

Past Tracks



A Publication of the Southern Arizona Genealogy Society

October 2026
Volume 33 Number 1

In This Issue

- October Monthly Meeting
- President's message
- Education Opportunities
- News from the Library
- Stories and articles from members
- And more!

Contributors

Mike Day
Darillyn Doss
Irene Little
Gordon Tans



Southern Arizona Genealogy Society October Monthly Meeting

Friday, October 16, 2026

1:00 PM - 3:00 PM

Recreation Center at La Posada
(directions on page 27)

Hybrid Meeting (Zoom and In-Person)



MARY MARTIN



COL DICK BUSHONG

Mary Martin will speak on Common Genealogy Myths

Col Dick Bushong will talk about his experience as a B-17 pilot in WWII. Dick is 103 years old and a resident of La Posada

Monthly SAGS Meeting
16 October 2026 1:00 - 3:00pm
Rec Center at La Posada
Hybrid Meeting (Zoom and In Person)

First Speaker: Mary Martin - Five Common Genealogy Myths

Mary Martin has been a member of SAGS for many years and currently serves as Secretary on the Board. She has written 5 books on her family's history and is near to completion of a 6th. She has spoken at SAGS monthly meetings several times over the last 5 years. This presentation was given at the Green Valley Rotary Club last Spring. Mary spends her summers back in Minnesota visiting her children, their spouses and her 10 grandchildren.

Second Speaker: Col. Richard Bushong - Living History, memories of a WWII B-17 pilot who flew 28 missions over Germany.

Col Bushong is 103 years old and lives in La Posada. He volunteers at the Titan Missile Museum and at the Pima County Aerospace Museum.

Group Activity: Welcome Back! Table discussions of genealogy research and discoveries over the summer of 2026.

President's Message

October Autumn Productivity



MICHAEL HARDY DAY

In accounting circles, there is something called the October View... how well a company does in a full month without the distractions of holidays and vacation time. This probably goes back to the agricultural economy where people were busy with harvest, food preservation and preparation for the coming winter throughout October. If you didn't prepare for the winter, you could enter the spring of the year without enough food for yourself or your animals.

In Green Valley, October can be a very pleasant month of moderate weather and renewing social connections with people who have been traveling. Mary Martin and I have had a busy summer of family visits and reunions, short trips with friends and engaging with the cultural life of Minnesota... everything from classical music to Weird Al Jankovic, historical societies to the SPAM museum, theater to the State Fair. I walked every day in our neighborhood and recorded or photographed over 60 species of birds.

Your SAGS Board of Directors have been busy as well. We will be launching a new AZSAGS Website in October and are continuing to find new ways to promote the society in the community and to make our SIGS and monthly meeting experience more engaging and useful in our family history research. We want members to get more value from their membership and we endeavor to operate the society more efficiently.

I hope you had a good summer of family history research and travel. I am looking forward to sharing our experiences with you at our first monthly meeting on Friday, 16 October 2026.

Mike Day

Monthly SAGS Meeting
19 November 2026 1:00 - 3:00pm
Rec Center at La Posada
Hybrid Meeting (Zoom and In Person)

First Speaker: Karen Rautenberg - Accomplishing my Journey Towards a Genealogy Certification

Second Speaker: Martha Love - Threads Through Time: One Ordinary Family's American Journey. Building a Family History Through Records, Land Grants, and Family Stories.

Three years ago, Martha Love followed one of life's sweetest adventures—her young grandchildren—to Tucson, Arizona. Before retirement, she lived in Houston, Texas, where she taught high school statistics. Her husband, John—yes, she really did marry for Love!—worked in the petroleum industry as a geologist. Together, they raised three daughters, two of whom now live in San Antonio, Texas. Over the years, Martha has uncovered fascinating branches of her family tree. She has explored her mother's Williamson and Brown connections in North Louisiana, followed the trails of her "Cajun Louisiana cousins," including the Sonnier and Trosclair families, and has now turned her attention to her husband John's family history. That journey has taken her to Wisconsin and into the story of John's Swedish grandmother, Carlsson.

Group Activity: First Thanksgiving / First Year Table Quiz

December Meeting: Family Holiday Traditions / Ancestral Customs, Potluck meal.



APPLY FOR A **FREE** LIBRARY CARD TODAY

The policy for library cards at the **Green Valley-Sahuarita Genealogy Library** has recently been revised — the necessity for the Library to use library cards remains but the cards are being offered **FOR FREE**.

The Library encourages you to check-out books that will expand your research possibilities. You may complete an application online (website coming soon) or apply at the Library to receive your card. The limit of three books for three weeks will continue to be the only restriction.

Education Opportunities



Please inform the facilitators/instructors if you will attend their session. Some classes require a Zoom link. The latest SIG information is always on the [SAGS website calendar](#). You may contact Pat Edwards at education@azsags.org for more information.

Let's Talk Genealogy (SIG)

First Weds of each month: October 7, November 4, December 2

9:30am - 11:30am

In-person Meeting

Genealogy can be confusing. Sometimes, you just need to be with some friends to talk about a research problem. Maybe you want to share a breakthrough you have been working on for years. That's the purpose of "Let's Talk Genealogy" – friends talking about genealogy and family history. Meetings are held the first Wednesday of the month. Meeting location: La Posada, The Pavilion, Building #60, 2nd Floor, Synergy Room.

