

The Carnegie Courier

Newsletter of

The Mitchell Area Historical Society (MAHS)
& The Mitchell Area Genealogical Society (MAGS)

Volume XVII, Number 1

www.mitchellcarnegie.com

Spring 2024

The Cassem Family - Part 2

Connections – Mitchell Pioneers

(Submitted by Geraldine Cassem Minor, 10/05/2023 – edited by Linda E. Oster)

The pioneers highlighted in this article are all connected to Oscar E. Cassem or Maria Keen.

Branch I Included in the Winter Courier (Randall Cassem and Maria Keen – Parents of Geraldine Minor)

Branch II Included in the Winter Courier (O.E. Cassem and Dora Krom – Grandparents of Geraldine Minor)

Branch III (Paternal) **Theresa McSwain & Solomon Krom** Pioneers of Mitchell, SD, Married by 1863 in Bloomington, Ulster Co. NY

***Theresa McSwain**
Born: 03 Sep 1845

***Solomon Krom**
Born: 17 Jan 1838
(other documents list 1836 & 1837)

Died: 26 Sep 1919

Died: 22 June 1879
Frankville,
Winneshiek Co. IA

Parents: Cynthia (Boss) & Moses S. McSwain

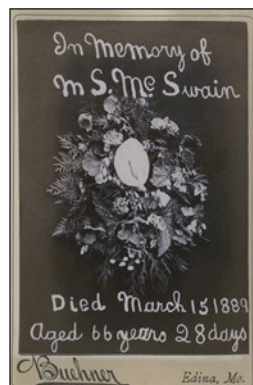
Parents: Maria Relyea (1810-1892) & Charles Krom Lawyer from Scotland (1806 -1886)

Relationships: Mother-in-law to Oscar E. Cassem, Mother of Dora Krom Cassem, Great Grandmother to Geraldine Cassem Minor

I knew very little about my Great Grandfather, Solomon, until I recently found the following information: Solomon's parents married on 16 Dec 1830 in Bloomington, Ulster County, NY when Charles, Solomon's father was 24 years of age and Maria, his mother, was 20 years of age. (Genealogy Richard Remme, The Hague, Netherlands) Charles Krom and Maria had 8 children: William, Eliza, **Solomon**, Sylvia, Charles, George, Mary and Silas Krom. Solomon was in the Civil War. Records show that he enlisted in November 1861 in Rochester, New York with the New York 20th Regiment Infantry. Solomon shows up on a list of people subject to military duty in Dubuque, Iowa in June of 1863. This record shows that



Theresa McSwain Krom
Mother-in-Law to O.E. Cassem



Memorial Card of Theresa's Krom's Father

he is married.

Theresa McSwain married Solomon Krom by 1863 in New York and they were married around 16 years before death separated them. Theresa was left a widow in June 1879, with three daughters and a son: **Sylvia** (b: 11 Nov 1864, Iowa d: 18 Jun 1945 CA); **Dora** (b: 23 Oct 1867, Illinois, d: 02 Apr 1942 South Dakota); **Charles H.** (b: 27 Jan 1868, Ossian, Iowa d: 12 Dec 1931, Mitchell, SD); **May or Marion** (b: March 1875, Winneshiek, Iowa, d: 12 April 1946, Redfield, South Dakota).

Recently widowed, Theresa, and her daughter, May, came to Dakota Territory in the autumn of 1879, just months after the death of her husband Solomon, to take up a tree claim. The other three children followed after their school terms were completed that year; Dora (Mrs. O.E. Cassem), Sylvia (Mrs. Fred Moses) and Charles H. were passengers on the first train that ever-entered Davison County. It appears they continued their education in the public schools of Mitchell.

Fred Moses was a son-in-law to Theresa as he married her oldest daughter, Sylvia. In a letter to his children in 1945, Fred wrote about a few remembrances he had of Theresa:

Regarding Grandma's land that she filed as a Timber claim in 1879. You hold 3/8, Aunt May 1/4, Thelma 3/8. She lived at Frisbie [Editor's note: We believe he is talking about Firesteel by his description and references to H.C. Greene's home.] where the town was supposed to be. The first time I saw her she was in H. C. Greene's kitchen all steamed up over a washtub.'

Aunt May as a little girl was with her. H. C. Greene kept sort of a hotel at Frisbie [Editor's note: We believe he is talking about Firesteel because in other writings he described the circumstances of Firesteel.] I little thought then [that] she would mean so much to me the way I came to be at Greenes'. I rode down with Charley Haskell who was in partnership with him locating claims for people while I was waiting for the track to be laid to Mitchell. A

Continued on page 2

The Cassem Family ...

Tree claim required 10 acres to be broken, cultivated and planted to trees and kept growing and cultivated for thirteen years before it could prove up and receive a patent. It was a year later that I became acquainted with her after she had changed her location. She bought a house across the street (west and north) of my lumberyard. I boarded with her. Aunt May then was a cute little girl with singlets of curls. Theresa had a horse and plow [she] used to go out to that claim 3 miles west, help cultivate, plow and care for those trees. The result was that she was able to make final proof and get a patent. She quit the boarding house soon after I and Oscar Cassem took her more help. Sylvia and Dora went with their mother to Butte, Montana. Teresa, being a good cook, obtained a job as a cook in a big eating-house. She had Oscar get 130 acres of the claim broken up for farming. She planted 1/2 oats, 1/2 corn in 1918. She had \$1,300 net income from it (taxes paid). One year after that the heirs got \$1,000. The land has got more weeds or something, but Thelma is doing a good job of managing the returns. Drought and failures gave the land a setback. Grandma would not want to see any of you suffer. Would work her fingers off to prevent it. You look after Aunt May, not let her born go on relief. Turn over to her the income from her mother's land if need be so she will not want. She loves you all dearly.

