

Old Franklin Township Historical Society Newsletter

December 2018 - Volume 11, Issue 2

WWII: LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT STORIES

By Barbara Darnell Bryant. MaryDon Beeson provided several photos.



Thelma Merida Catterson

One time I was talking to my mother (Thelma Merida Catterson Darnell Haller) about love at first sight and she surprised me with a couple of stories. I knew she loved dancing but did

not know that she went to dances at Camp McCoy during WWII. That is where she met my Dad (Pvt. George Clovis Darnell) who was in the Army Air Corps. When she was introduced to my dad, she said it was love at first sight for both of them.

They dated for a few months. He also sent her some postcards which were free to send through the mail and we still have in our possession. He gave her a sweetheart pin, then he was transferred overseas and sent letters when he could. When in France, he



Pvt. George Clovis Darnell at home of Christina Kraemer Catterson

made her a bracelet from coins (called trench art). After the war he was discharged and returned home to Texas. He sent my mother a telegram asking her to come to Texas so they could get married. She got on a train and they were married October 31, 1945 in Bay City, Texas. They had four children from that union. Unfortunately, their marriage ended in divorce. Thelma had a second marriage, to Raymond Haller, who died earlier than my mother. When my mother was planning where to be buried, she surprised us children because she expressed the desire to purchase a plot next to my father because she said he was her soul mate. Mom and Dad are buried in Midfield, Texas. Dad served from 5 Aug 1940 - 3 Oct 1945. My sister Linda used the coins from the trench art bracelet and remade it into a necklace for my brother and into bracelets for me and my sisters.

My mother told me about her cousin Kay (Agatha Katherine "Kay" Kraemer, daughter of Mary Elizabeth Walsh and Sylvester Kraemer) who came from Plain to attend



Thelma Merida Catterson wearing the Sweetheart Pin from George Clovis Darnell

dances with my mom, my grandmother (Christina Kraemer Catterson), and Lillian Nelson (who later became Marcel



Allan Peter Rolstad in 1944

to marry him that night and they got married on 31 Oct 1944. She and Allan settled in Seattle, Washington, and had ten children from that union. Allen served in the Army from 9 Apr 1942 - 7 Dec 1945.

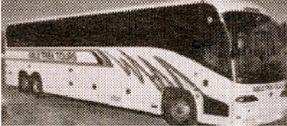
Catterson's wife). One night an Army man, Allan Peter Rolstad, asked Kay to dance and she said it was love at first sight for both of them. He asked her



Kay tries on her uncle Austin Walsh's uniform for a patriotic photo, 1943 on the Sylvester Kraemer farm

One time my family and I visited my cousin Kay in Seattle. I told her I knew about how she had met her husband, fell in love at first sight and got married. But what I didn't know until Kay revealed the shocker was that after Allen asked her to marry him, they got married THE NEXT WEEK END! So, love at first sight is real! And isn't it crazy that both my mother and Kay married on Oct 31st! It wasn't a trick - it was a treat for sure!

I do believe in love at first sight. I joined the United States Navy in 1966 and was stationed in Corpus Christi, Texas. When I saw my husband, Robert Byrant, on the base, it was love at first sight for both of us. That night he told me he wanted to marry me. We dated from Thanksgiving Day 1966 to the middle of January 1967. He asked me to marry him, I got an engagement ring and then he was transferred to Whidbey Island, Washington. We decided to get married in a year, but after writing many letters and several phone calls we decided to get married in May 1967. We have been happily married for 51 years.

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“He was a soldier and died just before the close of the Civil War”

By Ken Kraemer

So says the epitaph on a grave marker in the old St. Luke Cemetery just south of Plain, Sauk County, Wisconsin. The grave is actually that of Elizabeth Degen Reaser, but the marker also seeks to remember her husband Ulrich Reaser.



