His father John Custer remarried in 1842, to Polly Harris, and began a second family. Through that union Paul gained ten half siblings, for a total of 21 little Custers in a single family!

Paul had no medical training. In fact, there was no formal education and by all accounts Paul Caster was illiterate, possibly due to some form of learning disability. His adult life began abruptly, at age 14. Born Paul Custer on April 30, 1827 (a name he changed to Caster after the Civil War due to a clerical error on a brother’s land grant), he was the second child of John Custer and Rebecca Rippey of Henry County, Indiana. When his mother was, to quote Paul, “removed by the dispensation of Providence from time to eternity” in 1841, the family unit of eleven children disbanded, and Paul was on his own to wander and find his own way in the world.
The first accounts of his gift for healing are said to involve a young playmate whose affliction was called “a cancer of the breast.” When she developed difficulty breathing, Paul’s therapy was credited with curing her, and she lived to become a wife and mother. No specifics as to how Dr. Paul performed his healing have been included in the biographical materials that have surfaced, though the principle behind the practice is that a magnetic field surrounds the human body. Dr. Paul used his gift to influence the positive/negative forces of this field and effect a cure for certain afflictions and diseases. Apparently the electrical impulses did the trick.

The Subtle Power
It is not certain if Dr. Paul used massage in his treatment, or if he just passed his hands close to the affected part of the body he was to heal. An excerpt from an editorial account of unknown origin exists about Paul’s son Jacob Sylvester (J.S.) Caster’s healing practice (more on that later) which probably incorporated more chiropractic techniques. It states, “Usually however, the treatment was a mild form of massage under which some patients more susceptible than others to electrical impulses experienced the sensation of a mild form of electrical current.”

Further on, this editorial on J.S. states, “What was this subtle power? Dr. Caster himself was unable to answer. He frankly admitted he did not know. His father possessed it and apparently the son inherited it. None of his brothers and sisters was similarly endowed.”

This same editorial also presents the question, “How did he do it?” It continues, “The question was often asked of him. He was unable to satisfy even himself, let alone others. It seemed to be an intuitive process, that psychological power of internal apprehension, or sense-perception, without the aid of the reasoning powers.”

In conclusion, the article attempts to explain the Casters’ phenomenal abilities as an abnormally high degree of “animal magnetism.” To quote, “In other sections of the United States and in foreign countries there occasionally are men and women who have a similar effect upon patients in massage, but rarely is one found who has it in as large measure as did Paul Caster and his son.” Unexplained is the reputation they supposedly had for accurate diagnoses, referred to in the editorial as “infallible.” A record that few, if any, “regular” physicians (the allopathic doctors) equaled, the account concludes.

The Great Debate
It is inevitable that Paul Caster’s practice would have its detractors. His credentials would certainly be challenged by other medical disciplines, from allopathic to homeopathic and osteopathic, and probably remain the subject of intense debate. Hocus pocus? Quackery? Evangelism? Or was he simply ahead of his time—on the cusp of a new alternative medicine? One thing is sure. He was in the right place at a time when the country was receptive to the idea of non-invasive, drug-free treatments and cures. He was not alone—other magnetic healers were emerging in the country, but none attained the success or reputation that Dr. Paul enjoyed.

To judge, one must view his techniques in context with the times. Blood letting, or exsanguination, was still prevalent. Poisons, from arsenic to opium, were readily administered as emetics in order to purge the body of disease. At the same time new theories were taking hold in the medical fraternity. Phrenology was becoming the new Victorian phenomenon, and Dr. Freud, though born after Dr. Paul, was soon to emerge with his radical psychotherapy ideas. Dr. Paul’s ideas were hardly unorthodox in comparison, though avant garde enough to land him in the history books.

It was son J.S. Caster who probably took the brunt of the controversy. It is known that formal complaints were filed
against him with the intent to shutter his practice. Curiously, it was these legal actions that drew J.S. further into the political limelight and spurred a second successful career in local politics. Having successfully treated patients in high positions in the community, these people rallied around him in support to defeat all allegations. He rose to higher prominence.

His Legacy
It is known Paul Caster took particular pride that he drew clientele from every state then in the Union, and a considerable number of patients from abroad. His multi-story clinic in Ottumwa, Iowa, also known as his infirmary (and in a retrospective press clipping from the 1940s it is referred to as a “health resort”), was built in the early 1870s at 921 E. Main St. By 1875 a second wing was added, and in 1876 a third. Following that was an adjacent home at 931 Main. Just imagining the magnitude of this practice in the center of Iowa growing to this extent in ten years leaves one astounded.

To this day, students of chiropractic medicine and other alternative healing schools of thought find the name of Paul Caster in their textbooks alongside another prominent Iowan, Dr. Daniel David Palmer. Palmer, credited as the father of chiropractic medicine, is known to have been influenced by Caster’s magnetic healing methods and no doubt his financial success! In theory, Caster was Palmer’s mentor.

Caster’s legacy also lived on through subsequent generations. Dr. Paul recognized the gift in just one of his children, the previously mentioned son Jacob Sylvester Caster. J.S. did not follow in his father’s footsteps during Paul’s lifetime; in fact he refused to use his gift. He enjoyed working with machines, and was employed at his father’s clinic operating the boiler room. Several years after the death of his father J.S. moved to Burlington, Iowa, where he developed a highly successful healing practice and embarked on his political career. A third generation followed the tradition. J.S’s son, Charles E. Caster, took up the mantle as a chiropractor in Iowa in the early 20th century.
“...several careers, two wives, and two close calls...”

The story of Paul Caster’s journey to the top is highly intriguing. Paul’s early life was nothing short of a seesaw ride. He lived through several cycles of health and prosperity, happiness alternating with despair. Caster had several careers, two wives and two close calls with the grim reaper. An autobiographical account intended, one speculates, as a promotional piece for his practice, provides us with the insight of his own words. Due to Caster’s illiteracy, this booklet, “Life and Practice of Dr. Paul Caster” (Columbus: Nevins and Myers, Printers, 1870), was likely dictated to or written by one of his brothers.

He begins, “In sending forth this humble sketch, I trust I am not actuated by any vain motive, but by a desire to do good. The position I occupy before the world as a healer of diseases without the use of medicine or other scientific means, requires an explanation...” Paul relates how he was deprived of an education, and wandered penniless, but found a soulmate in Nancy Hatfield whom he married at age 21 in 1848. He rented a farm for three years and worked it, had his first child, and saved enough to go into business in the manufacture of chairs, wheels and hubs. He claims to have done a good business, with prospects for accumulating wealth, when he slipped on ice and fell with full force of his weight. His chest had been severely crushed by a log. “Now my prosperity was ended, and the dark clouds of adversity began to thicken around me,” he tells. He was attended by encouraging physicians while there was still money, he says, but when that ran out they told him his recovery was hopeless.

Disabled for three years and reduced to abject poverty, he obtained a horse and wagon and moved to Iowa with his now family of four, and resumed work in chair and wheel manufacture. Still in poor health, he was afflicted with bleeding and ulcerated lungs. In 1863, with three more children, Paul suffered his next crushing blow. Nancy died. Paul explains, “For two months I endeavored to provide for my little ones as best I could, but the task was too great for me.” He then placed the children in new homes as the Lord told him to do, and led a roving life with little peace of mind until he met his second wife, a widow of the Rebellion, Sarah Gilbert Ferrell.

Switching careers and home turf once again, Paul moved to Missouri and bought a mill. With good prospects ahead, his old disease returned and again he lay near death. He relates how the neighbors were called in and all thought he was going to expire. “They said I would turn red in the face and halloo as loud as I could,” Paul explains. The Lord was showing him the way to heal himself using the gift he’d been given, but until now he chose to ignore the messages and visions. At long last, he cured himself, sold the mill, settled his debts and moved back to Iowa, to Leon, where he had brothers to help him restart his chair and wheelwright business. But, at this point, he knew his mission was to be a healer.

“My Relations were Much Offended...”

He had some bills printed to advertise his intent to cure without medicine. Paul states, “The first month I had six patients, and the second month twenty-five, and the third month forty seven. The people were crying out that old Paul Caster was going crazy. I then traveled over the country on foot, wherever the people sent for me, and was the raggiest person you ever saw. My relations were much offended at me, and denounced me in bitter terms.”

As Paul’s itinerant practice rapidly grew, he bought a horse. Saddleless, he rode on a sheepskin. Enduring much ridicule, he commissioned the best saddle money could buy as soon as the money accumulated, but the practice grew so rapidly he soon commenced treatments in his home. In a matter of months he moved the practice from Leon to Albia and then to Ottumwa, where he bought property and prospered.

To quote Paul again, “On the 7th of July, 1869, I weighed...”
two hundred and thirty-four pounds, and have had the best of health since. I have doctored myself, and think I have complied with the adage which says: “Physician, heal thyself.” One can only suppose the relations were no longer offended.

*Editor's Note:*
For further reading about Paul Caster and Jacob Caster, you may want to read the biographies included in *Progressive Men of Iowa* by B. F. Gue.

A visit to the University of Iowa’s Healthcare web page showcasing the history of medicine in Iowa will give you a taste of the scurrilous treatment practitioners such as Paul Caster endured from the medical establishment. Paul is mentioned by name.

Many thanks to several direct descendents of Paul Caster for their contributions to this article. Specifically, to Craig Caster, native of Ottumwa, Iowa, for sharing documents and photographs, and to brothers Jerry Bailey and Ray Bailey of California for insight, recollections as well as photographs/clippings. All of these descendents credit the late Addie Caster Ludwig for her genealogical diligence. Phyllis Hansen

Please contact Phyllis Hansen directly for a list of sources used for this article. Her e-mail address is Fylis@aol.com.


The Caster family photograph taken after Paul Caster’s death, the exact date unknown. The photograph has been cropped, also at an unknown date.

Back row (left to right): Samuel Thomas Caster, Clara Ella Caster, John Lewis Caster

Front row (left to right): Sara Elizabeth Caster Rutter, George Wm. Caster, Sara Gilbert Caster (Paul’s second wife), Nettie Caster Binks, Jacob S. Caster

The Ottumwa, IA infirmary started by Paul Caster and enlarged to the size shown by Jacob S. Caster. This photo is in poor condition and the NewsCaster was unable to improve its quality. The date of the photograph is unknown.

Lineage of Dr. Paul Caster, son Jacob Sylvester and grandson Charles Edwin
PK.0 Paulus Kusters 1644-1708
PK.0.01 Arnold (Aret) Kuster 1669-1739
PK.0.01.04 Nicholas Custer 1706-1784
PK.0.01.04.02 John Custer 1736-1812
PK.0.01.04.02.07 Paul Custer/Custard 1778-1864
PK.0.01.04.02.07.02 Johannes Custer 1804-1886
PK.0.01.04.02.07.02.02 Paul Custer/Caster 1827-1881
PK.0.01.04.02.07.02.05 Jacob Sylvester Caster 1860-1914
PK.0.01.04.02.07.02.05.02 Charles Edwin/Edward Caster
Some Death Certificates from Texas

In September 2002 and October 2002 Merle Stevens sent copies of the following Texas Death Certificates to the CAOA Archives. Thanks Merle, this is a great addition to our files. I am hoping our members can help us identify those I wasn’t able to find. Patricia Caster CAOA Archives Coordinator

Heini Gerster abt 1688-// Descendants

HG.0.05.03.01.01.04.04.0? George Caster b: 7-Feb-1948 in Texas d: 7-Feb-1948 in Texas Father: George Caster Mother: Gene Bremkamp Informant: George Caster

HG.0.05.03.01.01.05 Henry Caster b: 20-Feb-1858 in Texas d: 4-Jul-1928 in Texas Father: Lewis Caster Mother: Ruth Robinson Informant: Ed Caster (son)

HG.0.05.03.01.01.06 Mrs. Florence Hancock b: 1862 in Texas d: 5-Aug-1926 in Texas Father: Lewis Caster Mother: Ruth Robinson Informant: Mrs. R. Clark

HG.0.05.03.01.01.01 William T. Caster b: 31-Jul-1886 in Texas d: 4-Jan-1951 in Texas Father: Lewis W. Caster Mother: Belle Caster Informant: Records VA H

HG.0.05.03.01.03.01.01.04.0? Christopher George Caster b: 17-Dec-1972 in Texas d: 14-Dec-1975 in Texas Father: Gary Caster Mother: Barbara Collins Informant: John Caster (Gfather)

HG.0.05.03.01.03.04.01.06.03 Huit D. Caster Jr. b: 20-Dec-1950 in Texas d: 9-Oct-1953 in Texas Father: Huit D. Caster Sr. Mother: Jean Bangert Informant: Huit D. Caster Sr.

HG.0.05.03.01.03.04.01 Margaret Frances Caster b: 17-Jul-1933 in Texas d: 1-Oct-1934 in Texas Father: G. G. Caster Mother: Catherine Becker Informant: G. G. Caster

HG.0.05.03.01.03.04.05 Lewis Caster b: 14-Mar-1898 in Texas d: 25-Dec-1929 in Texas Father: B. F. Caster Mother: Harriet Fulbright Informant: J. D. Caster (Gfather)

HG.0.05.03.01.03.04.07 Martin Elmer Caster b: 24-Jan-1902 in Texas d: 12-Sep-1972 in Texas Father: Benjamin Franklin Caster Mother: Harriet Fulbright Informant: Dora Caster

John Caster Sr 1754-1822 Descendant

JC.0.11.07.03.03 Dale Obed Caster b: 16-Feb-1908 in Missouri d: 6-Oct-1973 in Texas Father: Freeman Caster Mother: Mae Smith Informant: Mildred R. Caster

John Michael Kaster 1725-1801 Descendants

JK.0.03.05.01.04 Robert M. Castor b: 6-Apr-1842 in Canada d: 29-Nov-1912 in Texas Father: John Castor Mother: not given Informant: Mrs. E. Castor

JK.0.03.05.01.04.01 William Wesley Caster b: 23-Jun-1866 in Michigan d: 29-Aug-1950 in Texas Father: Robert Caster Mother: Eunice Verity Informant: Mrs. W. W. Caster

NK.0.01.03.03.03.03.03 Fletcher Charles Caster b: 18-Jan-1910 in Indiana d: 10-Oct-1912 in Texas Father: Charles Wilson Caster Mother: Grace Trittipo Informant: Mrs. Charles Castor

Please let Patricia know if you recognize any of following people.


Noah Castor 1764-1829 Descendant

NC.0.11.07.03.03 Fletcher Charles Caster b: 18-Jan-1910 in Indiana d: 10-Oct-1912 in Texas Father: Charles Wilson Caster Mother: Grace Trittipo Informant: Mrs. Charles Castor
**Beldon Benjamin (sic) Caster**  
Born: 27-May-1890 in Missouri  
Died: 17-Jun-1953 in Texas  
Father: Grant Caster  
Mother: Myrtle Martin  
Informant: Mrs. Gayle Caster

**Clara Hoyle Britain**  
Born: 3-Apr-1877 in England  
Died: 11-Apr-1954 in Texas  
Father: R. E. Hoyle  
Mother: Sarah Golden  
Informant: Clara Donnelly

**David Earl Britain**  
Born: 3-Jul-1876 in Texas  
Died: 21-Mar-1957 in Texas  
Father: Henry W. Britain  
Mother: Katherine Caster  
Informant: Earl R. Britain

**Edmond Caster**  
Born: 15-Oct-1880 in Texas  
Died: 30-Nov-1956 in Texas  
Father: Henry Caster  
Mother: Martha Jane Tate  
Informant: Mrs. Cora Mae Caster

**Elmer Lee Caster**  
Born: 1-May-1876 in Texas  
Died: 24-Nov-1957 in Texas  
Father: Andy Caster  
Mother: Elizabeth Rozell  
Informant: M. L. Caster

**Frances A. Caster**  
Born: 7-sep-1886 in Nebraska  
Died: 17-Jun-1973 in Texas  
Father: Orlando Woodruff  
Mother: Minerva Palmer  
Informant: Mrs. Olive Frisbie

**Fred D. Caster**  
Born: 1876 in Indiana  
Died: 12-Jan-1931 in Texas  
Father: // Caster  
Mother: not given  
Informant: Army Discharge Papers

**Horace Caster**  
Born: unknown in unknown  
Died: 4-Mar-1918 in Texas  
Father: unknown  
Mother: unknown  

**Ida Bell Caster**  
Born: 7-Dec-1879 in Alabama  
Died: 28-Jan-1955 in Texas  
Father: John M. White  
Mother: Jane Logan  
Informant: William Caster

**J. O. Caster**  
Born: 8-Jul-1901 in Missouri  
Died: 25-May-1927 in Texas  
Father: G. A. Castor  
Mother: // Morland  
Informant: G. A. Castor

**Jacob Caster**  
Born: Sep-1845 in Germany  
Died: 10-Apr-1919 in Texas  
Father: Mat. Caster  
Mother: unknown  
Informant: Mrs. Anna Giob (?)Gieb)

**James Park Caster**  
Born: 25-Nov-1903 in Kansas  
Died: 9-Jan-1974 in Texas  
Father: James Madison Caster  
Mother: Lucy Elmira Toland  
Informant: Randolph L. Caster

**Jewel May Caster**  
Born: 10-Feb-1920 in Texas  
Died: 1-Apr-1920 in Texas  
Father: G. U. Caster  
Mother: unreadable Freeman  
Informant: G. U. Caster

**Laura Elaine Caster**  
Born: 11-Oct-1963 in Texas  
Died: 14-Feb-1964 in Texas  
Father: William Caster  
Mother: Lillie O’Neal  
Informant: William Caster

**Lillie Verdie Caster**  
Born: 5-May-1917 in Texas  
Died: 31-Mar-1972 in Texas  
Father: Thomas L. Floyd  
Mother: Emma Taylor McMahan  
Informant: Gervas Leon Caster

**Linda Beth Caster**  
Born: 12-Feb-1962 in Texas  
Died: 14-Feb-1962 in Texas  
Father: Harold J. Caster  
Mother: Hattie Mae Harrod  
Informant: Harold J. Caster

**Mary J. Caster**  
Born: (Note 1) in Illinois  
Died: 15-Nov-1925 in Texas  
Father: Harve Story  
Mother: Mary Dillion  
Informant: Stelia (sic) Gunter

**Mary L. Caster**  
Born: 13-Jul-1929 in Texas  
Died: 13-Jul-1929 in Texas  
Father: W. D. Caster  
Mother: // Selby  
Informant: W. D. Caster

**Matilda W. Caster**  
Born: 19-Dec-1882 in Sweden  
Died: 10-Apr-1960 in Texas  
Father: // Johnson  
Mother: not given  
Informant: J. W. Caster

**Mrs. Mabel Frances Caster**  
Born: 27-Nov-1902 in Texas  
Died: 8-Mar-1957 in Texas  
Father: J. S. Neal  
Mother: Bell Weatherford  
Informant: Glenn Becker

**Roy J Caster**  
Born: 31-Dec-1914 in Texas  
Died: 27-Sep-1974 in Texas  
Father: Edward E. Caster  
Mother: Anna E. Freeman  
Informant: Mrs. Lucille Caster

**Snow Tyree Emerson**  
Born: 21-Nov-1906 in Texas  
Died: 22-Oct-1968 in Texas  
Father: // Emerson  
Mother: Azalee Reaves  
Informant: Mrs. Thelma Emerson

**Walter Y. Story**  
Born: 20-Jun-1871 in Texas  
Died: 16-May-1933 in Texas  
Father: George W. Story  
Mother: Sarah Caster  
Informant: Mrs. Martha Story (wife)

**William Edward Lusk**  
Born: 5-Nov-1866 in Mississippi  
Died: 25-May-1940 in Texas  
Father: W. M. Lusk  
Mother: Laura Smart  
Informant: Mrs. Edna Rice

Note 1 – Mary J. Caster date of birth was listed as the same date of her death. Her age at death was 68, so she would have been born in 1857.
The History of the Nineteenth Regiment Iowa Volunteer Infantry was published in 1865 by J. Irvine Dungan. It is a nearly contemporaneous history of the 19th Regiment, written by Dungan within two months of his mustering out on July 31, 1865. The 19th Iowa was organized at Wapello, Louisa County, Iowa.

The account is heartbreaking, shocking, and uplifting. The 19th Iowa participated in the battles of Prairie Grove, Vicksburg, Morganzia, Spanish Fort and others. Dungan tells not only of the extreme cruelty suffered by the Union prisoners held in pens at the prison camp near Tyler, Texas, but of the deprivation suffered by southern civilians. Whether or not you have a direct relationship to one of the 19th Iowa volunteers, it is riveting to read this very personal account of the Civil War, now 138 years away.

Reuben Fletcher Kaster, a member of the 19th Iowa, was taken prisoner during the battle of Sterling Farm and interned at the horrific Tyler, Texas, camp. He suffered extreme damage to his eyes and lost his vision completely. He died in 1907 at age 65. It is interesting to note that his name is spelled three different ways on the foresheet - further proof that one is still a Castor regardless of how you spell your name!

