

## Auto-Biography of Heaton Messenger Jennings

*The following text is the actual text written by H. M. Jennings. It has not been edited or changed. Footnotes have been added to verify names, locations and supporting documentation. The exact date this was written is not known, but it is estimated to have been in the 1940's or early 1950's.*

Born November 14th, 1864 at Waterloo, Iowa<sup>1</sup> to Harry and Emma Jane Jennings<sup>2</sup>.



Harry Jennings - 1863 est.  
Estimate based on photographic media and the fact his wife's picture was also taken. Assumed to have been taken when they were married.

At the age of three my folks moved to Killawog, Broome County, New York State. In 1869 my father was drowned

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<sup>1</sup> See Figure 1 for map

<sup>2</sup> There are several alternate spellings used for Jennings, including Ginnings, Genings. Harry M. Jennings, born 11 Dec 1842, New York, and Died 18 Sep 1869. Emma J. McWeary, born 27 Jul 1843.

in Senaca Lake<sup>3</sup>. My mother gave up keeping the home and I found myself living with a great uncle on my father's side, named Mac Jennings<sup>4</sup>. Evidently they did not like the idea as one Sunday morning, one of the hired men hitched up a pair of mules and drove me near Dryden Lake<sup>5</sup> and dumped me and my little bundle of clothes by the side of the road in front of my Grandmother's home. (This was my mother's mother.) I followed the team as long as I could see them through my tears. After they were out of sight I turned back and a neighbor family took me in and kept me over night. They were poor people, they put their son, who was about my age, and I in a trundle bed and shoved us under their bed. The next morning the lady took me over to my grandmother's.

How long I stayed there I don't remember, but I don't think it was long. My mother's sister was staying there too. Her Husband had been drowned at

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<sup>3</sup> See Figure 2 for map

<sup>4</sup> I believe this would most likely have been Alfred Jennings, born in Connecticut about 1787. Harry Jennings father was Rufus Jennings (Jr.), born in New York 1820. I have seen references to him in the 1850 and 1860 census. Based on census records Rufus Jr. was drover and was initially poorer than his younger brother Aaron Jennings who according to the 1850 Census record worked on his father's farm. Rufus Sr. died in NY on 21 October 1851. Rufus Jr. died on 31 July 1877 and is buried in Section 2 Lot 2 of the Cortland County Cemetery .

<sup>5</sup> This would be the town of Harford, New York. Heaton and Emma are shown on the 1870 US Census.

the same time as my father. She took me to Rochester, New York and tried to lose me in the depot but a policeman caught her at it and made her take me back home with her. Shortly after she took me to an orphan's home at Binghamton, New York<sup>6</sup>. I remained there one year. Then my great, Uncle Mac Jennings got a softening of the heart and got me out to live with a sister of his.

She was married to a man by the name Sam Tarble<sup>7</sup>. They were elderly people of a very cross disposition. The first sight I had of them I was scared stiff. The old lady wore bloomers that came to her ankles and a skirt to her knees, both made of a checkered red and black wool cloth, her upper front teeth were gone and her eye teeth hung down like the tusks on a walrus. She was enough to scare a grown person to say nothing of a six-year-old kid. Her husband was an old sourpuss with long gray whiskers down to his waist and streaked with tobacco juice.

After getting one good look at them I decided not to stay there, so ran away

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<sup>6</sup> It would seem reasonable to assume the "she" in this paragraph refers to Emma Jennings' sister.

<sup>7</sup> This would be Lucy B. Tarble age 50 in 1870, born in New York per the 1870 US Census. She was married to Samuel B. Tarbel, also age 50 in 1870, and also born in New York. They lived in Lisle, Broome County, New York. As seen in Figure 2, Lisle and Killawog are only a few miles away from each other. I think that Lucy Tarble was born as Lucinda Jennings, daughter of Rufus Jennings Sr. I do know that Aaron Jennings (son of Rufus Sr.) married Harriet Tarble (B:22 June 1835; D: 10 Mar 1910) so, the Tarbles appear to be related by marriage.

the same day. I remembered where my Uncle Mac lived about two miles away so went there. I don't remember how long I stayed there but anyway I wound up back at the Tarble's. They used to whale the life out of me for every little thing I did until the neighbors told them what they would do if they didn't quit. It was a little better after that but I was always in fear of them and if I did something that I was afraid of getting whipped for I would run away.

Of course I would always have to come back but I was revengeful and would get even. One the ways I got even was through an old cross buck sheep they kept chained to a big stone. One day my-aunt was out to the pump doing something; the pump was some



Emma Jennings - 1863 est.  
Estimate based on photographic media and the fact his wife's picture was also taken.  
Assumed to have been taken when they were married.

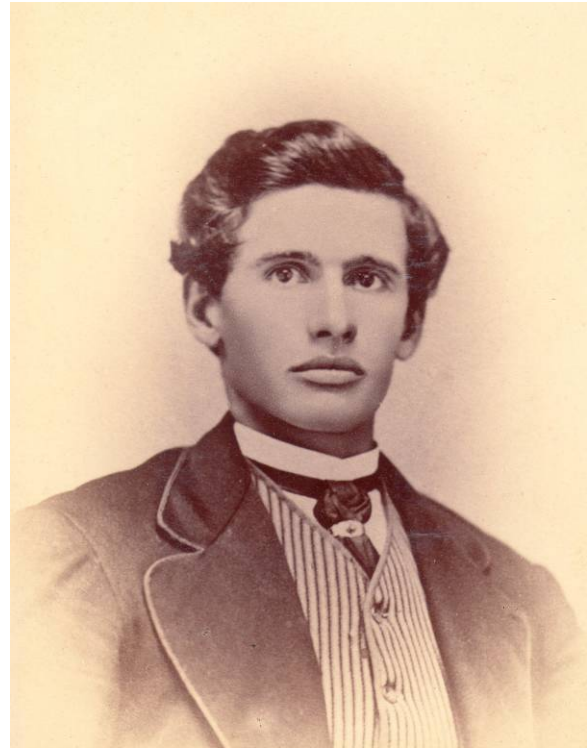
distance from the house and I could see the old buck eyeing her and stomping his feet so I slipped out and unsnapped his chain. He took a few steps and found out he was free; he lowered his head, took aim and took her square in the stern. I didn't wait to see what happened after that but ran behind the barn and down the creek wall for about a quarter of a mile and came back by the wagon road whistling as innocent as could be. By that time she had the buck tied up again but she kept eyeing me. She did not say anything however, so I got away with that one.

Another time she was milking the two cows and while milking the one on the end next the creek I climbed up the stone wall and punched the cow in the side with a stick, through a knothole. The cow jumped over the old girl pail and all. Of course, I was gone -in a jiffy and I got away with that one. Revenge was sweet. There was an old abandoned cording mill on the property where the chickens went to make their nests.

One day I saw my aunt putting a setting of eggs under an old chick and an idea struck me that here was a chance to get a little spending money as they never gave me any. The rest of the boys had money to buy candy to hang May Baskets. So as not to be outdone I stole the eggs and sold them at the store and bought candy for May Baskets. When it was time for the chicks was the first that she found that there were no chicks or eggs. Of course, I was accused but as they had no proof. I finally made them believe it was the rats who either ate the chicks or the eggs. So I won again.

Sometimes we used to turn the old

sheep out in the pasture with the cows. The pasture was on a side hill running down to a creek and the bank at one place was about ten feet high with a deep pool below. I would stand on the bank and wave my hat to draw his attention; he would eye me for awhile and then commence to come closer. When he thought he had about the right



Harry Jennings - 1869 est.  
Picture taken at Fearnought Photographic Art Studio on 16, 18 & 20 East Washington St. in Indianapolis, Indiana. Picture assumed to have been taken when Harry traveled back to New York.

distance he would charge. As a sheep always shuts his eyes just before they hit the target I would stand until he got close and then jump aside and the old buck would go over the bank for a bath. I could work this couple of times before he got wise, so you see I deserved some of the beatings I got but not all.

My wardrobe consisted of a hickory shirt, a pair of Jim pants and an old wool

hat for summer. The hat was generally covered with slime as I used to hold eels in it whenever I caught them as they are so slippery you cannot hold them except with something woolen. I had no shoes and my aunt used to make me go berrying and when I came back my arms and legs would be bleeding from the scratches. One day I had picked a nice pail of blackberries and, when almost home I fell on a steep rocky path spilling and crushing all the berries. Boy, did I ever get a beating for that.