Photo by Gary Haas

Inscription on grave marker:

Elizabeth Reaser¹
Born 1832 – Died 1917
Wife of
Eulrick Reaser
He was a soldier and died
just before the close of the Civil War
May their souls rest in peace
REASER

OBITUARY—RIESER.
One of the oldest pioneers, Mrs. Elizabeth Rieser, died at her home Tuesday morning, after an illness of three weeks at the age of 85 years. She was born in Switzerland and came to this country about 65 years ago. Her husband was a soldier in the civil war and died in the service.
About twenty years ago she joined the Catholic church, of which she has been a member ever since. She was buried Thursday morning in St. Luke's cemetery, Rev. Geo. Pesch officiating.
She leaves to mourn her loss three daughters and one son, John Rieser, Emily and Elizabeth Rieser of Spring Green and Mrs. Christina Haas of Plain, and many friends.

Weekly Home News
Feb. 18, 1917

Anyone seeing this marker has to be moved by the fact that so little was known about a man who gave his life fighting for the Union side in the American Civil War – not even his birth, death or where he died are indicated. Consider the shock that his widow, Elizabeth, must have felt upon getting word of his death. She was suddenly left alone with four young children.

So, who was Ulrich Reaser? Ulrich was born in Switzerland about 1831 and married Elizabeth Degen on 24 November 1850 in Bubendorf, Baselland, Switzerland (Switzerland Marriages, 1532-1910).² They immigrated to America aboard the ship “William Jarvis” which departed from Antwerp, Belgium, and arrived in New York City on July 18, 1854. The ship manifest which follows shows that Ulrich was age 29 and Elizabeth age 28.³ Although Ulrich and Elizabeth were from Switzerland, the manifest listed them both as “belonging” to Germany and intending to live in the United States.⁴

Ship Manifest for the ship “William Jarvis”- July 18, 1854

Headers: Names, Occupation, Age, The country to which they severally belong, The Country they intend to inhabit
326: **Ulrich Rieser**, farmer, age 29, belongs to Germany, intends to inhabit the United States.
327: **Elisab.**, age 22, belongs to Germany, intends to inhabit the United States.

¹ The last name was originally Rieser, and sometimes misspelled as Reiser. Later it came to be spelled as Reaser (per Eliz. baptism record; marriage record, obituary).

² “Schweiz Heiraten, 1532-1910” database, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:FVNZ-CNG>), Ulrich Rieser and Elisabeth Degen married 24 Nov 1850; citing Bubendorf, Baselland, Switzerland.

³ Elizabeth Degen was born 18 Dec 1831 in Bubendorf, Baselland, Switzerland to Jakob and Anna Degen. “Schweiz Taufen, 1491-1940,” database, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:FV8L-HZG>)

⁴ Both the marriage record and the 1860 U.S. Census support the notion Ulrich and Elizabeth were both from Switzerland. Subsequent censuses say they were from Switzerland, from Germany and Waldmünchen, Bavaria. We give the greatest credence to the marriage record and the self-report in the 1860 census.

DISTRICT OF NEW-YORK--PORT OF NEW-YORK.

I, *Mr. Ballard*, do solemnly, sincerely, and truly *swear* that the following List or Manifest of Passengers, subscribed with my name, and now delivered by me to the Collector of the Customs for the District of New-York, contains, to the best of my knowledge and belief, a just and true account of all the Passengers received on board the *Ship Mr. Jarvis* whereof I am Master, from *Switzerland* So help me God. *Wm. Ballard*

