



Asshawaygeeshegoqua (Daylight Beyond Woman)
Eldest Daughter of Chief Naynaonggaybee
1829-1896

(AKA Montanice (Montanis) Couvillion Bracklin Barker)

Drawn in Grand Portage, Minnesota Territory 1857 by Eastman Johnson

Asshawaygeeshegoqua was the oldest daughter of Naynaonggaybee (Nenaangebi – civil & war chief of the Man-fish and Catfish Clans – Rice Lake, Wisconsin area), and Niguio. Her son Thomas Jefferson Bracklin recorded her name as Ashaweia (a diminutive of Asshawaygeeshegoqua), A.K.A. Montanice (Montanis) Couvillion Bracklin Barker. Her story is the story of change; a changing name, changing men, a changing way of life and a change in the attitudes of her people. My grandmother knew her as Ashaweia, or as her friends called her Weia. The Daughter's of the American Revolution (DAR) Chapter in Rice Lake is named after her, because of the legendary figure she is in the area.

Lake Montanis, on the Southeastern edge of the City of Rice Lake was named after her. She was born along the shore of this lake around 1829. It is

said that where James Bracklin is buried (the white mausoleum in Orchard Beach Cemetery) is where she was born.

Her life had many momentous turns. A fur-trader from the St. Croix Fall's area named Joseph Couvillion, a Metis of Algonquin and French blood, wanted her for his wife. Her father did not trust the man, but after some time, he relented and she left with him. A few weeks later she returned and told her parents, the Couvillion was already married and just wanted her for a servant. There was a daughter from this marriage, Julia.

In 1854, with her father, mother and extended family she attended the La Pointe Treaty and heard her father give the following speech upon arrival:

"My Father, we too are very happy to see you. We have reasons for not coming immediately after we heard your voice echoing through the wilderness. We were all roused by the sound of your voice. It created glad feelings and rejoicing among all my people. I lost no time to give orders to all of my young men to collect before me. I then informed them that your words had reached me, desiring us to come immediately, while we were busily engaged in collecting wild rice, to provide for our sick, aged, women and children who could not travel, with but four of my best warriors to defend them from my troublesome and dangerous neighbors the Sioux, and I and my people with me, hastened upon the pathway to the shores of Lake Chippewa (Superior). I have obeyed your call and am now before you."

"You say, my Father, you are sorry to see us in our state of poverty. No wonder, my Father, you see us in poverty and showing so much nakedness. Five long winters have passed since I have received as much as a blanket for my children."

"My Father, what has become of your promise? You probably have sent what you have promised to us, but, where has it gone, that is more than I am able to say. Perhaps it has sunk in the deep waters of the Lake, or it may have evaporated in the heavens, like the rising of the mist, or perhaps it has blown over our heads, and gone towards the setting sun. Last year I visited our Father (Indian Agent H. C. Gilbert) who came here, and gave goods to a portion of his red children, but I could not get here in time, I got nothing. I turned around to some of our traders, no doubt standing among us here, and asked them for some clothing to take to my poor children, but

they refused me. Therefore I had to retrace my footsteps over a long road, with empty hands, to my home in the woods, just as I had come."

"In your words to me, you ask me not to use the fire-water, and after the traders refused me, as I said before, I do not intend to accept their fire-water in case they offer it to me."

"I returned to my home. I endured the severity of the long cold winter with what nature had provided for me, relieved only by the skins I had taken from the beasts of the forest. I had to sit nearer to my little fire for want of what I did not get from my Great Father and could not get from the traders; I am not like your red children that live on these shores of the Chippewa Lake, he desired you to bring him the irons to spear the fish, and small twine he uses in dropping his hook into the water. I told you my Father, I live principally in traveling through my home in the forest, by carrying the iron on my shoulder, that, whenever I aim at the wild animal, he falls before me. I have come with my young men, and we have brought most of our families on the strength of your promise last year, that you would give us good portions for our want this year. And like all your children, my Father, after a hard day's labor, or a long walk, I am hungry and my people need something to give them strength and comfort. It is so long since a gun was given us, we have only a few stubs, bound together by leather strings with which to kill our game, and to defend ourselves against our enemies."