Although two pages (185-186 are missing) we are offering copies of the book for $15. This covers copying, binding, and postage.

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Chapter XII  Fort Gaines and Mobile, Ala., --Mustering out --Up the River --Farewell Address of Col. Bruce

Chapter XIII  At Home

Chapter XIV  Dates of Death, Discharge or Transfer of each man

To order please send an order with the name of the book and a check made out to CAOA for $15 to: Joe Lacy, 302 CR 6720, Natalia, Texas 78059-2113.
Reuben F. Kaster owned a copy of the book. Although he became totally blind, he may have possessed some vision, albeit impaired following the war. His name is written on the inside front cover in three different hands. It is spelled the way his family spelled it only once, “Reuben F. Kaster.”
CHAPTER V.

Several days after the battle were spent in burying the dead and recuperating our strength.

Some sad scenes, necessarily follow such a battle—Southern women hunting their husbands, sons and brothers, whose sorrow was very demonstrative, where they found some sacrifice to Moloch.

Our fallen heroes were buried in long trenches—each Company by itself, and marked by a stone or board. The rebels sent in details to bury their dead; but when they saw what an Herculean task was before them, they returned without doing anything, and four or five days some were lying exposed; but after all our own dead were interred, details buried the rebel dead.

For miles around, every house was used as a hospital; in as short a time as practicable, the wounded were removed to Fayetteville, a beautiful village, but bearing evidence of the ravages of war.

The following order was issued by General Herron to his army:

HEAD QUARTERS, ARMY OF THE FRONTIER,
PRAIRIE GROVE, DECEMBER 19th, 1862.

Fellow Soldiers: It is with pride and pleasure, that I am able to congratulate you on the victory so recently achieved over the enemy, routing their combined forces, vastly superior to us in numbers, armed and equipped in the most efficient manner, contrary to what we had been led to believe, marshalled by their ablest generals, posted in a strong position of their own selection, prepared and ready to attack us, and entertaining toward us, feelings of hatred and fiendish passion, evoked by infamous lies, which rebel generals should have disdained to utter. You, fellow soldiers, after a forced march of over one hun-
HISTORY OF THE

December 18th, brought us an immense train with ammunition and provisions from Springfield; but no mail, and from the 4th day of December to the 21st, we waited, and watched for one, when at length, we heard from those homes where were now so many anxious hearts. Having given Gen. Herron's order to the forces under his command, I think it not out of place to insert an order of Gen. Hindman's, issued previous to the battle, several copies of which we found printed on poor paper:

HEAD QUARTERS 1ST CORPS, TROOPS, MISSISSIPPI ARMY,
IN THE FIELD, DEC. 4TH, 1862.

Soldiers:—From the commencement to the end of battle, have constantly in mind what I now urge upon you.

First. Never fire because your comrades do; because the enemy does, because you see the enemy, nor for the sake of stringing rapidly. Always wait until you are within the range of your gun, then single out your man, take deliberate aim as low down as the knee and fire.

Second. When occasion offers, be careful to pick off the commanders, especially the mounted, and kill his artillery horses.

Third. Never shoot except you charge the enemy; as a general thing keep silent, that orders may be heard, but pay no attention to unauthorized persons or idle rumors.

Fourth. Do not stop with your wounded comrades; the surgeons and the infantry corps will take care of them, but go forward and avenge them.

Fifth. Do not break ranks to plunder. If we whip the enemy, all he has will be ours; if not, the spoils will be of no benefit to us. Plunderers and stragglers will be put to death on the spot. Remember that the enemy has no feelings of mercy or kindness towards us; his ranks are made up of Fox Indians, Free Negroes, Southern traitors, Kansas Jayhawkers, Dutch cut-throats and bloody ruffians, who have invaded your country, stolen and destroyed your property, murdered your neighbors, outraged your women, driven your children from their homes and defiled the graves of your kindred.

If each man will do what is here urged, you will utterly destroy them. We can do it—we must do it—our country will be saved if we fall. A just God will strengthen our arms, and give us a glorious victory.

T. C. HINDMAN,
Major Gen. Com.

With such things as the foregoing, the rebel leaders constantly strove to stir up a feeling of bitter hate toward us, and yet, with such language always around them, many men were true to the old flag in the very rank and file of this army.

I have seen blank cartridges in dead men's pockets, and their supply in the box untouched; they had never fired a bullet at a Union soldier.

At our camp on the battle-field of Prairie Grove, we lay till Dec. 27th, when leaving behind all who were unfit for a long and hard march, we started at 4 o'clock A.M., with six days rations, and one blanket apiece, for Van Buren, a distance of sixty miles. At daylight we halted and heard a complimentary order
read from Gen. Herron, informing us that the object of the present expedition was to chase the rebels out from Van Buren and destroy stores at that place. That day we marched over thirty miles, crossing one stream,—Cole Creek,—over twenty times, and not stopping till 2 o’clock at night; many of the boys giving out, lay down many miles behind and slept till day, then hurried forward again.

The road crossed the Boston Mountains, ascending sometimes up great steps of rock that was extremely difficult to get the artillery over. At a distance of a few rods from camp flowed a broad clear shallow stream, called Lee’s Creek, and the cavalry, knowing a long and hard days march was before us, kindly carried us over dry shoal.

One cavalry man would lead two or three horses, on each of which two or three of the infantry would scramble.

Today’s march was much the same, the monotony being varied by being fired on as we wound our weary way through a deep gorge, killing one horse, but no more. About 2 P. M., we passed Gen. Blunt’s train. This force had left their camp near Cano Hill, nearly the same time we had left Prairie Grove.

Toward evening as we were passing over a ridge, on our right we saw a long low valley stretching far to the westward, with either side hemmed in by pine-clad hills, and far down as through an avenue of trees the last lingering sunbeam played a moment on the green valley then sunk in a bed of fire; ahead the booming of cannon announced that there was due to do than gaze at a beautiful sunset. Double-quick for an hour and we are one mile north of Van Buren.

where we hear the rebels have left the town to our cavalry, and we turn off the road, build fires, make our coffee and lay down to dream of home, where is no more marching and short rations.

The following morning we marched down into town, and keeping step to our band, we were highly complimented by an elderly lady of color, who said: “La, don’t dem Yanks step high?”

At the landing lay five steamboats laden with corn, commissary stores, and clothing. Going aboard these we removed all the mattresses there and loaded all the ambulances with them for our wounded boys at Fayetteville. The commissary stores in town were destroyed, the streets flowed with whisky and molasses,—a second promised land. The Fort, (Smith) was evacuated after a short but vigorous shelling.

After we marched out of town, the cavalry set fire to the steamboats “Frederick,” “Key West,” “Violet,” “Erie No. 2,” “Van Buren” and “Rosea Douglass,” and the glare of the burning boats lit up the sky for miles around. Several hundred head of cattle were brought in from the surrounding country by our cavalry, who deserved the honor of the whole expedition, which was a perfect success.

On the 20th, as we were returning, we were met by Gen. Schofield, who had ridden fast and far, attended by a small escort of the 1st Iowa Cavalry.

Gen. Curtis becoming alarmed, had sent General Schofield post haste to extricate the “Army of the Frontier” from the perilous position in which it had been placed by the brave, but short sighted Herron.

At that time Gen. Schofield was much disliked by the Army of the West; but none can deny that
Brocks Gap Heritage Day at Fulks Run

The thirteenth annual BROCKS GAP HERITAGE DAY will be held at Fulks Run Elementary School, Fulks Run, on Saturday, March 29th, 2003, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The purpose of the afternoon is to encourage people to bring in their old family letters, Bibles, tax receipts, etc. relating to Brocks Gap residents (including Post Offices Fulks Run, Bergton, and Criders). We’ll make copies to preserve the material and to use in future books on the Brocks Gap families. An additional copy is given to James Madison University Library for further safe-keeping.

Many of our old photos will be on display on 120 different posters, and Pat Ritchie’s library of genealogies, local and regional histories will be available to use to research. We will also be copying old photos of the families, and orders for reprints will be available at a nominal cost. Other family history researchers will be there with their displays and books. The Harrisonburg-Rockingham Historical Society will have books for sale, and local authors will have books for sale.

The day is sponsored by Pat Turner Ritchie and Garnett & Lena Turner, and there is no admission charge. Donations will be accepted to buy tombstones for local family cemeteries.

If you would like to have a table at Heritage Day, please let me know before March 21 so we can save you a space.

Last year 325 people came from 16 different states, including two separate parties from Washington state!

If you have ancestors from Brocks Gap area but have never visited, this would be an excellent time to come see the countryside. We guarantee you’ll meet some relatives or at least relatives of your ancestor’s neighbors long-ago. We’ve developed some maps to help find the old family cemeteries.

Swiss tour cancelled for Heini Gerster lines

We received this disappointing email about the Swiss tour. This tour sounded as though it would be a terrific experience and lots of fun.

March 10, 2003

Dear Castors,

It is with great personal sadness that I finally concluded that we must cancel our anticipated Castor Swiss Homeland Tour for lack of interest. We simply could not generate enough numbers to make a “Go” of it. Together we have been working very hard, and have turned over every possible stone to market this trip.

With the enthusiasm that was shown this past summer, I surely thought we would be able to arrange this uniquely wonderful tour. Our past tours with the Wastlers (1987 & 1991) had both gone far beyond our wildest expectations, and surely this one would have been no exception. Perhaps we must just chalk it up to “bad timing,” with 1) the looming war and 2) the disastrous effects of 9/11 on both our domestic and world economies.

You will hear soon from Wastler Escorted Travel, Inc., and your moneys toward the trip will be refunded.

Wishing you all an early spring and a delightful summer ...and with the hopes of meeting again soon!

Love, Dick and Diana

Hope to see you at Heritage Day.

Pat Turner Ritchie
pritchie2@earthlink.net
1559 Moffett Dr.
Winchester, VA 22601
Brocks Gap Heritage Day will be Sat., March 29, 2003, Fulks Run Elementary School, Fulks Run, VA
Some Caster/Castor Genealogies from Western Pennsylvania and Ohio available again - one volume for each family line

In 1985 the Castor Family Association, as it was known then, published the book *Some Caster/Castor Genealogies from Western Pennsylvania and Ohio*. This book covers 3 Caster lines: John Caster Sr. 1754-1823, Noah Castor 1764-1829 and Arnold Caster 1765-ca 1825.

We have decided to republish the book in 3 volumes reflecting the 3 distinct Caster lines. **No new data has been added.**

I am hoping that members will decide to purchase one volume, then use it to help fill in the blanks, and let me know what data we need to bring the books up to date.

John Caster Sr. will be Volume I, Noah Castor will be Volume II and Arnold Caster will be Volume III. Arnold is from the Paulus Kusters line. He is the son of Arnold and Rebecca (Caster) Castor who is the son of Arnold and Bridget (Strauder) Castor.

If you would like to purchase one of these books, please let me know at archives@caoa-gen.org.

Send orders listing the books your want and a check made out to CAOA to:

Joe Lacy, CAOA Treasurer
302 CR 6720
Natalia, Texas 78059-2113

I will mail the books as soon as Joe lets me know he has received your check.

(Remember the books are a reprint of *Some Caster/Castor Genealogies from Western Pennsylvania and Ohio* and have no new data in them.)

John Caster Sr. $15 (includes postage)  
Noah Castor $10 (includes postage)  
Arnold Caster $10 (includes postage)

Patricia Caster  
Archives Coordinator

Bucks County, PA Church Records

Sandee Lacy found these people in the Bucks County, Pennsylvania Church Records. I have searched the archives and have not found any information about them. Please let me know if you know who they are. Thanks for your help.

Patricia CAOA Archives Coordinator

Nockamixon Reformed Congregation page 73

Reformed records are mentioned in 1773 in the minutes of the coetus.

Joseph of Peter Kuster and wife Catharina, b December 23, 1784; bapt. August 7, 1785. Spon: the parents.

Susanna of Johannes Kuster and wife Eva, b. April 24, 1785; bapt. October 15, 1785. Spon: Peter Lare and Maria Shuman.

Maria Magdalena of Johannes Custer (Kuester) and wife Eva, b. March 27, 1781; bapt. October 16. Spon: Anna Clara.

Nockamixon Lutheran Congregation page 93

Register was begun in 1766.


Source:
New mail list for CAOA members only

After Patricia Caster learned that our mail list CAOA-ASSOC-L@rootsweb.com was being archived on rootsweb and could be searched by the world, the CAOA Board set up new mail lists for the CAOA members. The CAOA-ASSOC-L@rootsweb address will be discontinued.

Following a lot of research Patricia is now able to create private email lists for the CAOA as well as email addresses for the officers.

New email addresses for CAOA officers are:

- president@caoa-gen.org
- membership@caoa-gen.org
- secretary@caoa-gen.org
- treasurer@caoa-gen.org
- webmaster@caoa-gen.org

New email list for CAOA Members only

The new list address is caoa-org@caoa-gen.org. This list is closed to the public. Information shared on this list needs to remain within the membership of CAOA. The CAOA-ASSOC-L@rootsweb.com will be discontinued since it is open to the public.

The new list got off to a very active start by discussing how many lists the members wanted, and what they would be used for. The 60+ members of the list decided they want only one list. It will be used to discuss genealogy, CAOA business, CAOA announcements and members meeting members.

If you did not receive any of the introduction notes then you are not on the list. If you have questions or want to be a part of the list send a note to webmaster@caoa-gen.org.

I have family photos for descendants of Myrtle West Kester & Gilbert Kester

I have been given Kester family photos of Myrtle West Kester. I am trying to find the descendants of Gilbert Kester, her youngest son or his two sons Donnie and Bobbie. I would like to turn these family treasures over to them. Contact Alice Moore xmasmom@juno.com

New CAOA web site up and running

The CAOA Board is pleased to announce a new web site for CAOA members only. It is found at http://www.caoa-gen.org. It is still in the process of being built and has links to our current web site at http://maverik.rootsweb.com/caoa. The rootsweb site will be continued to provide a site for the public.

Our new web site will have password protected pages that will contain information from the archives and other sources to help further your research. What will be shared and how it will be shared has not been determined as yet.

The web site is already being used for the purpose of updating the Benjamin Caster 1741-1826 files. Four members have access to these pages. They are reviewing the data for their lines. They are sending the Archives Coordinator new information and sources. Once the new data and sources have been entered the site is updated and they review it again. Once they are comfortable with the information they will give up their spot on the team and another Benjamin descendant can join the team to update their line.

This means that every member can participate in helping to bring their lines up to date and do research at the same time.

The web site also allows us to place files in a directory that will allow the members to ftp to that directory and download the files. The way it would work is a member would like to have a certain file from his direct line. A directory would be created for that member. The file(s) would be placed in that directory and then the member could download the file(s).

Sharing goes both ways. If the member has new information, pictures, or source material for the archives, the member would then upload it to the directory and the Archive Coordinator would be able to download it for the archives.

The password protected directories contains information shared that belongs to the member of the CAOA and needs to remain within the membership of CAOA.

Please let the Board hear your ideas for the web site. Your input will help us set up the site so it works for you. Send your ideas to webmaster@caoa-gen.org.
Harris Custer is CAOA coordinator for 2004 CAOA and Little Big Horn Associates joint conference

Harris Custer and General George A. Custer (aka Steve Alexander) met at one of the Custer battle re-enactments. Harris will be working with Libby Custer (aka Sandy Alexander) to plan the 2004 CAOA and Little Big Horn Associates joint conference in Monroe, Michigan. To contact Harris for more information send an email to caoa-lbha-2004@caoa-gen.org.
Quarterly Membership Report
Jack Castor, Vice President Membership

CAOA Current Member Changes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Address</th>
<th>New Phone</th>
<th>New Email</th>
<th>New Zip</th>
<th>New web pages</th>
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<tr>
<td>Carolyn M Paschall</td>
<td>B. J Rosnick</td>
<td>R Thomsen</td>
<td>69025-9501</td>
<td>Cristina S Hueneke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3630 Glenhaven Circle</td>
<td>(808) 933-9105</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rosnickck@earthlink.net">rosnickck@earthlink.net</a></td>
<td>(813) 779-2538</td>
<td><a href="http://www.umstead.org">www.umstead.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zephyrhills, FL 33541-4418</td>
<td>(210) 497-8386</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ccuster@satx.rr.com">ccuster@satx.rr.com</a></td>
<td>(386) 328-5761</td>
<td><a href="http://www.15122.com/wjhhs/">www.15122.com/wjhhs/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clyde G Johnson</td>
<td>Carolyn M Paschall</td>
<td><a href="mailto:billpaschall@earthlink.net">billpaschall@earthlink.net</a></td>
<td>(941) 924-8541</td>
<td>newsletter/benjamincustard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1514 Kincross Court</td>
<td>Charles M Wills</td>
<td><a href="mailto:cmack1944@aol.com">cmack1944@aol.com</a></td>
<td>(831) 423-2787</td>
<td>htm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katy, TX 77450-8716</td>
<td>Colleen Kirn</td>
<td><a href="mailto:forestmountainbluesky@compuserve.com">forestmountainbluesky@compuserve.com</a></td>
<td>(307) 686-5121</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Esther M Castor</td>
<td>Mary L Bacon</td>
<td>Debra K Caster</td>
<td>95497-2950</td>
<td>Phil Haines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1001 Stanley Avenue Apt 2</td>
<td>(231) 347-6903</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Custardlucy4@cs.com">Custardlucy4@cs.com</a></td>
<td>(360) 893-3336</td>
<td><a href="http://www.15122.com/wjhhs/">www.15122.com/wjhhs/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gillette, WY 82716-5093</td>
<td>Phyllis J Ernst</td>
<td>John Caster</td>
<td>(702) 260-7047</td>
<td>newsletter/benjamincustard.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Juanita L Andrews</td>
<td>Charles M Wills</td>
<td>Diana H Rust</td>
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<tr>
<td>1681 Acre Circle</td>
<td>Colleen Kirn</td>
<td>Dorothy J Loescher</td>
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<td>Panama City Beach, FL</td>
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<td>Mary L Bacon</td>
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<tr>
<td>411 Hillview Drive</td>
<td>Richard N Overgard</td>
<td>Richard J Castor</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Petoskey, MI 49770-3959</td>
<td>(336) 599-3222</td>
<td>C. R Custer</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phyllis J Ernst</td>
<td>Richard J Castor</td>
<td>Pearlmen Boblitt</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4017 Shadow Crest Road</td>
<td>(831) 423-2787</td>
<td>Mildred H Spencer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingman, AZ 86401-6923</td>
<td>(307) 686-5121</td>
<td>Virginia Wass</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Richard N Overgard</td>
<td>Roy F Custer</td>
<td><a href="mailto:JCastor@onlineimage.com">JCastor@onlineimage.com</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>468 Hester’s Store Road</td>
<td>(801) 860-2748</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Custerr@bellsouth.net">Custerr@bellsouth.net</a></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Roxboro, NC 27574-8975</td>
<td>(310) 721-6104</td>
<td>Virginia Wass</td>
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New Address

- Carolyn M Paschall
- Clyde G Johnson
- Esther M Castor
- Juanita L Andrews
- Mary L Bacon
- Phyllis J Ernst
- Richard N Overgard

New Phone

- B. J Rosnick
- C. R Custer
- Carolyn M Paschall
- Charles M Wills
- Colleen Kirn
- Donald E Kester
- Esther M Castor
- Judith Beesley
- Kenneth S Custer

New Email

- R Thomsen: eandrthomsen@juno.com
- B. J Rosnick: rosnickck@earthlink.net
- C. R Custer: ccuster@satx.rr.com
- Carolyn M Paschall: billpaschall@earthlink.net
- Charles M Wills: cmack1944@aol.com
- Colleen Kirn: forestmountainbluesky@compuserve.com
- Debra K Caster: dkccowgirl@msn.com
- Diana H Rust: dhrust@visuallink.com
- Dorothy J Loescher: loescher911@aol.com
- Emmadean D Squire: sumeru@aol.com
- Ivan W Custard: custardlucy4@cs.com
- Jeanne Shelton: sidshelton@attbi.com
- John Caster: jfcmfc@everestkc.net
- Leo Wastler: lrwastler@worldnet.att.net
- Linda Martin: margraham@yahoo.com
- Linda Matteson: jmay47@rochester.rr.com
- Mildred H Spencer: mildred3824@aol.com
- Pearlmen Boblitt: sboblitt@voyager.net
- Phyllis J Ernst: kernst@frontiernet.net
- Richard J Castor: rcastor@onlineimage.com
- Roy F Custer: custerr@bellsouth.net
- Virginia Wass: vwass@bigfork.net

New web pages

- Cristina S Hueneke: www.umstead.org
- Phil Haines: www.15122.com/wjhhs/newsletter/benjamincustard.htm
Let’s try again.....

These December 2002 NewsCaster items did not duplicate well. Here are typescripts of the original items.

