

George R. Rowley was born on September 4, 1803 in Steuben County, New York, most likely near the settlements of Wheeler and Prattsburg. George and Charity were married on March 2, 1825 in Prattsburg, New York. George was 21 years, 6 months and Charity was 17 years, 10 months at the time of their marriage. Charity Ellen (Early) Rowley was born on May 29, 1807 in New York. Research cannot determine her actual birthplace. Available records just say New York and do not disclose the names of her father and mother.

They were in the farming business somewhere in the Wheeler-Prattsburg-Bath area of New York. We can determine this from the fact that George's and Charity's first five children were all born in New York State. In later years, these children gave their birth place as Bath, Steuben County, New York. The first recorded accounts of the George R. Rowley family can be found in the 1835 Steuben County census. It states that at the residence of George R. Rowley there are 3 males and 3 females. This listing then would have included George, Charity, and children: Harriet, Lydia, Lyman and James. One year after the census George and Charity pack up their children and belongings and migrate to Washtenaw County, Michigan. After arriving in Washtenaw County, George Rowley and Amos Wheeler (Wealthy Rowley's husband) take up U.S. government lands. To better understand land acquisitions in their time, this was the procedure the settlers used to acquire lands: In order to pay off the debts of the Revolutionary War (1775-1783), the U.S. Congress passed several public land bills between 1786 and 1813. The policy the Rowleys and Wheelers dealt with in Michigan was the Pre-emption act of 1830. By its terms, anyone who settled on unsold public lands could enter a land claim for a maximum of 160 acres at the minimum price of \$1.25 per acre. Which meant that 160 acres would have cost grandparents George and Charity \$200.00, payments stretched out over a four year installment period at \$50.00 per year. The Homestead Act appeared in 1862, giving 160 acres of public lands to the settler free of charge, if he or she proved up and lived on the claim for three years. After the Homestead Act was enacted in 1862, numerous Rowleys in our lineage took advantage of it. The Wheelers located at a settlement called Lodi (cannot be found in any atlas) and the George Rowley family in Bridgewater. Bridgewater is near Ann Arbor, Michigan. It can be assumed that the two families were not far apart in distance. Evidently, the Lodi settlement disappeared in time and no longer exists. In 1845 Amos and Wealthy Wheeler moved out of Lodi, and went to Woodland, Barry County, Michigan some sixty miles northwest of Lodi. In 1846 John and Laura (Rowley) Dillenbeck (sister to George and Wealthy) left Wheeler, New York for Woodland, Michigan. It is speculated that Elizabeth Rowley, mother of George, Laura, and Wealthy went with them to Washtenaw County, Michigan. Elizabeth's husband, William Rowley, had passed away in 1833 in New York. It is believed that she was in Woodland, Michigan by 1846 living with or near her two daughters. From the years of 1836 to 1849 there had been some big changes in the family. Their brood had now increased from five to ten children since leaving New York in 1836, plus another two children Edwin and Elmer had died in infancy. The oldest child was Harriet, married to Lafayette Case, and the youngest was Laura, less than one year old. The other children were Lydia, Lyman, James, Charles, George Martin, Sarah, Amos and Volney. In 1849 a decision was made to sell the farm and move westward. The family had been in Bridgewater, Michigan for thirteen years. Once again the wagons were loaded up with their worldly goods. With the parents were children of all ages from infants to adult children. Everyone clamored aboard the wagons for their trek west. One of the sons, James, 15, did not go on this venture. He bade them farewell and remained in Bridgewater where he was apprenticing out as a blacksmith. We can imagine that a stop was in order at Woodland, Michigan to visit the family there. Elizabeth Rowley would have been 71 years by this time. At this point in time (1849) one wonders if this family didn't have the strong urge to make a dash for the California goldfields or the fertile farming lands of

Oregon. However, they came to their final stop on the banks of the Turkey River, Shin Bone Valley of Northwestern Iowa. Today the small town in the Shin Bone Valley is called Elgin in Fayette County. In the Annuals of History of Fayette County, Iowa, one can find an entry that states in 1849 the new settlement of Elgin was increased by five recently arrived families, which included the George R. Rowley family, who constructed log cabins on land sites. During the spring of 1850, according to Fayette County history, townships 94 and 95, Range 7 were created making a civil township by the commissioners of Fayette County. An election is said to have been held immediately after the order at the home of George R. Rowley. Charles Sawyer, Matthew Conner and George R. Rowley were appointed to the board of the election. At this time, George R. Rowley was elected Justice of the Peace for the Pleasant Valley district. More Fayette County recorded history reveals the first wedding in Elgin, Fayette County. This marriage was that of John Johnson and Lydia Rowley (daughter of George and Charity) in 1851. (See page 115) There are no other references to be found in this Fayette County historical document concerning the George R. Rowley family in Elgin, Iowa. Researching the History of Chickasaw County, Iowa, we find the Rowley family in this county in June of 1853 near the settlements of Bassett and Chickasaw, Iowa. This move was short in distance, about 65 miles to the west of Elgin. It is not known why they moved. From the pages of the History of Chickasaw information can be obtained that on June 30, 1853, George R. Rowley was elected Judge of the Chickasaw District of Chickasaw County. Also, on February 23, 1854, a marriage license was granted to Lyman Rowley, age 25, and Mary A. Thuraman, age 21. (See page 117) This was one of the very first marriages in the newly formed Chickasaw County. Another marriage listing can be found when James W. Rowley, age 21 and Jane Billings, age 21, were married January 1, 1856. (See page 123) Judge George R. Rowley was a popular judge of the people, very active in Chickasaw County politics and had a reputation as being a very verbal outspoken citizen. In a historical publication entitled, "Reminiscences of Chickasaw County," published in 1883, page 14, is a short biography of our grandfather, George R. Rowley, which follows:

