

# Member of Pioneer German Family Invented 'Firelighter', Wire Fence

An important part in the early settlement of the Nissouri district was shared by members of the German family. The first instalment of this article has told of the arrival of James German at Lakeside, East Nissouri, about 1803. The story as continued here tells of what is known of their descendants.

By W. M. German

James German of Nissouri and Betsy Brown German had 10 children: Asa, Ellen, Scott, Frank (Francis), Varnum, Horace, Hiram, Jacob, Lyman and Smanthy.

Asa married at an early age and it is believed his first wife was named Margaret but her surname is unknown. His second wife was Hester Ann and her surname is also unknown. Both died at an early age and are buried in the old cemetery at St. Marys. The inscriptions as follows appear on the two stones, still standing — In Memory of Margaret, wife of A. M. German, Died July 26, 1839, Ae, 22 years four days. — In Memory of Hester Ann, wife of A. M. German, Died July 23, 1849, Ae 22 years, 11 months, nine days.

As I stood before those two old tombstones I thought what a sad story must be hidden behind those inscriptions. Two young girls dying at such an early age, just 10 years apart and both wives of the same man. Some time later Asa left for the United States and that is the last record of him available at this time.

Ellen German married a Mc-Nee. There is some doubt as to his Christian name but it was either Colin, William or Jacob. The couple settled at Thamesford where the record ends incomplete.

Scott German was a lawyer and justice of the peace at St. Marys, around 1860. He later moved to Kansas City, where it is said he was a very prominent citizen, and lived to a great age. His second wife was Ellen Johnson.

Frank (Francis A.) German was born in 1811. He married Eliza Gleason of a pioneer Nissouri family and was co-founder of the well-known Seaton family of Lakeside. In 1873 along with his son-in-law John Seaton, he erected "Lynden Lodge" a fine stone house, that still remains in a splendid state of preservation, on the Lakeside property. Frank's wife Eliza died in 1868 and he in 1887. Both are buried in the Lakeside Cemetery, the land for which he gave from his own homestead.

Varnum German was born April 20, 1815. He first married a Miss Murray and his second wife was Catharine Cavanaugh, an Irish girl of the Griffin family of Wolfe Island. By the first marriage Varnum had a family of nine children, Frank, who married Mary Burgess of Burgessville; Margot, who married Cudney of Lakeside, William, who married Delight Bullis of West Zorra. The latter settled on Lot 17, Concession 13, East Nissouri where my father, William Nathan German was born along

with other children. My father now aged 80, resides at Corunna.

William and his wife and family left the district about 75 years ago. They first went to St. Marys, then Granton and finally to Lambton County where he died at Mooretown in 1911 at age of 73. His remains rest in Mooretown Cemetery.

Jacob, son of Varnum, married Mary McKay and had no children. Joseph who married Susan Peasley lived at least the latter part of his life in the U.S.A. Hannah, Varnum's daughter married James McKay. Mary married Mail McConnell and Martha also married a McConnell brother, Emily married Charles Foster of Granton.

Varnum and Catherine Cavanaugh had six children, John born 1851 who died 1924; Spencer born in 1852 who remained a bachelor and died around 1905; James was born in 1853 and married Elizabeth McCullaugh; Daniel born in 1854 married and moved to South Dakota; Horace born in 1855, married Mary Ellen Dinsmore and farmed in Granton district. Horace died in 1940 at the age of 85. Much information regarding James German the pioneer was gained from Horace, his grandson. Betsy, Varnum's last child, was born in 1859 and married Robert Foster. They migrated to the United States.

Varnum and family lived for a number of years in East Nissouri it is believed on Lot 29, Concession 11. He later bought the Taylor farm near Granton where he died March 28, 1880, aged 64, 11 months, eight days, according to his tombstone in Granton Cemetery.

Horace and Hiram, sons of James German are said to have been twins. Hiram left the district of his birth and was not heard of again. His brother Horace remained however and founded a large family. Horace married Elizabeth Lewis and they had eight children: James who died young, Samuel, Daniel, John, Jane, Mary and Levi, who founded a large and widespread family. Levi, born in 1835, married Georgina Murray in West Zorra, February 8, 1865. He died in 1910 and is buried in Beachville Cemetery. John, a son of Levi, celebrated his 60th wedding anniversary, July 1, 1949, and had 39 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren present. Horace, son of James, died at a young age, around 40 — one of the very few of the family who failed to attain the age of 70 years. Horace and Hiram were born between 1807 and 1810.

James and Betsy German's son, Jacob Grant, was born August 12, 1819 and wed Mary Ann Sinkins, born August 10, 1829. Jacob's family Bible also registered "Robert Sinkins, born June 29, 1937", he presumably being Mary Ann's younger brother.

Jacob it is said was quite a character. He was an inventor

and wearing a great long white beard he constantly moved from place to place in both Canada and the United States selling his inventions. Among these inventions was a wire fence that was put to practical use in East Nissouri and district around 1874. Throughout the district today will be seen many of these fences built and erected by Jacob's genius some 75 years ago.

Another of Jacob's inventions was a "firelighter" with which he also had reasonable success.

Jacob must have taken his family along on some of the travels at least as there is an entry in his Bible — Salana German, born April 19th, 1858; Salana died January 20, 1859, and was buried at Kalamazoo, Michigan. Mary Ann, Jacob's wife died aged 43 in 1872 and Jacob died suddenly while visiting a farmer friend November 10, 1898 at the age of 79 years. Considerable information regarding Jacob was received from his grandson Lloyd Frederick German, near Embro.

Lyman, son of James, is believed to have remained single. Further information is lacking concerning him.

Smanthy married James McDonald of the 10th Concession of East Nissouri and had nine children. Some of their descendants still live in the old district.

After raising a large family James German died at the age of 78 years on October 8, 1860. His wife, Betsy, died just 10 days later. Vernice Bristol preached both their funeral services and they are buried in the Lakeside Cemetery that was once part of their homestead. It is one of the best kept, small cemeteries in Ontario, well fenced with splendid stone corner and entrance pillars. The fencing running to the corner pillars is the kind Jacob invented and erected some 75 years ago.

Many of the early members of the German family are buried in this cemetery along with other early pioneers of the district — fine, enterprising, good men, whose energy and courage helped so much to make trade and prosperity.

Standing there at the graves of my great-great-grandparents many thoughts went through my mind. I thought, how much we are in debt to every man sleeping in his grave — a debt that we can never repay, and I was proud to be a descendant of James and Betsy German, hardy pioneers of East Nissouri.

"Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,  
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke;  
How jocund did they drive their teams afield!  
How bowed the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!"

GRAY

(In this article I have only mentioned the early members of the family in hopes that I may receive some further useful information.)