

## Roots

For my 84<sup>th</sup> birthday, my daughter Beth and her family gave me a membership in Ancestry.com, an online facility for researching your family tree. Over the years, with help from some other family members, I had built a fairly expansive family tree, but it had a number of holes that I had been anxious to fill in. This timely gift has given me the opportunity to do just that. However, family history is more than just a list of names and dates. More interesting by far are the stories of the people that made that history.

This part of the story begins one day in the mid 1920s, when Myrna's father Bill Dreier and his cousin Ferd Dreier were walking along a street in the little town of Casselton, ND, when they saw an attractive young woman that neither of them knew. Yet, family lore has it that Bill advised Ferd then and there of his intent to marry that woman. The woman was Gladys Priewe who, in fact, became Myrna's mother. This is the story of the events that led those three young people—each of whom was either a first- or second-generation immigrant from Germany—to encounter one another that day in that little North Dakota town.

### Dreier Family History

We are indebted to Myrna's cousin (by marriage), Carmen Bellingham, for most of what we know about this branch of the family. Some years ago, Carmen produced a very extensive document of family history for the Dreiers. I will reprise the basics of that history here along with some additions, changes and commentary that help clarify the story leading to that encounter in Casselton.

For our purposes, this part of the story begins in early 19<sup>th</sup> century in that part of Germany known at the time as Prussia. Carmen's family tree identifies the earliest Dreier ancestors as Casper and Elizabeth (Grelk) Dreier. She had no birth dates for either of these individuals and provided no documentation as to their relationship to the descendants she identified. I did find a Casper Henrich Dreier in the birth records, born on January 23, 1797 in Westfalen, Prussia. The recorded parents are Johan Henrich and Anna Maria (Hoogman) Dreier. I have no confirmation of this birth or the parents.

The only child the records have produced so far for Casper and Elizabeth is Jochim Henry, born January 21, 1827. Jochim married Dorothea (Dora) Flohr, who was born on January 18, 1833. Carmen's family tree identifies six children for Jochim and Dora and all six of them can be confirmed by subsequent records, although some of them are not critical to the story being told. These children are:

Caroline, b. November 1859; d. 1947

Frederick, b. 1865

Joachim Bernard, b. June 3, 1866; d. January 22, 1947

Ferdinand, b. 1869; d. 1897

John, b. 1870

Diedrich P., b. April 2, 1874; d. February 22, 1961

All six of them emigrated to the United States in their early years. Caroline had married Henry Luttmmer in about 1880 and they emigrated with a six-month-old child. They debarked for New York from Antwerp, Belgium on the ship *Gelgenland*, arriving on November 8, 1882. Henry listed his occupation as *farmer*. Ferdinand, John and Diedrich came from Hamburg, Germany to

New York through Le Havre, France, arriving on May 25, 1891. Their ship was the *Rhaetia*. Ferdinand listed his occupation as *painter*, John as *farmer* and Diedrich as *tailor*. They were 22-, 21 and 17 years old respectively.

Two months later, on the ship Wieland from Hamburg, Germany, Jochim and Dora arrived in New York on July 18, 1891, along with their son, Frederick, age 26. Both Jochim and Frederick listed their occupations as *joiner*. The passenger list for the same ship lists their son Joachim, age 25, his wife Margaret (Thompson), age 23, and a three-month-old daughter, Elizabeth. Joachim gave his occupation as *carpenter*. Most of the Dreier émigrés gave as a destination simply “United States,” but Jochim’s record lists “Preston,” so obviously Caroline and Henry Luttmer had already established a home base for the Dreier family in Preston, Minnesota, by the time the rest of the family arrived.

Nine years later, the 1900 U.S. census listed five families of Dreiers in the Preston area:

- 1) John C. Dreier and wife Sophia C. (born in Wisconsin in July 1873). John is listed as a *house painter*.
- 2) Anna Dreier and her three children, Ferdinand (age 7), Alsa (age 5) and Lillie (age 3). Anna was the widow of Jochim’s son Ferdinand. They had married soon after arriving in the U.S., having come here the same year (1891). However, Anna (Michel) had arrived a few months later (July 1891) on the same ship as the rest of the Dreier family. Anna listed her occupation as *washer woman*.
- 3) J. H. (Jochim) and Dora Dreier, their son Diedrich and their nephew John F. Dreier (age 48) who had immigrated to the U.S. in 1882. I could find no further information on the nephew or his family of origin, and he did not show up with the family in Preston on any further census. J. H. listed his occupation as *cabinet maker*, John as *day laborer* and Diedrich as *tailor*.
- 4) Joe B. (Joachim) and Margarite Dreier, four children (Henrietta, 7; Willie, 4; Laura, 2; and Martha, 5 months) and Joe’s brother Fred. Elizabeth, who had accompanied her parents on the ship from Hamburg, died in 1895 and Emma, born in 1894, died in 1897. Joe and Fred both listed their occupations as *carpenter*.
- 5) Henry and Caroline (Dreier) Luttmer and three children (Dora, 15; Henry, 11 and Louie, 7). Apparently, the six-month-old child that came with them on the ship from Belgium did not survive. Henry was a *farmer* and the family was listed on a different census sheet than the other four families, although it still listed Preston as the community with which they were associated.

