

Grandma Orpha's People

Lou's Introduction

The below information was sent to me long ago by cousin Nancy Brockman. Nancy and I share common great grandparents, George and Rebecca True. Her grandfather, Ezra True was my grandmother Orpha's brother. I know very little about my mom's side of the family because she never left us with much information, which is not to say that she didn't love her family or know them quite well, it's just that she probably assumed that we kids knew them equally well, but we didn't. Nancy's information provides a wonderful review of my grandmother Orpha's heritage. Someday, perhaps, we will learn more about my grandfather Wayne Sutton's people.

I've copied Nancy's work as faithfully as possible, making only minor changes here and there for typos (I don't think Nancy did the original on a computer).

TRUE—VAN HORN

By Nancy Brockman

Larkin Greenberry True was born in 1833. He came as a young man to the Nebraska Territory from Terre Haute, Indiana. He and a friend, Billy Wolf, ran a freight line from Rock Bluff, Nebraska (Rock Bluff was then a great freighting town but today only one house remains) and Denver, Colorado. They freighted for the Watson Brothers, they were paid set wages and in addition could take 300 pounds of their own freight free to use to trade. They usually took powder and lead or tobacco which they traded largely for furs. They used Conestoga (a brand of covered wagons) wagons and oxen to carry their freight. Oxen were used because there was ample hay for them to eat out on the open range. If the river opened up normally they would go out to Denver in the early spring and come back in the fall. However if the ice went out late, they had to stay over in Denver and come back the next spring. Later when Nebraska was opened up for homesteading, Larkin Greenberry True and Billy Wolf took adjoining homesteads between Union and Murray Nebraska.

I have no records of any of my True ancestors before Lakin Greenberry. However, a popular legend concerning the first True to come to the new world has been handed down for many generations. This legend is held by many Trues to be wholly authentic but of course no one has any proof that it is. The first True to come to the new world, so the story goes, was a Scotchman. He was a bound boy who accidentally hit and killed a pig when he was driving it to market. His punishment was banishment to the colonies instead of going to jail.

Larkin Greenberry married Lydia Bird Pell. Lydia's parents were my great, great, great grandfather Richard Pell and my great, great, great grandmother Martha Sprattlen Pell. Richard Pell's parents were great, great, great, great grandfather Jack Pell who was born in Kentucky and great, great, great, great grandmother Tabetha Pell. (My in this

paragraph refers to Nancy Brockman who is a granddaughter of Ezra and Gladys True who will be mentioned in the latter part of this writing.) The Pells were English in ancestry. They moved from Kentucky to Missouri and later to Nebraska.

Great, great grandmother Lydia Bird Pell True was a small woman with red hair and violet eyes. She was born in 1844 in a covered wagon in Missouri. Her parents were originally from Kentucky and it is believed that they were on their way to Nebraska when Lydia was born. The family settled somewhere near Union, Nebraska. They took grain to the grist mill which was located on the Weeping Water stream not too far from Larkin Greenberry's homestead. Larkin and Lydia remembered a plague of grasshoppers in which the hoppers were so thick that they blotted out the sun. All the crops were lost. Lydia's brother, great, great uncle Henry Pell, was a great foot racer in his younger years. The Indians in the area chased him time and again as they wanted him to join their tribe because he was such a good runner.

Lydia and Larkin's first child was William and the second was George Henry (Nancy Brockman's great grandfather). They had three other children—Ada, Sanford, and Emma.

Great grandfather George Henry True was born at Union, Nebraska, on May 16, 1869 and died at Coleridge, Nebraska, on May 29, 1926. As a young man he lived with his parents and brothers and sisters on a homestead between Ogallala and Big Springs in western Nebraska. He almost lost his life in the blizzard of 1888. He set out to feed the cattle in a corral on the prairie at 8 a.m. and lost his way. It was 4 p.m. when he finally found his way back to the house by crawling on his hands and knees in a cow path. His clothes were so caked with snow they had to be cut off him. He later married Rebecca Van Horn.

The first Van Horns came from Holland and settled at the New Amsterdam. They left New Amsterdam when it was taken over by the English and settled in Pennsylvania. From there they moved to Ohio about 1790. Later they moved to Iowa and then to Nebraska in 1849. Several Van Horns acted as Indian agents for many years. They settled along the Missouri river about six miles south of Rock Bluff, Nebraska.

