

During the summer of 1850, a ten year old French boy named Louis Frederic Gustave Bouscaren migrated with his family from Guadeloupe Island in the West Indies. The family came to a wilderness in southern Grant County that remained without a name until twenty-five years after their arrival, and then it was Gustave Bouscaren who supplied the name. Through an unusual set of circumstances, Gustave was educated in France, earned a degree in civil engineering, and developed a superior talent for building railroads and designing railroad bridges.

When the Southern railroad was built through Grant County 1873-1876, Gustave Bouscaren was the civil engineer who made the surveys for the railroad bed. The track followed much of the old winding Lexington Turnpike and crossed the turnpike seven times between Dry Ridge and Crittenden. When the seven railway stations were built in Grant County from Crittenden to Corinth, Gustave Bouscaren named the sixth depot-not for himself-but for his friend and neighbor, Mr. Hyacinth Blanchet, another Guadeloupian. The small neighborhood then took the name Blanchet from the depot.

Although the depot was removed many years later and the Blanchet farm became better known as the Foree Place, the name "Blanchet" has continued to cling to the neighborhood and to a section of the Old Lexington Turnpike. The Bouscaren name, however, has been less enduring. Except for land deeds or other documents in the Grant County Courthouse and the inscriptions on a row of headstones in St. Joseph's Cemetery at Blanchet, the Bouscaren name has all but vanished from the county.

The row of headstones face what was once evidently called Bouscaren Road, but later changed to Dungan Hanna. The inscriptions on the family markers are

unusual in that they carry not only the dates of birth and death, but also the places of birth and death. Each inscription implies a story of its own: sixteen year old Gabrielle Bouscaren, born in Guadeloupe-died at Blanchet; she shares a cross-shaped marker with her mother Lise Segond Bouscaren.

Lise was widowed in 1872 when her husband died of cholera during a trip to Guadeloupe and was buried there; Paulzida Segond Desmirail, born in Bordeaux, France, died in Cincinnati, Ohio. Her namesake Desmi Dungan lies nearby. But Louis Frederic Gustave Bouscaren, born in Guadeloupe, was buried in Cincinnati not Blanchet. The story of his life and accomplishments are not well known in Grant County, but according to an account of his life in Ford's History of Cincinnati, Ohio, p. 466, "He had supervised the construction of the great bridges of the (Cincinnati Southern) road... which are monuments to his genius and skill."

The story of Gustave's life began August 25, 1850, in Pointe a Pitre, the largest town of Guadeloupe. His parents Victor and Lise Segond Bouscaren were part owners of a profitable sugar cane plantation, and the family lived in a spacious stone dwelling called Monrepos. Behind their home was the nearly mile-high volcano, La Soufriere.

The water that flowed down the steep sides of La Soufriere, furnished cheap water power to turn the cane mills. But on the morning of February 8, 1843, when Gustave was two and a half years old, the future of his family was changed by the sudden eruption of the volcano. Huge rocks were tossed out of the volcano and onto the roof of Monrepos, causing its collapse. The "Great Earthquake" and numerous fires devastated the island and wiped out the family's source of cheap water power; costs increased and income decreased.