NewsCaster Page 13 from the Polk County, OR, Itemizer-Observer, 22 May 2002

“Faye makes everyone’s day a little bit brighter,” said Jeremy Krum, recreation director at Independence Evergreen Assisted Living Center.

Nesmith, who has lived the the care center since 1994, celebrated her 104th birthday March 22.

“We had a huge party,” Krum said. “The governor sent a letter. We had cake and read her history.”

Staff members bought a tiara on Newsmith’s 100th birthday and she wears it every year on her birthday.

Nesmith was born in 1898 in Hopeville, Iowa, to Lilly Belle Erwin and Grant W. Castor. She was the third of six children.

Her father died in 1913, then her oldest brother went to fight in World War I. The family fell on financial hard times and the two youngest sisters were put into a children’s home.

Nesmith and her mother ran a boarding house to support the family until, after several years, they’d earned enough money to reunite with the two young sisters.

Then the entire family traveled by covered wagon to Kiowa, Okla. on the Oklahoma Land Rush Trail.

She married Roy Nesmith in 1917. She had two sons. Her husband died in 1977.

She lived in the Midwest and California, before moving to Oregon in the mid-1970s.

Nesmith is not always very talkative these days, but she still enjoys her morning coffee every day. She told staff members about her days working as a waitress in Hastings, Neb.

“I made good money and good tips,” she said. “Everybody liked me because I was so funny.”

One of Nesmith’s nieces has done extensive genealogical research on the family and has discovered that Faye is a third cousin of General George Custer.

NewsCaster Page 11 from the Medford, OR, Mail Tribune, Friday, 7 June 2002

First American pilot killed in Vietnam finally laid to rest

ARLINGTON, Va. -- With a 21-gun salute, the remains of the first U.S. pilot recorded killed in Vietnam were buried by the Air Force at Arlington National Cemetery on Thursday.

Capt. Fred “Potluck” Clay Cutrer’s remains were found in 1997 with the help of a Vietnamese native who saw his B-37 bomber plummet to earth in LongKhan Province on Aug. 5, 1964. Cutrer was from Osyka, Miss.

Cutrer’s gold colored coffin was brought to the grave site in a horse drawn carriage as rows of Air Force officers and his family looked on.

Also honored was Cutrer’s navigator, Lt. Leonard L. Kaster. Kaster was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart. His remains were never found.
The Castor Association of America is a non-profit corporation dedicated to the discovery and preservation of family history for all variations of the family surname.

Kuster Koster Custer Kusterd Kuester Kester
Custard Kustard Kaster Kistard Kister
Gerster Caster Castor Kastor
Keoster Kiester

**Officers**
- President: Ron Juvinall
- Vice President: Jack Castor
- Secretary: Arlene Castor
- Treasurer: Joe Lacy

**Appointed Positions**
- Archives Coordinator: Patricia Caster
- Editor: Mary-Margaret Ward
- Publications Manager: Sue Wanless
- Historian: Phillip Castor
- Web Master: Thomas Weingart
- Library Coordinator: Mary-Margaret Ward

---

### Castor Association of America

**Balance Sheet End December 2002**

Fiscal Year: 1 January – December 31

#### Income

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**TOTAL** $7,128.37

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**TOTAL** $9,292.29

**INCOME(LOSS)** ($2,163.92)

*This figure includes only March and June 2002 issues. The September and December 2002 issues were mailed in January 2003.

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**Please ask before you use it....**

All material published by the Castor Association of America including the *NewsCaster*, information on the CAOA web site, books, or material in any other form, including materials developed from the CAOA Archives, may be used only with the express permission of the Castor Association of America.

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Visit our web site:
http://www.caoa-gen.org
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This may be your last NewsCaster! Check your address label below...does it show that your NewsCaster subscription is expiring? If so, you need to pay your $15.00 annual CAOA dues!

The Castor Association of America
21371 Luisa
San Antonio, TX 78259-2159
USA

Dated Material

Change Service Requested
Benjamin Custard was here, at The Forks of The Ohio, in what is now called Pittsburgh, by 1775. To tell the story of the Custard family is to tell the story of the town of Jefferson, Colonial America, and American history.

Let's go back three generations before Benjamin Custard. His great-grandparents, Paulus Kusters (1644 - 1708) and Gertrud Doors Kusters, were part of a wave of German emigration to America in the late 1600's and early 1700's. Germany had been ransacked and pillaged from centuries of warfare. Germans consequently were attracted to Pennsylvania by the promise of religious freedom in William Penn's colony.

Paulus and Gertrud came from the town of Kaldenkirchen in the Rhineland. The exact date of their arrival in America is not known. They were still in Germany, present at the baptism of their twin granddaughters Gertruet and Agnes, as late as 1696, and were in America by 1700. They settled in Germantown, outside Philadelphia.

The family prospered here. They had between 8 and 11 children. But here begins the problem. The family farm got smaller and smaller as it got divided up in each generation. Also, people didn't practice soil conservation until the 1800's. After a couple generations, everyone was down to a long narrow strip of land, and soil that was worn out. So it was already "Go west, young man, go west!" for new land. As immigrants in a new country, people tend to seek out land that is familiar to them. Stevenson Witcomb Fletcher, Dean of Agriculture at Penn State 1939 - 1946, in his "Pennsylvania Agriculture & Country Life, 1640 - 1840," states that the geological map of Pennsylvania and Virginia, showing the location of shale and limestone, is identical to the map of Irish and German settlement. The Irish preferred the shale, with its streams and valleys, as in Ireland and western Pennsylvania. The Germans preferred the limestone, with its rolling landscape and agriculture, native to Germany, and now found where Germans settled, first in eastern Pennsylvania, then in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia.

The Early Pioneers...
BENJAMIN CUSTARD 1741 - 1826

by Phil Haines

Phil Haines, CAOA Member, gave the NewsCaster permission to reprint this article previously published in The West Jefferson Hills Historical Society Newsletter.
So it was for the Castor family. Paulus and Gertrud, while in Germany, had a son, Arnold. Arnold 1669 - 1739 had ten children, among them Conrad. Conrad Castor married Susannah Adams, and they settled in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, so by the third generation in America, they had already moved on to more land in Virginia. They are said to have had 27 children. Among them was Benjamin Custard, born 1741.

From the Shenandoah Valley the next step, in the middle 1700's, was here, the wilderness at the Forks of The Ohio... Pittsburgh. Many names of families in "The Great Valley" are the same as people in this area... Castor, Swearingen, Trumbo, Tydball, Wickersham, to name just a few. And by the late 1700's, children of the settlers who came here, Pittsburgh, had already moved on to northwest Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana, for more land. I have read correspondence from people in Indiana, back to their families in Virginia, telling them to forget about Pennsylvania, and come to Indiana!

Benjamin came here. Benjamin married Ruth Thompson, of Washington County. How did they meet? Don't know. Benjamin, though young, could have been in the French & Indian War, as was Zadock Wright, one of the earliest settlers to the area. How else would a young man from the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia meet someone from southwest Pennsylvania? Service in the F&I War could also explain his grant of land from Virginia. Zadock Wright, Custard's neighbor on Peter's Creek, was a teamster in Braddock's campaign of 1755, and received 700 acres on Peter's Creek. The story is that he saw the land on the way home, and came back for it after the war, as soldiers in the F&I War were promised. The soldiers who came here in the 1750's were offered land in the area in return for their service. This is called a Bounty Land Warrant. Bounty Land Warrants were also issued to soldiers in Dunmore's War of 1774, but three of Benjamin's children were born by then.

Benjamin and Ruth had ten children. According to German naming tradition, the oldest son was named Conrad, after Benjamin's father. Then a daughter Susannah, named after Benjamin's mother. Three of their children- Conrad, Susannah, and Rebecca, were born by the time they took land here in 1775.
The Custard family came here, along with over one thousand other families, as settlers from Virginia, settling land claimed by Virginia. What is today West Virginia, Kentucky and southwestern Pennsylvania was originally part of Virginia. That story, the Pennsylvania-Virginia Boundary Controversy, and the story of The Ohio Company, are forgotten chapters in history. Briefly, it goes like this...

Pennsylvania, by a treaty under Charles II, in 1681, had a title to land running west a certain distance, five longitudes, from the Delaware River. Pennsylvania wasn't sure exactly where the western boundary of its land would physically lie. They were stopped by the Indians in trying to carry out the measurement.

Virginia also claimed land west of the mountains. Their claim was based on an earlier treaty, given by James I, and also by a purchase in 1744. And they felt their claim was further supported by their participation in the French & Indian War. Virginia had sent in soldiers, Virginians, to help the British regulars. Pennsylvania had helped the British soldiers with a small amount of supplies, but refused to send in Pennsylvanians to fight. The Pennsylvania legislature said they weren't even sure if the area around "The Forks of The Ohio" was part of Pennsylvania. "Where her western boundary might lie she seemed to know little and care less," Boyd Crumrine p 507 "History..."

For Pennsylvania, it was simply an issue of measuring the property line, and seeing where the western border would lie. For Virginia, there was a larger concept and a vision - westward expansion, such that the boundary of Virginia would stretch from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi River. The Ohio River and the headwaters of its tributaries - the Monongahela and the Youghiogheny, were said to "co-mingle" with the headwaters of the Potomac. In the 1770's the Virginia counties of Yohogania, Monongalia and Ohio were named after these rivers.

The story of The Ohio Company, and the history of Augusta County, The District of West Augusta, and the three Virginia counties, including The Lost County of Yohogania, is fascinating, and is the subject matter of another article, on The Pennsylvania - Virginia Boundary Controversy.

The War for Independence was soon to take place. Settlers in Pittsburgh, when they heard the news about Bunker Hill, set up a committee, which on May 16, 1775 drafted a declaration of support for their fellow colonists. (For very colorful reading on this subject, read Leland Baldwin's "Pittsburgh, Story of a City. 1750 - 1865") This is commonly mistaken to be a Monongahela declaration of independence, but it wasn't quite yet... Early on, the colonists expressed loyalty to the king, but wanted their rights as Englishmen. The first flag used resembled the US flag, with thirteen red & white stripes, but in the field where the stars would later appear, the Union Jack. The flag was called The Grand Union.

As part of Virginia, we in Jefferson were in Yohogania County, and the Yohogania County Courthouse was located on Andrew Heath's farm, on the hilltop above present-day Lobb's Run Cemetery, overlooking the Monongahela River to the east, the present-day Floreffe Hotel to the South, Calamity Hollow to the west, and the old Withers house to the north. Benjamin Custard lived about two miles from the courthouse. His property, Custard's Delight, has three streams,
one of which flows into Lobb’s Run. His property straddles the hillside above Ridge Road, and serves as the divide between Lobb’s Run and Peter’s Creek, into which the other two streams flow. Benjamin appeared before the court, according to the courthouse records (read Boyd Crumrine), five times: once, to probate a will; once, to register the mark for his cattle; once, to serve on a jury; and it is mentioned once that Gentleman Justice Oliver Miller was to swear him in as a constable.

Benjamin served in The Frontier Rangers from 1776 - 1778. According to Noah Thompson, Benjamin was a farmer, and also a "drover," that is, he drove, or took other people's cattle to market for them. He was also a furniture maker, and made "fine violins." Benjamin and Ruth are buried at James Chapel Methodist Church, also known as Stone Church, outside Finleyville.

By 1779 Virginia and Pennsylvania were urged by the other colonies to settle their differences, in the interests of the common struggle for independence. They agreed to abide by the results of a survey and end their boundary dispute. The Mason-Dixon Line was "run," and as a result, Virginia gave up its claim to what later became southwest Pennsylvania. This is the origin of the cornered SW Pennsylvania boundary, cut out of the wilderness, following no natural boundary, which created the "panhandle" of later West Virginia.

Yohogania County disappeared. Allegheny County was not formed, or "erected," until 1789, so during the 1780's land to the east of the Monongahela River was part of Westmoreland County, and land to the west was in Washington County. Benjamin served as a Sergeant in the revolutionary army, in the Washington County Militia, 2nd Battalion, under the command of Captain William Bruce.

After the war, all the settlers who had Virginia Certificates to their land had to get their land surveyed by Pennsylvania. Officials from Pennsylvania worked out of Fort Cox, located on the hilltop near Stone Church. Fort Cox had previously served as a land office for Virginia. Now it was the place to go to get your property recognized by Pennsylvania. Benjamin paid 2 Pounds, 15 Shillings, 6 Pence for his land. This is cheap, even by old standards. Virginia, during its negotiations with Pennsylvania, held out that the Virginians already here could pay Virginia prices to Pennsylvania for their land. Virginia all along had offered land at a fraction of what Pennsylvania charged. That probably explains how some settlers who came here from Pennsylvania had Virginia Certificates. These negotiations resulted in the Baltimore Agreement, which when later ratified by both states, cleared the way for Pennsylvania to officially take over.

People were still using the British system of money. States issued their own currency - New York had New York Pounds, Virginia - Virginia Pounds, and Pennsylvania had Pennsylvania Pounds. (Fort Pitt, which was sold in 1772 for parts, was paid for in New York Pounds). The different states' currency varied from one another by the amount of silver, by which it could be redeemed. A Pound was something like a five-dollar bill. It consisted of 20 shillings, which were like quarters (20 quarters in five dollars). Each shilling was worth twelve pence, so a pence was a little more than two cents. In day-to-day life though, money didn’t actually change hands. People traded "on-account," a barter system wherein goods or services were given a value in pounds, but when people squared up their debts, or accounts, with each other, they paid their debts in commodities, such as livestock, produce, grain, or whiskey. A subject for a later story is the Whiskey Rebellion, where the young American government tried to collect a tax on the manufacture of whiskey, southwest Pennsylvania’s chief industry, by demanding payment in coinage which did not exist here.

Benjamin received, first through Virginia, 350 acres in 1775. I don’t know if it was surveyed, or approximated. When Pennsylvania had the property surveyed, it became 333 acres. If some was lost through "adjustments," or if the amount - 350 acres, was not originally accurate, remains for further research. The center of his land lay where present-day Ridge Road, Gill Hall, and Finleyville...
through the woods eventually to the top of the hill above Peter's Creek.
Then east along the top of the hill above "vacant land," then northeast,
crossing Gill Hall, to the bend in the creek, back to the top of the "star" where
we started.
In walking around the edges of the property, some of the same varieties of
trees are still there as are mentioned in marking off the original survey... the
Beech trees on Bedell Road, and the White Oak at the corner of Bedell and
Finleyville Road. Certainly not the same tree, but as my father used to say,
"the seed doesn't fall far from the tree!"
In 1797 Custard made the first subdivision of his property. He sold 53 acres
to his daughter Susannah and her husband, son-in-law Sampson Piersall, for
50 Pounds. This is the nicest section of his property, with a spring and a stream,
and an inset into the hill behind Ridge Road.
It is the piece which later became Huffman's, then Bedell's, later Aber, Biesel,
Greenwald and Haines. It is the last piece which is still intact as a farm.

Present-day roads. The intersection of Gill Hall and Ridge Road is in
the center of Custard's Delight. Peter's Creek, and modern Peters Township,
were named after Indian Peter. He stayed behind in this area when the other Indians moved on. There are
many stories about him. One story is that he was a fisherman, and he was befriended by a religious family which
named him Peter, as in the apostle Peter, who was a fisherman. He was said to be friendly to the white settlers, and
would warn them of impending Indian attacks. He roamed the
area, and was found dead from a heart attack on Coal Bluff.

The property is sort-of star shaped. If you picture it on a map, starting at the top of a star,
going to the right down to the southeast, the property line ran from Peter's Creek southeast along
Castor Road up to what is now Ridge Road, then east on Ridge to Knight, then south along Knight
to the corner opposite Ignatz Petrovich's house.
Then, unlike the "star," southwest along the woods, with the old Heath place to the south, and
Greenwald's / Haines' farm to the north.
It goes across the creek, and extends over the hill, taking in Denny Brain's property to the
north, cutting across Heath Road, and down to Bedell.
Back to the "star," northwest along Bedell, along the nursery, back up to Finleyville Road.
Then across the street, down the road back.
It is the piece, which carried forward the name Custard's Delight.

It is referenced in Joseph Parry’s "The Lost County," as the place for which Alvin "Sonny" Greenwald had an Abstract drawn up in 1939.

Neighbors had always told my family that the house was built in 1804, but apparently there was something there before that. Piersall's subdivision, "the farm," is listed in the 1798 tax rolls as having a dwelling valued at $42, while Benjamin's property has a dwelling valued at $10.

Susannah was 31 when they bought the farm, and they had 3 - 4 children by then.

Sampson Piersall and Susannah sold "the farm" in 1804. They sold it for 129 Pounds, 8 Shillings. It then changed hands, in Dollars, every few years until 1830 when William Huffman bought it. He paid $700. Back to Huffman later...

Benjamin died in 1826. The oldest of his ten children, Conrad, had already died at 54, leaving young children in the care of his parents, Benjamin and Ruth. Daughters Susannah Piersall and Rebecca Babb had already moved on, Susannah to Beaver County.

Benjamin's widow Ruth, and Conrad's two children, were to be taken care of by the youngest boys. The three youngest, Edward, Sampson and Gabriel, still lived at home. The two daughters were given $200 and personal household possessions. Son Edward separately acquired title to 39 acres, and later, in 1836, sold that 39-acre parcel to William Huffman, the new owner of Piersall's subdivision, "the farm." This 39-acre parcel, the one formerly owned by Edward, is mostly the area now owned by Denny Brain. Edward moved to Ohio. I received an eMail last year from a descendant of Edward, in Ohio, who knows the family history.

Edward still had an inheritance along with the other six sons. Benjamin left each of the seven sons an "undivided one-seventh interest" in his property, to be divided up after the death of his wife Ruth. Five of the sons - Benjamin, William, James, Paul,
and Edward conveyed their undivided one-seventh interest to the two youngest sons who were still here, Sampson and Gabriel.

Gabriel ended up with the property on the other side of Gill Hall and Finleyville Road, the side with the stone quarry. Gabriel Castor built the nice red brick house on Finleyville Road across from Ridge. One more generation later, his son Lewis would sell their property to Moses Thompson. Their branch of the family moved on later in the 19th century.

Which dwelling was Benjamin's? Probably not the Castor Farm house just below Ridge, where Benny Castor lived, and later Bill Castor - that property was also originally Huffman's. Possibly the old white frame house, set on an angle, just below the intersection of Ridge, the one said to have been a hotel - that house is in the center of the original tract of land. It is just conjecture on my part, but it makes the most sense. There weren't any roads yet when Benjamin settled here. The creek, Peter's Creek, was your address. If you went from Peter's Creek, through the opening in the hillside, where the railroad tunnel is, that would take you on what is now Gill Hall Road, and onto Benjamin's property. Go half a mile to the intersection with Ridge Road, and that could have been Benjamin Custard's house. Keep going, then turn left to go up to the top of the hill, then down the other side, through "the farm," around the back of the house, and over to the old Heath place. That is the only way I can figure the road is called Heath Road. This is likely the path traveled by Justice Oliver Miller, who traveled this way to attend court once a month at the Yohogania County Courthouse.

The time period from 1830 to 1860 seems to have been happy and prosperous for the families, as it was for the United States. William Huffman was undoubtedly the teacher at Huffman School. Tradition in Jefferson has it that the school originally was located on the elder Huffman's property, somewhere near the intersection of Knight and Ridge Road, and that it was re-located to where it now stands, the fenced-in house on Ridge, across from Clifford Castor's brown log cabin style house. Huffman, as the school teacher, would have been able to get youngsters to help him on the farm in the summer. The house was originally one story, with one or two rooms on the ground floor. In 1840 Huffman put on the second floor. Later in the 1880's Aber put on the two porches, re-did the second floor, and added the two-story addition.
in the back. He then signed over title to the farm to his wife, in consideration for the money he borrowed from her to do the additions!

Sampson got the property to the east of Gill Hall and Finleyville Road, including what is now Ridge Road. Now it looks like the Castor and Huffman families merged. Lewis and Catherine Huffman were Castor's neighbors to the east, on property north of Ridge Road. Two Huffman daughters married the two Castor sons who were left with the land. Sarah Huffman married Sampson Castor, and Katherine Huffman married Gabriel Castor. And a William Huffman, probably a brother, now owned Piersall's subdivision, "the farm." More research needed on the Huffman family.

Sampson and Sarah stayed here and prospered. They had 8 children. At some point they bought the elder Huffman's property and built the house there, the one Bill Castor later lived in, and at some point someone, probably a Bedell, built the stone house further down the hill toward the creek.

Sampson and Sarah are buried at Stone Church Cemetery. He is the nice tombstone near the road with the two hands holding each other. He lived from 1789 - 1869. Sarah is lying next to him. Hers is the tombstone with the Bible, and an inscription on the base of the tombstone. She lived to be 83.