"My Father, look around you, upon the faces of my poor people, sickness and hunger, whiskey and war, are killing us off fast. We are dying and fading away; we drop to the ground like trees before the ax of the white man, we are weak, you are strong. We are but foolish Indians, you have the knowledge and wisdom in your heads; we want your help and protection. We have no homes, no cattle, no lands, and we will not long need them. In a few short winters, my people will be no more. The winds shall soon moan around the last lodge of your red children. I grieve; but am powerless to turn our fate away. The sun, the moon, the rivers, the forest, we love so well, we must leave. We shall soon sleep in the ground, we will not awake again. I have no more to say to you, my Father."

In 1855, she and her extended family were at the annuity payment at La Pointe where when asked by the Indian Commissioner if he understood the meaning of what he had 'touched the paper' in agreement for the year before, the old chief said, *"My Father, I was here last year, when the Treaty*

was made, and I swallowed all the words of the Treaty down my throat, and they have not yet had time to blister my breast."

A few weeks after returning to the Rice Lake area, Naynaonggaybee lead a hunting party of about 60 onto the Hay River and at Prairie Farm, Wisconsin they were ambushed... Waubeekway, (Hanging Cloud Woman – Mrs. William Dingley) was with the party and the following is taken from Benjamin G. Armstrong's 'Early Life Among the Indians':

While writing about chiefs and their character it may not be amiss to give the reader a short story of a chief's daughter in battle, where she proved as good a warrior as many of the sterner sex. In the 1850's there lived in the vicinity of Rice Lake, Wisconsin, a band of Indians numbering about 200. They were headed by a chief named Na-nong-ga-bee. This chief, with about seventy of his people came to La Pointe to attend the treaty of 1854. After the treaty was concluded he started home with his people, the route being through heavy forests and the trail one which was little used. When they had reached a spot a few miles south of the Namekagon River and near a place called Beck-qua-ah-wong they were surprised by a band of Sioux who were on the warpath and then in ambush, where a few Chippewas were killed, including the old chief and his oldest son, the trail being a narrow one only one could pass at a time, true Indian file. This made their line quite long as they were not trying to keep bunched, not expecting or having any thought of being attacked by their life long enemy. The chief, his son and daughter were in the lead and the old man and his son were the first to fall, as the Sioux had of course picked them out for slaughter and they were killed before they dropped their packs or were ready for war. The old chief had just brought the gun to his face to shoot when a ball struck him square in the forehead. As he fell, his daughter fell beside him and feigned death. At the firing Na-nong-ga-bee's Band swung out of the trail to strike the flanks of the Sioux and get behind them to cut off their retreat, should they press forward or make a retreat, but that was not the Sioux intention. There was not a great number of them and their tactic was to surprise the band, get as many scalps as they could and get out of the way, knowing that it would be but the work of a few moments, when they would be encircled by the Chippewas. The girl lay motionless until she perceived that the Sioux would not come down on them en-masse, when she raised her father's loaded gun and killed a warrior who was running to get her father's scalp, thus knowing she had killed the slayer of her father, as no Indian would come for a scalp he had not earned himself. The Sioux were now on the retreat and their

flank and rear were being threatened, the girl picked up her father's ammunition pouch, loaded the rifle, and started in pursuit. Stopping at the body of her dead Sioux she lifted the scalp and tucked it under her belt. She continued the chase with the men of her band, and it was two days before they returned to the women and children, whom they had left on the trail, and when the brave little heroine returned she had added two scalps to the one she started with. She is now living, or was, but a few years ago, near Rice Lake, Wisconsin, the wife of Edward Dingley, who served in the war of rebellion from the time of the first draft of soldiers to the end of the war. She became his wife in 1857, and lived with him until he went into the service, and at this time had one child, a boy. A short time after he went to the war news came that all the party that had left Bayfield at the time he did as substitutes had been killed in battle, and a year or so after, his wife, hearing nothing from him, and believing him dead, married again.

At the end of the war Dingley came back and I saw him at Bayfield and told him everyone had supposed him dead and that his wife had married another man. He was very sorry to hear this news and said he would go and see her, and if she preferred the second man she could stay with him, but that he should take the boy. A few years ago I had occasion to stop over night with them. And had a long talk over the two marriages. She told me the circumstances that had let her to the second marriage. She thought Dingley dead, and her father and brother being dead, she had no one to look after her support, or otherwise she would not have done so. She related the related the pursuit of the Sioux at the time of her father's death with much tribal pride, and the satisfaction she felt at revenging herself upon the murder of her father and kinsmen. She gave me the particulars of getting the last two scalps that she secured in the eventful chase. The first she raised only a short distance from her place of starting; a warrior she espied skulking behind a tree presumably watching for some one other of her friends that was approaching. The other she did not get until the second day out when she discovered a Sioux crossing a river. She said: "The good luck that had followed me since I raised my father's rifle did not now desert me," for her shot had proved a good one and she soon had his dripping scalp at her belt although she had to wade the river after it.