Your loving father, Fred E. Moses

Obituary of Theresa: ... "Mrs. Alexander who is better known in Mitchell as Mrs. Solomon Krom, came to Davison County as one of the "seventy-niners," locating to Firesteel, where it was first thought the city of Mitchell would be located. When the site of the town was moved, she was one of the first women to come to the new town. She lived here until 1897, then moved to Butte, Montana. She later returned to South Dakota." She is buried at Graceland Cemetery in Mitchell, SD.

At the time of Theresa's death, her children were all still living. Her first born, Sylvia lived to be 80 years old passing in 1945. Dora passed in 1942 at the age of 75. Charles H. passed in 1931 at the age of 63. May reached the age of 71 passing in 1946.

Branch IV (Paternal) Fredric E. Moses and Sylvia Krom Pioneer of Mitchell, SD

**Fredric - (b: 15 Mar 1859 Sylvia-(b: 11 Nov 1864
d: 3 Feb 1950) d: 18 Jun 1945)**

Relationships: to Oscar E. Cassem, Brother-in-Law, Sylvia and Dora Krom Cassem are sisters, Great Aunt and Uncle to Geraldine Cassem Minor

(The following information was gathered using Fred's memoir, written in 1947 at the age of 88. He discussed his life beginning March 12, 1880, when he moved to Mitchell, SD. The Carnegie has a complete copy of the Fred Moses' memoir for those who wish to read more.)

First Lumber Yard in Mitchell, Moses' - Description of Mitchell at that time:

continued from front page

In March 1880, I started out to select a town in which to start a lumber yard. I stopped at Canton, South Dakota. Since there was only one train a day, I walked to Bridgewater at the end of the track. From there, by Baker Brothers Stage, crossing the James River on a ferry boat to Mitchell, arriving March 12. I was 21 on the 15th.

... I went out and bought lots on the Corner of First and Lawler Streets for a lumber yard, where Burns's Lumber Company is now located. (Note: He is recalling this in 1947,



L to R: Una Moses White, Oscar Cassem, Thelma Cassem, Dora Cassem, Sylvia Krom Moses, Fred Moses, Marie White Seeband's little girl.

Burns' Lumber Company may not be there anymore. [Editor's note - currently this is the location of Tessiers building.]

... S. F. Goodykontz had a bank, and Fred Kimball was cashier. There were two of three shanty hotels, several saloons, and a few rude dwellings, shacks or shanties. This constituted Mitchell at that time.

... The Railroad track was completed to Mitchell, April 26, 1880, and I had four cars of lumber on that first train. So I claimed the distinction of being the first lumberman in Mitchell. Up to that time, however, there was built the bank and a block of three stores of chalkstone on the corner of First and Main.

... While I was waiting for my lumber to arrive, I rode out in the country one day with a land agent, toward the southwest. The landscape was black, from having been burned off the fall before. The prairies were always burned off in the fall and, as a result, only buffalo grass survived (a short grass that cured on the ground; a very nutritive feed, which cattle readily fattened on). West of the Missouri, on the range country, large heads of cattle grazed winter and summer. True, there were some losses from winter storms, but generally they came thru [through] pretty well as they ranged in the rough country along streams and fed on the high ground. The snow would blow off and if it was not over six inches deep, the cattle worked through to the grass, and the snow answered for water.

Continued on page 3

The Cassem Family ...

... P. T. McGovern arrived from Wakasha, Wisconsin, and planned to build a store between Second and Third Street, on Main. A second lumber yard had been established, a block east of mine, the Oshkosh Lumber Company. Their contractors were LaBarre Bros.

... Conditions and a Little Gossip Regarding the First National Bank and Lawler's Bank

Mr. Bowdle, who was Vice President of the First National Bank, bought out the Security. Howard Kibbee [was the] Assistant Cashier [at the First National Bank.] He (Mr. Bowdle) promoted Kibbee to cashier and [then] came after me, to take the place vacated by Kibbee. I went over to the First National as assistant cashier at \$75.00 per month. That was the fall of 1892. In March, 1893, Mr. Gilbert (then cashier), died and I was advanced to his place at \$83.33 per month. That was the year of the panic, when depositors with a few hundred dollars got scared and went to drawing out their money and hid it in socks, or rag bags. There was not enough money in circulation to do business. Banks stopped paying actual money. All checks and drafts were drawn payable through clearing houses only, and by clearing house certificates. New York banks discounted drafts \$35.00 per 1,000 for actual cash. Chicago had the World's Fair, and enough money came there so they could pay bonafide money.

John D. Lawler, President of First National Bank, was a very good man, but a politician whose wife was General Sturgis' daughter, and too high a flier for a South Dakota banker to finance. Her sister was a wealthy widow of Prairie Du Chien, Wisconsin. She married Bob McBride, the editor of the Mitchell Mail. They went to New York to live on Fifth Avenue, but he could not behave himself, so she fired him. He blamed Lawler and used his paper to defame Mr. Lawler's character. McBride had a venomous pen; was a bright man and could use language with two meanings. He was a low, revengeful character. He would stoop to any depth to satisfy his devilishness. He fought Lawler and his friends such as A. E. Hitchcock, an able and respected attorney.