SIG Leader: Bob Pitcher; rpitcher1040@gmail.com

Beginners Genealogy SIG

Fourth Thursday of each month: October 22,

3:00pm - 4:00pm

Our Beginners Genealogy SIG, **open to non-members & members**, is a great way to get started with researching your family tree. Meetings are held on the 4th Thursday of the month from 3:00-4:30pm at the Genealogy Library at La Posada (665 S. Park Centre, Green Valley) and via Zoom. For more details, send an email to Jon Otto, SIG Leader, at jonotto48@yahoo.com.

DNA / AI Special Interest Group

Fourth Monday of each month: October 19, November 23

3:00pm to 4:00pm

In-person Meeting

This SIG is all about two of the most useful new technologies for Genealogists, DNA and AI. The format is free form and hands-on, so bring your laptop and your questions to its leader, Mike Day. Mike is a former teacher and technologist who brings a decade of experience as a user of DNA testing services and a career of understanding technologies. Mike has been exploring the use of AI in Genealogy for the last few years. If you have any questions or would like more information, contact Mike Day at michaelhday@me.com

Meeting Location: Genealogy Library at La Posada 665 S Park Centre Ave, Green Valley, AZ 85614.

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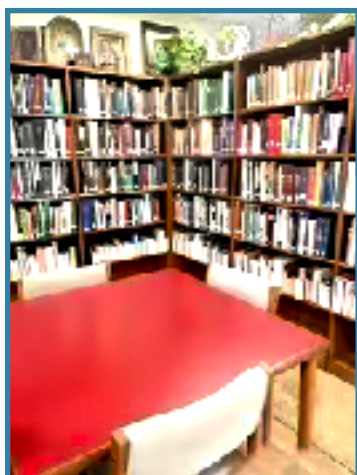


Green Valley - Sahuarita Genealogy Library

at La Posada
Darillyn Doss

- The Genealogy Library has a new look -

Have you visited the Library lately? What do you think of the new look? In an attempt to push the walls out and make the room larger, the staff rearranged the furniture and the book shelves. Remodeling with an addition of square footage is not on the horizon for the near future, so it was necessary to maximize the small amount of space between the walls.



The staff desk has been shortened so the volunteers will not be sitting at the research tables, leaving the tables free for researchers. The placement change of the research desks will allow for a total of 13 chairs and will make an attendance of 15 persons a possibility for future educational webinar presentations.

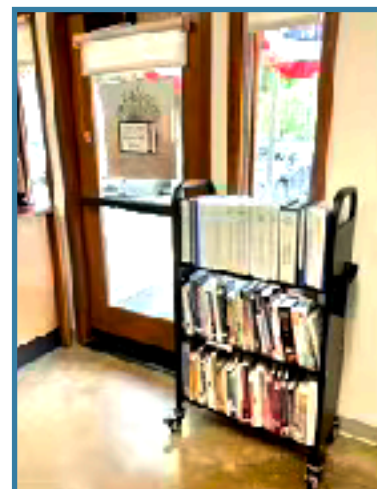
The large revolving magazine rack has been dismantled with two racks being placed on the wall in the area where hooks for coat racks were previously located. A third rack will be used by the staff for their informational sheets and is on the wall behind the staff desk, complemented by a new cork board for general staff notes.

The replacement of one library cart and the addition of another has allowed for the removal of the Books for Sale from a bookcase. The books have been placed in a separate area - the library cart by the courtyard door. Additionally, the how-to and manual books have been removed from the permanent bookcase to a separate area - the library cart by the front door.

These new changes are very exciting for the Library because they allow for more researchers to access the incredible resources that the Genealogy Library offers. Please stop by and admire the rearrangement and peruse the books. You might discover that crucial clue that will enable you to make a significant breakthrough in your family history research.

665 S. Park Centre Ave, Green Valley, AZ
520-648-4016

Monday - Friday 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Saturday 9 a.m. - noon



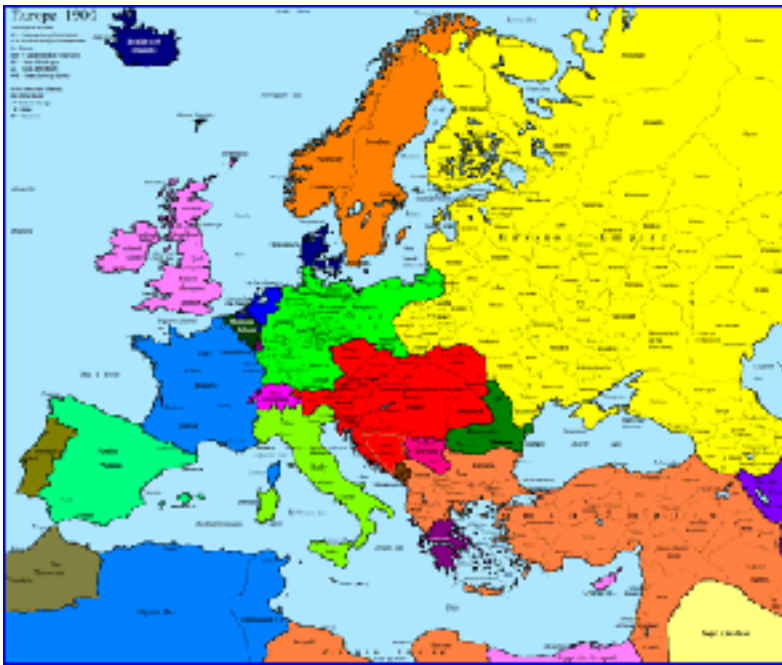


*For
your
Reading
Pleasure*

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What does Nationality and Ethnicity Mean?

