Running with Eyes Shut

The Condensed Life of a Richmond Boy

Chapter 1 - Denekamp / Germanns 1816 - 1938

Daniel Joseph Friedman, Jr. - last update **2026/05/31**

This is a chapter in RUNNING with EYES SHUT - a Small Boy's Condensed Life

Daniel J. Friedman, Jr. is a journalist living in Poughkeepsie, New York, and the editor of InspectApedia.com, a public information website on building and indoor environmental troubleshooting. He has worked in jobs ranging from ditch digging to computer engineering to forensic microscopy to journalism.

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This work is dedicated to Chase Gilligan, Tanner Gilligan, Quinn Gilligan, Sophie Gieseke, Zoe Gieseke, Chloe Gieseke, in hope that they will find it interesting. Although I appear in several forms, this book is not about me. Here are people who came before you, people who dreamed, worked, loved, worried, feared, messed-up, and died over the course of a century and a half. We must hear and see them with admiration, curiosity, respect, and sympathy for their human foibles.

"The more facts you come up with, the closer you come to whatever truth there is." The key word here is "closer," because a biography, by definition, can never completely close in on every aspect of a life. It's humbling … when one confronts the gaping discrepancy between the ticking minutes of a lived life and the random piles of letters and articles, of airline tickets and other scraps of paper that survive as documentation. A biography is a collection of puzzle pieces that do not fit, and the gaps can be as interesting as the connections. If you don't like gaps, skip biography and read fiction. - Deborah Solomon and her initial quote from biographer Robert A. Caro at a PEN conference, "Talk About Mixed Media", The New York Times, 12 June 2019, p. C1, C6.

Introduction:

This is a semi-fictional mixed-media biography of immigrants and their children, the Germann & Friedman families of Louisiana, Texas, New York, Virginia and other states - common and uncommon people who were born, arrived in the new world, worked, lived, and died between 1816 and 2015.

Dappled sunlight and small dark irregular forms move across my paper as outside the breeze waves the branches and leaves of the oak tree outside my window. Not many people write on paper any more. The people we will meet here wrote - on the backs of photographs, in letters, on postcards, and in notes addressed to one another and sometimes also to us.

They're gone now. These people. I'm the last. I write what I can - to remember them and to describe how they made their way. I found three cardboard boxes of papers, photographs, documents and a few other odds and ends: that's all that's left of their record. Moved home to home, basement to attic to garage, these boxes had not been opened in fifty years. Some letters I'd never read, some so cryptic they cannot be deciphered. Two boxes of 8mm movie film are so moldy we choke when the box tops are lifted.

That we have even these tintypes and ancient photographs at which to stare, trying to see into the past, is thanks to just a few who came before us: people who saved a precious letter or picture for themselves, passing it on to their child, to the next child, to the next, through our hands. They might have imagined us looking at and touching their things - or perhaps they didn't. They could not have guessed when, where or even if their memories would speak to those who would come later.

I look at and touch these things, write about them, then pack each safely into an archival-grade plastic envelope, a notebook, a box, labeled, named, hoping that after me someone else will carry them onward.

When we touch these actual objects, we touch edges and surfaces touched by men and women who lived more than a century ago. Women who loved, feared, who were brave, or perhaps sometimes, were not.

Our fingertips brush one another across generations as both their fingers and ours caress the surface of a metal tintype or a photograph printed on thin cardboard. Our hand on a letter smooths paper once warmed by the hand of mere children born in Germany in 1830, or fleeing from Lithuania in 1886. Men and women who fled, worked, built, hoped, erred, died.

We peer and touch across time in one faint, final meeting of fingertips. They call to us: *I was here*, before we all slip away to join them in quiet, nameless darkness.

1581 - 1895 Spanish-Dutch-Irish-American Denekamps

My mother Teal's mother, Hannah Denekamp, descended from Irish Jews - Irish they were indeed, after a multi-generational migration from Spain to Holland to Ireland, to England and finally to America. The flight began with the Spanish Inquisition when many Spanish Jews fled to Holland where they felt, for a while, safe.





Jews had lived in the low countries of present day Belgium and Holland since the Roman Conquest. In 1349 the Duke of Guelders obtained Catholic Church permission to receive Jews and to give them religious freedom.

The Spanish Alhambra Decree of 1492, and later the Portuguese Edicts of 1496 and 1497 led to the expulsion of most Jews from Spain and Portugal. Some stayed and "converted" to Catholicism, some of the conversos practiced Judaism in secret.

[In 1581 a few Spanish Jews settled in Denekamp, a Dutch village from which they took their name. "Kamp" referred to an encampment of refugees. Their older Spanish-Jewish family name was lost forever.]

A century later, in 1581, some Dutch provinces, newly independent from Spain, began to welcome the migration of Sephardic Jews escaping persecution in Spain. Not all provinces mad them welcome. After expelling its Jews in 1444, Utrecht prohibited Jews from staying overnight in that city until 1789.

Photos: Above: Leah and Moses Denikamp, photographed in London. Below, a photo of Bayswater Synagogue, London. These photos were carried by Edward Denekamp when he sailed to America.



Denekamp is a town in the Dutch province of Overijssel. It is a part of the region of Twente and the municipality of Dinkelland, and lies about 9 km northeast of Oldenzaal.

The town was first noted as early as the 10th century when it was referred to as Daginghem. The location became a municipality in 1818 incorporating the settlements of Noord Deurningen, Lattrop, Breklenkamp, Tilligte, Nutter and Agelo. - Wikipedia

Too soon new economic pressure and social change in Holland drove a small group of Jews including the Denekamps to Ireland in the 1600s where, keeping their heads down and speaking both Hebrew and Irish, and later English with an Irish lilt, they survived another two hundred and fifty years.

During the great Irish potato famine (1845-1849) and aided by co-religionists in London who mounted a rescue effort, Moses Denekamp and his wife Leah were among the lucky few who escaped the hunger and disease that killed more than a million Irish between 1845 and 1851. In London

Moses became the cantor in Bayswater synagogue. Cantors are in essence scholars who teach and who sing part of the religious service. A cantor is a “chanter”.

Bayswater Synagogue was an Ashkenazi-Orthodox synagogue located in Chichester Place, Paddington, London, near the Harrow Road. Built in 1863, as a branch synagogue jointly of the Great Synagogue and the New Synagogue, it was one of the original five synagogues that formed the United Synagogue in 1870. The original building where Moses taught and sang remained much as he knew it until finally, in 1965, it was demolished.





Photos: Leah Denekamp, photographed in London. We don’t know her dates of birth nor death but we think she died before Moses. Moses, born in 1816, died in London on 28 May 1873 - he was 57. Leah and Moses Denekamp were buried in the Bayswater Synagogue cemetery.

Moses and Leah had twin sons, Edward Denekamp and his brother whose name we don’t know. He was not Edward so we call him NotEdward, or Ned for short.

With both their parents gone, Edward and Ned planned for emigration to the New World. Ned, first-born, departed first on a ship for New York in 1874, probably traveling on the iron-hulled propeller-driven Great Britain, shown below.

Ned’s passage on the now well-established Great Britain, the largest steam ship of the era, took just ten days. Seventy years earlier the voyage by sail would have taken 1-3 months.

Edward, unable to buy passage to New York at the same time as his brother, took what transport he could get. Early in 1875, on a rising tide and across the enormous muddy delta of the Mississippi river, Edward Denikamp arrived in what was for him a very new world: New Orleans, Louisiana.

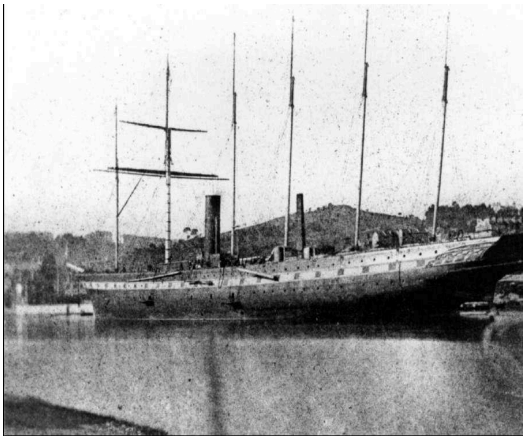


Photo: The *Great Britain* in the Cumberland Basin, April 1844. This historic photograph by William Talbot and posted at Wikipedia is believed to be the first ever taken of a ship. In 1847 the revolutionary SS *Great Britain*, also built by Brunel, became the first iron-hulled screw-driven ship to cross the Atlantic. When launched in 1843, *Great Britain* was by far the largest vessel afloat.

He had received no letters from Ned and knew - or hoped - simply that Ned had arrived safely in New York. Contact between the twins was hopelessly lost.

These departure years are approximations based on the documents we have at hand. More about the Denekamp family name is in a PDF file from a distant relative: drive.google.com/open?id=1AkocOO_ibdrhwHmjP8x1SACVB62XSFX_

1875 Denekamps in the New World

Not only did neither of the two know just where his brother had settled, there was another difficulty that prevented them from finding one another. When Ned Denekamp landed in New York, thanks to immigration processing of names, he had become D'Camp.

Denekamp was an unusual name. Spellings of the family name vary even among their own documents: usually Denekamp, occasionally Denikamp, once or twice Denecamp, and of course uncle Ned D'Camp. But there were D'Camps all over the place.

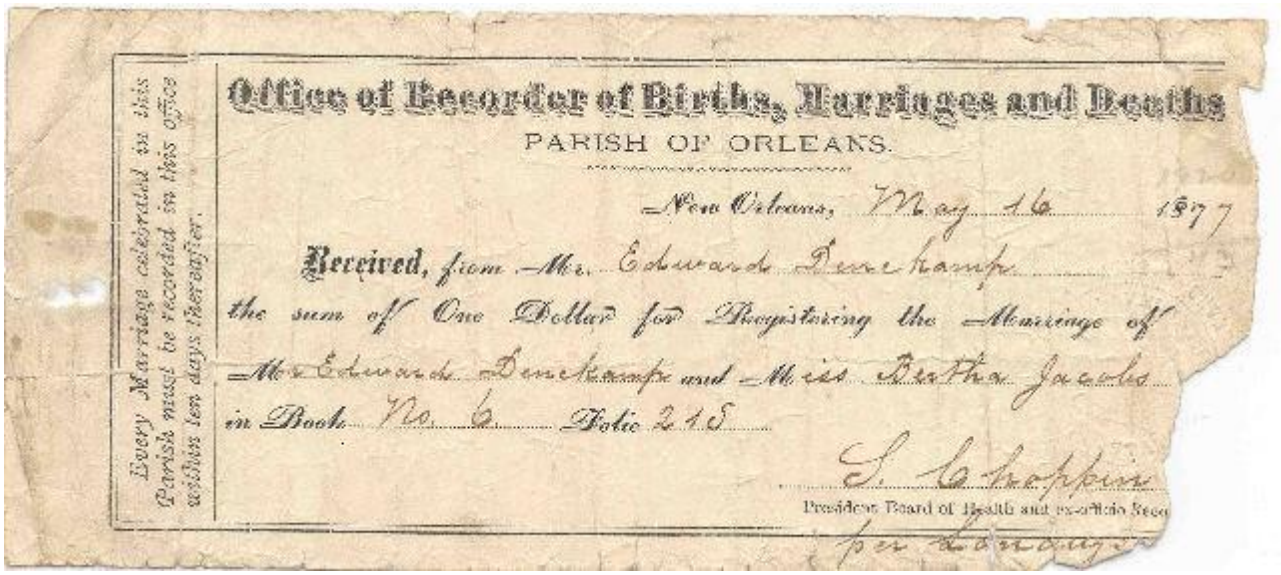
Each brother began, as did all immigrants, making a life in the New World. In New York Ned worked for a jobber, a dry goods wholesaler whose business would require Ned to travel widely up and down the Eastern half of the country.

Edward could not have found a Denekamp in New York City because there were none. Just D'Camps. And Ned could not have found Edward in New Orleans because, in fact he had not the slightest clue that his brother had sailed not for New York as they'd planned, but for New Orleans.

In New Orleans Edward found immediate support in the local Jewish community as well as a few odd jobs. Edward, following the example of his father Moses, was a traditional Jewish scholar who would hope to be supported by other family members - or the family of a wife.

In New Orleans the religious Jewish community lived and worshiped closely together. Bertha Jacobs' family worshipped at the same synagogue. They spotted one-another.

Edward Denekamp and Bertha Jacobs registered their marriage in the Parish of New Orleans on May 16, 1877. Below is the civil recognition of their marriage. For Edward and Bertha their religious Ketubah and a notation in her family bible (also below) were more significant.