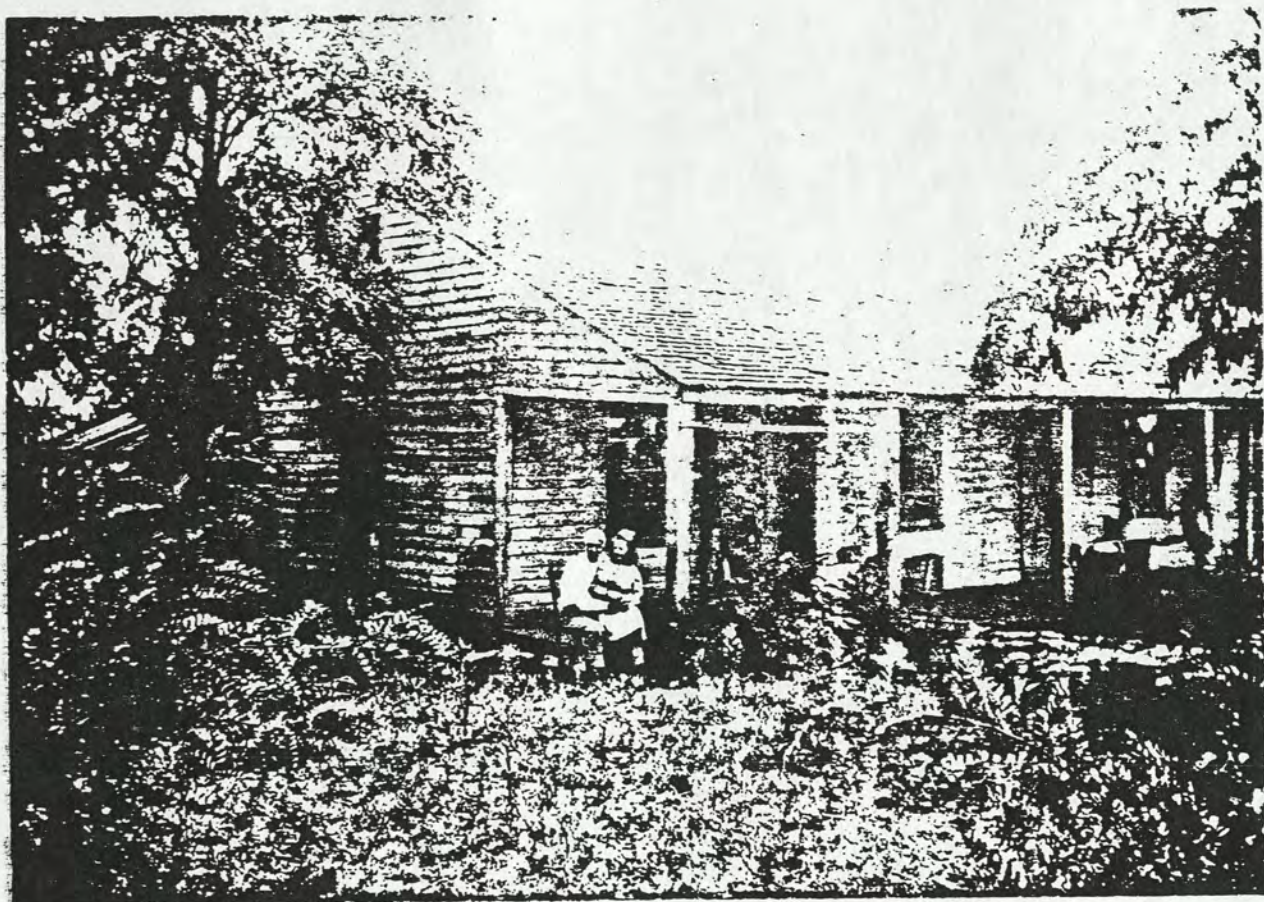
During the following years, Victor Gabriel Bouscaren began to look for a new land where he could earn a living for his family. By the end of the decade, he had decided to migrate to the United States; he did not decide on Kentucky until his neighbor M. de Bovis offered him "an outright gift" of four hundred acres of land in southern Grant County. (The Bridge Builder, pp. 16, 17.)

Victor Bouscaren accepted the gift with the idea that he would continue to grow sugar cane for profit. He did not yet know about the clay soil, the steep hillsides, the dense forest, and the cold winters in Grant County, Kentucky.

In May 1850, Victor left his family in Guadeloupe while he brought his workmen to Grant County to build a six-room log house. For the site of the dwelling, he chose a "moderate rise" on the east side of the unfinished Covington-Lexington Turnpike, south of the entrance to the Keefer dirt road. The house site was one of the high points on the twenty mile long north-south old dry ridge that served as a watershed, directing rainfall west to Eagle Creek or east to the Licking River.

Since Victor Bouscaren had always lived in the balmy climate of the Caribbean Sea and built his house during the warm Kentucky summer, he failed to build the chimneys and fireplaces that would be needed for the cool fall and cold winter. The oversight had to be corrected after his family arrived in the middle of October.

Lise Segond Bouscaren left Pointe à Pitre September 9, 1850, with her four children and four West Indies servants. Gustave had celebrated his tenth birthday the 25th of August; Gabrielle was twelve, Georgina was eight, and Marie was five.



The Bouscaren six-room log house built in 1850

When this picture was made, the house had been sold to Bill Musselman, who covered the logs with clapboard. The child in the picture is Charlotte Dungan (later, Marksberry), the granddaughter of Marie Bouscaren. Holding Charlotte is Leo Segond, brother of Gustave's mother, Lise Segond Bouscaren. Leo was called Vieux Oncel-old uncle-by the Bouscaren children. The new house built by Gustave Bouscaren (about 1871) was less than one-fourth mile from the log house.

Gustave had counted on bringing his big Newfoundland dog La Guerre to his new home, but the ship's captain refused to let the pet on board. La Guerre refused to be left behind. He jumped into the water and followed the voices of the screaming children until he drowned.

During the first days at sea, little Marie became ill with a fever that was suspected to be typhoid, often fatal. Fearing that a sea burial would be required if her child died, Lise Bouscaren purchased a barrel of "alcohol" at the next port in order to preserve the body and to prevent a sea burial if Marie did not survive.

After a stop at St. Thomas to visit friends and after alternating more than once between travel by water and travel by train, the group reached Cincinnati in "the middle of October." They had been delayed once in Albany, New York, by abolitionists who mistakenly thought that the dark skinned servants were slaves about to be taken out of free territory into slave territory.

Victor Bouscaren met his family and the servants in Cincinnati with two horse-drawn carriages and brought them to Grant County. The trip over the rough winding turnpike required a full day. From Williamstown southward to Lexington the turnpike was still unfinished, and from Williamstown to Corinth, the land on each side of the road was covered with forest.