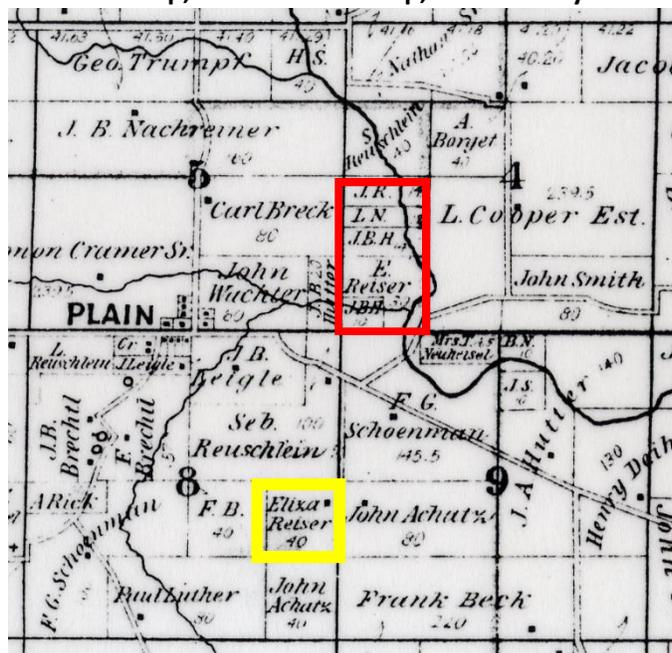
Sworn to this *13th* day of *July* 1854 at *New York* in presence of *Collector*

LIST OF MANIFEST of all the PASSENGERS taken on board the *Ship Mr. Jarvis* whereof *Mr. Ballard* is Master, from *Switzerland* burthen *ton.*

CL	NAMES	AGE Years - Months	SEX	OCCUPATION	The country to which they severally belong.	The Country in which they intend to become inhabitants.	Died on the voyage.
201	<i>Ernst Lueke</i>		<i>Farmer</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>German</i>	<i>United States</i>	
220	<i>Ulrich Rieser</i>		<i>Farmer</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>Switzerland</i>		
224	<i>Elizabeth</i>		<i>Female</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>Switzerland</i>		
225	<i>Emilie</i>		<i>Female</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>Switzerland</i>		

Source Citation: Year: 1854; Arrival: New York, New York; Microfilm Serial: M237, 1820-1897; Microfilm Roll: Roll 142; Line: 36; List Number: 885. Source Information: Ancestry.com. New York, Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820-1957

1893 Plat Map, Franklin Township, Sauk County



We do not know where the Reasers lived between 1854 and 1860, but they were living in Franklin Township, Sauk County, Wisconsin, as of the 1860 census. On June 1, 1860, "John Ulrich Riser" received a Land Patent for 40 acres in Section 8, Town 4 Range East from the Land Office in La Cross, Wisconsin. See yellow box on the map. Sometime before 1865, they acquired a second parcel of land just east of Plain – this was 80 acres in Section 4, located just north of the present-day Cedar Grove cheese factory (see red box on map).

Ulrich and Elizabeth were listed as born in Switzerland in the 1860 U.S. Census. It is likely they were Swiss-German as the ship manifest and later census records show them as German and/or German speaking. The census also indicates that White Mound was their

postal address. Plain did not have a post office until 1861. Based on their reported age in the 1860 U.S. Census (following), Ulrich would have been born in 1831 and Elizabeth in 1832. This later date is consistent with the birth records, ship record and the date on Elizabeth's grave marker.

1860 U.S. Census, Town of Franklin, Sauk County, Wisconsin

The 1860 census shows Ulrich and Elizabeth had twin daughters.

Transcription:

Ulrich Rieser, age 30, male, farmer, 200 value of real estate, 100 value of personal estate, born Switzerland

Elizabeth, age 26, female, born Switzerland

Elizabeth, age 4, female, born Wisconsin

Emilie, age 4, female, born Wisconsin

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SCHEDULE 1—Free Inhabitants in Franklin **in the County of** Sauk **State**
of Wisconsin **enumerated by me, on the** 31st **day of** August **1860.** A. P. Dillig Ass't Marshal.
Post Office White Mountain

1	2	3	4			7	9		10	11	12	13	14
			Age	Sex	Color		Value or Real Estate	Value of Personal Estate					
37	1207	Ulrich Reiser	20	m		Farmer	200	100	Switzerland				
38		Elizabeth	26	f					"				
39		Elizabeth	4	f					Wisconsin				
40		Caroline	4	f									

Before Ulrich would go off to the Civil War, they had a daughter Christina and a son John R. (who died just before his 4th birthday).

