

BIOGRAPHY OF THE KUHRT FAMILY BEGINNING WITH GRANDFATHER CHRISTOPH KUHRT

Our Kuhrt family originally lived near Gribau in Pommerania in East Prussia. The nearest good-sized city was Greifswald on the Baltic sea, an arm of which comes down on the east side of the mainland.

Legend says that two or three hundred years ago in the time of Peter the Great of Russia, the head of the Kuhrt family was a Prussian baron with an extensive land acreage and his own army. There was constant fighting among the barons and also the entire area was at one time ruled by the King of Sweden. Our baron's army was defeated in battle, and the family army and farm workers were forced into the service of the victorious baron. Our family members were assigned to do farm work on the estate. They did this kind of farm work for perhaps 200 years, and until our grandfather left the area and went to Berlin where he drove a cab for several years.

Pommerania was the bread basket of Germany. It produced then and now, many important crops and much livestock. Wheat, rye, barley, hay, milk, butter, cheese, pork, ducks, geese, some poultry and eggs and many vegetables such as potatoes, cabbage, turnips, sugar beets and also some fruits such as apples and plums were grown there. A large part of this produce was shipped to other parts of Germany and other countries. The Kuhrt family thus has an agricultural background.

Our grandfather Christoph Kuhrt was married twice. His first wife was Louisa. They had one son and two daughters. The son, Frederick, served in the Coast Guard of the German Navy and was a member of the Elite Corps - a bodyguard to admiral Von Moltke. After his military service he came to the United States, sometime before his father, who had married Christine Voight after the death of his first wife, Louisa. Fred first worked on a farm owned by the Huer family who were cousins living near Sheridan. He also worked on the Butler farm near Sheridan. Sometime later he and his wife, Mary bought their own farm south of Forestville. They had two daughters, Grace and Alice. Grace died at 16 years of age of diphtheria, and Alice married Fred Gens. They had two children, a son Leroy and a daughter, Clara. Leroy also had two children Robert and Norma. Clara married Phillip Brown but had no children. One of our grandfather's two daughters, Frederika, married Rheinhold Berndt in Germany. They had three sons, Ernest, Eric and Rheinhold. They came to Chicago in 1882 where he did carpentry work for several years. They sold out and came to Sheridan in 1903 where they bought a farm next to our farm. Ernest had two sons, Edmund and Arthur, and one daughter, Berdina. Edmund married Catheryn Budd and had three sons, one of whom died accidentally at an early age. Arthur

married Helen Taylor and has a son and a daughter. Ted had a son by a previous marriage to Carol McConell and later married Alfreda Snock; they had a daughter, Marie who is married to David Kurtz, and they have a daughter, Ann. Eric married Glenna Smith and they had a son, William. He and his wife, Lylla have a daughter, Marilyn, who is married to Arthur Mang and has four children.

The children of Ernest Berndt-Edmund, Arthur and Berdina strove hard to get a good education. Edmund graduated from Forestville High School, taught grade school. Then had 2 years as Fredonia Normal. Took special summer classes. Taught Junior High School, then took one year at New York University in New York City, from which he received his Bachelor degree in Education. He then taught Junior High School in Stockton, New York, took summer courses given by New York State University at Fredonia and received his Masters degree in Education. He taught high school mathematics for a while and in 1945 was appointed Principal of the high school at Cassadaga New York. He held this position until 1967 when he retired. He received area commendation for the excellence of his work as a high school principal.

Arthur Berndt graduated from Forestville High School in 1925. Taught school in local grade schools for a while. Then graduated from Fredonia Normal School in 1934. Received his Bachelor's degree from Buffalo State University in 1941. He then joined the Signal Corps, U.S. Army in World War Two in New Jersey.

After serving in the war Arthur returned to New York State. He had acquired considerable knowledge of electronics in the Signal Corps. He first worked for a company in Buffalo; then a company in Silver Creek, New York and finally became a production engineer for Sylvania in Buffalo from which position he retired. He lives in Forestville.

Berdina graduated from Forestville High School and Fredonia State University. She taught school in the Jamestown area and then married Bolling.

The other daughter of our grandfathers first marriage, Caroline, stayed in Germany since she was already married to the manager of the estate on which the family worked. His name was August Kleinfeldt. They had four children, Lina, Ernst, Martha and Herman. Lina married August Lenz and had two children, Margarete and Walter. Walter married but had no children. Margarete was married twice. She was a famous ballroom dancer as was her husband from Vienna. They called themselves the "Excelsiors" and danced in many places in Austria, Switzerland, France and southern Germany. Her second husband whose name was Dutschun was an ex-soldier and died soon after they were married.

