

ROGUE VALLEY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

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In this issue we feature Peter Lester’s “Missouri Connection,” another of the winning entries in our 2012 RVGS Writing Contest. Peter is on the right in the photo below. We also feature a research brief on the Vicars Family of Jackson County. Our next issue will feature the third winning entry in the 2012 Writing Contest and the winning photos from our 2013 Photo Contest.



2012 RVGS Writing Contest Winners

The Missouri Connection

By Peter F. Lester

My great-great grandmother is Lizzie Lind Foster Roberts. Although she died before I was born, family stories¹ passed down through the generations have made her a very real character for me. In the following, I have used that oral history and a little research to try to capture the essence of Lizzie’s life in the last half of the 19th Century.

“Bred in Kentucky, Born in Missouri”

Those words, spoken many times by Lizzie and repeated by her progeny, allude to the fact that Lizzie’s mother, Mary Foster, was pregnant in late 1850 when she and her husband, John, joined the general westward migration that reached a peak in the mid-19th century. Both John and Mary were about 26 with three children under six years old. They had lost a newborn earlier that year.

The John and Mary B. Foster Family in 1850	
Thomas Vernon	b1844
Mary Frances	b1846
Rachel Ellis	b1848

Figure 1. Foster Family Group Sheet

During the late fall-early winter, the Fosters’ trek took them from Franklin County, Kentucky to Saline County, Missouri (Figure 1). Although no record of their mode of travel has been located, we do know that the common methods of transportation from Kentucky to Missouri at the time were by wagon and by steamboat on the Ohio, Mississippi, and Missouri Rivers. The fact that the Fosters settled in a west-central Missouri county that borders the Missouri River strongly suggests that river transport facilitated their travel (Figure 1).²

