

Osborne Library

The Osborne-Wright legacy also includes national leadership in Temperance and in the WEIU movement to teach poor women industrial skills needed for their employment. The Osborne-Wright Family, through its D.M. Osborne & Company, were also an important innovator and manufacturer of agriculture mechanization equipment changing the business of agriculture throughout the world.

We propose that the Osborne Library, in the center of Auburn, Cayuga County, New York, be used as a self-sustaining educational facility to help schools, the public and researchers explore the Osborne-Wright Family and its community's contributions to the human rights movements of the 19th and 20th Centuries.

The Osborne-Wright legacy is part of the historical foundation of Auburn, Cayuga County and the Corridor of Conscience between Monroe and Madison counties. However, nothing in Auburn, the family's hometown, remains to house, inform and excite the public of that legacy, so it is nearly forgotten today. The Osborne Library will serve that purpose.

As a research facility and museum that includes Thomas Mott Osborne, the Auburn prison and prison reform movements, the Osborne Library would be an educational tool unique in the world. Its advent was part of the first significant prison reform since the Quakers built the first penitentiary in Philadelphia soon after the American Revolution.

The Osborne Library will show educators and the public the Osborne-Wright Family's role in opening the state's wildernesses for sightseers and sports people. Lithgow Osborne, a son of Thomas Mott Osborne, led the state's Department of Conservation during its formative years.

OSBORNE CENTER FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

The Osborne Family



OSBORNE CENTER FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

99 South Street
Auburn, NY 13021

at the
Osborne Library

The Osborne Family's Historical Perspective



The Osborne-Wright Family was instrumental in shaping the most important of America's late 19th and early 20th Century struggles. The Osborne Library, being all that remains of the magnificent Osborne mansion complex, is already a part of the National Register South Street Historic District. Wealthy, erudite and idealistic, the family deeply involved itself in the women's rights' movement from its beginning. Martha Coffin (1806-1875) was a Philadelphia Quaker, who moved to Cayuga County to teach in a Friends school and married one of New York State's most prominent lawyers, David Wright.

In 1848 she and her sister, Lucretia Coffin Mott (1793-1880), were organizers of the Seneca Falls Convention, the world's first formal meeting about women's rights. Martha Wright's daughter, Eliza Wright Osborne (1830-1911), continued the women's rights' struggle until her death. Susan B. Anthony once wrote that the Osborne Family was among the movement's most important sources of funding.



Martha Coffin Wright

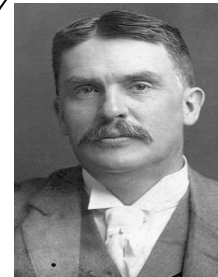
The Abolition Movement spawned the women's rights' movement, in which the Osborne-Wright Family was also central. The family helped make Cayuga County a harbor for freedom seekers. Its financial aid and connections settled many of them here. Its factories employed former slaves and helped them gain self-respect. Martha Wright's West Genesee Street, Auburn neighbors considered her "a very dangerous woman" because she entertained Frederick Douglass and put him up overnight.

It was Martha Coffin Wright, Lucretia Mott and Frances Miller Seward, who drew Harriet Tubman to Auburn, assuring her that bounty hunters would find Auburn an uncomfortable place to capture fugitive slaves. The family — Martha Wright, Eliza Osborne and finally Josephine Osborne, a local niece of Eliza — oversaw Harriet Tubman's financial affairs. The family's and the mansion's historical significance can be seen in the following paragraph, which Susan B. Anthony wrote in a letter in 1903:

"This most wonderful woman - Harriet Tubman - is still alive. I saw her but the other day at the beautiful home of Eliza Wright Osborne, the daughter of Martha C. Wright, in company with Elizabeth Smith Miller, the only daughter of Gerrit Smith, Miss Emily Howland, Rev. Anna H. Shaw and Mrs. Ella Wright Garrison, the daughter of Martha C. Wright and the wife of William Lloyd Garrison, Jr. All of us were visiting at the Osbornes, a real love feast of the few that are left and here came Harriet Tubman!"



Eliza Wright Osborne



Thomas Mott Osborne

In 1913, T. M. Osborne, Eliza's son, volunteered for a week living as an inmate in the Auburn prison. He then wrote a best-selling book about his experience, propelling himself to the forefront of prison reform. Soon he was appointed warden of Sing Sing and then commander of the naval prison in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in both places installing his radical Welfare League system with notable success.

The Auburn prison now called the Auburn Correctional Facility, was the source of many prison reforms. Lock-step, as a way to move prisoners in silence from cells to mess halls; prison industries to defray prison costs; prisoners confined to their own cells rather in congregated in open spaces and intimidating prison architecture were introduced there.

T. M. Osborne also served two terms as Auburn's mayor, mentored Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and is believed to be the man who suggested Roosevelt seek his first political office. As a team Osborne and Roosevelt worked to rid the state's Democratic Party of Tammany Hall and patronage before Roosevelt joined the Wilson administration as assistant naval secretary. It was Osborne, who found Louis McHenry Howe, the man who was to become Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt's closest friend and political mastermind.

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