Irene Little



EUROPE IN 1900 CE



EUROPE IN 2020 CE

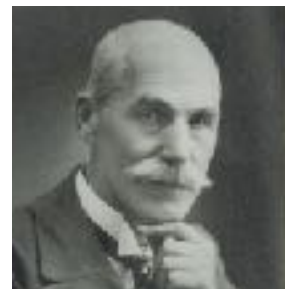
What does it mean to be an American, a German, a Ukrainian or an Austrian? What nationality and ethnicity we are is an accident of birth of where you were born. Does that really mean that we have to fight wars over an accidental event?

The definition from Wikipedia is: “**Nationality** is the legal status of belonging to a particular nation, defined as a group of people organized in one country, under one legal jurisdiction, or a group of people who are united by a common culture, history, traditions, and awareness of a common origin. An **ethnicity** is a group of humans who identify with each other on the basis of perceived shared attributes that distinguish them from other groups.” Looking at the 2 maps, you can see that by 2020 the the large empires of Russia, Austrian-Hungarian, Ottoman and German Empires have splintered into many small nationalities. Ethnicity

□ was not part of these decisions and the nationality of its citizens have changed.

I consider myself GERMAN even though I was born in Bohemia, now in the Czech Republic and my father considered himself a Ukrainian and my mother was an Austrian by birth. I grew up from the age of 4 to 15 in Germany, primarily in Kassel in the state of Hessen. But I have spent over 70 years in the USA. Now I compromise and call myself a German-American. Still having a German accent makes my German attachment easier.

That brings me to my father. On April 15, 1896 Myron Andreas Marenin was born, the middle child of 6. At the time of his birth, Javoriv, Ukraine was part of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire-the autonomous region of Galicia.



Andrij Marenin



Ukraine was part of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire-the autonomous region of Galicia. Hence he was considered an Austrian. Personally, he considered himself a Ukrainian all his life. His father Andrij Marenin was born and died in Javoriv (11 Mar 1856 --28 Feb 1928). He was the principal of the local high school in Javoriv. Myron's mother was Ludmila Buczatska (16 Sep 1866, Berwinkiw, Kosiw, -1920 Javoriv). She was a housewife. When WW I started, my father joined the



MYRON MARENIN 1916

Ukrainian free army and fought against the Russians. According to him, he was captured 3 times. In 1918 I found him in the Austrian newspapers as a prisoner-of-war. He escaped each time because of lax security in the camps. Speaking Ukrainian, Polish and Russian meant that he had no trouble reconnecting with his unit.

From Nov 1918 to Jul 1919, the West Ukrainian People Republic became independent, making my father a Ukrainian. He was slated to be the Minister of Transportation in the free Ukraine. But in 1919 the western part of Ukraine, including Javoriv, was given to Poland and the larger eastern part of Ukraine to the Soviet Union. Ukraine as a country



Free-West Ukrainian People Republic – Myron 4th from left



MYRON & MARIA

ceased to exist and my father became a Polish citizen. In 1935 the Police in Prague informed him that he had lost his Polish citizenship because he did not return to his birthplace to keep his Polish citizenship active. He became stateless. On Aug 11, 1933 he married my mother Maria Franziska Rutchter (called Mia), an Austrian citizen (24 Sep 1902-Saaz, Bohemia, Austrian-Hungarian Empire – 31 Aug 1981 Natick, Massachusetts). Since the nationality of a wife is that of her husband, she became Polish when she married. But in 1935 along with her husband she lost her Polish citizenship and became stateless. She had 6 nationalities without moving more than 50 km from her birthplace. All 3 children Roman (1937-2017), Otto (1939) and Irene (1941) were born stateless. The Poles closed all schools of higher education in Lviv, Ukraine where my father studied. To further his education as an engineer, he left Lviv to study in Prague from 1922 to 1929 and received his engineering degree from the Technische Hochschule. From 1929-1932 he worked as construction engineer for Skoda in Prag/Pilsen. In 1933 he received his degree on Modern Road Construction from the l'Ecole Polytechnique de Prague. From 1932—1934 he was a Sales Man for IMPORT-EXPORT of electrical instruments and from 1934-1937 he worked as a Patent engineer in Prague. His most important job from 1937-1945 was being a Locomotive Engineer for the Skoda Werke in Pilsen. From there he was recruited by the German government to work for them in Berlin-Mittweida from 1942-1943. As part of that assignment he was employed as an engineer for Henschel & Son in Kassel, Germany. He most likely worked on locomotives, his specialty. That was important for his career after the war. I do not know what else he did for the Germans.

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After my father returned from Berlin, we all applied for and were granted German Citizenship on September 9, 1944. We became Reichsdeute-full citizen of the German Reich, not Volksdeutsche-citizen of German descent living in other countries. These 2 types of citizens were treated differently. My parents had to show documentation that there were no Jewish ancestors in our family for 5 generations. That sounds like going from the frying pan into the fire, but in the long run it worked out for the best.