The long journey ended within three miles of Corinth, but on arriving at the log house, the newcomers faced another delay - a cold house. Lise and the children were taken in by their nearest neighbors, the Musselman family, who sheltered them for two weeks while the needed chimneys were added. They appreciated the kindness of the Musselman family and especially the comfort of the Musselman featherbeds.

On the evening of November 1, 1850, the re-united family celebrated their homecoming around "a blazing log fire." After a special meal, they discussed the problems and the prospects for their future in a strange land and a different climate. No doubt, they also retold the events of their sea journey. Little Marie had not only survived her illness, but would manage to survive for more than seventy years in her new home. Instead of a sea-burial, she would eventually be laid to rest in St. Joseph's Cemetery with her mother and other family members.

That Gustave retold the loss of his dog La Guerre can be assumed, and it was Gustave who suggested the name chosen for the new home: "Les Fermes des Caraibes." The name would endure for seventy-five years as the "Caribbean Farm."

The love that Gustave Bouscaren had for the home he named on the evening of November 1, 1850, continued to run like a strong thread throughout his life. Although he later had to leave the farm to be educated, and although he became a successful civil engineer and lived in Cincinnati, he returned again and again to the farm in Grant County to stay for weeks or months throughout his life. During these times, he would take his own children on long walks over the farm and teach them to identify plants, trees, and birds.

By the end of the first winter in Grant County, Victor Bouscaren was certain that he could not grow sugar cane for a living. An industrious man, he turned to other projects. He first built a saw mill and later a flour mill. He planted an orchard on the slope behind the house, raised a garden and took advantage of the food available on the land. In the forest were wild turkeys, deer, and squirrels; sugar maples were tapped for the sweet sap to be made into syrup or sugar. Rabbits and quail were abundant; the children gathered nuts from the trees and fished in the creeks.

Occasionally, Victor returned to Guadeloupe to earn additional money by helping his former neighbors manage their plantations. The family survived! If any member of the family was unhappy with life on the Caribbean Farm in Grant County, the problem was not recorded in the writings available.

But Lise's father William Segond was extremely perturbed that his lovely, talented daughter, accustomed to social life and luxuries, was now living in what he considered dire poverty. The family, however, kept a hired man and a hired girl in addition to the four servants they brought with them from Guadeloupe. It is not likely that the few scattered neighbors or the hired help considered the Bouscarens to be poor, but to Grandfather Segond, Lise's life was harsh and unacceptable.

Determined to rescue his daughter from "a life of drudgery", William Segond searched for the way and the means. Since he spent much of his time in Paris, France, to promote his own business affairs, he found the way and Gustave would be not only the means, but also the chief beneficiary of his plan.

The year was 1854 and Gustave would soon be fourteen years old. Except for a few months of schooling in Cincinnati and at Georgetown, Kentucky, he had been taught only by his mother. For her it was said that he had "a special love and attachment."

Two years earlier, in 1852, Victor Bouscaren's brother, General Henri Bouscaren, had lost his life in Algiers, North Africa, while defending the new French Emperor Napoleon III. The General had graduated in 1825 from the Ecole Polytechnique, a military school founded by Napoleon I. He was the first officer with the rank of General to be killed in the service of Napoleon III, and he had died childless.

William Segond, through friends "in high places," sent an appeal to Napoleon III that a scholarship to a technical school be awarded to the General's nephew Gustave Bouscaren as a memorial for the General. The request was granted; a full scholarship was awarded to Gustave, to be available on his arrival in Paris, France. Furthermore, money would be provided not only for incidentals and clothing, but also for transportation from the log house on the old Lexington Turnpike in Grant County to Paris, France.

The emotional reaction of Gustave Bouscaren to the tremendous opportunity can only be conjectured, for his response is not recorded. That he may have been somewhat reluctant is indicated by the very persuasive letter written to him by his grandfather Segond.

The letter:

Paris 27 avril 1854

Mon cher petit Gustave,

J'ai bien reçu la lettre que tu m'as écrite le 12 mars, de Caribbean Farm ou tu étais venu, me disais tu, par suite d'une indisposition.

Lorsque celle ci te parviendra tu seras au moment de t'éloigner de ta famille pour venir chercher une éducation que tu ne pourrais pas recevoir labas. Regarde bien ta bonne et chère maman; tes soeurs chéries; ton petit Jules et pénètre toi bien, cher Gustave, que si tu le veux, dans peu d'années tu deviendras leur soutien et leur plus grande satisfaction.

Tu réussiras, sans aucun doute, si tu veux travailler et tu travailleras, sois en bien certain, si tu le demandes tous les jours du fond de ton coeur au Seigneur et à la Sainte Vierge.