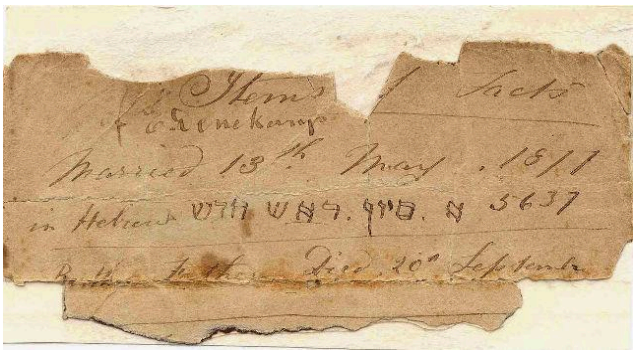
Office of Recorder of Births, Marriages and Deaths
PARISH OF ORLEANS.

Every Marriage celebrated in this Parish must be recorded in this office within ten days thereafter.

New Orleans, May 16 1877

Received, from Mr. Edward Denekamp
the sum of One Dollar for Registering the Marriage of
Mr Edward Denekamp and Miss Bertha Jacobs
in Book No 6 Folio 215

S. Caspin
President Board of Health and ex-officio Recr
per Lanaux



Their Jewish marriage ceremony took place on 13 May, 1877 or in the Hebrew year of 5637 - three days before the marriage was registered in the Parish of New Orleans.

This scrap documenting their wedding date in both English and Hebrew is all that remains from the Denekamp family bible.

We don't know when Bertha Jacobs' family emigrated to Louisiana, but Bertha, born in 1853, was 24 years old in 1877 when she and Edward stood under the chuppah and Edward stomped on the small crystal glass. The Jacobs family were part of the mid-century orthodox Jewish community in New Orleans.

A chuppah (Hebrew: חוּפָּה, pl. חופות, chuppot, literally, "canopy" or "covering"), also huppah, chipe, chupah, or chuppa, is a canopy under which a Jewish couple stand during their wedding ceremony.

The first Jewish immigrants came to New Orleans in 1724, a Dutch Sephardic Jew named Isaac Monsanto. A small population of Jewish immigrants followed him seeking a new life in America. Their welcome waxed and waned.

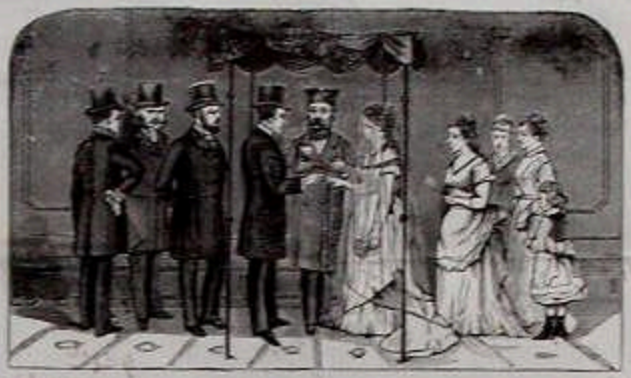
In 1769, the second Spanish governor sought to expel successful Jewish merchants he considered a threat to Spanish economic power. Some Jewish families had to seek temporary refuge in Florida.

In the early 1800s first Jewish immigrants were from Western Europe including Great Britain. They settled together, formed an orthodox community, and were generally apart from the more-bustling main-stream New Orleans culture. It was this community that would have welcomed the Jacobs and Denekamps to New Orleans.

Just a few years before Edward Denekamp arrived in New Orleans, Judah Touro, also a jew of Spanish-Dutch descent, had founded a congregation that became Touro Synagogue in 1850. Touro, a businessman, was a philanthropist, founding the Touro Infirmary that became what is today a large hospital. - Adapted from “Jewish History in New Orleans”, neworleans.com/things-to-do/multicultural/cultures/jewish/

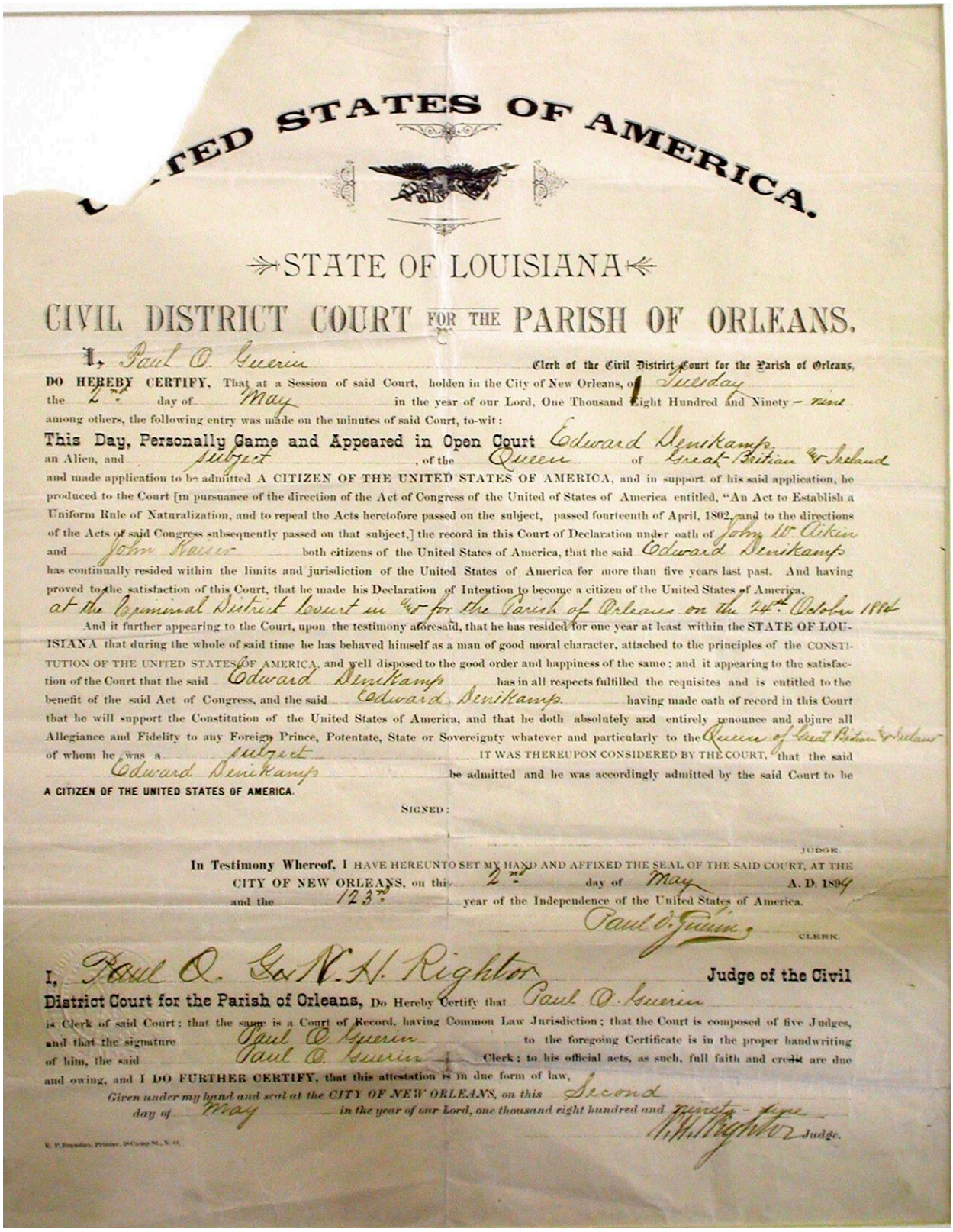
The Bertha Jacobs - Edward Denekamp wedding ketubah, a key document in the establishment of recognized legal lineage for religious Jews, is given below.

Seven years after their marriage, on 24 October 1884, Edward applied for U.S. citizenship status.



Published by A. L. Germansky, 30 Canal St., New York.

Hannah Denekamp was already 12 when, in 1899, her father Edward, prior subject of the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, finally received his citizenship, granted in the Parish of New Orleans on May 2, 1899 and shown below.



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

STATE OF LOUISIANA

CIVIL DISTRICT COURT FOR THE PARISH OF ORLEANS.

I, Paul O. Guerin Clerk of the Civil District Court for the Parish of Orleans,
DO HEREBY CERTIFY, That at a Session of said Court, holden in the City of New Orleans, on Tuesday
the 2nd day of May in the year of our Lord, One Thousand Eight Hundred and Ninety-nine
among others, the following entry was made on the minutes of said Court, to-wit:

This Day, Personally Came and Appeared in Open Court Edward Denikamp
an Alien, and subject, of the Queen of Great Britain & Ireland
and made application to be admitted A CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, and in support of his said application, he produced to the Court [in pursuance of the direction of the Act of Congress of the United of States of America entitled, "An Act to Establish a Uniform Rule of Naturalization, and to repeal the Acts heretofore passed on the subject, passed fourteenth of April, 1802, and to the directions of the Acts of said Congress subsequently passed on that subject,] the record in this Court of Declaration under oath of John W. Aiken
and John Kaiser both citizens of the United States of America, that the said Edward Denikamp
has continually resided within the limits and jurisdiction of the United States of America for more than five years last past. And having proved to the satisfaction of this Court, that he made his Declaration of Intention to become a citizen of the United States of America,
at the Criminal District Court in & for the Parish of Orleans on the 24th October 1894

And it further appearing to the Court, upon the testimony aforesaid, that he has resided for one year at least within the STATE OF LOUISIANA that during the whole of said time he has behaved himself as a man of good moral character, attached to the principles of the CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, and well disposed to the good order and happiness of the same; and it appearing to the satisfaction of the Court that the said Edward Denikamp has in all respects fulfilled the requisites and is entitled to the benefit of the said Act of Congress, and the said Edward Denikamp having made oath of record in this Court that he will support the Constitution of the United States of America, and that he doth absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all Allegiance and Fidelity to any Foreign Prince, Potentate, State or Sovereignty whatever and particularly to the Queen of Great Britain & Ireland of whom he was a subject IT WAS THEREUPON CONSIDERED BY THE COURT, that the said Edward Denikamp be admitted and he was accordingly admitted by the said Court to be

A CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

SIGNED:

JUDGE.

In Testimony Whereof, I HAVE HEREUNTO SET MY HAND AND AFFIXED THE SEAL OF THE SAID COURT, AT THE CITY OF NEW ORLEANS, on this 2nd day of May A. D. 1899
and the 123rd year of the Independence of the United States of America.

Paul O. Guerin CLERK.

I, Paul O. Guerin Judge of the Civil District Court for the Parish of Orleans, Do Hereby Certify that Paul O. Guerin is Clerk of said Court; that the same is a Court of Record, having Common Law Jurisdiction; that the Court is composed of five Judges, and that the signature Paul O. Guerin to the foregoing Certificate is in the proper handwriting of him, the said Paul O. Guerin Clerk; to his official acts, as such, full faith and credit are due and owing, and I DO FURTHER CERTIFY, that this attestation is in due form of law,

Given under my hand and seal at the CITY OF NEW ORLEANS, on this Second
day of May *in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and* Ninety-nine

Judge.

E. P. Brandao, Printer, 28 Camp St., N. O.

Above: Edward Denekamp's citizenship paper.

1895 Brothers D'Camp and Denekamp Reunite

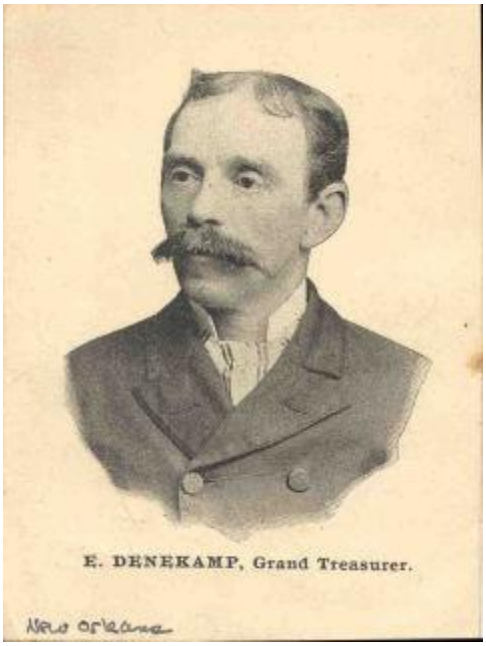
If I'm a writer, it's the Irish Denekamps I blame for having learned from those forebears the famous Irish adage popularized by a famous liar, Mark Twain: *Never let the truth get in the way of a good story.* Actually that's not exactly what he said.

In Adventures of Huckleberry Finn [1884] we read: "*You don't know about me without you have read a book by the name of The Adventures of Tom Sawyer; but that ain't no matter. That book was made by Mr. Mark Twain, and he told the truth, mainly. There was things which he stretched, but mainly he told the truth.*"

What happened to Ed and Ned? The brothers had lost one another - seemingly forever.

The New Orleans Edward Denekamp was, among other jobs, Grand Treasurer of a Masonic lodge. Bookkeeping had made him nearly blind, so after work Edward often rested his eyes - in a pub.

By a remarkable twist of fate, Denikamp and D'Camp met up in that pub in New Orleans. It was pure chance. A full quarter of a century after the brothers had lost one another, in May of 1895, in Edward's favorite Irish pub in New Orleans, Edward was celebrating payday (he was a bookkeeper). A man of similar build was drinking next to him at the bar. Within minutes a fistfight broke out between two men, both arguing, one for and one against the claim that the Irish have bad tempers.