*"G.R. Rowley was elected Justice of the Peace at the origin of Chickasaw Township, and was a marked character in his day, and was only exceeded in rotundity, in the township, except by his neighbor Cudworth. With a limited education, large frame, and full abdomen, easy going and good natured, and smoking a corn cob pipe with an air of dignity, he was a typical specimen of a new country squire. With a full sense of dignity of his position, reckless of technicalities and precedent, ignoring legal rules and untrammelled by the law of evidence, and coming to conclusions he appealed to his innate feeling of justice and common sense, and results were generally right and was looked upon as one of the reliable men of the County. Too easy going and careful of over exertion to accumulated a fortune, he was happy with his large family of boys, and was satisfied with very plain fare, but when his county called for volunteers to defend her integrity, he was rich in material, and gave the largest number of any family in the county, sending five. While a trial was in progress before him, a couple presented themselves to be married. The Justice was nothing loth, but there were unseen difficulties, but they were finally overcome by his Honor keeping his back to the wall as he slid into position, thus keeping the view of the catastrophe that had befallen the rear of his pants."*

In 1856 a bitter political battle is under way in Chickasaw County concerning the changing of the county seat of government from the town of New Hampton to Bradford. George Rowley is leading the minority opposition to stop the county seat change. After a hotly contested election, Bradford won out. The opposition immediately claimed that there were serious irregularities in the tabulation of votes casted. To settle the issue, George Rowley was appointed as one of the county board of canvassers to investigate the irregularity charge by the opposition. In the History of Chickasaw County, pages 156-159, we can read the report of his findings to the

electorate of Chickasaw County. INDIGNATION MEETING: *Pursuant to notice, the citizens of central, western and the northern parts of Chickasaw County, assembled at the Brink house, on Wednesday, April 23d, 1856, and organized by calling the Hon. J.C.H. Miller to the chair, and electing E.R. Gillett, Esq., secretary. The chairman stated the object of the meeting in a few words. "It seems", he said, "that we are called together again to deliberate upon the ways and means, whereby the people—the majority of the people—claiming to be republicans, shall be heard, and the 'elective franchise' vindicated."* On motion, a report (minority), from G.R. Rowley, one of the county board of canvassers, was read, and ordered to be printed in the *Dubuque Tribune*. On motion, a committee of three were appointed to procure counsel. Osgood Gown, T.A. Jacobs and David Edwards were appointed said committee. Mr. Cutler introduced the following resolution, which was unanimously adopted: *Resolved, That the proceedings of this meeting, and the report of Mr. Rowley (together with 200 circulars struck off), be published in the Dubuque Tribune. On motion, the meeting adjourned sine die.* E.R. Gillett, Secretary. J.C.H. Miller, Chairman. To make a long story short, the minority group led by George R. Rowley and the courts overturned the corrupt election, and retained the county seat to New Hampton. As the years went by, George and Charity apparently settled down for good and resided near the small hamlets of Bassett and Chickasaw. This is a close knit Rowley family as all of their eleven children and spouses are nearby in Chickasaw County. He divided his activities between being a judicial judge and overseer of his land holdings, which he and Charity had accumulated over the years in Chickasaw County. Documented deeds can be obtained from the Chickasaw County files confirming that George R. and Charity Rowley, between the years of 1857-1862, sold most of their land to their son, Charles Rowley. In the year of 1868, a year before George's death, a deed on record in Iowa reveals that his sons and daughters, Lyman, James, Amos, Charles, George, Harriett, Lydia, and Laura purchased their father's remaining properties for the sum of \$60.00. Charity had passed away in 1867. At this point in time, indications are that their original land was almost depleted. By examining all the deeds of sale on record and the moneys received, it can be estimated that George and Charity Rowley's land holdings to be approximately 15,000 acres of prime farming land. Today the original Rowley land in Chickasaw County, Iowa is in the heart of the corn belt of Iowa. In looking back to the activities of our grandparents, it appears George was a judge for a number of years, but as time elapsed, did not follow this profession into his later years. It is evident that they depended on the income from leasing and selling their properties purchased in 1849-1856. By 1862 (Civil War) George and Charity's situation is that of meager means and dependent upon their children for support. In their last years, they stayed in the home of their son, Amos and his wife, Betty Anne. In the Chickasaw County History, Page 300, the following appears: *"Whereas, G.R. Rowley, of Chickasaw County, Iowa, is entitled to the banner, by having more sons in the United States Service than any other man in said county; he being poor and dependent entirely on the efforts of one son only for his and his wife's support, therefore be it resolved, that the sum of \$5.00 per month be allowed him from the County until further action by this board."* George and Charity Rowley had five sons leave Chickasaw County, each volunteering to serve in the Union Army during the Civil War (1862-1865). The sons were Lyman, James, George M., Amos and Volney. Volney was killed by a firearm while returning home from the war on a train. Charity passed away in Bassett, Chickasaw County, Iowa on January 1, 1867. She was 60 years old and buried in the Chickasaw Cemetery. George passed away on September 27, 1869 at Bassett, Chickasaw County, Iowa at age 66. He is buried next to Charity. George and Charity donated the land for the cemetery to the county of Chickasaw a number of years before their death.