Prends donc bien la résolution en regardant avec amour cette chère maman, que, depuis que tu as vu le jour, ne cesse de travailler pour toi! Regardes ces bien aimées soeurs et frère, dont tu vas devenir le soutien; comprends ce qu'il y a de noble, de grand, dans la mission que Dieu te donne de les soutenir! Prie le avec ferveur chaque jour, sans jamais y manquer, et Il t'accordera la grâce d'atteindre le but que tu te propose.

Ton bon vieux Gros
Wm. Segond

Translation:

Paris 27 April 1854

My dear little Gustave,

I received the letter which you wrote to me the 12th of March, from Caribbean Farm, where you had gone, you were telling me, after a period of not feeling well.

When you receive this letter it will be at the time you will be getting ready to leave your family in order to seek an education which you cannot get there.

Look well at your good and dear mother; your dear sisters; your little Jules and imprint them all on your mind, dear Gustave, because if you really desire it, within a few years you will become their support and their greatest joy.

You will succeed, without doubt, if you want to work and you will work, and be certain, if you ask everyday from the bottom of your heart to the Lord and the Blessed Virgin.

Make it a resolution, while looking with love at your dear Mother that from the day you were born, she has not stopped working for you! Look at your dear sisters and brother for whom you will become their support; understand the noble and grand mission which God gives you in supporting your family! Pray fervently for this every day without missing any, and God will give you the necessary means to attain your end.

Your good old Gros

William Segond

Reluctant or otherwise, the fourteen year old Gustave accepted the opportunity and the responsibility, but the parting from his family had to be difficult. His sixteen year old sister Gabrielle had died earlier in May, 1854; his baby brother Jules, born at the farm in 1851, was not yet three years old.

A five year separation could seem a lifetime to a fourteen year old, but after a second attempt to bid his mother goodbye, he boarded the waiting carriage to begin his long journey to Paris, France.

In Paris, Gustave enrolled in the Lycee St. Louis, similar to a high school but which required five years instead of four. Since French was his native tongue, he was fortunate that he did not have to struggle with a new language. Nor was he entirely without friends in Paris. A former Guadeloupian, Mme. Hart invited Gustave to her estate to hunt in the fields and woods as he had done at the Caribbean Farm. Also kind to him were Colonel and Mme. Caussade, friends of Gustave's uncle, the late General Henri Bouscaren. At one time the Caussades became concerned about his health - which was no doubt homesickness - and tried to send him home. But he held steadfastly to his purpose and refused to leave Paris.

When the five year term was completed, all students were required to pass an extremely difficult test in order to enter a technical school. Usually about a third of the class failed, but Gustave was one of those who passed. After taking the test, he returned to the farm in Grant County for a short visit with his family. His new baby brother Octave, born two years after Gustave left, was now three years old and little Jules was eight. Georgina and Marie were in their teens. Gabrielle had been in her grave on the hillside near the house for more than five years.

After the brief visit, Gustave had to leave his home and family again, but surely the second parting was less difficult than the one five years earlier. He was now nineteen years old and had only three years of schooling left until the final homecoming.

In Paris, he enrolled in the technical school, Ecole' Centrale des Arts et Manufacture. During the next three years, Gustave prepared himself for a career in civil engineering. Evidently the studies were in harmony with his natural talent and brilliant mind, for in 1862, according to family records, he ranked third in a class of 170.

And what of Grandfather William Segond? Was he in Paris eight years earlier to comfort and encourage his homesick grandson? Was he present for the graduation ceremony when Gustave was handed his diploma in civil engineering? Unfortunately, for both of them, he was not.

An example of one of life's ironies occurred in 1854. Shortly after Grandfather Segond secured the scholarship for Gustave, and Gustave left for Paris in "late summer," 1854, Grandfather Segond left Paris in "late summer" 1854 for Sicily on a business trip. In Sicily, he found an epidemic of cholera, contracted the disease, and lived only three days. He died without an inkling that his grandson would one day be listed in Who's Who in America and be called a "genius in design" by a Cincinnati historian.

In the summer of 1862, eight years after fourteen-year-old Gustave Bouscaren first left the Caribbean Farm in Grant County to begin his education in Paris, he left France with a degree in Civil Engineering. He was now nearly twenty-two years old. After crossing the Atlantic Ocean and traveling to Cincinnati by train, he was within fifty miles of home. He no doubt expected to cross the Ohio River without complications, to find a stagecoach on the Covington side, and to travel the Covington-Lexington Turnpike in reasonable comfort, but that was not what happened.

The Civil War was well into its second year; according to The History of Morgan's Cavalry, p.209, "The utmost consternation prevailed in Cincinnati... the Rebel troops were within five miles of Covington. The city (of Cincinnati) was placed under martial law, and every citizen was required to report himself for duty."

General Lew Wallace, the Union Commander of the District, and his Volunteers had crossed the Ohio River on a make-shift bridge of floating coal barges and were stationed in the hills to intercept the rebels coming from Richmond, Kentucky. Like the Volunteers, Gustave could have crossed the river on the barges, but he could not have by-passed the armed and suspicious defenders hidden in the hills, and no stagecoach driver would have dared to venture onto the turnpike into the path of the coming rebels.