E. DENEKAMP, Grand Treasurer.

Edward pulled on the ends of his enormous moustache, thought for a moment, then drew back his fist. But, squinting suddenly at his opponent, he froze in amazement.
Hey! Hold on. You look a lot like my brother! he shouted in amazement.

I AM your brother you damned fool! sputtered Ned.

Actually that's not true. Gospel Truth: the missing Ned Denekamp - now Ned D'Camp - had come to New Orleans on "business". He was eating breakfast in the Roosevelt hotel.

Ned D'Camp sat back and looked at his coffee. From outside came the clip-clop of horses. He had an hour before his sales call. Looking down, he opened the newspaper and began to leaf idly through the *New Orleans Times Picayune* news.

Suddenly there was his brother!

A newspaper article described the recent investiture of his brother Edward as Grand Treasurer in the local chapter of the Masons. The photo above is from that article.

1913 - Bertha Jacobs-Denekamp - the Last to be Naturalized

The Bertha Denekamp (nee Jacobs) 1913 certificate of naturalization gives scant detail about Bertha Jacobs but does establish the ages and thus years of birth of her husband Edward (age 62 in 1913, born 1831) and herself (age 60 in 1913, born 1853), and it gives the family home address, 1733 Cleveland Avenue in New Orleans, a house remembered by my grandmother Hannah, who was Bertha and Edward's youngest daughter.



Photo: This is not the actual Denekamp home but it is a typical New Orleans shotgun house that remains today along Cleveland Avenue a few blocks from the site of the Denekamp home from the 1840s to 1930s.

A shotgun house is a long narrow house prevalent in African American communities in New Orleans and other areas of the southern United States. Shotgun houses generally consist of a gabled front porch and two or more rooms laid out in a straight line.

They were called "shotgun" houses because if you were to stand at the front of the home and fire a shotgun the pellets would spray everyone throughout all of the rooms of the house and then pass right out the back door.

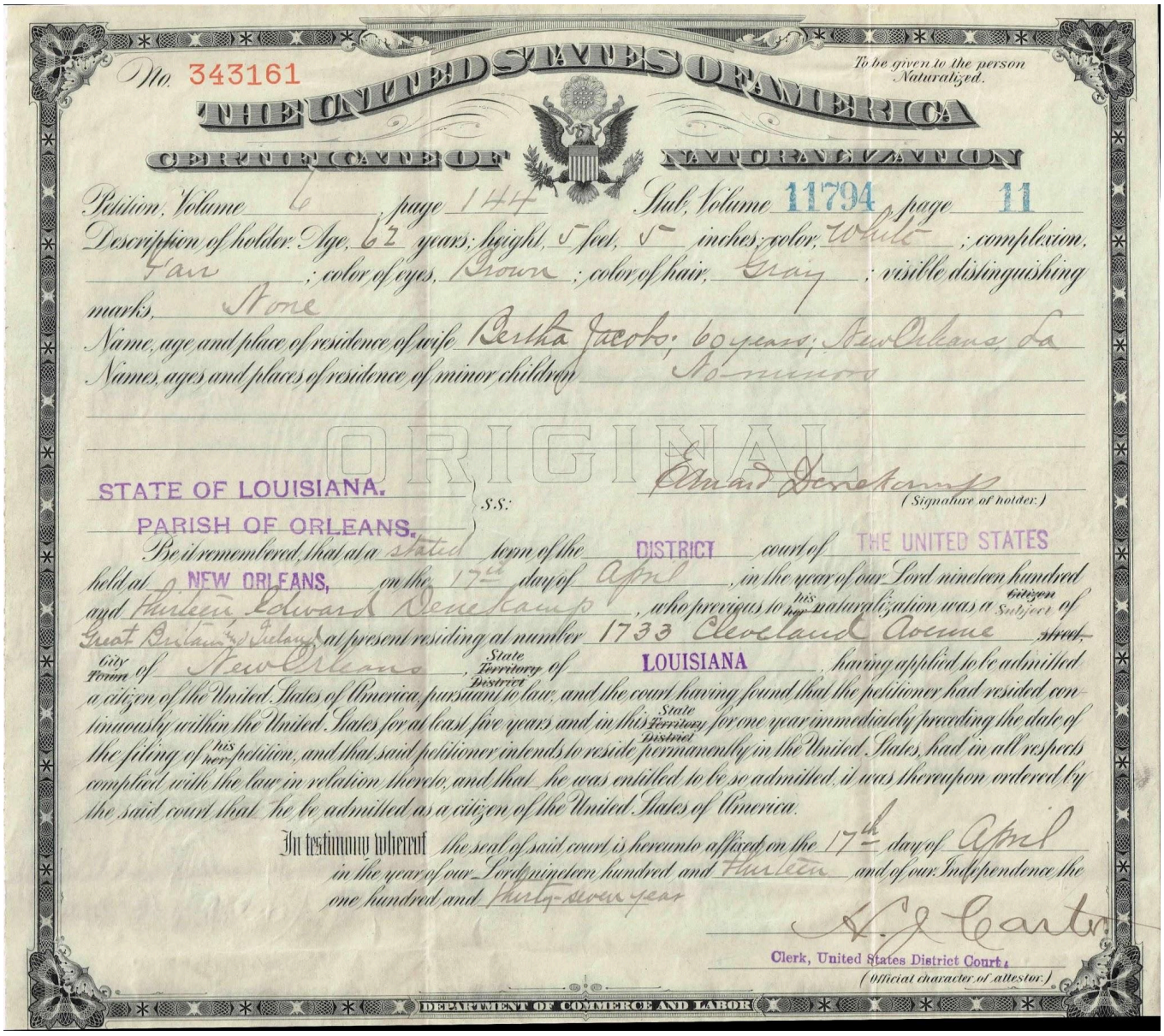
In 2019, 1733 Cleveland Avenue, New Orleans LA is just two blocks from the enormous New Orleans Tulane University Medical Center and just a few houses from U.S. Interstate 10.

This address today (in 2026) is a raw-earth construction zone. All the houses have been demolished. One sees parking lots, high rise buildings, hospitals. The tree-lined streets are gone.

Hannah herself would prove to be a handful - as was her daughter, my own mother Teal. That's something that my own daughters will appreciate as not only were they a handful themselves, but so were their own flock of children, especially certain of my grandchildren. They will know who I mean.

Hannah's multiple lives and stories will offer that entertainment after we introduce the other side of the maternal family, the three Henry Germanns. Yep. Three generations of German-Catholic Henrys.

Next page: Certificate of Naturalization of Bertha Jacobs, filed by Edward Denekamp in 1913. Bertha was 60, Edward was 62.



No. 343161

To be given to the person Naturalized.

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

CERTIFICATE OF NATURALIZATION

Petition, Volume 6, page 144. Stub, Volume 11794, page 11

Description of holder: Age, 62 years; height, 5 feet, 5 inches; color, White; complexion, Fair; color of eyes, Brown; color of hair, Gray; visible distinguishing marks, None

Name, age and place of residence of wife, Bertha Jacobs, 60 years, New Orleans La

Names, ages and places of residence of minor children, No minors

ORIGINAL

STATE OF LOUISIANA, PARISH OF ORLEANS, } S.S.

Edward Desenkamp (Signature of holder.)

Be it remembered, that at a stated term of the DISTRICT court of THE UNITED STATES held at NEW ORLEANS, on the 17th day of April, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and Thirteen, Edward Desenkamp, who previous to his naturalization was a Citizen Subject of Great Britain & Ireland, at present residing at number 1733 Cleveland Avenue Street, City Town of New Orleans, State Territory District of LOUISIANA, having applied to be admitted a citizen of the United States of America, pursuant to law, and the court having found that the petitioner had resided continuously within the United States for at least five years and in this State Territory District for one year immediately preceding the date of the filing of his her petition, and that said petitioner intends to reside permanently in the United States, had in all respects complied with the law in relation thereto, and that he was entitled to be so admitted, it was thereupon ordered by the said court that he be admitted as a citizen of the United States of America.

In testimony whereof the seal of said court is hereunto affixed on the 17th day of April in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and Thirteen and of our Independence the one hundred and thirty-seven year

A. J. Carter

Clerk, United States District Court.

(Official character of attestor.)

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND LABOR

The certificate's notation stating that there were no minor children bears explanation. Bertha and Edward had four daughters. In 1913, their youngest, Hannah, would have been twenty-six. Hence there were no *minor* children.

Jennie never married. She lived in the family home at 1733 Cleveland Avenue in New Orleans where she cared for her parents Edward and Bertha until their death.

Lilly, whom my mom remembered well, lived in Lake Charles Louisiana where she started her own family. Lilly outlived all of her sisters. My mom, Teal described visiting Lilly at age 103.

Esther, the bright red-head of the family also never married. We will read more about Aunt Esther shortly.

Hannah, my grandmother, had two lives, two marriages, each producing two children.

Hannah has secrets to reveal - soon.

First we need to meet the three German-Catholic Henry Germanns.

#####

1828 - German-Americans: 3 Henry Germanns

To the Germans I owe a sense of quality, a love of machines, and love of working with my hands. And neatness. But dark Irish blood runs in the veins of any writer of semi-fictional biography. Besides:

To stretch the truth a little to make a good story is to reach for a greater truth. - DJF Jr.

The first Henry, Heinrich Germann, was born into a traditional German Catholic family in Hannover Germany in March 1828. Having not a thought about ever being called Henry “Senior”, he actually spent his boyhood not too far from Holland where, generations before, some Sephardic Jews, the Dutch Denekamps had found refuge. But the Germanns and Denekamps would not cross paths in his generation.

Heinrich Germann was not his real name. At least not his family name back in Germany. We have no record of his real family name before Heinrich landed at New Orleans in early September 1842. So we call him Henry EinDeutch. He’d have preferred VonDeutch but life isn’t always fair. Heinrich was just fourteen years old. But he looked older. Heinrich was tall for his age. Height ran in his family.

Having finally gotten off the ship, the *verdammt schwimmende Seekrankheit Maschine*, Heinrich EinDeutch, along with his two older cousins Franz and Horst, waited in the immigration line. As the youngest of the three, Henry (Heinrich) waited behind Horst, the oldest. They would be interviewed first and he would join them after his turn.

The docks were noisy and there were seven long lines in front of seven outdoor desks at which seven immigration clerks had simply to write down the date and the name of each newcomer. From the ship’s records the clerks already knew that everyone on this ship was from Germany.

Henry was exhausted. He may have dozed off in the hot sun. Suddenly he looked up. His cousins were nowhere in sight. Most-likely they had already passed through their interviews. They would be waiting for him outside where their own older family members were in the welcoming crowd.

The first steamship purpose-built for regularly scheduled trans-Atlantic crossings was the British side-wheel paddle steamer SS Great Western built by Isambard Kingdom Brunel in 1838, which inaugurated the era of the trans-Atlantic ocean liner. The SS Archimedes, built in Britain in 1839 by Francis Pettit Smith, was the world's first screw propeller-driven steamship for open water seagoing. It had considerable influence on ship development, encouraging the adoption of screw propulsion by the Royal Navy, in addition to her influence on commercial vessels. The first screw-driven propeller steamship introduced in America was on a ship built by Thomas Clyde in 1844 and many more ships and routes followed.

After seventeen days aboard a nearly-new side-wheeled transatlantic steamer on rough seas, then two and a half days waiting in line and eating nothing but the fish and oranges that were offered to the waiting immigrants, when his chance came, Henry was damn sure going to do and say whatever he had to to get through the gate. Outside his cousins’ family promised a place to sleep, something to eat, and best of all, a job.

It was Henry's turn.

NAME? Shouted the immigration clerk. *NAME* the clerk shouted again, snapping Heinrich wide awake. Everyone in line heard the shout. The people behind him watched to see how Henry would fare.

Standing in line on the docks in the fall of 1842, fourteen-year-old Henry did not understand English. *NEM? Was fragt er?* He wonders what *Nem* means. He also knows he had better answer quickly.

Ich glaube dass er mich fragt, woher ich komme. Henry, says to himself. *Ich muss ihm antworten. Ich sollte es laut und deutlich auf Englisch sagen. Er könnte wütend werden, wenn ich Deutsch spreche.* Probably he's being asked what country he came from.

Henry knows he has to answer, and that he'd better try speaking *auf Englisch*. *Gut* English. He is from Germany. He is a German. And proud of it.

GERMAN! Henry shouts back, trying to speak English loudly and clearly so as to be understood. Someone on the boat told him *Wenn sie dich nicht verstehen*, the fellow passenger had said, *schrei es nur lauter*.

GERMAN! Henry shouted it a second time just to be sure he was understood. Shouting ought to work, right?

