

# The Hall Family of “Tonnancour”<sup>99</sup>

by Thomas W. Brunk

“Tonnancour” was the name of the summer estate of Theodore P. Hall and his wife Alexandrine. Built on the shore of Lake St. Clair in 1880, the home soon became a local cultural center with visitors like Silas Farmer and Marie Caroline Watson Hamlin. It is this literary connection that led us to select Tonnancour as the title for this publication.

The story of the Hall family is here told by historian Thomas W. Brunk.

**T**HEODORE PARSONS AND his wife Alexandrine Louise (Godfroy) Hall began building their elaborate sixty-three acre estate called “Tonnancour,” on Private Claim 617 facing Lake St. Clair in Grosse Pointe Farms in 1880.<sup>1</sup> This summer home was an elegant wood-en Victorian Swiss-chalet style mansion designed by Detroit architect Mortimer L. Smith.<sup>2</sup> Hall’s brother Charles S. Hall described the estate in 1896.

*Here he [Hall] has laid out a beautiful park filled with fruits and flowers and every imaginable variety of shrubs and trees. In the midst of this paradise of his own creation stands his summer home, from which stretch vistas in every direction through the foliage, and before which is the broad expanse of the lake, with the tonnage of a continent passing in steady pro-*

*cession, the view intercepted only by the boat-house bedecked with streamers, and the grotto in which stands Ste. Claire gazing out over the waters.<sup>3</sup>*

The name “Tonnancour” was taken from the 18th century stone mansion of the same name built by René Godefroy de Tonnancour (1669-1738) on the St. Lawrence River at Trois Rivières, Québec. The exact family relationship between Alexandrine Louise (Godfroy) Hall (1838-1918) and René Godefroy de Tonnancour remains to be explored in a future Tonnancour article.

Theodore Parsons Hall, fourth child of Samuel Holden Parsons and Emeline Mehetable (Bulkeley) Hall, was born at Rock Hill, near Hartford, Connecticut on December 15, 1835. Two years later the family settled at Binghamton, New York where Theodore attended the Binghamton Acad-

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<sup>1</sup> The location is between Moross Road and Provencal Street, at present-day Tonnancour Place.

<sup>2</sup> For additional information on Mortimer L. Smith (1840-1896) and his architectural practice see: Smith, Hinchman & Grylls: 125 Years of Architecture and Engineering 1853-1978 by Thomas J. Holleman and James P. Gallagher. Wayne State University Press for Smith, Hinchman & Grylls Associates, Inc., Detroit, 1978.

<sup>3</sup> Charles S. Hall. Hall Ancestry (New York and London: G. P. Putnam’s Sons. The Kinckerbocker Press, 1896). 432-33.

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Hall Children in 1879: Nathalie Heloise (top center), Alexandrine Eugenie, Marie Archange Navarre, and Godfroy Navarre (lower left).

emy and, later, the private school of Dr. T. Romeyn Beck in Albany. In 1852 Theodore attended Yale University where he was graduated in 1856. He studied law for a year in his brother's law office in Binghamton and worked as an assis-

tant manager of a newspaper for a short time before taking a job with the Central Bank of Brooklyn, New York. Following the bank's suspension in 1857, Hall entered the Wall Street brokerage firm of Thompson Brothers.

Desiring to establish a system of banks in Michigan, Thompson Brothers sent L. E. Clark, son of New York Governor Myron H. Clark, and the twenty-four-year-old Hall to Detroit in the fall of 1858. They organized the State Bank of Michigan on February 1, 1859, with \$50,000 capital and Clark as president and Hall as cashier. The Civil War and growing concern over the future of banking, led Hall to resign on August 1, 1861.<sup>4</sup>

Hall received a life appointment as a Commissioner for United States Courts on August 4, 1862. These appointments were made by US Circuit Judges and the commissioners were paid from fees levied.<sup>5</sup> About the same time, he took a position with the Detroit commission house of Voorhees & Company and in 1863 entered the grain commission business on the Detroit Board of Trade.<sup>6</sup> In 1868 he and Rufus W. Gillett established Gillett & Hall, a grain-shipping partnership with an office at 5 Chamber of Commerce Building.<sup>7</sup> Hall retired from active business in 1888 to pursue his interests in literature, publishing, agriculture, his summer home “Tonnancour,” and to travel.<sup>8</sup>

He was a member of the Detroit Young Men's Society and served as its president in 1877-78. A member of the Detroit Club, Hall was affectionately called the “Sage of Tonnancour.” Hall was Democrat, “but very independent in his political action.”<sup>9</sup>

Theodore Parsons Hall was married in the Jefferson Avenue home of Reverend Bishop Lefevre at Detroit on 11 January 1860 to Alexandrine Louise Godfroy. Alexandrine, a daughter of the Honorable Pierre and Marianne Navarre (Goudet Marantette) Godfroy<sup>10</sup>, was born on the Pierre Godfroy Farm at the foot of 14th street in Springwells Township, near Detroit on 11 May 1838.<sup>11</sup> Pierre Godfroy served as Springwells Township supervisor 1827- 1830 and

<sup>4</sup> Farmer, Silas. *History of Detroit and Wayne County and Early Michigan*. (Detroit: Silas Farmer & Co., 1890; reprint, Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1969), 176 (page references are to reprint edition). The bank was located on the southwest corner of Jefferson Avenue and Griswold Street.