After the panic, McBride turned on Lawler's Bank, but did not mention me. Constant dripping will wear away stone, and deposits began to drop until we had paid out nearly all except the Lawler family's [own deposits]. Mr. Lawler and the Bank Directors went to Sioux City to meet a brother from whom Lawler thought to get help to save the bank. But the brother had already done all he could for the bank. The directors came back. Mr. Lawler did not return with them, and that night he died at the hotel. The Bank did not open and Mitchell citizens were so indignant at McBride that they ransacked the office of the Mitchell Mail, burned its contents and told him to leave town, which he did. The Bank was reorganized and I was out of a job, so it was the farm for me again."

Sylvia Krom and Fred E. Moses were married on March 12, 1884. They had five children. Three sons preceded her in death; surviving her were her two daughters, Mrs. Una White and Mrs. Elizabeth Russell, nine grandchild-

continued from page 2

dren, one sister, Mrs. Marion Randolf. Fred Moses, her husband was left off the list of her survivors, but he did survive her; he did not pass until February 3, 1950. Her obituary from the Mitchell Gazette dated June 28, 1945, states: "In 1896 she moved with her husband to Tobin Township where they developed one of the best farms in Davison County. Mrs. Moses was active in school, church and local societies, especially Lisbon Ladies. Mr. and Mrs. Moses celebrated their golden anniversary on March 12, 1934 at their farm home at which time more than 300 neighbors and friends attended. The [they] left the farm the fall of 1937, driving to Sacramento, California, to live with their daughter, Mrs. White, driving back to the farm for the summer each year. Mrs. Moses loved South Dakota, never failed to give it a boost.

After a little over a month's illness she passed away at the age of 80 years. She was placed to rest in East Lawn Cemetery in Sacramento, California."

Branch V (Paternal & Maternal) JOHN RICHARD WHITE & MARY (WILLETS) WHITE
Pioneers of Mitchell, SD, Married: August 26, 1875, Le Grande, IO

*John Richard White
Born: April 22, 1850
Belvedere, NC
Died: Dec. 17, 1945
Whittier, CA

*Mary (Molly) Willets White
Born: Aug. 26, 1852,
Le Grande, IO
Died: June 1918,
Whittier, CA

Parents: Augustus E. & Margaret (Bundy) White (Hammond) Willets
Relationships: Oscar E. Cassem by two marriages, Great Aunt & Uncle to Geraldine Minor



John White



Mary (Molly) Willets White

In 1906, Sylvia Krom Moses' daughter, Una Irene Moses, was married to Walter W. White son of John R. White, (Sylvia was Dora Cassem's sister).

My parents, Randall Nelson Cassem and Maria Eliza Keen were united in marriage following the interest shown by John White for his nephew Randall on the Cassem side of his family, and Maria on the Keen/Willets side of his family. (Mary or Molly Willets was the sister of my grandmother, Nellie Willets Keen.)

While attending Earlham College, John met Molly Willets. She was a student as well, and John grew fond of her during their time at school. After graduating, John decided to move west to Iowa, to pursue both Molly and employment. A friend of John's was concerned about his decision to go to Iowa, and she expressed her thoughts that Iowa was clearly beyond civilization, and that he would probably fall

Continued on page 4

The Cassem Family ...

victim to the Indians.

When he arrived at his destination in Le Grande, Iowa, John immediately felt at home. He met many families: the Hammonds, Healds, Willets, McGrews, Plummers and Hoovers living on Quaker Lane and felt these were his kind of people since he was raised as a Quaker and had attended Earlham College, a liberal arts college in Richmond, Indiana that was established by the Religious Society of Friends known as Quakers. John found employment as a teacher and eventually married Molly in 1875. They started a family which consisted of one boy and one girl. John eventually realized that he had inherited the pioneer spirit when his desire to press farther west grew stronger over time.

(The following information was gathered using John's memoir, written in 1937 at the age of 87. He discussed his life beginning in 1879, when he traveled to Dakota Territory.)

In the fall of 1879, John went to Dakota Territory to join Thomas Scholfield as a junior member of a partnership. They were to erect a flour mill on the James (Jim) River just east of the city of Mitchell. It was the first mill in that part of the country and settlers came with their wheat for miles around. (Editor's note from John R. White's autobiography: John R. White also built a house on the bank of the river near the mill. This was the family home during the youthful years of his children Everett, Marie, Walter, Ralph and Bob.) Marie recalled accounts of the happy days spent there to her daughter Florence. The children were sliding down the hillside on their sleds in the winter. On one occasion as two of the boys, on one sled, were speeding down the slope in the icy snow, one of their father's cows walked right into their path at just the right moment. Luckily the sled and boys slid right under the cow's belly and they went on their merry way - everyone laughing at the incident!"

For the next few years (about 1886) he was engaged in the grain and coal business after he sold his interest in the mill to Scholfield. He built a grain elevator and coal sheds at this site. Later a store and post office came in and the station was called Riverside.

John and Mary had four sons and one daughter. He says, "Being long on boys and short on girls, I went to increasing my farm activities, by buying more land and raising more stock". He then owned 920 acres and soon after, he rented land from the state. He farmed one tenth of 1500 acres. The rest either remained grassland, became fenced pasture, or was kept for hay. John said, "I believe if about this portion of grass and cultivated land has been maintained throughout the state and adjoining plains, we would never have had the dust bowl to contend with. I well remember the expression of one the speakers at a Farmers Institute in our county, when some of us were agitating the stock and dairy business. He said, 'when this prairie sod is turned over by a plow, it is wrong side up.'"

