

## THE SEVEN SONS OF MY GREAT GRANDFATHER DAN

### (My Grandfather's Six Brothers)

The seven sons of my great grandfather Dan and Catherine Dunkel Althouse must have pulled many tricks, prior to and after their father died at age 55, leaving Catherine widowed for twenty-two years. They appeared to have been enterprising according to the various ways they used to earn money. These are gleaned primarily from the stories and reminiscences overheard by me when Perres and Will sat together, both in the high 70's and I in my teens. Speaking of their younger days, they would go to dances held regularly at some location in their rural area. A group of city boys began to attend and were attracting their girls. So one evening they armed themselves with cords of wood, beat up the city boys, who never came back again to take their girls.

Several would drive regularly to Philadelphia with horse and wagon, over fifty miles, buy a load of fish and sell them enroute home. The farm dog followed the team, not unusual however one time the dog rolled himself in some foul smelling material as dogs will sometimes do. While prospective customers were about to buy fish, the dog would run up to the wagon, the people would smell the dog and think the odor came from the fish. Believing the fish to be spoiled, no sale and the boys arrived home with a wagon full of unsold fish.

It was customary in those days to "ride the rails" that is to hitch a free ride on freight trains, probably not legal but often practiced nevertheless. Several of the boys would, ride west to Ohio or further and each would buy seven horses, saddle one, tie the remaining six tandem, and lead them east. At home or enroute they were sold. I believe my brother Brooke related in his writing herein that one of them lost his life when a freight car full of horses for which he was caring, caught fire.

They put a horse or mule in a straw mow and drove it around to pack down the straw. This created a problem as to how to get the animal down to the barn floor after the straw bin or mow was filled. A rigging of ropes and pulleys did the trick.

In those days the water table was high. The smallest of streams flowed with a considerable volume of water especially in the spring. The streams abounded with edible fish. A few of them still small boys caught a lot of fish. Their father suggested that they ride horseback (the customary travel at that time and they were all horsemen) to their grandfather's home and farm (above Reading, along the Tulpehocken) and take some of the fish as a surprise for him. When they returned home they were asked if grandpop liked the fish. "Yes, he liked the fish and asked what they were worth and we said they were as big as 'quarter-dollar shad'". "You did not sell the fish to your grandfather?" They admitted to taking money from grandpop for the fish, whereupon each received a licking.

Note - Here again I repeat that their grandfather was the grandson of the immigrant and only the second generation born in America. There is one record showing that their grandfather bought 180 acres from their great grandfather for 600 pounds. Their grandfather had acquired much additional land. The grandfather of Perres and Will wished to dispose of his farm but none of the boys was interested. Great grandfather Dan was one of the boys. Then the grandfather fixed up all of the buildings after which the boys all renewed interest in the farm.

Here, I somehow, have two conflicting memories as to how he gave each a fair chance to acquire the homestead.

One is that he had them pull straws but I seem to recall them saying that grandpop told them to each write on a slip of paper the amount they were willing to pay. This was the time Adam [brother to Dan] won the homestead. Dan married Catherine Dunkel of Exeter Township then bought the large tract at the Schwartzwald Church.

Sometime prior to the death of their father (Dan) the boys all happened to be home at the same time. The grain was ripe and he asked them to each take a cradle into the field, line up, and mow across the grain field as he wanted to see all of them together. What pride a father of seven healthy boys must have had. What a picture it must have made, but no cameras had been invented that early. This was even before the advent of the reaper. However the cradle was an innovation when compared to a sickle. I wonder if it might also have been a scheme by great grandpop Dan to get some grain harvested. It was a woman's work to follow the cradles, with a rake, pull the row of grain into bundles called sheaf's about eight inches in diameter and bound the sheaf, not with twine but with

some of the grain. They would set the sheaves together in shocks. This was called binding and shocking.

Breakfast was eaten before six A.M. Work began at six A. M. in the field. A snack of sandwiches was served in the field at 9:00, dinner at 12:00, another snack at three, and supper at six, after which time the milking and barn work had still to be taken care of. The women milked the cows while the men fed, watered the animals and cleaned the stables, (removed the manure).

During the Civil War it was customary to post the names of all who had been drafted for the army. The posting took place on Penn Square. The boys were husking corn. One had ridden to town to see who was drafted. While the others were husking, one of them said, "Let's go to town and enlist". The other, to whom spoken was holding an ear of corn, threw it down, and said, "Let's go". While they were enroute they passed the brother returning from town. He looked very discouraged. They asked, "Was anyone listed (drafted) whom we know?" and the answer, "I was". Thus three of the brothers served in the Civil War including Uncle Will. All of this took place after their father's death.

The account of the Schwartzwald Cemetery gift out of the farm is included in Brother Brooke's account.