Sampson and Sarah had children, including a Sampson P Castor and a Gabriel P Castor. The two sons split up the property, but this is the subject for a later detailed presentation on the Custard property.

"Benny" Castor was one of Sampson P Castor's six children. We are now in the fourth generation in Jefferson - Benjamin Custard's great-grandchildren... We have numerous photos of Benny and his wife, Josephine Margaret Bedell, now Biddle. He lived from 1862 - 1935, and is buried at Stone Chapel. "Benny" is pictured at the top of this article.

Benny had three children: Bill, Grace and Clifford. Bill never married, nor did Grace. The parchment copy of the survey done by Pennsylvania in 1785 was passed on to Bill. Clifford was in World War I.

Clifford 1894 - 1940 had three children, including a son Benjamin.

Benjamin, born 1929, had two children, including a son Ben, born 1951, who went to Thomas Jefferson High School the same time as I did.

I think that all the Castors in Pittsburgh are part of this lineage, going back 7 generations to Benjamin and Ruth Custard.

Other Castors, descended from Paulus and Gertrud of Germany, ended up all over the United States. One line of the Castors moved from Germantown to Burgettstown, PA, then to New Rumley, Ohio, where a son George was born, then to Michigan where George grew up, and became known as General George Armstrong Custer, as in Custer's Last Stand.

The Castors are a healthy and long-lived people. Benjamin Custard lived to be 85. Bill Castor lived to be 100. Bill looked like his father "Benny" in the picture above. I remember Bill in the 1970's, when he was in his 70's, helping my father and Nick Petrovich bale hay. He was as healthy as could be. He and Nick said that was because of how they lived, how they worked, and the area around Gill Hall and Ridge Road itself. They used to tell my father, "Andy, you could come out here and work and throw away all those pills." Something like the famous area in Russia where everyone lives to 100. That is, that the area around Gill Hall and Ridge Road contributes to health and longevity. I think it does.

Selected Bibliography:
For information on Benjamin Custard and his family:
Do you know Rev. J. W. Dean, Castor Family historian?

Rev. J. W. Dean is the source of much information about Benjamin Custard 1741-1826. Noah Thompson notes in his *Early History of The Peters Creek Valley and the Early Settlers* that the information on the Castor Family was given to him “by Rev. J. W. Dean of Jersey Shore, Pa.” Thompson’s book is considered by many to be the definitive source for information about Benjamin and his family. It is also the source for the belief that Benjamin’s father is Conrad Custard.

Jack Castor corresponded with Rev. Dean and Rev. Dean replied in an undated letter, believed to have been written in 1978:

“I appreciated the material you sent me and as soon as I am able to do so will check it over and write to you. I notice that some of the records that you sent me that were compiled by other people seemed to have been copied from some of my magazine articles. One differed from my records and I know that they were in error.”

Jack has no further correspondence from Rev. Dean.

Rev. Dean’s notes to Nancy Griffith are cited as a source in the September 1998 *NewsCaster* article, “Another Benjamin Castor.”

If you have information about Rev. Dean or his articles, please contact Mary-Margaret Ward, mmward2001@mindspring.com, or 2214 Clay Street, San Francisco, CA 94115, or Patricia Caster, archives@caoa-gen.org, or P. O. Box 955, Windsor, CA 95494-0955.

**Sources:**
Letter from Rev. J. W. Dean to Jack Castor, undated.; held by Castor Association of America Archives (PO Box 955; Windsor, California 95492-0955. Loose papers of Jack Castor.
John P. Castor, deceased, was well known throughout Butler County as a substantial citizen of Slippery Rock. He was born at New Castle, Pennsylvania, August 2, 1858, and was the son of Francis L. and Phoebe Jane (Bowman) Castor.

Francis L. Castor, deceased, was a native of New Castle, Pennsylvania. After the close of the Civil War he removed to Pittsburgh and later to Butler County, where he engaged in general farming and stock training. He died in 1903, and his wife, a native of Pittsburgh, died in 1871. Mr. and Mrs. Castor were the parents of five children, as follows: John P., the subject of this sketch; George, died in infancy; Ella, married Edwin, Walsh, lives at Bethany, West Virginia; Joan, died at the age of eighteen years; and Eletha, deceased was the wife of William Davis.

John P. Castor attended the public schools of Butler County, and in early life was a farmer. He owned and operated a farm in Brady Township, Butler County for eighteen years, and later farmed in Worth Township, Butler County. About 1902 Mr. Castor removed from Worth Township to Slippery Rock. He organized the Slippery Rock Telephone Company in 1904 of which he was general manager at the time of his death. The company was organize in 1904 and now has over 500 telephones in operation. Other officers of the company were: Andrew Cooper, Dr. John Barber, John Aikens, Ray Wilson, I.N. Moore, M.A. Gibson and William Moorhead. Mr. Castor was also one of the organizers of West Liberty Borough. He was a very hard worker and was always busy. He was a carpenter and stone mason. He was a great sportsman and liked fishing and hunting and had many thrilling experiences. John P. Castor was a member of the Methodist Church and his wife belonged to the Presbyterian Church. He was affiliated with the Masonic Lodge and Independent Order of Odd Fellows, and was one of the building committee men for the lodge building. In politics, he was a Republican. He died January 11, 1927.

Mr. Castor was married first in 1882 to Miss Sara Hines, and they had four children: Joseph Albert, further mention of whom is made below, resides in West Liberty Borough; Margaret, deceased; Frank D., resides at Greenville, Pennsylvania and John deceased. He was later married on May 11, 1926 to Miss Bertha Barnhardt, of Concord Township, Butler County, the daughter of John L. and Barbara (Arthurs) Barnhardt. Mr. Barnhardt, a prominent farmer of Concord Township, Butler County, died in 1925, and his wife died in 1926.

Joseph Albert Castor, son of John P. Castor, was born October 10, 1883, in Muddy Creek Township, Butler County. When he was six years old the family moved to Brady Township. He was educated in the West Liberty public schools and was a farmer, carpenter and blacksmith and also ran a threshing machine engine for a time. On September 1, 1904 he became associated with his father in the telephone company at Slippery Rock, Pennsylvania, and at the death of his father he became manager for the company. Joseph Albert Castor was married December 25 1907 to Nellie Steele, who was born in Armstrong County, Pennsylvania, the daughter of J.N. and Alice (Keener) Steele. To Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Albert Castor nine children were born, as follows: John Jay; Florence Susan; Alice Melvina; Albert Clare; Gertrude Blanche, Mildred Aletha, Vera Estella; Albert Cecil, and Ella Elizabeth (Continued on page 11)
From the Archives

What a year this has been. A lot of the members I have talked to have had a lot of upsets this year. Mary-Margaret and I have had our share too. We both lost computers through the proverbial hard drive crashes. It has taken a while to recover from them. I am still trying to find my backup files for the hard drive I lost.

I ended up with a bad case of shingles that lasted from June until mid September. I still have twinges from it but it isn’t as bad now as it was in June.

The West Coast Get Together was a lot of fun. We were able to go through a lot of files that hadn’t been added to the John Caster Sr. line and add them into the file folders. I have a lot of work left to do to get them in to the archive files. But finding them will speed up the process a great deal.

I am working on updating four different Benjamin lines, with Arlene Castor, June Herron, Gloria Heits-

(Continued from page 10)

and James. Mr. Castor is a Republican and a member of the Presbyterian Church. He is a member of the Masonic Lodge at Grove City, Lodge No. 603; the Independent Order of the Odd Fellows, No. 435, Slippery Rock and the Encampment and Rebekahs.

Source:
Sipe, Chester Hale, History of Butler County, Pennsylvania (Topeka, Kansas: Historical Publishing, 1927) 975-976


If anyone has any information on any of these ancestors please let us know at archives@caoa-gen.org

man and Mary-Margaret Ward. When I have entered all of the data correctly I will be ready to work with a couple more members to update their files. If you would like to be next please let me know. I will add your name to the list.

I am also working with Ed Castor to put together a web page on his ancestor John H. Castor. He is willing to share John’s civil war records. It is going to be a great addition to our web site. Hopefully others will be willing to share and we can build a site that will be very interesting and informative.

I am a bit disappointed that our new mail list at caoa-org@caoa-gen.org has not been very active. I really believe it could be a lot of fun just sharing what you have found in your research or asking questions that others may already have the answer to give to you. Maybe what we need is someone who can spur on conversation on the list. If you are not on the list please let me know and I will add you. It is a closed list, which means it is only for the members of CAOA.

On a personal note, with a friend’s help we found my gg-grandmother Mary Jane Warner in the 1850 Monroe County, Georgia census. She was living with her father and mother William and Margaret (Ward. It was quite a challenge because they were listed as “W arren” instead of “W arner”. The lesson I learned is if you suspect a certain county search on first names too. I wasn’t sure what her father’s name was but I suspected it was William and I knew the county was Monroe. Thanks to my friend I now have one more generation to add to my own records. Hope to have some time next spring to do more research. Patricia
Death was on the road and in the backyard!

by Bruce Black

One Caster family’s heartbreaking history in two parts. The events and the research.

Ezra Caster was born in 1778 as the Revolutionary War was coming to a close. His patriot father, John, would fight as an Ensign as late as 1779 and participate in the surrender of Burgoyne. Ezra was one of nine children, eight of whom lived to adulthood. When his parents, John and Anne, left Columbia County to settle in Redfield in Oswego County, New York, all but two of their children followed. Their second son, Christopher, was already in Herkimer County and moved to Wayne County about the same time his brother, Ezra, traveled west. This was near the end of the war of 1812.

Ezra Caster and his wife, Rhoda Whiting (Caster), moved with their five children from Eastern New York to Galen, in Wayne County, arriving about 1814. Galen was originally a Post-Township of Seneca County, 12 miles North of Waterloo and bounded North by Wolcott, East by Cayuga County, and South by Junius.

Ezra and Rhoda raised ten children, Christopher, Abigail, Horace, Selinda, Charity, Ezra, George, James, Henry, and Lurenda. Galen was their new home and a perfect place for their children to attend church and school and to eventually raise their own children.

I mention Ezra’s brother, Christopher, because Ezra named his first son Christopher in his honor. In fact, the names of mothers and fathers, aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters, were passed generation-to-generation and family-to-family.

Abigail married first and named her first child Rhoda after her mother. She also had a daughter, Celinda, and son, Simon Peter, after her husband, Peter, and his father, Simon Hendricks. Christopher, having married Peter’s sister, Polly, had ten children in Galen before they were through. He named a son Elisha Ezra for his father, a daughter Abigail, and daughter Catherine Celinda, after his sisters, a daughter, Rhoda, after his mother, a son, Horace Albert, after his uncle Horace, and a son, Wesley Simon, also after his wife’s father Simon Hendricks. A seating chart would be needed to keep the names and faces straight.

The Hendricks/Caster union had one more connection, Abram Hendrix, [as he continued to spell his name] a brother to Peter and Polly. He married Cynthia Caster daughter to Ezra’s eldest brother John. Catherine Caster summed it up this way, “John had a beautiful daughter and my mother’s brother, Abram, said Peter and Polly have got a slice off the first loaf so I’ll take a slice off the next loaf (a phrase used a great deal in those days) so he proposed and was accepted by this fair lady and this union made him Cousin as also Brother-in-law to my Father.” [Celinda Catherine Caster, 1898]

Happiness all around but “death was on the road and in the back yard.” There would be several tragic deaths spanning several generations, each senseless, each cruel, and each heartrending.

Elisha Ezra Caster, whom we will come to know later, jotted this statistic in his diary of 1864. He wrote, “The average human life was 33 years. That one-quarter dies before age 7 and one half before age 17.”

As you look at your own ancestors’ record of mortality you see example after example of this statistic. The causes, including childbirth, which was almost equally fatal to mother and child, were epidemics such as smallpox and common maladies including consumption and erysipelas. But this is not a story about inflictions on a large population but rather uniquely individual tragedies.

First Lurenda.

My Great Great grandmother Catherine, Lurenda’s sister, told the tale in a letter to her brother Lawton.[1]
Speaking of her grandparent’s home she said, “It was in Galen that remorseless Deth (sic) entered their home and broke the link that bound the ten together.”

Eight-year-old Lurenda, the youngest of ten children, had dashed out of the house one day to play in a late April snow. Her play was cut short when “She climbed upon a sled that was upturned against a fence. It fell with her striking across her neck and she was carried in dead.”

I think of Lurenda often and think how lucky I am. I think of her whenever I read my Grandma Catharine’s letter, when it snows, and when I think of my own happy childhood in the snow. The neighbor kids passed through our yard at the bottom of the long hill to get back to the top of the road we all used for sledding. This shortcut took us past the Klan’s house on the left, the Brown’s house on the right, and through their apple orchard, which was quite a climb when snow and ice covered the last steep slope. Our neighborhood families were so fortunate. So much activity, the skis, toboggans, sleds, snowballs, hills, the hair-pin-turn cut midway around the only road in and out of the area which formed a huge dirt bank on the left and a deep ravine on the right. Every kid in the neighborhood knew it well, never a problem, not a scratch. Even the one time I lost control and went through a fence. Fortunately the boards were nailed on the other side of the post so the boards flew off when I hit them and I just pounded them in place with a rock. Nothing was bent or broken so I went on my merry way. If anyone had a complaint during our years of fun it should have come from Judy Jones because whenever we would race double on a sled she was the favorite pick for the bottom. No one complained though, not even Judy. I’ve searched Wayne County for Lurenda’s little grave but have found none. Perhaps another day.

Next Ezra.

Ezra, the namesake son, brought joy, comfort and pride to the family. But he too died at an early age. In the same letter to brother Lawton, Catharine tells of his becoming one of the best millwrights in that section of the country. “I don’t know why he was such a successful millwright,” said Catharine, “unless it was because he was a shouting Methodist. He was a beautiful singer and a powerful exhorter. In 1847 he was granted a license to Exhort, and had he lived undoubtedly became a Minister of the Gospel. He had taken a mill to repair, four miles from home and having got it to running smoothly, came home to spend the Sabbath. We all attended the same place of worship and I never seen any one more happy than he was that day. Monday he returned to his work and Wednesday morning something did not sound right at the Pitman Box. Putting his ear down to listen the machinery struck the back of his head killing him instantly. This awful tragedy occurred 3 Dec. 1847. He left a wife and two children who were tenderly cared for by his brother Henry.”

It was time to move west again. The whole family would eventually migrate from Galen to Michigan. Ezra’s oldest daughter, Abigail, and her family would blaze the trail. Her husband, Peter, had been in the War of 1812 and there was Bounty land in Michigan. Ezra’s brother, James Harvey, wanted to attend school to become a Methodist minister, so he and his brothers, George and Horace, and his parents, Ezra and Rhoda, were next to leave for Michigan. The 1850 census reveals that Charity, James Harvey, and Horace were living in Jackson County, Michigan.

Then, Rhoda!

Rhoda Ann Caster was the fifth child and fourth daughter born 23 August 1830 to Christopher and Polly Hendricks (Caster). We have a bible record that confirms her date of birth. A note written on the same bible page declares that all of Christopher’s children were born at Galen.

News of her death was originally reported in a local paper, The Observer, Fentonville, Michigan, Friday, November 24, 1854. "AN AWFUL TRAGEDY! On Monday last, an awful tragedy occurred about six miles south east of this village, in the town of Rose. It appears that David Foster, who had returned from California within the past few weeks, sent for his wife, then at the house of Caleb Everts, to meet him at the house of James Everts, for the purpose, as he stated, of reconciling some differences.
between them, and inducing her again to live with him. The woman set out accordingly, upon horseback, and when within a few rods of the latter place, she was met by Foster, who assisted her to alight from the horse, which he hitched, and together the two walked along in the road, some forty or fifty rods past the house of Everts. Here they sat down by the roadside, and after a few moments conversation, foster offered her a vial of medicine, as he called it, requesting her to take it and telling her it would be ‘good for her.’ This she refused to take, suspecting it to be poison, as it undoubtedly was. He then said he had a ‘bitterer dose than that for her,’ and immediately drawing a large dirk knife, stabbed her three times through the abdomen. She screamed, ‘murder!’ and started to run, but the murderer, intent upon finishing his purpose, followed her up, stabbing her twice more through the back, the knife in one place reaching entirely through her body. Mr. Parker, happening to be at work near by, and hearing the screams, ran to the spot in time to witness the last thrust, when Foster seeing him, desisted, broke the blade of his knife and threw it away, and went off. The woman ran some rods further, when she fell. This scene occurred between 11 and 12 o’clock, in the forenoon. Mrs. Foster survived about twelve hours.

Immediately after the murder, Foster went to the tavern at Rose corners, only about a mile and a half distant, made no effort to escape, but readily acknowledged the crime. He said he ‘had done the deed,’ and was ready to receive a summary punishment, California fashion. He was secured and taken to Pontiac to await his trial.

Jealousy is the cause of this lamentable affair. This jealousy existed and produced much difficulty between them before Foster went to California. We understand his letters after his departure were of such a character that Mrs. Foster expected he had left her entirely, and during his absence she has had to provide for herself and two children—at least without aid from him. Whether there was ever any real cause for the husband’s jealousy, it is difficult to say; but her neighbors, and others who are intimately acquainted with her, believe that Mrs. Foster’s conduct was blameless and her character above reproach. Her maiden name was Rhoda Ann Caster, and her family and connexions (sic) respectable. There is no doubt, however, that Foster believed his suspicions to be well founded, for no other cause could be supposed to awaken such awful and revengeful passions. It is not impossible that the tattling of some mischief-making persons may have contributed to poison the mind of Foster with painful suspicions against his wife. Probably the plea of insanity will be used in his behalf.

The parties were both young – scarcely past the prime of youthful years. The husband’s jealousy had already embittered their happiness, and has now consigned himself, doubtless, to a murderer’s reward – leaving two young children, both boys, to reflect upon their parents’ fate.

This awful tragedy – coming home, as it does, to the most sacred of all domestic relations, is a solemn and painful warning to all to avoid giving the least cause for suspicion on the one side, and against the unreasonable indulgence of jealousy on the other. The consequences may not always be as tragical (sic) as in the case before us – but the doom of misery would be equally certain.”

Now, Elisha Ezra Caster

His first wife, whom he married in 1860, died within a year and it is speculated from childbirth. He married again in 1863 and makes the following entries in his diary about his newborn son.

Sunday March 24, 1867
“At 3pm Hattie gave me a 6¼ pound boy. For this my heavenly father has all praise. I pray for grace to aid me in bringing him up for God if he shall spare me.”

Tuesday March 26, 1867
“The little boy is as bright as a shilling.”

Wednesday 16 October 1867

Household goods being moved to parsonage in Detroit from Flint]
“Our goods came today and had them taken to the parsonage. Had a letter from my wife today stating that our little boy is sick Lord save him.”

Friday 18 October 1867
“At 9 received a telegram from Hattie stating
that our little Artie was worse & at 3:45 I left for home & arrived there a 7:30 to find our dear boy dead O my God, is he dead!”

Saturday 19 October 1867

“Our Dear little Artie is dead & this morning I went to Flint & bought him a little house & lot which cost about $50. O God sanctify the affliction to our benefit. Today O dreadful day we buried in Glenwood cemetery our dear little son Artie. Brother Birdsall preached this afternoon at the Garland Street Church, Flint, where we have labored 2 years.”

And last, Wesley Simon

My records show that other generations of Caster have suffered losses. Generally these meet the statistic mentioned by E.E. Caster in his diary. Children dying young and while they are unmentioned here that does not diminish the pain the parents must have felt at the time.

Part II the research.

It’s been one hundred fifty years since this newspaper account shocked local citizens with the lurid details of Rhoda’s death. Did the reporter, who was obviously closer to the event than I, get it right? What details were left out? What about Foster? He had not been tried in court as of this writing, what was his fate? A 1927 version of this killing tells us that he had been released from prison but that he begged to return being unable to “make it” in a changed society. What, if any, truth was there in that?

Over the years the newspapers’ re-telling of the story has lead to some interesting changes as well as the expected summarized accounts. A number of inaccuracies have also been printed. As social history changed the attitudes of the publishers changed as well. For example none of the later versions attached a “Moral” to their
The story of the tragedy was revived and the stone again became an object of interest. Many persons have since visited the old Beebe cemetery, west of Rose Center, to see the marker and read the inscription upon it.

Beneath the inscription, which appears clearly in the photograph of the stone, carved in large letters are two verses reading as follows:

In Eighteen-Hundred-Fifty-Four
This Awful Deed Was Done.
Let All Who Read My Awful Fate
Flee From Vice Before It is Too Late.

This By My Husband Was I Slain
On The Highway In Open Day.
Two Little Orphans Have I Left
To Share The Trials Of This Life.

No one has been found who can give authoritative information, but the story has been handed down from the older generations, concerning the details of the affair.

Rhoda Castor is said to have been a charming girl of excellent character. An insanely jealous husband, it is related, could not bear to have any one show her the slightest attention. This fierce passion included members of the girl’s family.

