allegan Road. There is presently (2011) a late-1800s wood frame house in the same location as Daniel's house shown on the 1895 atlas, so it was probably his. Its western half is probably the original house, with an eastern wing being added later.

Daniel used his property in Saugatuck Township as an orchard, mainly for peach trees. Allegan County deed books show a number of lien transactions to various landowners in Saugatuck and Laketown townships, including, in 1892, Daniel's sister-in-law Elizabeth Falconer, which seem to be intended as a form of "futures market" for peaches; Daniel would sell a specified number of peach trees to a landowner at a specified price plus interest to be paid after two years, with the agreement that the buyer was to take all necessary measures to manage and harvest the trees properly. If the payer defaulted, the effective tree ownership reverted to Daniel for an 8-year period, with the original buyer being obliged to maintain and harvest the trees for Daniel's benefit, with

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<sup>12</sup> *Ontario Chancery Court Records*, Ontario Archives.

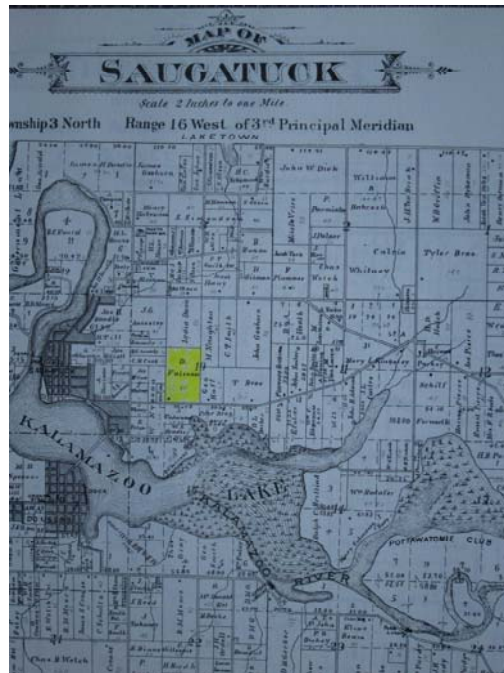
<sup>13</sup> South-west corner of south half of east half of south-west quarter of Section 10, Saugatuck Township.

<sup>14</sup> Lot #106, north-west corner of Hoffman and Butler Streets.

<sup>15</sup> *Illustrated Atlas of Allegan County, Michigan, 1895*



the further stipulation that the original buyer would then be allowed to harvest and sell the fruit in one year, of his own choosing, out of the eight. This arrangement probably was motivated by the unpredictability of peach harvests from year to year.



Northern part of Saugatuck Township, 1895, with Daniel Falconer's land shown in yellow. Its eastern half was originally owned by Thomas Falconer.  
[From *Illustrated Atlas of Allegan County, Michigan, 1895*, Kace Publishing Co., Racine, Wisconsin, 1895]



Probable house of Daniel Falconer on Old Allegan Road, Saugatuck Township

At his death on July 16, 1897, Daniel left his land and possessions to his wife and surviving children (one of whom, William, a son of his second wife, could not be located, and was presumed dead).

Daniel, his mother Ann, a son Henry B., who died at age 2 in 1882, and his great niece, Jean (Falconer) Sperry, daughter of Jacob Alexander Falconer, are buried in Block 3, Range 13, Lot 8 of Riverside Cemetery in Saugatuck Township

### **Mary Ann Jane Foster**

Daniel's third wife, Mary Ann Jane Foster was born in Darling Township, Canada West in 1852. She was 21 years old when she married 44 year old Daniel in Elma Township, Ontario on March 12, 1873. Their three sons, James A., Allen Lorenzo and Henry B., were born in Saugatuck on Feb. 6, 1876, Sept. 15, 1878 and May 29, 1880, respectively. Mary was a charter member of the Saugatuck Women's' Club, founded in 1904. In the book *Snapshots: A Saugatuck Album*, by James Schmiechen and William Kemperman, and published in 2003 by the Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society, Mrs. Dan Falconer<sup>16</sup> is mentioned as the operator of the Oak Manor Hotel in Douglas. This was a Greek revival building, built about 1898, as the "Dutcher House". It was located on Washington Street, near Dutcher's Lumber Mill and Basket Factory. The building was demolished in 1980.