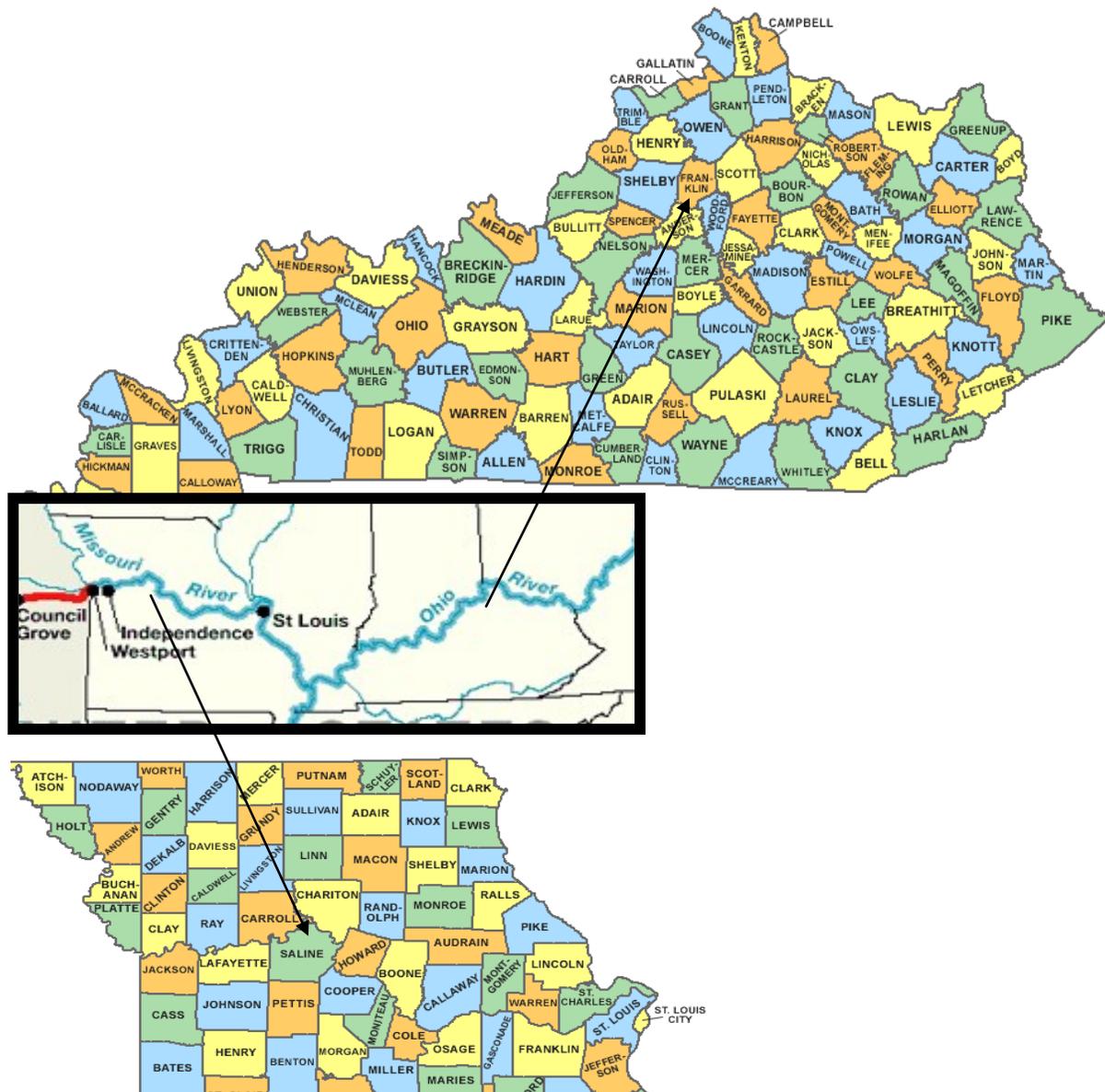


Figure 1 The Fosters’ journey in the winter of 1850-1851 from Franklin County KY to Saline County MO. River boats travelled along the Ohio River along the northwestern border of Kentucky intersecting the Mississippi River along the border of Illinois and Missouri. At St. Louis, it continues westward along the Missouri River. **Note: this and similar figures used in this report were obtained from the Internet. Most, if not all, are under copyright and cannot be used for commercial purposes without permission.**

Possibly as a result of that long journey, Mary Foster started her labor early. Soon after the family arrived near Waverly in Saline County, Missouri (Figure 1), Mary gave birth to a very premature baby girl. The date was February 25, 1851. The tiny baby was named Lizzie Lind Foster.

Lizzie’s middle name, “Lind,” was inspired by Jenny Lind³, the so-called “Swedish Nightingale,” a popular singer in both Europe and America in the mid-nineteenth century. But there is some disagreement about her first name, “Lizzie.” Although some formal records show it to be “Elizabeth,” according to family stories, she always insisted that her given name actually was “Lizzie,” suggesting that records keepers⁴ had incorrectly identified “Lizzie” as a nickname for “Elizabeth” and simply changed it to the more formal form. Whatever the truth, she was always “Lizzie” to her family.

Family stories describe the newborn Lizzie as so small that “... her head was the size of a doorknob and her mother’s wedding ring fit over her wrist.” Appropriately, her first bed was a drawer in her mother’s dresser. Years later, she would describe her newborn self through her mother’s eyes as “... a tiny monstrosity;” saying that “people came from miles around to see her.”

From Lizzie's small size and her described appearance, it is estimated that Mary Foster's pregnancy was about 28 weeks along when she gave birth. A premature child delivered a week or two earlier would not likely have survived. Also, it was fortunate for her descendants that she was a girl. Typically, the survival rates of female "preemies" are higher than males.⁵

A family tradition during Lizzie's lifetime was to try the cap and booties originally knitted for the newborn Lizzie on babies of the next generations. Those items were always too small.

According to family lore, Lizzie had a wet nurse. Why? The stress of such an early birth could have interfered with her mother's ability to produce milk. But, then again, Mary Foster may simply have wanted some rest after her long trip from Kentucky immediately followed by Lizzie's birth. We don't know for sure. But we do know that the Fosters were a young farming family, now with four children under the age of seven and having recently lost a fifth under the age of one.⁶ Separated by many miles from the help of relatives and friends, it is not difficult to assume that Lizzie's premature birth was a survival situation ... that is, that the wet nurse was a necessity. If that was so, we descendants owe a lot to that woman.

