

## Founders of Pearlman, Michigan

At the end of the *Boom Town Brides* series, six families left Singapore, Michigan in June of 1873. They headed toward land they had already purchased in what would soon become the town of Pearlman. Later, their arrival would be celebrated on the last Saturday of June in the festival of Founder's Day.

The six families were as follows:

- Roland and Pearl Decker with their son, Jules
- Garrett and Amanda Decker with their children Isaac, Sadie, Ralph, and Ruth
- Paul "Sawyer" and Fiona Evans with her niece Mary Clare
- Jesse and Louise Hammond with their adopted daughter Grace Ellen and baby Lyle
- The elder VanderLeuven, who ran the hotel in Singapore before retiring to move closer to their son Dirk's family
- Dirk and Else VanderLeuven with their children Hilda, Holst and Helen

**Roland & Pearl Decker** began a mercantile in Pearlman. It did a thriving business. In 1882, Roland sold the business to Branford Kensington so he could fulfill Pearl's lifelong dream of seeing San Francisco. They and their son traveled to that California city by train and decided to settle there. Roland began a chandlery, and Pearl taught English to Chinese immigrants. Their son, Jules, grew up in the family business and continued it after his father's retirement. A visit in 1903 was the only time the Deckers returned to Pearlman.

**Garrett & Amanda Decker** settled in Pearlman on acreage that supported large apple orchards. Soon Garrett added a cannery to the property. In 1880, he decided to change his family name back to the original German, Neidecker, which aggravated his brother Roland. They parted agreeing to disagree, and Roland took his family to San Francisco. Through the efforts of the brothers' wives all was forgiven, and Roland's family stayed with Garrett and Amanda for their visit in 1903. Garrett's son Isaac, enthralled by his uncle's stories of San Francisco, moved there. Sadie married and moved to a neighboring town. Their son Ralph carried on the cannery and grew it to the point that it made the family one of the wealthiest in Pearlman. Though they lost a daughter to scarlet fever, two other daughters survived and remained nearby.

**Sawyer & Fiona Evans** raised her sister's orphaned daughter, Mary Clare, who decided to return to New York City when she was grown. Like her aunt, Mary Clare was a gifted singer on the stages of Broadway. Her voice was even recorded. Sawyer and Fiona also had a son, Glenn, who inherited his grandfather's fortune and lived a philanthropic life. Sawyer ran a hotel in Pearlman and took Fiona on many excursions to see the cities and the niece she loved.

**Jesse & Louise Hammond** had a son, Lyle, in addition to the girl they adopted. Their daughter took the bold step of attending university, much to her mother's delight, and became a botanist. Lyle stayed in Pearlman, opening a carpentry business, for he loved working with his hands. His son, however, intrigued by his grandfather's stories of lighthouse keeping, applied for the

Lighthouse Service and tended a Lake Michigan light for many years. Jesse at last found peace in working the land and a simple, faith-filled life with Louise.

**The VanderLeuvens** – After the elder VanderLeuvens passed in the 1880s, Holst changed the family name to Vanderloo, since the original Dutch was too difficult for many to spell and pronounce. Holst invested in Standard Oil and made a small fortune, enabling him to build a large house in Pearlman and become one of the town leaders. He served several terms as mayor.

The stories of the descendants of the Founders begin with *Soaring Home*. The Pearlman-based books are as follows, in chronological order:

1. *Soaring Home*
2. *The Matrimony Plan*
3. *All Roads Lead Home*
4. *Legacy of Love*
5. *Groom by Design*
6. *Suitor by Design*
7. *Love by Design*

Look for the Neideckers, Hammonds, Evanses and the Vanderloos in these books and remember how it all began in the 1870s in Singapore, Michigan.

<http://www.christineelizabethjohnson.com/pearlman-books.html>