Roman 7y, Otto 5y, Irene 3y

May of 1945 the war ended for the Czechs and Germans in Czechoslovakia. General Patton and the 3rd Army arrived in Pilsen on May 6, 1945. Immediately, the Czechs started looking for Germans and weapons. They came to our house and my parents were very worried that I, Irene, as a 4 year old would greet them with a "Heil Hitler" sign. Fortunately, I had been well trained to greet them in Czech. It was the official policy of the Czech government that all Germans were to be removed from Czech soil and they started rounding up all the Germans in Czechoslovakia. Eventually about 1.6 million ethnic Germans were rounded up and expelled from Czechoslovakia purely because they were of German origin-ethnic cleansing before it was called that. My parents were asked to come to the police station to register as aliens, but they did not return. My maternal grandmother, Franziska Hermine Rutherford at the age of 69 (22 April 1876, Saaz, Bohemia, Austria-3 November 1961, Willimantic, Connecticut) was left with her 3 grandchildren- Roman 8yr, Otto 6yr and Irene 4yr. About a week later she

was asked to come to the police station to register and she had the presence of mind to bring her 3 grandchildren with her and registered all 4 of us. That night we spent in the cellar of the police station, a scary place. The next morning we were brought to one of five prisoner-of-war camps around Pilsen. We never saw our home again. My grandmother and mother had had enough sense to stuff valuables into Otto's coat pocket, Roman's clothes and sewed some money/valuables into my coat. That was all the possessions we ever had from



our lives in the "Sudentenland". We still did not know what had happened to my parents. My brothers being older were free to roam the camp and one day they saw my parents thru the fence in the camp next door. Who was the one to identify them is still an argument between my brothers. Fortunately, this discovery allowed us to be reunited. Many others were not.

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The big worry in the camp was which army would get first to Pilsen—the Russians or the Americans. The Russians were rumored to rape, pillage and ship all the refugees in the camps to the East. On May 6, 1945 the 3rd army under General Patton arrived in Pilsen. We were very relieved. On May 8, 1945 the Czech people overthrew the German government and war effectively ended for us. Because of an agreement with the Russian General Antonov, acting chief of the Soviet staff, Americans had to stop along the Karlsbad-Pilsen-Buwei's line and Eisenhower ordered Patton to go no further than Pilsen. Eventually Prague was liberated by the Soviets but not before thousands of civilians had been killed in the final fighting east of Pilsen.

But the American soldiers were no angels either. They also would come into the camps to rape women. My mother was accosted by a US soldiers. Fortunately, my father was nearby and stepped in and the situation was resolved. Food was scarce in the camp. The American authorities resolved this bad situation by asking for volunteers to go with the soldiers. These women got food, gifts and housing in exchange for companionship. After a week or so, Patton and his command authorized the removal of all Germans in the camps; they belonged in Germany. Five trucks came to the camp and loaded us onto trucks. They told us not to worry if different members of a family were in different trucks since we all would go to the same place. That was not true as different trucks went off in different directions. Hopefully, split families were able to find each other later with the help of the Red Cross. Fortunately for us, all 6 of us were on the same truck. The truck stopped in the middle of the forest near the border of Czechoslovakia and Germany and they told us to get off since we were now "HOME" in Germany in a place/country to which we had not been and did not know. The most exciting part of this new development for me was that I had acquired a baby carriage somehow. But unfortunately for me, very soon it was required for a girl that seemed to have an appendicitis attack. Hopefully, she survived. We did not know where we were until we found a soldier with a map who told us that we were in Germany at the border close to the town of Schwandorf. From there we wandered for weeks thru Germany, each night staying in schools and churches. Eventually the American occupation authorities found a place for us to stay in the little village of Altfeld, Northern Bavaria by going thru all the village houses and deciding how many rooms the family needed. The rest were assigned to refugees. You can image how excited these farmers were to have total strangers dumped on them. Strangers who did not talk the very strong local dialect. We were assigned the attic in the Schafer household—an older couple and their 10 year old niece. Eventually, we became friends. My mother ended up working for the Mayor of Altfeld as a secretary since she had been a foreign correspondent in Pilsen. Eventually, my father found an engineering position with Henschel & Son in Kassel, Hessen, West Germany. In 1949 all 5 of us relocated from Altfeld to Kassel and we were reunited with my father. In 1956 the American Refugee Program came to an end and my father decided that he wanted to get as far away from the Russians as possible. On March 17, 1957 my parents and the three children emigrated to the US and settled in Willimantic, Connecticut. My grandmother joined us in 1959. My father's European degrees were not recognized in the US and he worked as a draftsman until his forced retirement in 1966. In 1964, he became a US citizen.

My Mother's nationalities journey is simpler. 1902 she was born an Austrian in Saaz, Bohemia. In 1919 the Austrian-Empire ceased to exist and Bohemia became part of Czechoslovakia and she became a Czech. In 1934 when she married my father in Prague, she became a Polish citizen and 1935 she became stateless along with my father. In 1940 she tried to become a Czech citizen, but her application was denied. In 1944 my father, mother and 3 children became citizens of the German Reich--Reichs Deutsche. As you can see, she had 6 different nationalities without ever moving more than 50 miles from her birthplace Saaz: Austrian, Czech, Ukrainian, Polish, Stateless, German. After emigrating to the US in 1957, she became a US citizen in 1962.

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So what does Nationality mean? Nothing except what the authorities decide for you and not what you feel you are.

Summary of Citizenships-Nationalities of Myron Andreas Marenin

1896-1918—Austrian

1918-1919—Ukrainian

1919-1935—Polish

1935-1945—Stateless

1944-1964—German

1964-1981—US citizen

Ethnicity is determined at a very early age by the accident of your birth in a particular community. My father always considered himself an Ukrainian to the point that his tombstone in Florida is written in Ukrainian Cyrillic script.— “Мйрон МАРЕНІН” rather than the western script “Myron Marenin”.

We live on Little Blue Ball in a vast universe. There is no reason to fight over little parts of Earth. We have no place to go.



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC](#)

Earth seen from the Moon

Halt the Hun!

