

Meyers – Momrow Family History

The Meyers homestead was built in the 1850's. It was owned by John and Hannah Schriener. My great-great-grandfather, John Henry Meyers (Hiram Meirs, 1840-1906), left Germany because of the persecutions of German and Dutch citizens and settled in Schenectady. He was a blacksmith and hammersmith. Because of his experience in Germany he was disgusted with the idea of slavery, and when the Civil War broke out he enlisted as a private in the Northern Army. He was with Company K, 7th Regiment, New York Volunteer Heavy Artillery. He served as a blacksmith and was with the Heavy Artillery Division, presumably because he could manufacture and repair things. He was captured by the Confederate Army at Petersburg, VA and was a prisoner of war. His trade as a blacksmith kept him alive as a prisoner. If you've read any Civil War history you know that prisoner of war conditions were deplorable, but I imagine he survived because he was useful. When the prisoners were released at the end of the war, they were transported as far as Yorktown and then they walked the rest of the way home up the Hudson River. Enlisting in the army earned the German and Dutch immigrants their citizenship. John Henry Meyers was made a naturalized citizen in October 1864 - 100 years before I was born! I have his citizenship paper. He returned to Schenectady, but wasn't as healthy and strong as he was before being a prisoner.

Meanwhile, up here on the mountain, the Canadian logging industry was logging down through the Champlain Valley, Green Mountains, Berlin, Taborton Mountain (formerly known as Johnstown or Georgetown???). Clear-cutting of the mountain provided an opportunity for the German/Dutch immigrants to lease/buy land cheaply on the mountain. Henry Meyers (as he was known) began leasing this house in the 1870's. He worked for the logging industry on the mountain, and cut ice on the lake and sold it. As the community grew, he returned to being a blacksmith and he built a forge near what is now the intersection of Lawson and Taborton Rd. Remains of the stone foundation still exist (but you wouldn't know you were looking at anything if you didn't know it was there). He worked repairing wagon wheels, shoeing horses, forging chains, kitchen and farm tools, hooks, hinges, anything made from iron. Henry made the strap hinges that are still on our barns as well as the boot scrape outside our side door. He sent to Germany for his soon-to-be wife, Mary Elizabeth Sauerbrei (1852 – 1916). She sailed out of Bramen Harbor and he met her in New York City. She had her mother's fine spinning wheel with ivory posts, and a large roll top trunk, which carried the rest of her possessions. The heirs of the Meyers family still have these family treasures.

Henry and Mary had four children: Anna, Cora Louise, Emma (my great-grandmother), and August Louis ("Uncle Gus"). Henry bought the farm from John Schriener in 1882 for \$1000. (I have the deed) Mary was the first Sunday school teacher at the Church. The children had to learn Bible verses in English and in German. One of her students, Luella Gundrum Shoemaker, 98, still goes to Church and tells me about my great-great grandmother.

Henry died in 1906 leaving Mary to support herself and the farm. She applied for a widow's pension for Civil War veterans and was granted a pension of \$8 per month in 1908. Mary had to prove that her husband was, in fact, in the war and we have many letters and an affidavit from fellow soldiers. I have the pension paper, which is stamped by then Secretary of the Interior James Garfield. Mary also raised money by selling off small parcels of land and lakefront for people to build camps on Big Bowman. I have a stack of papers that are wrapped together and marked, "deeds from campers". She sold the land for \$1.00 per foot. I have deeds

from the sale of property, which is now owned by Schulman, Kooba, Simons, McQuaid and Izzo. There was more sold, but some deeds wound up with a surveyor and never returned, so I can't be sure about anything else without more digging around.

Anna was the oldest child, born in 1880. She eloped with Charles Hood and moved to Brooklyn, NY. They had met at the Saratoga races. Charlie was a New York fireman. Anna and Charlie had three sons, Charles, James, and Fred. Charlie and Jimmy married and lived in Brooklyn with their wives, Dot and Adele. They spent summers visiting the homeplace in Taborton and enjoying Big Bowman Pond. Jimmy and Adele built a camp on Taborton Road where they spent summers and weekends (698 Taborton Road).

Next came Cora Louise, born in 1883, who married James Quinn. He was called "Gentleman Jim" as he was never out of a full suit, shirt and tie, even to sit home on his rocker. They lived in Brooklyn also and had one child, Olive Quinn Baker. Louise wanted a camp on Big Bowman, so brother Gus sold her a parcel for \$1.00. Fred Rendert built that camp in the 50's. Grandniece, Peggy Momrow Connole and her husband, Joe, purchased it in 1965.