<sup>5</sup> Farmer, 176

<sup>6</sup> The Board of Trade was organized in 1856 and incorporated in 1863. It was comprised of all branches of business, but with the enormous harvests of 1877 and 1878, grain and produce assumed dominance. Richard Edwards, ed., *Industries of Michigan*, City of Detroit (New York and Chicago: Historical Publishing Co., 1880), 63-71.

<sup>7</sup> R. W. Gillett served as vice president of the Board of Trade in 1867 and president in 1870. Hall served as vice president in 1872. *Industries of Michigan*. 63.

<sup>8</sup> *Hall Ancestry*. 432 and Albert Nelson Marquis, ed., *Book of Detroiters* Chicago: (A. N. Marquis & Company, 1908), 204.

<sup>9</sup> *Hall Ancestry*. 434

<sup>10</sup> Pierre Godfroy (15 June 1797 - 21 May 1848) was the son of Jacques Gabriel and Therèse Douaire de Bondy Godfroy. Mac Cabe's 1837 Detroit Directory lists “Godefroy Peter, agriculturalist, Springwells,” on page 56, and on page 95 he is listed among the wardens of St. Ann's Cathedral on Larned Street. He married Marianne Navarre Goudet Marantette (8 April 1800 - 19 November 1878), daughter of Dominique Goudet and Marie Louise Archange Navarre Marantette, in 1821. According to Silas Farmer, Godefroy Avenue was named for Peter Godefroy (sic) in 1864 (941) and Marantette Street was named for Mrs. Peter Godfroy (sic) in 1868 (943).

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*Godfroy Navarre Hall*



*Nathalie Heloise Hall*



*Marie Stella Holden Hall (left) and Josephine Emeline Hall.*



*Marie Archange Navarre Hall*

## THE HALL FAMILY OF "TONNANCOUR"



Madeleine Macomb Hall

1837-40, a Wayne County commissioner in 1842, and in the state legislature in 1843.<sup>12</sup>

Alexandrine attended a private school near her home until age 12 when she was sent to Miss Scott's school in Detroit. Two years later attended the newly opened boarding school of the Ladies of the Sacred Heart on Jefferson Avenue where she was the first boarder. Her studies at Sacred Heart were conducted mostly in French. In 1854, sixteen-year-old Alexandrine was sent to the Academy of the Visitation at Georgetown, DC where she remained for one year. Due to "failing health," she spent the following year at Mt. Sales near Baltimore, a school operated by the same religious order.

The Halls boarded the winter of 1860 at the Russell House Hotel and in the spring moved into Mrs. Cole's furnished house on Larned Street. In the fall of 1860, they rented the Lyons' house on Jefferson Avenue opposite the Jesuit College where their first child was born. The following year they moved to Elizabeth Street West where they remained until 1869 when they moved to 170 East Congress. In 1880, Hall purchased the property fronting on Lake St. Clair and

began building their summer home "Tonnancour." Here they spent subsequent summers developing the estate. During the winter months, the family occupied various quarters in the city, sometimes at the Hotel Cadillac or a home on Jefferson Avenue. In their later years, the Halls wintered in Florida or on the Pacific coast.

The Hall children were educated in private Catholic schools. Their formal education was enhanced with Hall's literary interests and extensive family travels. Hall took his children to visit the homes of their Revolutionary War ancestors in Connecticut and Massachusetts, as well as those of their French ancestors at Trois Rivières, Québec. They visited the Centennial Exposition of 1876 at Philadelphia and in 1879 Hall, his wife and two eldest daughters, Marie and Josephine, traveled in Europe for six months. Josephine remained in Paris at Miss Mason's Pension to complete her formal education.

Their union produced ten children, one of which died at birth.

### **Marie Stella Holden Hall**

(26-December-1860, Detroit - 13-April-1907, Grosse Pointe Farms) married William Toone St. Auburn (25-March-1852, London, England - 15-April-1905, Detroit) on 2-January-1880.