Another time I was overhead in the barn cutting hay with a feed cutter for the horses. My aunt was also up there filling a straw tick for a bed; when the feed cutter turned quite hard my right arm got tired and I went to change hands and ran two fingers of my left hand into the cogwheels. Naturally I gave my hand a flirt throwing blood on the straw tick, she made one slash at me hitting me on the side of the head so hard that it nearly knocked me out of the hayloft. Then she took me to the house and done my fingers up in fine cut chewing tobacco, the middle finger was split bad one piece over on the side and there it grew. I am carrying it so today as a reminder of my boyhood days.

I remained with the Tarble's until 1876 the year of the centennial in Philadelphia; then I ran away and they were glad to get rid of me I guess, as they did not come after me. I lived with a farmer for my board and went to school in the winter. I think I lived with him about two years. I then hired out to a farmer for nine months at five dollars per month. For the winter I went to my Grandmother Jennings<sup>8</sup>. Getting one of

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<sup>8</sup> I believe this would be Ellen Jennings born in Pennsylvania about

the neighbor boys to help me by exchange work we cut her forty cords of wood then cut forty cords for his folks.

The following spring I hired to a little Englishman on a farm at East Freetown<sup>9</sup>, again for five dollars a month, and believe me he saw that he got his moneys worth. After haying was over he hitched me to the end of a cross cut saw and we cut wood for market and cleared land. In the fall I went back home as I called it to cut the wood.

The next spring I hired again near the same place for seven a month. This fellow was so tight that at times I thought I would starve. He kept a hired girl though we ate at the same table while the family would have sauce; we were not allowed any. At one time I took the second helping of cheese and he nearly had a fit, said he liked a pig but not a hog.

I was getting old enough by this time to begin to think for myself and I made up my mind to save all the money I could and get out of that country. I went back home again for the winter. The last of February I met a man by the name of Coupland who had a brother at Alden, Illinois who was looking for help so I packed my few belongings and started for Alden at sixteen years of age<sup>10</sup>. When I got off the train at Alden there was an old man loading feed on a sleigh and found after talking with him that he was the man I was looking for. He wasn't very much impressed with me as I was as thin as a rail, but I convinced him that I was tough as whalebone, so

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1832

<sup>9</sup> East Freetown is about 10 miles north of Marathon New York. See Figure 4 for map.

<sup>10</sup> See Figure 5 for map

we finally got together at twenty dollars a month. I soon found out that he had two farms and milked 60 cows, kept 5 hired men and 2 hired girls. The old man rather took a liking to me and came to me with everything he wanted done and depended on me to see that it was done.

When my time was up one of the other boys and myself started cutting corn by the acre, husking corn and cutting wood.

The following spring I hired out to a man by the name of Derrick on a rented farm, I didn't draw my wages only for a few clothes and in the fall he ran away leaving his family and forgot to leave my money. So I was busted again but I found work enough to make my board and room for the winter,

The next spring I again hired out on the same farm but by the owner and for the year. I stayed with him for three years and would have stayed longer but the last year he kept 34 cows and I got so sick of milking 17 cows night and morning that I took an oath that I would never milk another cow and I never have.

I thought I would like to go back east for the winter after being away for 5 years so I went but it was too tame for me and I only stayed about a month. I had kept up a correspondence with one of the boys who worked with me on the Coupland Farm.

His home was in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. He had been trying to get me to come out there so I took a chance and a few days later was braking on the Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Northern

Railroad<sup>11</sup>. That was the commencement of my railroad career. I worked there until February 1887.

On a trip to Whatchen (sp?) for a train of coal we had an old crab for an engineer, but a fireman who had been very nice to me and we had become very good friends. All the way down the engineer nagged and found fault with the fireman. We had taken coal just out of the mines. It was green and hard to burn, so it was hard to keep up steam. Going into Cedar Rapids the fireman about tired out and lost his shovel in the firebox. He was firing by throwing chunks in by hand when the old crab started abusing him again.

It was more than I could stand so I took him by the neck, pulled him off of his seat and beat him up. He was not able to run the engine in, the fireman ran her in the yard and I threw in coal with my hands. We were lucky it was downhill or we never would have made it. I knew I was all through on that road so next morning went to the office and asked for my time. The train master laughed but did not say anything.

I had kept up correspondence with a school mate from New York State who had learned telegraphy and had wandered into Michigan where he had become station agent for the Milwaukee Lake Shore Railroad which had built its line through that country of iron mines and lumber. He had been trying for some time to get me to come up there said every thing was booming. So with no place else to go I left Cedar Rapids at once and landed there the last of February.

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<sup>11</sup> See Figure 6 for map.

The railroad had just been built. The cars and engine were small and looked like a plaything to me so I went to work for a lumber company, as a road monkey. My job was to repair bad places on their ice roads where they haul logs. This lasted until the snow went away in May. Then I took a job handling about fifteen men building a corduroy road into the iron ore prospecting nines. I took this job from the town board but I never did get my money from them.

The town of Marenisco (Michigan) wasn't very large, consisting of a lumber camp, a saloon, hotel, boarding House, two stores and a Depot and a few residences, but it was about as tough as they make them<sup>12</sup>.

When the lumberjacks and the miners come to town there was something doing, everyone wanted to be the bully of the town. You could look up the street and see a fight anytime. I came in with the road building crew one afternoon on account of rain. I went into a store for something and when I came out I met Wallace, the saloonkeeper. He was drunk and looking for trouble. He was looking for his bartender who he thought was getting too familiar with his wife. He had a revolver in his hand and as he got close to me he stuck the gun in my face and pulled the trigger but it only snapped, my time wasn't up.

He went into the store and found the man he was looking for and started fighting with him breaking an earthen wash bowl over his head. The bartender ran out and got a gun and shot Wallace through the abdomen. Their case came

up at Bessemer, the county seat and I was called as a witness for Wallace. While at the trial a report came that the town of Hurley, six miles away, was burning.

Another witness and I got excused and went to Hurley. The whole main street was burning; several people had been burned to death. (Mostly prostitutes from one of the big gambling and variety show places.) The police were trying to close all saloons. They would go into a place and the next minute the whole front would come out and there would be a free for all battle in the street. Then they would go to the next place. Once in a while you would hear a shot. This was too wild for us so we went up to a hotel and sat on the veranda where we could see the show. Soon a woman came out of a saloon and she was shooting. One of the bullets came close to us so we moved; but she shot the thumb off a fellow. The firemen turned the hose on her and the police locked her up in a boxcar, as the jail was full. There were a lot of drunks in the car also and someone went around on the other side of the car and opened the door and let them all out.

They all beat it for Ironwood just across the line in Michigan. Hurley was pretty badly wrecked and a year or so later they had another fire that nearly destroyed the town. But it soon built up and was as bad as ever. Nearly every building on Main Street was a saloon and kept a lot of women. The governor got after them but in a months time they were back to the same old routine<sup>13</sup>.

The Rail Superintendent, some way,

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<sup>12</sup> See Figure 7 for map.

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<sup>13</sup> Figure 7 shows the location of Ironwood

found out that I had been a Brakeman and he had been after me several times to go to work but I stalled him off until August 1, 1887.

They put me on a way freight between Ashland Watersmeet, and later on a work train out of the Marenisco Gravel Pit. When we finished there in the fall I was the only one left of the original crew; the rest had either been discharged or killed<sup>14</sup>.



Heaton Jennings as a Young Railroad Conductor, approx 1887. Picture taken at Rhinelander Wisconsin.

We had one collision destroying sixteen flat cars and ten ore cars and badly damaging one engine. No one was hurt but the crew on the ore train was all discharged. After getting through on this work train I was put braking on a way

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<sup>14</sup> Figure 8 shows the location of Watersmeet.

freight between Ashland Wisconsin and Watersmeet, Michigan. I caught a very bad cold and was laid up for a couple of weeks.

Then I was sent to Rhinelander, Wisconsin to work on a mixed train making through round trips to Monico fourteen miles and doing the switching at the saw mills at Rhinelander with Conductor Fields. On June 16, 1888 Fields was called to the main line and I was put in charge of the train. This established my rights as a conductor but as Fields was only gone for a couple of weeks; I had to go to back to braking<sup>15</sup>.

That fall November 1888, I married and in the winter moved to Antigo, Wisconsin working out of there until May 1st when I was put on a construction train building a new line from Rhinelander to Hurley opening a new territory and a much shorter line to Ashland<sup>16</sup>.