Some time between 1910 and 1920, Mary moved to Tacoma, Washington, to live with her eldest son James. She died there on August 31, 1924.

### **Thomas Falconer and Jane Speers**

Thomas Falconer was born in Caputh, Perthshire, Scotland on May 29, 1823, the oldest son of Duncan Falconer and Ann McGlashan. He emigrated to Toronto with his parents, Daniel and his other brothers in about 1842. Thomas married Jane Speers in Toronto on March 11 1846. Jane was born in Tandaragee, County Armagh, Ireland, in 1825. Her family emigrated to Peel County, Canada West, in 1828, and later Toronto. Thomas and Jane farmed in Perth County, Ontario from about 1847 to about 1864, and then moved to Elderslie township, Bruce County, Canada West. Thomas and Jane had 14 children between 1847 and 1869, all but two of whom reached adulthood. Thomas and Jane moved to Saugatuck Township in 1873 with their daughter Mary (also called May) and their youngest children John, 9, Minnie, 6, and Jacob Alexander, 4. They were preceded by their older daughter Sarah Jane, who had moved there with her husband David W. McClellan in 1871. Their oldest children, Duncan (1847-1925), Ann (1849-1933), Bertha (1855-1911), William (1857-1882), Thomas (1859-1907), and Robert (1862-1912), stayed in Ontario or moved to the Province of Manitoba. Their daughter Ann Eliza (1851-?), with her husband William Callbeck, moved from Ontario to Tuscola County, Michigan in 1875.

In the 1851, 1861 and 1871 Canadian censuses, Thomas was listed variously as a millwright, farmer, and carpenter. Why did Thomas and Jane move from Ontario to Michigan, away from most of their older children in 1873 at about the same time as brother Daniel and mother Ann? There is no reason to believe that they were in the same financial predicament as his brother Daniel. They may have received good reports of prospects in the Saugatuck area from their daughter Sarah Jane (Falconer) McClellan. Another reason may be economic: There was a relative boom in agriculture in Canada West in the 1850's and 1860's, spurred by grain and timber exports. However following

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<sup>16</sup> In this case, "Mrs. Dan Falconer" might be Mary Ann Jane, or the wife of Daniel's son Daniel, Jr., from his second marriage.

the American Civil War, trade reciprocity agreements between the US and British North America were not renewed. This resulted in a depression in Canada West in the mid-1870s. Prices for farm products dropped<sup>17</sup>. Michigan and, for some of Thomas's older children, Manitoba, may have appeared to have a brighter economic outlook at the time.



Thomas Falconer



Jane (Speers) Falconer

The Allegan County Register of Deeds shows that Thomas purchased 27 1/2 acres of land from Henry A. Durham Estate and O.P. Durham on Feb. 27, 1877<sup>18</sup>. The lot was on the Allegan Road, and it bordered Daniel Falconer's property to its west. The sale price was \$800. Thomas and his second wife Elizabeth sold this property on 19 Aug., 1886 to Duncan Falconer of Eureka, Nevada (Daniel's oldest son), and it was eventually taken over by Daniel, and combined with his adjacent lot and other additions, making a total of 60 acres. The *Illustrated Atlas of Allegan County, 1895* clearly shows a house on the extreme south-west corner of the property (in the part occupied originally by Daniel). There is a late 1880s house in the same location as Daniel's house, so it was probably his. Thomas Falconer was a skilled carpenter, so it is tempting to suppose that he built all or part of the house, and that perhaps he and Jane lived there with Daniel and their families.

Jane Falconer died in October 1875 at age 50, while on a visit back to her older children in Bruce County, Ontario. An excerpt from Thomas's 1890 obituary in the *Commercial Record* stated "After a few years his wife's health began to fail and gradually grew worse until it was deemed advisable for her to return to Canada, hoping old scenes would be beneficial, but it was otherwise ordered, and she was called to her rest in 1875". Jane is buried in the Paisley Cemetery, Bruce County.

Thomas was listed as a carpenter in the 1880 US census for Saugatuck Township. On the same census page, and living nearby, is the family of his brother, Daniel, the family of his daughter Sarah Jane and her first husband David W. McClellan. Also living nearby are listed his late wife's brother Robert Speers and Robert's wife Elizabeth.