### **Josephine Emeline Hall**

(5-June-1862, Detroit - 9-December-1941) married Lieutenant Robert J. Crombie Irvine (17-July-1851, St. Johns, NB - 7-May-1910) on 10-February-1886 in her parents' Jefferson Avenue home.

### **Samuel Holden Parsons Hall**

(30-June-1864, Detroit - 15-December-1864, Detroit).

### **Nathalie Heloise Hall**

(1-June 1866, Detroit - 6-November-1945, New York) married James Lee Scott (9-January-1856, Ballston Spa, New York) on 27-October-1886 at the rectory adjoining Church of St. Paul, Grosse Pointe Farms.

### **Corinne Alexandrine Hall**

(11-February-1868, Detroit - 2-February-1869, Detroit).

### **Alexandrine Eugenie Hall**

(4-December-1869, Detroit - 17-February-1892, Detroit).

### **Marie Archange Navarre Hall**

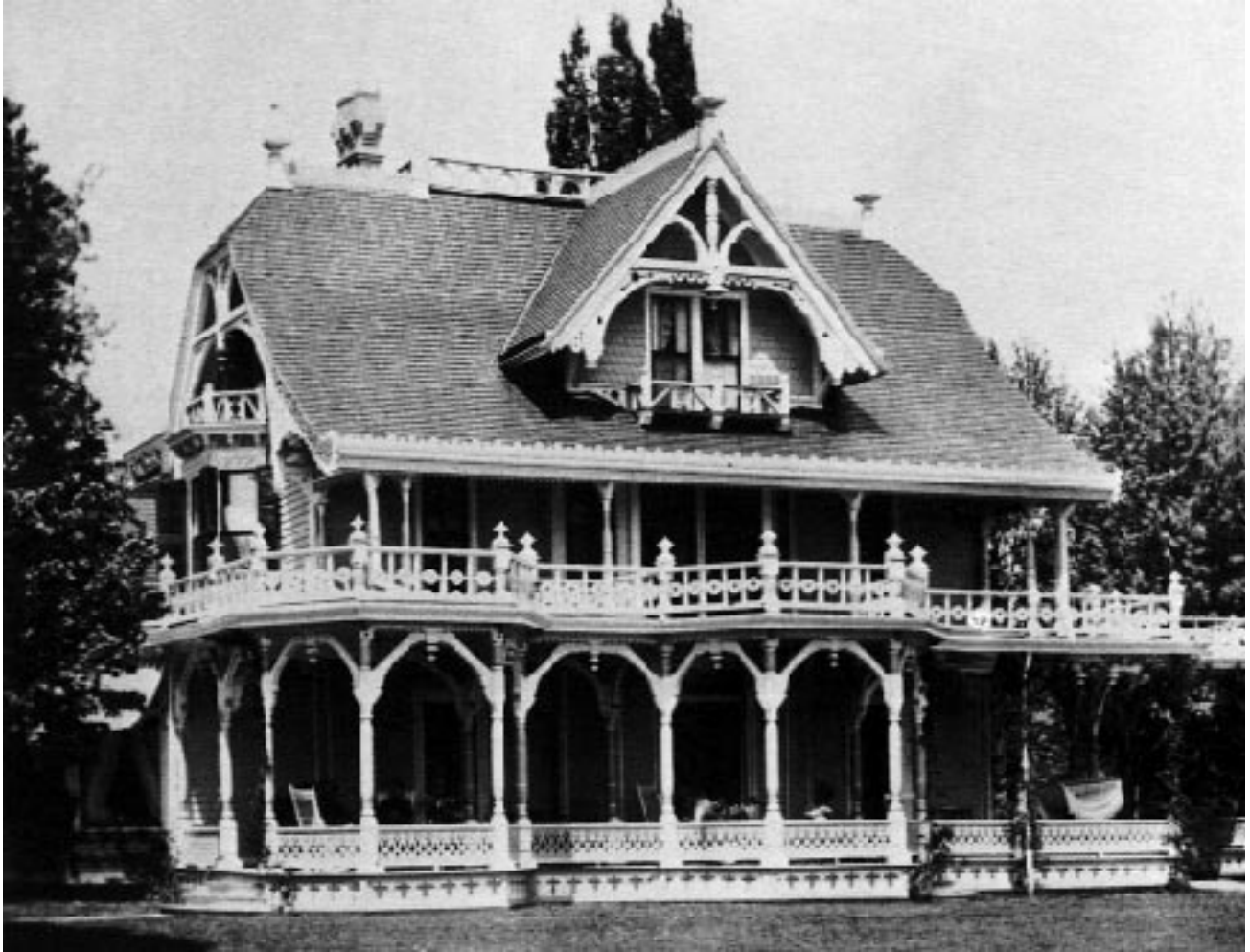
(7-September-1872, Detroit - 30-November-1961, Detroit); 1st marriage to Lieutenant Frederick William Fuger (21-February-1869, David's Island, New York - 26 November-1915, at Tonnancour, Grosse Pointe Farms) on 28-June-1899 by Reverend Bishop Foley at the