Willie, the four-year-old listed in the Joe B. Dreier family in the 1900 census, is Myrna’s father, Bill. Joe’s family went on to add three more children (Herman, born in 1902; Walter, born in 1904; and Henry, born in 1907). Three days after Henry was born, his mother Margaret died, presumably as a result of the childbirth. Then, some thirty years later, Henry was hit by an automobile as a pedestrian on a rainy night and died.

Now let’s follow 7-year-old Ferd and 4-year-old Willie (Myrna’s father) who were the principals in that conversation on the street in Casselton some 25 years later.

Sometime between 1910 and 1920, Anna Dreier (Ferd’s mother) remarried. Her new husband was Albert Reinke, a German immigrant who was born in 1856 and came to the U.S. in 1881. Obviously, Albert is the key to how Ferd ended up in Casselton, although it is not clear how Albert and Anna met. In the 1900 census, Albert was living in Everest Township, Cass

County, ND with his wife of three years, Joanna. His occupation is listed as *farm laborer*. He had emigrated from Germany in 1881, she in 1886. On the passenger list for Albert's departure from Hamburg, he listed his occupation as murer, or *builder*. In the 1910 U.S. census for Casselton, ND, he is listed with his wife Joanna and his occupation is listed as "*Section Forman N P Ry.*"

The 1910 census shows that Anna Dreier had moved from Preston to La Crosse, WI, with her three children (Ferdinand, 17; Elsie, 15; and Lillie, 13). The following decade was a critical period for both of these families. During those ten years, Joanna Reinke had died, Lillie Dreier had married Edward A. Wilder, Anna had married Albert Reinke and the Wilders had moved to Casselton. The 1920 census shows them all living together in Casselton. This census shows Albert's occupation was still *section foreman* and Ed Wilder was listed as *section hand*. One can only speculate how Albert and Anna connected, but it seems pretty clear how Ferd ended up in Casselton and working for the Northern Pacific Railroad—and the 1930 census shows Ferd and his wife Selma living in Casselton with two children: Robert, 10; and Eleanor, 5 (According to a contributed record on the Ancestry web site, they were married in 1917 in Fresno, CA). At that time, Ferd was employed as a *fireman* on the railroad. The record also shows that Robert was born in California and Eleanor in North Dakota, so the family had to have moved to Casselton sometime between 1920 and 1925.

Meanwhile, Ferd's cousin Bill was growing up in Preston, MN, where the family was busily engaged in the house-building business. In fact, Diedrich, the tailor (Uncle Dick), continued to be listed as a carpenter in the census records until after 1930...and, through those years, Dick and his brother Fred continued to be shown in Joe's ledgers (listing transactions from 1899 to 1934) among his regular laborers.

Obviously, for the Dreiers, a first priority in the house-building business had to have been a domicile for the family because, by the 1910 census, there were ten individuals living at that home; Joe, his seven children and two brothers, Fred and Dick. We don't know exactly when it was built, but it was probably soon after the family became established in Preston. At this time we have no picture of the house as it was in earlier days, but it was a very roomy house, obviously intended to accommodate a large family. It was a two-story structure with five bedrooms on the second floor and a two-room apartment with separate entrance on the first floor. In later days, when Myrna was growing up there, the apartment accommodated Uncle Dick and his tailoring business.

Another interesting thing from Grampa Joe's ledgers were the charges for building the "German Lutheran Church" in 1903, which was the church in which Myrna and I were married. The total charge for the project was \$3,255.56. As it was built on contract, the ledger shows no breakdown of costs, but in other entries it does show that in 1903 Joe was charging between 20 and 25 cents per hour for the labor of his crew. A little arithmetic will tell what an equivalent cost might be in today's dollars. And it was not a large church, as can be seen from this postcard photo from early days.

By the 1920 census, Henrietta (Hanna) had married and moved out the previous year, but the house was no less crowded because Joe had taken in a boarder, one John Zollman who listed his occupation as *house painter*. Joe and Dick still



identified themselves as *carpenters*. Bill, now 24, was listed as an *electrician*.

It was early in the following decade that the two Dreier cousins, Ferd and Bill, came together in North Dakota. As the story is told in the family, Ferd—now living in Casselton with his wife Selma and their two children—contacted Bill and suggested in effect that North Dakota was the land of opportunity and invited his cousin to grasp that opportunity... which he did. And this is how we find them together that day in 1924 or 1925 walking that street in Casselton and taking notice of Gladys Priewe as she walked the same street.

### Priewe Family History

The earliest of the Priewe's I could find were Carl [b: May 21, 1829] and Elizabeth (Woznak) Priewe [b: February 18, 1830]. They were both born in Germany (Prussia), as were their five children, four of whom emigrated with them to the U. S: Theodore (b: December 12, 1856); Richard W. (b: April 3, 1860); Albert G. (b: January 30, 1863); and Melvina (b: May 30, 1868). They all came to the United States from Bremen on the German ship Sirius, arriving at Baltimore on June 16, 1874. Carl (the name on the passenger list was Wilhelm) listed his occupation as *joiner* and his destination in the U.S. as Minnesota.