For the next eight years, the Fosters lived first in Saline County then near Carrollton in Carroll County, just to the west. Finally, in 1859, they moved southward, across to the Missouri River to better farming opportunities in Lafayette County (Figure 1)⁷. It was near the township of Clay where they chose to settle permanently. That is where Lizzie would grow up.

By 1860, John and Mary Foster's family had grown substantially with the addition of three more boys, William (1853), Andrew (1855) and John (1858). With the oldest at 16, the family now included seven growing children. However, it was apparent that 10-year-old-Lizzie's "growing" would be limited. In addition to being extremely small at birth, the charitable description, "short of stature," would follow her for the rest of her life. To make matters worse, as she grew, she became somewhat bow-legged, likely due to the effect of rickets. When she did reach her full growth, her height was only 4'7".

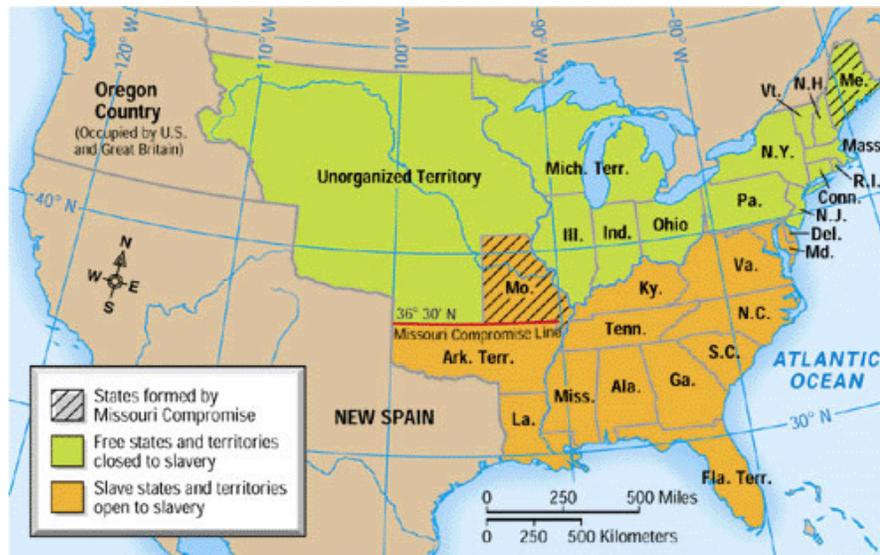
Years later, Lizzie's grandson would tease her by lifting her up onto the kitchen sink, knowing that she was too small to jump down.

But, by all accounts, Lizzie's diminutive size did not slow her down. She was a bright child and full of energy. Her prodigious memory served her well. Having been raised in a Christian church, she could "quote her Bible backwards and forwards" and, in school, she proved herself a word-master in spelling bees.

The Civil War

It is impossible to detail the history of the Fosters in Missouri without reference to the political maelstrom that was boiling up around them and across the country. Missouri was literally in the middle of that storm as a "Border State" between the Confederate South and the Union North. In order to facilitate the entry of Missouri into the Union thirty years prior to Lizzie's birth, the U.S. Congress passed a bill known as the "Missouri Compromise."⁸ Although Missouri would be part of the anti-slavery North, the "Compromise" legislation allowed slavery to continue within its borders in order to maintain a political balance between Slave States and Free States (Figure 2).