Determined to reach home, Gustave chose an alternate route, a detour to the southeast through Falmouth in Pendleton County. He "left his books and belongings" in Cincinnati, walked several miles up the river, crossed in a hired boat, and walked to Falmouth. Once again, his way was blocked--this time by Union troops.

A few weeks earlier, in mid-July, Federal officers had made a drive in Northern Kentucky to discourage Southern sympathizers. Among those arrested and jailed were several residents of Pendleton County. When Gustave was overtaken on the road at Falmouth by intoxicated Union soldiers, he was mistaken for a rebel spy.

For Gustave to explain the reason that he was on the road alone would have required an interpreter; he knew very little English, and they would not have understood French. The troops prepared to hold a hasty trial which would have ended in a speedy execution. Somehow, word of the young man's danger reached a Falmouth friend of the Bouscarens family. A "Doc" Rusk appeared and "vouched" for the captive, and Gustave was released.

Just how he found his way home from Falmouth over the maze of dirt roads, wagon paths and unmarked by-ways was not explained; perhaps Doc Rusk also drew a map for him. Another possibility is that during his years between ten and fourteen, he had been taken to Falmouth for outings on the Licking River; many years later, he took his own children on such outings.

When Gustave reached home at last, his family had many war-related stories to tell. Living along the main route from Richmond and Lexington to Covington and Cincinnati made the Bouscarens vulnerable to passing troops from both north and south. The fact that the family was French, spoke French, and had no reason to choose sides did not prevent their harassment by both sides.

The most recent war-related event had taken place at the very time Gustave was expected home from France. A detachment of General Kirby Smith's rebels under General Heath, returning to Richmond after their failure to reach Cincinnati, halted at the Caribbean Farm for food and water. The men filled

their canteens at the well and waited impatiently for the cornbread that was stirred up and baked by the two West Indies women. Two work hands were kept busy all day going to and from the mill on Bouscaren Road for the cornmeal. Sometimes the half-starved men "snatched the bread from the ovens before it was half done." (The Bridge Builder, p.25).

Another story for Gustave was the problem of Leopold, the cook who had prepared the homecoming dinner on the November evening in 1850, the night Gustave named the Caribbean Farm. Because of Leopold's color, he had become "an object of suspicion by supporters of both North and South." To ease the tension, their good neighbor F. G. Bracht suggested a solution. Since Mr. Bracht had gone into the Union Army as a commissioned officer, he offered to take Leopold along as his personal servant.

His act of kindness was by no means the first of the Brachts for the Bouscarens. In 1851, Mrs. Bracht had served as mid-wife for the delivery of little Jules Paul and five years later in 1856, for Octave. At another time the frantic children called on her for help when their mother appeared to be dead. Mrs. Bracht used the ancient method of holding a mirror to a seemingly deceased person's mouth to check for breath. Mrs. Bracht then restored the mother with towels dipped in hot vinegar. Lise later reported that she could hear everything but could neither move nor speak. (My Communion of Saints, p.136).

Leopold's troubles were not entirely over when he went with Major Bracht. Soon afterward they were involved in a battle at Richmond in which the Union troops were defeated. Leopold was captured and put into prison, but he managed to escape and to find his way home. Knowing that a search would

follow, the Bouscaren family hid Leopold in the woods and fed him until after the unsuccessful search was made. Leopold then found his way back to his own regiment.

Gustave's two sisters Georgina and Marie also had a story to tell about Zeke, the runaway slave of the Musselman neighbors. Zeke had come late one evening to the Bouscaren house and knocked on the window. He told the West Indies girl Angelina goodbye, and she handed him a package of food through the window. Next morning an angry posse of farmers with guns and bloodhounds passed along the road searching for the runaway, but Zeke was never heard from again.

Another story that was later handed down orally through Marie Bouscaren's granddaughter Charlotte Dungan Marksberry was a tale of war-time cruelty. In passing the Bouscaren home, a band of raiders had noted the dark skinned servants and concluded that the Bouscarens were southern sympathizers. The men halted, took the servant Eugene and hanged him from a limb of a big oak tree in the front yard. They ordered the family to stand by and commanded them to watch, but Lise Bouscaren gave different instructions (in French). She said, "Children, close your eyes and pray." Then she threw her apron over her own head.

After Gustave's reunion and rest, he set to work to master the English language. His native French had been a tremendous asset in France, but now he needed English in order to look for employment in Cincinnati. The same spirit of determination that kept him in France for eight years now helped him to overcome the English language barrier. Within a few months, he was prepared to find work in Cincinnati.

His first employment was with Hannaford and Smith, two well-known architects. (Ford's History of Cincinnati). Next, he worked for T. D. Lovett and E. C. Rice, chief engineers of the Ohio and Mississippi Railroads. Under the direction of E. C. Rice, the young engineer was given the opportunity to design a large iron bridge across the Great Miami River, an important tributary of the Ohio.

