

Ed Cable and the Cable House



The house at 212 Cass St., Bangor, MI, has a unique history. It was built sometime in the early 1870's and at one time was owned by Ed Cable, one of Bangor's more interesting citizens. A barber by trade, Mr. Cable came to this community in the early 1870's and became the first successful African-American businessman in town. He was highly respected and served his trade for almost 60 years. In 1882, he was elected Grand Secretary to the Colored Masons of the State of Michigan. In 1888, he was elected as a delegate to a Republican Convention, although it is not know if it was a county, state or national convention.

Shortly before 1910, an inappropriate racial comment was printed in the Bangor Advance newspaper. Mr. Cable responded and let his thoughts be known, at a time in history when African-Americans were usually afraid to comment on such matters. His letter to the editor was printed in the following week's edition of the local newspaper.

The Bangor Reflector reported that Mr. Cable came into a rather large sum of money in 1882, by sharing a lucky lottery ticket sold to the future president of the local bank. Local lore has it that Ed then purchased the house on Cass St. from his business partner with his so called winnings for the sum of \$550. The following week the newspaper rescinded its report and stated that Cable's partner Billy Martin was one of the lucky winners. In the spring of 1883, Cable sold a very respectable race horse for a grand sum of \$1550. It was most likely this money with which he purchased the Martin house in that year.

In 1885 at the age of 32, he married Anna DeNoon, a white woman ten years his junior. They tried to get married in Bangor, but no one would perform the ceremony. In frustration, they went to Covert and were married in front of a Justice of the Peace. The community response to their interracial marriage was not taken lightly. He received several notes of a threatening nature, but was determined to stay and face the community. He eventually regained the respect of the town and its citizens to become an admired businessman.

The Cable Barbershop moved several times during nearly 60 years of service. There was a room in the Cable house set aside for people to come for haircuts by appointment. There are people still living who can testify to the quality and skill of this master barber at his residence. Mr. Cable retired in 1932, and died in 1939. Mrs. Cable continued to live in the house until her death in 1948.

After Mrs. Cable's death, the house was sold and eventually was assigned to the State of Michigan due to delinquent taxes. In the early 1980's, the house was given by the State to the City of Bangor, after members of the local Arts & Crafts Council expressed an interest in restoring the building as a museum and meeting hall. The Cable House Restoration Committee was created and several fund drives were formed. A little over \$10,000 was donated towards the project.

The restoration of the house included almost the entire exterior. New windows were replaced, patterned after the originals, and the house was painted. The foundation was rebuilt. A new furnace and air conditioner were installed and some internal electrical work was completed.

Some old plaster was removed from the walls on the inside and one room has been dry walled. Work has been done stripping woodwork around the doorways. The roof was reshingled, although the original roofing were shakes. Much of this work was done by volunteers.

It was determined that another \$20,000 would be needed to complete the job in the mid 1980's. At least two grants were applied for to finish the project, but were turned down. People were willing to volunteer work, but without funds the vision of a community museum and meeting place was fading.

The vision has been restored and is strong as we pass into the 21st century. There is great desire and need for this project to be resurrected. Bangor is a very racially diverse community. The people of Bangor would like the uniqueness of Ed Cable, as a respected man of color in a predominately white community, to be remembered as a legacy to the citizens of this town and state.

ED Cable House Nomination for the National Historic Register

DESCRIPTION

The Cable House at 212 Cass Street is a two-story, T-shaped home with the front part of the house in Carpenter Gothic style and the rear part in Greek revival style. The property's legal description is Lot 11 Block 8 Cross Addition, and currently it is owned by the city of Bangor. The surrounding homes on Cass Street look to be older as well, with the railway line separating the street into two parts. The home has a brick foundation and wood plank siding on the exterior. Due to the divergence in building styles between the front and back parts of the home, as well as, a variation in roof pitches of the two parts, it is believed that the rear part is an addition built quite close to the original building date. Also adding to this belief is an evident awkward form in the foundation of the home near the kitchen entrance as it cuts inward. The visible exterior chimney looks to be a later addition as it is made of 20th century, circa World War I wire cut brick, and has no apparent connection to the interior.

