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1. New Courtenay

Volume No. 7

My Family History

The purpose of this paper is to bring out the highlights in the Courtenay families of the more recent generations as well as to trace their history, their coming to America and the subsequent events related to their lives.

In order to do this it would be best to give a small introduction to give a background to the later generations.

Midway in the history of the Courtenay ^{family} Athens founded a town of Courtenay 53 miles south of Paris and took the surname of Courtenay. ^(1000 A.D.) Thus the name was established. Athens' descendants in France went to the Crusades. Reginald de Courtenay, one of the leaders arranged the marriage of his cousin Henry the 5th of England to Eleanor of Aquitaine and escorted her to England where

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he remained to found the English house of Caunterray.

In the early part of the seventeenth century my great grandfather and his three brothers came to New York city. The two younger brothers went boating one day on the Hudson, a sudden squall came up and capsized the boat. They were both drowned. The third brother had never married, this was my great grandfather's twin, so like him his parents could not tell them apart. Since the three brothers died unmarried my mother, brother and I are the sole representatives of that line of the Caunterrays. However my great grandfather met and married Catherine Ash of Mayflower ancestry. My grandfather was born in New York city but due to his father's early death from tuberculosis his father's mother bore that life in

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what was then considered a 'big city' (59,000) might cause her two sons to develop the same disease or she sent them to friends in Illinois, where they could grow up on a farm in the 'great open spaces'. Then, my grandfather finished high school he taught a district school for two years, then attended Beloit College in Wisconsin and later carried on the family tradition by studying law in the office of Charles E. Fuller, congressman from the district. After he was admitted to the bar he practiced law successfully in Chicago for a year but decided to take Grandfather's advice & go west. He and a friend, a photographer, also of an adventurous turn bought a horse and wagon and a stock of notions and dry goods, drove westward through Illinois, Iowa and into Nebraska

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disposing of their wares at the farm houses and villages as they drove along. Arriving in Lincoln the town appealed to them, inquiries confirmed this favorable opinion, the horse and wagon were sold and both young men, my grandfather was then 20, remained. This was in the year 1877, Lincoln was then a blossoming town of about 4,500! The town then had the hopes of some day reaching the magnificent proportions of 10,000!

One of the clients of the lawyer into whose office my grandfather went invited him to his home to spend the evening. My grandfather, fancying that the daughter of the house was a middle aged spinster, put his pipe in his pocket, went, prepared to spend a quiet evening smoking. Imagine his surprise when the daughter

proved to be an 18 year old beauty. My grandfather tactfully concealed the ruse; they were married a few months later!

My grandmother's father was also of English descent (in fact my entire ancestry except for one Dutchbacker line is all English for the last 500 years). He was born in Putnam township where his family had lived for generations, some were friends and neighbors of George Washington's ancestors and an old will of one Henry Atkins records a legacy to one of the Washingtons.

His father was the "village blacksmith" only it was on a larger scale as he employed 10 men, a large establishment for a hundred and twenty-five years ago. It was my great grandfather completed his apprenticeship (at the age of 14 he had commenced it) at the

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end of seven years to a harness maker and saddler (we have his apprenticeship papers illuminated and sealed and return carefully put away) he resolved to seek his fortune in the new world.

His diary describes his six weeks trip to New York in a sailing vessel. His account of the city in 1845 is very interesting. One surprise was that only 3 meals a day were eaten in this country, five being the custom in England.

Discussing Albany he writes,

"Albany is a very handsome city I think superior to New York. The buildings are chiefly ^{brick} painted red and painted white. There are many very fine public and private buildings, the city hall is a very spacious stone building imitating marble.

There are some fine shops and wide streets with trees regularly planted on either side along the foot pavement which is very

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convenient to passengers in the summer. There are 12 Saddle Ships, I went in 2 of the principle ones and the Boss, for that is the name by which they call their masters here, was apparently a very intelligent man, he took great pains in shewing me his stock in trade and in asking me various Questions. This is the manner of Yankees generally, being very inquisitive. He took me to be a Dutchman.

There are only two trains leave Albany for Rochester daily, at 8 in the morning and one at 8 in the evening, the emigrants train. Travelling by railroad in America is not to be equaled to travelling in England. I was struck almost as bad as being in a waggon."

Some of my grandfathers friends were bound for Canada, he accompanied them up the Hudson

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and across New York to St. Thomas on the shore of Lake Erie. In a neighbouring town he found the a few-
ing he sought and in a new world of perennial forests, wild animals, abundant fruits & unusual beauty he settled down to live.

In the little town was an attractive young woman of American parentage; her mother had likewise come from England, with Governor Endicott in 1628. A brief stay in Salem, exploration of Massachusetts Bay Colony at official behest, the founding of Cheltenham, Massachusetts a trip to Rhode Island to aid in the founding of that commonwealth etc. marked their early years. All of them who could fought for the colonies in the Revolution, either as officers or privates. After the war Major Joshua and his son Frederick, being that peace was lastingly migrated with some of their neighbours to the shores of Lake Erie in Canada.

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Fredricks' daughter was the young woman and she married my great grandfather.

In the meantime, my great grandfather's brother and sister had come from England to Cincinnati, the brother, an Oxford man and a barrister in London decided to go west to the land of new found gold. A party with oxteams drove a wagon load toward for California, near Fairburn they were attacked by redskins, a circle of wagons was quickly formed and the Indians were finally driven off. Arriving in Denver, there a town of 200, he decided to stay, became territorial treasurer of Colorado and was elected first state treasurer of Colorado. Later my ~~grand~~ great, great, uncle went to Salt Lake where he knew Brigham Young and at length, after being some years on the way he arrived in California. My great grandfather stopped in Cincinnati to see his sister and was urged by her friends

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to stop in Fossil to visit friends
they had known in England Mr.
and Mrs. Luke Lavender. He did
so and was so much taken with
the town that he returned to Canada
instead of going on to California,
sold his business moved to Fossil,
built a home for his daughter and
brought ^{her} here in 1876.

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Very interesting,