Their eldest son, Emil G. (b: December 6, 1851), did not travel with them at that time. Emil was Myrna's great-grandfather. He had obviously arrived earlier, but the only individual on a possible passenger list had the name August Priewe. He was 18 years old, identified himself as Prussian and came to New York from Bremen on the German ship Jupiter. He listed his occupation as *musician*. The 1870 U.S. census lists an Emil Priewe, age 18, living in Henderson, MN. His listed occupation was *domestic servant*.

Emil's wife, Eugenie, is more of a mystery. We know (from later census records) that she was born in Prussia in January 1854 and came to the U.S. in 1872. However, I have been unable to locate a maiden name. We have a 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary photograph of Emil and Eugenie, on the back of which is the following notation: "First settlers of Casselton Dak. Ter : in 1872." To substantiate that claim, I found in Casselton's history on the web the following opening statement:

#### **The city that has been home to five North Dakota governors got its start as a windbreak.**

*It was 1873, and the Northern Pacific Railway sent Mike Smith to plant cottonwood and willow trees in the area to serve as windbreaks along the railroad's right-of-way. The idea was to harvest the trees and use them for railroad ties when the trees grew to maturity. As that experiment was growing, the one-man hamlet was called The Nursery, Goose Creek and Swan Creek for a stream that meandered through the area.*

*In 1874, Emil Priewe and his wife joined Smith there, and on March 28, 1875, their son, Harry, became the city's first child when he was born in their sod shanty. In 1876, a school was organized for area children.*

The first U.S. census I can find for Emil's family is for 1900. That census shows eleven people living in the Priewe household: Emil and Eugenie; Harry, age 24, his wife Amelia, also 24 (born in Norway) and their son Clarence, age 3; Frances, age 21; Emil, age 19; Elma, age 18; Hugo, age 16; plus two individuals identified as boarders; Amelia Donnenberg, age 13; and Peter Styles, age 34. Emil listed his occupation as *furniture dealer*; Harry as *railroad*; Francis as *school teacher*; Emil as *laborer* and Hugo as *barber*. Amelia and Elma were listed as *students* and Peter as an *upholsterer*. Myrna recalls living for a while in that house as a child. She can't

believe that so many people could live there. Even in the early 1930s, it did not have running water...at least for drinking or cooking.

In the 1910 and 1920 census, Emil and Eugenie were the only residents listed in the home and his occupation continued to be *furniture store*. A photo of the store at about that time, with Eugenie in attendance, is shown here.



In 1925, Eugenie died and sometime before the next census, Emil married a lady named Hulda Hahn, the widow of an area farmer whose husband had died the same year as Eugenie. Family lore has it that Hulda had been hired as a housekeeper for the widower and that a relationship developed, resulting in their marriage. The 1910 census indicates that Hulda had immigrated to the U.S. from Germany in 1895 with an infant daughter and that she had been the mother of two children, only one of whom survived. Sometime before 1910 she had married William Hahn, who was born in Wisconsin. The census that year shows the three of them living in Watson, ND, near Casselton. The 1920 census shows the immigrant daughter no longer living with the family and there had been the addition of a four-year-old son, whose name in the record is “Walter.” In the following census, he is as listed as fourteen-year-old “Reuben.” This fact becomes important because, forty years later, Reuben became Myrna’s stepfather.

That 1930 census shows the Emil Priewe family as Emil, age 78; Hulda, age 54; and Reuben, age 14. I can find little in the records about Reuben in the years after that census. Most of what I can relate comes from Myrna’s recollections. I will add those to the story as they become timely. Hulda became known as “Grandma Hahn” in the family and lived a long life bearing that name.

Among Emil’s offspring, we will now focus on his youngest son, Hugo, who was to become Myrna’s grandfather. On October 25, 1904, Hugo married Minnie Tullis and the 1910 census shows them living in Hawley, MN, just across the Red River from Fargo. Hugo listed his occupation as *telephone lineman*. By then there were two children in the family; Gladys, age 4; and Robert, age 2. When I tell you that, for several years before their marriage, Minnie had been an operator for the telephone company in Fargo, you can see how Hugo and Minnie might have made a connection. However, before we inquire about how she happened to be living in Fargo at that time, we need to trace her family back another generation (if we can believe the census records) to a woman named Madeline Burgess with a most fascinating life and history.

Although family lore has her born in Macomb, IL, there are no records to confirm that. The 1860 federal census shows her living in Sumnum (Fulton County), IL at the age of 6 (and in the 1870 census at the age of 15), so she was probably born there around 1855. Her father Jacob C. Burgess (b: about 1830) was a farmer. He had married Mary Ann Schields (b: about 1829) on September 25, 1851 in Fulton County, IL. Madeline was the eldest of at least six children, five of whom survived to the 1870 census.