The home is currently painted in light blue and white, and with original Carpenter Gothic woodwork. There exists a secondary sidewalk which branches off from the front sidewalk and leads to a side entrance into the kitchen. This may have been used to lead into a room in the home, which may have served as Edward's secondary barbershop in tandem with his downtown shop or once he retired from downtown. The door to this entrance also appears to be original to the home. The front of the home has a stained glass front door, which does not appear to be original, and leads in from the front porch, which extends the full front of the home. There exists a second, smaller porch at the side kitchen entrance, and prior maps indicate that the existing outer door on the opposite side of the home and the rear door also once had accompanying porches.

The interior of the home appears to have mostly original woodwork. The first floor has a front room with a rectangular, walk-in bay window on the one side, and a smaller room opposite this window on the reverse side of the room. Behind this front room is another large room, from which the second floor stairs extend, entrances to the kitchen, back bathroom, and a small corner back room. The decorative trim appears to differ in the back rooms in the kitchen and bathroom area. A city-sponsored restoration project has removed all the plaster walls in the first floor and most of the second. The two front rooms and the bay window have been dry-walled and the

woodwork stained in attempts to house a city museum there. Among notice were the first story floorboards, which differ from the front of house to the back in terms of size and shape, a factor that may signal an addition or a difference in original room usage. The smaller front room to the left side has a closet that may show signs of possible original staircase, which may have also been a result of any additions to the home.

It may be possible that the first floor bay window was added later as there are signs of a moved sash window. Of the two windows adjacent to the bay, one does look to be in its original position while the other does not. However, to look for possible signs of an addition in window construction is useless as all the windows were replaced as part of the 1980s restoration project. The newer windows were specifically made to look similar to some of the originals. In the kitchen, are the original or close to original built-in cabinets, and the possible original stove.

The second floor has two bedrooms and an unfinished room space above the back part of the house, all of which one can enter from the top stair landing. The stairway itself is somewhat of an odd shape and difficult to maneuver. It is possible that its odd shape is, yet, another sign of an addition. The smaller of the two bedrooms has a notable closet door and adjoining woodwork, as well as, a visible 1904 newspaper utilized in its wall construction. The unfinished room space, which may be part of an addition, shows signs of an older, removed chimney as there is a precisely placed, square hole in the roof and floor boards. The roof boards also appear to be cedar roof planks originally intended for wood shingles.

Outside the home, the back yard has a square concrete pad which looks to be circa World War II, and matches a later Sanborn Map showing an automobile garage in that location on the lot. A prior Bird's Eye map shows a smaller, rectangular outbuilding directly behind the home, which appears to no longer exist. The home does have a rear entrance to a basement that does not extend the entire length of the home, only the rear part, and as such, may have been a later addition, as may have been the entrance itself.

SIGNIFICANCE

The Cable House is a Carpenter Gothic, Greek revival style home of one of Bangor, Michigan's most renowned and contributing citizens. While Edward Cable, a successful African-American barber and his European-American wife, Anna may have passed away; their home survives as a reminder of their long-time participation in the community.

Built in the early 1870s, the home first served as a residence for Cable's barbershop partner before Edward and his wife made it their home in 1883. With no surviving children, the house went out of the Cable's ownership in 1948 following Anna's death. No other notable or long-term residents would make 212 Cass Street their home until the city took ownership in 1981.

As Edward's barbershops have since burned, his home remains a reminder of the Cable's interracial marriage, and of one of Bangor's most successful and respected African-American businessmen. Edward and Anna remain a very integral part of Bangor's history and development.