We were sent out with no caboose, this left us no place to sleep so I got hold of an old box car and the engine and train crew slept in this until I could get in touch with the general manager. He saw to it we had a decent car to sleep in. We took our meals in the boarding cars with the laborers. We were fifteen miles from any place, no mail service, and no way to communicate with the outside world. I used to get the section men to carry out a letter to my wife whenever they came out that far. We lived that way from May until Christmas.

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<sup>15</sup> Figure 9 shows a map of Rhinelander

<sup>16</sup> Heaton married Nancy Anne Huyckes, born in Michigan in 1869 in November. See Figure 10 for map of Antigo.

When I got home that night I went to the house where I had left my wife and pounded around trying to get in. Then the man next door told me I didn't live there any more. He happened to know where my wife had moved so I found out where I lived. My wife had written me but I never got the letter.

As soon as we had the track completed they commenced to ship iron ore over it before it was ballasted so we had plenty of wrecks and derailments. They used me as a pilot for about a month for the loaded trains. The only sleep I would get would be on my return trip to Ironwood where there was usually a train ready to go waiting for me.

The following spring I was put in regular ore service and this lasted until 1893 when I went to the interior branch. It was a tough spot and train crews had a lot of trouble with the lumberjacks they wouldn't pay their fares and went so far as to throw off the conductor a couple of times. We used to handle as high as eighty of them at a time and mostly drunk. I refused to go there unless I be allowed to handle thing my own way and on assurance that I would not be discharged. For a while it was a battle royal but they never got the best of me. Things went along until Christmas when I went to the store at Interior for the mail.

The Post master told me there were five toughs hanging around there for four or five days ordering drinks and not paying for them. Everybody was afraid of them and advised me not to have any trouble with them. But I was of a different opinion and still carried the idea that I would be boss. These fellows were going out with me and made their cracks they would have their free ride.

When I got back to the train they were there swearing and using vulgar language, there were some ladies aboard so I couldn't stand for that. I figured out who their leader was and told him I wouldn't stand for any of that kind of stuff, he wheeled and struck me and the battle was on. His buddies didn't interfere and when I got through with him it was a sorry looking place, blood everywhere and him stretched out on the floor completely out. A preacher came to me with blood on his shirtfront and said he didn't believe in fighting but he felt I had done a very good job. I had no further trouble with the rest of the gang; they paid their fare and also paid the fare for their fallen comrade.

When I got back to Interior there was a mob at the depot, they picked me up on their shoulders and carried me to the saloon and kept me there for forty-five minutes and from that day on I never had any more trouble. Every lumberjack was my friend and came to me with all their troubles. The morning after I had this trouble the bully came out of a saloon at Watersmeet I thought for another session but before he got to where I was he stopped and said, "Jennings you and I will never have anymore trouble, you hit too hard."

I began to do quite a lot of extra Passenger work acting as relief man and in 1902 was regularly assigned to passenger work never doing any freight work after that. I was retired in 1935 at the age of seventy and seven months. I bought a cottage at Post Lake and we spent about five months each year there.





Heaton Messenger Jennings circa  
1950

I had forgotten to mention that my wife died in 1927 leaving one son<sup>17</sup>. I married again in 1930. This was not a very successful marriage.

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<sup>17</sup> The son was Merritt Harry Jennings, father of Judy Jennings, later Judy Webb.



Heaton Jennings (Front Second from the Left) Approx 1900.  
Conductor on Chicago and North Western Railroad. Photo date estimated  
from other photographs.



Heaton Jennings with Merritt H. Jennings  
and Nancy Jennings, approx 1902.  
Date estimate based on estimating age of Merritt

