

The Charles and Marion Osberg Family 1913 - 1943

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The Charles and Marian Osberg family began to live on the Esopus property in 1913 and remained there until 1943, after the Marist Brothers had purchased the area between route 9W and the Hudson River. Thus they provide a thread of continuity in the period when the property was owned by Captain Harry Payne Bingham and later the Protestant Episcopal Mission Society of New York.



Charles Osberg (1889 - 1977) was born 28 September 1889 in Brooklyn NY to John Osberg (1864-1922), born in Sweden and Hilda ??? (1867-1907) born in Norway. Charles had a younger sister Helen who was listed as an Apprentice Dressmaker in the 1910 census but a nurse in Washington DC in the 1920 census. Charles is listed as a machinist on steamboat, and his father is a machinist in a factory. (All the Osbergs who came to the USA had machinery backgrounds.) Both Charles and Helen were born in the USA, but when they were very young their his mother developed an illness and it was recommended that she return to Norway for health reasons. They returned when Charles was 11 years old; by that time Charles had forgotten English. Hilda died in January 1907, and John Osberg remarried.

Charles became a seaman. His daughter Barbara remembers his telling tales of his adventures at sea, including rounding Cape Horn in storms and working the sugar trade between

Hawaii, Mexico and California. Later when Charles was retired, Barbara brought him to Hawaii, where he regaled audiences with his stories of what the Islands were like when he sailed in the first decade of the 20th century.

He then became a sailor aboard the Aphrodite, where his uncle Oscar and perhaps another uncle were seamen. In 1912 Colonel Payne asked him to remain ashore in Esopus to become the engineer for the water and electric systems. His duties included daily visits to the pump house on the river at the northern edge of the property, maintenance of the generating equipment in the stable/garage area (a dormitory for the Juniors in 1942, then a gymnasium, then a chapel, and now a conference center).

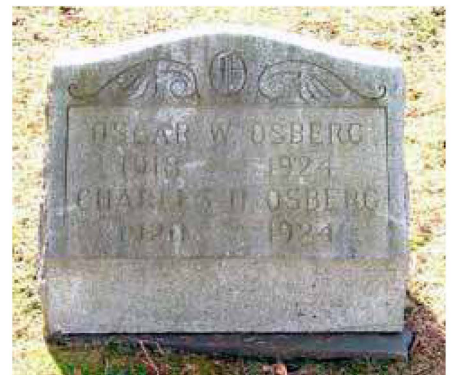
A word about terminology. Those associated with the Marist Brothers refer to the stone buildings currently in use near the cemetery as the "English Village". Barbara used that term for the employee cottages across route 9W along Black Creek Road. The Carrère & Hastings work log calls the buildings *stables* and the cottages across the road *employee cottages*. In what follows, we will use *stables/garages* for the village complex, *superintendent's house* for Holy Rosary Cottage.

The village of Esopus held occasional dances. Charles was introduced to Marion Schane (1894 - 1970), a young lady from Esopus who was invited to the dance; the couple dated and married in 1913. Both Marion's parents were born in Germany. Marion's father had died before the turn of the century and her mother remarried A. Palmateer, who operated a farm in the hills west of Esopus, in an area called Poppletown. (This is not listed as a town on current maps, but survives via an old house listed in the Federal Register at Old Post Road and Swarte Kill Road, and a winding road called Poppletown Road which runs past Louisa Pond.) Marion loved to train horses. Most of Marion's brothers and sisters moved away from Esopus. Her youngest brother, William, worked as a gardener on the Esopus estate during 1913-1914, but joined the service during World War I.

He is listed in the 1920 census (taken 8 January 1920) as living in West Park Village and working as a gardener on an estate. He may be one of the ones dismissed when Captain Bingham cut back expenses. He lived in the West Park area until his death.

After Charles and Marion were married, they lived in the employee cottages along Black Creek Road. Later they moved to one of the cottages in the stable/garage area. The second cottage remained empty for many years, but when Wiltwyck became operational the second cottage was occupied by the head administrator, a well educated black man and his wife.

The 1930 census lists Charles, Marion and two daughters, Hilda born 1914 and Barbara born 1926. Two boys were born between Hilda and Barbara, Oscar William in 1918 and Charles in 1920, but they both died in 1924, victims of scarlet fever. A third daughter, Esther was born in 1933.



Hilda married John Eastman in 1936. John was a traveling salesman from the Midwest, possibly Illinois. They moved to Brattleboro Vermont. Hilda loved farming. When World War II broke out the couple moved away to Clarendon, Ontario, Canada. John continued in sales, and Hilda operated a family farm. Hilda died in 1989.

Barbara Osberg (1926 - 2004) attended New Paltz Teachers College but did not finish. She married Earl Matthews (1920 - 1970) of Rome NY, whom she had met when visiting Charles' sister in Washington DC. He served in the Marines. Barbara traveled to South Carolina and the couple married in 1945. She worked as an accountant for 40 years for Ford Motor Company. In 1952, she and her husband moved to his family's farm in Rome, New York, where she lived with two of her children — a widow after 1970; but two other children have moved away to New Jersey and Virginia.