Anti-German Sentiment in Fremont, Michigan During World War I

By Gordon Tans



In the 1870s and the years that followed, immigrants of Dutch and German origins found Newaygo County, Michigan a desirable place to settle and establish farms and businesses. Many of them prospered in and around the towns of Fremont and Reeman.

Included among these immigrants were my maternal great-grandparents Jan Hindrik Deters (known as J.H.) and Gese Plescher (known as Grace). J.H. Deters (age 27) arrived in Newaygo County in 1881, having emigrated from Alte Piccardie, Grafschaft Bentheim, a county in western Germany. In the same year Gese Plescher (age 23) arrived in Michigan, emigrating from Osterwald, a village very near Alte Piccardie in Grafschaft Bentheim.

J.H. Deters quickly settled into his new life in Newaygo County. In 1882 he was one of several Dutch and German immigrants who formed the First Christian Reformed Church of Fremont. In May of 1884, J.H. Deters and Gese Plescher were married in Fremont.

Five years after his arrival, in March 1886, J.H. filed a Declaration of Intent (Book W, Citizenship Records, Circuit Court, Newaygo County, Michigan (Indexed July 8, 1987)) to become a U.S. citizen. This declaration included this statement:

I, John H. Deters, solemnly swear that it is bona-fide my intention to become a CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES, and to RENOUNCE FOREVER, all Allegiance and Fidelity to each and every Foreign Prince, Potentate, State or Sovereignty whatsoever, and particularly the King of Germany of whom I have been a subject."

In April 1889, J.H. Deters bought 80 acres of farmland in Garfield Township east of Fremont. He bought a second parcel of 80 acres nearby in April 1903.

J.H. Deters and Gese Plescher began their family very soon after their May 1884 marriage. The following February (1885) they had their first child, my future grandfather. Their family eventually grew to 10 children by 1903. These are their children's names, birth dates and eventual spouses:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Birth Date</u>	<u>Spouse</u>
John Herman	27 February 1885	Ada Pikaart
Jennie E.	30 June 1886	John Timmer
Anna	5 February 1888	Albert Oosterhouse
Henry	9 January 1890	Jennie De Boer
Herman	1 January 1892	Anna Cook
Hattie	28 October 1893	Gerrit Hamberg
Garrett	27 November 1895	June Kolk
Harry	25 August 1900	Marian Ohlman
Jacob	25 August 1900	Clara F. Krohne
Joe	1 April 1903	Clara De Weerd Jeanette Veldink

Their six oldest sons were all young men in 1917-1918 when they were required to register for the draft for the "Great War," later known as World War I. Only Joe, who turned 15 years old in 1918, did not register. Two of the sons, my grand uncles Henry and Garrett, were particularly affected by the war, but in distinctly different ways.

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Grand Uncle Garrett Deters was the only one of the sons who was drafted. He was called into active duty in November 1917 and served as a mounted veterinarian trained to care for the army's horses and mules. By June 1918 he had arrived in France where he served until his discharge in June 1919. For more than 50 years after that, Garrett, dressed in his army uniform, walked proudly "with back ramrod straight and shoulders square" in the annual Fremont Memorial Day and Old Fashioned Day ("Fremont's Old Soldier to March Again," byline Dave Hewitt, clipping from *Fremont Times-Indicator*, circa 1975.) parades. He became a visible symbol of patriotic service.



GARRETT DETERS CA 1919



HENRY DETERS, 1920S

Grand Uncle Henry Deters, five years older than his brother Garrett, was seen very differently. Whether fairly or not, the local citizens of Fremont saw Henry under a cloud of disloyalty and suspicion. Maybe it was something he said or did, or maybe it was the company he kept. More than a hundred years after the fact we can't really be sure what caused him to be viewed so poorly.

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When World War I broke out in 1914, the reputation of Americans of German heritage took a definite turn for the worse. At first the United States maintained neutrality in the war. Nevertheless, sympathies of the American people generally lay with Great Britain and its allies from the beginning. But at that time there were a very substantial number of German immigrants in the United States, and it is true that some of them did vocally support the German war effort.

Germany did not make it easy for the United States to maintain neutrality. In February 1915 the Germans sank the *William P Frye*, private American vessel. In May of that year the huge passenger liner *Lusitania* was sunk by a German U-boat and 1195 persons died, including 123 Americans. These events greatly fueled anti-German sentiments.

The German army was being characterized in the media as ruthless and savage. To a large degree, this was an idea that was planted by Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany himself. In 1900 the Kaiser had made a speech, bidding farewell his German expeditionary corps then sailing from Bremerhaven to China to defeat the Boxer Rebellion. In his speech he said:

When you meet the enemy, he will be defeated! No quarter will be given! No prisoners will be taken! Those who fall into your hands are forfeit to you! Just as a thousand years ago, the Huns under their King Etzel made a name for themselves which shows them as mighty in tradition and myth, so shall you establish the name of Germans in China for 1000 years, in such a way that a Chinese will never again dare to look askance at a German.

The Kaiser's theme of advocating Hun-like savagery was widely reported in the European press at the time. Later, at the start of WW I the term "Hun" was revived as the basis for characterizing the Germans as barbarians and savages, lacking respect for European civilization and humanitarian values.

Thus, the German soldiers, and Germans in general, came to be called by the pejorative term "Huns." This terminology was used in a public campaign to sell war bonds to help defeat the savage "Huns."

One particularly scary war bond poster shouted out "Beat back the Hun with Liberty Bonds"



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In early 1917 Germany sank four US merchant ships and a passenger liner, finally prompting the US to declare war on Germany on 2 April 1917.