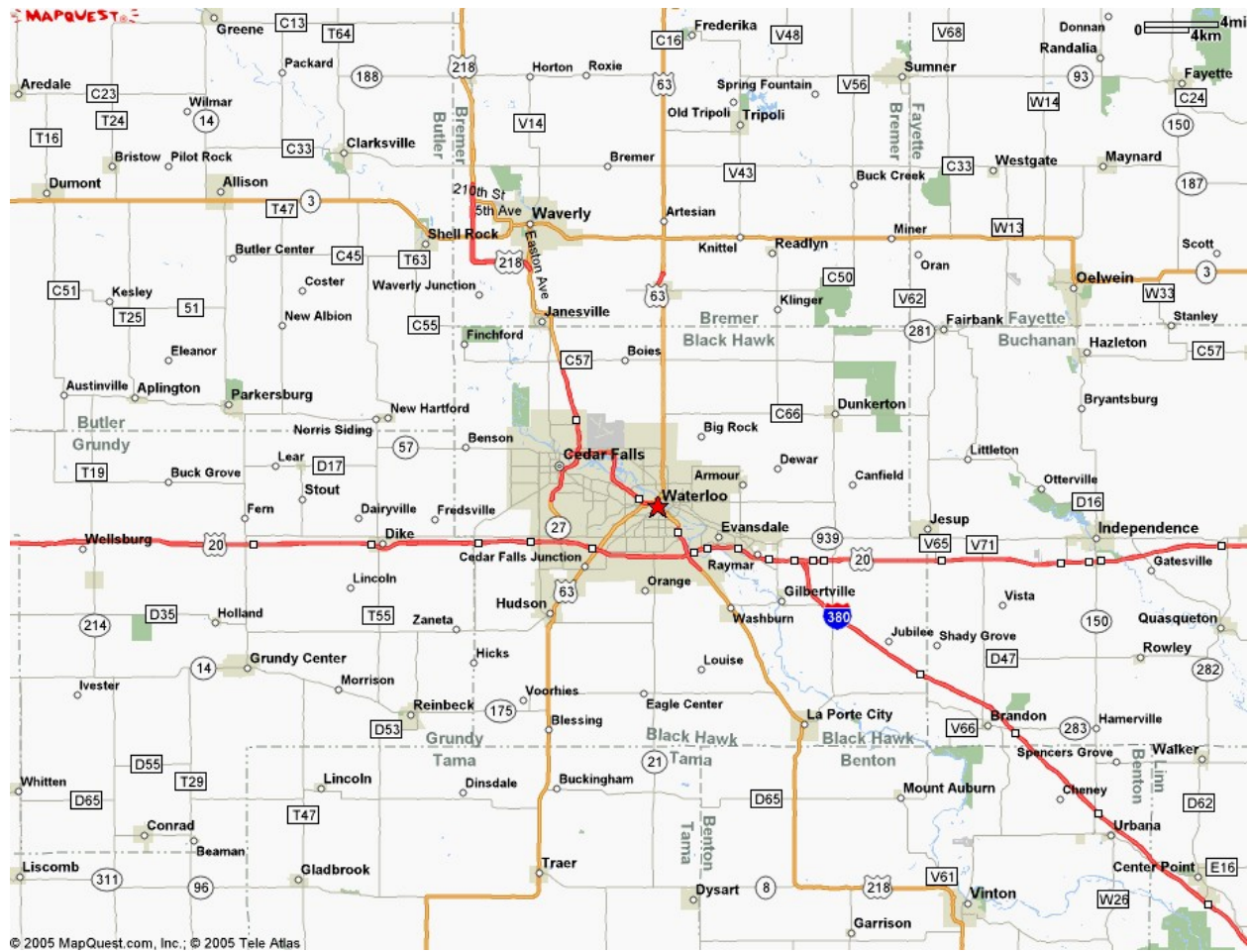


Figure 1  
 Waterloo Iowa, Birthplace  
 November 14, 1864

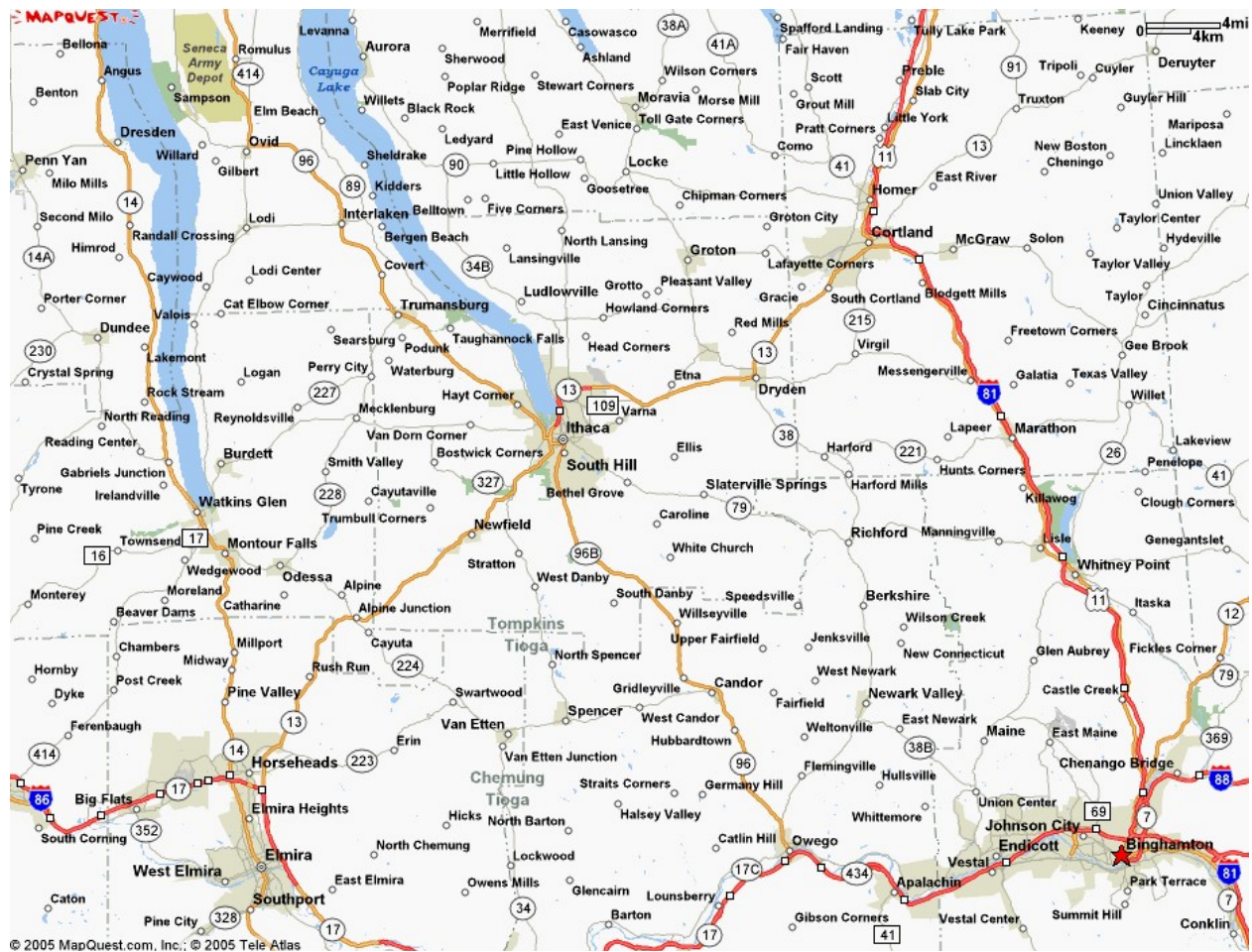


Figure 2

Killawog, Binghamton and Seneca Lake, New York State  
 Early childhood years, ~1869 to 1876.

Seneca Lake is the large lake on the left with Watkins Glen at the tip.

A search of census records indicates that New York State had more Jennings than any other state in 1870.

Lisle, Harford, Killawog and Marathon all consistently come up in Research. Those towns are in Broome and Cortland counties. All of these towns are within about 10 miles of each other.

Both Harry Jennings and Rufus Jennings Jr are buried in the Cemetery in Marathon NY, Section 2, Lot 2.

An 1889 Cortland County Directory shows Hunt's Corners (a small town near Marathon) as the residence of Ellen Jennings, Heaton's grandmother.

These are all small towns, even today.

Harford 920 people in 2000

Lisle 3000 (town and village combined) people in 2000

Marathon 3100 est. people in 2000

Killawog, no separate data available. Considered part of County

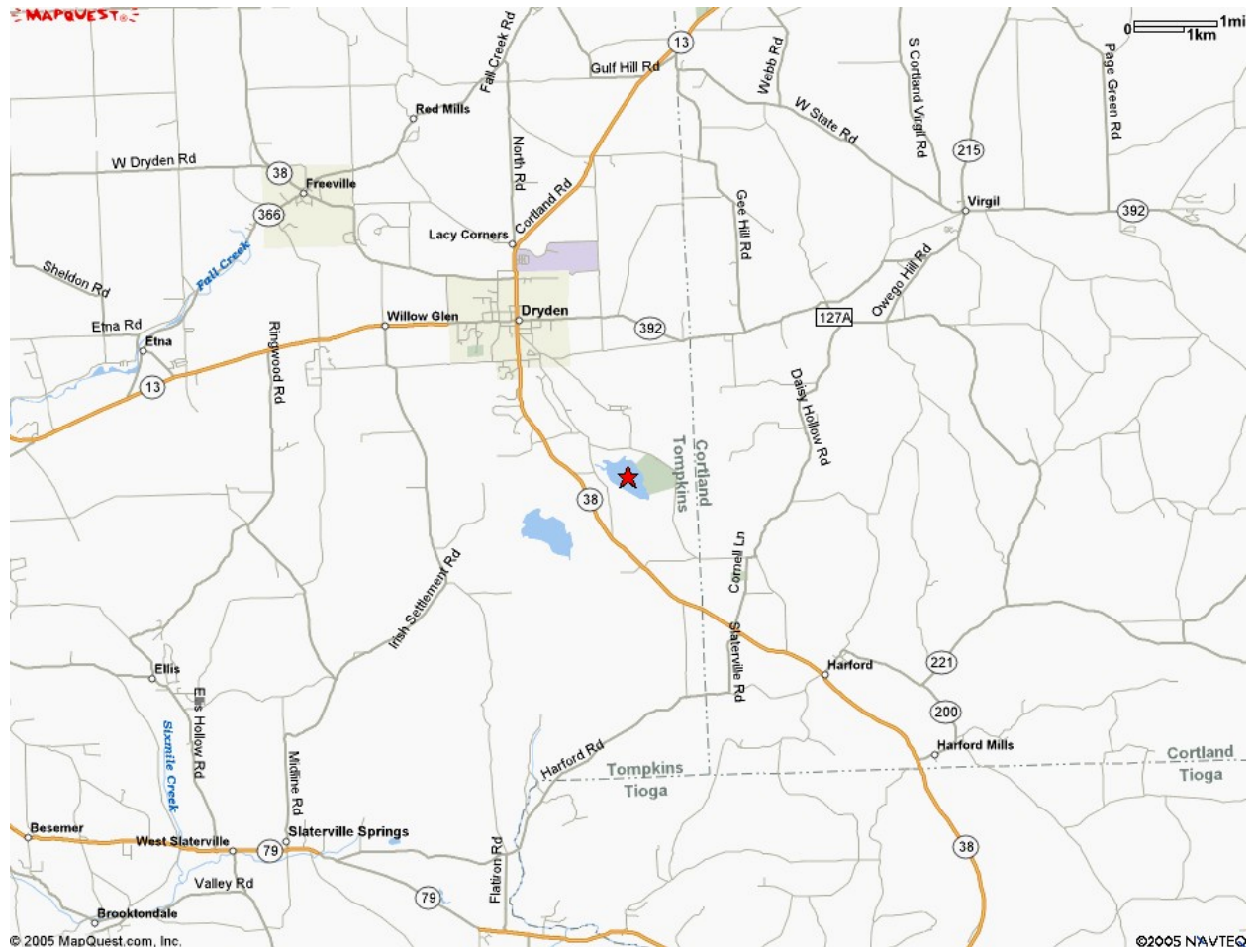


Figure 3

Harford, where Heaton lived near Dryden Lake with his mother after his father drowned (~1870). This is between Binghamton and Ithaca