That census shows two families adjoining one another in the list. The first was headed by Eliza Schields (Mary Ann’s mother). Her household included two of her children, both in their twenties and a seven-year-old, Charlotte Burgess, Mary Ann’s daughter. The other household

was headed by Mary Ann and included the rest of her surviving children, including Madeline. So, in that one census, we find Myrna's great-, great-great- and great-great-great-grandmothers. So now we'll follow the great-grandmother and see where she leads us. It turns out to be a fascinating venture.

I found a record for Madeline's marriage to William Billmire (probably actually spelled Billmyer, although the census records vary all over the place), giving the date: December 17, 1878. At the time, Madeline would have been about 23. However, family lore has it that there may have been another husband and two children prior to that. I can find no record of any such events, but I need to pass on the lore for whatever it is worth. That prospective husband was named Henry Wise and the two children were named Henry and Bertha. The junior Henry was reported to have committed suicide at age 21. I could never find either Henry in the records. I could find a Bertha Wise in later census records, but have no idea if any of those records reflect the Bertha claimed in the lore.

The 1880 census shows William and Madeline Billmyer living in Woodland, Fulton County, IL, with their nine-month-old daughter, Minnie Mae. William listed his occupation as *sewing machine agt.* Also in this family list were two other children, Samuel N, age 7; and Birthy E., age 4. These must have been children from an earlier marriage for William, because I can find no further record of either of them. Regrettably, I can also find no federal census for the year 1890, so whatever happened in the Billmyer family for the next twenty years has to be deduced from later census lists. It is clear from those records that William Billmyer faded from the picture and his two children by Madeline became part of another family. However, before we pursue the activities of that family, we need to consider what might have happened to William.

The federal census for the year 1850 shows the family of John and Elizabeth Billmyer living in Pike County, MO, with a three-year-old son named William C. Billmyer. His father, a tobacconist, listed his birth state as Pennsylvania; his mother listed Kentucky. In the 1880 census, William lists his parents birth states as Pennsylvania and Kentucky. So, when I found in the 1910 federal census in McDonough County, IL, the next county west of Fulton County, a 63-year-old man named William C. Billmyer, I had to ask, where his parents were born. The answer: Pennsylvania and Kentucky. This man and his wife had been married for 16 years and they had four children. This doesn't absolutely prove that this is the man that fathered Myrna's grandmother, but the evidence is pretty convincing.

Meanwhile a lot had happened since Madeline and her two daughters, Minnie and her younger sister, Nellie, had been living in Summum, IL, with husband and father William Billmyer. The 1900 census show Madeline now married for 14 years to Amos E. Tullis and living in Fargo, ND. That census record is almost as fascinating as the one from 1870 showing Mary Ann Shields' family. The head of the household is A. E. Tullis. His wife is listed simply as "M." All of the children have the family name "Tullis." First comes Minnie Tullis, the eldest; age 19 and single. Then, her sister Nellie Tullis; age 18 and married. Next in the household is William White; age 24 and married (for two years to Nellie). Then come four more minor children, ages 13 to 3. Amos lists his occupation as *painter* and the two older girls are both *telephone operators*.

We have no information as to why or when the Tullis family moved to North Dakota. I have been unable to find a 1900 federal census, but there are a number of periodic city directories for Fargo (from 1891 to 1919), and they shed some light on the family history in that interval. From these records we know that the family was living in Fargo as early as 1891, when Amos is working as a *brakeman* for the NPRR. For the next 18 years, he listed a number of

different occupations, and in 1909 he listed no occupation. Family lore has it that, sometime in this period, Amos had a “railroad accident” and lost a leg. This event was presumably the reason he took an interest in prosthetic limbs, because the 1910 census shows his occupation as *manufacturer, artificial limbs*. He continued this occupation for the rest of his days, moving to Minneapolis, MN, in about 1919. Although he was not a blood relative, the family always knew him as Grampa Tullis. He died on September 4, 1937. Madeline preceded him by ten years, passing on February 4, 1927.

So, now we know the events that led Hugo Priewe and Minnie (Billmyer) Tullis to know one another and to begin the relationship that produced Myrna’s mom Gladys Priewe. And, with this, we make the final connection in the chance meeting of Ferd, Bill and Gladys on that street in Casselton in the mid 1920s. Bill and Gladys were married on July 25, 1927...and Myrna was born in Fargo three years later. The story of Myrna’s childhood follows some interesting twists and turns and is worth a few paragraphs of explanation.

At the time Myrna was born, Bill was working in Casselton and the Great Depression was just getting under way. Soon thereafter, he lost his job and his father invited him to come back to Preson, MN, where the family remained active in the house-building business. At that time, four members of the family (Joe, sons Herman and Henry and his brother Diedrich) were working in the business. All were then living in the family home, along with Joe’s daughter, Laura, who was a nurse, and son Walter, who was a haberdasher. As I mentioned earlier, Joe had built a good-sized house for the family. It was a good thing, because three more people were about to move in. And that’s the home in which Myrna grew up, except for a couple extended visits to Casselton, which I will relate in time.