Ernst and Anchen Kleinfeldt had four children, Fritz, Richard, Hedwig and Erna. Fritz died when he was 6 years old. Richard and his wife, Amalie had one son, Karl-Ernst who is divorced and lives in Hamburg. Hedwig and Wilhelm Krampe had no children. He was an engineer in the ministry of the German Navy - a specialist in submarines. They lived in Berlin until the Russians arrived. They left Berlin as quickly as possible to avoid capture by the Russian Army. Willi was required to live in Frankfurt for a while and Hedwig lived with her mother in Wilhelmshaven until they could be reunited and then lived in Hamburg. He died in 1966 and Hedwig died in 1989. Erna married Heinrich Muller. He was in the German Postal Service and during the war was in German Wehrmacht. During the war he was in charge of a refugee camp in Denmark. Heinrich Muller is dead. They had one daughter, Barbel, who is married to Heinz Mielke, a professor of Physics in the University of Hamburg. They live in Elmshorn and have a son, Frank. They visited us here for our 30th Kuhrst reunion in 1989. Erna's son, Jurgen Muller married Barbara Otto, a widow with children and they live in Leipzig, E. Germany. Until recently he had difficulty in seeing his family in West Germany.

Martha Borst lived in Berlin. They had a son Gerhard, who married Susanne Breiter. They had two children, Renate and Rainer. Gerhard lost his life in the last days of World War II.

Herman Kleinfeldt left home after he finished his apprenticeship to a barber and said he was going to the United States. The family never heard from him afterward.

Martha Borst was still living in 1965 when Bill and Dorothy visited her in the Hospital in West Berlin. She was violated by the Russian soldiers in Berlin and subsequently lost her mind. She died in a Deaconess hospital in Berlin.

Our grandfather, Christoph and his second wife, Christine, and their children, except our father William, came to the U.S. in 1883. They bought a small farm in the town of Sheridan quite near where the Nickelplate railroad was being built. They worked in building the railroad. His son John worked for the railroad, tending the water tanks for many years, but was laid off shortly before he was due for a pension. He had given faithful service, seeing that the water was free of ice in the winter time so the locomotives could scoop it up without stopping. He and his wife, Elizabeth Snock had two children, Alma and Frank. Neither of them married. The other children of our grandfathers were Theodore, who married Minnie Snock and had a daughter, Amanda; Mary who married James Guntow, and had nine living children, Herman, Harry, Amelia, Ida, Martha, Anna, Bertha, Minnie & Frances. Minnie Guntow died as a young woman of diphtheria. Sophie married Frank Snock. They had two children, William and Alfreda. Will and his wife, Irene also had two children, Martin

and Dorothy.

Our father, William came to this country in 1884, when he was 16 years old. Records indicate that he was apprenticed to become a machinist before he came to the United States.

On our mother's side grandfather Massman and his wife, Ernestine had six children. They lived on a farm near Sheridan Center. Our mother Elizabeth was the oldest, born in 1866. Then there was Charles, Louis, William, Emma and Mary. Louis had three daughters, Emma Massman was married to Ferdinand Tadt, they had five children; Joseph, Helen, Carl, James, and Gladys. William Massman married Emma Rickerman and had one son Henry, who became a minister. Charles and Mary did not marry. Mary spent the last years of her life living with our parents and helping our mother when she became blind.

Records tell us that Wilhelm Frederick Joseph Kuhrt, our father, was born April 12, 1866, son of Christoph Kuhrt and Christine Voight. He was baptized in Ranzin on May 6 in that year. On March 21, Palm Sunday, 1880, he was confirmed in the Lutheran faith at Cartlow, Germany. As a boy, he lived on the farm estate and attended a school run by a very strict schoolmaster who punished a boy because he laughed when the goose sitting on a nest of eggs in a corner of the schoolroom started to cackle. His mother taught him to knit, and he spent the time knitting as he watched the flock of sheep on the farm where he lived. In 1884 at the age of 16, when there was a great tide of emigration from the European countries to the United States, the land of promise, he came to this country. He worked for some cousins, the August Huer family, at first, and later for the Reeds and the Hamlets. About that time, he met our mother, Elizabeth Massman, who was employed by Hannah Butler to do housework, milking, and other light chores. We recall the gifts which our father gave to our mother. One was a gold velvet box containing a lovely white comb, brush, and mirror set and which also played a pretty tune when the box was opened. The other gift was an engagement ring with a ruby in the center and surrounded by tiny pearls. Needless to say, my sisters and I enjoyed looking at these treasures.

The father of Daniel Reed was a Great Lakes ship captain. His son Dan Reed about the age of our father, became a lawyer and then was elected to the House of Representatives, where he served for many years. When Bill lived in Washington, D.C., he saw Dan Reed several times. He always remembered our father and spoke well of him.