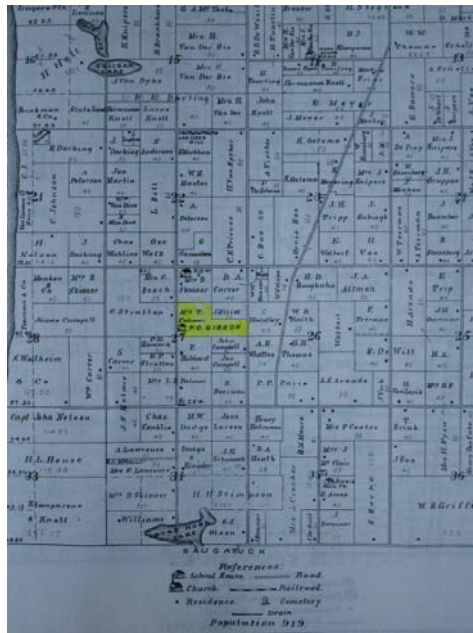
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<sup>17</sup> *Ontario 1610-1985: A political and Economic History*, by Randall White

<sup>18</sup> The property was described as being on "the eastern part of the north-east quarter of the south-west quarter of Section 10 in Saugatuck Township.



Thomas married Elizabeth Caithness of Laketown Township on Oct. 19, 1880. She was the widow of George Miller, who had died in 1875. After Thomas married Elizabeth, he moved to her property in Section 27 in Laketown Township. James Caithness (Elizabeth's brother), who had taken over the land of his brother Robert Caithness, sold 20 acres of it to Thomas Falconer and Elizabeth in Jan. 4, 1884 for \$100<sup>19</sup>. Thomas put the property in his wife's name later that year. The *Illustrated Atlas of Allegan County, 1895* shows Thomas's widow Elizabeth occupying an L-shaped lot, comprising about 60 acres. The lot contained in its south-west corner, the Gibson Post Office. Today, the property is heavily treed, on the east side of 65th Street, roughly halfway between 138th Avenue and 140th Avenue. There are no discernable houses of 1880s vintage.



Southern part of Laketown Township, 1895, with Elizabeth Falconer's land shown in yellow

[From *Illustrated Atlas of Allegan County, Michigan, 1895*, Kace Publishing Co., Racine, Wisconsin, 1895]

Thomas died of emphysema on August 17, 1890. He and Elizabeth, who died in 1918, are buried side by side in Riverside Cemetery, Saugatuck Township in Block 3, Range 11, Lot 3. The deed for the cemetery plots was purchased by Thomas's son John Falconer. In the same cemetery lot are buried Thomas's son Jacob Alexander Falconer, his wife Mabel (Thompson) Falconer, their infant daughter Marjory Joy Falconer, their son Robert Thomson Falconer and his wife Lugene Amy Falconer.

<sup>19</sup> It was described as the south half of the south-east quarter of the north-east quarter of Section 27 in Laketown Township.

### **Elizabeth Caithness and George Miller**

Elizabeth Caithness, the second wife of Thomas Falconer, was born in Kirkwall, on the Island of Orkney, Scotland on March 20, 1840. Her father, Robert, was a merchant seaman, and her mother, Jane Peace ran the family farm. The family, including 6 siblings, emigrated to Quebec in 1853, moved on to Northumberland County, Canada West, and later to Grand Haven, Michigan, although marriage, birth and census records seem to indicate that Elizabeth and her family moved back and forth between Canada West and Michigan between 1859 and 1871. Elizabeth Caithness' first marriage was to George Miller in 1866 in Allegan, Michigan on 27 Dec. 1866. The marriage record indicates her address as Chicago, and his as Saugatuck Township. Their first child, Margaret Jane Miller (also called Jennie), was born in Allegan County, Michigan in 1867, their second child, Robert Caithness Miller, was born in Hastings County, Ontario in 1869, as was their third child, Frank J. Miller in 1871.

A 1873 land atlas of Allegan County<sup>20</sup> shows 20 acres owned by C.E. Miller in Section 27 of Laketown Township. C.E. Miller was likely related to George Miller, and it is likely that Elizabeth and George were living in that property or the adjacent 40 acre property owned by Elizabeth's brothers Robert and James. George Miller died in February, 1875. In the 1880 US census for Laketown Twp., Elizabeth Miller is listed as widowed, living with her younger brother James Caithness, age 28 (who later married Thomas Falconer's daughter Mary), and her three children, Jennie, 12, Robert, 10 and Frank, 9.