One of the first Van Horns coming to this new world acquired a tract of land along the ocean front in what was then called New Amsterdam (now New York City). He wanted to go further west so he rented his land on a 99 year lease. Around the year 1910 (when my grandfather Ezra True was about 15 years old) this lease was found among some old papers. It was taken to experts who said it was still valid. Lawyers were sent back to New York to try to reclaim the land for the Van Horns but their money was soon used up because of the tremendous amount of red tape which was encountered. Then the group of Van Horns who had spent all they could and felt their cause was valid, advertised in papers all through the Midwest for anyone by the name of Van Horn who could help out with money to fight the big corporations who stood to lose fortunes if the land could be reclaimed. Money poured in and a lawyer or lawyers were again sent to New York with a bonded agreement for their future if they were successful. However,

the lawyers were never heard from again. No one knows if they were done away with or bought off. Hundreds of dollars were returned to people who had sent money so there was still money on hand to have fought the case through the courts.

The earliest Van Horn ancestor of which I have a definite record is my great, great, great grandfather Joseph Van Horn. He was born in Pennsylvania. He married Matilda Statler and they came to Kanesville, Iowa, now called Council Bluffs, which was then just a settlement and steamboat landing. Their son, Joseph Van Horn II (father of Rebecca Van Horn and my great, great grandfather), was born before they moved to Nebraska. When Joseph II was four years old they moved across the river to what is now Cass Count, Nebraska, but was then just Indian country. There were Otoe, Ponca and Pawne Indians in the area but no other white settlers. The Indians, however, were friendly. Joseph Van Horn I was an Indian agent and lived on what was called a land grant. He and his sons cut cord wood and sold it to the steam boats that came up the river from St. Louis. They also raised hogs and cured bacon to sell to the riverboat crews. Joseph Van Horn I helped make the first Nebraska laws. A treaty was signed with the Indians in the area the year the Van Horn family came to Nebraska but it was three years before they left. The family watched them take the Old Indian trail through the timber from their land grant home south of Rock Bluff.

Joseph Van Horn II (my great, great grandfather) helped survey the state of Nebraska. He surveyed the country north from Norfolk to about where Plainview is now located. The country was mostly lakes then. He also surveyed for the Union Pacific when the railroad was built across Nebraska. He said that around the area of Columbus, Fremont and West Point it was so swampy that they traveled by boat and carried their surveying chains that way.

The house on great, great grandfather Van Horn's homestead was made of logs with floors of walnut four inches thick that were hewed out with adzs. Seventy five or more years later this house was sold to a lumber company and those logs were taken up and sawed into lumber. Joseph II used to go to many shooting matches. He had several sons. One of them, great, great uncle Sam Van Horn was a top shooter with a sling shot. Another son, uncle George Van Horn, who now lives at Kalamoth Falls, Oregon, demonstrated for 17 years for Peter's Cartridge Company. This meant that he traveled to shooting matches all through the North Western states.

Joseph II's homestead was right next to the river and people often stopped and asked him to take them across in his boat. One night two men came about supper time and asked Joseph to take them across the river. They invited the two men to eat supper with them and then Joseph took them across. Sometime during the trip he became aware of the fact that the two men were Frank and Jesse James. When he had them safely to the other side of the river, one them threw a \$10 golf piece into his boat.

Great, great grandfather Joseph Van Horn II married Cilia Dixon. The Dixons came from Scotland. The first Dixons settled in Virginia around 1690 and moved to Missouri about 1850. Great, great grandmother Celia Dixon had five brothers who

fought in the Civil War. Two fought with the South, two with the North and one with Quantrille's Raiders who was with the South, if anyone. She came to Nebraska after the Civil War and married Joseph Van Horn II. They had 11 children, one of whom was my great grandmother Rebecca Van Horn. Cilia Dixon was part French.

George and Rebecca True had ten children –Fleming, Ezra, Orpha, Dewey, Sanford, Rose, Cleola, Lydia, and Mary. Another daughter, Edna Mae died in infancy. They were all farmers all their lives, living first in Cass County and later in Knox and Cedar Counties. The family moved to Coleridge, Nebraska in 1910. Ezra and Fleming served in the Army during World War I beginning September 18, 1917. They left from Hartington, Nebraska on the train. They were together until Ezra was wounded on September 8, 1918 in France on Patrol.

Lou's notes: Orpha was my grandmother on my mom's side of our family. For a couple years my mom followed my dad around during WWII and I was left on the farm to be raised by Orpha. Needless to say, I became very close to her. Today, Orpha, her husband Wayne and a number of other relatives are all buried in the Coleridge cemetery. Since this is a very small town with probably more folks buried in the cemetery than alive and paying taxes, we donate to the upkeep of the town cemetery every year.