When Davis [David] Foster, the husband, returned from California, after a long absence, he sent a message to his wife, so the old story goes, asking her to meet him.

Mounting her horse, the girl, mother of two small children, went to keep the appointment with her husband. She was overtaken on the road and after a heated conversation she was offered a poisonous drug, which was declined. Assisting his wife to dismount, Foster suddenly attacked her. She was stabbed five times, the old story relates, but lived long enough to tell the circumstances to neighbors who found her at the roadside.

The husband was apprehended and sentenced to life imprisonment.

After many years in the prison, broken and old, the husband was released. He returned to Holly and visited the grave of his wife.
Thursday, June 6, 1985

Rose wife ‘slain by the highway in open day’

‘The mystery of the grave stone’ has been solved. It took a 1935 graduate of Holly High School to do it. The murder of a woman by her husband was once etched on a gravestone located in the Beebe Cemetery in Rose Township. A story in the April 11 edition of the Herald Advertiser told how the gravestone was stolen following a new-story about its unusual tale.

Virginia Mott Beebe, now of Bowling Green, Kentucky, remembers the gravestone well. She was in town Saturday for the Holly High School alumni Banquet. Her brother, Robert Mott, brought a letter into the Herald office from Virginia. Robert is a 1937 HHS graduate now residing in Westland, Ohio. The letter explains the history of the gravestone.

We’ve omitted name of the husband in case relatives still reside in the area. The letter reads as follows:

I believe I can clear up the ‘mystery’ of the gravestone at the Beebe Cemetery.

The woman buried there was the sister of my great grandmother, Catherine Caster Mott. Her name was Rhoda Ann Caster (name omitted). As the story was told to me—her brother, a merchant seaman, came to visit her and stayed a few

My mother, Virginia Mott Black, still a subscriber to the Holly area newspaper, was living in Kentucky at the time this last article was written. She thought she might “set the record straight” so she wrote a letter to her brother,

New generations of newspaper editors and writers continue to find interest in the story and some have been philosophical and poetic but once again they have failed to present all the facts and research necessary to “finish the story.”

The Northwest Oakland County Herald Advertiser published a story by Kathy Whipple, 11 April 1985, about Chester Everet Rundell, a Rose township native, who was born in Rose in 1902 and was retiring. He was, among other things, the sextant for the Rose Cemetery for over five decades. His grandfather was Caleb Everts Sr, a name you will recall from the original story.

“Because Rundell has been the caretaker of the beautiful cemeteries for so many years, he can tell you where most graves are located” Kathy said in her article. “There is an old story about another grave stone in the Beebe Cemetery that Rundell likes to tell. Right on the stone, along with the name and 1856 [1854] date of death of the woman is the story about her death. Etched in the granite it says the husband stabbed the woman to death out in the street. The story goes that the husband came back from the gold fields in California to find a situation which angered him to the point of an argument that ended with the stabbing in the middle of the road outside their home.

The Situation which caused the outrage is left up to the imagination of the audience in the story. That unique stone was stolen years ago after a newspaper story telling of its unusual engraving. *(8)*

Bob Mott, who took it into the Herald offices. The follow-up article by the Herald was even more confusing due in part to the newspaper’s mistaken identity of my mom, referring to her as Virginia Mott Beebe instead of Black and my uncle’s residence as Westland instead of Westlake. Also, newspaper writers by this time had entered the “politically correct” age of writing and removed the name of the husband, Foster, “in case relatives still reside in the area.” Some Casters do still live in the area but there are no direct descendents of Foster to be found. Franklin Foster’s brother Riley died in 1872 and Franklin’s only daughter died in Spokane, Washington 22 April 1985. This was the end of that line.

This is the follow-up story to the 11 April 1985 article.

Stricken with remorse, an outcast from society, he made his way back to the prison and begged to be readmitted. There he died an old, broken-hearted, broken-spirited man, haunted by the presence of the slain woman.”
days. As her husband was in the gold fields—the neighbors were suspicious. When he returned, they told him she had a ‘strange man’ with her—and—without her explanation and in a rage he grabbed a butcher knife. When she ran out of the house he chased her and stabbed her to death.

While many years ago the stone was still standing in place, I wrote down the message on it, which follows:

‘In memory of Rhoda Ann
Daughter of C.W. and P. Caster
who was murdered by her husband
(name omitted), Nov. 20, 1854
aged 24 years, 3 mos.

In eighteen hundred fifty four
this awful deed was done
let all who read this awful tale
flee from evil before it is too late

Thus by my husband I was slain
on the highway in open day
two little orphans I have left
to share the trials of this life

There always seems to be a morsel of truth to hand-me-down stories. In this case my mother was told that Rhoda’s brother, a merchant seaman, was a frequent visitor. That it was he of whom Foster was jealous. Careful research cannot account for any of the Caster brothers ever becoming involved in maritime. What I found in fact was that the frequent visitor was Elisha Ezra Caster. Elisha, better known in Michigan history as, E.E. Caster or Reverend E. E. Caster, had been studying for the clergy at that time. It would be three years after Rhoda’s death when he would enter the Detroit Conference of the Methodist church. He would write later in his several diaries [10] about his frequent visits to Rose to see his parents, brothers and sisters. At the time Rhoda was killed Elisha was still unmarried and although one would assume he would have been well known in the community, a loose tongue or unkind speculation could have stirred the imagination of Foster.

I don’t know when my mother was last told these facts but she was recalling, second hand, an event that took place 131 years earlier. My grandfather would have been the one doing the telling and he died in 1981 at age 92. I am another generation removed from the event but my curiosity got the best of me and I figured that some old maps would help locate the exact place on the road where Rhoda was stabbed.

Rose Township records reveal that Caleb Everts had property in sections 19, 20 and 29. James Everts owned property in sections 20 and 29. Rhoda lived on 80 acres in section 20. So the Everts and Caster/Foster had adjoining properties.

Within each township are 36 sections, each one mile square. Each section contains 640 acres. The sections are numbered from 1 to 36 in inverse order right to left 1 thru 6 then 12 thru 7, and so on. That means that 19 is west of 20 and 29 is south of 20.

Looking at a sectional map and going back to the original story, she was visiting at Caleb Everts [section 19] and David had been at James Everts [section 29]. She rode to within a few rods of James Everts. [Caleb’s house was northwest of James so Rhoda had to have been riding southeast] Rhoda stopped short of James’ house and there David hitched the horse.

They walked 40 or 50 rods past James Everts. In order to walk past it they would have had to be walking east. Forty or fifty rods at 16.5 feet per rod would have put them about a quarter of a
mile down the road which means they would have been very close to the 80 acres she lived on when she was first attacked. A plat map shows that property, later owned by Rev. E.E. Caster, is about the mile and a half David would have traveled to end up at the tavern at Rose Corners and the Corners which is about 6 miles southeast from Fenton as reported.

What about David Foster?

As far as the details of the murder are concerned, I went to Pontiac, the county seat for Oakland County, and got a copy of the Grand Jury transcript. An extract of the five pages follows.

Pg 1
[#449] OAKLAND CIRCUIT (COUNTY) COURT
1854: The People vs. David Foster: Indicted for Murder Filed Nov 24 1854

Pg 2
OAKLAND CIRCUIT COURT
The People Vs. David Foster
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Murder

I hereby certify this writing to be a true (file)

Stephen (neives) (Foreman)
Aug C Baldwin, Pros Atty (Lester) Jennings, Clerk

L. Jennings
V.D. Wendell
A. Park (er) *Witnesses[12]
(Presented) to the (Court)
By the members of The Grand Jury in the proceedings
In open court filed this 24 day of November A.D.1854
Alfred Heagman, Clerk
Joseph R ( ) deputy clerk

Pg 3
State of Michigan, The Circuit Court for the County of Oakland.

(Continued on page 20)
moved from the County jail of the county of Oakland, to the State Prison of the state of Michigan

In testimony wherein I have hereto set my hand on the 29th day of November AD 1854.

Alfred [Heagman] clerk

Foster was then taken to the State Prison in Jackson, Michigan.

State prison Officer
Jackson Nov 31st 1854
I hereby certify that the sheriff of Oakland Co. did this day duly executed the foregoing writ by delivering into my custody at said Prison the within named convict. Peter Day, Agent, by G. Bloomfield.

To the County clerk)
Of Oakland County)

The next stop was the Michigan State archives to look at index cards[13], which had been filled out by officers of the prison for each prisoner. For David Foster the following information was noted. Height 6’, Complexion Dark, age 36, white male, Convicted 29 Nov. 1854, Oakland County, Crime Murder 1st degree, Term Life – Solitary, Occupation Farmer, Birthplace New York, Remarks Scar on lower joint & upper side of larger toe also on left groin.

This story continues with some more interesting elements to it, not the least of which is David Foster’s release from prison. When was he released and did he beg for re-admittance as described in the 1927 article above? Did he die in prison? How old was he? When did he die and where was he buried?

These questions may never be answered with the kind of certainty I would like to offer as a researcher. I have been unsuccessful in acquiring a death certificate from the State of Michigan. Neither the State archives nor officials at the
Jackson Prison were able to shed light on his death or burial in a ‘Potter’s field as I once speculated.

I went back to the U. S. Census[14] to help develop a timeline as to his whereabouts. He was enumerated in the 1860 and the 1870 census as an inmate of the prison. I did not find him in either the 1880 or 1900 census but as you will learn he was alive in 1880. I don’t have a birth record for David but I believe the year 1818 is likely to be correct. The index card of Jackson prison has his age as 36 in 1854 and the 1860 census is consistent with an age of 42, which gives us the year of 1818. However, the 1850 census says age 22 and the 1870 census age 50. That calculates to 1828 and 1820 respectively. The only other age related information was in 1847 when he got married. He was reported to be 27 years of age and that too calculates to 1820. Using the year 1818 he would have been 62 in 1880 and 72 in 1890.

One more document from the Michigan state archives offered a final clue and a further mystery. Governor of Michigan, Charles M. Crosswell, responded to a plea from a Mr. G. Green of Chicago and on 1 August 1877 pardoned David Foster.[15]

What interest would Mr. Green have in the case of a prisoner in the Jackson State prison? Was he merely actively involved, socially, in similar prison related cases and our David Foster was a likely candidate for his social leanings? Could there be a family connection? Perhaps his wife was related to David? That seemed quite plausible but proving her maiden name would not be easy or forthcoming. I looked in the 1880 census again but this time for Illinois.[16] I found a young A. W. Green age 32 from New York and his wife, initial “A”, age 26 born in Illinois, and twin children Grace and Erwin, born within the year, one cook and one servant but no David Foster. There was no A. G. Green listed in the census so the discrepancy in his initials is not satisfied. It didn’t seem likely this was a family connection 26 years David’s junior and from Illinois.

The pardon did give us the answer as to whether or not he was released and the year it happened. In 1877 David would have been about 59 years old and would have spent 23 years in solitary. Governor Crosswell wrote to the warden of the prison as follows:

“Whereas, at a session of the Circuit Court for the County of Oakland held on the 29th day of November in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and fifty four David Foster was convicted of the crime of murder in the first degree and sentenced to imprisonment in the State Prison for the term of his natural life. And whereas, the pardon of the said David Foster has been solicited by sundry good citizens of this state, and the reasons assigned therefore appearing to me satisfactory: Now therefore, Know ye, that I Charles W. Crosswell, Governor as afore said, by virtue of the power and authority in me vested, DO HEREBY PARDON the said David Foster of and from the offense whereof he was convicted and sentenced, as aforesaid. And I do Hereby Require, that upon the production and exhibition to you of these presents, the said convict to forthwith set at liberty from his said imprisonment, and therefrom and thereafter be wholly discharged. And you are herby required to make due returns hereof, with your doings herein, according to law. In Testimony Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand, and caused the Great Seal of the State of Michigan to be hereunto affixed, at Lansing, this first day of August in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and seventy seven. Charles W. Crosswell ss. By the Governor: G. Holden, Secretary of State.”

The process took 21 days. David did not gain his actual release until 21 August 1877. Bureaucratic red tape even then.

David Foster was a free man and may indeed have visited the grave of his late wife. Had he
done so it must have been with certain quiet. His former in-laws and all of Rhoda’s brothers and sisters were living in the area. They were not likely to have given him a warm reception despite their staunch Methodist leanings. No mention of the pardon is made in any of the Holly area papers. The 1880 census becomes more important because it could answer the question as to how David was able to provide for himself on the outside. Mr. Green had to post a bond in Lansing to secure the release of Foster but did the bond provide for his livelihood?

Ten years would pass and the story of David’s return to prison would be confirmed in a letter from Warden W. F. Hatch to then Governor of Michigan, The Honorable C. G. Luce.[17] The letter was dated 7 November 1887. “Dear Sir: One David Foster a life convict was pardoned out of this prison by Gov Crosswell. Said Foster has returned and applied to me for maintenance, on the ground that while here, the solitary confinement incapacitated him to such an extent that he is unable to earn a livelihood. I have temporarily provided for him in the Asylum.” Yours truly, H. F. Hatch, Warden.

Since the 1900 census fails to enumerate him can we assume he died between 1887 and 1900?

In a final note regarding David Foster: Elisha Ezra Caster, the Methodist Minister mentioned above, would often visit Asylums and homes of the poor as well at the State Prison in Jackson. These facts are noted in his several diaries. On one occasion while visiting the prison he mentions Foster as follows:

Monday February 7, 1870
“Today went all through the State Prison and saw them take dinner. Saw Foster who is in for life for killing My Sister Rhoda 16 years ago. He is a raving maniac, an awful sight.”

Even today I can feel his sentiments as Godly a man as he was. He is so forceful in his underlining “My Sister Rhoda” and critical yet benevo-

lent in his next comment of Foster.

In the reality of today’s reporting we’ve witnessed the abrasive tactics of reporters who shove their microphones in the face of someone whose next of kin just suffered death in an accident. “How do you feel” they ask.

There is no doubt about the feelings of the family in the loss of Rhoda it was far reaching. This revealed in two poems by Sylvanus H. Mott, father-in-law to Catherine Caster Mott. They may well have been the inspiration for the verses on the tombstone. These were found in family effects printed in pencil on 8 by 12 1/2” sheets of plain brown paper. Four lines to a verse, each verse numbered and the last line of each underlined. The first set has 12 verses the second has 13. I have included just the first set. He apologizes for his lack of skill and states that this is purely emotional. He included them in a letter to his son, Elisha Mott and daughter-in-law, Catherine Caster (Mott). The poems were written 27 January 1855, two months after Rhoda’s death.[18]

These pages have stayed in the family and have never been published before their inclusion here. It’s history, plain and simple, not a polished piece. It doesn’t read smoothly, it doesn’t flow, but it does weave a fabric of emotions such that it narrows the gap of 2003 and 1854. The handwritten words were not easily deciphered and I felt compelled at one point to put in parentheses a more obvious translation, but I like history just the way it happened. At least the typewritten version will give you the gist of the sentiments with a little patience on your part.

...
Telling a story is one thing, research is another.

Whenever a conflict arises in research it must be resolved. Tackling a conflict can be dry, tedious, but very necessary. In my telling the rest of the story of Rhoda to you I must tell you of some critical conflicting dates and what I did about them.

The problem dates begin in a marriage of 1847, a husband who is in California in 1850, and a wife in Michigan with two children born in New York but whose birth dates are later than 1850 according to census records. This needed to be resolved.

Rhoda had married David Foster 22 July 1847 in Galen[19] but she does not show up in the 1850 New York census or the Michigan census. I know of their marriage because New York State has a wonderful system of historical preservation. Each county employs a county historian and most townships have volunteer township or village historians. I met such a person on one of my research vacations to Rose Township, Wayne County, New York. [Interesting that the family would live near Rose, New York and then in Rose, Michigan] I was walking through the North Rose cemetery in New York when this smallish bespectacled gentleman greeted me cordially and asked if I needed help looking for someone. That’s a curious expression, don’t you think, when someone asks are you “looking for someone”? and you are waist deep in tombstones. Anyway, here comes Bill Dean, the Galen township historian, as I would later learn his identity, his arms full, trailing quite a long stream of computer paper, the old style paper held together with perforations complete with sprocket holes on the edges for the old dot matrix printers. Since I never throw anything away, I still have a box full of that paper and a printer in the closet that might still work. Well, to my delight, Bill had some information in his database about my Casters, including Rhoda’s marriage date, but since the whole family moved
Rhoda and David’s marriage was about 7 months along when gold was discovered 24 January 1848 at Sutter’s Mill. Just past their first anniversary in 19 August 1848 the New York Herald published the news of the discovery worldwide. The choice was farming or “Get Rich Quick”. David must have convinced himself, and perhaps even Rhoda for a time, that their fortune was to be made in California. He had the “Fever”. David Foster is among the miners in Georgetown in the 1850 census for Eldorado County, California.[20] He is listed as a 22-year-old miner born in New York whose average value of daily product was $2.00.

Rhoda’s parents, Christopher and Polly, were in Rose Township, Oakland County in 1860 and in 1870 and their grandchildren, Franklin Foster and Riley Foster, were enumerated with them. The 1860 Michigan census gave Riley Foster’s age as 9 years and puts Franklin’s at 11. Roughly, that’s a birth year of between 1849 and 1851. The 1870 census gave the same results with ages of 19 and 21. Since there is no birth record for Franklin or Riley it was important to do some calculations based upon what I did know.

David must have left for California soon after Franklin was born in 1849. I found a ship’s passenger record for the steamer California that had docked in San Francisco on 26 March 1850.[21] It had sailed from Panama 23 days earlier and on board was D. Foster with no other identifying remarks. If this was our David it means that he would have had to catch the ship probably in New York sometime in February. It also means he never knew his second son, Riley, other than by correspondence. He was on the boat probably before Rhoda knew she was pregnant.
to look in Washington State for Franklin I checked the 1880 through 1920 census. He is enumerated only in the 1900 and 1910 census\(^{(23)}\) and his reported age was quite different than in the earlier census and immediately this became an issue. The 1900 census lists him as 46 years of age with a birth month and year of May 1854. The 1910 census lists him as 57 years of age or a birth year of 1853. Rather impossible since David was absent from the family in 1850 to 1854.

It was time to make plans to visit Washington State. I went to Everett, the Snohomish county seat, to see what I could find. Not wanting to waste a trip where I may strike out genealogically, I am always ready to kill as many birds as I can with one stone, so while the entire trip was planned around my research I took advantage of other events. [In other words always go with a backup plan incase you get skunked] I flew in and out of Portland and that gave me an opportunity to see an aunt and uncle in the Dalles, Oregon and a cousin in Kent, Washington on my way to Seattle. While there I attended a 30\(^{th}\) High school reunion. Then it was off to the Snohomish County seat in Everett, Washington and then to the Everett Public Library. I copied some deeds and city directories. I also found addresses for the Snohomish Historical Society, which I contacted later and from which I received the baptism of Franklin’s daughter, Helen, his wife’s maiden name and other records that made the trip worthwhile. After exhausting my resources in a couple of days of snooping around I pulled out another contingency and met a man in Everett who was the biggest collector and seller of the pre-war Marx model trains. Even genealogists play with trains, so I added quite a few gems to my collection that day. Then it was back to Portland via the King County records office for some other family deeds and records, and the Pierce County offices for more of the same. I avoided the traffic jam in Olympia and sent for the death records I needed. You never know what the traffic will be like be-
for my research and with certain persistence has paid genealogical dividends. I have proven my ancestors pioneer status and by doing that I have qualified for membership in the “First Families of Ohio,” “Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War,” two separate lines for “The Society of Mayflower Descendants,” and recently a life membership for lineal proof for “The Society of the War of 1812.” I owe it all to my Mom and all who have gone before me in their research and the continued encouragement of those who are here today especially my wife.

Sources & Comments

[1] 3 page letter written by Catherine Caster (Mott) 3 Aug, 1898, Holly, Michigan to her brother Lawton Caster. Original in Linda Caster (Holiday) records, copy in Mott-Black family records.

[2] 1850 Michigan Census, Reel 352 pg 271, Charity is married to Ezra Barnes and live in Parma Twp; James Harvey is also in Parma on pg 271; Horace is in Concord Twp pg 265.


[5] Published in the Oakland Press October 11, 1927; I have two copies in my file. One from Norma Caster (Brownlee) which is an original copy complete with picture of tombstone as it was in 1927 and the same article without the picture reprinted in the Rose Township history [1837-1987] published by the Rose Township Historical Society, 1987.


[7] Evidently the newspaper did not look in the right place for “Authoritative” information. My grandparents were living on Clarence Street in Holly and judging from the documents handed down to my generation they were not consulted.

[8] The stone was broken and the larger upper part was taken. No one knows by whom but other than by vandals who wanted a unique souvenir, speculation was that a family member still residing in the area wanted to get rid of the reminder. My money is on the first scenario.