Historical Background

Bangor Township is one of eighteen townships in Van Buren County, Michigan situated in the northwest corner of the county. Bangor is bordered by Geneva Township on the north, Arlington Township on the east, Hartford on the south, and Covert Township on the west. While Bangor is not on the coast of Lake Michigan, its 20 mile proximity and the Black River which flows into the lake from Bangor's northeast section have both continued to play a role in the lake's influence. Bangor's terrain has been described as "gently undulating", land which was once covered in forests eventually swept away for use in Bangor's lumber mills and iron ore furnaces. However, the land has maintained its history as quality farmland.

Originally made an extension of South Haven Township to the northwest by the Michigan legislature, Bangor was later incorporated under the name Marion on October 11, 1853, but due to displeasure with the new title, was soon changed to Bangor on October 14, 1853. The first settler and also surveyor of the township was a European-American man with his family by the name of Charles U. Cross, followed by J.R. Monroe. Also notable in these first years of Bangor's beginnings was Joseph Nyman, an entrepreneur who utilized Bangor's local waterways to build three separate and useful mills. These first settlers made their home in what soon became, and is still today, Bangor Village situated in the top northeast corner of the township.

The Edward and Anna M. Cable House

Edward Cable was born in Alton, Illinois on February 28, 1853. Seven years later he was listed as a black ten-year-old boy in the 1860 Illinois census as a resident of Macoupin, Illinois, along with his mother, father, three sisters, and one brother. His father George, also black, was also from Illinois, while Edward's mother Angeline was a black woman from Tennessee. Edward's sister Mary was two years older than him, then there was his sister Elizabeth, his junior by three years, six years younger was sister Catherine, and finally George Jr., Edward's younger brother by eight years. While there is no record of Edward in the 1870 Michigan or Illinois census, a local Bangor newspaper from 1917 tells of him living on an Arlington farm (presumably Arlington, MI) in 1874, along with his parents. Various other sources also confirm Edward's first arrival to Bangor was sometime in the early 1870s on a visit to a relative at the age of 21. These sources go on to state that Edward, or Ed for short, enjoyed Bangor to such an extent that he decided to stay. It is also during the 1870s that Ed's future home was to have been built on Cass Street in the village of Bangor.

Once in Bangor, Ed began to work for a local barber William (Bill or Billy) Martin in his shop. It seems from multiple newspaper articles, that Bill and Ed became partners in the shop soon after Ed's arrival. In an article from the local newspaper, the Bangor Advance, an article from 1876 states that by that year "Martin has been here for seven years and Cable has been in the business about three". This article also goes on to elaborate that the men had been able to "thus far hold the trade against all competitors". The most interesting tidbit to arise from this same newspaper article was the statement that Ed and Bill were brothers-in-law. This information taken in tandem with a later Bangor Advance newspaper article from July 28, 1882 confirms that Martin was married and an African-American, which leads one to assume without further evidence that the men were brothers-in-law through one of Ed's sisters. While Ed was not yet living in the house, an 1873 Plat map of the village section details Cass Street showing the

future Cable house in its present location at 212, the third lot going west from Walnut Street. The map illustrates that during this year of 1873 that someone by the name of H. Harris was then residing in the home.

Along in 1880, the Michigan state census details Ed Cable living in a hotel in Bangor run by John and Eunice Sebring which would be the famous Bangor Sebring House hotel. This hotel was a very important part of Bangor's history, yet, is no longer standing as a gas station rests today where the hotel once stood. It is beneficial to note that while residing at the hotel, Cable is listed as a single man still working as a barber. A few years later, an important piece of local history was recorded in an article from the July 14th issue in 1882 of the Bangor Advance. The paper reports hotel owner John E. Sebring going to Bill Martin and Ed Cable's barbershop for a shave coming away having agreed to split a Louisiana lottery ticket worth \$15,000 with half for himself at \$7500, and the other half to the two barbers at \$3750 a piece. During the following week, the paper reports of the men winning the lottery with both going down to Louisiana to bring back their winnings, however, the same paper also informs that Cable was incorrectly reported as having any part in the deal. This same year an article from the December 15th issue of the Bangor Advance tells of Ed having been elected to as the Grand Secretary of the Colored Masons for the State, although nothing further is stated. Assuming, due to later newspaper articles, to have occurred during these years was Ed's barbershop partner coming into ownership of the house at 212 Cass Street.