At that point, anti-German sentiment was very high, verging on hysteria. The entire country viewed every German-American as a potential enemy alien. Many of them endured persecution and harassment. <https://www.saturdayeveningpost.com/2017/03/alien-enemies-americas-persecution-german-citizens-world-war/>

These feelings were rampant in western Michigan, too, as illustrated by an incident that occurred in Manistee, Michigan, some 70 miles northwest of Fremont. An article published in the Manistee News Advocate on September 6, 1917 reminded its readers that spies could be lurking anywhere:

German spies!

That was the expression on many lips when the fire department received a call at 10:30 this morning to the Manistee Shipbuilding company, which began operations this week.

However, the alarm was caused by nothing more sinister than some burning grass on the Manistee Iron Works property behind the Pere Marquette depot. It required 20 minutes to snuff out the blaze, because it had worked down to a depth of two feet into the accumulation of bark beneath the grass.

Yes, spies and disloyal Germans, real or imagined, could be anywhere! Even in Fremont, Michigan. In this super-heated political atmosphere, the loyal citizens of Fremont thought they had identified at least two German sympathizers among the local population: Ben Kunnen and Grand Uncle Henry Deters, both of whom were natural born U.S. citizens.

Ben Kunnen must have thought he was about to die on the night of 5 December 1917, when he was taken from his home by the Fremont vigilance committee (i.e., a vigilante mob) and hauled to Fremont Lake. There a rope was placed around his neck and he was ordered to sign a pledge of loyalty to the United States. After he complied, they cut an iron cross in his hair with a clippers and painted the word "Hun" on his forehead (in iodine). Later he was returned to his home and warned that he had better keep his pledge. This is the pledge he signed:

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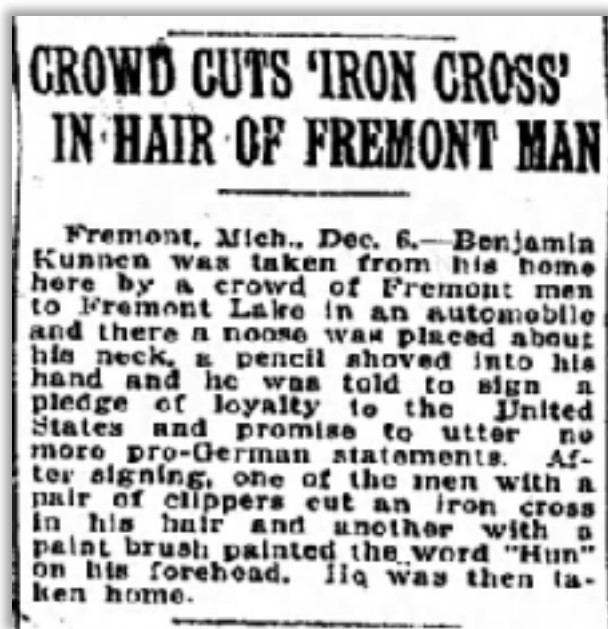
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To the loyal citizens of the U.S.:

In a spirit of utter humility and supplication, I, Ben Kunnen having come to realize my unfitness and unworthiness to share the protection of the United States government, hereby beg of the citizens of the United States the privilege of withdrawing, retracting and recalling and apologizing for each and every remark and interference I have made concerning the President or the United States government which lacks proper esteem and respect due from a person enjoying the protection of this Flag; and further beseech the people for forgiveness and mercy for my hitherto grossly insulting and unpatriotic remarks concerning the President of the United States and the Government. If I am allowed the privilege of remaining longer under the protection of this Flag, I solemnly swear that I shall never mention or in any manner refer to the President or the Flag or the Government of the United States, or any of her Allies, except in the utmost respectable manner, and in a tone of deepest respect, I further solemnly swear that I shall never again mention or in any manner refer to Germany or her Allies or anything appertaining thereto, except in the proper tone of disgust and disapproval.

Ben Kunnen

Bentheimer's International Society Newsletter, 4 October 2018, citing *Grand Rapids Press*, December 6, 1917 Thursday Page 4 Column 2.



Detroit Free Press, 17 December 1917, p. 10

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A few days later, the Fremont vigilance committee secured two more loyalty pledges, according to the *Grand Rapids Press* (*Bentheimer's International Society Newsletter*, 4 October 2018, citing *Grand Rapids Press*, December 10, 1917 Page 4), which reported:

Fremont Vigilants Get Two Loyalty Pledges

Fremont December 10 – Fremont's vigilance committee which recently took Ben Kunnen to Lake Fremont and painted the word "Hun" on his forehead served notice on two more Fremont citizens, Henry Deters and Rev. W.J. Kuipers that they mean business. As a result Deters signed a pledge to not utter any pro-German statements and Mr. Kuipers decided he would not press his request that the ministers of the city hold an indignation meeting to protest the treatment given Kunnen. The minister was requested by his residents to sign a loyalty pledge and did so.

Reverend Kuipers disputed this report, making his position clear in the pages of the *Fremont Times-Indicator* a few days later (see below).

The *Fremont Times-Indicator* devoted considerable space to the story on December 13. It reported (*Bentheimer's International Society Newsletter*, 4 October 2018, citing *Fremont Times-Indicator*, December 13, 1917, Page 1.) on the Ben Kunnen incident in this manner:

Fremont No Place for Pro-Germans

Indignant Citizens Take Action to Unify Loyalty Sentiment in this Community

Indignation over continued expressions of Pro-German sentiment in this community reached fever heat last Wednesday night when Ben Kunnen, who is said to have made unpatriotic statements, was forced to sign an apology to the public for his alleged Pro-German attitude and kiss the flag as a token of humility and of submission to the United States government.