Emma, my great-grandmother, born in 1885, married Christian Joseph Momrow (Chris, born 1881), a Taborton man. He was one of 12 children of Fred and Mary Momrow (Chris' siblings include Fred, Conrad, John, Hattie, Lena). Mary died of tuberculosis when Chris and a younger sister, Lena, were very young. While the older children could help Fred on the farm, Chris and Lena were left on a wall in Berlin for someone to take them in. The pastor took them in until they were old enough to be indentured. Nick Teal took Chris in until he was 16, at which time he went to live with Ed Rendert's family. Ed had the Ford dealership in Averill Park. Chris had earned \$800 and went to Brooklyn where he bought a wagon and a team of horses, and established a business called Mountain Ice. They cut the ice on Lake Opatcon (spelling?) (on Long Island?). Chris' brother, Con, and many other Taborton men went to Brooklyn to work with Chris and the ice business. Adam Schumann (spelling?) from Sand Lake also had an ice and coal business in Brooklyn, as well as Pete Young. Chris and Emma were married in the living room of the Meyer's home, which was decorated with princess pine garland (wedding photo 1905).

Emma returned with Chris to Brooklyn and they had 3 children: John Henry, Arthur Christian, and Alma Louise. The three children spent summers with Grandma Meyers on the family farm when there were outbreaks of chicken pox and measles in the city. Chris and his two workmen sold ice and bags of coal up and down the streets of Brooklyn. Iceboxes were the only means of cooling and coal stoves were the choice for cooking. That business grew into Momrow Coal and Coke, a well-established coal and oil business, as well as appliance store, for the two sons, John and Arthur, who owned and operated the business until their deaths. John married Esther and had one son, John Jr.. Arthur married Margaret McCusker and they had two daughters, Mary Ann Mathews and Margaret (Peggy) Momrow Connole (my mother). Emma and Chris' daughter, Alma, married Fred Rendert and they lived in Menands with their son, Richard. Fred owned and operated Rendert Lumber Company, and he was also the building inspector in Menands for many, many years. Fred built many houses in the area, including a number of homes and camps on Big Bowman and the Berlin Fish and Game Club. Alma just celebrated her 97th birthday on December 23, 2006.

Henry and Mary's youngest child was August Louis. He was born in this house on December 30, 1889 and lived his entire 91 years here. He burned charcoal for a living, picked blueberries and had a taxi service bringing people from the city or the trains out to their summer homes on the lakes (photo 1922), and bringing mountain folk into Troy or Albany. During the summers, sisters Louise and Anna came up from Brooklyn to pick the blueberries (huckleberries). Gus had the kids (John, Arthur, Alma) put small pieces of paper in the four corners of the berry baskets so the berries would not spill out. Gus took the berries to Albany market where he sold direct to a baker and other merchants. Gus was a great friend of George Dobert, who also made charcoal, and they helped each other with the pits. George's son is Loren Dobert, who still makes charcoal at his house up the mountain a couple of miles. Gus married at age 51 to Florence and they had no children. Uncle Gus and Ray Manning built one of the barns together. It housed the first fire engine that Taborton had, long before there was an organized fire company. Harold Anderson was in the car/truck business and he donated a used fire truck to serve as Taborton's first fire engine. The Anderson's were long-time summer residents. They had a camp, which was torn down, and Fred Rendert built them a new one.

When Gus Meyers was getting on in years, he sold the farm to his nephew, Arthur Momrow, with the understanding that Gus would live out his days here. Arthur died suddenly shortly thereafter. His daughters inherited the property, and Peggy Momrow Connole bought her sister's share. Peggy and her husband, Joe, renovated the house somewhat as it needed to be rented (a second bathroom, updated kitchen). The house was rented to several families over 25 or so years. My parents no longer wanted to be landlords and we all wanted to keep the property in the family. My husband, Douglas Galbraith Boughton and I lived on Big Bowman, on property adjacent to my family's homestead. We sold our house on Big Bowman and bought the family farm from my parents. We moved in here in October 2005 with our first son, Cole Joseph, who was born in 2003. In January 2006, August Edward was born, a namesake for Uncle Gus. Doug and I are thrilled to be living on the family farm and raising the 6th generation.

While Arthur Momrow owned the property, the Church contacted him and asked to buy some land to expand the cemetery. Arthur wanted to donate an acre of land to the Church, but he died before he could do so. When his daughter, Peggy, inherited the property she knew of her father's wish, so she deeded an acre to the Church for the new part of the cemetery. Her husband, Joseph Connole, my dad, was buried there this past December 30, 2006. It's nice to have him just up the hill from us on family land. I'll be making my way up there too, but hopefully none too soon.

Here's some Bowman trivia: Lawson Road used to be called Henry Werger Road. Henry Werger was an original occupant at the end of the road. Lawson Road is called Henry Werger Road in some of the deeds that I have from the early 1900's. I don't know when the name was changed.

Submitted March 2007 by: Barbara Boughton,
great-great-granddaughter of
John Henry and Mary E. Meyers