The following year of 1883 saw Ed in the papers several more times, most notably beginning with a piece in April on Ed selling his "fine trotter horse" by the name of Razor D for \$1550. The township of Bangor is noted as having previously had a popular horseracing track, which no longer exists, that may have been related to Ed's ownership of the horse. It is worthy to notice here that some newspaper issues later, on June 29th, 1883, Ed is reported as having acquired his barbershop partner Bill Martin's home at 212 Cass Street for the sum of \$550. Other sources describe this sale as a result of Martin's desire to move, additionally confirmed in local historian Bob Emmert's book on Bangor history as he describes on page 45 that Martin supposedly "moved to St. Louis and frittered away his share of the [lottery] winnings in a series of poor business ventures, all of which he denied". Also recorded at this time is Martin's additional sale of the barbershop to partner Ed; however, the amount of the sale was never disclosed. More than likely, Ed was able to purchase both these properties from his partner as a result of selling his horse for such a large sum of money. The barbershop that Ed bought from Martin was reported as having been situated in a wood frame structure on Monroe Street. A statement that is quite possible as a barbershop is indeed illustrated on that street in the 1893 and 1899 Sanborn maps of the village at the address of 423.

The next year, 1884, Ed Cable would continue his appearance in the local paper. An article from August of that year has an excerpt on Martin and Cable's business partnership, detailing that while Ed continues to live in Bangor, Martin has now moved on to Fort Scott, Kansas. This same issue also goes on to later mention Ed as a local singer, a report verified through author Bob Emmert's conversations with local residents from Ed's time who gave testimonials of events where he sang. Aside from this interesting detail, one of the most noteworthy aspects of Ed's life occurred the following year.

In August of 1885, the Bangor Advance published a piece on Ed Cable and a woman named Anna DeNoon traveling to the North Side Church in Bangor to get married. The piece goes on to recount that the pastor at the church refused to marry them so the two moved on to the

west of Bangor to Covert, Michigan, and were married there. While the paper acknowledges Ed as a prominent citizen, a man named C.C. Phillips wrote, "...Much sympathy is felt for the family of the infatuated girl. Although the laws of Michigan furnish no legal impediment to their marriage, the idea is naturally and justly very repugnant to the public sentiment and much indignation is expressed over the episode." Why so much ardor over a simple marriage? As one can read, and easily obtain from local residents of Bangor, Ed was obviously an African-American, yet, Anna DeNoon to whom he married, was European-American. Record of their marriage still exists in Van Buren County documents, and it can be easily found that Anna DeNoon, a 22-year-old woman born in Arlington Township in Van Buren County and living in Bangor at the time, married Edward Cable, a 30-year old man from Bangor. The record states Covert's Justice of the Peace, among witnesses, married the couple on August 25th, 1885. Two small notations quite visible above each of their names duly notes that the groom was "mulatto", and the bride was "white", a notation that does not exist among the other records of marriage in the documents. Anna DeNoon was known to be the daughter of Ignatius DeNoon, a Bangor Township pioneer who was constable at the time of her marriage. Anna's mother was born in England, her father in Maryland, and Anna herself, was born in Michigan in June of 1863.

It seems that the marriage wasn't simply initially frowned upon. The following month of September that same year saw an issue of the Bangor Advance published which indicated Ed had returned to Bangor after his wedding to receive several notes of "threatening nature, but is determined to stay long enough to find out who wrote them." This article proved true, as Ed settled into 212 Cass Street in Bangor with his new wife Anna, returning to his barbershop for business.