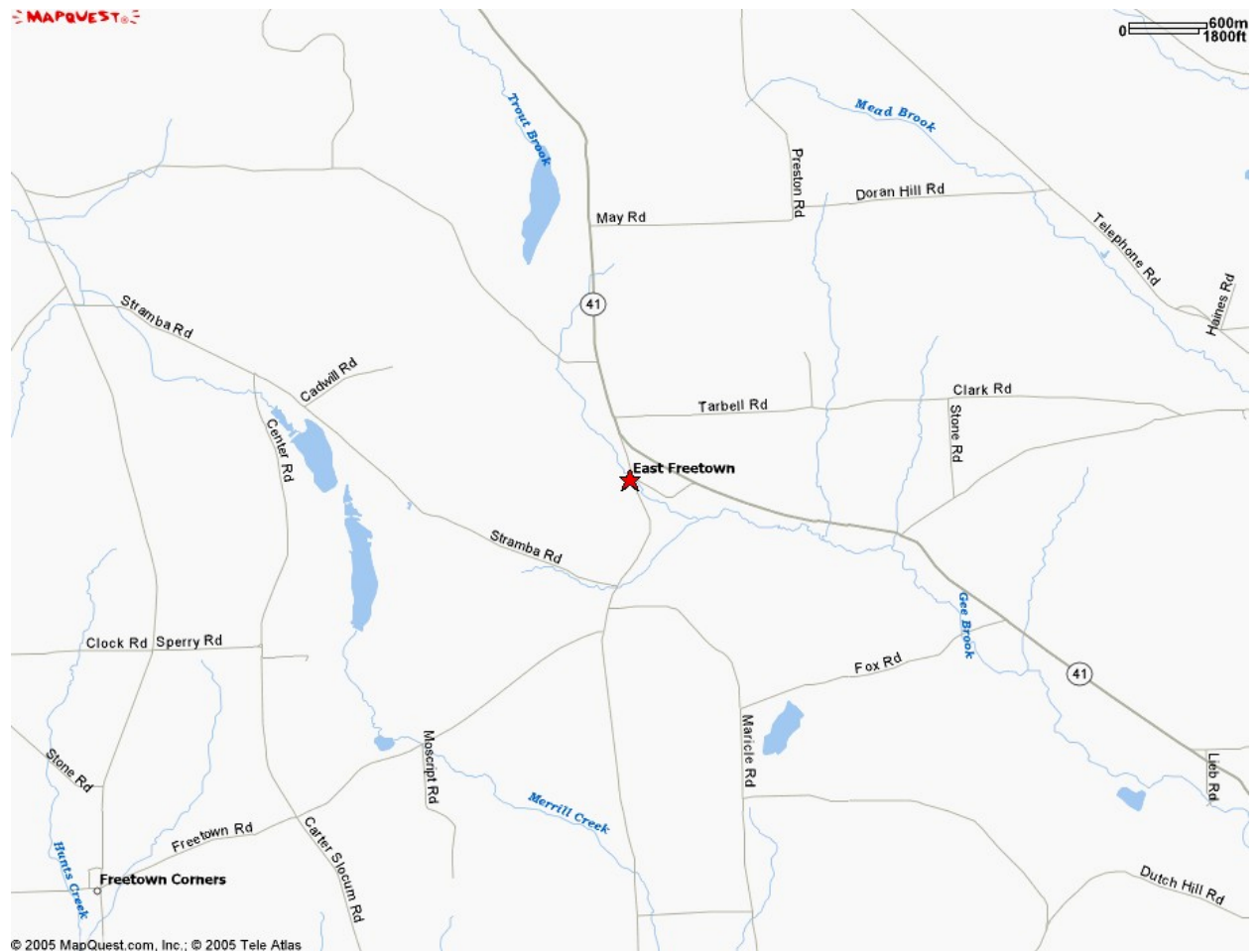


Figure 4  
 East Freetown, New York (1877 to 1878)  
 Note the "Tarbell Rd" nearby.

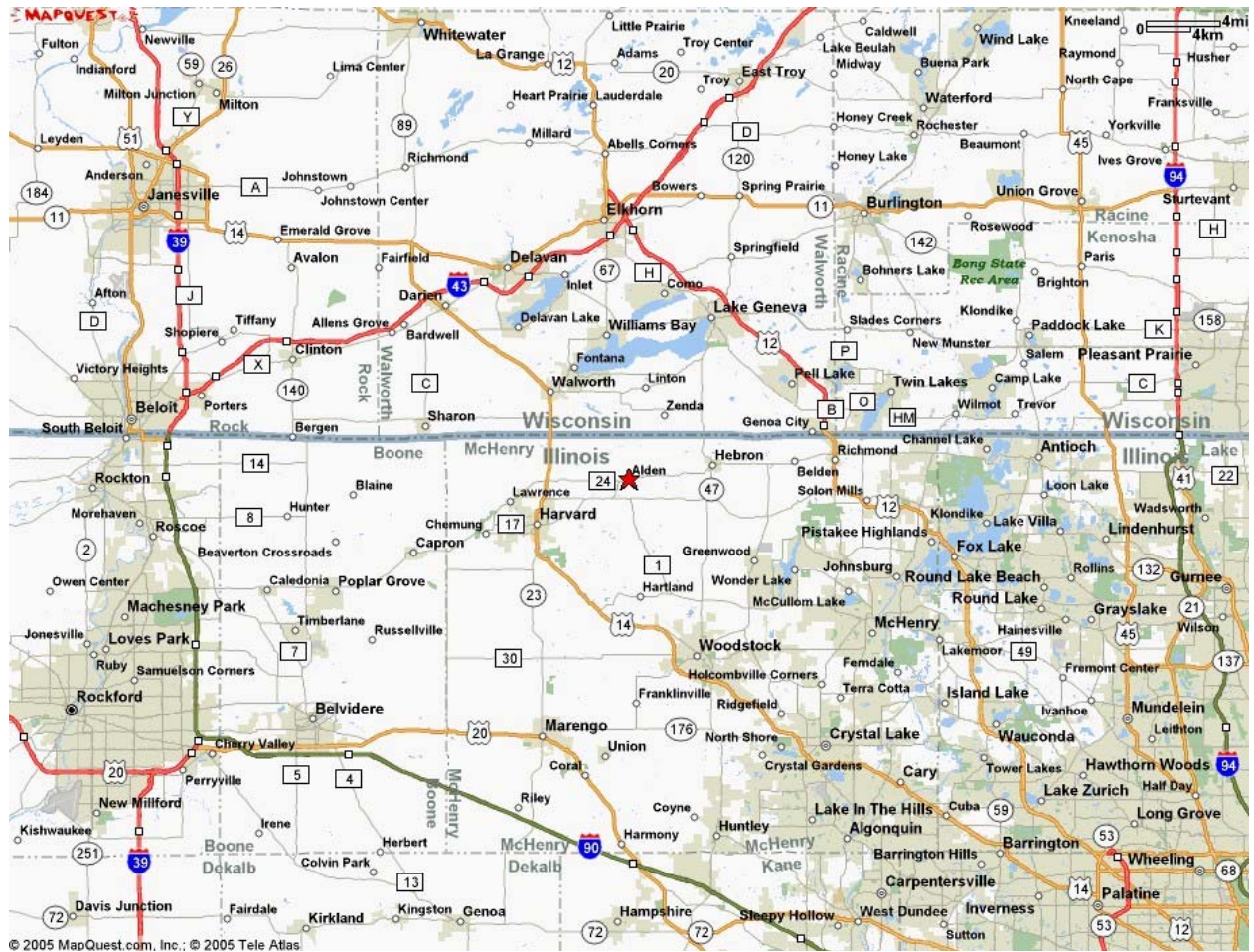


Figure 5  
 Alton, Illinois  
 Area of residence from ~1879 to 1884.