Several times while eating at Uncle Will's table it was customary for the maid to wait on the table but Uncle served the main course to each individual. Although with this bit of refinement an argument would be repeated and my grandfather Perres would tell his Brother Will (toothless), "Get a set of store teeth like I have, then you can eat like a man", and Uncle Will's reply was, "Perry, I'll die before I'll put someone else's teeth in my mouth". Whereupon he would gum his meat until all the good was extracted, then drop it into his palm and give it to the dog, which always sat beside him at the table.

6. The next few pages were written by my Brother Brooke about our (3) great grandmother and her seven sons. She survived her husband Dan by twenty-two years. He has also added information about our father, mother, and a bit about mother's family. Written by Brooke Althouse, son of Irwin and Annie.

6. Reference to the family tree will aid in reading the following history - Daniel Althouse my great grandfather, born October 12, 1805; died May 28, 1860. Catherine Dunkel Althouse, wife, born June 10, 1908; died January 22, 1882. Dan was a farmer. He left Northern Berks, taking over a large tract of land adjacent to Schwartzwald Church, along the old toll road to Boyertown, Southeast of Reading. He built a *bam* to house his livestock and crops. At the time of building, it was the largest barn in the county. He was a successful farmer, acquiring some wealth in his occupation. They are buried in the Schwartzwald Cemetery. The plot is located in the lower part toward the front of the church in the cemetery addition. When this portion of land was needed as an addition, Daniel donated the ground with a provision that all lots must be sold, none to be donated. Later he had a death in the family and due to the provision he had made when he donated the land, he was required to pay for his lot. He thus indirectly purchased a piece of his own land.

His wife Catharine was a small woman. As their children were all boys, she needed help in the home. She often had two maids to assist. This was partly necessary for milking the cows. Few men did the milking in those days. It is said that she would take her fishing pole and go to the nearby stream and catch a mess of fish if she wished fish for a meal.

Children:

4. Edward - Died single. Was burned to death while traveling East with carload of horses. Car caught fire, so did his clothes, in leaving the train in a hurry, he jumped into an oil barrel. This happened West of Pittsburgh.

4. Isaac - Engaged in coal-mining business, was well off financially when he sold out to the Reading Co., Corp. coal barons.

4. John Perres (my grandfather) was short in stature, went by name of Perres. As a young man he taught school and was the proprietor of the Center Hotel. He went into the brewing business, but due to continual 'cave-in ripening vaults (thought to be, but not proven, sabotage) the business failed. He started a successful tin-smith business with a partner in Reading. The partner absconded with the assets of the business leaving Perres with the debts. He made restitution for those debts over a period of years. He farmed for several years in Alsace Township near Heckman Hotel, Northeast of Temple. It was a dairy farm making butter and marketing. After that, for many years, until he retired he conducted his own retail coal yard on Green Street, below Tenth Street, in Reading. He lived retired a few years,

dying at the age of 84 years. His home for many years in Reading was at 1000 Oley Street.

His wife was Mary Heckman. It is said she was a beautiful young lady. She was a farm girl and always liked it in the country although she spent most of her married life in the city. She was a good mother, a wonderful housekeeper, cook and baker. She suffered half of her life with a swelling on the left side of her neck, caused by a strain when she was a girl. She and Perres were members for many years before they died, of Covenant Memorial Methodist Church, Ninth and Elm Streets, Reading, although the Althouse family was predominantly Reformed.

4. Daniel - followed the horse trade, was a buyer for his brother William and other dealers. He was short and heavy. It was always said that he was among the best judges of horses, that he could make a horse run if it had only three legs. He was a volunteer Civil War veteran.

4. William - Also a Civil War Veteran volunteer. He followed the horse trade. He also was short and heavy. For years he had the Wm. Penn Horse Bazaar, Market Street, Philadelphia. On busy sale days the auctioneer would sell at the rate of a horse a minute. He raised fast (race) horses on his stock farm at Phoenixville, Pa. In 1892 his horse Wm. Penn broke the world's record for a two year old and again in 1893 as a three year old. Old horsemen, even today, recall the famous Penn horse breeding line.

His wife, Emma operated the Wm. Penn Hotel connected with the Wm. Penn Horse Bazaar, located in the 3200 or 3800 Market Street. The account is told of William and Daniel that one day while their father was away; they decided to hitch the bull to the buggy. While they were doing this, their mother came to the kitchen door and called to them to unhitch the bull and stop their foolishness. They said she should go in the house or else they would put her in the buggy and take her along. They drove the bull down to the Schwartzwald Hotel. After that Daniel was nick-named "Bull Althouse".

4. George - was the clerical type and was said to be a good accountant. He lived in Reading but died at the age of forty-one.

4. Aaron - Died single at the age of twenty.

Offspring of J. Perres Althouse:

5. Irvin Daniel (my Father). He was 5 feet 7 $\frac{1}{2}$  inches tall. He was boy when his father moved to the farm. About 28 or 19 years of age when they returned to Reading. He learned the trade of stove mounting and worked for the Mt. Penn Stove Works until his early thirties when he moved his family to a farm he purchased in Maiden creek Township, The harmful effects of the iron dust in the stove works was the reason for his move. He conducted a successful dairy farm, shipping the milk to the coal regions. He specialized in raising potatoes, especially the "Blue Victor" variety. He raised ten acres of potatoes each year, retailed them in the fall of the year in Reading, nine miles away. This was all done by horse and wagon. He spent his retired years in a home he purchased in Laureldale.