Through much of Myrna’s growing up years, the household in Preston was generously peopled with adult Dreiers. Henry died in 1938 and Walt was married later that year. Herman and Diedrich lived the rest of their days in the home and Laura kept a room there till after Myrna was gone. There were no other children in the family until her sister Laurel was born in 1945, when Myrna was 15. Grandpa Joe died two years later at the age of 80.

Meanwhile, In the fall of 1936, Grandma Minnie Priewe was dying of breast cancer in Casselton and Gladys and Myrna went there to share her final days and help Hugo deal with his loss. Myrna recalls going to school in Casselton for the first half of first grade. While they were in Casselton, they lived in Hugo’s house, which had been the Emil Priewe home before Eugenie died. Emil and Grandma Hahn had moved across the street where they were living with her son Reuben, then about 15. At this time, Gladys’ brother Robert and his wife Prunella (aunt Pat) had been living with Hugo and Minnie, along with their three boys, Ellison, Conrad and Rodney (Elly, Connie and Roddie). Myrna had been the only child in the home in Preston, but now she had three cousins about her age to share the home during those few months in Casselton. Minnie died on Christmas day and Myrna was back in Preston for the rest of that school year. However, three years later, they were back in Casselton, this time Bill, Gladys and Myrna.

On New Years Eve 1938, Hugo’s funeral home burned down. Nine days later, January 9, 1939, Emil Priewe died. That year, after Hugo had moved his business into in a new facility—a onetime lodge house in a residential neighborhood—Hugo asked Bill and Gladys to come help him get established. So the family moved into that funeral home before Myrna started the fourth grade. She spent the fourth and fifth grades in Casselton, but by early 1941 Bill had had a falling out with Hugo and had moved back to Preston. Myrna and her mother stayed in north Dakota till she finished that school year, then joined Bill in Preston, where she spent the rest of her growing-up years.

Interestingly, one of the people she remembers from those days was Reuben Hahn, who was the step-son of her great grandfather, Emil, and who was a teenager living with his mother and Emil in the early 1930s. In the 1940 census he is reported to be living on a farm in rural Cass County, and then nothing further in the ancestry records until a divorce action vs. Viola Hahn announced in the December 12, 1958 issue of the Tri-City Herald in Kennewick, WA. Census records later than 1940 are not now available. So, Reuben did not appear again on the family scene till the early 1970s, when he began courting Myrna's mother, who was then a widow and living in Southern California. They were married in 1971 and Gladys joined Reuben in Kennewick, WA, where they both lived out their days.

If I begin the story of my side of the family with how my parents met, that narrative is not nearly as dramatic as the one about Bill and Gladys. My parents went to the same high school in the little town of Arlington, Iowa, although Dad (Robert Ecker) was two years older than Mom (Winifred Bachtell). I don't recall hearing them ever talk about how that courtship started. It may not have started till after Dad graduated, because he spent his senior year in high school in Ault, Colorado, where he and his mother went to live for that year. However, that is a story for a little later. For now, we will speculate that those circumstances delayed their courtship till after he returned to Arlington and began to earn his own living.

The two sides of Dad's family followed very different tracks, originating in different parts of Europe and immigrating at very different times. However, before I begin following those tracks, I need to offer some other evidence that gives us insight into where the majority of our forebears may have originated. My brother, Tom, recently submitted a sample for DNA analysis to discover what our genes have to tell us about where we came from. Following is the result of that analysis. It shows the percentages of our genes that came from forebears living in various parts of the world—mostly Great Britain and Ireland.

Great Britain, 63%  
Ireland, 18%  
Scandinavia, 9%  
Iberian Peninsula, 3%  
Western Europe, 3%  
Italy-Greece, 2%  
Finland-Northern Russia, 2%

Finally, I need to point out that a second cousin of mine (Jim Hinkley) has researched the Ecker Family tree very extensively and he sent me some years ago a 23-thousand word narrative documenting the family ancestry in much more detail than I intend to do here—tracing one branch back to a Robert Greene, living in Browridge Hill, Dorset County, England in 1543. His narrative can be seen at <http://www.ocomm.net/family/ecker.pdf>. My narrative here will go back no more than about five generations, but will include some information from more current research.

### Ecker Family History

The first American Ecker, came here from Germany in 1737. Christopher Ecker was born in 1718 in Wachendorf, Mittelfrunker, Bayern, Germany. His parents were Andreas and Margaretha (Bussman) Ecker. Family lore has it that he was a physician, but I could find no confirmation of that tradition. He settled in Coventry Township, Chester County, PA and, in

1740, he married Elizabeth Stager (b: January 1, 1722; d: March 6, 1777). They had two children, John and Jacob. Christopher died on February 26, 1747 at the age of 28. He may have been a Mennonite as he married a Mennonite woman and is buried in a Mennonite cemetery. My cousin's narrative suggests that Elizabeth may have been born in Germany, but that is only speculation. Her father, Jacob, was identified in documents as a prominent Mennonite.