Figure 2 Missouri Compromise 1830



The Civil War broke out in 1861, the year Lizzie was 10 years old. As a Border State, Missouri was a mixed political bag. Union troops and civilian supporters of the North outnumbered the Confederates in the state as a whole but that imbalance was not true county-by-county. For example, in Lafayette County MO, many of the population, including the Fosters, were originally from states that were now part of the Confederacy and they brought to Missouri a distinct political leaning toward the Stars and Bars.⁹

One of the most obvious indications of that Confederate support was a widespread ‘slavery mindset’ among the white population. In 1861, slaves made up a quarter of the total population of Lafayette County¹⁰, a greater fraction than in any other county in the state. Contrary to a popular impression that “hoards” of slaves were found on every farm, many individual farmers had but a few slaves, a situation that most likely reflected their income level. Of course, these facts don’t make slavery acceptable in any way but they do indicate how common it was in households throughout Lafayette County. The Fosters were one of those households. At the time of Lizzie’s birth, her wet nurse, mentioned previously and described in family stories as “... a black woman who lived on the (Foster) property,” was in fact, a slave, “owned” by the Fosters.¹¹

Beyond the slavery issue, the Foster family lived under the shadow of the Civil War with dangers close by. A major cause of this situation was fighting between two undisciplined quasi-military groups, pro-Union “Jayhawkers” and Confederate “Bushwhackers.” This was a serious problem along the Missouri-Kansas border.¹² The situation became so bad that, on August 25th, 1863, Union General Thomas Ewing Jr. issued his controversial General Order 11 requiring all residents of Jackson, Cass, Bates counties and part of Vernon County ... all located along the Kansas-Missouri border ... to leave their homes and businesses (Figure 1).¹³

Ewing’s order defined a “scorched earth” policy. All deserted homes, shops, and barns in the designated counties were burned to the ground. Under that law, any evidence of local support of the Confederacy was dealt with harshly. Furthermore, General Order 11 required supporters of the Southern cause to return to Confederate territory. Penalties for non-compliance ranged from heavy fines, to confiscation of property, to death, depending on the nature of the violations. General Ewing justified his plan as the only way to rid the area of guerilla fighters and to eliminate their hiding places.

Initially, the Fosters were able to remain on their property in Lafayette County while living under the severity of Union martial law. Although most of the fighting occurred in counties to the west, violence occasionally spilled over into their neighborhood. (Figure 1) Stories from Lizzie told of neighbor’s homes being burned; burying family silver to keep it from being stolen; and brothers hiding under haystacks that were examined closely by soldiers with bayonets. Finally, the Fosters did leave Missouri, returning to Kentucky for about one year.¹⁴

After the Civil War ended in March, 1865, John and Mary Foster, then in their early forties, went back to their Missouri farm. By 1870 their family had expanded to 10 children ranging in age from 2 to 26 years old. Lizzie was 20 (Figure 4).

Figure 4 Foster Family in 1870

The John and Mary Foster Family in 1870¹⁵
Thomas Vernon 26, Mary Frances 24, Rachel Ellis 22,
Lizzie Lind 20, William L. 17, Andrew B. 14,

Lizzie Lind Foster and Wesley Roberts

As Lizzie matured, similar to many young girls living on farms in those days, she became an accomplished seamstress and cook. But there was more to her than those household pursuits. She was an outgoing young woman who enjoyed guitar playing, singing, and dancing. She was also known for her story-telling and card-playing. Lizzie would share her enthusiasm and talents with the next two generations.

Over the next few years, the future of the maturing Lizzie was impacted by another Lafayette County family, that of B. J. and Mary Roberts. Although B.J. was not a farmer (he was an established carriage-maker¹⁶), the Roberts and the Fosters had much in common. Both families emigrated from nearby counties in Kentucky (Franklin and Fayette, see Figure 1); both moved to Missouri at about the same time; both had large families; and both had a history of slave-holding, suggesting some common political leanings. But, more importantly ... at least for Lizzie ... the Roberts had a son. Lizzie caught Wesley Roberts' eye and on April 29, 1873, 22-year-old Lizzie married 24-year-old Wesley in Clay Township, Lafayette County.¹⁷