Figure 6  
 Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Location of first railroad job.  
 Area of residence from ~1885 to 1887

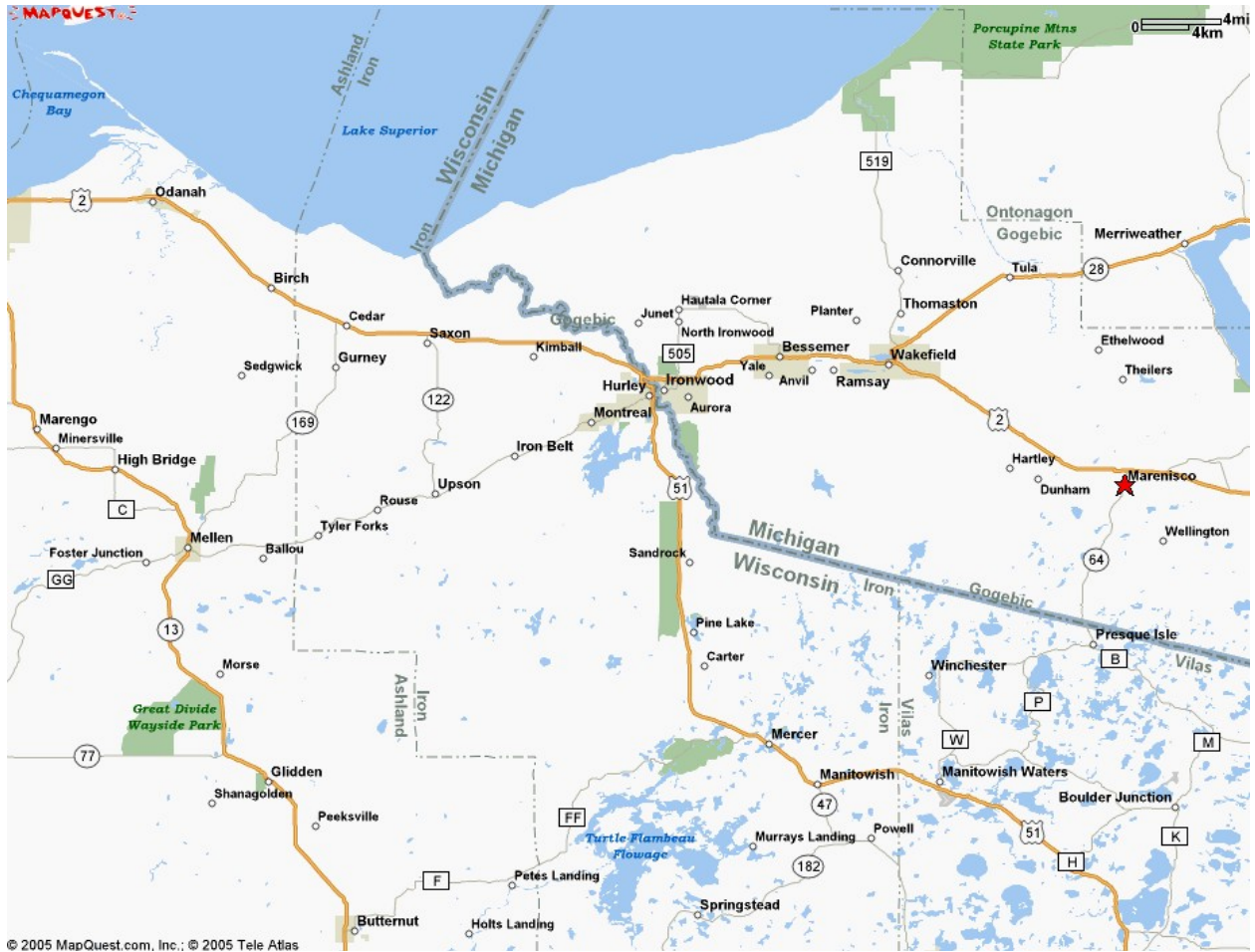


Figure 7  
 Area spent working on Milwaukee Lake Shore Railroad, (~1887 to 1888)  
 Marenisco, Michigan

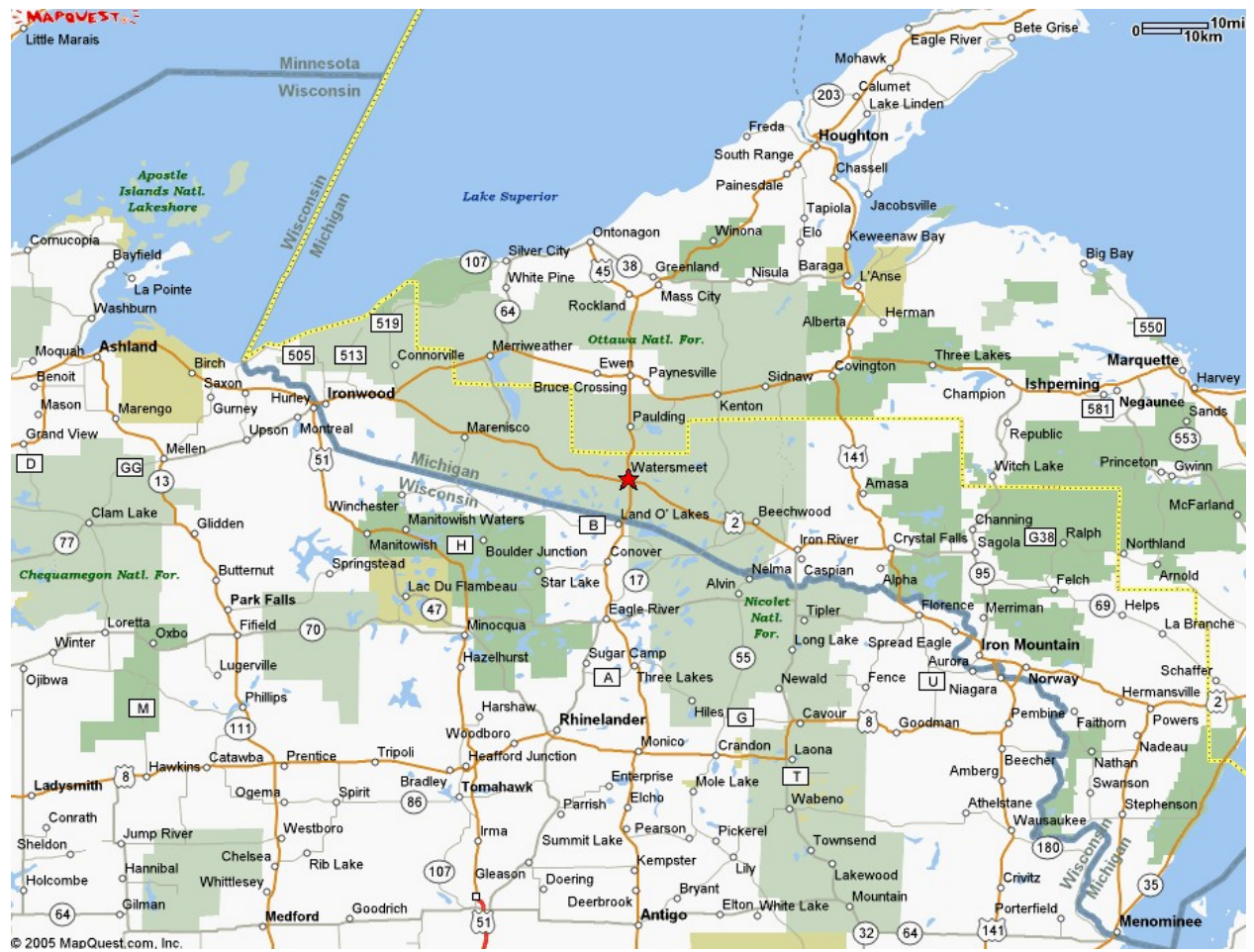
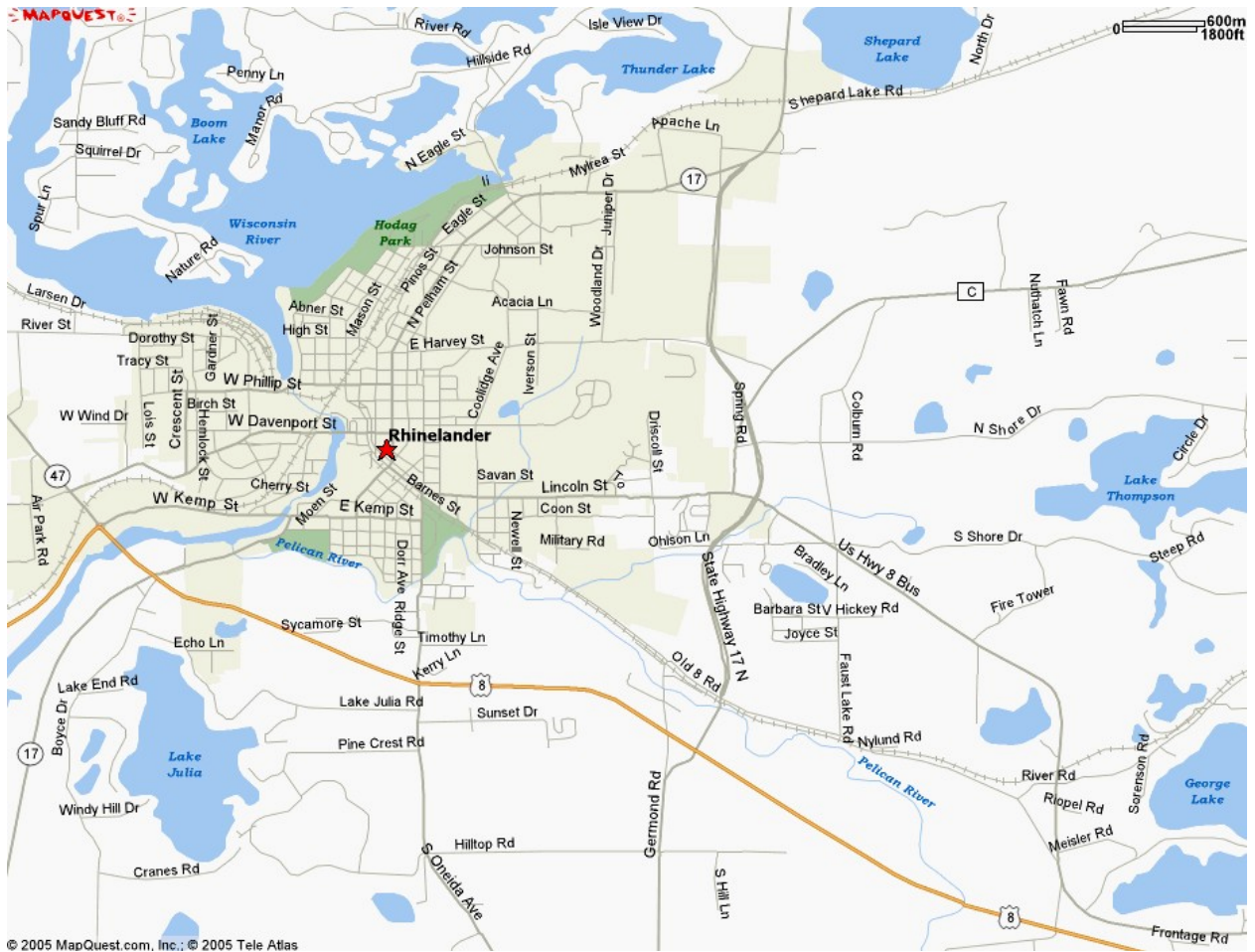