Christopher's son John lived most of his life in Frederick Co., MD. Although his occupation was never revealed, he owned a lot of land and was likely a farmer. On September 8, 1769, he married Elizabeth Engle (born on June 8, 1753 in Chester Co. PA and died on September 8, 1811 in Frederick Co., MD). Elizabeth's parents, Casper and Elizabeth apparently lived out their lives in Chester Co., PA. John died on October 13, 1821 and is buried in Frederick County, MD. They had nine children, the seventh of whom, Abraham, was born in New Windsor, MD, on June 1, 1785.

Abraham studied (apprenticed) to become a physician and on February 11, 1806 married Elizabeth Barnharte (born on February 11, 1786 in Frederick Co. MD and died on February 4, 1872 in Ashland Co., OH). They had twelve children. Two were born in Maryland, five in Westmoreland Co., PA—where they lived from 1810 to 1818—and the last five in Ashland Co., OH, where they lived out their days—he as a practicing physician. Abraham died in Rowsburgh, OH on November 11, 1859.

Abraham's sixth child, John, was born on April 2, 1816, while the family lived in Pennsylvania. On January 1, 1837, John married Catherine Ihrig (born on September 29, 1818 in Wayne Co., OH and died on September 2, 1897 in McGregor, IA). Like his father, John became a physician, but there is little evidence that he had much of a practice and, in 1856, his family moved to West Union, IA, where he lived out his days as a practicing physician, although he was also elected as a county judge for at least one term. John died in West Union on May 26, 1873. He and Catherine had thirteen children.

Their first child was Abraham B. Ecker, born in Rowsburgh, OH on December 31, 1837. He was eighteen when the family moved to Iowa. The census showed him employed as a clerk. On October 7, 1858, he married Harriet Conkey (born on July 26, 1839 in Farmer, OH and died on March 27, 1916 in Des Moines, IA). Three years later, the Civil War began and A. B. (as he became known) almost immediately enlisted in the Union Army as a musician (fifer). He served on active duty for slightly more than four years. He went back to his work as a clerk in the county offices (being elected at one time as Recorder of the city of West Union) and later went on the road as a traveling salesman. He divorced Harriet on September 24, 1886 and married Ida Blanch Graham Huxley in Kenosha, WI on February 15, 1887. A. B. died in Chicago on March 1, 1916, and he is buried there. He and Harriet had two children, the eldest of whom was Ernest Conkey Ecker, my grandfather.

As I pointed out earlier, Jim Hinkley, has been able to trace the Conkey branch of the tree back into the sixteenth century in England. I will not attempt to identify any of those ancestors here. In fact, the Hinkley narrative will provide interesting detail and on much of what I have recorded here.

Ernest was born in West Union on October 23, 1859. On July 27, 1880, he married Janet Maria Hutchison in Mt. Sterling, WI. Apparently, Mt. Sterling was the home of Janet's uncle. She was living in Arlington, IA at the time. Ernest and Janet Maria (my grandparents) had five children: Edna, born February 14, 1882; Ernestine, born December 16, 1883; Janet, born July 5, 1887; John, born May 29, 1890; and Robert (my father), born August 31, 1902. Because my father's siblings were so much older than he, my cousins on that side were also much older than I,

so I never got to know any of them (except one—my aunt Edna’s daughter, Barbara, who lived in Waverly after she married Jack Wright). Now, before I proceed further with this part of the tree, I need to pass on what I have discovered about my grandmother’s family.

### Hutchison Family History

Janet’s father, John Hutchison was born in Maypole, Scotland on January 2, 1837. He migrated to the U.S. in 1856 and settled in Belleville, MI, where he had an older brother already living at the time. He joined his brother in the wagon shop business. On December 14, 1859, he married Martha Lickiss, who was born in Belleville on May 1, 1841. Janet Maria, the second of their seven children, was born nearby in Ypsilanti on September 15, 1862. In 1865, the family moved to Iowa where he established and ran another wagon shop for ten years, when he sold it and moved to Arlington (then called Brush Creek). By then he had qualified to pass the bar in Iowa and spent the rest of his days as an attorney and politician. John died on November 29, 1929. Martha died on January 2, 1929. Both are buried in Arlington.

Martha’s parents were John and Maria (Webster) Lickiss, both born in England; John in Yorkshire in 1804 and Maria in Leicestershire in 1803. I found a passenger list of the brig Freake, arriving at New York on June 25, 1827, with a John Lickiss as passenger, listing his age as 23 and his occupation as *farmer*. I could find no record of Maria’s immigration. John’s parents were William and Janet (Hamilton) Hutchison. Both were born and died in Scotland; John 1787-1860, Janet 1799-1877. As far as I have been able to determine, all of the earlier Hutchison ancestors that could be located lived their lives in Scotland, at some place or another not too far from Edinburgh.