Continued on page 5

continued from page 3

Wedding Date Is Cleverly Revealed At Smart Luncheon

Mrs. Joe Seppi and Mrs. Russell Burke were co-hostesses at a smart bridge luncheon, Saturday, October 3, when they entertained a group of friends in honor of their sister, Miss Maria Keen.

A delightful surprise awaited the guests since the affair proved to be the announcement of the approaching wedding of Miss Keen to Mr. Randall Cassem.

Miss Keen is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Scott Keen, 545 North Milton avenue, a pioneer family of Whittier. She has a large number of friends here to whom the engagement comes as a pleasant surprise. Mr. Cassem is the son of a well known family of Mitchell, South Dakota.

The wedding will take place October 21, after which they will leave for Mitchell, South Dakota, where they will make their home.

Pink and white were effectively used as the motif for the table decorations while little quaint old-fashioned ladies were used as place cards. Baskets of vari-colored asters, cosmos and dahlias were arranged about the rooms.

After the delicious four course luncheon, bridge formed the chief diversion of the afternoon, with Mrs. Morris Bogue as winner of the high score and Mrs. Percy Slayton the second high prize. Miss Marie Keen was given the consolation award. The second prize proved to be a miniature bride's bouquet in which was a card disclosing the approaching wedding and date.

The invited guests were the Mesdames William McNees, Floyd Glass, Roy Patton, A. T. Charlton, A. O. Pierce, Roy Braucht, William Cochran, Percy Slayton, Winfield Oliver, George Crook, Morris Bogue, Clay Johnson, William Moore and Lyman; also the Misses Rebecca Griffith and Maria Keen, the honoree. Out of town guests were Mrs. J. P. Wyatt of Rivera, Mrs. R. O. Bourne of South Pasadena, Mrs. Mary Orr of Williams, Arizona, Mrs. V. W. Baily of Eagle Rock and Mrs. Harold Mann of San Pedro.

The Whittier News - Oct 5 1925 pg 3

The Cassem Family ...

John sold his farm and stock and moved into Mitchell, SD after bucking the blizzards for more than 20 years. John took over a hardware store in Centerville, South Dakota. After the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad had extended its line from Chamberlain to Rapid City in the Black Hills, it then ran tracts as far as Murdo. He shipped his hardware stock to Murdo and opened a hardware store. He also organized the First State Bank of Murdo. Besides his business, he was interested in the civic, educational and religious life of the town. John was a member of the school board, and active in the organization and building of the First Methodist Church. In addition, he served one term as Mayor of the town.

In 1909, John went into partnership and opened a real estate office in Faith. John filed on a homestead where he lived for a year until proving up on a claim. He then built a two-story five-room home in Faith. John and Molly moved from Faith to California in 1912.

In 1918, Molly took ill and died after a three-day illness. John returned to Mitchell for her internment. While there for a short period, he built a house for Fred Moses. He then returned to California for the winter. In 1923 and 1924, John built and furnished the apartments at the corner of Painter and Franklin in Whittier, California. Uncle John played a big part in the lives of my parents, and I guess we can say in my life too. Also, starting with my high school years (from 1943 to the summer of 1949, just prior to my marriage in September of '49), my family lived in Uncle John's apartments. He took his evening meals with us and I came to know what a kind person he was. He enjoyed my mother's cooking and said that he could eat her desserts without suffering from heartburn like he experienced elsewhere. We concluded it was because she used the vegetable oil Crisco and not lard which is animal fat. He was still found climbing a ladder in his 90's when repairs in his apartment buildings made it necessary. His death came quietly in his sleep on December 17, 1945. After a long and busy life John White passed quietly in his sleep at the age of 95 on December 17, 1945. Rose Hills Memorial Park, Whittier, California is the location of his internment.

Branch VI (Maternal) AMMI WILLETS & MARIA (HAMMOND) WILLETS

Pioneers of Mitchell, SD, Married: 25 Dec 1844

***Ammi Willet**

***Maria H. Hammond**

Born: 18 Aug 1820,

Born: 11 Mar 1825

Brandonville, WV

Jefferson Co., OH

Died: 2 Sept 1890,

Died: 1 July 1912

Mitchell SD

Whittier, CA

Parents: Jesse & Rebecca (Forman) Willets

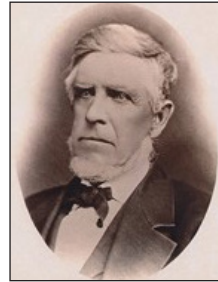
Parents: Benjamin & Margaret (Naylor) Hammond

Relationships: Ammi and Maria are grandparents of my mother, Maria E. Keen Cassem, Great Grandparents to Geraldine Minor

Ammi Willits was my great-grandfather. Although Iowa seems to be where he lived while raising his family, he did reside in Mitchell during its early years, perhaps after

continued from page 4

he was 60 years old until his death in 1890. He is buried in the Mitchell Cemetery, alongside one of his daughters, Molly White (wife of John R. White). Molly's son, Ralph, is also buried in the Mitchell Cemetery.



Ammi Willits



Maria Hammond Willets

Ammi was married to Maria H. Hammond. What I know of him I have learned mainly from my genealogy research. However, Maria came to live in Whittier, CA in 1890 with her other daughter, Nellie Willets Keen. Maria passed away in 1912, many years before I arrived in 1935 to live in the same house. Maria had a bedroom on the first floor of a six-bedroom house on Beverly Blvd. I shared a room with my sister upstairs and so wanted a bedroom to myself. Great-Grandma Willets' room would have been perfect, but after 23 years since her passing, it was still being used to store many of her belongings. My cousins called it the "scary room," and I agreed!