OK, Name: ***Germann****,* says the officer and he writes *Germann* on the immigration form and hands it over, motions to an open alley between buildings, and shouts *NEXT!*

Henry EinDeutsch, now Henry Germann walks through the gate, between two tall clapboard warehouses, and into his new world where, happily he sees Franz and Horst hugging their family and slapping one another on the back.

Working like a madman as do nearly all immigrants, in a little over a year Henry Germann senior, who was for most of his life had thought he was Heinrich EinDeutsch, was earning enough to help feed the family of his cousins who'd given him a safe haven in New Orleans. Banks were safer now that the New Orleans banking panic of 1837 had passed. In 1848 Henry opened a little savings account at the Hibernia Bank. For seven years he had worked, saved, and studied construction methods.

Then in 1849, when he was just twenty-one, Henry met and soon convinced a very attractive eighteen-year old, a fellow Catholic, to marry. Her name? Mathilde. They were clearly in love. They married in May 1850. Among the flock of nine little Germanns who would be born in the next many years, first came Henry Junior.

1851 - Henry Germann Junior

The second Henry, Henry Germann Jr., was born in January, 1851, a time of increasing turmoil between the northern and southern states of the American Union. Just a year before, while Mathilde was pregnant with Henry Jr., the Fugitive Slave Act had been passed by the U.S. Congress.

Under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, a slave owner could reclaim a runaway slave by establishing ownership before a commissioner rather than in a jury trial. Clay's initial omnibus bill that included all these provisions failed. Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois then established different coalitions that passed each provision separately.

Responses to the Compromise of 1850 varied. Southerners cease movement toward disunion but are angered by Northern resistance to enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Act. Anti-slavery forces are upset about possible expansion of slavery in the Southwest and the stronger fugitive slave law that could require all U.S. citizens to assist in returning fugitive slaves. The Nashville Convention of nine Southern states discusses states' rights and slavery in June; in November, the convention talks about secession but adjourns due to the passage of the laws that constitute the Compromise of 1850. - adapted from Wikipedia.

From boyhood young Henry worked as a carpenter. He loved seeing a building rise from nothing but the sheer effort of physical labor combined with hammers, saws, nails, spikes, and a few bits of iron. But he was a born engineer. He took note of what held buildings up and why they might survive, or not survive, the terrible storms that sometimes blew in from the Gulf of Mexico.

Throughout the South the Civil War was raging, yet in New Orleans suffered much less than other Southern cities. On April 25, 1862, New Orleans was captured by the Union Army, if you could call it “capture”. High above the Rue Royale an eleven-year old Henry watched the bluecoats march into town from his perch atop a wooden construction scaffold.

The Yankees had fought past Fort Jackson and St. Phillip, but when they got to New Orleans they were unopposed by the Confederates. The Yanks just walked into the city. As a result, New Orleans was spared the burning and destruction that leveled other Southern cities. Sherman’s 1864 March to the Sea would pass to the east, through Atlanta, never touching New Orleans.

As a young man and later as an adult Henry Jr. also loved attending plays in New Orleans theaters. Before the U.S. Civil war New Orleans theaters, beginning with the famous Le Spectacle de la Rue St. Pierre, on St. Peter Street, rivaled those of New York and Boston, attracting both refugee actors from the West Indies and more-famous actors like Jenny Lind from the North.

Henry Jr. was impressed by the St. Charles theater, with its tall central dome and hundreds of gas lights. But when time and money permitted, he preferred performances in the St. Charles or on occasion in the smaller but still cavernous Orleans Theater where he’d watch the stage until, near midnight, he would ease his way outside - performances continued to two or three AM - to get some sleep before the next day’s labor.

The Orleans Theater, built in 1809 and re-built after a fire in 1813, opened at 6PM and kept performances going until 2 or 3 AM the next morning. The Charles Theater at 432 Charles Street was built in 1835 and continued in operation until it was lost to fire in 1899. In 1902 the Orpheum theater was built on the site of the Charles.

Actors included the famous Edwin Booth, James brutus Booth, Fanny Ellsler, and Jenny Lind. and of course, Frank Mayo Sr., father of Frank Mayo who starred in 310 films until his death in 1963.

Henry Jr., that is Henry #2, married twice: two sisters. On June 9, 1870 Henry (age 19) married Adele. Together they had six children. Sadly, Adele died during that last childbirth - in July 1879. A year and a half later, Henry Jr. having married Adele's sister, had found the woman of his dreams.

Henry's second wife's name is lost to us by the common accident of biographical fate that determines that some scraps of paper are preserved in a shoebox while others blow away in a hurricane or are lost in a flood. With no name for Henry Junior's wife we give her a nickname: Lovelee.

The new couple produced seven more Germanns, of whom Henry III would be the last, that is, the youngest.

Despite the peaceful takeover by Union soldiers in 1862, New Orleans still had its rough side: in 1866 there had been at least two major street riots. Predictably, the riots were over graft, corruption, and about the new free status of Negroes.

There was a major street riot of July 30, 1866, at the time of the meeting of the radical constitutional convention. Businessman Charles T. Howard began the Louisiana State Lottery Company in an arrangement which involved bribing state legislators and governors for permission to operate the highly lucrative outfit, as well as legal manipulations that at one point interfered with the passing of one version of the state constitution. In New Orleans, Reconstruction was marked by the Mechanics Institute race riot (1866). - Wikipedia 2019 - including also:

Louisiana was readmitted to the Union in 1868, and its Constitution of 1868 granted universal manhood suffrage. Both blacks and whites were elected to local and state offices. In 1872, then-lieutenant governor P.B.S. Pinchback succeeded Henry Clay Warmouth as governor of Louisiana, becoming the first non-white governor of a U.S. state, and the last African American to lead a U.S. state until Douglas Wilder's election in Virginia, 117 years later.

Having seen rioting and mayhem in New Orleans, Lovelee kept a petrified deer's foot under her pillow to use as a club should they be attacked.

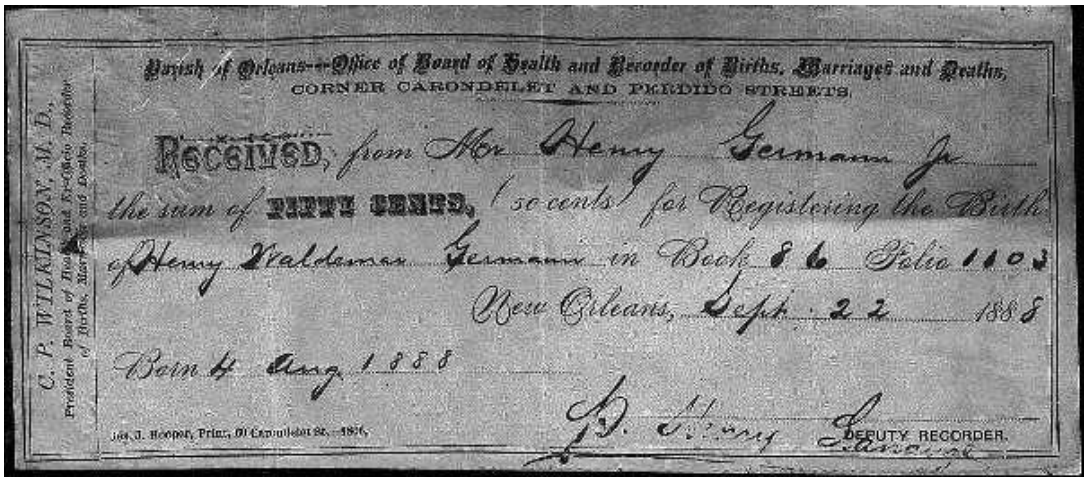
Just a few decades later her granddaughter, young Teal Mathilde, would sneak into Lovee's room, feel beneath Grandma's pillow, pull out the deer's foot, and brandish it aloft while shouting madly as she ducked beneath Mathilde's dressing table.

Henry Junior and Lovelee, religious Catholics as have been their forebears, had many children. Between 1881 and 1887 their crop includes six daughters. They love each and every one of them - Henry Jr. calls them his *darlings*. But as is the way of some men, Henry Junior as well as Henry Senior still hoped for a son to carry on the Henry Germann name.

1888 - Henry Waldemar Germann

In 1888 it happened: the third Henry, Henry Waldemar Germann was born on August 4, 1888. This Henry, Henry Waldemar, was the 13th and last child of Henry II and was Lovelee's seventh birth. She said it was even easier than all of the darling girls who'd come before. At birth Henry III was a big baby. A long one.

He was destined to be tall, athletic, and, in his father's tradition, he would be an engineer.



Parish of Orleans—Office of Board of Health and Recorder of Births, Marriages and Deaths,
CORNER CARONDELET AND PERDIDO STREETS.

C. P. WILKINSON, M. D.,
President Board of Health and Ex-Officio Recorder of Births, Marriages and Deaths.

Received, from Mr Henry Germann Jr
the sum of FIFTY CENTS, (50 cents) for Registering the Birth
of Henry Waldeman Germann in Book 86 Folio 1103
New Orleans, Sept. 22 1888
Born 4 Aug 1888

Jos. J. Hooper, Print., 91 Carondelet St., 1876.

H. Henry DEPUTY RECORDER.

Henry Germann Jr. recorded the birth of his son, my grandfather, Henry Waldemar Germann in the Parish of Orleans on 22 September 1888. Henry #3 had been born on August 4 - but it was customary to wait a bit to see that the baby lived. Henry's father, Henry Germann Jr. was enthralled by the name Waldemar and so applied it to his son, the third Henry Germann.

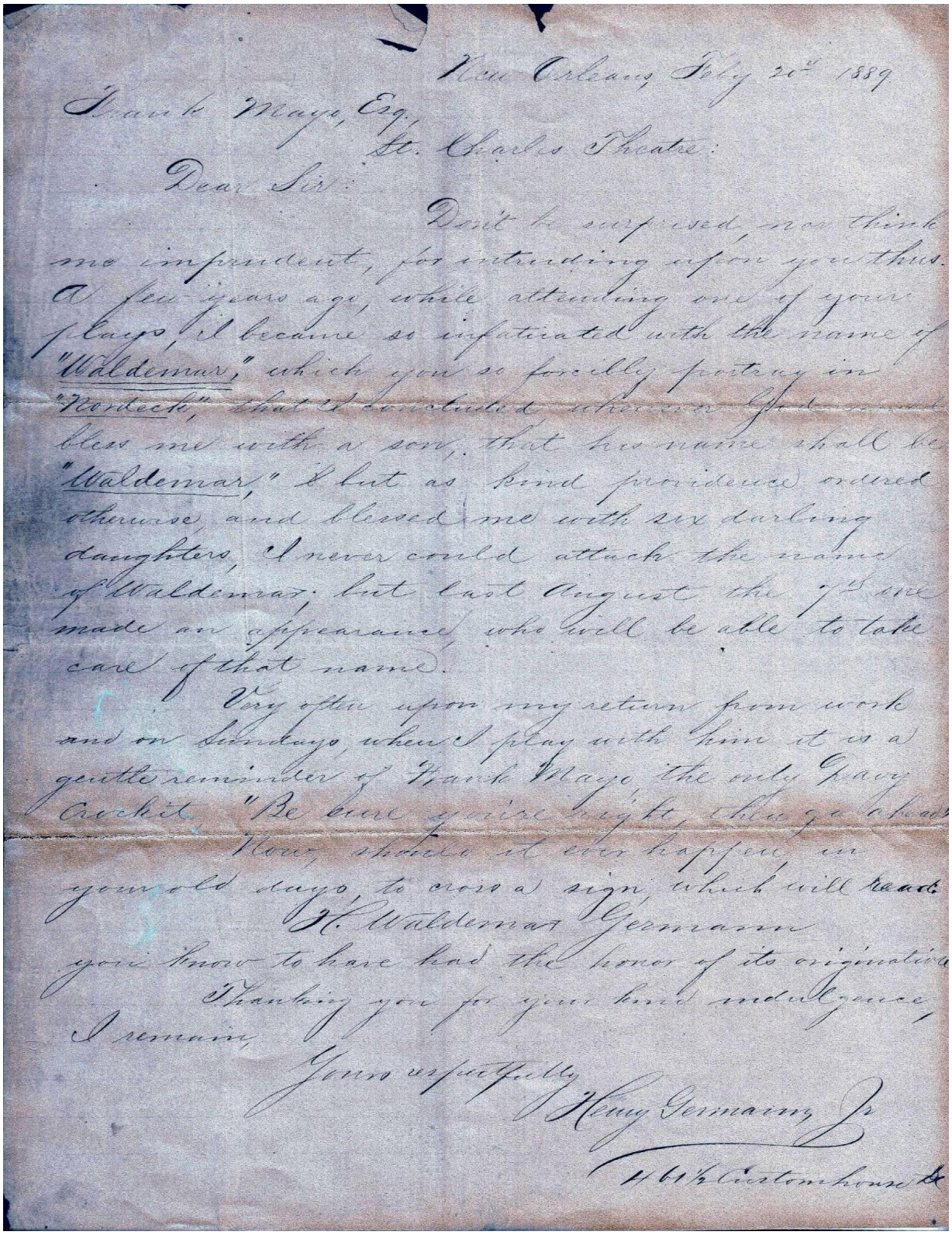
Waldemar is an Old High German given name. It consists of the elements wald- "rule", "wield", "brightness" and -mar "fame". The name is considered the equivalent of the Slavic name Vladimir. It was introduced into Scandinavia by the 12th-century Danish king Waldemar (or Valdemar) who was named after a royal ancestor of his Ukrainian mother.