### Bachtell Family History

The first Bachtell in America was Martin David Bachtell (b: January 26, 1710; d: August 25, 1786), except in those days, they spelled the name Bechtel. As far as we know both he and his wife Elizabeth (Reiff) Bechtel were born in Germany (the Palatinate?) and immigrated (presumably together) to Philadelphia around 1740. Their son Samuel Bechtel (b: June 25, 1741; d: February 20, 1814) is the first Bachtell ancestor about whom we have much confirmed information. His gravestone lists his parents and some siblings. In addition, a more recent stone can be seen in front of the original and showing some details of his service as a private in the Revolutionary War.

In 1768, he married Margaret Coulston (b: 1744; d: June 28, 1815). Margaret was the daughter of Samuel Coulston, a significant land owner in Montgomery County, PA, and who was already well established in the community. Samuel Bechtel became a farmer and he and Margaret had seven children, one of whom was named after his father and became the ancestor of our line of the family. Samuel, Jr. was born on December 10, 1777 in New Hanover Township, Montgomery County, PA and died on August 23, 1831. He married Elizabeth White (b: Londonderry Township, Chester Co., PA, April 15, 1780; d: Washington Co., PA, April 18, 1868) and they had ten children, all born in Londonderry Township. Elizabeth’s parents were of Scotch-Irish descent and came to this country from County Down, Ireland in 1770. Sam and Elizabeth and Sam’s parents were all members of Faggs Manor Church and all four (plus two infant children) are buried in the cemetery across the street from the church.

David Bachtell was Sam and Elizabeth’s last child. He was born December 15, 1818. On January 2, 1840 he married Susannah Davis (b: May 6, 1819), whose parents, Jacob and Euphema Davis were residents in Chester County. David and Susannah had ten children over the

next 22 years. The eldest of these (and my great grandfather) was Thomas Davis Bachtell, born in Chester County, PA on November 23, 1840. They had two more children in Pennsylvania and then moved to Ohio, where another was born, and then to Iowa where they bore the rest of their children and lived the rest of their days. It is said that David was a butcher in the early days, but became a farmer later in life. He died on February 17, 1891 and Susannah died three weeks later on March 13, 1891. They are both buried in Elkader, IA.

Thomas Davis Bachtell (who apparently adopted the name "Davis" as his given name) was living on the family farm in Elkader when he married Adelia Iantha Ingraham on November 19, 1862. She went by the name "Deal" and their wedding certificate shows their names as "Davis Bachtel, age 22 and Deal Ingram, age 19." A year later their first child was born and the following year Thomas was drafted into the Union Army and was mustered into the Iowa Volunteers on October 8, 1864. He was mustered out on October 11, 1865.

Deal was born in Wayne City, MI on June 1, 1844. Her father Donald had come from England. Her mother Roxey (or Betsy) came from Michigan. Davis and Deal went on to have nine more children between 1867 and 1886. Their fourth child, Henry Elmore, born April 16, 1871 in Volga City, IA, was my grandfather. Davis spent his life as blacksmith in National, IA. [Note: National no longer exists as a community. We have been to Bachtell family reunions at the site where the town used to be. It is now the location of the Clayton County fairgrounds.] Thomas died September 18, 1910; Adelia on June 30, 1932. Both are buried at Volga City, IA.

I never knew my grandfather, Henry Elmore (He went by the name Elmer). He died on December 22, 1924. On August 25, 1895, in National, IA, he married Bessie Izora Smith (b: January 23, 1879, National, IA). Early in his career, he was a blacksmith like his father, primarily in Arlington. Later, he was involved in the produce business. They had eight children, two of whom died in infancy. Winifred (my mother) was the fourth oldest of the surviving six children. As Bessie was still fairly young (46 years) when her husband died, it is not surprising that she remarried. Her second marriage was brief and ended in divorce. I was present (in utero) a few years later when she married Carl Wilkinson (b: National, IA, about 1877) in Waverly, IA on February 8, 1930. Carl was the only grandfather I ever knew on that side of the family, although we always knew him as just "Carl."

### Smith Family History

The Smith branch of our family is the biggest challenge for the ancestry tracker. Actually, it's not the Smiths themselves that offer the challenge but the branch of the woman married to the most recent Smith. The earliest member of that branch we can find was a man named Peter Demo. There is a fading gravestone in Sand Hill Cemetery, Brushton, Franklin County, NY that has on its face the following identification: "PETER DEMO; DIED; Jan. 16, 1859.; Aged 112 Years." The consensus among people that have tried to trace the background of this man is that he was born with the name Pierre Guimond and emigrated to the U.S. (Vermont and New York) from Canada. Most of those people contend that he was born in Canada. The year of his birth is a matter of some contention. If we count back 112 years from 1859, his birth year would be 1847. However, if we look at census records beginning in 1850, when the records began to show specific ages of individuals, we find his age listed as 94 in the August 1850 U.S. census and 97 in the June 1855 New York state census. These are probably more accurate estimates and would put his birth year between 1756 and 1758, making him more likely around 102 when he died. There is also a question concerning whether or not he was born in Canada because, in the 1880

census, his son Wallace (my great-great-grandfather) declares that his father was born in France and his mother in Canada.

