

Getman News From The Past

The Getman Family

The history of this family is Interwoven with the history of Montgomery county, from Revolutionary times till now and the family is spread over a goodly section of the western end of the county, in St. Johnsville, Canajoharie, Fort Plain, Fonda, Tribes Hill, Johnstown. N. Y. and other towns and villages. A genealogy of the family would show them to have entered in most every walk of life, farmers, merchants, lawyers and businessmen of all professions, thereby giving a good cross section of the history of the Mohawk valley.

(Saint Johnsville, New York, ENTERPRISE AND NEWS, Wednesday, February 19, 1936)

Why Did the Getmans Relocate?

War of 1812

One of the questions that has come up on several occasions is “Why did my line of Getman descendants move?”

There are a number of factors that enter into anyone deciding to leave their place of birth to settle in a new and often strange place. Initially the answer boils down to a desire to own land and be independent. More recently the reason is often associated with a need for gainful employment. In a way these two purposes are essentially the same. The person/family that is moving sees an opportunity for an improved situation.

One of the first movements from the Mohawk Valley seems to have been stimulated by the War of 1812. Here in New York we are a bit more aware of this war than in some parts of the county because it much of it occurred around here.

During the War of 1812, the US was battling Great Britain over land in the Ohio river valley and there was also an attempt to annex Canada. For people in upstate New York the primary impact was along the St. Lawrence River.

At the East end of Lake Ontario a fortress had been built at Sackets Harbor. This fortress provided the US a place on Lake Ontario where British shipping could be controlled or at least interfered with. Troops assigned to the fort included militia from

throughout New York. Several of the militiamen stationed there were Getmans, their in-laws and friends.

Having been stationed in the area allowed them to become familiar with the agricultural potential of a part of the country that was both essentially unpopulated and held a great potential. Following the war many of the families of militiamen relocated to the area near the eastern end of Lake Ontario, an area surrounding what is now Watertown, NY. A listing of early settlers in this area reads much like a listing of Mohawk Valley families, many members of this generation packed up and went north along the military road that had been used to move troops to Sackets Harbor.

Erie Canal 1821

New York State opened the Erie Canal, also known as “Clintons Folly” in 1821. The impact this had on western settlement is remarkable. A migration to the western part of the country was expected, ongoing and encouraged, but the impact the canal had was unprecedented.

Travel west became affordable for nearly everyone. Instead of having to load materials into a wagon to move one’s self or use a series of expensive coaches the travelers were able to cross into the great lakes in a matter of days instead of weeks for a fraction of the cost.

Many members of the younger generation of Mohawk Valley families had members who took advantage of this opportunity.

Once again family names from the valley are well represented in locations such as Michigan and Minnesota as a direct result of the opening of the Erie Canal. As with the period following the War of 1812 early settlers wrote home and encouraged their friends to join them encouraging and accelerating the Westward movement.

Homestead Act of 1862

According to Wikipedia: From early colonial days, the desire for “free land” had generated successive waves of westward migrations. By the 1850s, prominent individuals such as *New York Tribune* editor Horace Greeley were urging enactment of homestead legislation. In 1846 Congress was presented with the first homestead bill, which many called a “great question of land to the landless.” In 1860 Congress finally passed a Homestead Act, but it was vetoed. Southerners opposed the act on the grounds that it would result in antislavery people settling the territories.

The Republican Party platform for the 1860 election promised a new homestead bill, and Lincoln’s victory, along with the secession of the Southern states, ensured its passage.

The act, which took effect January 1, 1863, granted 160 acres of unappropriated public lands to anyone who paid a small filing fee and agreed to work on the land and improve it, including by building a residence, over a five-year period.

The Homestead Act proved one of the most important pieces of legislation in the history of the American West, as hundreds of thousands of people moved to the Great Plains in an effort to take advantage of the free land.