In the 1900 US census for Douglas Village, Allegan County, she was living with her daughter Jennie and her son in law Louis W. McDonald. She continued to live there until her death on 18 July 1918, resulting from a fall. She is buried in Riverside Cemetery, Saugatuck Township beside her second husband Thomas Falconer.

### **James Caithness and Mary Falconer**

James Pierce Caithness was born in 1848 in Orkney, Scotland, the younger brother of Elizabeth, and engaged in lumbering in Allegan County. In the 1870's he was probably living on 40 acres of Section 27 of Laketown Township, with his father or older brother, who were both named Robert Caithness. Their neighbour was C.E. Miller, possibly a relative of George Miller, the husband of James' sister Elizabeth. The 1880 US census record for Laketown Township listed James as a widower, head of household, living with his sister Elizabeth and her children.

Mary Falconer (also called May) (1856-1933) moved with her parents to Saugatuck and helped look after her younger siblings. She also taught school in Saugatuck. On May 11, 1881, James Caithness married Mary Falconer, about 8 months after his older widowed sister Elizabeth married Mary's widowed father Thomas. James and Mary had one child, Jeanne Falconer Caithness, born in 1885, before they decamped to Wisconsin and later Washington State, where they enlarged their family and James continued in lumbering and shingle businesses.

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<sup>20</sup> *Land Atlas, Allegan County, 1873*, C.O. Titus, 1873.

The Laketown property was sold by James Caithness and Mary to Thomas and Elizabeth Falconer on Jan. 4, 1884<sup>21</sup>.



Mary (May) Falconer

### **Sarah Jane Falconer**

Sarah Jane Falconer, born in 1852 in Fullarton Township, Perth County, Canada West, was the fourth child of Thomas Falconer and Jane Speers. She married David Wesley McClellan in Perth County in 1871, and they moved to Saugatuck Township in Allegan County immediately afterwards. Thus Sarah Jane was the first of the Falconers to move to the Saugatuck area. David had been born in Canada West in 1843, and was a lumberer. The 1880 US census for Saugatuck Township showed the McClellans living close to Thomas, his daughter Mary, and Thomas's younger children. David and Sarah Jane had four children born in Saugatuck: Wesley (1872), William Everett (1874), Annie May (1876), and Thomas Arthur (1878). The Allegan County Register of Deeds shows David McClellan purchased 40 acres in 1881 in Laketown Township<sup>22</sup>. The sale was witnessed by John Falconer (probably Sarah Jane's younger brother). David turned the land over to his wife Sarah Jane in 1882, and they sold it in January 1883 to his brother Josiah McClellan of Saugatuck. David died in Laketown Township on May 12, 1883, and is buried in Block 1 in the Riverside Cemetery in Saugatuck Township.

After David's death, Sarah Jane moved to the Province of Manitoba, where she kept house for her bachelor brother Thomas Falconer, before marrying David's brother, Robert W. McClellan in 1885. Robert and Sarah Jane moved to Red Deer, North West Territories (now the Province of Alberta) and went through the second Riel Rebellion there. There is a story that Sarah Jane scared away an Indian who was threatening to kill her baby.

### **John Chester Falconer**

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<sup>21</sup> The 40 acre lot was described as "the south half of the south-east quarter of the north-east quarter of Section 27, Laketown Township."

<sup>22</sup> West half of north half of south-west quarter of Section 26 in Laketown Township.

John Chester Falconer, born in 1864, came to Saugatuck with his parents Thomas and Jane in 1873. He moved to Washburn, Wisconsin, where in 1893 he married Jessie E. Tabor. They later moved to the State of Washington, where John was active in lumbering, real estate and insurance.



John Chester Falconer

### **Minnie Falconer**

Minnie was born in Paisley, Ontario in 1867, and moved with her parents Thomas and Jane to Saugatuck in 1873. After her mother's death in 1875, she went to live for a time with her oldest sister Annie (Falconer) Hopper on her farm near Paisley, Ontario. Later, like her brother John, she went to live with her married sister May Caithness in Washburn, Wisconsin. She taught school in nearby Bayfield Wisconsin for two years. She married Lorenzo Clausen in Wisconsin, and after the birth of her daughter, she contracted spinal meningitis, and was a semi-invalid until her death in 1912.