Although Wesley's father was in the carriage-making business, Wesley had turned to farming when he was still a teenager. Corn, tobacco, fruits, vegetables, and many other crops grew well in Lafayette County and offered a good living for a young farmer¹⁸ although the business of farming in the 1870s was far from easy. Planting and harvesting was demanding in those days when, at best, plows were pulled by horses. The ordinary difficulties of that physical labor were heightened by occasional natural disasters that must have required some deeper resilience to survive. For example, during the first two years of Wesley's and Lizzie's marriage, a large portion of Missouri, including Lafayette County, was struck by an infestation of locusts. By the historical description of that event, many crops were completely devastated.¹⁹

But the locust disaster did not seem to hinder either the Roberts' farming efforts or the arrival of newer immigrants from the East as the population of MO increased by three-fold between 1850 and 1880. Adding to that increase was the family of Lizzie and Wesley which included six children between the ages of 1 and 16 by 1890.²⁰

Moving Westward

Likely inspired by their parents' earlier migrations, Wesley and Lizzie sought more and better opportunities westward. Their trek in that direction had already begun in the late 1880s with a small but important step as the family moved about 20 miles or so from Lafayette County to Jackson County ... near Kansas City, MO. It was there that Wesley Roberts left farming for good to become a home builder and developer.

As the turn of a new century approached, Lizzie and Wesley were soon to be in their early 50s with their older children in their 20s. But they continued to look forward, both in time and distance, to a better life. Although committed to his new business as a builder, the initial move toward Kansas City did not yield the successes he had anticipated ... there was news of better opportunities farther west in booming Southern California. By the end of the 19th Century, the wagon trains that had been carrying migrant families westward over the Oregon and Santa Fe Trails had been displaced by a much faster and more efficient railroad system (Figure 5).²¹



Figure 5 Train routes SW U.S. circa 1890. Lizzie and Wesley Roberts and their family traveled from Kansas City to Southern California.

Encouraged by these developments, in 1900, Lizzie and Wesley Roberts made a life-changing decision. Wesley, at age 51, and Lizzie, then 49, boarded a train for Southern California, leaving Missouri and their two grown children behind.²² The youngest among the four children who made the trip West was 10-year-old Hazel Lind Roberts, destined to be my grandmother.

That train trip was another beginning for the Roberts. Adventures and misadventures lay ahead for the whole family. Most importantly, Lizzie would carry the strengths of her “Missouri Connection” with her, passing them on with hard work, songs, stories, and laughter to her children and grandchildren.

References

¹Many personal details of this story (some, but not all, indicated by quotation marks) are derived from family lore ... oral history. Major sources are Hazel Roberts Burns (Lizzie’s daughter and my grandmother), Marie B. Lester (Lizzie’s granddaughter and my mother) and my sister, Susan Lester Ortega.

²General information on River transport in 1850 http://www.uni.edu/iowahist/Frontier_Life/Steamboat_Hints/Steamboat_Hints2.htm

³Jenny Lind http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jenny_Lind

⁴See, e.g., 1873 Marriage Certificate of “Elizabeth” (Lizzie) Foster and Wesley Roberts, Clay Township, Lafayette County Missouri Marriage Records (accessed through Ancestry.com)

⁵John Delgado, 2013: MD, OB-GYN Ashland, Oregon.

⁶Ryland E. Foster 2013: *A History of the Foster and Jackman Families in Missouri* <http://familytreemaker.genealogy.com/users/f/o/s/Ryland-E-Foster/index.html>

⁷Thomas V. Foster 1881: in *History of Lafayette County* Missouri Historical Co. St. Louis 883pp (p504). See also Ryland E. Foster 2013: *A History of the Foster and Jackman Families in Missouri* <http://familytreemaker.genealogy.com/users/f/o/s/Ryland-E-Foster/index.html>

⁸Missouri Compromise, 1830: <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=22>

⁹Geographic distribution of Slave Holders in Missouri, 1860: <http://www.usgennet.org/usa/mo/county/callaway/Slavery/SlaveDistribution1860.html>

¹⁰Slave Population in Lafayette Co. and surrounding areas, 1860: <http://www.usgennet.org/usa/mo/county/callaway/Slavery/SlaveDistribution1860.html>