Mr. Kunnen was taken from his home on Dayton Street to a cottage on Fremont Lake and there a prearranged program was carried out. Being unable to secure an iron cross from the Kaiser in time for the ceremony a symbol of the sacred emblem was clipped upon the head of the victim and the word "Hun" was printed upon his forehead with iodine. As an evidence of future loyalty to the flag and the great nation which it represents Mr. Kunnen kissed the "Stars and Stripes" and subscribed to the following apology. [See Kunnen's pledge quoted above.]

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Rev. Kuipers tried to make his position clear in this letter published in the same issue of the *Times-Indicator*:

Rev. Wm. Kuipers States His Position

Pastor of Second Chr. Ref. Church Answers Critics and Corrects Error in Press Article.

To the Citizens of Fremont:

Inasmuch as my loyalty seems to be questioned by some of this locality, I wish to take this means of letting you know just where I stand in respect to the government and the war. Before this country had severed relations with Germany, I was a pacifist, a believer in the stand and policy of our ex-Secretary of State, the Honorable William Jennings Bryan. Since war has been declared and pacifism seemed no longer tenable, I have cast my lot with the government and do what I can to bring this war to a successful end.

In respect to the article printed in the Grand Rapids Press under the date of Dec. 10th, stating that I had called upon the ministers of this city to hold an ‘indignation meeting’ and furthermore that I had signed a pledge of loyalty, it is false. As a minister of the gospel and as president of the Minister’s Conference, I felt it my duty to pulse their sentiments regarding the methods employed of late in this city for the purpose of stamping out Pro-Germanism and see if we ought not voice our disapproval is the so-called “indignation meeting” to which the Press correspondent referred. Finally, I signed no pledge of loyalty. No one has ever requested me to do so. If the proper authorities feel the need for this, I gladly will. What made the correspondent of the Press write this, I am not able to say.

Yours for America

Rev. Wm. Kuipers



Rev. William Kuipers. From https://hymnary.org/person/Kuipers_W

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Rev. Kuipers seems to be questioning, if not outright criticizing, the method Fremont citizens used to promote patriotism by vigilante committee (mob) violence. While he denies having signed a loyalty pledge, he does state he will sign one if “the proper authorities” feel it is needed. This seems to emphasize his concern that such matters should be handled in good order by proper authorities, not by an uncontrolled self-appointed group of vigilantes.

Times-Indicator coverage of the day included the text of the loyalty pledge signed by Henry Deters, printed on page 1 of the paper:

Public Apology

December 5, 1917

To My Fellow American Citizens:

I feel I have made wrong statements relative to the present situation as to the American and German trouble, and I take this way of publicly apologizing for any and all such expressions. I wish to say that in the future I shall do my very best to be a true citizen of our United States.

I can see the folly of the past. I have a brother in the war service and should necessity require, I am ready to serve my country as a soldier (As noted earlier, his brother Garrett Deters was already in active duty, and Henry had already registered for the draft.).

Henry Deters

In the presences of Henry McCarty and Henry Keegstra

Despite Rev. William Kuipers’ apparent concern about the methods of the vigilance committee, the committee’s efforts seem to have been received with widespread public approval. The editor of the *Times-Indicator* published this editorial (*Bentheimer’s International Society Newsletter*, 4 October 2018, citing *Fremont Times-Indicator*, December 13, 1917, Page. 4.) applauding and justifying the actions of the vigilance committee while condemning all pro-German sentiments:

Fremont Against Pro-Germanism

The fact that the “hazing” incident of last Wednesday night has aroused no perceptible opposition among the truly loyal and patriotic citizens of this community is evidence that the people are awake to the danger of allowing Pro-Germans to poison the country with expressions of sympathy for common enemy and disdain for our own government and its conduct of the war.

The time for temporizing is past. The metal of loyal Americans is aroused. It would be difficult to suppress this feeling of indignation as it would be to defeat the Kaiser's armies with popguns. The feeling has found tangible expression in all parts of the country and will continue to run rampant until the disloyalists are suppressed or the congress has passed laws to cover the cases. The vaporings of a few "old women" against these alleged "atrocities" are mere sentimental twaddle and will not affect the issue. It is idle to believe that true Americans will suffer their feelings to be outraged without an effective protest. The result is inevitable.

The affair of the other night was not the work of gangsters and low-brows. Local business and professional men, clerks and farmers were prominently identified with it. It was an expression of protest from the best elements of the community. These men are lovers of peace and order but the provocation was irresistible and they acted.

It is rumored that other cases are under investigation, and those nurturing disloyalty in their hearts will serve their own welfare best by ceasing to make themselves obnoxious to patriotic Americans.

The present session of Congress will doubtless enact drastic laws to cover all similar cases. The following petition has been signed by hundreds of thousands of loyal Americans and the enactment of laws in accordance with these suggestions will make violence to suppress Pro-Germanism unnecessary.

Often, Dutch immigrants met with the same suspicion as German immigrants. The American people of those times tended to confuse the Dutch and German peoples. The Dutch language sounded like German to English-speaking people, and "Deutsch" (meaning German) and "Dutch" were such similar words. On top of that general confusion, the Netherlands remained neutral in World War I, which led many to conclude the Dutch were sympathetic to Germany in the war.

The Christian Reformed Church ("CRC") denomination was itself vulnerable to such confusion and suspicion.