When researching the census records for Ammi, I found him listed in several places. One record indicated he had gone into "The Territory." When I asked a clerk to help me find records about the Territory, she replied, "There aren't any." When I mentioned that Ammi had been a Quaker, she took me to a shelf containing volumes of books by William Hinshaw which listed Quaker families that had come to America. Not only was Ammi mentioned, but I was able to make connections with many more ancestors in Europe. I have included in my memoir a story by Ammi Willets entitled "A Venture in Wild Cattle." It takes place in the Midwest, from Iowa through the Dakotas, and on to Montana. It describes the area as it was when he lived, which I found very interesting. I have no further records of Ammi's life after he sold his farm to finance the trip to Montana for cattle and his burial in Mitchell, South Dakota.

Editor's note: The spellings of names can vary from document to document. For example, Theresa McSwain Krom can be found under Theresa Crum, Teressa Krom, or Teresa McSwiney. We have verified Theresa's claim, and that she was able to get the patent for the claim, using one of the many reference books at the Carnegie titled Family Maps of Davison County, South Dakota, page 89.

Please feel free to come to the Carnegie and investigate Geraldine Cassem Minor's Memoir and the collection of her artwork that she has so graciously provided to us. Her contribution to the knowledge base of Mitchell is very much appreciated. She has also provided us with the memoir of Fred Moses that she quotes in her article. Thank you, Geraldine and family for thinking of us and providing us photos, information and original documents for our never-ending quest for knowledge.

Relationships in the Ger...

This is a very simple, incomplete family tree connecting those early pioneers that Geraldine Cassem Minor talks about in her article. Much more detail can be found in her book, *Brushstrokes Over Time*, available at the Carnegie Resource Center. All relationships are from Geraldine's generation. Her paternal line is in blue and her maternal line is in pink.

2X GGPARENTS
Jesse Willets m. Reb



Great GParents
Ammi Willets r

Great Aunt & Uncle
Mary (Molly) Willets W (White's Mill owner)
Four sons and one d



2X Great Gparent
Maria Relyea



2X Great GParents
Cynthia m. Moses S. McSwain



Great GParents
Theresa McSwain m. Solomon Krom



Grandparents
Oscar E. Cassem m. Dora Krom

Great Aunts & Uncles to Geraldine - Sibli
Sylvia(Fred Moses) | May (Randolf)

