

The Regnery Family's Journey

"On my mothers side I have a coffee grinder that came from Germany."

Cody Horne

Gretchen Regnery who lives in Mill Valley, California sat down and spoke to me about our families immigration journey. I chose to interview her about her side of the family because I only know a little bit about their immigration here to the United States. She is my Grandmother on my mothers side.

Her grandfather on her dad's side came to the United States from Germany in the 1860's. "My great-grandfather immigrated to the United States in the 1860's" said Gretchen. This means that he went to the United States during the American Civil War which was from 1861 to 1865.

There were a couple of factors that enticed him to come. There were better opportunities at the time in the United States such as farming and resources. "There were better living opportunities and he bought a farm." Gretchen said during the interview. "My great grandfather came over from Europe to buy white oak in the 1860's because it was hard to find good oak to make wine barrels in Europe." White Oak was very hard to find in Germany because there was great need for it to make various things such as wine barrels.

The name Regnary comes from a village in Germany where the name is very common. Most of the population there had the last name Regnery. My mother Willow tells people that anyone with the last name Regnary is related to her. "It comes from Germany and may have come from the French

speaking part of Belgium...It occurs frequently in the area around the old Roman city of Trier. It also is sometimes spelled Regneri." Said Gretchen. The name Regnery in German means someone from the region of a town called Regen.

When asked about the traditions we have kept from Germany Gretchen said, "Christmas and German cookie recipes. My mothers side did all kinds of German foods. We eat cookies and other typical German foods. They grew cabbages and made sauerkraut. They all spoke German." To this day I make cookies with my grandma at Christmas time.

There was a company that was is the family for a while but was sold eventually. It was started in the late 1800s by a man named William Volker. "It was called Western Shade Cloth and it was started by William Volker who was not a relative in 1897. My grandfather took it over eventually. He bought the other shareholders out in 1912 and built the business. They made industrial fabrics." This factory became very successful and was the factory where my grandmother grew up. The factory was called Joana Western Mills and they manufactured window shades.

My Grandmother with the extended members of her family and I have only ever met my great aunt and her two of her three children. Many members of my family are politically conservative and have supported things I don't believe in. I enjoy spending time with my Grandmother and learning about her childhood.