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#### MICHIGAN'S FIRST REPUBLICAN GOVERNOR IS FROM GREEN OAK

Kinsley S. Bingham selected Green Oak Township as his new home in Michigan. He came in 1833, following his marriage to Margaret Worden, newly arrived from Scotland. In Section 11, about a half mile south of the Huron River, 200 acres were purchased. Margaret's brother, Robert, had married Bingham's sister, Caroline, and the two couples jointly purchased 120 acres. (Robert and Caroline also bought 320 acres.) They worked together on the task of developing a home site in the wilderness. This meant clearing, fencing, putting up buildings, planting, harvesting, etc.; all accomplished within a few years.

Four days after the birth of their son, Kinsley W., Margaret died. "After a suitable time..." her sister, Mary, became Kinsley's wife. A son, James W., was born to them in 1840. The brother of Kinsley S., Dr. Ira Bingham, arrived in 1841.

Having studied law in Syracuse, N.,Y., Kinsley's leadership abilities were put to good use even before Michigan statehood in 1837. Under the Territorial government his neighbors elected him to Justice of the Peace and post master positions. He was Livingston County's first Probate Judge. Election to the legislature followed upon statehood. Three of the four terms served were as Speaker of the House. In 1846, the only authentic farmer in the National Congress, his efforts were always in the interest of agriculture. While the merits of a forged plow as opposed to a cast iron plow escape us today, he knew the cast iron plow would hardly last one long row before breaking on the stones found in a Livingston County acre and prevented the introduction of the "Woods Patent Cast Iron Plow". Following his reelection in 1848, he strongly put forth his opposition to slavery.

Until 1854 he'd been a Free Soil Democrat. His Congressional record won him nomination to the governor's office in the newly formed Republican party, the first Republican governor in the country. A second term followed in 1856. Mindful of his agricultural roots he was responsible for the establishment of the first land grant college in the U.S., the Agricultural College in Lansing in 1857 (MSU). The construction of the 'Soo' locks, 1855, on the St. Mary's River, was another major accomplishment in his public career. We cannot begin to estimate the benefits to Michigan the locks represent, especially to the U.P. Educational, charitable and correctional institutions came into being during Bingham's administrations. His return to Congress in 1859, enabled him to be very active in Abraham Lincoln's campaign for president.

October 5, 2003, marks the 142nd anniversary of his death at his home in Green Oak Township. He was buried in the family burial site behind his home on Silver Lake Road, beside Margaret. In 1882, after Mary's death, Margaret's son, Kinsley W. moved the remains of his father, mother, half brother James (died in the Civil War), and his Uncle Ira, to the family plot in the Old Village Cemetery. (Compiled by Marieanna Bair from the 1891 Portrait & Biographical Album; Bill Pless' Supplement to the Old Village Cemetery; and 'Early Landowners and Settlers of Livingston County' by Milton Charboneau. Additions/corrections welcome. 810/229-6402.)