Aunts & Uncles to Geraldine Siblings of Randall

Loren Clement, Thelma Doreen, Oscar Edwin

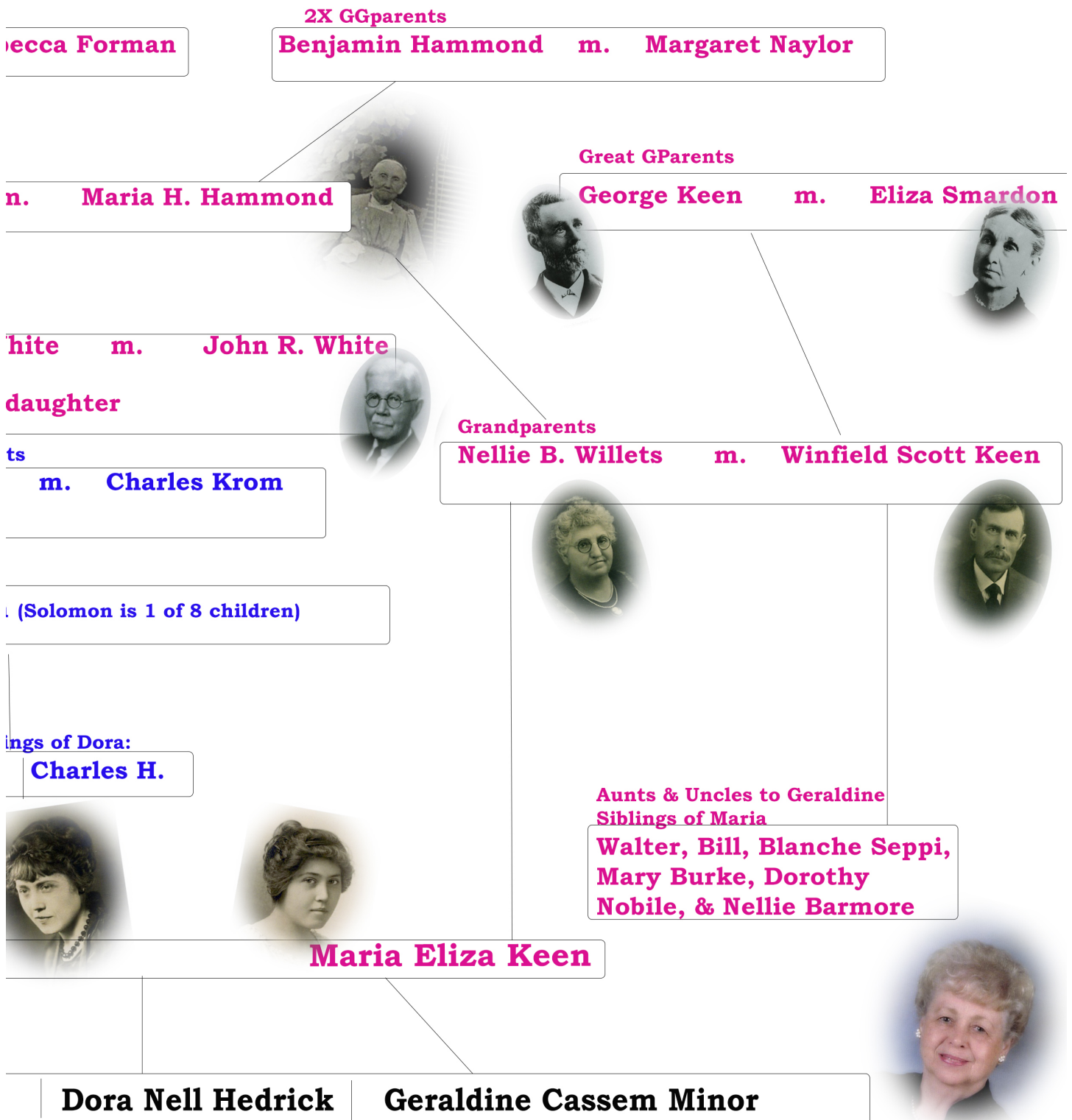
Parents

Randall Nelson Cassem m.



Children of Randall & Maria Keen Cassem- Scottie- lived days

aldine Cassem Minor Family



FIRESTEEL – THE VILLAGE IN A VALLEY

Where to settle? How friendly was the area? Who was already settled at the spot? What natural resources were available? Is there water close by? What kind of land and for what is it suited? How to get to a certain location? Was the railroad coming to the area? How organized is the region? Is there government? How much money is needed? These, and many more, are all questions that must have gone through the minds of those daring, brave people who ventured westward.

In 1872, H.C. Greene and John Head came to the spot that became known as Firesteel. They lived in dug-outs the first year and built homes in 1873. By 1874, Davison County was organized; Firesteel was official having its first election at H.C. Green's home. There were 21 voters and an estimated 50 population according to Ethel Dowdell Abild, daughter of H.C. Greene. Gradually the tiny settlement of Greene and Head obtained some services that required a town. Since Greene's home was on a hill/cliff, it was decided that a town should be on more level ground and a town was platted a short distance from the Greene home. Once a post office was established, the Jamestown Stage Line also ran through Firesteel. The village in the valley on the prairie gradually grew with those establishing businesses and homes hoping to get the railroad to use their village as a location for a station. Abild recounts in her monograph, "The town of Firesteel probably resembled most mid-west early villages. My father had platted it. Uncle Israel helped construct a store with its squared front. The newspaper, the tin shop, the post office, the blacksmith shop lined up in a not to impressive row. Each business had its own walk approach, for a street side walk was not constructed.

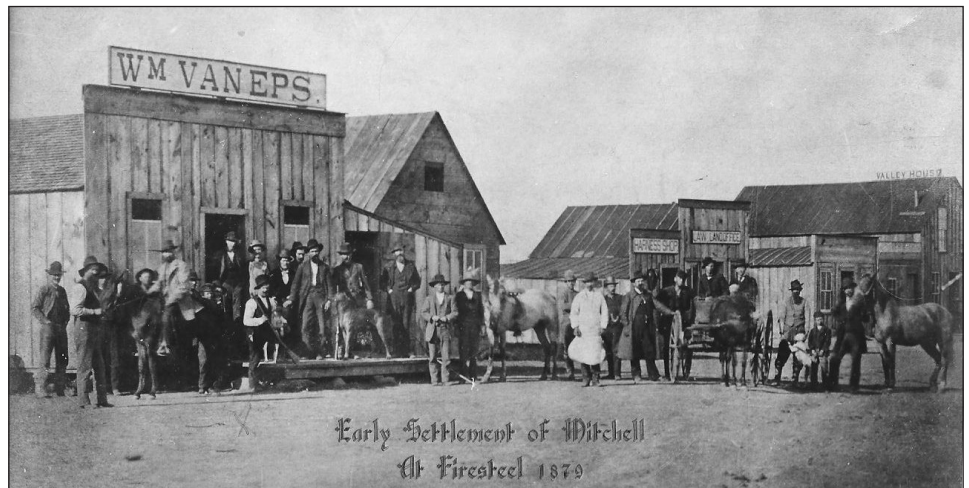
Some men enroute to the gold rush at Deadwood stayed in the Firesteel area, they heard tales of disappointed pan-golders. More came for land for the taking. A kind of hey-day hit Firesteel just before its doom when

the railroad avoided its location because driftwood in the trees told them it could be subject to flood. How right they were. The very next year a sudden flood followed a deep snow winter. The combination of the creek and rivers surging waters would have wiped out the town." (Firesteel – Birthplace of Mitchell, SD by Ethel Dowdell Abild)

There was stiff competition for the railroad as it boosted or doomed a site. Rockport was a major competitor for the placement of a railway station against Firesteel; many thought it had the advantage because it had been the site of Old Fort James and military and railroad officials were familiar with the area. It seems that these settlements were always trying to outguess the route of the railroad. The settlement of Firesteel grew to 32 buildings by 1879.