Several months passed before Ed or his wife again caught the public's notice. In January of 1886, the local newspaper dually reported that as of January 8th, the Cable's week-old baby had passed away. It would be two more years until Ed and Anna would receive any local mention. In 1888, an August issue of the paper records Ed as having been elected as a delegate to the Republican Convention; however, nothing more about the event was mentioned, and it is not clear at what level this delegation served. A few more years would pass until Ed once again received Bangor's attention in the news, and worth notice is his continued residence there-in. December 23rd of 1892 witnessed an article in the local newspaper concerning prominent businessmen in Bangor, and Ed was included as one of these men. Above a paragraph detailing Ed's work is a sketch of Edward's face with the article reading:

"The subject of this sketch is perhaps the most widely known knight of the razor and clippers in Van Buren County and we venture to say that there is no other who has remained in one place so long... [he] came to Bangor on a visit... went into the tonsorial business and has been at it ever since. Just opposite the [Sebring] hotel, you can get good work done."

Eight years later, Ed continued to reside in the growing town of Bangor, and would also continue his noticeable role with its people.

By the year 1900, Edward and Anna Cable could still be found living in their home on Cass Street, and Ed at his barbershop on Monroe Street. By this time Ed was 45 years of age, his wife was 36, and the two had been married 15 years. Aside from the child who passed in 1886, it seems that Ed and Anna had no other children. It was in this year that the Cable's had one of two recorded boarders in their home, a Miss Adalene Conner, a two-year old African-American girl

who looks to be a relative of theirs. The following year of 1901 say Ed move his barbershop further west down Monroe street as the Bangor Advance from November 22, 1901 details that a local man by the name of H.D. Harvey had repaired the building south of his block for Ed Cable to move in as a barbershop. This report is confirmed by the 1909 Sanborn Map which no longer shows a barbershop at 423 Monroe, but further down the street at 429 is a new barbershop. Ed must have not been there long as sources report that this shop eventually burned down in a fire, and Ed having moved to a brick building on adjoining Railroad Street. This account seems to be accurate, as the Sanborn Map from 1918 no longer shows a barbershop on Monroe Street; yet, there now was a shop shown down the street from the Sebring Hotel at 420 Railroad Street (or Main as it was previously titled). Ed would once again have his shop threatened by fire, as there is record and accompanying pictures of a fire on January 10, 1910, which started in a neighboring pool hall on Railroad Street. Caused by an overheated stovepipe and defective chimney, Ed's new shop to the north was reported as able to escape damage.

Not until 1910 could the Cable's be found again, shown in the 1910 state of Michigan census, both still living in Bangor at 212 Cass Street. Edward was now 56 years old, Anna now 48 years old, both now celebrating 25 years of marriage. It should be dually mentioned that while Edward is noted as still working as a barber in his own shop, his wife Anna seems to pass her days working around their home as she has yet to be recorded as having a formal job. Also along in 1910 the Cable's could be found to be housing another boarder by the name of Robert West, a single, 24 year old African-American man listed as a worker in a barbershop, most likely as Ed's helper. It would be during this year that an inappropriate racial comment was published in the local newspaper that would catch Ed's attention and his strong letter of response in the following issue. It seems that this incident was the last time notice would be taken in reference to Edward's (or Anna's) race. A few years later in 1917, Ed and Anna are still in Bangor, and the local paper begins to take notice of their long tenure in Bangor. The paper writes an article on August 3rd of that year pertaining to Ed's long presence in the community, focusing on Ed and his role in the barbershop trade, telling the story of how Ed had at present cut three generations of the local Edmonds family hair. The article goes on to comment on Ed's long presence in the community, and speculates on years of continued residence and prevalence as a barber in Bangor.