The "Dutchness" of the CRC caused major problems during the First World War. In January 1918, *The Anchor*, the Hope College student newspaper, editorialized that "the average Dutch settlement in America is a hotbed of disloyalty." By average Dutch settlement, the editors clearly meant CRC strongholds. The Grand Rapids labor newspaper, *Michigan Tradesman*, touted the same theme, calling Calvin College, the

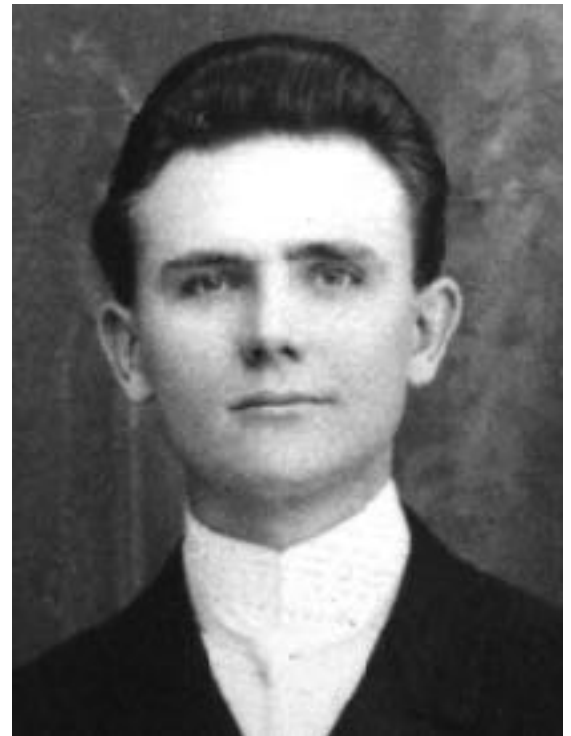
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denominational school of the CRC, “a bed of pro-German ideas, prejudice, and propaganda,” and staffed by “German sympathizers” for its refusal to stop teaching German (Swierenga, Robert P. “Herman Hoeksema and the ‘Flag in Church’ Controversy,” *Leben: a journal of Reformation life*, December 16, 2016. Accessed 26 April 2021 at <https://leben.us/herman-hoeksema-flag-church-controversy/>).

As hinted at by Rev. Kuipers entanglement in the Fremont incident, it was difficult for the church leaders to avoid controversy over questions of loyalty. Within months after the Fremont incident another Christian Reformed Church became involved in a very public dispute over patriotism and displaying the American flag in church.

Rev. Herman Hoeksema of the Fourteenth Street Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan “stirred up a hornet’s nest” in 1918 when he removed the American flag from his church sanctuary and preached against its presence during worship services. He believed it was an improper entangling of Christian worship and civil patriotism to include the flag in the sanctuary. He insisted that he was himself a patriot, that good Calvinists should support the war effort, and that it was entirely proper to display the flag at all other types of church events – but not during worship. Rev. Hoeksema met with fierce criticism from all quarters. Although he was probably correct according to his Calvinist theology, he did not get support from the leadership of the Christian Reformed denomination in Grand Rapids. Matters got so intense in Holland that he is said to have started carrying a pistol for his own protection. Eventually his own parishioners hung a huge flag in the Fourteenth Street church sanctuary (without the pastor’s approval), and that seemed to bring the public controversy to an end. Fifteen months after the incident Rev. Hoeksema left the Holland church and accepted a call to Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids (Swierenga, Robert P. “Disloyal Dutch? Herman Hoeksema and the Flag in Church Controversy during World War I,” *Origins* (Historical Magazine of the Archives of Calvin College), vol. xxv, no. 2, 2007, which contains a thorough discussion of the controversy.).

The theological dispute over patriotic nationalism and display of the U.S. flag in a church sanctuary during Christian worship services continues to this day, although without the intensity of 1917-1918.



Rev. Herman Hoeksema, circa 1915. From Archives, Calvin College.

Afterword

Grand Uncle Garrett Deters married June Kolk in 1921 and they had three children: Geraldine, Herbert “Lee,” and Ellis Earl. Garrett owned and for many years operated a variety store in Fremont. Garrett died in Bradenton, Florida in March 1983.

Grand Uncle Henry Deters married Jennie De Boer in 1915, well before the events described here happened. She delivered their first child about 2 weeks after Henry was forced to sign the loyalty pledge. They had four children in total: Gladys, Gerald, Jay and Jean Marie. Henry worked at various jobs over the years, including department store sales clerk, kitchen worker in the canning factory, and wall paper hanger. Henry died in Fremont in March 1970.

Ben Kunnen, whose full name was Albertus Ben Kunnen, was a farmer. He married Hazel Dobb, and they had at least seven children: Robert Marvin, Peter Henry, Albert Jay, Marvin Roy, Ronald Joe, Maxine June and Harvey. He died in Dayton Township, Newaygo County in June 1952.

Rev. William Kuipers left Second Christian Reformed Church of Fremont in 1919 and moved to Oakland CRC in Hamilton, Michigan. After that he served churches in Grand Rapids, Michigan and Passaic, New Jersey where he died in 1933. He was the author of the well-known hymn “By The Sea of Crystal” as well as several others (https://hymnary.org/person/Kuipers_W).

Rev. Herman Hoeksema became involved in several more theological controversies. Among other disputes he participated in, he disagreed with CRC over the doctrine of common grace. This led to his dismissal from the Christian Reformed church in 1924. Then he helped found the Protestant Reformed Church. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herman_Hoeksema.

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Map of La Posada Campus with Recreation Center at Western Edge. Entrance to Campus is off Continental on the East side.

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