Asshawaygeeshegoqua was not with that party, but the death of her father was something she would not accept readily. During that winter she dreamed that she was supposed to lead a war party and the next spring she did just that and came back with a few scalps herself. Grandma told me that

she saw her with three eagle feathers, the ends dipped in red, when she was a little girl and saw the old lady 'dressed up'. Her son mentioned that his mother had lead war parties (more than one), she killed with the spear, and that she had taken scalps.

During 1857 Asshawaygeeshegoqua spent some time in the new community of Superior, Wisconsin where she met an artist named Eastman Johnson. Johnson went on to become a prominent artist, but while in Superior he drew a number of pictures of Ojibwe people... one he titled Ojibwa Head – my grandmother who took me up to Duluth to see the picture, told me that this was Weia, that she had been told by the old lady about this artist and had a drawing of herself by him she treasured, the picture she had was one that looked just like this.

In 1862/3 she worked as a 'housekeeper' for James Bracklin. During this period calling an Indian woman a housekeeper, was to have a common-law wife. From this relationship 2 children were born, a daughter, Gejiashikwe, Nellie Bracklin was born in 1864 and a son, Nenaangebi, Thomas Jefferson Bracklin was born in 1865 and it is thanks to this man that I am able to tell, much of this story. Right after the Civil war, like many of the 'Great Lumbermen' James Bracklin walked away from his 'Indian Family' and married Julia Vance.

Asshawaygeeshegoqua married an underling and good friend of James Bracklin, Sam Barker, who died in 1876. From this union two more children were born, a son named Edward Barker, who died by drowning at age 17 and a daughter Mary Barker.



Samuel P. Barker

In 1877 the Barron County Shield in its first edition recorded the following about Sam Barker (from the Barron County Shield – March 30, 1877 -

Address of Alvah Dewey at Barron, Barron County, Wisconsin, July 4, 1876.):

I will refer briefly to a character recently deceased, who has much to do with every political, material and general event transpiring in the county over a period of the last twenty years. His life was not one of stirring achievements, but was of quiet, determined loyal duty. We speak of the man whose friends are found beneath the smoke curling above every wigwam, every settlers cabin, every household, and every logging camp, where his presence was known, viz, Samuel P. Barker, a man of great muscular power, extraordinary memory, brave, yet discrete; a born chieftain – a leader of men. Born 44 years ago, in the State of New York, educated in part for the ministry, he found himself at the age of 21 upon this soil in quest of fortune and adventure. Prompted by a like spirit that moved Cortez and Pizzaro; he was from that time until his death identified with every transaction of importance occurring within the county. He was the first chairman of the old town of Dallas; the first chairman of the county of Dallas, and the first chairman of the new county of Barron.

During most the turbulent times he had the confidence of the Indians; they knew his indomitable courage; and instinct taught them that he was their equal in all the qualities that go to make up a brave man.

It is related of him that he possessed a quaint but quiet humor, which often gave much amusement to the boys in camp. During the visit of a number of ladies and their escorts from the haunts of civilization to one of his camps, known as old Lousberg, the party indulged in some sentiment, which was quietly favored by Barker, anticipating fun; and when a social dance, a usual amusement in camp in those days, was inaugurated, one of the lady guests expressed a desire to have as a partner one of the Indians present, a rather sedate looking Buck. After some urging the gallant chief joined aristocratic partners in the intricacies of a quadrille. Unfortunately his wardrobe was a bit scanty, consisting of a red blanket, which, it was confessed, he wore with grace over his greasy body. As the music quickened the savage warmed up to his work; it was at first a little bark, then a little louder, and louder, then a yell, and then his blanket dropped, amid the yells and screams of the woodsmen. Shall we drop a curtain over this scene? You would say the lady fainted; not so! She completed the set with the utmost sangfold; but her curiosity was gratified, and she did not dance another set. Another incident will be of interest. Soon after the death of the old Chippewa

Chief Un-gav-a about eighteen years ago, a band of Chippewa started after the Sioux, who had murdered two of their number on an island in the river below Sand Creek. Barker had a camp at the mouth of the Chetek; they called on him to join them. He responded by donning a first class Indian costume, paint, buckskins, an immense headdress of eagle feathers, and grasped his rifle, and called on the hundred braves to follow him. His tall, majestic figure decked out with all the trapping of an Indian brave, had a magical effect upon the Chippewas; and from that time until his death he was respected and obeyed as if he had been their orthodox chieftain.