The Old Norse form Valdamarr (also Valdarr) occurs in the Guðrúnarkviða II as the name of a king of the Danes. The Old Norse form is also used in Heimskringla, in the story of Harald Hardrada, as the name of a ruler of Holmgard (Veliky Novgorod), in this case as a translation of the Slavic name Volodimer.

The Fagrskinna kings' sagas also have Valdamarr as the translation of Slavic Volodimer/Vladimir, in reference to both Vladimir the Great and Vladimir Yaroslavovich. The German form was introduced to Scandinavia as Valdemar in the 12th century, with king Valdemar I of Denmark.

The naming of Henry Waldermar German deserves a closer look. The explanation is in an eloquent letter written by Henry Jr. to Frank M. Mayo, a famous actor. Don't blind yourself admiring Henry #2's beautiful but hard to read handwriting.

The actual text of the letter is given on the page following this image of the letter itself.



New Orleans Feby 20th 1889

Frank Mayo, Esq.
St. Charles Theatre:

Dear Sir:

Don't be surprised, nor think me imprudent, for intruding upon you thus. A few years ago, while attending one of your plays, I became so infatuated with the name of "Waldemar," which you so forcibly portray in "Nordeck," that I concluded when ever God should bless me with a son, that his name shall be "Waldemar," but as kind providence ordered otherwise, and blessed me with six darling daughters, I never could attach the name of Waldemar; but last August the 7th one made an appearance, who will be able to take care of that name.

Very often upon my return from work and on Sundays, when I play with him it is a gentle reminder of Frank Mayo, the only Davy Crockit. "Be sure you're right, then go ahead" Now, should it ever happen, in your old days, to cross a sign, which will read H. Waldemar Germann you know to have had the honor of its originator

Thanking you for your kind indulgence, I remain,

Yours respectfully

Henry Germann Jr

1611 Customhouse St

Letter: Henry Germann Jr. to Frank Mayo



New Orleans, Feby 20th 1889

Frank Mayo, Esq., St. Charles Theatre:

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Very often upon my return from work and on Sundays when I play with him it is a gentle reminder of Frank Mayo, the only Davy Crockett,

"Be sure you're right, then go ahead".

Now should it ever happen in your old days, to come across a sign which will read

H. Waldemar Germann

you'll know to have had the honor of its origination.

Thanking you for your kind indulgence,

I remain Yours respectfully,

Henry German Jr.,
4 by ½ Customhouse Dr.

Frank M. Mayo, shown in the photo above, (1839–1896), American actor and comedian. In San Francisco at seventeen he began his career and in a few years was appearing with Edwin Booth.



Mayo's first great success was as Badger in The Streets of New York performed in Boston in August 1865.

Photo: Henry Waldemar Germann at age 1.

In 1872 Mayo portrayed Davy Crockett, a backwoods character which endeared him to the public. In later years he continued to perform in "Davy Crockett" revivals.

Other favorite roles were in "Nordeck" - cited in Henry Germann's letter, and "The Royal Guard". Frank M. Mayo's son, Frank Mayo (1889–1963) also played the Davy Crockett role but was more famous as a film star. Mayo the son appeared in 310 films between 1911 and 1949.

Who was Nordek? Grégoire Gaspard Félix Coffinières, later Coffinières de Nordeck (1811–1887) was a French general, commander of the École Polytechnique during the Second French Empire. During the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, he commanded the fortifications of Metz, which he surrendered without defending them.

Davy Crockett, or Be Sure You're Right, Then Go Ahead - cited by Henry Germann's letter to Mayo, was written in 1872. First performed on Broadway in New York at Wood's Museum Theater in June 1873, it became a very popular play inspired by American frontiersman Davy Crockett. Written by Frank Murdoch, the lead role was played by Frank M. Mayo.

Though its first reviews were not complementary, soon the Crockett play was "one of the most revered plays of the nineteenth-century American theatre." Frank M. Mayo played Crockett throughout the rest of his life, and by May 1877 he had given 1000 performances of the role. Like Arthur Conan Doyle who grew to hate his successful character Sherlock Holmes, Mayo wished he could break free of being typecast as Davy Crockett. He joked that a man approached him and asked "I don't suppose you'll ever play anything else but Mayo, Mr. Crockett?"



The next Frank Mayo, Frank M.'s son, also had success playing Crockett.
A 1916 silent film of the same name was also made.

At just one year old (photo above) Henry Germann Junior was both a posed and a poised young fellow, an expression still as serious when he was thirteen, as you see in his confirmation photograph (here).

In these photographs Henry did not see himself pitching baseball, nor traveling by train across the U.S. for the US Maritime Administration. Those lives, as well as future wife Hannah Denekamp were not yet in young Waldermar's sights. But Hannah soon she was sighted: they lived next door to one another.

The paths of our lives zig-zag along. Often the most significant moments are around a corner where we don't see them until we trip up.

For a time we leave young Henry Waldemar to find his way through New Orleans as a teenager. He continued to live with his family right next door to the Denekamps, and he often had an eye on sultry Hannah Denekamp.

Before we can understand when, where, how and why Henry Waldemar Germann and Hannah Denekamp (his elder by just five months) got together, we must first follow Hannah on one morning in 1902 when, at the crack of dawn on a cool New Orleans morning she crept out of the family house on Cleveland Avenue.

Hanna's adventures began about one hundred and twenty years ago, near the start of the last century.

#####

1901 - Hannah Denekamp & Maxwell Barnett and the getting of Uncle Pig



Henry Waldemar Germann, Jr., ball player, ship auditor, and Simonizer of the engine of his car, was, in fact, grandma Hannah's second husband. First was Max Barnett.

Like her grandfather Jacob before her, Bertha, Hannah's mother, was made of stern stuff.

That may explain why Hannah, daughter of Bertha Jacobs and Edward Denekamp and daughter of Grandpa Eddie, left home for the first time when she was thirteen. She'd been born on March 22, 1888.

Photo: Bertha Jacobs' father David, Hannah Denekamp's grandfather, Teal's great grandfather, died 26 September 1867. This is one of the earliest photos of Jacobs family members.

Teal never described just how the relationship between Hannah and Max Barnett began nor how it ended. There are certainly some serious questions one could ask.

Born in 1888, and raised in a strict orthodox Jewish home, by age thirteen Hannah had not gotten much sex-education. Perhaps there was also not close parental supervision of their four daughters.

Max Barnett, at 26 in 1901, was twice the age of both Hannah as well as of 13-year-old Henry Germann, Hannah's friend and next-door neighbor.



For a photograph taken when she was 13, Hannah struck a sultry pose with a slightly mischievous smile. Was the photograph made for or by Max?

In the Spring of 1901 when she was still just a girl, Hannah noticed that her tummy was, well, sort-of puffy. *Uh Oh*. She tried eating less.

That didn't seem to help, but her face grew thinner and lost some of that baby look. She started feeling not so good, especially in the mornings. She thought about Max constantly and more, about running away from home for good. Time was getting short. Hannah and Max made a plan.



Hannah's inspiration both for running off and for confabulating came in part from Annie Cohen, a young woman just ten years older than she.

Photo: a tintype of Hannah with one of her sisters - probably Lilly, or Jenny, not Esther. Tintypes enjoyed their widest use during the 1860s and 1870s, but lesser use of the medium persisted into the early 20th century

In their attic room by the light of their smoky kerosene lamp, Hannah and her sisters pored over the story of Annie Cohen Kopchovsky aka Annie Londonderry. The report of Annie's trip and her return to Boston was first reported in the *New York Times* then re-run in the *New Orleans Times Picayune* - the newspaper brought home by their father.

Just a few years before, in September 1895, Annie completed a year and a half world tour by bicycle - riding first a clunky model with huge front wheel, then a newer one of those new equal-sized two-wheelers, the first such trip by a woman. She traveled and lived on her own as Annie Londonderry, bicycle exhibitionist and lecturer.



In June 1895 Annie Cohen Kopachovsky, a master confabulator herself, left her husband, their three children and her home in Boston to travel around the world by bicycle, steamship, and train, supporting herself by lying, well ok by making up stories, giving talks, selling souvenirs.

Annie claimed to have been held up by Bandits, hunted tigers, to have been shot in the shoulder, graduated from Harvard medical school, worked as a lawyer, founded a newspaper, and had other fabulous experiences. Confabulous.

Photo: Annie Cohen Kopachovsky in Boston, 1896. Source: Weber, Bruce, "AnnieLondonderry (1870-1947) A pioneering bicyclist's epic journey came to symbolize women's independence", The New York Times, 2019/11/11 p. B8

In 1896 Susan B. Anthony, herself idolized by the Denekamp sisters, was interviewed by a reporter in the New York World to whom she gave her view of the new bicycle:

I think it has done more to emancipate women than anything else in the world. I stand and rejoice every time I see a woman ride by on a wheel. It gives a woman a feeling of freedom and self-reliance. It makes her feel as if she were independent. The moment she takes her seat she knows she can't get into harm unless she gets off her bicycle, and away she goes, the picture of free, untrammeled womanhood. - (Susan B. Anthony 1896, from Weber 2019)

Between 1890 and 1899 there was an explosion in popularity and availability of these new-fangled machines. The combination of pneumatic tires, a pedal and chain drive, smaller diameter wheels of equal size and a new step-through frame combined to change that awkward and dangerous *high wheeler* into the new *safety bicycle*, a vehicle that anybody could learn to ride.



For the sum of $15.00 Daddy bought one of these machines for Hanna's older sister Jennie. Jennie and her sisters all took turns learning to ride it. They parked the new bicycle in the shed each night.

Hannah's sister's bicycle was identical to the one ridden by Annie except for its lack of a "Londonderry" promotional sign alongside its rear wheel. The shed was never locked.

Photo: Jennie with her new bicycle in 1900. Tintype portraits were most commonly made by itinerant sidewalk photographers.

Because the lacquered iron support (there is no actual tin used) was resilient and did not need drying, a tintype could be developed and fixed and handed to the customer only a few minutes after the picture had been taken.

From about 1865 to 1910, the most popular size, called "Bon-ton", ranged from 2 ⅜ in × 3 ½ - the original rough-cut size of the tintypes shown here. - Wikipedia

At the crack of dawn on a morning in June 1901, Hannah's soft brown eyes fluttered open. The night before she had packed her little valise with some of her older sister's clothes, especially that grown-up-looking dress, along with *Ookla*, her tiny bear that she dearly loved. She dressed quietly, slid the valise from below the bed that she shared with Esther, and tiptoed down the creaky stairs, stepping over the second tread from the bottom that could otherwise wake the whole household.

The rest of the family were asleep. Closing the big front door quietly behind herself and using a length of packing twine from the supply kept by the breadbox in the big kitchen, Hannah tied up her long skirt to avoid getting it caught in the bicycle chain. She walked Jennie's bicycle out from the rickety shed behind the house, and holding her valise in her left hand (there was no back fender onto which she might have tied-it) she stepped through the frame, gave a push with one foot, sat and then pedaled quietly off into the New Orleans mist.

Hannah, who had a soft clear voice, would have said the air was filled with *Nawlins mayest*. Her heart was pounding. She thought about what Lily would say (*Hannah you fool!*) and how annoyed Esther would be about the clothes (*my best dress!*) and Jennie about the bicycle (*thief!*). Hannah gave no glance over her shoulder. She focused … ahead. And hoped, trembled, and pedaled on … then she saw him.

Exactly as he'd promised, Max was waiting at the end of the block, at the intersection of Cleveland and South Derbigny. With his own safety-bicycle he stepped forward, out of the shadows. Hanna sat astride Ester's bicycle. Edward hugged her for just for a moment, then together they pedaled off, heading first South, then West on South Clairborne, out of the city. Hannah was 13. Max was 26.

At the west edge of New Orleans they spotted a tintype photographer and his horse-drawn wagon that formed his home, darkroom, and store. The photographer was poking a smoky fire on which was warming a pot of *Nawlins' cawfee*. The smell drew them closer. They stopped.

To document their confidence at their new freedom from the strict oversight of Hannah's orthodox parents Bertha and Edward Denekamp, Hannah asked for and Max paid for a tiny tintype of the two of them - an image now lost. The cost of the bon-ton sized tintype was just a three cents. Hannah already carried with her tiny tintypes of her sisters - the very tintypes that she would later pass on through her (future) daughter Teal to her grandson Daniel - that's how the deep, dark images appearing here have survived to make it into this story.