"RIESER: John R. d. May 8, 1867 - 3y 11 m - Son of U. & E." (Source: Myrtle E. Cushing, *Cemetery Inscriptions of Sauk County, Wisconsin*, volume 6, page 35). Burial was at Pleasant Hill Protestant Cemetery, west of Plain on the right side of County B when traveling west in Franklin Township, Sauk County, Wisconsin.

Like others from Franklin Township,⁵ Ulrich was placed on a draft list for the Civil War in 1863. Surprisingly, given his age (32) and father of four young children, he enlisted to serve in the Civil War on 19 October 1864 in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. He may have been motivated by an enlistment bonus.

Draft List, June 30, 1863, Third Congressional District, Wisconsin

Consolidated List of All Persons of Class I, subject to do military duty in the Third Congressional District consisting of the counties of Richland, Iowa, La Fayette, Green, Crawford, Grant and Sauk, State of Wisconsin, enumerated during the month of June 1863, under direction of Capt. John G. Clark, provost Marshal.

Headers: residence, name, age, white or colored, occupation, marital status, place of birth

Franklin Township

Reushlin [Reuschlein], Joseph, 25, white, farmer, married, Germany

Reushlin [Reuschlein], Sebastian, 23, white, farmer, single, Germany

Rick [Riek], Anthony, 31, white, farmer, married, Wittertemberg [Wuerttemberg, Germany]

Reaser, Ulric, 36, white, farmer, married, Germany

Records from the Wisconsin Veterans Museum document Ulrich's war history. He enlisted in the 1st Wisconsin Light Artillery for one year on October 10, 1864, at Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. He was described as 40 years old, married, brown eyes, black hair, dark skinned, 5' 7" tall, and a farmer.

The regimental muster roll ("M") for December of 1864 shows Ulrich was a new recruit who joined the unit at Baton Rouge, Louisiana, on 22 Dec 1864. His unit made many long marches, participated in many minor movements, and made frequent contact with the enemy. In the muster and bi-monthly muster rolls ("M & B.M.") for June of 1865, Reaser was listed as absent, because he was sick in the General Hospital in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. It does not indicate the exact date he went to the hospital. It is likely that Ulrich was hospitalized in the Asylum for the Deaf and Blind in Baton Rouge, LA. During the Union occupation of Baton Rouge, the Asylum housed a general hospital while Union troops often camped about its open grounds. Ulrich died on July 2, 1865. According to the Regimental History, volume 20, page 285, he was buried under the name Ulrich Reiser in section 45 grave 325 in a cemetery at Jefferson

⁵ See the June 2015 issue of the OFTHS Newsletter for a story about John and Michael Weishan who also enlisted in the Civil War.

Barracks in Lemay, St. Louis County, Missouri. Jefferson Barracks was a Union military post with a hospital that served both sides during the Civil War. Either he died in the hospital at Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and was taken nearly 650 miles north to the St. Louis area to be buried, or he rejoined the regiment after his stay in the hospital and died somewhere between Baton Rouge and St. Louis. The entry is unclear on these points. He was mustered out of the army with the battery on July 18, 1865. It is likely that they officially mustered him out on July 18, even though he had actually died a couple of weeks earlier. Elizabeth filed for a widow's war pension and received payments until she died in 1917.

Widow pension payment card

"United States Veterans Administration Pension Payment Cards, 1907-1933," database with images, *FamilySearch*

There was no will, so Elizabeth filed for probate on 9 October 1865. She was 33 years old and had three girls and a boy: Amilia (Emily) and Elizabeth ages 7; Christina age 3, John age 2 (who would die in May 1867). The property inventory prepared by an appraiser for the court shows that the total value of the estate

was \$537.42. It was comprised of the real property and household property. Most of the value was in two pieces of property.