After the successful completion of the iron bridge, Gustave was employed for two years by Lane and Bodley, builders of engines and manufacturers of machinery. "Although the iron bridge project had shown the direction his talent would take, the experience with Lane and Bodley was recognized by the young engineer himself as an important step in his advancement. With the engine builders and manufacturers of machinery, his practical education and genius as a designer had a better field for exercise." (Ibid.)

After two years with Lane and Bodley, Gustave's engineering skills seemed to be in constant demand by many different railroads. A list of his activities in Ford's History of Cincinnati was followed by the statement that "His (Gustave's) large abilities and his superior general and technical education have thus abundant opportunity for practical application in important fields of labor."

Although busy with his responsibilities as a civil engineer, he remained interested in the Caribbean Farm in Grant County. A deed recorded in the Grant County Courthouse shows a purchase of land by Gustave Bouscaren from V. G. and Lise Bouscaren February 24, 1864. For the 144 1/2 acres in two tracts, the purchase price was "two thousand dollars in hand with the remainder to be paid in twelve months from the date." The boundaries included the lines of F.

G. Bracht, the Musselmans, the Cincinnati road, and the mill road. Landmarks mentioned were a white oak, a pin oak, a dead oak, a slippery elm, and a hickory.

No mention was made of any previous problem concerning an uncertain title to the land. A possibility exists, however, that such a problem had occurred in 1851 but had been settled. In her book about her father's family, Gabrielle Bouscaren briefly mentioned a Lawyer Skegg, who spoke French and came on horseback once or twice in 1851 "to straighten out the legal imbroglios about the uncertain title to the lands." (My Communion of Saints, p.136)

Also, in the Grant County Courthouse records, a deed dated 1856 was made to Lise Ceile Bouscaren and signed by the "widow of L L de Bovis," the widow's children, and the children's spouses. Another deed to the Bouscarens was signed by the Blanchets who had purchased land in the area in the 1840's, a few years before the Bouscarens arrived.

Whether the uncertainty of the title was settled by Lawyer Skegg in 1851 or later settled by deeds was not stated, but Gabrielle Bouscaren, the granddaughter of Victor and Lise Bouscaren, was convinced that her grandparents had paid for the land that was supposed to be an "outright gift." (Eloise Fornash, a descendant of Marie Bouscaren Dungan).

Another possibility for the confusion could have been the difficulty of pinpointing a four hundred acre plot surrounded by thousands of acres owned by Musselmans and Blanchets.

As recorded in Who's Who in America, Vol 1, 1897-1942, Gustave Bouscaren was the civil engineer in charge of construction for the Vandalia, the Cairo

and Vincennes, and also the St. Louis Southeastern railroads from 1867 until 1873. In 1870 he returned to Grant County to give support to his widowed mother, following the death of his father in Guadeloupe.

At times before 1870, Victor Bouscaren had made trips to Guadeloupe to earn additional money for his family and had returned safely to the Caribbean Farm. But, in 1870, he had gone to the island to salvage something of the estate he had left behind in 1850. Believing that he would prosper and even become rich on four hundred acres of free land, he had brought nothing with him except the will to work. The clay soil had not been productive and he had not prospered.

His 1870 trip to Guadeloupe ended in disaster. A cholera epidemic had broken out, and Victor helped to nurse the sick and dying. The French government decorated him for valor, but he contracted cholera and lost his life without recovering any of his property. Like Gustave's grandfather Segond who had died of cholera in Sicily, his father Victor had died of cholera in Guadeloupe and each was buried far from home and families.

The next year after his father's death, Gustave donated land and lumber from the Bouscaren farm to build the first Catholic church in Grant County. The land lay in the right angle formed by the junction of Bouscaren road with the Old Lexington Turnpike. The churchyard would be large enough for a cemetery, not only for the Bouscarens, but also for other Catholic families. (The history of St. Joseph's Church will be included in the forthcoming History of Grant County by Communities.)

During that same year-1871, Gustave built or had workmen to build a "spacious" new house for his mother. The well-built two-story house continued to shelter Bouscaren descendants or Bouscaren relatives for many years. The

house was a hundred and three years old when it was destroyed by fire July 31, 1974, while occupied by tenants.

After the new house was built, the log dwelling of 1850 was sold to their neighbor William (Bill) Musselman. In the 1920's, the original log house was owned and used at times by "Miss Lizzie" Musselman. The last owner in 1934 or 1936 was Harold Adams, who lived in front of the old dwelling. The logs had already rotted and the house was only a shell with the fireplace and the unsupported walls remaining. The walls soon collapsed and disintegrated. By the time the Kentucky State Historical Society at Frankfort became interested in the historical value of the Bouscaren home, both houses were completely gone. The only landmark left was the old well where the Civil War Confederate soldiers had filled their canteens in the late summer of 1862.