By 1918, Edward and Anna Cable were continuing their residence at 212 Cass. It is by this year that their home and their street are finally recorded by the Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. on their maps. The 1918 Sanborn Map indeed shows a dwelling at 212 Cass/Lot 11, with a T-shaped structure, the cross part of the T shown as one and a half stories while the rear of the T is simply one story. The house is recorded as having four porches, and a automobile garage in the back left corner of the lot with the left half of the building showing one and a half stories, and the right half as one story. This garage no longer exists, yet, there is a square concrete slab left behind in that area of the lot. Also shown on the 1918 map was a small, rectangular, one-story building situated in the back yard directly behind the house, a structure which may have been for storage, but also no longer exists. Two years later, in 1920, Edward and Anna could still be found at 212 Cass, 68 and 60 years old, respectively. Now with 35 years of marriage, the two had never had any other children, but kept busy as Ed was still a barber, and Anna continued to maintain their home. While they were not in the newspapers during these years, the Michigan census and The Farm Journal Illustrated Directory of Van Buren County Michigan from 1916-1921 noted their continued presence.

Ten years later, 1930 saw Edward reach 77 years of age and Anna turn 69. About this

time Ed and Anna were married 45 years, he still working in his barbershop on Railroad Street, and Anna still working around the house on Cass Street, which now was outfitted with a radio. The census of 1930 shows the value of the house at this time to be about \$2700, which would have entailed the same T-shaped home, porches and surrounding outbuildings shown in the 1918 Sanborn map, now part of the 1931 Sanborn map. Also along in August 1931, the local paper would again take notice of Cable's of Ed's continued presence in the community with an article arguing Ed should receive the title for oldest working barber in the state of Michigan for that time. By 1931 Ed was 78 years old and still registered as working in his barbershop on Railroad Street, and still living in the house on Cass Street. These facts were all of great importance to the newspaper, as it reports that Cable is unique for living in the same community for the past 56 years, a record the paper stated was only exceeded by one or two other instances of continuous residence in the village of Bangor. However, the following years would witness Ed's retirement from his barbershop on Railroad Street. Yet, it doesn't sound as if Ed retired from his barber's duties, as local historian Bob Emmert was able to locate several citizens still presently living in Bangor who could recall Ed taking clients from time to time at his home. By the mid-1930s, Ed's shop on Railroad Street was now recorded as being home to the Bangor Gospel Mission. This building has unfortunately since burned down.

Despite his retirement in the 1930s, Ed and Anna still called 212 Cass Street home. This would be the case until 1939 when Edward passed away on the morning of November 7th from "valvular heart disease" at the age of 86. The Bangor Advance ran his obituary and Ed Cable was laid to rest in the local Arlington Hill cemetery where his marker can still be found. Anna would remain as a widow in the home on Cass Street until she followed Edward in passing away in 1948. She was also buried in Arlington Hill Cemetery along with her husband and their week old baby. This would be the only child of the couple, and the house would leave their ownership in the wake of Anna's death.

Following 1948, the home at 212 Cass Street would be owned by several other people, but no one of recognition until the house came under ownership of the city in 1981. A restoration project was taken to the city of Bangor by the local Arts and Crafts Council around 1986, and many volunteers including Restoration Committee chairman John Balzer made efforts to restore the home until their resources began to run thin.

The house at 212 Cass Street in Bangor, Michigan is indeed, a home of ripe old age, having notable carpenter-gothic and Greek revival architectural styles. However, the house has become one of the sole reminders of a very prominent and notable Bangor citizen. It is easy for one to notice Ed Cable's important role in Bangor's history from the numerous times he made the news, how he made the news, and that present local citizens still know his name and trade. In the absence of any of his previous shops Ed's home has become an important landmark that serves as a reminder of Bangor's interesting development as a village, to now a city. Many have said that Ed was the first successful black businessman in town, and after much research, that statement is nothing short of the truth. Not only did he serve his trade well for almost 60 years, Ed was a man of character, and possibly controversy. Despite racial tensions, Ed did what he believed in, and wasn't afraid to attend to sentiments against him. It would seem that his color and his controversial marriage won him notice in the town, but that he left a legacy of a respected businessman behind.