### **Jacob Alexander Falconer**

Born in Paisley, Ontario in on January 26, 1869, Jacob Alexander Falconer was the 14<sup>th</sup> and youngest child of Thomas Falconer and Jane Speers. He also was to become the most famous member of the Falconer clan. He moved with Thomas and Jane to Saugatuck at the age of 4. He grew up in Saugatuck and Laketown Townships with Thomas and Jane, and later, Thomas's second wife Elizabeth. Jacob moved from Saugatuck to Washburn, Wisconsin at the age of 18. There he attended Beloit College. He then moved to Everett, Washington, where his sister Mary Caithness was already living, and became involved in the manufacture of shingles, and bought and sold timber lands (probably initially with Mary's husband James Caithness). Jacob returned to the mid-west two years later in 1896 and married Mabel Thompson, whom he had met in Saugatuck at the age of 16. She was the daughter of a Congregational minister, Alexander Thomson, who spent many summers in Saugatuck. Jacob Alexander and Mabel settled and raised a family of five children in Everett, Washington.

Jacob Alexander served as mayor of Everett for two terms. He also served in the Washington State Legislature for 8 years, in the second term of which he was the Speaker of the House. He was Chairman of Appropriations and Revenue and Taxation Committees respectively, in the 1909 and 1911 sessions. He co-authored the Workmen's Compensation Law and introduced it in the state senate. In 1912, he was elected to the 63d Congress of the United States, a member of the Progressive ("Bull Moose") party, and the family moved to Washington D.C. In Congress they called him "the man with the silver hair and the golden singing voice". He ran unsuccessfully for the US Senate in 1914.

After his political career, Jacob Alexander lived for a time in Fort Worth, Texas, and later in Farmington, New Mexico, becoming involved in oil-drilling and road-building businesses. Eventually he moved with his family to Wingate, Dutchess County, New York.

Jacob Alexander suffered a heart attack and died at his home in Wingate on July 1, 1928. The *Saugatuck Commercial Record* printed a lengthy and laudatory obituary on July 13, 1928. He is buried alongside his father Thomas, and his stepmother Elizabeth, in Riverside Cemetery, Saugatuck Township. Also buried with them are His wife Mabel Falconer, who died in 1957, their infant daughter Marjory Joy, who died in 1909, their son Robert Thomson Falconer, who died in 1993, and his wife Lugene A. Falconer, who died in 1998.



Jacob Alexander Falconer



Mabel (Thomson) Falconer

### **Falconers in the *Commercial Record***

The *Commercial Record*, founded in 1868, is the oldest continuously-published newspaper in Allegan County. Its local news covers mostly the western Allegan County area, adjacent to Lake Michigan. Over the years it has had several names such as *Saugatuck Commercial*, *Lakeshore Commercial*, and *Saugatuck Commercial Record*. For genealogists and history buffs, it has the great attraction of being fully digitized from

1868 to 1961 and available on the Internet<sup>23</sup>, and some periods have also been indexed. Serving a relatively small community, it also has the attraction of revealing glimpses of the lives of ordinary people. Some examples of Falconers appearing in 1880s:

April 7, 1882

“March Meeting of the S&G Pomological Society: ...**Mr. Falconer** [Daniel] said that he had killed currant worms and kept them off effectually by sprinkling with common hand plaster....”

Sept. 29, 1882

“We gratefully acknowledge the receipt of a basket of excellent Bartlett pears from **Mr. Daniel Falconer**.”

July 20, 1883

“Thos. Kernan expects to raise a barn this week. The work is being done by **Mr. Falconer** [Thomas] of Saugatuck.”

Mar. 14, 1884

“**Thomas Falconer** lost a valuable horse, the best one out of his team, on Sunday morning, from inflammation of the lungs.”

Apr. 17, 1885

“The following named were granted certificates at the examination held here on the 4<sup>th</sup> inst.: ...**Minnie Falconer, J.E. Falconer, ..Jennie Miller,..**”

May 1, 1885

“**Miss Minnie Falconer** is teaching at Diamond Springs, this county. We wish her success.”

July 24, 1885

“As far as we have learned, John Hayward is the only person who succumbed to the heat this week, though **Thomas Falconer** came very near being prostrated.”