A.J. Waterhouse, attorney, and as a Mitchell Capital article stated an "Orator Deluxe" in a speech given at the first reunion celebration in 1880 of the Comrades of '79 says this about Firesteel, "Ladies and Gentlemen and Comrades All: I know of a deserted village: not like that one which Goldsmith wrote, but a deserted village nevertheless. Down by the banks of the Jim; down where the river, winding its way from the north, reaches a somewhat wider stretch of valley than it has traversed before; down beneath the valley bluffs, where the wind is tempered to the shorn lamb,

where oak trees blessed the prairie's tired sight; where the plum tree renders its luscious fruit in due season; where the wild grape clammers and twines and grows wilder day by day; where Nature, growing tired, seeks to break the prairie's dead monotony—and succeeds—was once the village of Firesteel." He goes on: "In October 1879, the first building was placed upon the town-site of Mitchell. It was removed from Firesteel by J. W. Walsh, and the proceeding was looked upon with considerable distrust by many of the remaining Firesteelites—for the railroad was not yet with us. Soon, however, another building followed in its wake, and then another and another, until the prairie between here and Firesteel was dotted with moving buildings, and the air was blue with profanity of gentle drivers. Rapid removals were those, my friends. In the morning some building stood in Firesteel. Two hours later it had 'folded its tent like the Arabs, and silently stolen away.' And then, as the deserted village grew silent and lonely, as its competitor on the hill grew more and more lively, the Comrades 'passed on with the tide' and Mitchell was our home." The railroad came to Mitchell in 1880 and the city boasted around 320 citizens. Mitchell was incorporated in 1881 and the population climbed to 1,000 by 1883. The directory of 1884 lists a population of 4,000 and notes 200 places of business.



Early Settlement of Mitchell
At Firesteel 1879

New arrival at the Carnegie Resource Center

The Carnegie Resource Center recently received a book entitled *Life on a Prairie Farm, A Grandpa's letters to his Granddaughters* written by John Dodd Heide sent to us by Susan Heide Festa, his daughter, of Congers, New York. The following letter talks about the family moving to a farm west of Betts in Davison County in 1917. If you would like to read more, come to the Carnegie, sit in a comfortable chair in front of the fireplace and enjoy.

Life on a Prairie Farm, A Grandpa's Letters to his Granddaughters

By John Dodd Heide

Dear Leslie and Laura,

Would you like to know what it was like in the "Olden Times"? The Olden Times don't seem so "olden" to Grandpa, but maybe I can tell you a little of what life was like for me in 1917, when I was about your age. Maybe the best time to start is when we arrived in South Dakota.

The day was March 17, 1917. During a March blizzard. A March blizzard is not as bad as a regular winter blizzard in South Dakota, which I will describe in a later letter. But the snow is heavy and wet, the temperatures gets down to 00 F, and the wind blows out of the northwest drifting the snow and making the roads impassable.

By "We" I mean my father and mother, Samuel D. and Clara E. Heide, my older brother Paul (13 yrs.) whom you love to visit and who loves to have you visit, me (11 yrs.) and our "baby" brother Harold (6 yrs.).

In addition, "we" meant two railroad box cars of farm machinery, household goods, oak fence posts, two horses, two mules, a Welsh pony, a few cows, and assorted other items. These had been chaperoned across the state of Iowa into South Dakota by two hired men who rode the freight train caboose and saw to it that the livestock in the cars had been watered and fed every day.

The trip of the freight cars from Maquoketa, Iowa to Betts, South Dakota had taken a week. Our family came



This is the farm that the Heide family moved to in 1917. Located in the SW ¼ 17-103-61 of Davison County.

by passenger train which was a 24-hour trip, approximately, I suppose our departure from Maquoketa was planned so we would arrive at the same time as the freight cars. That we did, and all arrived during the blizzard.

We arrived in Mitchell, a "metropolis" with a population of 10,000, and something of a rail center. Mitchell had two "big" hotels which were three or four stories high. It also had the Merchants Hotel which was a two-story building with many fewer rooms but designed to accommodate families who might be staying for longer than a few days. This was the hotel where we stayed for a week or so until Dad and the men could get things moved to the farm and the furniture moved into the house. We kids enjoyed hotel life for that time.

Betts was a station six miles west of Mitchell on the Milwaukee Line and six miles closer to the farm. It consisted of a grain elevator, livestock pens for shipping cattle, a lumber yard, a general store, and three houses. Until the blizzard subsided, the two hired men had to make do by buying groceries at the general store. They did have a stove in the box cars, so they had heat.

You might wonder why my dad, your great-grandfather Heide, would ship two box cars of goods the 550

miles from Maquoketa, Iowa to a Davison County farm in South Dakota. The answer lies in the normal farm practices of renting farms in South Dakota and many other areas. The moving time for renters and thus for owners who want to move onto their farms is March 1st, the worst of the winter is over and most of the preceding year's feed is fed up. The spring work hasn't started yet. Thus, if a renter is moving from one farm to another at that time of the year, he has the least stuff to move and yet he can get settled in before the rush of spring work starts.

Since Dad had rented out this farm, which was to become our new home for many years he couldn't ask the renter to leave before March 1st.

Dad's lifelong profession had been that of a lawyer. This venture to the farm was made because of his health. He thought getting out in the open and away from the tensions of a law practice would be beneficial.

But one doesn't just walk out one day and start farming the next. In those days, horses and machinery were required. To run a farm well, one had to have livestock such as cows, pigs, and chickens. You don't just go down to the corner grocery store and buy such things. If you are in the locality of the farm you are going to move onto on March 1st, and if

Continued on page 10

CRC needs help to repair steps - again



This picture of the front steps shows they are in need of repair - Again. This will be our next project. We have tried to repair them many times, but they continue to crumble at the edges. The replace/repair project estimated cost will be from \$8,000-\$10,000. Please consider a donation towards this project. Just note step repair on your check and the funds will be set aside for this project. Thanks for considering this!

New arrival at the Carnegie ...

you have a place to keep the equipment and livestock, the starting farmer spends most of the winter going around to farm sales buying up what he needs. Since Dad was 550 miles away, he couldn't do this in South Dakota. But he could do it in Iowa and he did. That is why during the winter he had accumulated two carloads of goods to ship to South Dakota.