The sun rose higher in the muggy but sunny Louisiana sky. Hannah and Max hitched a wagon-ride. West. Jennie's bicycle, *jayest borrered* by Hannah, went with them along with the stolen clothes. Max's bicycle did not fit in the wagon so he sold it a fruit seller for a whole dollar. They would need the money.

Bouncing along on the hay-lined wagon floor the young couple rode south, then northwest into Iberia where a larger shipper gave them a lift to the edge of Lafayette where, exhausted, they slept in a hayfield. Then their wagon rides continued through Crowley, Jennings, Welsh, and finally into Lake Charles.

Max and Hannah entered the brand new Lake Charles City Hall building where, with few questions and only slightly-raised eyebrows a City clerk issued the couple a marriage license. That afternoon they were married by a tipsy local Justice of the Peace who so slurred the words that they were not sure if he was speaking English or creole. Crossing the state line the next day into Pinehurst they continued until night found the newlyweds in East Texas where, in Beaumont. Max found a small dusty hotel room.

They had traveled 560 miles in just a few days. Hannah had never been so far from home. She thought again of what Jenny must be saying about her missing bicycle, Esther about her missing clothes, and about her father's face which would be black and glowering. She was not sorry. She had Max.

On their wedding night the couple were so exhausted that after dinner downstairs at the Beaumont Arms, they staggered up to their room, fell onto the bouncy feather bed, and immediately slept.

Little Siggie, in utero, gave an experimental kick with his left foot but Hannah just stirred, turned on to her right side, and slept on.

In Beaumont they found a second floor room in a boarding house near the Neches River. At night the sound of splashes and calls of boatmen lifted to their open, un-screened windows. In the fall Sigmund was born. [According to grandpa Henry Germann who was off in Hannah's un-imagined future, his stepson Siggie was a wild man from the first get-go.]

The Lucas Gusher on Spindletop hill had wakened East Texans to the wealth of oil beneath the ground but Max, no oil man, was one of the few who were not determined to get rich off black gold.

Max admired the wealth of the McFadden rice merchants and imagined finding his own wealth in some food industry.

Folks always got to eat, he explained to Hannah. *It's either food or funerals - that's the othah one that's always gwin to run. But Ih'm not foah working on deaed paeple.*

Max applied to both of Beaumont's established employers, considered working in the lumber yard but as rice was edible, he took work in the Beaumont Rice Mill - more to his liking. *Ya'll cain't eat no sawdust.*

With a clatter, little Sigmund dropped the fork he'd been using to stab rows of holes in a table leg and crept out to look up at his father; he seemed to be listening to Max's theorizing. These days Max theorized and lectured a lot. Hannah was beginning to find it tiresome. Someday Sigmund too would work in the food business - fruit though, not rice.

Hannah felt a new stirring. She was pregnant again.

1903 Aunt Dexter & Uncle Pig



Just six months later Hannah gave birth to Dexter. Joining her older brother they were known in South Beaumont as the Barnett Boys. It was common to clothe all babies - boys and girls - in dresses, so until baby Dexter was bigger it may not have been clear to strangers that she was a girl.

When Sig and Dexter were big enough to play with their young mother (then 15) in a grassy field, another Texas photographer made this tintype of the three of them.

Hannah's face shows that she was pleased with her children - life with Max had not yet grown hard. Siggie wore his mad face because his mother pinched his behind when he squirmed, forcing a re-take of their tintype. Dexter gazes placidly into the camera.

None of them could have imagined you staring into their faces from more than one hundred years into the future.

Despite or perhaps because-of having been born into an orthodox Jewish family Hannah was not at all religious.

According to Teal, as an adult her mother was a vehement anti-semite as were a number of semitic assimilationist Jews at the turn of the last century. Yet, Henry (German Catholic) wrote to Teal that her mother, his wife Hannah Denekamp (Orthodox Jew), always said that she was born a jew and would die a jew. When Hannah died it was Teal who arranged a Jewish memorial service in New Orleans.

That was an in-fated attempt by some to gain acceptance in the wider world.

Jewish assimilation (Hebrew: התבוללות, *Hitbolelut*) refers to the gradual cultural assimilation and social integration of Jews in their surrounding culture as well as the ideological program promoting conformity as a potential solution to historic Jewish marginalization in the age of emancipation.

Like the pork-eating *Chuetas* in Mallorca, changing one's professed religion didn't change the minds of the neighbours.

Chueta is the name in Mallorca for people whose Jewish ancestors converted to Christianity during the Spanish Inquisition. Devoutly Catholic but widely distrusted by fellow Christians, chuetas ironically retained their distinct identity because hostility to them forced them to marry mostly among themselves.

To prove that they were Catholics, not Jews, in Mallorca, once a year the *Chuetas* would stand on the front steps of their home, on display to neighbors, eating ensaïmadas. Translated as "enlarded," an ensaïmada contains rendered pig fat, despite the fact that some food historians say the dish has Jewish origins.

My own mom (Teal) grew up a bit uncertain about assimilation, roles assigned to her by others who had no conception of who she figured was. As a girl Teal was particularly confused about Dexter and Sig - just who were they? Hannah wouldn't say. They were so close to Hannah's own age (Sig was just 13 years younger than his mother) that Hannah suggested they were her brother and sister. Indeed, Teal called them Aunt Dexter and Uncle Sig, not knowing they were her half-brother and sister until she was an adult and married herself.

As girls, Teal and her older sister Ritz were exposed to both church and synagogue. As they grew older, each would claim whatever religion was convenient at the time. Sometimes too, Teal might claim to be a member of whichever group was being harassed - she had in a deep-seated sense of dislike for prejudice even if she and Rita were, sometimes, prejudiced themselves. They could be of two minds.

Rita, Jewish when she married Albert Brussell, was Baptist when she later married Bill Miller. My cousins Eve Lynn, Teal (No. 2) and Neal claim to be Southern Baptists or Presbyterian or something. Neal's second wife Gwen laughed uproariously when I pointed out that, legally, her Baptist husband was Jewish.

Well that explains a lot, laughed Gwen. *Like you know, he likes those big weird crackers, you know, those may-t-sos.* Neal glared furiously at me from across their living room.

Both Teal and Rita taught that fierce, glaring look. Fierceness took several forms but had its roots in necessity - surviving on the road.



Their independence also had a hereditary line directly back to their Aunt Esther whom we'll meet in in a moment.

Photo: Jennifer and I photographed the remains of United Fruit banana plantation worker housing in Costa Rica in 1998.

As an adult uncle Sig - who took the last name Frucht, worked for the United Fruit Company.

The United Fruit Company was an American corporation that traded in tropical fruit (primarily bananas), grown on Latin American plantations, and sold in the United States and Europe. The company was formed in 1899, from the merger of Minor C. Keith's banana-trading concerns with Andrew W. Preston's Boston Fruit Company.

United Fruit Co. flourished in the early and mid-20th century, and it came to control vast territories and transportation networks in Central America, the Caribbean coast of Colombia, Ecuador, and the West Indies. Uncle Pig's United Fruit Company, probably with the help of the U.S. Government, was able to hold a fruit production monopoly in parts of Latin America.

The smaller, weaker of those countries were disparagingly referred-to as banana republics - meaning really controlled by the U.S. through private fruit companies. They included, for a time, Costa Rica, Honduras, and Guatemala. United Fruit had a long-lasting impact on the economic and political development of those countries that is now in their past. Relics remain including more than the worker housing in my photo. There remains as well at least a partial distrust of and resentment towards the heavy hands of the United States.

Critics accuse United Fruit of exploitative neocolonialism, and described it as the archetypal example of the influence of a multinational corporation on the internal politics of the banana republics. After a period of financial decline, United Fruit was merged with Eli M. Black's AMK in 1970, to become the United Brands Company. In 1984, Carl Lindner, Jr. transformed United Brands into the present-day Chiquita Brands International.

How Uncle Pig Got His Name

When I was a boy and Uncle Sig Frucht, the United Fruit Man visited us in Dunnsville Virginia. The first night of his visit my big sister Linda and I heard the most amazing sound.

Uncle Sig snored. It was a sorting snuffling snore. The snorting snores were not just loud. No. It was a house rattling, foundation cracking, Rappahannock river tide-retreating incredibly loud snoring. Most nights Uncle Sig was the only person in the house who actually got much sleep.

His snores sounded like the big Dunnsville Pig grunting and rooting in the muddy ruts where, each June, our car got stuck trying to get to the farmhouse. We decided we'd call him Uncle Pig.

How did we know the Dunnsville Pig Farm and its farmer? They lived across the dirt road. The farmer had pigs, a big cornfield from which Mom swiped corn just one time, and he kept a mule, Chucker, who pulled us out of the mud a time or two each summer. The corn got stolen just once because it tasted terrible - it was tough white feed corn. The mule liked it though. Chucker got to know the sound of our car's screaming as its wheels spun in the Dunnsville mud. His nose would visibly pale whenever he heard us coming.

Returning to Hannah's history, back in Beaumont, Texas in 1905, Dexter and Sig were becoming a handful.

Sig was determined to have his way and Dexter began crying incessantly. The parents were not prepared for months of sleep deprivation. Max, at his job in the rice mill, began working longer hours. He caught up on sleep by creeping off to the storage barn where, behind a mountain of sacks of rice ready for shipment, he napped - on the job.

Hannah began thinking about the soothing warmth of cuddling with her sisters in their huge feather bed. And the smell of her mother's hair.

Surprising herself Hannah realized that she missed the New Orleans mist, the shouts and crazy music of the French quarter, the bright *Nawlins'* house colors, and the candy that flew through the air during Mardi Gras. Beaumont, in comparison was not bright. Instead, Beaumont was black with oil, beige with wood, and dusty white with rice husks.

Hannah didn’t say anything about this to Max who was too tired to talk anyway. Like Esther back at home, Hannah could take independent action if she wanted-to. She missed her sisters.

That fall she’d had enough. Leaving little Siggie and Dexter in Texas with Max who was getting a bit old - about 30 - Hannah made her way back to New Orleans. This time, like Annie Londonderry, Hannah rode her safety-bicycle back home by herself.

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1910 - Hannah Denekamp Germann & Henry Waldemar German Jr.

In 1910 Hannah moved back home. This plan is NOT AN OPTION for my own daughters nor my beloved grandchildren - just in case you're reading this.

Henry Germann, a next door neighbor since they were children (they were in fact still children), saw her almost every day, and had always had an eye for Hannah. He thought a lot about that sultry pose and quirky smile we see in her photo as a thirteen-year-old. He knew Hannah had disappeared. And he'd missed her. Now he saw a second chance. Hannah had returned. Henry was almost the same age as Hannah - just five months younger than she.

With familiar, tall and quiet Henry, Hannah felt safe. She told him everything.

Henry, for his part, wooed sultry Hannah, not yet twenty. In less than a year after Hannah's return she and Henry Waldemar Germann married (this time in the Catholic church) - for Hannah perhaps she was *married* for the first time. Records are a bit sketchy.



Their first daughter, my aunt Rita, was born in 1913, a completely respectable time after their marriage.

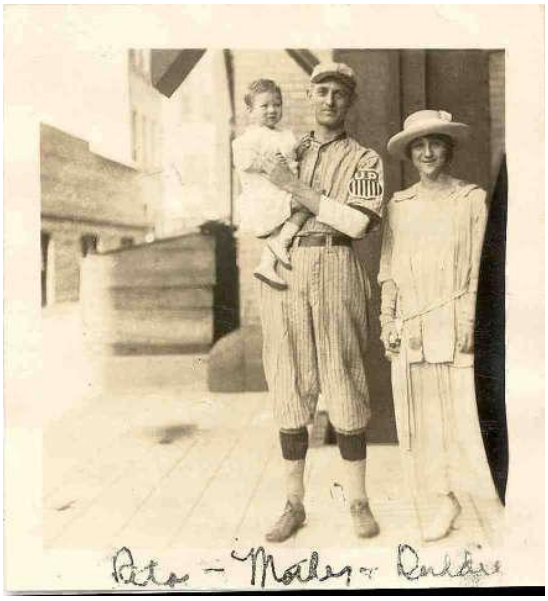
Above: Rita at left, Teal at right, along with another child (in arms) whom mom could not name.

Henry wrote on the reverse of this photo:

Taken in North Carolina (Wilmington) I swiped [sic] the maid at hotel & a friend's baby (Virginia), Henrietta & Mathilde and colored maid Eugenia.

Carrying on our Irish tradition of lying whenever it's appropriate to do so, in the 1980s in Poughkeepsie, I told our bigoted cleaning lady that the turbaned woman in this photo was my maternal grandmother.

Red neck quit on the spot, exclaiming she wasn't gonna work for no you-know-whats.



In his baseball uniform, Henry W Germann and Hannah Denekamp-Germann are holding my Aunt Rita. Their second daughter, Teal, my mother, had not yet made her appearance.

Henry's height and strength found him as a baseball pitcher. He combined a hot spitball with a curve. He beat both Walter Johnson and Ty Cobb.



In his most-famous ballgame Henry pitched against (and lost to) Babe Ruth (inset).