But the incident, which establishes his courage and tested his endurance more than any other, as well as the bravery of his white comrades, is the following:

Previously to, and after the Minnesota massacre, several land hunters had been murdered by the Indians, who escaped unpunished. During the year 1863 two men, Allen and Taylor, while ascending the Menomonie River, exploring the pine, after reaching a point one and a half miles south of the Yellow River, were suddenly fired upon by concealed savages. Allen was shot dead; the other received a wound in the shoulder, one in the back and one in the arm. He turned his canoe down stream and after reaching Lamb's Creek, left his dead comrade and walked to Menomonie, and there obtained assistance to recover the body of his dead companion.

These outrages passed unpunished, and the prowling bands were daily becoming more daring and dangerous. The whites determined that these atrocities should be stopped.

In 1864 three men from the St. Croix Valley started out in search of pine. One was left with the team on the Apple River; Grover and Shaw were prospecting for pine, and at an unexpected moment were shot down by two concealed Indians. Upon hearing this last outrage Barker, Quarderer and Bracklin determined that they would arrest the Indians who did the deed. Leon La Forte, now living above Rice Lake, was sent out to discover who and where the murderers were.

About nine o'clock on Monday in June a young, powerful, half-naked savage stepped up to John Quarderer's camp and asked for food. John fed him and the Indian passed on, saying he was going to Old Lousberg, section 19, town 34, range 11. Old Elk and Tom Goose arrived soon after, and told

Quarderer that one of the murderers of the two whites had just gone to Barker's trading post for powder. Indians in numbers were seen prowling in the woods; the old men were willing to give up the murderer, but the young men opposed. The Indian reached Barker's and asked him to go into the store and sell him powder. At this time there were a very few whites at Prairie Farm; Bracklin, Dan Harrington, Joe Queen and one or two others were cutting hay just below Barker's camp. Barker having learned that one of the murderers was in his camp determined to secure him. They entered the store together. At that time paper was not used to do up articles sold to Indians; they tied up their powder or other purchases in one corner of their shirts. Barker weighted the powder and told the Indian to step up and get it, with the intention of grappling him. The Indian was evidently suspicious and would not approach Barker. He said, "Do it up." Barker replied, "I will get some paper from behind the door," the door being open. He stepped towards the door and closed it. Then they clinched in one of the most terrible life and death struggles possible. The Indian, athletic, naked and greasy, was like an immense serpent in the arms of Barker.

No muscle relaxed, it was one incessant strain. During the struggle a large body of Indians had gathered about the post. Surrounding the building threatened to destroy and kill. Still the man with iron nerve maintained his grasp, and told them that they might kill him but the whites would destroy them; that this murderer must submit to the white man's law. They held their knives and guns over his head amid the lamentations of Indian wives of the whites who besought him to let the Indian escape and save his own life as well as the lives of all of the whites. He clung onto his victim. When one hand was wrenched from the slippery body of his foe, his grip tightened with the other, and for an hour the life and death struggle continued; but the white man's superior endurance conquered. The murder became exhausted.

Barker then dispatched a friendly Indian messenger to the marsh and to Quarderer's. When Quarderer reached Barker's the Indians were seen passing in and out the store whooping and yelling. As no whites were visible he supposed all had been murdered. He soon found the whites and learned that messengers had been dispatched for aid. Bracklin, Quarderer and others kept guard over the Indian but his friends were admitted and one of them supplied him with a double-barreled pistol. Just at dark the Indians on the outside of the cabin commenced the death chant, which was taken up by the prisoner. He arose to his feet, pointed his pistol over his shoulder towards the whites, a cap was heard to snap followed by a shot. A light was brought and it was found that the Indian had killed himself.

The community of Rice Lake believes that Asshawaygeeshegoqua is buried on the Point of Rice Lake, but her son records her as 'walking on' in 1896 and she was buried on Old John Quarderer's place, near Whitefish Lake. My Grandmother told me that the person buried on the Point is Niguio, her mother.

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From the Notebook of Timm Severud (August 10, 2004)