Our father and mother were married in March of 1889. They went to live in Dunkirk, where he first worked for the Brooks locomotive works, and later for the Martin Heater Works when steam heat was being installed in railroad passenger cars. This

work was not good for his health, so they came to work for Miss Butler for a while. Their oldest son, Reuben, was born in Dunkirk. They lost a second son, Edward. Raymond, their third son was born when they lived with Miss Butler. The day Raymond was born, our father arranged to buy our home on King Road from a Mr. Strong. Miss Butler would have liked to have them stay with her until she died, at which time she would have willed them her fine farm, but our father wanted a home and farm of his own now that he had two sons. Miss Butler was generous anyway, and gave them many pieces of beautiful furniture which are still in the family today. Another son was added to the family when William was born in 1895. Seven years later Ethelyn was born. Marguerite and Marjorie followed along in 1905 to keep her company.

Reuben stayed on the farm to help our father. He married Florence Hall and lived eventually in a remodeled house across the road. They had no children. Reuben died in 1967. Raymond graduated from Cortland Normal School and became an agricultural teacher and taught in Ellington, Sherman, Forestville, and Ambler Pennsylvania. His first wife was Beryl Hawkins of Forestville. They had a son, Noel and a daughter Benlah who died of severe burns when a baby. Noel graduated from the University of Rochester and worked for Eastman Kodak. He had one son, Noel Jr. and a daughter Sally; Noel Jr. graduated from Dartmouth and worked for Dupont for many years in photographic supplies. He and his wife Karen have one son Noel Chris and a daughter Aimee they live in Wilmington, Delaware. Noel Chris is at Dartmouth and Aimee is at Lafayette. This family is the only one that retains the "Kuhrt" name at this time. They live in Wilmington, Delaware. Noel's daughter Sally married Will Johnson who has a PH D. in music from the University of California at Berkeley, California. Will is head of the music department of California State University at Sonoma, California. Sally is Executive Director of a community service organization. They have two children Tyler and Katolyn and they live in Petaluma, California. Raymond was divorced from Beryl and later married Marguerite Phillips of Philadelphia. They lived in St. Augustine Fla., where Raymond built some houses. They had two daughters, Faith and Katherine. They were divorced some years later and Raymond married Helen Smith. Raymond returned to high school teaching and also had a dairy farm. He died in 1978 at the age of 86.

Faith, his oldest daughter married Joseph Tiberio of Boston who built up a business making small parts for cars and many other machines. He made a great deal of money and became a millionaire. They live in Sherborn, Massachusetts. Katherine, the second daughter married Vernon Huppi who was a commercial artist. He fell from a ladder, and was severely crippled and died a few years later. Katherine worked for the Florida telephone service for many years. They had three sons, Eduard,

Konrad and Otto. Katherine recently married Jean Burtin a Frenchman. They live in St. Augustine Fla.

William J. Kuhrt, the youngest son of William and Elizabeth graduated from Foresville High School in 1913, then studied law and economics at Cornell. Was a lieutenant of field artillery in World War I,; worked in the Texas oil fields for nearly three years to raise enough money to finish at Cornell. He finished in fall of 1922; worked for US Dept of Agriculture until 1929. Did research work in grain marketing in the states of Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Montana during which time he took six semesters of economics at the University of Minnesota, gaining a Masters Degree. He was called back to Washington to head the grain section of the Federal Farm Board. He became general manager of Northwest grain association at Minneapolis 1929, 1930 and part of 1931 when the association was taken over by the Farmers national grain association. In March 1932, he went to California Department of Agriculture. Rose under Civil Service there from 1932 to 1963-became Chief Deputy Director of the California Department of Agriculture. (Acting Director) and retired in 1963. In 1927 he married Dorothy More of Fargo N. Dakota. Dorothy More Kuhrt graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1926 majoring in English and history. She taught high school for two years before marrying Bill in 1927. After moving to Sacramento she became interested in Civic Club work; she was President of her Sorority, Gamma Phi Beta, President of Woman's forum and was very active in church work. She died in February 1971. After 44 years of marriage with Bill. They had no living children. Dorothy's sister Helen had one son Edwin Leiby, he and his wife Bobbi live near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Edwin graduated from the University of North Dakota and later received an MBA from Harvard, they have two children. Her brother Donald had 3 children Mary, William and Joan. Mary is married to Robert Benno a druggist they live in Fullerton, California. They have two sons. William has been married three times he now lives in El Dorado Hills, California. He has three daughters. Joan has two daughters and lives in Burnsville, Minnesota. Dorothy died in 1971. Bill then married Esther Fisher who owned a beef cattle ranch in Amador County, California. Esther had two children from her first marriage Lois and Rodney. Lois married Don Winsby. They had 3 children Janice, Karen and a son David. Rodney was a combat pilot in World War II. They had four children Noel and Carol (twins) and Marilyn and Robert. Lois died in 1983. Rodney was divorced and later married to Flora. They live in Livingston, Texas. Esther contracted Alzheimer disease in 1984 and died in 1988. Bill received honors from the California State Board of Agriculture; the University of California-an oral history of his work and a citation and medal from the Secretary of Agriculture of the United States.