Oct. 23, 1885

“**Mrs. D. Hopper** of Canada [Thomas and Jane’s oldest daughter Ann who lived in Paisley, Ontario] and **Mrs. W. Callbeck** [Thomas and Jane’s second oldest daughter Ann Eliza] of Caro, Mich., were the guests of **T. Falconers** over Sunday. They returned to their respective homes Tuesday noon.”

Mar. 19, 1886

“..concert to be given at the Congregational Church on next Tuesday evening...Song: **Jacob Falconer**...”

Apr. 6, 1900

“**Mrs. Dan Falconer** [Nellie (Chittenden) Falconer, wife of Daniel’s son Daniel, Jr.], of Shelby, Mich., visited relatives here last week.”

Nov. 9, 1900

“**James Falconer** [oldest son of Daniel and Mary Ann Jane], of Chicago, was in town this week.”

The *Commercial Record* also printed touching, pious, and sometimes lengthy announcements of weddings, such as that of Thomas and Elizabeth, and obituaries, such as those of Ann, Daniel, Thomas, Elizabeth, Jacob Alexander and David McClellan.

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<sup>23</sup> <http://commercialrecord.org/>



### Where did they all go?

Apart from Daniel and Thomas Falconer, their mother Ann, Thomas's second wife Elizabeth, and Henry, an infant son of Daniel, it seems that all of the other Falconers left Allegan County, and ended their lives elsewhere.

Most of the older children of Thomas and Daniel never lived in Allegan County. Daniel's oldest surviving child from his first marriage, Duncan, moved from Ontario to become a mining engineer in Nevada and California, as did eventually John and Daniel from Daniel's second marriage. Daniel's daughter Annie Margaret, from his second marriage, married and stayed in Ontario. Thomas and Jane's older children, Duncan, Ann, William, Thomas and Robert all moved from Ontario to Manitoba. Bertha stayed in Ontario with her husband. Anne Eliza and her husband moved from Ontario to Tuscola County, Michigan.

James and Allen, the surviving children of Daniel and Mary Ann Jane, moved to the US west coast from Allegan County, as did Mary Ann Jane herself. The other children of Thomas and Jane: Mary, Minnie, John and Jacob Alexander also moved with their spouses from Allegan County to Wisconsin and/or Washington. Robert and Frank, the two sons of Elizabeth Caithness, from her first marriage to George Miller, both moved to Texas from Allegan County. Her daughter Jennie stayed with her husband Louis McDonald in Saugatuck Township, later moving to Grand Rapids, Kent County, Michigan.



Row of Falconer gravestones in Riverside Cemetery. Behind the row is the large Falconer family stone. From left to right: Thomas, Elizabeth, Jacob Alexander, Mabel and Marjory Joy, Robert, Eugene

The main trend for most of these Falconer offspring was to move west, either in Canada or the USA. Younger sons and daughters tended to follow, and in some cases live with, older siblings who had already moved west. The only Falconers known to have remained permanently in Allegan County are those buried in Riverside Cemetery. Thomas, Elizabeth, Jacob Alexander, Mabel, Marjory Joy, Robert and Eugene are buried, with uniform headstones or markers, in a row in Block 3, Range 11, Lot 3. Behind their row is a large Falconer family stone. It seems plausible that Jacob Alexander's children may have arranged for the family stone and the other headstones to be placed there. Ann

(McGlashan) Falconer, Daniel, Daniel's infant son Henry B., as well as Jean (Falconer) Sperry, a daughter of Jacob Alexander and Mabel, are buried in a row in Block 3, Range 13, Lot 8. Their row is bare, with no markers. This seems curious, given Daniel's relative prominence in the community.

### **Acknowledgements**

I am very grateful for information and help from many people in the Saugatuck area, during a recent (September, 2011) trip to Saugatuck, including members of the Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society<sup>24</sup>, the Saugatuck Township Office, the Saugatuck-Douglas Library, the Allegan Library, the Herrick Library, and the Allegan County Register of Deeds, Probate Court and Vital Records Department. I especially wish to thank Howard Peschke, Aaron Sheridan, and Chris Yoder for their help and interest.

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<sup>24</sup> The SDHS has a superb web site, with many useful links, at <http://sdhistoricalsociety.org/SDHSWeb/SDHVirtualResearchCenter.htm>.