These are by no means the only mysteries in this ancestry. There is a period of about fifty years in the life of Peter Demo about which we know almost nothing. The 1820 census for North Hero, VT shows a Peter Demo household of four members; one male older than 45, one female between ages 16 and 25, and two males younger than 10. So, at that time, Peter was married to Julia F. (no known family name) who was more than thirty years younger than he. There have been a lot of speculations about what he had been doing during those five decades, but none has been convincingly documented. Among the most fascinating of these speculations is that he was married to an Abanoki Indian woman and that our family descended from that union. However, it seems clear that the spouse from whom our line descended was Julia F., a Caucasian born in about 1795 in New York (or Canada?). In addition, the DNA test shown earlier makes it clear that Native American genes are conspicuously missing in our heritage. So, although Peter Demo is a fascinating ancestor, much of his background will continue to be clouded in mystery.

Wallace Demo was born in North Hero, VT on May 21, 1825. He was one of eight children. In 1844, he married Deliah Bunor (b: Scotia, Canada, March 25, 1823). The 1880 U.S. census had them living in National, IA, where Wallace was listed as a mail carrier. The 1900 census in National listed them as the parents of ten children, five of whom were still living. Wallace's occupation was listed as farmer.

In the 1905 Iowa census for McGregor, IA were listed, on the same page, the Wallace Demos and the family of Ash Smith (b: 1848, New York), including his wife Delia D. (b: 1856, New York) and four children. Delia was one of the five surviving children of Wallace and Deliah Demo. Ash (Ashmond) and Delia were my great-grandparents. At the time of this census, they had four children still living with them. Bessie (their eldest and my grandmother) had been married to Elmer Bachtell for ten years by that time. Ash Smith was listed as a day laborer.



Elmer and Bessie's six surviving children were a rather close-knit family group (Lester, b:5/23/96; Claude, b:8/25/97); Leo, b:11/28/01; Winifred, b:11/28/04; Valmah, b:9/23/07 and Lois Lavon, b:6/5/10). They and their children were the relatives I remember most from my early years. Most of them lived in or around Arlington, IA as I was growing up, as did all four of my grandparents.

Shown on the left is a photo taken of eleven Bachtell cousins, posing in our

grandmother Wilkinson's back yard in the summer of 1933. They are identified as follows, with their birth dates: Children of Valmah (Pete) Bachtell—A=Bill, 10/20/28; B=Darlene, 9/16/26; C=Leon (Gus), 12/30/30; D=Sid, 9/8/32. Children of Winifred Bachtell Ecker—E=Ted,

11/19/26; F=Don, 6/22/23; G=Dick, 3/13/30. Children of Leo (Pick) Bachtell—H=Tom, 1/26/23; I=Helena, 12/21/24; J=Edna Irene (went by Irene), 1926?; K=Roy, 12/22/28.

In the matter of how and when Robert Ecker began courting Winifred Bachtell, there is an interesting mystery involved. Robert left Arlington and moved with his mother to Ault, CO for his senior year in high school. The reason he always gave was that they thought he had tuberculosis and it was common in those days for patients to move to higher elevations in Colorado and live in a tent while they were being treated for the disease. However, when I began to research that story, I discovered that there never was a tuberculosis tent camp anywhere near Ault. What there was in Ault was the home of Dad's eldest sister, Edna, which is obviously where he and grandma stayed while they were there. Couple this with the fact that Dad was a track star at Ault High School and the tuberculosis story becomes really hard to believe. Then, if you add the following explanation from Dad's book, *No Green Pastures*, it seems possible that Grandma invented the tuberculosis story to get a little R&R.

*As far back as I could remember, my father had been what was known as a "tramp printer." This was not meant to be a derogatory term, but it was pretty descriptive. It referred to the printer's common habit of changing jobs with great frequency. Printers in those days were in great demand. So, the knowledge that a job was always waiting in some other town made them overly independent. The slightest disagreement between labor and management brought about the instant departure of labor. After a while, I think this pattern deteriorated into a sort of disease for my father.*

*When I started the second grade in Fayette, Iowa, I had already been in two other schools. At that point my mother decided to put her foot down. She told my father that he could travel as much as he wished, but she and I (I was the only child still at home) were staying in Fayette. And that was the way it was for five years. Dad always managed to stay within easy reach of us, and generally made it home on week-ends. Occasionally, he would even take a job in Fayette. So I attended school in Fayette from second grade through sixth. Then my mother apparently weakened. Seventh and eighth grades were in What Cheer, ninth grade in Sumner, and in the tenth grade I was back in Fayette.*

So, Mom was entering her junior year in high school when Dad returned from his "tuberculosis therapy" in Colorado. It was that fall (1920) that he met Mom at a chiveree for a pair of newlyweds in Arlington. He had already begun to learn the printing trade at the Arlington News, but he had to find work elsewhere if he wanted to follow the trade. He went to Osage first and then to Waverly. So he had to travel a considerable distance for those days to do his courting (and Arlington was not easy to get to). Of course, true love won out and they were married within a week of her graduation from Arlington high school and moved to Waverly, where they lived out the rest of their days.