Henry was the same height as The Babe - 6'2" - but The Babe was a better hitter than any pitcher he ever went up against. The Babe smacked four home runs off Henry's best fast-spit-curveball.

After giving up four home runs to the Babe, Henry moved on. Trained in accounting and engineering he went to work for the U.S. Maritime Commission - inspecting ship building jobs for the USMA and later for Ingallis Shipyards - his work for more than forty years meant a lot of travel.

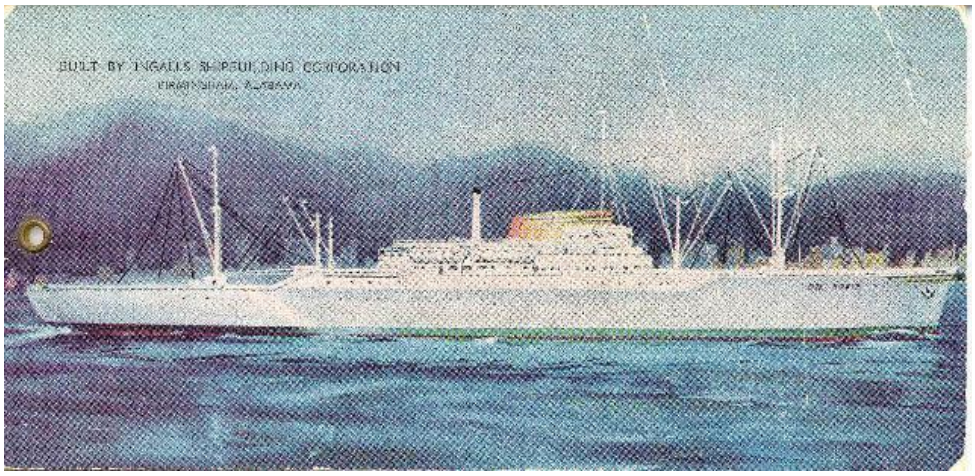






The first photo above is Henry W. Germann, Jr. - my mom's father, in 1920 - the year after mom's birth (if she was telling the truth) and then we see him sixteen years later, in (Duluth?) Minnesota in 1936, and finally in Pascagoula Mississippi in 1953.

When they were not on the road - which was most of the year, the family might stay in a hotel in Washington, D.C. where Henry could report in to the ICC.



Grandad Henry gave me this desk ink blotter with a photo of one of his ship projects built by Ingallis. Ink blotters were frequent gifts from Grandad Henry, as they documented ships in whose construction he'd assisted.

In 1963, shortly after Grandma Hanna's death, Henry wrote to Teal, from which we excerpt here:

I received your letter with the temple Bulletin enclosed - that's awfully nice of you to have arranged for the memorial services - I know mother would have liked that - she always said she was born a jew and would die a jew - that's why I and you did all possible to meet her desires and wishes.
…
I have been passing a few dollars on to some of my grandchildren without remembering my good pal Danny - so, Teal, I am enclosing a check for $50.00 which I would appreciate if you would give it to him for me and tell him my overlooking him for a while was really a fault of the head and not of the heart. Danny is a good boy and I am very fond of him.
… Yours always, Daddy.

With the letter he enclosed one last ink blotter, the Lone Star Mariner built by Ingalls Shipbuilding Corporation in Birmingham Alabama.

Photos: GrandadHenry in his last desk job, and a 40-Years of Service award from the U.S. Maritime Administration given in 1958.





He had a wonderful smile and his car engine was spotless. Granddad Germann liked to be referred to as Granddad - that's what's in the bottle he is holding in the photo below. He wrote addressing his grandson as *Me Ole Pal.*



Photo: Ole Grandad Henry, me, Grandma Hannah, Dad and Mom at Vinita Farm outside Richmond: where Henry, having driven up from New Orleans, taught me to clean and wax the engine of his car.Ca. 1955 or 56. Before my escape to Fork Union M.A.

That's what was in the bottle he's holding.

From his home at 4475 LaFaye Street in New Orleans (shown below), Grandad Henry would mail me an occasional letter or a birthday card on which he wrote,as if I - his very grandson - were retarded:

H - A - P - P - Y - - B - I - R - T - H - D - A - Y - - L - O - V - E - -
Y - E - R - - O - L - E - - P - A - L - - G - R - A - N - D - A - D.

On some cards he would underline each letter individually and dash between them. Actually I think he just liked the way the letters looked. Henry Waldemar Germann liked being a grandfather and we all loved and admired him.



Photo: The Germann home at 4475 LaFaye Street in New Orleans, as seen by Google Street View in 2016. When the Germanns lived in this home it was the tiny modest shotgun house in front; the huge rear building and the stucco exterior were later additions.

Sometimes there was also a birthday check for $10. He could write with beautiful penmanship as did his father before him.

Succumbing to cancer that began as a leg lump that he refused to have treated, he died on 26 December 1971 at age 83 years.

In New Orleans to arrange Henry's funeral at a nearby Catholic Church (though Catholic, Henry was a lapsed-churchgoer) the priest told her that a high mass, the sine qua non for Henry's last celebration, could not be said as Henry had not been attending church. Ever herself, Teal simply upped the size of her contribution to the church to a sufficient sum. Henry enjoyed a high mass at his funeral. He is buried along with Hannah in the Hope Mausoleum in New Orleans, LA.

1913 Nomads: Henry, Hannah, Rita, Teal

Henry and Hannah had baby Rita, their first child together and Hannah's third, in 1913. We don't have a photo of Rita as a baby.

Rita was the first liar of her generation. Just one example, she always insisted that she was the younger sister. A lifetime later in Boca Raton Florida, Rita's daughter and thus my cousin Teal (named for her my mom, her aunt) turned to me and said *Yes they both are terrible liars. The truth never gets in their way.*



Then, interrupting the family's nomadic life for a few hours on 26 May 1919, Teal was delivered. Her arrival began by train.

The family were traveling to Henry's new assignment when Hannah went into labor with Teal. They got off the train in Salt Lake City, Utah where Hannah gave birth to her fourth child, Mathilde.

The next day the family, now four, continued on their way by the next train.

Photo: baby Teal. According to a birth announcement she was born 26 May 1919 at Holy Cross hospital. In baby pictures Teal looks a lot like a little boy - which is amusing since photos of my dad, Dan Sr. at the same age show he looked like a little girl - even wearing baby dresses as was the custom.

Mom, Teal, was born *Mathilde* which she pronounced Ma-*Tilde* rather than Matilda - it was much more elegant. Her middle name was *Evelynn* that she pronounced *Eve*-linn not Evelyn.

Below in a cart drawn by a remarkable billygoat are, the two sisters, Rita (left) and Teal (right) in 1923.



Rita's face shows how very much she was in-charge of both her little goat-sister and the larger horned nannygoat up front.

Teal, the grinning one on the right, looks older than the 4 she'd have been, having been born in 1919. Rita may have lied about her own age for her whole life.

Of little doubt, however, is the fact that girls must have studied the dickens out of that goat. Perhaps that was where they began learning, early-on, their incredible stubborn streak.

1920-1938 The Wandering Girls: Rita & Teal Germann



Above: Teal in 1920 and 1921 with Hannah and Henriette (Rita - at right)

In the 1920s, growing up living in hotels as father Henry audited construction and shipping projects, first for the US Maritime Commission and later for Ingallis shipyards, someday having a fine home - in one place - and elegance were Teal's fantasy.

Every month or so the family would climb down from a long train in a new city where they'd pile luggage onto a taxi to drive to a hotel where they'd live for the next weeks. Hannah, exhausted and possibly depressed, would retire to bed. The sisters were constantly together.





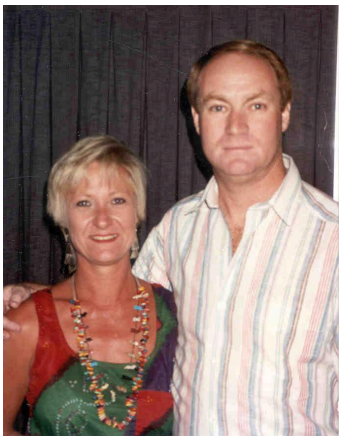
Here they are with Hannah and Henry in Kingsville TX in 1927 and sun-dressed at the sea a year or two later. Rita would have been fourteen and Teal 8 - Teal looks more like she was 10.

Rita Germann Brussell Miller

The Southern Germann descendents were a marrying crowd, joining in matrimony many times and often.




Rita (with me in 1963) married twice: Albert Brussell (producing my cousins Neal, Teal, named for her sister, & Eve Lynn), and in a second marriage, Bill Miller. Remarkably, as they bickered and criticized one another constantly, Rita ultimately moved to Boca Raton (above) to be near her sister Teal who in turn helped care for her until Rita's death.

Rita's youngest, Neal Brussell, married twice and had a daughter Ashley. Above are Neal and me at Vinita in Richmond Virginia as boys, shortly before horsing around like idiots I tossed him into a swimming pool where the result was his broken wrist. He was very good natured about it. There too are Neal with his lovely wife Gwen. If Neal looks stern it's because he was thinking about my having outed him as having been born a jew.



Rita's middle child, Teal (named for Rita's sister, my mom) married four times including to a Chambers, and had three children, Rebecca, Daniel, and Camille whom I last saw on my bike trip to Mexico in 1976.







Eve Lynn (above), star of plays at Lindan in Dunnsville, married and later divorced Ed Wilson and lived for a time in Iowa. They had two children, Craig Wilson and Little Teal (also named for her great aunt Teal, my mom).

Tragically Eve's daughter little Teal along with Eve's fiance at the time were killed in a private plane crash of which Eve was the only survivor. Eve described the terrible crash to me. The plane hooked its wheels on a power line and flipped upside down when trying to land in a thunderstorm.

Eve recalled feeling as if she were in a tunnel, dying, then spotting in a light in the distance, her remaining child, her son Craig, beckoning to her. She realized she could not leave Craig, and somehow found her way back to the light, to consciousness, to life.

Eve suffered physically the rest of her life, with a painful arm that never recovered and with fragile health.

Teal Evelyn Germann



First Rita, then Teal as well learned to navigate hotels, how to order room service meals, shop at local grocery stores, and generally how to fend for themselves.

Photo: Teal's grammar school, Grant, in Washington D.C. in 1925. She rarely attended any single school for more than a few months before the family moved again.

They didn't like their nomadic life and resented their lay-about mother who was perhaps depressed. Maybe, or perhaps Teal was exaggerating - that would be no surprise.

The girls would attend the local school, meet the local kids, but knowing they'd be moving on soon, school and the other kids were never an anchor in their lives. They had no anchor. Mom says Rita found changing schools so difficult that she stopped bothering to attend. Mom, preferring reading books, didn't bother seeking friends because she knew in a few months they'd be moving.

On an occasional return to New Orleans or a trip to Texas the family would visit with Sig and Dexter.







Above: Hannah, Rita, Teal and Henry in Texarkana in 1929. Rita would have been about 16, Teal 10. Center: Teal dressed for the prom. Right: Teal & Rita in Boca Raton in 2000. Teal died at home in Boca Raton Florida on July 9, 2015. She was 96.

Teal grew up thinking that Sig and Dexter, not much younger than her mother Hannah, were her mother's brother and sister.

She called them *uncle* Sig and *aunt* Dexter.

Teal herself was quite a looker, as a kid at camp, and as a young model back in Texas living with Sig and Dexter while Henry and Hannah continued to travel or occasionally to work back at Maritime Commission headquarters in Washington D.C.





As she grew past campgirl age, besides changing schools and training her dog *Itchy* to jump for a stick, Teal read.

And she practiced dressing up and tried out speaking with a British accent - a skill carried into adulthood, but one that she forgot when, tipsy, she'd lapse into her Nawlins' drawl.

At seventeen Mathilde Evelynn Germann, having shortened her name to Teal - encouraged a pack of suitors whom she described to her children.

Her four favorites were Larry, Bobby, Ted and … Sid:





In 1934, Sid Wyman wrote on the back of a photo he gave to Teal:

A soldier boy Oi / be
I may not be
handsome,
strong nor tall

But what I own,
I offer you all.

She considered accepting but then she met this fellow Daniel Friedman from New York.

Sid's offer teetered in reserve.

But Texas was hot and New Orleans was muggy. And Minnesota, as she already knew, was too cold.



In 1936, before meeting Daniel, Teal had tried a change of climate: she went to live with her sister Rita and Rita's new husband Albert Brussell.

Albert was serving his medical internship in the only hospital in Duluth[1] Minnesota. He earned $15. A week.

Earlier we showed a photo of Grandpa Henry German taken in Duluth Minnesota in 1936 where most likely he was visiting Rita and Teal. Perhaps he also consulted on ore boat construction.

To feed themselves and pay their heating bill the family needed every cent. Teal waitressed briefly, perhaps at the Hill Hotel. Tips were bad, probably because she didn't accept being pinched by the dockworkers.

It was summer of 1936 when Teal arrived in Duluth. At first the cool northern air was a delicious change from Texas and Nawlins.