The Farm in 1885

Although 1873 was called a "panic year" in Cincinnati, the year was especially rewarding for Gustave Bouscaren. He had not only been hired to do the kind of work he enjoyed and for which he was well-prepared, he met and fell in love with a beautiful young Cincinnati girl named Helen Seymour Lincoln.

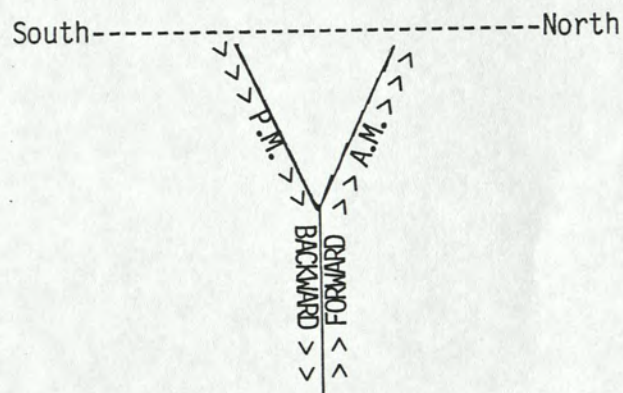
The meeting of Helen and Gustave had been brought about by his mother's brother Leo Segond. Leo, pronounced Lay-o, had come from Guadeloupe, lived part-time in Cincinnati, and earned money by giving lessons in the French language. At the home of the Lincoln family, Leo often praised his handsome nephew Gustave Bouscaren, the young civil engineer who had been educated in France. Mary Lincoln invited Gustave to her home to meet her six daughters.

One of the six daughters would become the "light" of his life and the mother of his five children. Three years after the introduction, Gustave and Helen were married at St. Peter's Cathedral in Cincinnati. He was thirty-six; she was twenty-three. Another six years went by before the arrival of their first child, a son which they named Louis Henri Gustave. In naming their firstborn son for his Uncle Henri, Gustave showed that he had not forgotten the General whose death had opened the way for his own education in France, his successful career as an engineer, and his present happiness.

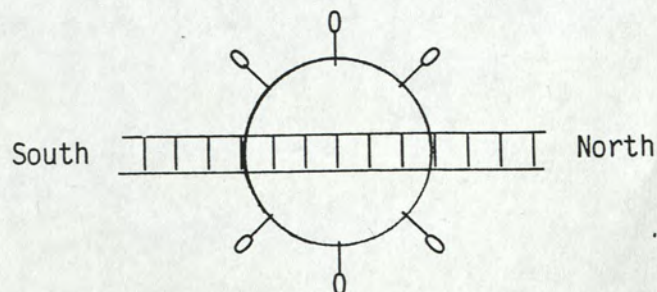
In 1873, the City of Cincinnati had decided to build a railroad to the South to compete with the L and N, which brought freight and important business through Louisville. When Gustave's former employer, Thomas D. Lovett was named consulting engineer for the new railroad, Mr. Lovett hired Gustave Bouscaren "to make the necessary surveys and the plans for the bridges ... over the Ohio and Kentucky Rivers." (Ford's History of Cincinnati).

In the early years, the Cincinnati Southern was called the Queen-Crescent, Queen for the "Queen City" Cincinnati and Crescent for New Orleans. By 1876, the double tracks had been laid from Ludlow in Kenton County to Corinth in Grant County - near the Scott County line. Before the line was completed to that point, however, the railroad was made available for train traffic by the ingenuity of civil engineers.

When the tracks were completed as far south as Williamstown, an extension of the track called a "Y" was added from near the depot to a point a mile farther south. The engine of the commuter, which carried working people into the city daily, could be turned around by backing it onto one prong of the Y in the evening. Then in the morning the train could be pulled forward to the depot. The seats were hinged so that they could be turned either direction.



When the tracks were extended as far south as Blanchet, a turntable, using neighborhood manpower rotated the engine.



The twelve months of 1877 were perhaps the busiest of Gustave Bouscaren's career. He opened a consulting office at 134 Vine Street in Cincinnati, but remained the consulting engineer for the Cincinnati Southern; he completed two famous bridges and participated in the testing of one of them.

High Bridge across the Kentucky River gorge in Jessamine County was not only the world's highest bridge at that time, but was also the first cantilever bridge in the western hemisphere. (The Bridge Builder, p.28). The World Book Encyclopedia (Vol. 3, p.184, 1988), describes a cantilever bridge as "a structural beam projecting from opposite sides of the river. The beams meet and are joined in the middle but get no support from their joining; that is, each half of the bridge can carry as much weight as the two can when joined."

High Bridge was completed February 20, 1877, and tested two months later on April 21. Hundreds of spectators came to the site by every means possible: on foot, by horseback, by boat, buggies, and bicycles. A large delegation of interested and important people from Cincinnati boarded a special train at Ludlow, Kentucky, to travel to Jessamine County for the big event.