¹¹*Federal Census Slave Schedule* 1850

¹²Jayhawkers and Bushwhackers, 1862: <http://www.ozarkscivilwar.org/archives/1487>

¹³General Ewing’s General Order 11, 1863: <http://www.civilwarmemo.org/educators/resources/info-sheets/thomas-ewing-jrs-general-order-no-11>

References (continued)

¹⁴Thomas V. Foster: in *History of Lafayette County Missouri*, 1881. Missouri Historical Co. St. Louis 883pp (p504). See also Ryland E. Foster 2013 *A History of the Foster and Jackman Families in Missouri* <http://familytreemaker.genealogy.com/users/f/o/s/Ryland-E-Foster/index.html>

¹⁵Ryland E. Foster 2013: *A History of the Foster and Jackman Families in Missouri* <http://familytreemaker.genealogy.com/users/f/o/s/Ryland-E-Foster/index.html>

¹⁶*Federal Census* 1860: Roberts Family: Clay, Lafayette County MO (accessed through Ancestry.com)

¹⁷*Marriage Certificate* 1873: W. Roberts and L. Foster: Lafayette County, MO (accessed through Ancestry.com)

¹⁸*History of Lafayette County Missouri*, 1881. Missouri Historical Co. St. Louis : “Agricultural practices in Lafayette County,” pp 90-95.

¹⁹*History of Lafayette County Missouri*, 1881. Missouri Historical Co. St. Louis. “Locust infestation,” p 96.

²⁰*Federal Census*: Foster-Roberts Family (accessed through Ancestry.com)

²¹U.S. Railroad Development 1830-1950, 2012: http://cpr.org/Museum/RR_Development.html

²²*Federal Census*, 1900: Kansas City Ward 10, Jackson Co MO Foster-Roberts Family
Federal Census, 1900: Los Angeles, Los Angeles CA Foster-Roberts Family (accessed through Ancestry.com)

Editor’s Note: The editor regrets that neither reference to nor a picture of Figure 3 could be located; we apologize to the author if anything important was omitted.



The Vicars Family in Jackson County

by Anne Billeter

Niece of former Greensprings resident, Robert Alve Cooper (1919-1998), Karen Elliott, asked if we could help her find a descendant of the local Vicars family, as she had a 1924 photo labeled "Siskiyou cabin" showing people possibly in the process of building the cabin. She thought family descendants might like to have the photo. Karen was also interested in the possible location of the "Siskiyou cabin," as she believed the Coopers and the Vicars were family friends.

A site-specific Google search of the JCGL website: "vicars site:rvgslibrary.org" provided 8 hits, leading to 2 death certificates, 4 marriage records, a divorce record, 2 cemetery gravestone photos and a listing for the burial of another Vicars. Census research on Ancestry.com revealed that the Alexander R. Vicars family came from Oklahoma to Jackson County, Oregon between 1920 and 1930. Jackson County land records (researched by Chuck Eccleston) confirm that Alexander and his wife Rosanna Vicars first purchased land (60 acres) on 11 Sept. 1928 and purchased additional adjacent land (6 acres) on 26 December 1933. The eastern border of the land abutted "Pacific Highway" (state highway 99), and in 1939 they sold a small amount of their eastern border to the state of Oregon when the highway was relocated. Census records, Alexander's death certificate, and his obituary confirm that he worked for the state highway department. The *Oregon Death Index* (on Ancestry.com) provided many death dates and places. The *California Death Index* (on Ancestry.com) provided one death date and place. Additional obituaries were obtained, some from the *Ashland Tidings* and *Oregonian* microfilm collection at the Southern Oregon University Library, some from the *Medford Mail Tribune* microfilm collection at the Medford branch of the Jackson County Library, and some over the Internet. *Find-a-Grave* provided dates, locations, and obituaries, and a public family tree on Ancestry.com provided dates for daughter Lillian Leroy Vicars.