[1] When the federal minimum wage first became law in 1938, it was 25 cents. Adjusted for inflation, by 2019 that would be a bit over $4.00 Postcard: Duluth Minnesota in the 1930s.



She posed on the front steps of their Duluth apartment. They lived upstairs on the second floor of this large home uphill from big lake Superior.

Then came winter. Minnesota winter.

At the western end of Lake Superior icy winds blow off the lake, across Duluth's streets that parallel the lake, whistling up the streets that offer the wind an escape in the opposite direction, up-hill,.

In the late 1930s the Superior wind rattled the windows of Rita and Albert's tiny house, leaking in around the missing window-weights and hissing under the front door to chill one's bare feet before continuing, out through the back of the house where it continued on up to a near-vertical updraft along Hawk Ridge.

On September 10, around my birthday, the hawks migrate, riding the Hawk Ridge updrafts, but for Teal the hawks were nowhere and ice-cold was everywhere. She didn't own a fur coat much less the mink stole she coveted after seeing one modeled in a New York fashion magazine.

In Duluth Albert and Rita kept the heat too low. Mom's meagre allowance and waitress job helped support the Duluth Brussell - Germann family but it wasn't enough to turn-up the thermostat: she absolutely hated Duluth and the rest of Northern Minnesota.

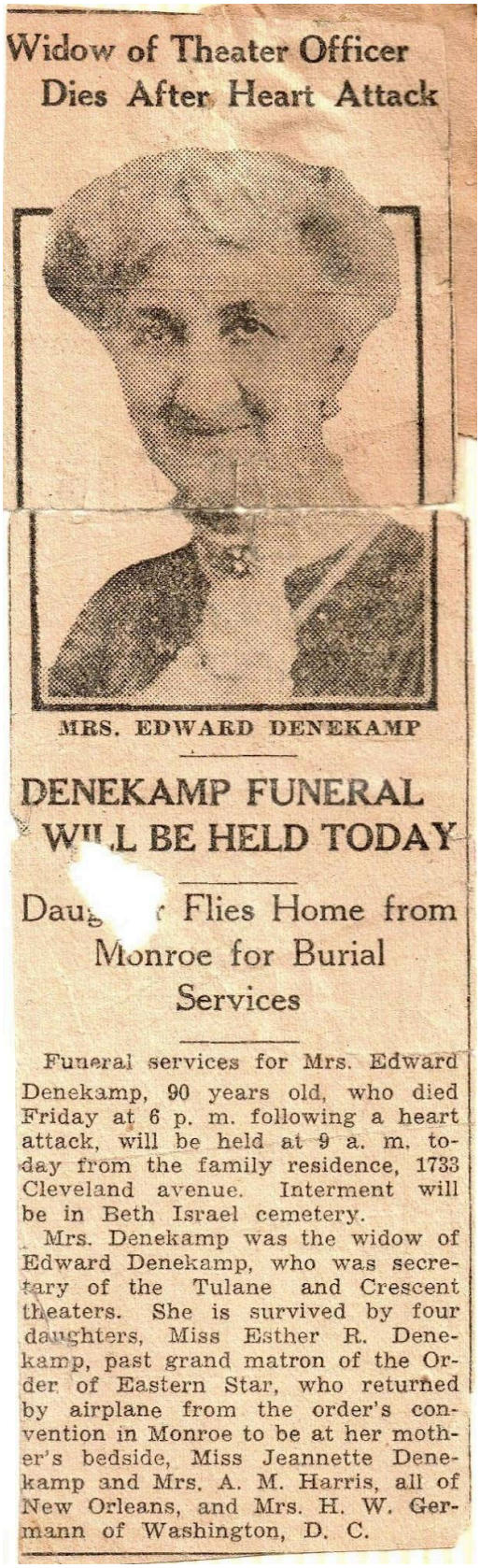
At night they all piled on more blankets. Rita had Albert. They shivered together. Teal shivered alone.

Teal's cousin Henry (perhaps destined by one of her father's many sisters to be Henry IV) back in New Orleans sent a letter enclosing with a news clipping the story of the death of her grandmother Bertha Denekamp - Grandma was 90.

By the spring of 1937, Mathilde was ready to return to the South, leaving Henrietta - now officially Rita - and Albert to congeal alone - a condition that would ultimately encourage the production of their children: Eve Linn - a future actress-princess and later, sole survivor of a tragic airplane crash, Teal, Mathilde's namesake, and finally my red-headed cousin Neal whom I love dearly but from whom I'd never buy a used car.

Like the rest of us Denekamp-descendants, Neal never lets the truth get in the way …

Back in New Orleans Hannah's family were living at 1735 Cleveland Avenue, located near what is today's Tulane Medical Center.



Widow of Theater Officer Dies After Heart Attack

MRS. EDWARD DENEKAMP

DENEKAMP FUNERAL WILL BE HELD TODAY

Daug[illegible]r Flies Home from Monroe for Burial Services

Funeral services for Mrs. Edward Denekamp, 90 years old, who died Friday at 6 p. m. following a heart attack, will be held at 9 a. m. today from the family residence, 1733 Cleveland avenue. Interment will be in Beth Israel cemetery.

Mrs. Denekamp was the widow of Edward Denekamp, who was secretary of the Tulane and Crescent theaters. She is survived by four daughters, Miss Esther R. Denekamp, past grand matron of the Order of Eastern Star, who returned by airplane from the order's convention in Monroe to be at her mother's bedside, Miss Jeannette Denekamp and Mrs. A. M. Harris, all of New Orleans, and Mrs. H. W. Germann of Washington, D. C.

What happened to Teal's role model Aunt Esther?

Postmarks saved on the back of this news clipping are dated Nov. 15 1932 and Dec 1 1932. The news clipping itself is from 6 March 1932, possibly from the New Orleans *Times Picayune*.

The Times-Picayune is an American newspaper published in New Orleans, Louisiana, since January 25, 1837. The current publication is the result of the 1914 merger of The Picayune with the Times-Democrat; and was printed on a daily basis until October 2012, when it went to a Wednesday/Friday/Sunday schedule.

Edward Denekamp had died years before, after serving as secretary of the Tulane and Crescent Theaters.

Mom's aunts included Aunt Esther H, past grand matron of the Order of the Eastern Star who returned by airplane to be at Grandma Denekamp's bedside, Miss Jeannette Denekamp, Mrs. A.M. Harriss, all of New Orleans, and my grandmother Hannah - Mrs. H.W. Germann.

Teal had a lot of cousins. When she was a girl in New Orleans, she went with her cousin Henry who took her to confession at the local Catholic church.

I don't know what to say! Worried Teal aloud.

Just tell the priest you sassed your mother. That one's not too bad. Henry advised. That worked.

Grandma Bertha Denekamp (nee Jacobs) was buried at the Beth Israel Cemetery.

Founded in 1903 or 1904,though tracing its roots back to 1857, it is the oldest Orthodox congregation in the New Orleans region. In the 1930s Beth Israel purchased its own cemetery on Frenchmen Street.

The Duluth family visit lasted less than a year - Teal returned to Houston and to Dexter and Uncle Pig. Back in Texas in December 1938 Teal would meet Daniel Friedman - in town walking his father's footsteps, calling on Friedman Marks Clothing Company's retail customers.

1888 - ca 1934 Esther Rosa Denekamp



Esther Rosa Denekamp, her independence much admired by her sister Hannah and her young niece Teal, worked in the Hart Jewelry Store as a young girl where she was taken not by men but by gems. Diamonds, she figured, were less trouble.

As a girl she worked at the Hart Jewelry store, starting as a sales clerk. But she was sharp as a tack, and Esther had an eye for quality in gems. As an expert diamond appraiser, she became a buyer for Hart. Aunt Esther didn't want a husband. She wanted to live in the elegant DeSoto hotel.

Opened in 1907, as the New Denechaud Hotel with 217 rooms. When Esther lived there it was the DeSoto Hotel. In downtown New Orleans close to the French Quarter and the Garden District, the opulent DeSoto was called the "Belle of New-Orleans". It was a luxurious home for grand balls and festivals that during Prohibition included a secret tunnel so a safe entrance (or exit) 1 ½ blocks away. From 1928 to 1948 its penthouse suite housed WDSU, the city's first radio station. The original land siting the hotel was purchased Jean Bienville, founder of New Orleans.In the 1970s new owners re-named it again the Le Pavillon Hotel - its current nom d'hote.

At nineteen she opened her own jewelry business in office # 402 in the Baronne Building in New Orleans. Built in the 1890's the Barone Building was one of the city's largest commercial spaces.



By 1920 Esther could afford her dream: buying a big Studebaker touring car.

Photo: 1920 advertisement for the Studebaker Big Six touring car. A woman is driving; no men required. - Wikipedia

It was stunningly expensive, costing $2,360. But Esther's jewelry business was performing stunningly too, as was Esther herself. Esther Rose loved driving her open car, breeze in her face, hair flying, and on cool mornings, her long pink scarf waving in the wind. Esther knew that cars could be dangerous, but she was a careful driver. And about the scarf - well this was before Isadora Duncan.

On September 14, 1927, dancer Isadora Duncan is strangled in Nice, France, when the enormous silk scarf she is wearing gets tangled in the rear hubcaps of her open car. - history.com 2019

Running at full speed but with *her* eyes wide open, Esther's pride and pleasure at the independent life took a sudden and terrible zig-zag. No one saw it coming.

Taking visiting relatives sightseeing in New Orleans on a cool February morning in the 1920s, Esther was being careful, she was in complete control of her own car. But she couldn't see around the turn. Esther was killed when another driver crashed into her car. Her loss was felt community-wide. Her sisters were devastated.

Page 6

Gem expert dies of hurts in car crash

Miss Esther Rosa Denekamp, leading woman diamond expert in this section, and past Grand Worthy Matron of the Eastern Star, died early yesterday as a result of injuries sustained in an automobile accident more than a week ago.

Miss Kenekamp, who lived at the DeSoto hotel and conducted her own jewelry business at 402 Baronne Building, had taken some visiting relatives sight-seeing on February 25 and her automobile was struck by another one near the Pakenham Oaks. She suffered fractures of both jaws, fractures of both legs and head injuries; and was taken to Charity hospital.

Learned Jewelry Business

Her condition was too serious for her to be moved, and since Dr. George Bel, superintendent of Charity, was her personal physician, she asked to remain there.

Miss Denekamp learned the jewelry business with the former Hart Jewelry store at Baronne and Common streets, where she worked from her early girlhood, and advanced from clerk to buyer. She then set up her own business, and her opinion on diamond appraisal was sought by other experts, as she had made this her specialty.

Miss Denekamp was one of the founders of the Business and Professional Woman's club of New Orleans, and a charter member of the Quota club. She also belonged to a number of charitable organizations.

A native of New Orleans, she was the daughter of the late Edward Denekamp and Bertha Jacobs, and a sister of Mrs. Henry W. Germann. Funeral services will be held at the Tharp-Sontheimer-Tharp funeral home at 10:30 a. m. today, with interment in Beth Israel cemetery.

Dies



MISS ESTHER R. DENEKAMP, woman diamond expert and former state worthy grand matron, Eastern Star, died yesterday morning of injuries suffered a week ago in an automobile accident.

The New Orleans Business & Professional Women's Club, Inc's mission is to promote equity in the workplace for women through advocacy, education, and information. The association still functions -

Quota International has members in 14 countries across the world who work every day to save lives within their communities. - http://quotabr.org/

Esther joined her parents in the Beth Israel Cemetery in New Orleans.

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Luck of the Irish - a Post Script written on 2025/05/26 (Teal's Birthday)

Jennifer and I traveled to Ireland (Jennifer's gift to me) from 4 May to 18 May 2025 - a wonderful and beautiful trip where we were joined by Lili and Lee Church/Shields.



On 9 May 2025 my brother in law Lee and I climbed to the top of one of west Ireland's taller hills, Diamond Peak (photo above).



On this walk, as we paused for breath at the highest point, a lovely couple (above) offered to take our photo (below).



In conversation I learned that the couple were Dutch.

It was a wonderful twist of fate, I offered, to meet a *Dutch* couple at this high and remote mountaintop.

I explained that I was the first of four generations descended from Irish ancestors to return to Ireland and that those ancestors, the Denekamps descended from Jews fleeing the Spanish Inquisition to Holland.

There they took their family name from a Dutch town, *Denekamp*. Their descendents, in turn, emigrated from Holland to Ireland and still later my great grandfather Edward Denekamp had emigrated to New Orleans. (cf 1875, Denekamps in the New World)

Amazing coincidence, said the husband: I know the town of Denekamp; it's not far from us.

May 2026: Still More Luck of the Irish

30 May 2026, one hundred and fifty-one years after the Irish Denekamps de-camped to Louisiana, Moses Denekamp's great great great great great granddaughter Zoe Gieseke writes to DF: I'm doing a 5 week study abroad course that goes to Ireland for 10 days, I'm so excited to go and I'm really enjoying the history we've been learning.