[9] The Herald Advertiser April 11, 1985 and June 6, 1985 provoked this question and my mother Virginia Mott (Black) answers the question. I remember that mom had been in Holly for her 50th high school reunion. Our family had a mini-family reunion and I was in Holly as well? I remember her reunion because it would have been my 25th high school reunion.

[10] He kept diaries and faithfully made an entry every day if only to report the weather. Many of the daily entries are detailed however and I have copies of six of them that were archived at Adrian College. These six do not include the year 1854. He rode the “cars” to Holly, as the train was called in those days, very frequently to visit his parents in Rose. To do so he would get off in Holly and follow the tracks on foot to Rose and cut through the woods he knew well from his youth.

[11] From files copied at Pontiac records retention center in the basement of the Pontiac Court House. Found in the Index to Criminal calendar 1841-58, Oakland County. The transcript consists of five pages of which three are handwritten testimony.

[12] Witnesses Lester Jennings 1812-1869 and VanDyke Wendell 1810-1888 are both buried in the Beebe cemetery. Mr. Park(er) is not further identified.

[13] The State Archive in Lansing, Michigan has a file on the early Jackson Prison. The identification card was among the papers.


[15] The State Archive has a file for “State papers” of the governors of Michigan. I found a pardon in the papers of Governor Charles M. Crosswell, Republican. He served from 1877 to 1881. File No. 1104 in his papers is the pardon granted.


[17] Cyrus G. Luce was the 30th governor of Michigan if you count the early governors of the Northwest, Indiana, and Michigan Territories.


[19] Bill Dean records: There is now a Web Site that shows these records [http://www.rootsweb.com/~nywayne/vitals/mar1847a.html]


[21] Ships Passengers pg 15 [California Gold rush Voyages, (Continued on page 27)

[22] Frank F. Foster owned and operated a Clothing and Gents' Furnishing goods, Boots and Shoe store. It was this letterhead on which he wrote to his aunt Catherine.

[23] 1900 Census Soundex Reel 19, Vol 15 ED 220, SH 7, LN 53 First street Snohomish city & County; 1910 Reel 1669 ED 15, SH 1B Dist 308, Retail dry goods.

Project Help Needed

One of my goals is to scan every issue of the NewsCaster and format them in Adobe Acrobat to be put on CD's.

The CD's will preserve the NewsCaster's and can be made available to the Members.

I have so far scanned in 1983 and 1984 and have 18 more years to go.

If you would like to help, you will need a scanner. Let me know........Patricia Caster

Archive Coordinator

Membership Dues are due by January 1, 2004
Dues are $15 per year

JC.0 John Caster Sr. 1754-1822
JC.0.05 Thomas Caster 1792-1873
JC.0.05.02 John H. Caster 1836-1908
JC.0.05.02.0? Charles Albert Caster 1874-1947
JC.0.05.02.0? Charles Vaughn Caster 1906-1958

Vaughn Caster
Dies in Hospital
At Philadelphia

C. Vaughn Caster, 52, chief chemist in the plant of the Brown Rubber company and a member of the company's board of directors, died unexpectedly at 11 a.m. Tuesday in Hahnemann hospital, Philadelphia, while being prepared for heart surgery. The family home here is 1415 Central Castor, prominent in civic and fraternal organizations, had gone to Philadelphia Feb. 12 for a physical checkup.

Born at Lockport, N. Y., he lived in Lafayette 37 years and was graduated from Jefferson high school in 1925 and from the Purdue university School of Civil Engineering, receiving a bachelor's degree, in 1937. He celebrated his 25th anniversary on the Brown Rubber company staff last August. He was married to Aneta B. Larson in 1935.

Mr. Caster was a member of Trinity Methodist church, Elks Lodge 143, Chamber of Commerce and Kiwanis club. He was exalted ruler of the Elks in 1957-58 and was chairman of the Jefferson high school Key club. He also was a member of the American Chemical society and the Ft. Wayne Rubber and Plastics group and Chicago Rubber group.

Surviving with the widow are two sons, Pvt. Charles Vaughn Caster Jr., in the Marine corps and stationed at San Diego, Calif., and Edward Eugene, at home; a brother, J. Arnold Caster of Lafayette, and two sisters, Mrs. Warren Douglas of Detroit and Mrs. Orville Hart of Green Hill.

Charles A. Caster
Charles A. Caster, 74, of 102
Owen street, retired Brown Rubber manager, died at 10:30 p.m. Tuesday at St. Elisabeth hospital, where he had been a patient since Sunday. Born in Millersburg, O., Mr. Caster first came to Lafayette 17 years ago as manager of the Lion Tire company, which has since become known as the Brown Rubber company. He retired about eight years ago.

He was first married to Laverne Arnold, who died in 1915, and was later married in 1939 to Elizabeth Cheesman, who survives with the following children by the former marriage: C. Vaughn Caster and J. Arnold Caster, of Lafayette; Mrs. Orval J. Hart, of Otterbein, and Mrs. Douglas R. Warren, of Detroit, Mich.
Descendants of Phillip Henry Caster

Generation One

1. Phillip Henry Caster was born on 16 Sep 1880 in Kansas. Phillip married Ella Ora Fair before 1923. This marriage has not been verified. Phillip died on 4 Oct 1968 at Turlock, California, at age 88.

   We found a Phillip Henry in the Social Security Database. This may not be the Phillip Henry we are looking for. The Phillip we are looking for died in Turlock, California. However the SS info does not show where his last benefit check was sent before 1950.

   Children of Phillip Henry Caster and Ella Ora Fair were:
   + 2 i. Charles Edgar Caster, born 2 Aug 1924 at Colorado; married Blanche Elizabeth McMains.

Generation Two

2. Charles Edgar Caster (Phillip), son of Phillip Henry Caster and Ella Ora Fair, was born on 2 Aug 1924 in Colorado. Charles married Blanche Elizabeth McMains before 1946. Charles died on 5 Oct 1987 at Auburn, California, at age 63.

   We found Charles Edgar in the Social Security Database. His last social security benefit check was sent to Auburn, Placer County, California, 95603.

   Children of Charles Edgar Caster and Blanche Elizabeth McMains are:
   3 i. Edward Dwight Caster.

Bibliography

CAOA Archive Coordinator, CAOA Archive Records. CAOA Archives.
Castor Association of America, Application of Edward Dwight Caster.

Endnotes

4. CAOA Archive Records, CAOA Archive Coordinator; CAOA Archives.
6. Charles E. Caster, Social Security Death Index, Rootsweb (http://www.rootsweb.com: Rootsweb), The Social Security Records show a "Charles E. Caster, born 2 August 1924, died 5 October 1987," His Social Security card was issued in California. His last residence was Auburn, Placer County, California 95603.

Hi Everyone, please check your files and see if you can find Phillip Henry in your ancestors. I would love to link him up with one of our lines. Thanks Patricia CAOA Archive Coordinator archives@caoa-gen.org
We had a great time digging through the books. Evelyn and Ernie Thomsen from Manteca, California gathered information from the Paulus-Arnold-Paul-Nicholas line, while Leland Caster from Bremerton, Washington organized and made copies from the John Caster Sr. line. Jean and Chuck White from Arizona, helped Mary Margaret Ward from San Francisco, California find information for the Benjamin Caster 1741 book. Delilah Logan from American Canyon, California helped with Benjamin Files.

I was amazed at how much was accomplished. It has paid off already in helping me to find files on our ancestors quickly. I would love to do it again next year.

Thanks to everyone for the help.

Patricia
Query: Captain Paul Kester

My name is John Peters and I write for the "PETERS AND ALLIED FAMILIES GENEALOGICAL QUARTERLY", founded 1997. We will be posting this same Query in the December's 2003 issue of the Quarterly.

We are looking for any information surrounding the KESTER/CUSTER connections outlined in the schematic on page __. Specifically, we would like to find the listing of the 3rd Battalion, Bucks County, PA between the years (1775 to 1785) and find more info on Captain Paul Kester who was married by Reverand Frazier and the Captain of the 3rd Battalion, Bucks County, PA during the Revolutionary War. These two commonalities, along with a Warner Peters living in Bucks County, PA at Peters Corners (Hannah Peters, his Aunt married Jonathan Custer and her brother Warner Peters in Loysville, Perry County, PA), make for some very close and interesting connections. You may contact me by email at JAKEOWEN@AOL.com

---

Children and Wife of:
PK.0.01.10.07.01.05.01 Ulysses Grant W. Castor 1868-1913

Front Row: 01 William Thomas 1896-1946, 03 Elvie Pearl "Jack" 1900, 07 Paul Marion James 1911-1973

Thank you Darlene Litzsinger for sharing this wonderful photograph with us.
DID YOU KNOW THIS …Voyage of the Concord

By Terry O’Connor

Today is July 24, 1863 and it is a bright sunny day with westerly winds as we board the good ship, Concord, on its journey to the New World and Penn’ s Woods. We have sold or given away what possessions we have that cannot be taken with us. We have said goodbye to the family and friends and the City of Krefeld. We have traveled down the Rhine River to Rotterdam and then to the port city of Gravesend, England from which we sail today.

Our leader, Daniel Pastorius, has gathered our group and we have gathered our baggage as we board the Concord. Our home for the next 2 and a half months is a good, strong, ship of 500 tons which is 120 feet long and 32 feet wide. The ships master is William Jeffries who has made 7 or 8 trips to Virginia and is to be a friendly and polite.

Accommodations are described as, “many convenient cabins made and private rooms for families and 14 excellent oxen killed and 30 Tonn beer and abundance of bread and water so that we are victualled for 120 people.” The ship carries 26 cannon 1/3rd of which have been stored in the hold to give us more space and 40 sailors. The cost of the transportation would be 5 pounds per person more than 12 years of age and 50 shillings each for those less than 12 while infants under 1 year are free. The freight rate for goods is 40 shillings a ton and drinks are24 shillings a ton. We have been advised to bring butter, cheese and clothing for 2 or 3 years, iron for building, tools and all kinds of mechanics, rope, fishnets and guns.

We have learned that we are not the only passengers on this vessel. Although the ship has space for 120 people there will be only about 60 total. One of these is a James Claypoole who will write several letters before and during the voyage that will survive to the present day. James wrote, “the blessings the Lord did attend us so that we had a comfortable passage and had our health all the way.” James brought several servants with him. A humorous note about James is that he sent some of his servants over on an earlier ship to build a house for him. In his instructions he had forgotten to include fireplaces and he “froze most of the winter till they were completed.” Two children were also born on the passage.

It is unfortunate that not all CAOA members will be able to connect directly with this ship. When the Concord arrived it did not have any members of the Kuster’s on board. The first Kuster to Germantown was Johannnas who arrived in 1684. Paulus, with his wife were witnesses to the baptism of their grandchild in 1699 in Krefeld. However many can connect to with the Concord in another way.

The second son of Paulus was Arnold. Arnold’s first son was Conrad who married Susanna Adams. Susanna is the daughter of Richard Adams and Alse Op den Graff. Alse was the daughter of Abraham Op den Graff who along with his 2 brothers Dirck and Herman and their mother were on the Concord. Therefore any CAOA members who can trace to Conrad Custer (abt 1695, d 1 Feb 1772) can trace to the original 13 through Abraham Op den Graff.

The United States Postal Service and the Postal Administration of the Federal Republic of Germany are commemorating the tricentennial of German immigration to the United States by the joint issuance of postage stamps featuring the Concord.

In 1683, the Concord sailed from London, carrying 13 families making their way to the New World from Krefeld, which is in North-Rhine Westphalia, in search of religious freedom. The immigrants sailed on 24 July 1683 and landed in Philadelphia on 6 October 1683. They purchased land in Pennsylvania to build the community of Germantown, which today is part of Philadelphia.

The issuance of these stamps salutes the courage, stamina and motivation of those first immigrants and all who followed in their footsteps. Both the U. S. and German stamps are designed by Richard Schlecht of Arlington, Virginia, who is an American of German descent. Since a picture of the Concord is not available his design is based upon written descriptions of the ship.
300th ANNIVERSARY OF GERMAN IMMIGRATION

According to the personal record of Francis Daniel Pastorius... the leader of the first German Immigrants to settle in America... the voyage from Germany to America was quite an ordeal. Pastorius described the event as follows: "... After I had... arrived at Deal, I hired four male and two female servants, and on the 7th day of June, 1683, I set sail on the Concord with a company of eighty passengers. Our ship drew thirty feet of water. Our fare on board was poor enough. The allowance of provision for ten persons per week was as follows: three pounds of butter; daily four cans of beer and one can of water, every noon; two dishes of peas; four times per week salt meat, and three times salt fish, which we were obliged to cook, each man for himself, and had daily to save enough from dinner to serve for our suppers also. And as these provisions were usually very poor, and the fish sometimes tainted, we were all compelled to make liberal use of liquors and other refreshments of a similar nature to preserve the health amid such hard fare..." Pastorius did not dwell on the additional hardships passengers had to face. However, it was not uncommon for many passengers to die from either starvation or the dreaded "ship fever," during the three to six months it took to make the trip to America. To honor the first, brave German Settlers to come to America, both the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany issued the stamps that appear on this First Day Cover.

(Source Unknown)
Help identify this important Benjamin Custard 1741-1826 document

Leland Caster found this important document for Benjamin Custard in the CAOA files. It is very important because it gives a definitive date for his settlement of Custard’s Delight in Allegheny County, PA. As there is no attribution on the document, we need to identify the type and date of the document, issuing authority, and the repository.

Believed to be Virginia Certificate

We believe that this document is a copy of the certificate issued to Benjamin by the Commissioners of the Monongalia, Yohogania, and Ohio District. It gives him entitlement to 400 hundred acres and a preemptive right to 1000 acres.

Immediately before the border dispute between Virginia and Pennsylvania was resolved, Virginia set up Commissions to hear settlement claims and to issue land and preemption certificates to settlers in the disputed area. The subject document conforms to the facts listed in the microfilmed list of Land Claimed and Certificates Granted by the Commissioners of the District of Monongalia, Yohogania, and Ohio for Settlements and Preemptions at the Library of Virginia.

Pennsylvania honored the Virginia settlement certificates and resurveyed and issued new land warrants establishing title based on these new surveys. These later Pennsylvania documents are part of the Pennsylvania Archives, Record Group 17 Records of the Land Office.

Where is the original document?

To date, we have not been able to ascertain where the original Virginia certificates for the District of Monongalia, Yohogania, and Ohio are archived. Some records are archived in the Washington County, Pennsylvania Courthouse. Other records are located in the West Virginia Historical Archives in Morgantown, West Virginia. Do you know where these documents are located?

Please help locate the document!

Please contact Mary-Margaret Ward and Patricia Caster if you can help us find this document. Mary-Margaret’s e-mail is mmward2001@mindspring.com. Her address is 2214 Clay St., San Francisco, CA 94115. Patricia Caster’s e-mail is archives@caoa-gen.org and her mailing address is P.O. Box 955, Windsor, CA 95494-0955.

Typescript of document front

"We the Commissioners for the [missing fragment] Claims to Unpatented lands in the Counties of Monongalia Yohogania and Ohio do hereby Certify that Benjamin Custard is Entitled to four hundred Acres of land in the County of Yohogania on Peters Creek to Include his Actual Settlement made in the Year One Thousand Seven hundred and Seventy one also a right in Preemption to One Thousand Acres adjoining thereto.

Given under our hands at Cox’s fort the Nineteenth day of February 1780 in the fourth Year of the Commonwealth.

[Signature]

[Signature]
Francis Peyton
Phil. [-]on[-----]
Joseph Holmes

Test [-----]
James C.[-----]”

Typescript of document back
“2454
Benjamin Custard
400
100 Preemp
Yohogania”

________________________________________________________________________

“I assign the within to Cap Geo Berry. May 2. 1782.
Benj'[ Custard]

I assign the within to Benj’ Johnston 13 May 1782.
Geo Berry”

________________________________________________________________________

“2454 Mem.”

This certificate cannot be entered with the
Surveyor after the twenty sixth day of
June 1780

James [-----]

This certificate was Entered with [--------]
[-----] March 29th 1780.

Auditors Office 23 May 1783 J[ ----] Crawford

Rec’d the Treasurers [----] for four hundred [-----]
Pounds for the within Preemption. B . Stark”

Bibliography:


Virginia Land Office. A list of land claimed by the settlers and preemptions in the District of Kentucky; [Monongalia, Yohogania, and Ohio; August, Botetourt and Greenbrier; Washington and Montgomery] and for which certificates by the commissioners have been granted. Microform. Filmed by the Virginia State Library Photographic Laboratory, 1949. FHL US/CAN Film No. 7811 Item 2.
Query: Donald Marion Custer’s 1000 page manuscript

Does anyone know how to obtain a copy of the 1000 page notebook written by Donald on Paulus Kuster and his descendants? The name of the notebook is unknown to me. I am will to cover the costs of obtaining a copy.

Richard P. Dunbar  rpdnmd@aol.com

His other works in the LDS Library (SLC) are:
• The descendants of George Custer (son of George) and his wife, Mary Wise : with an account of the Wise family
• Descendants of Hermanus Kuster (son of Paulus and Gertrude) and his wife, Sybella Conrad
• The descendants of Paul Custer (son of Arnold) and his wife, Sarah Ball Custer : with an account of the Ball family

Donald was born September 11, 1911 and died May 7, 1976 in Denver, Colorado. He never married. He was a Spanish teacher in Salida, Colorado. He is buried in Salida Fairview Cemetery. He had one brother, Kenneth George Custer, born June 10, 1908 and died December 1983 in Golden, Colorado. Kenneth married Virginia Louise Close in 1931. They had 3 children.

Where do these Authors Fit?

It would be interesting to know where these people fit into the Castor lines that have been established and to know more about them from readers of this newsletter if you can claim them as being in you line.

*Henry Castor wrote the following books.
• AMERICA’S FIRST WORLD WAR: GENERAL PERSHING AND THE YANKS
• THEODORE ROOSEVELT AND THE ROUGH RIDERS
• FIRST BOOK OF THE WAR WITH MEXICO
• FIFTY FOUR FORTY OR FIGHT!: A SHOWDOWN BETWEEN AMERICA AND ENGLAND
• SETTLES THE OREGON QUESTION

I tried to find out who he was using the internet under American Authors, American Writers etc and had no luck at all. I then tried the Library of Congress and learned the following had books registered under their names.

CASTOR, GAYLORD B., 1917- (1 item)  [Cofounder of CAOA in 1983, descendant of Noah Custer]
CASTOR, HAROLD, 1915- (2 items)
CASTOR, HENRY* (2 items)  *same person only two books listed with Library Of Congress
CASTOR, INEZ (1 item)
CASTOR, J (2 items)
CASTOR, J. CARRERAS- (1 item)
CASTOR, JACK WILLIAM, JR., 1950- (2 items)
CASTOR, JAMES (5 items)
CASTOR, JAMES M., 1947- (1 item)
CASTOR, JAMES W (3 items)
CASTOR, JAMES, 1944- (14 items)
CASTOR, JAMES, 1947- (1 item)

Bruce Black  brvb@dslextreme.com
Emanuel Custer Cemetery since being restored in 2002

The cemetery is located on land in Maryland purchased by Emanuel Custer in 1810. The front stones are Emanuel and his wife Catherine. His son, Samuel and wife Lydia (Durst), son, Peter, grandson, Frank, son of Samuel and Lydia, daughter, Catherine are behind them. One other person, Catherine Ellen Kimmel is also there and is unknown to me. I can not make a Custer connection.

Rev. Franklin Bishop

Archive Note: Emanuel Custer Jr. was born 29 January 1779 and died 13 June 1829. His wife, Anna Catherine Ringer was born 28 March 1784 and died 26 April 1847.

I did a search and found a Michael Kimmel in Ohio and a town of Kimmel in Indiana.

Ancestor’s found for Mary Jane Castor

Mary Jane Castor who was born about 1845 and married William Hodge was Barbara Murray’s oldest known ancestor when she submitted her application for membership. I was not having much luck at finding her in the archives. I sent Barbara a note and asked if she had any more information about Mary Jane, like brothers or sisters maybe. She answered the very same day to let me know that she thought Mary Jane had a sister named Kate (possibly Catherine) and two brothers Uriah and John and that they were from the Elizabeth, Pennsylvania area.

I searched on Uriah and on Elizabeth, Pennsylvania. We hit the jackpot. Mary Jane’s father was Benjamin Castor grandson of Benjamin Castor 1741, born about 1816 and married Sarah Jane Armstrong. Their first child was Mary Castor born about 1834 in Pennsylvania. Her brothers and sisters were William, James, Joseph, John, Catherine and Uriah. They all lived in Elizabeth, Pennsylvania.

Mary Jane’s lineage id is PK.01.01.10.10.04.01.

Mary Jane married William Hodge and they had a daughter Sarah Jane Rebecca Hodge 1867-// who married William Rigby. They had a daughter Lide Ann Rigby 1896-1975 who married David John Pergrin 1892-1975. Their daughter Julia Mae Pergrin married Alton Lloyd Baum and they are Barbara’s parents.