The only personal requirement was that the homesteader be either the head of a family or 21 years of age; thus, U.S. citizens, freed slaves, new immigrants intending to become naturalized, single

women, and people of all races were eligible. The potential for free land attracted hundreds of thousands of settlers to move to Kansas, Nebraska, the Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma), Dakota Territory, and elsewhere in the West and enticed a migratory wave of thousands of African Americans from the South. Rumors of better race relations in the West served as an added attraction; more than 25,000 southern blacks moved to Kansas during the 1870s and 1880s as a part of the Exoduster Movement—the name given to the migration or “exodus” of African Americans from the South to escape Jim Crow oppression. While the rumors regarding racial attitudes proved to be exaggerations, the black farmers who took advantage of the Homestead Act found the West more hospitable than the South. While black access to land never equaled that of whites, the Homestead Act of 1862 gave thousands of ex-slaves the opportunity to own their own land, something that was unattainable in the South.

Once again, Getmans and their descendants took advantage of this opportunity to own land and start anew. A close look at census records shows that our cousins moved west from the Mohawk Valley, the Watertown area and many of those already in Western locations moved to the newly opened areas. This migration was accelerated after the Civil War when veterans of the war were offered properties as another incentive for Western expansion.

California Gold

One of the migration factors that hasn’t been studied in terms of the Getman descendants is the Gold Rush following the discovery in 1848. There must have been some who were enticed by this opportunity, but the numbers were not as significant as the previously listed movements.

A Sad Situation

SERVICES HELD FOR 2 CHILDREN, CLAYTON HAYES

Daily People's Press Owatonna, Minn.
July 17, 1945

Double funeral services were held at the Congregational church in Medford yesterday afternoon for Patrick Wayne, 4, and Bruce Edward, 3, sons of Mr. and Mrs. Clayton Hayes of near Medford who were killed in a train-car accident Saturday afternoon.

Floral offerings were numerous and the service was exceptionally largely attended by relatives and the numerous friends and neighbors of the grief stricken parents. The two boys were their only children.

Eight young men from Medford and Owatonna were casket bearers for the service conducted by the Rev. Mr. Hunter of Northfield. Interment was in the Union cemetery.

Children Killed As Train Hits Stalled Car at Medford...

MOTHER MAKES VAIN ATTEMPT TO SAVE PAIR...

3 and 4 year old Sons of Mr. and Mrs. Clayton Hayes, Victims

Daily People's Press Owatonna, Minn.
July 15, 1945

Two Medford children were killed when the stalled automobile in which they had been riding was struck by a northbound train in Medford yesterday after their frantic mother had made a vain attempt to halt the onrushing train.

Dead are Patrick Wayne, 4, and Bruce Edward, 3, only children of Mr. and Mrs. Clayton Hayes of near Medford.

The accident happened at 4:27 p.m. CWT, as the car was struck by a Rocket on the Rock Island tracks at the north Medford crossing.

Moments earlier the car, driven by Mrs. Hayes, stalled on the crossing. The frantic mother attempted first to get the children out of the automobile and then to wave down the train, according to reports made to authorities.

The through train smashed into the automobile, completely wrecking it as one of the children was killed instantly. The other died after being taken to the City hospital here.

As clearly as it could be learned Mrs. Hayes and her two children were on their way home from Medford to their home, about a half mile east of the crossing.

When her efforts failed to halt the train, Mrs. Hayes ran to the left rear of the car and was pulling one of the children out of the auto by the arm just as the train hit. The impact virtually tore the baby from her grasp.

Mrs. Hayes is the former Donna Roebuck, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ray Roebuck of Owatonna.

Arrangements for funeral services had not been completed late this night.

Patrick and Bruce were grandsons of Elizabeth K Getman (GFG - C 174d) 1855- 1929 and William Roebuck 1844-1934.

A-B-C Lines

In the initial publication each of the original Getman sons was assigned a letter as follows. These letters were used to differentiate their lines of descent.

George Getman, b. 1723	A line
Christian Getman, b. 1734	B line
Frederick Getman, b. 1725	C line

There were additional D and E lines set up for Getman families that could not be linked to the original family when the book was being developed. These have each been identified in more current research and are now clearly linked to one of the A-B-C lines.

Send us your family stories.

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