Esther became a teacher, graduating from New Paltz and teaching in the Wappingers School system. She married George Stanley Hulsair (1930 - 2009) of Ulster County, who worked for IBM, first in Kingston and later in Poughkeepsie until his retirement, after which the couple moved to Edgewater, Florida. Two Hulsair sons (George and Charles) have taken over the family farm along Myers Corners Road. One built a new house, the other is remodeling the original farmhouse. George and Esther have two daughters living in Wappingers Falls and one daughter in Florida.

Captain Bingham did not live for any length of time on the Esopus property. He had property in Palm Beach, Florida, as well as townhouses in New York City. He tried to maintain the property so that the employees might have a place to live. When that became too expensive, Bingham dismissed most of the employees. However, he made arrangement with Charles Osberg, to live on the estate for no pay but to maintain the water and electric systems and do general repairs. Bingham may also have made a similar deal with the head gardener, (name perhaps Travis or Travers or Green. There is an Elmer Green age 42 listed as a gardener on a private estate in the 1930 census) who lived in the greenhouse area. The Osbergs cultivated a large garden, and Barbara remembered the family had a cow, which Marion milked.

When Captain Bingham donated the property to the Protestant Episcopal Mission Society in 1933, Charles Osberg was asked to stay on in the same capacity. The gardener was gone. Barbara was close to her dad, Esther close to her mother. Barbara remembers walking often with her Dad to the pump house. One vivid memory is herself and a boy companion finding themselves standing in a nest of copperheads. Her father told them to remain still. He took a stick and dispersed the snakes so they could proceed. She also remembers visiting the mansion, awe-inspiring to a teen and pre-teen girl. She and her sister dreamed of getting married in the mansion, with a major

part of the dream descending the grand staircase in their wedding dresses. A visit to the mansion was part of Charles' daily rounds. It's not certain whether Charles had to keep the mansion heated, but I remember the Brothers keeping the heat up in the mid 1960s even though the house was empty to prevent water damage. At the latter time, the heat cost close to \$50 per diem.

Barbara remembers the great hall as a single hall. This seems to reinforce my belief the great hall was not converted to a chapel by the Episcopal group but by the Brothers. She also remembers the murals on the walls of the interior courtyard, which again reinforces my impression that the murals were painted over in summer of 1943.

Barbara remembers that Wiltwyck organized summer camps where children were brought from NYC for two weeks each session. The platforms for the tents were between the Black Creek and the railroad, probably the site proposed for the construction of the permanent school but abandoned for lack of funds. She and her family would attend the final campfire for each session, with stories and cookouts.

She recalls that the property between route 9W and the Hudson River was used as a convalescent home for sick people from the poor districts served by the Mission Society. There were doctors and nurses present. At first, her mother worried about the girls moving about freely, as the caliber of patients were likely not from high or middle society. However, once her mother made friends with several of the nurses, things became a little more relaxed. Her mother washed and ironed the nurses uniforms, which was a source of supplemental income. The patients lived in the rooms above the carriage house, but ate their meals in the superintendent's house. Some plans exist which show two buildings to be erected between the cottages and the superintendent's house to be used as meeting rooms and kitchen/dining room; but these plans also were speculative and never materialized during the Depression era of the 1930s.

Barbara isn't clear when the greenhouse was reduced to the state of destitution which the Brothers found in 1942 with the dome and two of the adjoining greenhouses demolished. Brother Feliciani brought the remaining two greenhouses back to life, and tended them for two decades. She thinks the destruction began after the Mission Society owned the property and after the gardener left.

Since Marion Osberg was of German parentage and Charles of Scandinavian parentage, it was natural to assume that they would be Lutherans. This was true; the family traveled to the Lutheran church in Kingston for worship. When the Mission Society became the owners, Charles and Marion thought they ought to join the Episcopal Church; services were held in the Ascension Church. However, for the patients, services were held in the open garage area of the stable/garage area. Since the patients were housed in the same building, the site was convenient. Marion and Charles were buried out of the Episcopal Church in Kingston.

The Osbergs and the Brothers got along very well. Brother Mary Anthony Scheh familiarly known as "Herbie" was the general maintenance person and often sought Charles advice on problems. Barbara also remembers a Brother James, probably Brother James Elliott, who taught at Marist Prep from 1942 to 1945. The Osbergs got along so well with the Brothers that one day Charles remarked that they ought to have become Catholics rather than Episcopalians!

When the Brothers bought the property, the Osbergs were living in one of the two separate houses in the stable/garage complex. Since that was to be used for the faculty, the Osbergs moved across route 9W to the farm superintendent's house next to the old chicken farm. Some time in 1943 the family moved to Kingston.

Charles Osberg took a position first with an electrical plant during World War II and later with Island Dock Corporation in

Port Ewen. Roger Mabie, an Esopus native and unofficial historian, remembers Charlie well. Charlie was highly regarded by both his superiors and fellow workers at Island Dock. Marion died in 1970 and Charles in 1977. Both are buried in Highland Cemetery, together with the two boys who died in 1924. By that time all their children had moved out of the Kingston area.

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photos improved and small changes to the text