Figure 8  
Watersmeet, Michigan  
Area of freight work



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Figure 9

Rhinelander Wisconsin, location where Heaton first worked as a conductor ~1888.

The rail line going along "Old 8 Road" is the line Heaton would have worked going to Monico



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Figure 9a  
Location of Monico

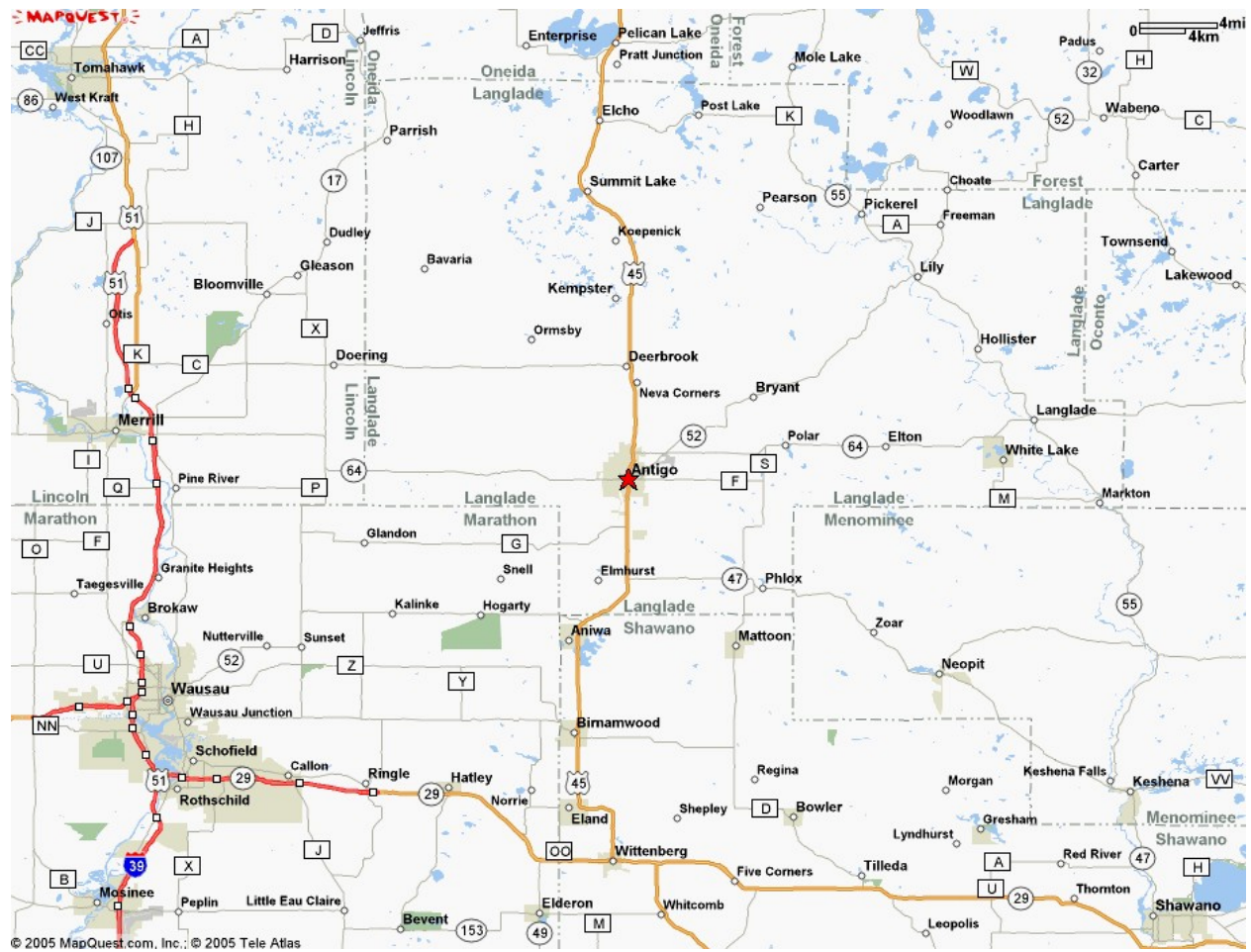
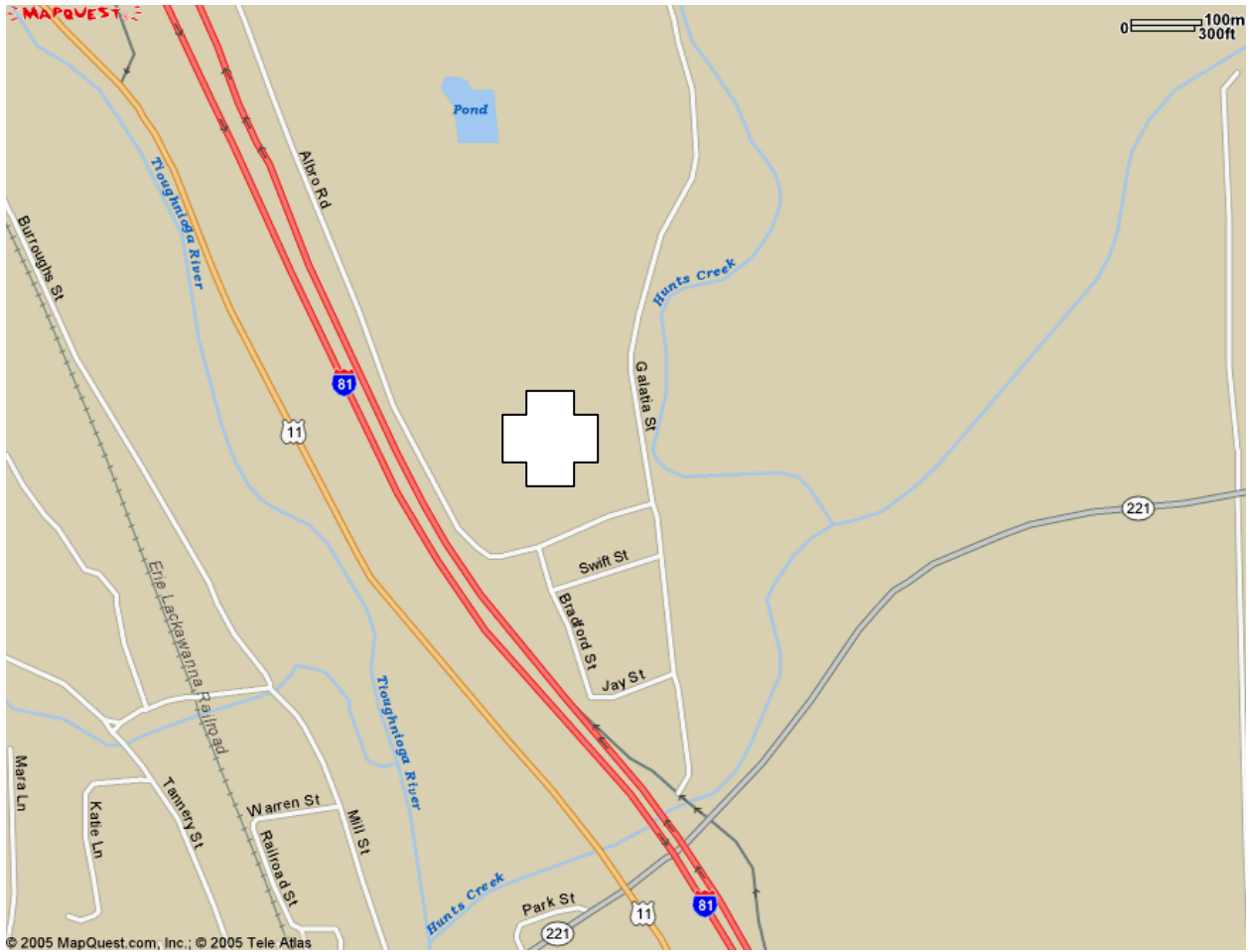