Description	Size	Valuation
1. East ½ of the SW ¼ of Section 4, town 9 north of Range 4 east	40 acres	\$125
2. NE ¼ of SE ¼ of Section 8, town 9, north of Range 4 east	80 acres	\$200

The Reasers lived at property #1 as original homesteaders. Property #2 was located about 2 miles away, just northwest of the Sylvester Schweiss Cheese factory (now Cedar Grove Cheese Factory) shown on the plat map above in red. At the time of probate, the court ordered an inventory and appraisal of household property as follows. They did not have much, but then few people did in those days.

Number	Description	Value
Household furniture		
1	Bedstead and bedding	\$6.00
1	Bedstead	2.50
1	Cooking stove and furniture	10.00
1	Clock	1.00
1	Table	1.00
2	Chairs	1.00
2	Chests	2.50
	Tin ware and crockery	1.00
	TOTAL	\$25.00

Number	Description	Value
Other property selected by the widow		
1	Yoke work oxen	\$60.00
1	Black cow 11 years old	9.00
1	Red cow 7 years old	10.00
3	Pigs	6.00
4	Hogs	40.00
1	Truck wagon	5.00
30	Bushel ears corn	6.00
10	Bushels oats	1.00
16	Bushels wheat	12.00
1	Sled	2.00
1	Old plough	1.00
12	Harrow teeth	1.92
1	Log chain	1.50
1	Pork barrel and wash tub	1.00
1	Chopping ax	2.00
	TOTAL	\$162.42

Elizabeth later lived with her son John T. Reaser (born 1867) and his wife Magdalena “Lena” Winkler on the family’s 40 acre farm. As of the 1905 Wisconsin census, Elizabeth lived in Spring Green with her two unmarried twin daughters. She died at the age of 85 on February 13, 1917, and was buried in the old St. Luke Cemetery in Plain, which is where this story originated – with her grave marker. It is very likely that Elizabeth and her children never knew any the details of Ulrich’s service and death. Her children, or whomever created the grave marker, certainly did not know Ulrich’s birth and death date.

Editor’s note: The December 2017 issue of the OFTHS newsletter featured the story about John Reaser and Lena Winkler by Ken Kraemer: *“Lena Reaser: A Sweet Old Moonshiner Who Loved Children”*

If you are interested in more about Ulrich’s life and military service, Ken Kraemer plans to write a more detailed account of the lives of Ulrich Reaser and Elizabeth Degen and their family.



From the President’s desk. . . .

2018 was another historic year at the OFTHS Museum. We had the opportunity to display the artwork of Alexander “Sasha” Parkevich (1941-2016) who lived in Plain for many years and Franklyn Liegel (1950-2012) a local boy.

This summer, the OFTHS recognized Bob Neuheisel and Linda Paulus for their many contributions to the community during the Plain Fire & EMS Celebration parade.

We were pleased to receive a donation of historic clothing from the Bill Hutter family of Spring Green, which was prepared for display by Mary Jayne Liegel at the museum this summer.

Please check out our website under the “Merchandise” tab for gift-giving ideas. We have several books and CDs to offer, including the complete “Kraemer Series” of

books. The OFTHS website also has information about how to become a member and how to make a memorial donation.

If you need help researching ancestors or want to know more about the history of Plain and Franklin Township, our museum has a lot to offer. Opening times are from June through September, but we can also be open by appointment. Contact info is on the website.

Thank you to our feature authors, Barbara and Ken, for their interesting stories. We welcome stories and ideas for future issues.

Wishing everybody well during the holidays and a Happy New Year!

Until next time! í Eugene Hausner
Email: eugenehausner@gmail.com

A nation that forgets its past can function no better than an individual with amnesia.
~David McCullough



Old Franklin Township Historical Society
915 Wachter Ave.
P.O. Box 218
Plain, WI 53577

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/OFTHS>
plainofths@gmail.com
<http://oldfranklintownshiphistoricalsociety.weebly.com>
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