After several preliminary tests, the moment came for the supreme safety test. As described by Henri Gustave Bouscaren, son of the civil engineer, the final test consisted of a heavily loaded freight train to be driven onto the bridge at high speed and then suddenly to have the brakes applied. As the time approached for the final test to begin, the engineer who would drive the train "took a doubtful look at the slender span and asked Gustave Bouscaren if he would be willing to ride in the locomotive cab." Gustave was willing; thus, the train engineer and the civil engineer rode safely together on the first trip across the world's highest bridge.

In September 1879 - two and a half years after the bridge was tested - President Rutherford B. Hayes traveled by train from Cincinnati to High Bridge to participate in the Dedication Ceremony. At various points along the railroad, including the Williamstown Depot, the train stopped for a short time to allow President Hayes to greet his admirers waiting at the railroad stations. Among those who accompanied President Hayes from Cincinnati was Gustave Bouscaren, the principal engineer of construction. (High Bridge, A Pictorial History by Howard Carry, printed by Feedback Printing, Inc., Lexington, Ky. 1984, p.33).

In 1881, when the Cincinnati Southern was leased by the Erlanger group, Gustave Bouscaren became the chief engineer of the entire southern system. The railroad was completed to New Orleans in 1884 (Who's Who in America, Vol. 1, 1897-1942), but Gustave remained the consulting engineer for the Cincinnati Southern Trustees and also continued his general business in civil and mechanical engineering at 134 Vine Street. (Ford's History of Cincinnati).

During the years 1881-1884, Gustave was listed as a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers, the Institute of Civil Engineers in England, and the French Societe des Ingenieurs. (Ibid.)

The Bouscaren family - Gustave, Helen, and their five children: Gus, Tim, Marie Lise, Pierre, and Gabrielle (an infant) moved back to the farm at the end of 1891 or early the following year. The family doctor had suggested that the pure country air would be beneficial for Helen's lungs, and living in the country would also be more economical than living in Cincinnati.

Although the country was a source of fresh air and the farm a source of fresh food, the spacious house had no running water, no indoor plumbing, no

central heating, and no telephone. In the country, as in the city, Helen was her children's first teacher. She talked to them, read to them, and sang to them in the French language, thus preserving their French heritage. The children were privileged to hear the famous Fables of Jean LaFontaine in the original language, instead of a translation. All five children became bilingual.

By 1893, the depression that had been in sight two years earlier, was now affecting the consulting business at 134 Vine Street. Gustave, who had been commuting to spend week-ends at home, was spending more time at home than at the office.

The two oldest children, Gus and Tim were enrolled in preparatory school at St. Xavier in Cincinnati. As the depression increased, even their train fare would have been a burden without their passes. For their convenience, especially on wintry mornings, their kind father - the famous civil engineer - constructed two sets of steps from the yard to the railroad track; the first set descended the embankment to the pike, the second set went down the embankment from the pike to the railroad track. The railroad engineer watched for the lads and allowed them to board the train near their house instead of walking to the station a half mile to the south.

After five years at the farm, the depression suddenly ended for the Bouscaren family; Gustave was appointed chief engineer of the new Cincinnati waterworks. Although he had been given recognition many times for his work with railroads and bridges, his family called the new waterworks project "his crowning achievement."

In Cincinnati, the Ohio River had been compared to an open sewer and the drinking water was called a civic disgrace. A layer of mud was left in

bathtubs, and, unless the water was filtered, a film of mud remained in drinking glasses; the typhoid rate was one of the highest in the land. With the first delivery of clean water, the typhoid rate dropped almost to zero. (The Bridge Builder, p.48). Both rich and poor now had germ-free water for drinking and cooking and clean water for bathing.

In 1901 with the waterworks project under construction, life for the Bouscarens was easier financially. In fiction, Helen and Gustave with their great love for one another and with their five beautiful children could have lived "happily ever after." But the country air had not healed Helen's lungs and in 1901, Gustave lost the "light of his life," the one whom their son called "a perfect wife and mother." She was only forty-eight years old.

Gustave survived her by only three years. He was stricken with cancer and died November 6, 1904. His funeral took place in St. Peter's Cathedral where he and Helen were married twenty-five years earlier. He was laid to rest beside Helen in St. Joseph's Cemetery, Price Hill, Cincinnati. A fitting epitaph for his monument or his life could have been the words of his son and biographer Louis Henri Gustave Bouscaren who said "Father was happy in his work."

November 6, 1989, will be the 85th anniversary of Gustave Bouscaren's death at age 64. Although he spent only four full years of his childhood at the Caribbean Farm in Grant County, Kentucky, the farm home was the magnet that drew him back repeatedly during his adult years. A monument marks his grave at St. Joseph's Cemetery in Price Hill, Cincinnati, but "...the great bridges of the railroad...with other fine structures on the line are monuments to his genius and skill." (Ford's History of Cincinnati).