Ethlyn married Theodore Farnham shortly after graduation from high school. They had seven children, Theodore, Robert, William, Ralph, Sylvia, Beth and James. Ted Sr. drove a transport truck between Buffalo and Cincinnati, Ohio for many years. Later became a supervising mechanic in the International truck repair shop near Fredonia. Ted died in 1987 and Ethelyn in 1989.

Ted Jr. graduated from Forestville High School and became a painting contractor. He and Dorothy his wife had six children, Barbara, Theodore Jr. William, Richard, Kimberly and Timothy. Later he became a maintenance Engineer for the Red Wing plant in Fredonia. Robert graduated from the University of Buffalo as a mechanical engineer specializing in turbine construction. He first worked for Joy manufacturing in North Tonawanda; then twelve years with Aerojet in Sacramento. Then worked for several companies with contracts with Nasa. He is now employed as a consulting engineer for Rockwell Engineering near Los Angeles. He and his wife Adeline have three children, Nadia, Robert and Michael; they live in Bonita, California. William the third son married Jennie Bradigan a teacher, they had two sons. ^{7/1982} She died in 1982 and Bill married Judith Taylor. Bill also has ~~one~~ step son. Bill worked for Prudential Life Insurance Company for many years and is now retired. They live in Sun Lakes, Arizona. Ralph married three times; served in the U.S. Navy until retirement then took a job with the Revenue Service in Atlanta, GA. Sylvia married Harland Gabel who worked in a Tannery in Gowanda. Sylvia teaches music and gives piano lessons. They have four sons and a daughter. Beth has two daughters by her first husband and now is married to Frank Barron, Beth is a real estate broker. James had two sons and a daughter from his first marriage to Brenda. He is now married to Karen. They have a son and daughter. Both he and his present wife are associated with Computer Programming.

Marguerite and Marjorie attended Fredonia Normal school, graduating in 1925. They both taught in Walden, NY and Dunkirk. Marguerite married James Merritt in April 1928. They moved to East Lansing, Mich., where James got his doctorate in Entomology. He and Marguerite retired to the home farm after our mother's death. They had two sons, James and William. James has a grape farm near Forestville and has a son and daughter, James Jr. and Kathy who was adopted. He is divorced from his wife, Myone. Young James and his wife, Susan, live in Colorado. Kathy lives in Florida. William and his wife Christi have two daughters and two sons. Elizabeth graduated from Fredonia State University and now teaches music and conducting in Akron, Ohio. Laura graduated in music from S.U.N.Y. in Fredonia where Elizabeth also attended. The two boys are in high school. The family manages the Merritt Estate Winery. After James' death, Marguerite married Alfred Sample. She died in 1987. Alfred died earlier.

Marjorie married Vincent Aldrich in June 1928. They bought the home grape farm where Marjorie still lives. They had four daughters, the first died in 1930 at birth. Marilyn was born in 1932, Loraine in 1937, and Ruth in 1942. Marilyn married Professor Wolfgang Taraba from Germany after her graduation from Fredonia State. They had a daughter, Marilyn Susan, and a son, Frederic. They were later divorced, and Marilyn worked for J.C. Penney Co. in St. Paul, Minn, as an interior decorator. Loraine married Russell Hutchinson after graduation from Syracuse University. They have three children, Kirk, Dawn, and Bryan. She received her masters degree in Library Science at Buffalo and is currently Director of the Hamburg Public Library. Ruth graduated from Geneseo State University and took her masters degree in Library Science at Syracuse. She married Dale Greenawalt and has two sons, Daniel and Trenton. She is now director of the Bridgewater College Library in Virginia.

Vincent died in March 1966 and Marjorie married Rev. William Hastings in May 1978. He died in Nov. 1978.

Our father died in 1937 and mother died in 1957.

Marjorie is very active in Community affairs around Fredonia and especially in her church where she has served in several capacities. She is a member of Fredonia Grange number 1-the first Grange organized in the United States.

These family records were compiled by Marjorie Hastings and William Kuhrt with much help from family members both here and in Germany. Much of the German records were compiled by Hedwig Kramp. These records are not complete, especially these from Germany but now much of the information is not obtainable. Also there are many errors and omissions so please bear with us.

We have an excellent family background and we should be proud of it. As Faith Tiberio said at the 1989 family reunion "the Kuhrt name has always been associated with honesty, hard work and decency" not a bad motto for us to have. So let us do our best to live up to it. Marjorie Hastings and William Kuhrt.