A family group sheet of Alexander and Rosa Anna (Tilley) Vicars and their ten children was developed (with some initial confusion due to the unusual naming of the twins). It was determined that all ten of the Vicars children and all but one of their spouses are deceased.

Using several Internet sites (Zabasearch.com, Intelius.com and whitepages.com), an address and phone number were found for the youngest child's widow, Marilyn Virginia (Jones) Vicars. While these sites are not necessarily current, a search of the Social Security Death Index did not find her listed and a Google search found that she had submitted a story about her grandson, a Marine, in 2010.



Karen phoned Marilyn Vicars, who was very pleased to hear from her and to be able to add the "Siskiyou cabin" photo to her collection for her grandchildren. In exchange she provided the photo of her husband, Dwight, in front of the cabin in 1938 (photo at left). (A photo of Dwight in 1981 in the same location is at right.)

Harold Vicar's obituary in the McMinnville *News-Register* stated: "He moved to Oregon with his family when he was 5 and lived in a log cabin in the Siskiyou Mountains near Ashland. He was raised and schooled there."



Vicars Family Group Sheet

Alexander Raymond Vicars

Born: 16 May 1880, Lexington, Fayette, KY

Died: 16 Mar 1941, Ashland, Jackson, OR

Married: Abt. 1903 MO

Rosa Anna Tilley

Born: 19 Sep 1888, Exeter, Barry, MO

Died: 27 Oct 1934, Ashland, Jackson, OR

Children:

1 John Raymond Vicars

Born: 8 Sep 1906 OK

Died: 24 Oct 1969 Yreka, Siskiyou, CA

Married: Willa Virginia McElfresh (she b. abt 1907; d. 1997)

2 Brady Ross Vicars

Born: 13 Nov 1908 OK

Died: 3 Jun 1979 Deschutes Co, OR

Married: Dorothy Findley, 24 Dec 1933, Ashland, Jackson, OR (she b. 1912; d. 1979)

3 Chester Lawrence Vicars

Born: 1910 OK

Died: 1910 OK

4 Beulah Florence Vicars

Born: 23 Apr 1912, Grand Junction, Mesa, CO

Died: 17 Jan 1975, Longview, Cowlitz, WA

Married (1) Earl Egbert Patterson, 12 May 1927 Jacksonville, Jackson, OR (he b. 1899; d. 1952)

Married (2) Henry Alfred Gedlich, 1960, Kelso, Cowlitz, WA (he b. 1927; d. 1996)

5 Lillian Leroy Vicars

Born: 12 Aug 1914 OK

Died: 7 Aug 1995, Prince George, BC, Canada

Married: Clyde Layton (he b. 1912; d. abt. 2000)

6 Lillie Roy Vicars

Born: 12 Aug 1914 OK

Died: 3 Feb 1985 Klamath Falls, Klamath, OR

Married Everett Edwin Kerns, 15 Mar 1930, Ashland, Jackson, OR (he b. 1909; d. 1986)

7 Stella Vicars

Born: 17 Jun 1917 Mannford, Creek, OK

Died: 12 Oct 1984 Longview, Cowlitz, WA

8 Harold Fred Vicars

Born: 5 Mar 1918 Mannford, Creek, OK

Died: 25 Oct 2003 McMinnville, Yamhill, OR

Married (1): Frances L. _____, Reno, Washoe, NV, 13 Oct 1940

Divorce: 2 Jan 1947 Jackson Co, OR

Married (2): Jennifer Alice Hersey, Reno, Washoe, NV, 17 Feb 1947 (she b. 1918; d. 2008)

9 Arthur Everett Vicars

Born: 18 Sep 1922 OK

Died: 18 Dec 1998 Douglas Co, OR

Married: Alta Rae Pope, 21 Apr 1946, Jackson Co, OR (she b. 1924; d. 2007)

10 Dwight Ellsworth Vicars

Born: 31 May 1930 Ashland, Jackson, OR

Died: 4 Aug 2001 Gresham, Multnomah, OR

Married: Marilyn Virginia Jones [living, Jan. 2013]