

# History of The Randall Abner Family

By Lisa K. Still  
Abner descendant



**Randall Abner** is the son of James and Mary Abner of Stonington Connecticut and born in 1789 (William DeLoss Love). It is not known for sure if James and Mary Abner were part of the Brothertown movement, however it is known that James Abner is in Stonington Connecticut at his death. It is recorded in the Eastern Pequot Overseer Accounts on "24 Oct 1828, Esther Waugh 75 Cents in full for use of bed and clothes and care of James Abner while sick." (northeastIndianportal.com).

Randall Abner married Sarah "Sally" Tocus, daughter of Joseph and Grace Crosley Tocus. To this union eleven children were born. After they were married, the couple moved to Stephentown, New York and then in 1819, they relocated to Brothertown, New York and settled on lot number 86. They remained in New York until 1831 when they moved to the lands in Wisconsin purchased from the Menominee Tribe (William DeLoss Love).

While in Brothertown New York, Randall served as Peacemaker from 1823 to 1831. During the years in Brothertown, New York, the tribe experienced land conflicts with the Oneida, white settlers, and other Native individuals who were not a part of the Brothertown community. Eventually, these conflicts led to looking for new land to settle upon in the West. On the 6 April 1824, the tribe voted to purchase land in Wisconsin from the Menominee. Randall Abner was chosen to represent the tribe in Washington DC as they secured funds the tribe had in trust with the US Government. He traveled with Thomas Dean who ministered to the tribe and was a trusted advisor. In 1831, once the transaction was completed, the Randall Abner family along with married daughters Hannah Commuck, wife of Thomas Commuck and Rebecca Johnson wife of John W Johnson, and the families of William and Elkanah Dick, Isaac Scippio and David Johnson all left for Wisconsin. (William DeLoss Love).

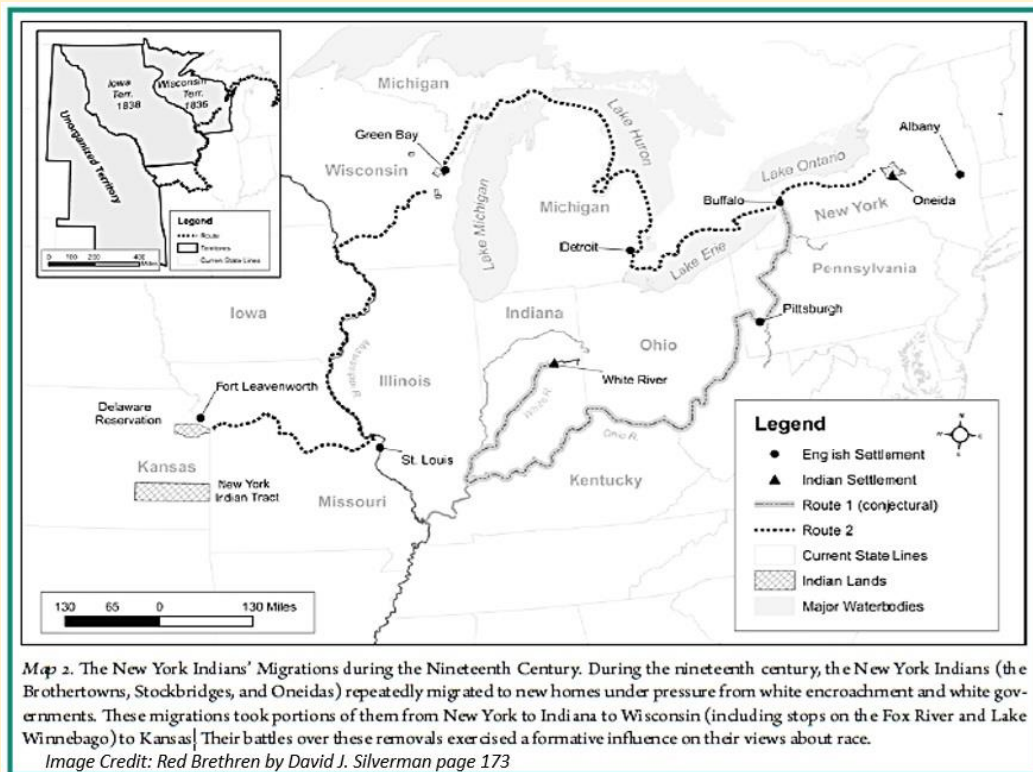
It was not long after arriving in Wisconsin that Randall Abner and Thomas Commuck became Justices of the Peace and over the years Randall served the tribe as Peacemaker. After the 1838 Treaty of Buffalo Creek which set aside land in Kansas Territory for the Brothertown to relocate to, the tribe was once again faced with making a hard decision. Randall was one of the men who urged the tribe to consider US Citizenship in order to keep the land they now called home. The tribe did so and one morning, in November of

1839, the Brothertown Indians awoke as US Citizens. (January 29, 1839, Wisconsin Democrat, Green Bay, Wisconsin)

Randall and Sally Abner were still living in Calumet County, Wisconsin in 1850 until, for reasons unknown decided to relocate to the lands set aside for the New York Indians in Kansas Territory. Their daughter Mary Abner Geboe relocated to Kansas a few years prior to her family's arrival there. They left Wisconsin in 1852 and shortly after they arrived in Kansas Territory, Randall died. Sally and her family stayed at the Miami Mission until the spring of 1853 when they removed to the New York tract set aside for the New York tribes and settled on Indian Creek which is a branch of the Little Osage River (Census of the New York Indians by A. S. Stevens, Ancestry.com)



Map shows land tract set aside for the New York Indians Image Credit: Kansas Historical Society.