A few days after our arrival, the weather improved so that the men could start moving things from Betts to the farm. Actually, the weather moderated during the next week, so that the snows of the winter started melting and the streams started to flow. Our farm was $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile north of Betts and two miles west. Just to the north of Betts there was what then was known as a 'raw quarter'. This meant a piece of land a half

mile on each side with no fences and that it had never been plowed. This offered a shortcut to the farm, which we made use of. Of course, there was no road across it - merely a trail.

Dad and the two hired men started to unload the railroad cars and move everything to the farm. The means of power was the team of horses and the team of mules. The hired men detested driving the mules, so Dad drove them. One late afternoon he had a load on a wagon and headed for the farm. He took the short cut and about halfway across there was a stream, running about 18 inches deep with ice cold water. The width of this stream was about five feet greater than the total length of the wagon plus the team of mules. Just as the mules and wagon were in the middle of the stream, the mules

continued from page 9

stopped dead in their tracks. Nothing Dad could do would move them. Finally, he got down from the wagon, waded through the ice water and walked $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile to the next farmhouse. He got the farmer to hitch up a team and come down to the creek. The plan was to hitch the farmer's team some way onto the front of the wagon (or the mules) and pull the whole mess out of the creek bed.

So, they hitched the farmer's team on. Just as he was about to say, "Get-up" to his horses, the mules started up and pulled the wagon out by themselves. Poor Dad. First, he got soaked above his knees in freezing water; then he had to walk or ride about two miles in wet trousers.

The farmer thought this was quite a joke on this "city feller."

Love, Grandpa

From The Archives

A BRAVE MOTHER.

She Lets Her Hand Burn Off Rather Than Risk Her Children's Lives.

Woonsocket News: A terrible accident happened to Mrs. R. A. Wheeler Monday evening that will probably render her a cripple for life. The lady was cooking supper over a gasoline stove and had set the tea kettle, partly filled with water, under the stove. In reaching over the stove, it seems that her dress in some way caught upon and turned one of the faucets or spindles, and a quantity of gasoline ran out and down into the tea kettle. She soon noticed the gasoline running and shut it off; but did not know that any had run into the tea kettle. She afterwards set the tea kettle on the stove, and when the water, with the dangerous oil on top, had almost reached the boiling point, she picked up the kettle and started to carry it into another room, and when only a few steps from the stove, the gasoline on top of the water exploded and the flames burst out. She ran to the door to open it and throw it out, but the door did not open easy, and the little children sat on the floor near by—to drop it was death to them. So this brave woman clung to the kettle, thinking only of her children, while her hand was being burned to a crisp, and carried the flaming vessel back to the gasoline stove. Had she dropped it, it is quite likely the children would have been immediately enveloped in the flames. The unfortunate lady's hand is badly burned, the flesh of the thumb and fore-finger being almost all consumed.

Related to H.C. Greene Lance and Marilyn Olson, Great Falls, MT



The Olsons stopped by the Carnegie Resource Center to look up information for the Greene family. When asked if they would like to visit with the past president, Lyle Swenson, they said that they would appreciate a visit. Lyle was thrilled to visit with them. Chuck and Linda Oster took them to visit Lyle at Brady.

LADIES' SALES DAY, Thursday, Sept. 8th, CHAMPENY \diamond BROS.'

ON THIS DAY
The MCKIBBIN FUR COMPANY

Will make a Display of the Finest Line of Fur Garments ever shown in the City.

French Sable Military Capes, Mink, Astrichan, Coney, Monkey Garments
And all the Latest Novelties in Fur Goods.

A cordial invitation is extended to all Ladies in Mitchell and vicinity.

CHAMPENY BROS.

Upcoming Events

**Mitchell Area Genealogical Society (MAGS)
And Mitchell Area Historical Society (MAHS)**

- February 29 thru March 2** - Genealogy
Roots Tech at Salt Lake City, Utah
- March 18** - 7 p.m. MAHS Business Meeting
- March 25** - 6 p.m. MAGS Business Meeting
7 p.m. – Evidence Analysis: How to Become a
Genealogist Detective (Laura Lefler Webinar)
- April 11** – 7 p.m.- MAHS PROGRAM- Dredging the Lake –
By Mayor and City Officials
- April 15** – 7 p.m. MAHS Business Meeting
- April 22** – 6 p.m. MAGS Business Meeting
- April 22** – 7 p.m. - Discover, Gather, Connect – Ideas for
Engaging in Family History as a Whole
Family – Olivia Jewell Webinar
- May 16-18** – National Genealogy Conference
- May 20** –7 p.m. MAHS Business Meeting;
Election of Officers
- May 27** – Memorial Day – No Meetings for MAGS
- June 17** – 7 p.m. MAHS Business Meeting
- June 24** – 6 p.m. MAGS Business Meeting
7 p.m. – Catalogs The Key To Using Familysearch.Org
And Ancestry.Com- James Tanner
- July 21-26** – Institute of Genealogy and Historic
Research – 13 Courses offered
- Aug 28** – Sept 2 – South Dakota State Fair
Genealogy Scrapbook Theme – Farm Life

MAHS & MAGS Renewals

MAHS and MAGS wish to thank everyone for their memberships and donations. We couldn't survive without YOUR kindness and generosity. Feel free to stop by and say hi. We appreciate your input as well as those that have donated their time and energy to keeping our societies relevant and active.

THANK YOU!!!



**Carnegie Resource
Center**
119 West Third Avenue
Mitchell, S.D. 57301