<sup>11</sup> Her tombstone in Mt. Elliott Cemetery, Detroit has the birthdate of May 4, 1836. The cemetery's burial plot ledger indicates that she was 82 years old when buried on November 8, 1918 which would make her birth year 1836. However, the 1892 and 1896 genealogies cite her birthdate as May 11, 1838. The Pierre Godfroy Farm is Private Claim 726, formerly the Angélique Cicot Farm.

<sup>12</sup> I am indebted to Peter W. Buchanan, Director of Mt. Elliott Cemetery, who kindly showed me the Hall-Godfroy burial plot, cemetery records, and The History of Mt. Elliott Cemetery, an unpublished manuscript written by Fern Freeman, with information on Pierre Godfroy on pages 28-29.



THE HALL FAMILY OF "TONNANCOUR"



"Tonnancour." *Courtesy of the Burton Historical Collections, Detroit Public Library.*



"Marie's Room."

*Courtesy of the Grosse Pointe Historical Society*



"An Interesting Book."

*Courtesy of the Grosse Pointe Historical Society*

THE HALL FAMILY OF "TONNANCOUR"



Hallway. Courtesy of the Grosse Pointe Historical Society.



Dining room.  
Courtesy of the Grosse Pointe Historical Society.

**A Protest from the Camera  
Victims to the Camera Fiend**

by Theodore Parsons Hall

The Kodak's come to Tonnancour, and with it days of woe.  
We do our best to stand it, we've nowhere else to go.  
And so we try to bear it, and pray it's but a phase,  
For Marie - little Marie Hall - has caught the camera craze.

We've acid in our finger nails, and acid everywhere,  
We find it in our tooth mugs, I tell you it is rare.  
We try to stand this state of things, and pray it's but a phase,  
For Marie - little Marie Hall - has caught the camera craze.

We see ourselves in attitudes no moral ever struck,  
With leer distorted features, having our pictures took.  
We try to take this sweetly, we hope it is a phase,  
For Marie - little Marie Hall - has caught the camera craze.

Swearing is the fashion since Kodaks entered in,  
Sunlight's at a premium, a rainy day's a sin,  
For then she can't print pictures, oh, may this be a phase,  
For Marie - little Marie Hall - has caught the camera craze.

We cannot take our morning bath, for photos in the tub,  
Our talk is all of focussing and lens, and now, the rub is  
Should this last? But no, it can't, oh, may this be a phase,  
For Marie - little Marie Hall - has caught the camera craze.

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Church of St. Paul, Grosse Pointe Farms; 2nd marriage to Claude Edmund Delbos (? - 27-January-1949) on 15-November-1924.

### **Godfroy Navarre Hall**

(31-May-1877, Detroit - 16-February-1885, Detroit).

### **Madeleine Macomb Hall**

(21-July-1881 at Tonnancour, Grosse Pointe Farms - 2-January-1902, Washington, D.C.).

Theodore Parsons Hall died of heart failure on January 3, 1909, about an hour after Father Nacey received him into the Catholic church.<sup>13</sup> Alexandrine Hall continued to live at "Tonnancour" until it was severely damaged by fire and demolished in 1914. Following the fire, she moved to 162 Joseph Campau, Detroit until the residence at 383 Lake Shore Road was completed. This house was later the home of Nathalie Hall Scott. Marie Hall Fuger and her husband erected a house 395 Lake Shore Road in 1914 designed by Washington, DC, architect Edward W. Donn, now 55 Tonnancour Place. Josephine Hall Irvine built her house at 403 Lake Shore Road in 1915. Alexandrine Louise Godfroy Hall died on 20 August 1918 and was laid to rest with her husband, family and ancestors in Mt. Elliott Cemetery.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Fern Freeman. *A History of Mt. Elliott Cemetery*. (Detroit, 1981), TMs 29.

<sup>14</sup> Section B, lots 15, 16, 17 and 18. These four lots were purchased on April 2, 1866 for \$500 (purchase #76) by Marianne Navarre Goudet Marantette Godfroy. Interestingly, she is listed as "Mary Ann Godfroy" and her signature reads the same. Each lot measures 15 x 20 feet. Mrs. Godfroy arranged to have other family members reinterred in these lots from the older section of Mt. Elliott Cemetery or other cemeteries. It seems that she was the first family member to be directly buried in the plot. Her burial was November 22, 1878.