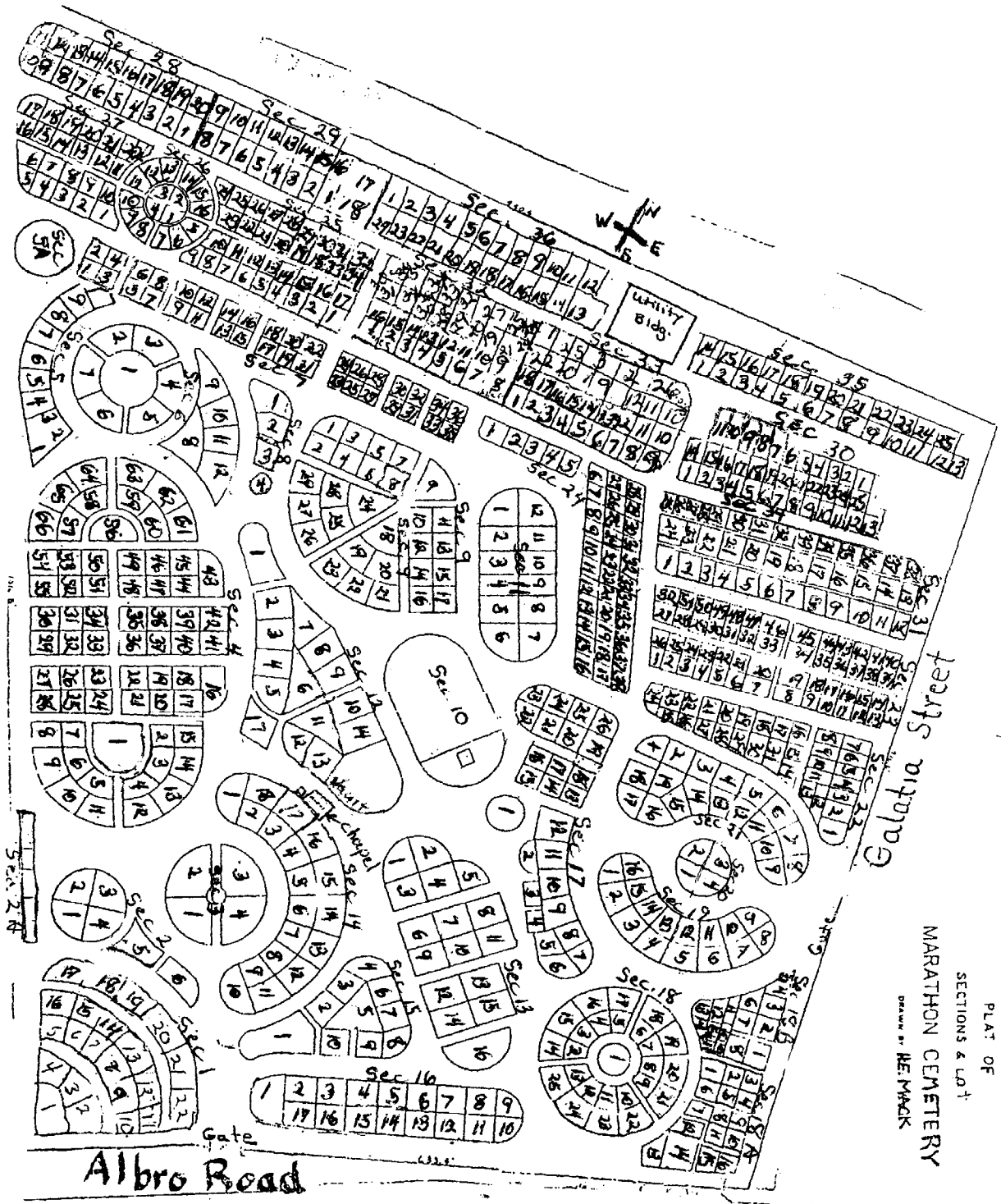
Figure 10  
 Antigo Wisconsin where Heaton lived with his wife Nancy and son Merritt.

## Appendix

# Cemetary Records



Cross Indicates Location of Marathon Cemetary



PLAT OF  
 SECTIONS & LOTS  
 MARATHON CEMETERY  
 DRAWN BY: RE: MACK

Layout of Marathon Cemetary



# New York State Cortland Co. Cemetery listings - Marathon Cemetery

## Marathon Cemetery (incorporated)

<u>Name: Last</u>	<u>First</u>	<u>Middle</u>	<u>Date Died</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Sect</u>	<u>Lot</u>	<u>Grave</u>
Jennings	Albert	A.	08/24/1928	64	5	2	
Jennings	Alford		1886		14		
Jennings	Alfred		11/23/1867	81	14	9	
Jennings	Anna	Mariah	01/22/1850	30	2	2	
Jennings	Bertie	L.	01/15/1870	1	14	8	
Jennings	Betsy	S.	1891		9	25	
Jennings	Charles	K.	04/23/1939	71	9	25	
Jennings	Clayton	R.	08/22/1913	48	2	2	
Jennings	Darin	R.	02/21/1911	74	24	2	
Jennings	Dora	Abbott	04/26/1986		13	14	
Jennings	Eley	H.	01/22/1855	4m	2	2	
Jennings	Elizabeth	Losson	10/03/1825	35	14	9	
Jennings	Ellen	D.	08/14/1896	65	2	2	
Jennings	Emmit		08/01/1902	3			
Jennings	Ernest		1900		4	8	
Jennings	Frank	D.	01/23/1934	64	24	2	
Jennings	Fred		08/08/1928	78	13	14	
Jennings	George	W.	19//		14	8	
Jennings	Hannah		02/10/1879	80	5	6	
Jennings	Harriet	Sessions	03/21/1893	69	13	14	
Jennings	Harriet		10/23/1869	64	14	9	
Jennings	Harry	M.	1869		2	2	
Jennings	Harry		06/06/1861	60	5	6	
Jennings	Helena	M.	03/19/1937	70			
Jennings	Henry	C.	10/04/1964	55	9	25	

Jennings	Infant		1894		9	25
Jennings	Infant		1895		9	25
Jennings	Leon	C.	05/24/1938	51	05A	
Jennings	Mary	G.			9	25
Jennings	Mary	Jane	05/20/1923	67	13	14
Jennings	Mason	W.	1875		13	9
Jennings	Ophelia		02/15/1863	15	2	2
Jennings	Orlando		06/27/1896	77	13	14
Jennings	Philander		05/27/1854	28	14	
Jennings	Rachel	Brooks	07/03/1993	36	13	14
Jennings	Ransom		1889		9	25
Jennings	Ray		03/01/1895	1	24	2
Jennings	Rebecca	E.	12/29/1905	64	24	2
Jennings	Rufus		07/31/1877	56	2	2
Jennings	Sarah	Mackey	06/20/1913	74	14	8
Jennings	Susie		03/22/1929	60	24	2
Jennings	William	Orlando	11/17/1971	83	13	14