I just love it when I am able to connect lines together.
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**New Members**

Help keep CAOA postage expenses down by reporting address changes as soon as possible. For each NewsCaster that is returned we pay the US Post Office $.50 and it then costs $1.00+ to mail it to the correct address.

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**Please ask before you use it**

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Vice President………………………….…...….Jack Castor  
Secretary……………………………….…….Arlene Castor  
Treasurer………………………………….……….Joe Lacy

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Editor………………………………...Mary-Margaret Ward  
Publications Manager……………….………Sue Wanless  
Historian…………………………………… ..Phillip Castor  
Web Master…………………………...Thomas Weingart  
Library……………………………….Mary-Margaret Ward

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http://www.caoa-gen.org
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The Castor Association of America
21371 Luisa
San Antonio, Texas 78259-2159
USA

Dated Material

Change Service Requested
For the past couple of years the Alexanders' have been filling dumpsters and pounding nails in preparation for the 2004 Castor Association visit to Monroe, Michigan.

Since 1999 when Steve and Sandy purchased the Judge Daniel S. Bacon home, birthplace of Elizabeth Clift Bacon, their goal has been to return it to the look of the 1860-70’s. Libbie, as her father called her, later married General George Armstrong Custer and these were the years that they resided in the house while on military leave.

It is estimated that the home has endured two moves. The first move was about 1825-30 and then again in 1911 following the dedication of the Custer Monument in 1910. The original location is thought to have
been in Loranger Square across from the Court House. It was from there Judge Bacon purchased the home and had it moved a block to the location on Monroe Street that most people are familiar with. Today that site is the location of the Monroe Historical Museum following the years it served as the post office for which the property had been purchased by the government.

Libbie was born in the house on Monroe Street. She attended Boyd Academy only a couple of blocks away on Cass Street as a boarding student after the death of her mother when she was but twelve years old. Her father, devastated by the loss of her mother, Eleanor Sophia Page Bacon, closed the house for a period of time while he resided at the Humphrey House across from the Court House. Later he was to rent the property, then restore it when he married Rhoda Wells Pitts of Tecumseh. Ultimately brought Libbie home from the school to once more have a mother and a home.

It was in this home Libbie and the General made memories that lasted throughout her lifetime. She sold the house on Christmas Eve 1890 to a friend, Attorney John Rauch. She had long since moved to New York City to earn her livelihood and support both the General’s parents and his sister following his death. The house was moved to its present location on Cass Street in 1911 just prior to the building of the new post office. In 1972 the post office moved to a newer building hence the Monroe Historical Museum became the site of the largest collection of Custerania in the United States.

Luckily for Steve and Sandy, the Bacon-Custer home was not torn down but conveniently relocated five blocks and privately owned before their purchase in December 1999. Over the years a succession of families dwelt in the historical treasure attributing their own personalities, yet not destroying the integrity of the late Colonial/Greek Revival home.

With much elbow grease and HQ paints, the home has now returned to the time when ladies wore hoops and sabers rattled on the stair steps. The marked features will help highlight the educational and fun filled weekend conference for both the Castor Association in America and the Little Big Horn Associates Conference in 2004. This is the first time these two groups will combine to share their particular expertise and roll back the clock to the 1860’s for “Custer Week” in Monroe, Michigan. Plan to join us for both the conference and perhaps a day or two earlier to view other local sights of interest like the Henry Ford Museum and the Greenfield Village. Take a day to tour the Toledo Museum of Art, eat a famous Tony Packos hot dog made famous by Klinger on MASH and tour the countryside in Southeastern Michigan and Northwestern Ohio. This is one conference you will not want to miss. Visit the Bacon-Custer home and hear the stories of General Custer’s birth in
As I lifted the lid on the box labeled “Ann,” I saw the small brown bible. I picked it up and the front cover nearly fell off. A shudder of excitement passed through me as I opened it and saw Kaster names I knew.

The names recorded in the bible and on the loose sheets tucked inside the front cover were of my mother’s family – her siblings, grandparents, aunt and uncle.

I read the entries, names and dates, more closely and began to question some of the entries. I would need to study the information written in this little bible more carefully.

Who is “Ann?”

“Ann” is Ann Mary Pauline Kaster Dry, the eldest child of Clark Kaster and Amelia Buch Kaster. Born in 1892, Ann was named for Clark Kaster’s mother, Dortha Ann Stephens/Stevens, his stepmother, Mary Goldsberry, and Amelia Buch’s mother, Pauline Kliner Buch. The joke among the other children was that they used all the girl’s name for Ann and hence, her two younger sisters, Hattie and Emily, had only one name apiece.

Physical state of the bible

First I looked at the book itself. It is 3 3/8” x 5 1/2”. It was printed by George E. Eyre and William Spottiswoode, London. It is undated. There is writing on the inside front cover, the inside front page, and the back cover. The last pages of the book are missing. Inserted in the front of the book are two small pieces of paper with names and dates. A postcard and a card reading “Candidate” below which is written in script “Amelia Kaster” with gold and white ribbon were also inside the front cover. Someone has cut a piece, about 2 1/2” x 1/2”, out of the top of the inside front page. The cover is brown Moroccan leather with “Holy Bible” imprinted in gold. The front cover is almost detached from the spine.

The written entries and enclosed papers

- **The postcard**
The postcard enclosed in the Bible says “New Year Greetings.” It is addressed, in pencil, to “Mrs. L.C.C. Kaster, Dexter, Kansas.” The address reads: “Best Wishes to all for A Happy New Year Mother & Brother.”
What does this mean? First, Mrs. L.C.C. Kaster is my grandmother, Amelia Buch Kaster. I believe the message is exactly what it says, a New Year greeting from her mother and brother. However, there is one mystery. The postcard is not stamped nor has it ever been through the mail.

- **The card with the ribbon**
The card reads “Candidate” in type and under it is written “Amelia Kaster.” I have no idea for what occasion this card may have been prepared. However, there are two holes with a linear indentation at the top of the card. This is possibly where Amelia used a straight pin

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1. Clark Kaster’s full name is Leaman Clark Chancy Kaster. He was called “Clark” or “L.C.C.” by his friends and family.
inside front cover, made the entries through Reuben F. Kaster. It also seems likely that the same person made the entries for Hattie and Emily and the entry for Ann Dorothy Kaster(sic), inside back cover.

Inside front cover handwritten entries

- “W.S. Kaster Died February 10 at noon 12.30 Houston Texas. 1930.”
  W. S. Kaster was the older brother of Clark Kaster. He died in Houston on February 10, 1930. I have this information from my mother. W. S. Kaster’s granddaughter, Sandra Kaster Lee, also gave me the information, which corresponds with the CAOA records.

- “Aunt Vic Ott Hoyt Died February 18 1929 age 67 years”
  Aunt Vic Hoyt was Clark Kaster’s stepsister. Her mother, Mary Goldsberry, was Reuben Fletcher Kaster’s second wife. Reuben Fletcher is the father of Clark and W. S. Kaster.

The handwriting on these two entries appears very

Loose pages inserted inside front cover of Bible

I personally knew the people named in these lists. The names are those of Clark and Amelia Kaster’s children and the dates are the respective birth dates. The names and dates are consistent with the other dates I have for my mother’s siblings, my aunts and uncles.

I did not recognize the handwriting but I believe it is possible the same person who made the entry for W. S. Kaster,

Postcard tucked inside Kaster Bible

to attach the badge to her dress or jacket. I surmise that it is a nametag for my grandmother for some event.

- The two enclosed pieces of paper
  These two papers, approximately 2 1/2 “ x 3 1/2”, have the names and birthdates of the children of Clark Kaster and Amelia Buch. One page is written in what appears to be a blue pencil with certain words over traced in ink. The second page has three names with dates, two of which are written in a brown crayon like pencil and one neatly written in lead pencil. It appears that perhaps two different people have written on these papers.

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I did not recognize the handwriting but I believe it is possible the same person who made the entry for W. S. Kaster,
similar. Both entries are in pencil but the entry for Aunt Vic Hoyt is stronger, as if the writer had pressed the pencil harder or perhaps used a different pencil. There are some significant differences as well – the “t” is crossed differently in each entry, the “y” is not the same nor is the “e.” However, the slant of the letters seems consistent in each entry.

- **Who made these entries?**
  
  I have concluded that the entry for “Aunt Vic Ott Hoyt” must have been made by one of the children of Clark and Amelia Kaster, not one of them. Neither Clark nor Amelia would have referred to Victoria Hoyt as “Aunt Vic”. Clark Kaster grew up with her as a sister and Amelia Kaster would have considered her as his sister as well. It is unlikely they would have called a contemporary “Aunt Vic.”

However, it is quite possible that either Clark or Amelia made the entry for W. S. Kaster. The handwriting between the two entries is sufficiently different that I am unable to decide if two people made the entries or if one person did, whose handwriting varied from one entry to the next.

**Facing page, front of bible, handwritten entry**

Someone has cut out a rectangle area of the page commencing about 1/2” from the left top, 3/4” depth and continuing to the right edge of the page.

The words “Paul Buch CherryVale Kansas” are written in red approximately half way down the page, toward the right edge of the page.

This is a significant clue for me. I know that Paul Buch was the oldest brother of Amelia Buch Kaster, wife of Clark Kaster and my grandmother. The Buch family lived in Cherryvale, Montgomery Co., KS, prior to moving to Winfield, Cowley Co., KS, in 1889. Clark and Amelia were married in Winfield in 1891.  

This clue leads me to wonder if the bible be-
same as that recorded on the gravestone for Reuben Fletcher Kaster. I knew that these two women were his wives. This knowledge is based both upon family tradition and marriage records.

- **Is the birth date, 5 December 1832, correct?**

This date is incorrect, I concluded, based upon an analysis of other evidence I had.

First, I knew that Reuben was 30 years on 25 March 1871, the date of a petition he filed in Appanoose County Circuit Court requesting the appointment of Robert Kaster as Administrator of William Kaster’s estate. The ages of William’s heirs are listed in the petition.

Second, I knew that William had married his first wife, Angeline Brazell, on 20 July 1840. Reuben F. would have been born in 1841, which would make him 30 years old in 1871.

Third, I had the 1856 Iowa census where his father William is enumerated as widowed with Reuben age 15, Benj. F. age 10, James H. age 8, and Mary Catharine and Eliza Jane, both age 1. Furthermore, the ages of Reuben, age 18 in the 1860 U.S. Census and age 29 in the 1870 census, all are evidence that the birth date in the bible is incorrect.

- **Who made the entry?**

Because this entry says “Grandpa Kaster” and below is “Grandma Mary Kaster”, I am certain that neither Clark Kaster nor Amelia Kaster made the entries. Reuben Fletcher was Clark’s father, Dortha Stephens/Stevens his mother, and Mary Goldsberry his stepmother. They are unlikely to have referred to him as “Grandpa.” It is far more likely that one of the children of Clark and Amelia made these entries.

- **“Grandma Mary Kaster”**

I knew, from their marriage license, that Reuben F. Kaster married Mary Goldsberry 14 March 1873. From her gravestone, I knew that she had died 2 February 1900. I believe the birth date given in the bible is correct. She is listed as 40 years old in the 1870 US census and 52 in the 1880 US census. She would have turned 52 just three weeks before census day, June 11, 1880.

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7. Declaration of Henry H. Might, Sheriff, 22 Dec 1871; Estate of William Kaster, Probate File No. 860, District Court, Appanoose County, Iowa.
8. Ripley County, Indiana, Marriage Book 3:90; microfilm no. 1311044, Family History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.
10. Mary Goldsberry household, 1870 U.S. census, Iowa, Appanoose County, Chariton Township, population schedule, page 504, line 39, dwelling 132, family 132; National Archives micropublication M593, roll 375.

Ruben Caster household, 1870 US census, Iowa, Appanoose County, Taylor Township, population schedule, page 10, line 5, dwelling 66, family 66. National Archives micropublication M593, roll 375.

Rheubin Caster household, 1880 U. S. census, Kansas, Cowley County, Dexter Township, population schedule, page 504, line 2, dwelling 109, family 110; National Archives micropublication T-9, roll 377.

Kaster-Goldsberry marriage, marriage license for Reuben Kaster and Mrs. Mary Goldsberry, 14 March 1873; issued and signed 14 March 1873 by Clerk of the Circuit Court W. J. Johnson, Appanoose County, Iowa. Held in 2003 by Mary-Margaret Ward (2214 Clay Street, San Francisco, CA 94115).
Since Reuben and Mary Goldsberry married in 1873, Dortha Ann must have died between 1870 and 1873. Thus the death date given in the bible is probably correct.

What conclusions to draw?

After studying the bible over several weeks and trying to compare the handwriting in it, I reached these conclusions:

1. At least two people, possibly three, have written in the bible.
2. The bible had belonged to Amelia Buch Kaster before she married.
3. The entry for W. S. Kaster was probably written by Clark Kaster or Amelia Kaster.
4. One of the children of Amelia Buch and Clark Kaster made the rest of the entries. Because I knew most of these people as a child and teenager, and because I had heard my mother and her brother talk about them intimately, I believe that Ann Kaster, the oldest child of Clark and Amelia, made most of the entries. I have compared this handwriting with other samples of her hand and to my eye, they are similar. However, I believe the penmanship for part of the birth date entries and the one for Dorotha(sic) Ann Kaster are the same, with alteration by another person.
5. Finally, the dates for Reuben F. Kaster are incorrect as to birth date but correct as to death date.
6. The death date for Dortha Ann Kaster is likely correct.
7. The dates for the births of the children of Clark and Amelia Kaster may have been entered by 2 different people with first hand knowledge of the events. However, the entries were made some time after the children were born.

Summary

Finding a family bible is exciting and a genealogist’s dream. However, that bible, such as the Kaster family bible, can be misleading. A researcher has to analyze the information in the bible with other information known about a family and each person. Only after synthesizing all the known data can one make a determination as to which facts one can reasonably accept as accurate.
Samuel Custer’s Civil War Service 54TH Pennsylvania Regiment

By Nancy Mozeleski

Samuel Custer was born and raised in Somerset Co., PA. His family had been living in Somerset since the early 19th century. Samuel’s ancestors’ emigrated from Germany or Switzerland and were among the earliest Pennsylvania Dutch (Deutch), settlers in Pennsylvania. Since there were a number of Custers in the early settlements, there is no definitive information on his early ancestry, but he is likely descended from John Philip Custer, who fought in the Revolutionary War and settled in Somerset between 1800 and 1810. Samuel was married to Sophia Seese, (granddaughter of a Revolutionary War veteran) and had 6 children. He was 5’9” tall, 145 lb, had dark hair, and a dark complexion. He could write. He was 37 years old when he volunteered for the 54th Pennsylvania regiment and he served until the end of the Civil War. He had been married for 16 years at the time of his enlistment. His daughter Susanna, our direct ancestor, was born three months after he went off to war and his last child was born in 1864 during the war, so he must have had the opportunity to go home.

The Fifty-fourth Regiment was recruited principally in the counties of Cambria, Somerset, Dauphin, Northampton, and Lehigh, during the months of August and September, 1861. About half of the enlistees were from Somerset County. Initially, Samuel was assigned to Company I. The Regiment met at Camp Curtin and was organized by the selection of the following field officers: Jacob M. Campbell, of Cambria County, Colonel; Barnabas McDermit, of Cambria County, Lieutenant Colonel; John P. Linton, of Cambria County, Major. Colonel Campbell and many of the officers and men had served during the three months’ campaign, and Lieutenant Colonel McDermit possessed military experience acquired in the Mexican War.

On February 27, 1862, the regiment was ordered to Washington and camped near Bladensburg Cemetery. This was a period of training were they practiced drilling and exchanged the flint-lock muskets, furnished by the State, for Belgian rifles. On the March 25th, the 54th was ordered to report to Brigadier General Keim, of Casey’s Division but the order was countermanded, and, on the 29th, it was ordered to Harper’s Ferry, to report to Colonel Miles. Upon his arrival, Colonel Campbell was directed spread his forces along the 56 miles of railroad west of Martinsburg that was to be guarded. Company I (Samuel’s Company) led by CaptainWilliam B. Bonacker was assigned to at Sir John’s Run 27 miles west of Martinsburg. Regimental headquarters were established at first at Great Cacapon, but subsequently at St. John’s Run.

The country through which that portion of the railroad runs, which the regiment was required to guard, was considered by the rebels as their own territory, and the majority of the population, in the vicinity, were rebel at heart. Numerous guerrilla bands, led by daring and reckless chieftains, roved the country, pillaging and burning the property of Union inhabitants, and watchful for an opportunity to burn railroad bridges, cut the wires of the telegraph, and destroy the road. The regiment’s duties were: (1) to guard this thoroughfare, which was of vital importance to the government; (2) to suppress guerrilla warfare; (3) to afford protection to the harassed and helpless people. Campbell at once assumed, as a cardinal principle, that the true way to deal with guerillas was to assume the offensive and to hunt them instead of waiting to let them hunt him. Almost daily
from some part of the line, squads were sent out to engage and capture these roving bands, led by such notorious partisans as Edwards, White, Imboden, and McNeil, and many were brought in. Some of these were sent to Harper’s Ferry; others, less guilty, upon taking the oath of allegiance, were released. The most notorious were sent to Camp Chase, Ohio.

Union General Nathan Banks, who had been engaging Gen. Stonewall Jackson down the Valley, was defeated in mid-May at Front Royal and Winchester, disrupting the Union plans to forge ahead to Richmond. The priority at this point was to protect the Capitol and keep the Confederates from crossing the Potomac and racing to Washington D.C. As a result troops that were to participate in the assault on Richmond were diverted to the Valley. Sunday morning of May 25, 1862, all the locomotives on the railroad west of Harper’s Ferry, were hurried through to Cumberland, with the engineers bringing the first intelligence of the retreat of Banks and the approach of Stonewall Jackson to Martinsburg. At nine o’clock that night Colonel Campbell received the following dispatch from Colonel Miles: “Concentrate your regiment at South Branch. General Banks defeated and driven through Martinsburg. Expect an attack here hourly. Mean to fight.”

Fortunately, Col. Campbell had detained one engine, and this he immediately dispatched for company G, nearest to Martinsburg, and most exposed to the enemy’s advancing columns. It arrived not a moment too soon; for as the company moved away the rebels began to swarm in, and soon set fire to the deserted camp and the railroad bridge which the company had been guarding. A train procured from Cumberland was sent out and the companies were all successively picked up and carried west to South Branch. Here the Potomac was spanned by a substantial iron bridge, the only one left standing by the rebels during their occupation of the road in the preceding summer. The telegraph wires were now severed and all communication with headquarters was cut off. Lieutenant Colonel McDermit was sent out on the 28th with two companies to reconnoiter, and on the 31st, Colonel Campbell proceeded down the road with two companies as far as Back Creek without meeting any opposition. The destruction of the bridge at this point prevented further progress, and he returned to camp. On June 1st he dispatched two companies under command of Major Lin-tont to the Great Cacapon, for protection of the bridge. On June 17, 1862, Jackson had been driven from the valley, never to return. On the following day the Colonel received the following order, telegraph, from Colonel Miles, “Colonel Campbell and command will occupy the railroad as before.” By nightfall all the companies were at their old posts.

The success of Jackson and the consequent withdrawal from the road had inspired his roving bands with new life. They became more troublesome than ever, wandering up and down the country, pillaging indiscriminately, from friend and foe. The several companies of the 54th were kept constantly on the alert. Often they penetrated twenty to thirty miles into the interior, capturing and dispersing the guerrillas, restoring stolen property, and successfully protecting and preserving the road. From June 1st to September 10th, two-hundred thirteen guerrillas and two-hundred seventy-three horses together with muskets, sabers, pistols and other military gear, were captured.

The rebel army having defeated McClellan upon the Peninsula and Pope at Bull Run, was now advancing into Maryland for the Antietam campaign. On September 11th the advance reached Back Creek, where the Confederates surprised and captured some of the pickets of company G. Communication with Col. Miles was again severed and soon after Harper’s Ferry was invaded by Jackson. The post garrison, and immense military stores fell into the hands of the enemy. Col. Campbell now telegraphed to General Kelly, in command in West Virginia, for orders. Kelly declined to give any, but advised the withdrawal from the road. This the Colonel decided not to follow and clung to his po-
Skirmishing with the enemy's pickets continued until September 21, 1862, when Company G, which was holding the bridge, was attacked by a considerable force of the rebels. Upon receipt of intelligence of its approach, Colonel Campbell moved his train, with his forces hastily collected, to the support of the menaced detachment; but before he arrived, Major Linton had been attacked with an overwhelming force, and was obliged to fall back, bringing off all his men, but losing his camp and garrison equipage. The enemy advanced and burned the railroad bridge, but hearing the whistle of the locomotive bringing up Colonel Campbell's force, and suspecting the arrival of reinforcements hastily fell back. Col. Campbell pushed out his pickets again to the bridge, where they arrived before the ruins had been extinguished.