5. Hattie S. - In late middle-life married Leroy E. Reed, manager of Singer Sewing Machine Stores. She was short in stature but a very active and capable person. She was a good mother to her three step-children, who were about fourteen, seventeen, and twenty years of age when she married. Always regular in attendance in her church, Mr. Reed, too, was a church man, a Methodist.

5. Katie - died in infancy.

5. Edward - never married. Died at thirty-three years of age. Never followed any special line of work, was poor in health.

5. James P. - was a carriage painter by trade but changed to stove mounting after he could not take the varnish and paint poisoning. From middle-life on he worked in the hosiery mills being expert at fixing the knitting machines.

5. Charles - died in infancy.

5. Brooke - died in infancy.

5. Jennie - never married. Lived with her father and kept his home for him after her mother died and sister Hattie married. She did some dress making and fancy work. She was interested in singing and for many years was a member of the Choir of Holy Memorial Church (Methodist), Fifth Street, Reading. She was in ill health for many years.

Annie R. Althouse (my mother and wife of Irwin) - short and plump. A good mother to four boys she raised. Two others died at birth. She liked the city but spent most of her married life on the farm due to her husband's health. Moving to the farm she missed the city conveniences. She made the best of

conditions, made a pleasant home. She was an exceptional housekeeper, cook, and baker. She never followed any special line of work before her marriage. The ancestry of Annie R. Althouse as nearly as 1 (J. Brooke Althouse) her son, recall from experience and told to me by her mother (my grandmother) Rebecca Rapp:

Ancestry of Annie Retta Althouse:

Samuel R. Rapp - Her father was a six foot tall man. He was the only child raised by his widowed mother. Her maiden name was Axe. From what I saw as a child, and heard, I would judge that he was of English descent. By trade he was a house painter and paper-hanger. Except for a few years in New Holland, Pa. and at the time of marriage hi or near Norristown, Pa. he lived and worked in Reading. His disposition was on the quiet side; he liked reading, and was a thinker. He was a regular church man at Covenant Memorial Methodist Church, Ninth and Elm Streets, Reading. A Civil War Veteran, being a volunteer.

Rebecca (Cornog) Rapp - was a short and plump person, raised in Norristown, Pa. Her father was of Welsh descent. He owned and operated canal boats, operating between the coal regions and Philadelphia and intermediate points. His income was large, but after providing well for his family, he was a free spender and good natured and generous. At one time he owned land that is near or part of the center of Norristown. Grandmother told me that he owned a tract of land on which he allowed a negro to live if he paid the taxes. After a given number of years the taxpaying negro owned the land but it did not seem to bother him (her father). He was generous through his carelessness. Grandmother told me that her father and two other men went into partnership in having a canal boat built. Her father gave the dimensions to make it, the second one ordered it, and the third partner ordered it still larger. After it was built it would not pass through the locks (due to size) at Norristown. The boat could then only be, used between Philadelphia and Norristown. Mrs. Cornog, my great grandmother was a Lee. I know little of her except that grandmother always spoke well of her and that she must have been a jolly person. She must have been a busy mother as she had six children to care for. It is told that Mrs. Cornog (maiden name Lee) and her family decided to search into their ancestry to make a family tree. After some search had been made it appeared that they were heading toward General (Mad) Anthony Lee of Revolutionary fame, or ill fame, so they dropped the matter as no one at that time would wish to acknowledge lineage from Gen. (Mad) Anthony Lee. General Lee came close to being tried for treason because he ordered retreat at the Battle of Philadelphia, when we were being victorious.

I remember Grandmother speaking of two sisters and four brothers. Am writing as I can recall. The brothers all enlisted in the Civil War I do not recall their names, except that only one survived the war and his name was Adam. He was a drummer boy as they were called, age fifteen. He was very heavy and died young of a rheumatic condition induced through exposure during the war. The other three brothers were killed.

One was cited for bravery because he exposed himself to retrieve the flag when it had been shot from the mast. Her sisters' names were Martha Taylor of York and Tamsen Long.

My grandmother Rebecca Rapp was also a member of Covenant Memorial Methodist Church. She was a great reader and a very good story teller. She would entertain her grandchildren by playing games and telling them stories. She was very good with children.

I now add a few notes to Brother Brooke's account:

When the terrible Civil War between the North and the South began, one of my grandmother's four brothers was in business and living in the South. He, not wanting to fight against his blood brothers living in the North, abandoned his business and began fleeing North. On his way, at one point, was suspected to be a "Northerner" was nearly imprisoned. By the grace of a tavern keeper's wife he was served with a meal and sent on his way by night. He reached the northern boundary safely.

[Althouse, Harry N.; Althaus – Althouse; A genealogical booklet; 1977]