There, the Abner families, built homes. Within three months, the homes with all the families' belongings were burned in a prairie fire. About eleven years later, on 20 January 1864, the Confederated Peoria Tribe adopted the families (Census of the New York Indians by A. S. Stevens, Ancestry.com). Sally Tocus Abner lived the rest of her life in Indian Territory among some of her children and grandchildren. Sally died in Indian Territory prior to 1880.

Hannah Abner Commuck was the firstborn child of Sally and Randall Abner. She was born in Stephentown, New York in 1814. She married Thomas Commuck in 1831 in New York and they soon relocated to Wisconsin where they lived the remainder of their lives. The Commucks had ten children and it is assumed that Hannah outlived all of them. Thomas drowned on 25 Nov 1855. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of January 1865, Hannah married David Johnson. Hannah lived into her 80s and died 27 May 1901 at the home of Mr. and Mrs. E. M. Dick. She is buried in Union Cemetery in Brothertown, Wisconsin.

Rebecca Abner was born about 1816 in New York. Per William Deloss Love, Rebecca married first Simeon Adams. She later married, prior to 1848, John W Johnson and they had three children. This was a second marriage for both. Rebecca died at 92 years of age in Calumet County Wisconsin on 1 March 1908. Both are buried in Union Cemetery, Brothertown, Wisconsin.

Lucy Abner was born around 1819 in New York and came with her parents to Wisconsin. She married on 17 Dec 1840 to Avil/Arvil Wadsworth in Brown County Wisconsin. Not much is known about him, but he is listed in the 1840 census in Calumet County, Wisconsin as single between the ages of 20-29. Together they had four children. The youngest child, Hiram, appears in the 1850 census in the household of Randall Abner and was just a few months old. He does not appear in the records after this date. Arvil/Avil Wadsworth is not listed with Randall Abner's household in 1850. Lucy later had a relationship with Alexander Wolcott Stowe, who was the first Chief Justice for the Wisconsin Supreme Court. At his death he left most, if not all of his assets to Lucy and her children by Wadsworth and the two sons they had together. After the death of Alexander W. Stowe in 1854, Lucy married Lewis Coffeen and had four children with him. She died in Taycheedah, Wisconsin on the 28 June 1875 and is buried in Taycheedah Cemetery. Lewis Coffeen moved to San Diego, California and remarried. He died in 1919 and is buried in Mount Hope Cemetery in San Diego, California.



left: Lucy Abner Wadsworth Coffeen, middle: Lucy's daughter, Attlie J Coffeen Root, right: Lucy's granddaughter, Attlie's daughter, Kittie Root Meyer  
Image credit: Photos courtesy of Marilyn Gunnare

Sylvia Abner was born in New York in 1823. She married Daniel Skeesuck in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin on 26 May 1844. The Skeesucks traveled with the Abner family to Kansas Territory and at some point, after their arrival in 1852, Sylvia and Daniel died. They had one daughter, Mary, who was living with Sally Abner at the time of the interview with Alden S Stevens, Special Agent (Census of the New York Indians A. S. Stevens, Ancestry.com)

Marietta "Mary" Abner was born around 1830 in New York. Mary went with her parents to Kansas Territory and at some time married David Ka Ka Sa Kau Yah Geboe. He was the Chief of the Miami Nation. They had two children, Simeon and Ora Geboe and they along with their mother, Mary, were all adopted by the Peoria Nation. David sued Mary for

divorce in 1866 (Miami County, Kansas Court Records, Ancestry.com). No information has been found at this date on Mary's life or death after 1866. David remarried and had a daughter.

Grace Abner was born in Brothertown, Calumet County, Wisconsin on 17 January 1833. She relocated with her parents to Kansas Territory in 1852. She married first Lewis Paschal and had two daughters with him. Later she married William Blakeslee and had two sons. She died 15 July 1863 and is buried in the Peoria Indian Cemetery in Peoria, Ottawa County, Oklahoma.

Josephine was born in Brothertown, Calumet, Wisconsin about 1834. She relocated with her parents to Kansas Territory. In the mid to late 1850s, newspaper articles listed her as being delinquent on land taxes. She was living in Kansas Territory at this time, and it is assumed that she died as there are no other records about her found at this time (Chilton Times, many dates, Ancestry.com).

Dennison W. Abner was born in Brothertown, Wisconsin in 1841. He moved with his family to Kansas Territory. He married (wife unknown) and had two daughters. It is possible he died in Kansas about 1875. The two daughters were living with their cousin John Wadsworth, and both died as young women and without issue.

There is not much that is known about Randall Abner Junior. He is not listed as living in his Father's household in Wisconsin in the 1850 census. William DeLoss Love *in Samson Occum and the Christian Indians of New England* stated that Randall Jr moved to Nebraska but to date, no information is found there. There is a Randall J. Abner found in Connecticut that would be about the right age, but it is unclear if they are the same person.

As with Randall Junior, there is little information about James. The only information found is what W. DeLoss Love mentions in the Appendix of *Samson Occum and the Christian Indians of New England*.

Roxy Abner is also a mention in DeLoss Love's book. She is not enumerated in the 1850 census in her parent's household however, she did have a land allotment in 1842 in Wisconsin and was delinquent on land taxes in the mid to late 1850s. She may have died prior to 1850.

It is of note that W. DeLoss Love mentions that Randall and Sally Abner had a son Joseph who was lost at sea. He makes no mention of Josephine who is enumerated in the household of Randall Abner in the 1850 Census. He may have been mistaken about a son named Joseph.

Many Abner descendants live across the country today. I am proud to be one of them. It has been an interesting journey learning about the Abner family's rich history, sacrifices, and contributions they made to the Brothertown Indian Nation and my family.