After the battle of Antietam, Gen. McClellan, unaware of the presence of any Union troops south of the Potomac, sent a cavalry force to picket the Maryland shore. Seeing soldiers in blue across the river, they regarded Col. Campbell's men of the 54th Pennsylvania as rebels in disguise, and it was with difficulty that they could be undeceived. Upon the surrender of Miles, the brigade to which the regiment belonged, had disappeared. A report of its position to the General-in-Chief soon brought an order attaching it to General Franklin's command. At daylight on October 4th, rebel General Imboden, with a force of infantry and cavalry, seven hundred strong, attacked company K Captain Newhard, at Little Cacapon. The men were at roll-call when the enemy, under cover of a dense fog, rushed into their camp, and the first intimation that they had of his presence was a volley fired from their own rifle-pits. They immediately seized their arms and attempted to drive out the hostile force, but the odds were too great, and they were forced to yield. Thirty-five of the company escaped, but Captain Newhard and fifty of his men were captured. Seven of the company were wounded. The enemy had two killed and eight wounded. Moving rapidly to Paw Paw where Captain Hite was stationed with Company B,
Imboden divided his brigade and with one column keeping the Captain amused in front, sent the other to the rear. Before the latter was aware of his situation, he was fast between the two. Bringing up two small guns within easy range of Hite’s position, Imboden demanded his surrender. As resistance was sure to entail a useless slaughter the company yielded. Learning the fate of two of his companies, Colonel Campbell quickly concentrated his force at Sir John’s Run. Imboden approached within six miles, and after reconnoitering the position for a day, unwilling to attack, withdrew to Winchester, and the remaining companies of the Fifty-fourth were returned to their old posts.

Soon afterwards the regiment, now attached to the command of General Morrell, left for the defense of the Upper Potomac. Subsequently, upon the organization of the Eighth Army Corps, it was assigned to the Third Brigade, of the Second Division, commanded by General Kelly. In December companies B and K, having been exchanged, returned to the regiment, and the order, relieving it from the onerous and trying duty upon the railroad, which had been earnestly longed for, was received.

Samuel reenlisted on January 1, 1863. He was assigned to Co. “C”. Concentrating at North Mountain, the 54th Regiment moved, on January 6th, 1863, to Romney, where, after a fruitless pursuit of Imboden, it remained until the opening of the spring campaign.

The Fifty-fourth was now attached to the Fourth Brigade of the First Division, Department of West Virginia, Colonel Campbell in command of the brigade, and Lieutenant Colonel Linton of the 54th Pennsylvania regiment. On April 3rd, the enemy having attacked a forage train above Burlington, the Fifty-fourth, with a battalion of cavalry, was sent in pursuit. At Purgitsville the rebel cavalry was encountered and driven, and some prisoners taken. The regiment continued here, scouting the country and capturing guerrillas who infested the region, until June 30th, when it moved to New Creek in anticipation of an attack upon Grafton. On July 6, 1863, General Kelly moved his Second Division by forced marches, to cooperate with the Army of the Potomac, which was now driving the enemy from the field of Gettysburg. On the 10th he came upon rebel pickets. Upon the withdrawal of the rebel army into Virginia, he followed their retreat and on the 19th was heavily engaged in battle with them. During the night he learned through a scout that the enemy, in force, was moving on his rear, and immediately retreated into Maryland, leaving the 54th alone on the Virginia Shore. The enemy approached and threw a few shells into the lines, but soon retired.

The regiment now returned to Romney. On August 15, Colonel Mulligan, in command of the Twenty-third Illinois, was threatened with an attack near Petersburg and the Fifty-fourth marched to his relief. Here it remained, and for three weeks was engaged in fortifying. On November 6th the brigade moved to Springfield, where a reorganization of the command took place, the Fifty-fourth being assigned to the First Brigade of the Second Division, Colonel Campbell in command.

On January 4 1864, General Kelly apprehended and ordered an attack upon Cumberland. Colonel Campbell with a part of his command was ordered to its defense. A month later Company F, while guarding the railroad bridge at Patterson’s Creek, was attacked by an enemy party in the garb of Union soldiers serving under the notorious Harry Gilmore. By this deception the rebels reached the picket line unsuspected, when they dashed into the camp, and after a short struggle compelled its surrender. Three of the company were killed, and several wounded. After the surrender Gilmore, with his own hand shot and instantly killed Corporal Gibbs, an act which should stamp its perpetrator with infamy. Colonel Campbell, at his own request, was relieved from the command of his Brigade, and assumed charge of his Regiment.
Sheridan’s Shenandoah Valley Campaign

In March 1864, Gen. Ulysses S. Grant wanted to hit the Confederate army on all fronts—Richmond, Savannah, and Mobile. As part of his strategy in Virginia, he replaced Gen. Kelly with Maj. Gen. Frantz Sigel, who was ordered to advance to the Shenandoah Valley to disrupt the Confederates communication and supply lines. He was to march up the valley from Martinsburg W. Va. toward the railroad at Staunton in order to cut off supplies from the Valley to General Lee’s troops in Richmond. Confederate General John C. Breckinridge, former Vice President of the U.S., put together a force of 4500 and at Staunton, marched to meet Sigel, who was moving very slowly. Breckinridge moved into position on Shirley’s Hill south of New Market before Sigel arrived and attacked one regiment of Sigel’s army that was holding ground in New Market. Sigel ordered a retreat but then changed his mind forgetting to tell one of his subordinates.

Sigel arrived at New Market at noon on May 15 without Gen. Jeremiah C. Sullivan’s forces and directed his men to form a new line in the north at Bushong Farm. Confident of victory, Sigel disposed his troops for battle. His left flank was protected by Cavalry, while three regiments of infantry, the Thirty-fourth Massachusetts, First Virginia, and Fifty-fourth Pennsylvania, composing the Second Brigade, commanded by Colonel Thoburn, and two batteries, were formed for the attack, with the brigade of Moore in support on the right. At the opening of the battle, the cavalry, in passing to the rear, threw the infantry into some confusion, breaking through its lines.

It had been raining for four days, but Breckinridge was able to see clearly the Union fire from the hill, devastating his troops. He authorized the use of cadets from the nearby Virginia Military Institute, whom Lee had authorized as reserves. Steadily the enemy moved forward to the attack, his long lines overlapping both flanks of Sigel’s force. The artillery was used with excellent effect, but could not stay the rebel columns. Arriving within easy musket range, the infantry of both sides opened, simultaneously, a heavy and mutually destructive fire. For some time the battle raged with great fury, but the enemy’s superiority of numbers at length prevailed and the Union lines were forced back. Sigel was not a battlefield leader and was unable to press the advantage. His troops were in confusion and the Confederates, reinforced by the cadets, launched a final charge up Bushong Hill. The muddy ground on this hill were the heaviest fighting took place became known as the Field of Lost Shoes because so many of the cadets lost their shoes trudging through the mud. Many of the Union soldiers panicked and fled. But the Fifty-fourth retired in good order, returning the fire of the enemy until he ceased to pursue.

1. A German born general, Sigel achieved high rank because was popular with German Americans and was instrumental in recruiting many of them into the Union Army.
2. Even though he was traveling North to South, it is considered “up” the Valley because the Shenandoah River runs north.
Jubal A. Early, who had been detached from Lee’s army at Petersburg, advanced into Maryland. He had driven Wallace from the Monocacy and approached the gates of the Capitol to draw Union attention from Lee’s troops in eastern Virginia. As soon as the Union reinforced troops at the Capital, Early retreated, crossing the Potomac at White’s Ferry. Grant sent Maj. Gen. Horatio Wright, including Gen. Crook’s Army, in pursuit of Confederate troops of West Virginia, to which the 54th Pennsylvania was attached. The arrival of General Wright with the Sixth and Nineteenth Corps from Grant’s Army turned Early back and, to intercept his retreat, Hunter’s forces were ordered forward from Martinsburg. Lt. Col. Linton by this time had returned to command of the 54th Pennsylvania. Early stayed ahead of the Union troops and crossed the Blue Ridge Mountains into the Shenandoah on July 17 just south of Berryville Pike in Clarke County. The next day the Union infantry arrived. The Federal officers had no idea where Early’s main army was and thought some cavalry were defending Castleman’s Ferry at Snicker’s Ford. Not only was the enemy guarding the spot in more substantial numbers than the Union thought, but the rest of Early’s troops were nearby. The Union soldiers tried to take the ferry twice but were blocked. They tried again on the morning of the 18th. Wright insisted they get across somehow and ordered Col. Jos. Thoburn to take his division of Crook’s army two miles further north and cross the river at a ford across from Cool Spring Farm and double back to Castleman’s Ferry. They eventually were able to cross the river north of Castleman’s ferry. Having taken some snipers prisoner, they discovered the size of the army at Castleman’s, so they never marched south.

In early July 1864, Confederate General Sigel retreated to Cedar Creek where he threw up defensive works. The loss to the regiment in this engagement was one hundred and seventy-four killed, wounded, and missing. Samuel was wounded in the hand on May 13. On May 18 he was sent to recover at the U.S. General Hospital in Cumberland MD.
Breckenridge was attending church at Grace Episcopal in Berryville when he received word that the Union soldiers had crossed the river. He ordered Generals Gordon and Wharton to head for the Union troops. Crook and Wright could see the Confederates coming from a vantage point on the Blue Ridge. Crook wanted to retreat because his men’s backs were to the river. Wright did not. Crook’s West Virginians, Pennsylvanians and Ohioans fought for 2 ½ hours to hold the position on the ford but as night fell had to retreat across the river. The loss was due to poor coordination, fragmented command and control and disagreement among the commanders as to how to proceed. As a result Crook’s army (including the 54th) were left to fight three divisions of Confederates. Wright, who had failed to reinforce Crook, now came up with his two corps and crossed in force, the enemy lying back as he advanced until he reached Winchester where the pursuit was stopped.

On the following morning, the enemy made a vigorous attack, which increased in fury as the day wore on. The fighting, in the vicinity of Kernstown, in Colonel Mulligan’s front, was very severe, and, at first, the Union troops maintained their position but, aware of his inferiority in numbers, and that his positions was liable to be turned, Crook ordered Mulligan to withdraw. At that moment the retrograde movement commenced, the enemy charged, the movement had to be executed under a terrific fire of infantry and artillery. The Fifty-fourth, which had fought its way up to, and beyond Kernstown full of courage and confidence, heard the order to retreat with evident dissatisfaction, but executed it in excellent order, twice facing about and delivering a well-directed fire into the faces of the pursuing host. At the moment retreat commenced, Colonel Mulligan fell, mortally wounded, and the command of the division devolved on Colonel Campbell, that of the brigade on John P. Suter, Lieutenant Colonel Linton having been disabled during engagement; and of the regiment, on Captain F. B. Long. Crook now withdrew his forces across the Potomac.

Grant was determined to dispose of Early, who had threatened the Capitol, burned Chambersburg and the Martinsburg ‘ds while retreating from the Capitol and had defeated the federals at Cool Spring and Kernstown. Moreover, the 1864 election was approaching and Grant knew that a decisive victory in the Valley would quiet growing opposition to the war.
He trusted Sheridan to achieve this goal. His charge was not only to defeat Early but to destroy the economic value of the Valley to Lee's army.

During the remaining summer months, the regiment participated in various minor marches and counter-marches of the command, the exact object of which was best known to its leader. Upon the assumption of the command by General Sheridan, the army was reorganized and prepared for an active campaign. The Fifty-fourth marched with the command to Cedar Creek, participated in a series of heavy skirmishes, and with it fell back to Halltown. Here they remained until August 28th, when, the enemy having disappeared, the whole force marched to Charles-town. During Sept-Oct. Samuel was on the rolls of Co. H. On the 3d of September the Regiment marched to Berryville. On the day of its arrival, a severe engagement occurred, lasting into the night, and ending in the complete repulse of the enemy. For four days the Army of West Virginia, now known as the Eighth Corps, bivouacked near Berryville, and was then transferred from the extreme left of the infantry line, to the extreme right at Sum-
it Point. Here the 54th remained until September 19th, repairing, as far as possible, the ravages of the campaign, distributing supplies, and assigning recruits, convalescents, and veterans returned from furlough.

At two o'clock on the morning of September 19th, Sheridan advanced to drive the enemy from his strongly fortified position near Winchester, crossing the Opequon Creek at a narrow ravine known as Berryville Canyon. Two eastbound brooks—Abrams Creek on the south and Redbud Run on the north—flow through the canyon beside the road and into the creek. The Union advance stalled when the lead corps brought with it a wagon train of supplies creating a bottleneck that gave the Confederates a reprieve of several hours. Crook's Corps reached the railroad crossing of the Opequon, at 11:00AM and was here held in reserve until 2:00PM, the sound of battle, fiercely raging beyond the small stream, distinctly audible, when it was ordered to advance. Crossing to the right of the Winchester Pike, the regiment was formed in the rear of a wood, through which it advanced in line, relieving a portion of the Nineteenth Corps. Here Crook's entire line lay for some time in comparative quiet, responding at brief intervals with random shots to the skirmish firing of the enemy. Suddenly, to the right, was heard a loud shout. It was the charging of Torbert's Cavalry of several thousand men, the largest cavalry charge in American history. Simultaneously, Crook received the order to charge, and with shouts and cheers the whole line rushed forward into the open field, and...
had suffered badly since their triumphant victory at New Market in May. Early’s reading of Sheridan based on their engagements in August and September was that he was hesitant and indecisive. But September brought about two Federal victories, at Opequon and Fisher’s Hill that proved him wrong. After Fisher’s Hill, Early retreated to Waynesboro and Sheridan began concentrating on the task of destroying the Valley, burning mills, barns, and some homes and destroying forage, grain and livestock.

Following Sheridan down (to the north) the valley, Early reoccupied Fisher’s Hill on Oct. 3 and waited for the Union to retreat. Then he realized that he must either retreat or attack because the devastation of the Valley would not allow him to stay put. He sent spies up the Signal Knob on the top of Massanutten Mountain to survey the Union troops. Recognizing that he was outnumbered, Early decided on a surprise attack on the Union’s weak eastern flank.

On the October 19, 1864, in the absence of General Sheridan, Early passed silently from his camp at midnight, and dividing his command into two columns, gained a position undiscovered, in dangerous proximity to the Union force, whence, in the mist of the early morn, he fell, with crushing force, upon the Union troops, sleeping unsuspicous of danger. Crook’s Corps in advance was first attacked, and before it could form in line or offer any resistance, was driven back. Early was in full possession of their camps, capturing 18 pieces of artillery, and 1300 prisoners. But one stubborn Union Corps held the enemy. Early lost his focus on the overall battle while trying to defeat this one union division and was forced to halt to reorganize. The two armies now faced each other front to front in lines perpendicular to the Valley Pike. The Union troops had been pushed back north of town. Sheridan arrived upon the field at about 10:30AM and received a welcoming hug from Gen. George Armstrong Custer. He collected his scattered forces, formed his lines of battle with cavalry on his
flanks. At about 4:00 PM the Union advanced, pressing both of Early's flanks. By nightfall Sheridan had retrieved all that was lost, and was glorying in his captures of artillery, small arms, and a great crowd of prisoners, the exultant enemy reduced to a flying mob. In this engagement, made memorable in song, the Fifty-fourth suffered severely, being posted in advance, and the first to feel the enemy's blow. This ended the campaign of the Shenandoah, and the enemy never afterwards made his appearance in the valley in force.

Samuel was reassigned to Company I in December 1864. On the 19th of December, the main body of Sheridan's army marched from the valley to join Grant at Petersburg. The Fifty-fourth moved to Washington, then to City Point, arriving on the December 23d, and encamped on Chapin's Farm. It was assigned to duty in the Army of the James.

Upon the muster out of service of the Third and Fourth Reserve Regiments, in May, 1864, the veterans and recruits were at first organized into an independent battalion, which was subsequently united to the Fifty-fourth. On February 7, 1865, the term of the original enlistments having expired, an order from the War Department directed that the two organizations should be consolidated under the name of the Fifty-fourth Regiment. The following field officers were commissioned, the original officers of the 54th having been mustered out at the expiration of their terms of service: Albert P. Moulton, Colonel, William A. McDermit, Lieutenant Colonel, and Nathan Davis, Major. The 54th was assigned to the second Brigade, Independent Division of the Army of the James, commanded by General Ord.

On the morning of the April 2, 1865, the regiment was ordered to join the forward movement of the army. Proceeding with the brigade they crossed the abandoned rebel works near the Boydton Plank Road, and approached Fort Gregg. Here they encountered spirited resistance, and it was not until a hot fire of infantry and artillery had been brought to bear that the Confederates yielded. In this brief engagement the regiment lost twenty killed and wounded. Major Davis and Lieutenant Cyrus Patton, of company G, were among the killed. Captain John L. Decker, of company A succeeded Davis as major of the regiment.

The rebel army, having been routed from its works about Petersburg, was retreating rapidly towards the North Carolina border. On the 5th of April, the 54th Pennsylvania, and the One Hundred and twenty-third Ohio, Colonel Kellogg, with two companies of the Fourth Massachusetts Cavalry, Col. Washburn, were ordered to make a forced march to High Bridge, and effect its destruction for the purpose of cutting the enemy's retreat route, and delaying his columns. Arriving at Rice's Station, General Read, of Ord's staff, took command, and when within sight of the bridge promptly attacked. But the enemy had taken ample precautions for the safety of this, their main avenue of escape. After a desperate struggle in which General Read was killed, Colonels Kellogg and Washburn were wounded and taken prisoner. A large proportion of the command had been killed or were prisoners surrounded on all sides by the main columns of the enemy's infantry and cavalry. They were forced to surrender. The losses of the Fifty-fourth were twenty-one killed and wounded. The captives (including Samuel) were taken back to Rice's, where, to their astonishment, they beheld Longstreet's Corps entrenched, having come up but a few moments after Read's column had passed in the morning.

The attack, though failing in its immediate purpose, served its purpose. Lee's columns were delayed several hours, enabling Sheridan to sweep around the enemy's rear, and complete the destruction and capture of that Confederate army. For four days, without rations, the captives of the 54th marched with the retreating rebel army when, to their great joy, they were released from their captivity and their starving condition, by Grant's victorious columns. From Appomattox Court House the regiment was sent to Camp Parole, at Annapolis, Maryland. On July 15th, it was
mustered out of service at Harrisburg.

After the war, Samuel returned to his farm in Paint Township, Somerset PA. He suffered from rheumatism, which began shortly after the war. About 1870, he lost his sight in the right eye because of an accident at a quarry. In 1890 he was receiving a pension of $6 a month but it was increased to $10 a month that year after a medical examination certified that he could not perform manual labor because of partial paralysis. According to the doctor who examined him, he was in poor shape and could not work, Samuel ended his days at Burgess Farm, the home built by his father in 1840. His sister Nancy and her husband Tobias owned the farm. His wife Sophia died in 1882 and he died in 1899. Three of his children preceded him in death. He is buried at Burgess Farm in the Lehman Hoffman Cemetery.

For more information contact Nancy Mozeleski
email: mozdle@visuallink.com address: 643 Lander Lane; Berryville, Virginia 22611-3316

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<th>Lineage of Samuel J. Custer 1801-1849</th>
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<tr>
<td>PK.(E).0? Reiner Kuster 1542-1616</td>
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Happy Holidays
and may next year
be better for all of us.
Patricia

Samuel is pictured on the far right. Those pictured from left to right are: Sarah N. (Lehman) Kaufman, Sally Custer (Samuel’s sister), Ralph Lehman, Tobias J. Lehman, Chauncey Lehman, Nancy (Custer) Lehman (Tobias’ wife and sister of Samuel), Mary Jane (Lehman) Manger, Orie Walter Manges, Jacob Manges, Sgt. Samuel J. Custer.
Help keep CAOA postage expenses down by reporting address changes as soon as possible. For each NewsCaster that is returned we pay the US Post Office $.50 and it then costs $1.00+ to mail it to the correct address.

Addresses/New Members

New Member
Billie Dale Kiger
13697 Ragged Mountain Drive Box 1646
Paonia, Colorado 81428-8312

From the President

The first full year of the re-organized Castor Association is almost over and I’m sure a few of the members have not been totally satisfied with the re-organization according to some of the emails I have received. I hope you all bear with the tardiness of the Newscaster and I am sure the problems will be overcome in the new year.

Next year is the election of officers and maybe some of you will take an interest in competing for the positions. By years end I hope we have a procedure in place for you to nominate and vote for the officers.

Please accept my appolgies for your Newscaster being late and I wish for you a joyous holiday season.

Ron Juvinall
President-CAOA

Please ask before you use it

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2004 CAOA and Little Big Horn Associates Joint Conference in 2004

Visit the Bacon-Custer home and hear the stories of General Custer's birth in Southern Ohio and his formative years in Michigan.

Email Harris Custer for more information at:
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