

“THE PARENTAGE OF GEORGE WILLIAM BONNELL”

In Volume III, No. 3, of the Newsletter, I printed an account of the life of George William Bonnell, for whom Mount Bonnell in Austin, TX, was named. (A recent newspaper article about Mount Bonnell was printed in Volume VI, No. 1.) At the time I could not identify George’s parents.

According to the *ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE NEW WEST*, by John Henry Brown and William S. Speer, 1884, George William Bonnell was a native of Onondaga co, NY. Assuming that statement to be true, I am satisfied that the following evidence, even though circumstantial, is sufficient to establish that George Bonnell was the son of Ambrose CB310130 and Rosanna (Woodruff) Bunnell.

The manuscript genealogy of the Bunnell family compiled some 75 years ago by John A. Biles, based on his research of the previous 30 years, tells us that Ambrose Bunnell, son of Titus and Sybil (Yale) Bunnell, was born 22 march 1765 in Burlington, CT, and that he died in 1817. He removed first to Onondaga co, NY and later moved south, perhaps to North Carolina or Tennessee. Biles did not know the name of Ambrose’s wife, but lists his children as Anson, Adna, George, Ambrose, Asa, Gad W. and Hartley.

Unfortunately, Biles did not provide the source of any of his information, and I did not find reference to this family in any of his correspondence which I copied through the generosity of his granddaughter Marian Biles.

Ruth C. Duncan, on page 40 of her book, *WILLIAM BUNNELL AND HIS DESCENDANTS*, lists Ambrose as the sixth child of Titus and Sybil (Yale) Bunnell as follows:

‘vi. Ambrose m 4 July 1793 ROSANNA WOODRUFF, dau. of Elisha & Ann (Griswold) Woodruff. She was b 19 April 1773 Farmington (VR); d 1865. They removed to Mobile, Alabama’

No children are listed. Besides the reference to Farmington Vital Records, Ruth also cited *HISTORY OF PLYMOUTH*.

Claude Bunnell’s Database indicates that Ambrose Bunnell appears in the 1800 census in Plymouth, Litchfield co, CT; 20010-40010, and in the 1810 census in Onondaga twp, Onondaga co, NY: 31110-32210. In other words, in 1800 the family included 2 boys and 4 girls under 10, and in 1810, 3 boys and 3 girls under 10. Although it is not necessarily true that all of these were actually children of Ambrose and Rosanna, it seems likely that the list of children provided by John Biles is not complete.

Claude also sent me extracts from the *ANNUAL TOWN MEETING, TOWN OF ONONDAGA, NY*, which show that Ambrose Bunnell was elected overseer of the poor on 7 April 1812 and again on 6 April 1813.

Therefore Ambrose was certainly resident in Onondaga co, NY by 1810 or before. He was still living there in 1813. I know of no other Bunnell or Bonnell family in the county at this early date. We do not know the exact date when he moved to Onondaga co from Connecticut, but he seems to have had a number of children between 1800 when he appears in the Litchfield co, CT, census and 1810 when he appears in the Onondaga co, NY, census. Some of these may well have been born after the move to Onondaga co.

Biles lists George among the children of Ambrose. George William Bonnell is said to have been born in Onondaga co.

Ruth Duncan says that Ambrose removed to Mobile, Al. The first definite appearance of George William Bonnell is as a newspaper editor in Mobile, AL.

Biles manuscript is my only source for the children of Ambrose and Rosanna. However, Claude sent me a list of soldiers in the War of 1812 which includes Adney, Anson and Asa Bunnell, all members of militia in New York state. Adney and Anson are both listed as privates in Wood's 147th Regiment of militia. This regiment was formed as the 1st Regiment of Onondaga co militia. It became the 147th under the new system of numbering adopted in 1812. Thaddeus M. Wood took command as its colonel on 31 March 1809. (See ONONDAGA'S CENTENNIAL, GLEANINGS OF A CENTURY, edited by Dwight H. Bruce, 1896, Vol. I, page 205.)

These names, Adna, or Adney, and Anson, identified with Onondaga co, NY, by their military records, are unusual enough to give credence to Biles's list of children for Ambrose, whose family was the only one of this name known to be living in Onondaga co at the time. Therefore, I see no reason not to accept Biles' statement that another son was George. I believe this George Bunnell, son of Ambrose, to be identical to George William Bonnell. until better evidence is found, and barring evidence to the contrary, I shall assume this to be correct.

As an aside I might mention that, while the vast majority of Bunnell migration from Connecticut went west, two of Ambrose's brother, Titus Jefferson and Asa, were among the relatively rare migrants to the south, in their case to North Carolina."