

This and That-Fill out the Elwer family tree

Written by Helen Kaverman

Monday, June 25, 2012 7:52 AM - Last Updated Tuesday, November 06, 2012 3:09 PM

Evelyn “Evy” Martin, of Fort Jennings has been climbing family trees for at least 24 years. She remembers taking her son, Jeff, along to the LDS Library in Lima when he was just a baby. She has spent hours in the Delphos Public Library searching for info on ancestors, on the micro film of the Delphos Herald. Evy has been digging for the roots of Pohlman, Hoersten, Grothaus, Elwer, Martin, Halker, Goedde, Luersman, Recker, Ruen and Schulte families — just to name a few. She has at least 10 three ring binder albums filled with documents, pictures and all kinds of information.



Evy is the daughter of Art Hoersten and Thelma (Pohlman) Hoersten. The family lived on a farm west of Delphos. Evy married Jerry Martin and they have three children, Michelle Porr, Louise Crawford and Jeff Martin and five grandchildren. Evy was employed at Drapery Stitch in Delphos for several years.

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Evy now does most of her searching on the internet. She subscribes to Ancestry.com and finds it very helpful. Evy carefully documents all her information. Through the internet she met an Elwer cousin, Michael Brehmer. They have been working together on the Elwer family. The late Imogene Elwer, a well-known historian, did considerable research on the Elwers. She traveled to Fuchtorf, Germany, and visited with the Budda – Elwer family and had members of that family visit her at their home near Fort Jennings. Evy and Mike found a few minor variances between their discoveries and Imogene's. They would like to share the Elwer story, as follows:

Dear Extended Elwer Family

By Evelyn Martin

and Michael Brehmer

About 25 miles south of Osnabrook, Germany, lies the small village of Fuchtorf. On some maps, to the east of the village, there is an area named "Elve", which indicates the location of the original Elve/Elver/Elwer farm. In many areas of Europe, it was the custom for a farm to retain its name through many generations. Farms usually received their names from one of their earlier owners. Once the name was established, however, it usually remained regardless of whether or not the farm changed owners. When a person moved onto a farm, he would change his name to that of the farm, an important fact to remember when reading the history of our Elwer ancestors (really Schmedt, as you will see below). In 1758, Georgius Elver/Elwer, the "colon" (farm owner) and his wife, Elizabeth (Redecker) lived on the Elve-"hoff" (farm) in Fuchtorf, Germany, with their 5-year-old daughter, Anna Gertrudis. On 4 April 1758, another daughter, Anna Maria, was born, but the mother, Elizabeth, died a month later on the 5th of May. Tragically one month later on 7 June 1758, the father, Georgius, died leaving the two little girls orphans, both still very young and not able to take on the Elver farm. Living on the Elver-farm, but not related to them as far as can be determined, was the family of Joannes Wilhelm and Anna-Maria Elizabeth (Schlebbe) Schmedt. A young couple, with two children of their own, they agreed to raise the two Elver girls as their own. As recorded in the Harkotten II von Korff land records, the Schmedt's took over the Elver cottage and farm on the 12th of June 1758.

In an agreement, the Schmedt's put all of their money into the cottage. Because of this, their two already born children, Johann Henrich and Anna Gertrud (after coming of age) would receive from Elver cottage 20 Reichthaler (about \$35) and a cow for their dowry. Should one die this dowry would go back to Elvers cottage. The children yet to be born would have to be looked after accordingly. The Schmedts would pay all the taxes on the Elwer cottage and farm over a number of years and by 1770, the tax books show that the cottage was fully paid.

As described above, in the custom of the times, the name of the farm was retained and the Schmedts changed their name to Elver/Elwer. Of the two original orphaned Elver/Elwer girls Anna Marie died in 1761, but the oldest, Anna Gertrudis, married Casper Nierkamp and their ancestral lines continue to this day in both the United States and Canada.

Of the original Schmedt (now named Elwer) children, Johann Heinrich Elwer-Schmedt, who was born 1 December 1754, married Maria Christina Laufmoeller on 21 Oct 1788 and they had 10 children. Their youngest, Friederich Wilhelm Elwer, was born on 26 May 1811. In 1837, Friederich Wilhelm left Fuchtorf and sailed to America.

Friedrich Wilhelm, or William Frederick as he would be known, arrived in New Orleans. He stayed there for a while and then moved up the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers to Natchez, Mississippi; Memphis, Tennessee; and Madison, Indiana; and then to Cincinnati, where a

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number of other emigrants from Fuchtorf had settled.

In the Holy Trinity Church of Cincinnati on 30 October 1838, he married Christina Stratmann-Schwienheer who was also from Fuchtorf. Christina had emigrated with her younger brother, Casper, arriving in New York aboard the "Howard" on 15 October 1836. In a letter by Imogene Elwer, a granddaughter recounted that Christina "landed" at Fort Jennings and heard jobs were available in Cincinnati. So she and another girl walked from Fort Jennings to Cincinnati.

Wilhelm/William and Christina lived in the neighborhood of the Holy Trinity Church in Cincinnati's 5th Ward, where on 20 February 1840, their first child, Henry William, was born. A daughter, Catherine, followed soon after in 1841. In 1845, another daughter, Maria was born. A second son Bernard J. was born in 1848. Around this time the family moved to the west side of Cincinnati to Storrs Township, where tragedy struck.

In six weeks time, more than 4,000 lives were lost in Cincinnati's Cholera Epidemic of 1849. Two of those were Catherine and Maria Elwer, the daughters of William and Christina, who died on the same day 12 June 1849. It's said Christina also had cholera, but she recovered to have another child, a son Joseph, born 19 April 1851.

(Note: In both their obituaries in the Delphos "Kleeblatt", it's stated that Wilhelm and Christine had four of their six children die young. We have not found any record of the fourth child yet.) Again, in Imogene Elwer's letter, it is written that according to a great grandson of the couple, William had worked at a couple of jobs in Cincinnati. He said that William's last job was in a brick yard where he drove horses to turn a wheel which held bricks above a fire. There was an accident, and a co-worker was killed. The owner was much relieved when he learned it was only one of the workers killed and not one of his prized horses.

Imogene noted that descendants all agree William "took up boating" as they called it. "My grandmother talked of their living on a canal boat. She related how she washed the clothes and hung them on the boat to dry", quoted a granddaughter.

On 22 August 1853, the middle son of William and Christina, Bernard J., age 5 died. Of the six children born to them, only the oldest, Henry William, and the youngest, Joseph, survive.

After the death of Bernard, the Elwer family moved from Cincinnati to Delphos, perhaps to escape working in the factories and return to farming. They certainly wished to get away from the periodic cholera outbreaks in Cincinnati, which we know had claimed at least two of their young children and possibly the other two. There were already emigrants from Fuchtorf living near Delphos such as Eickholt, Picker and Schwartzengraber, which influenced their decision to move.

The Elwer's settled on a plot of land south of Delphos and to the best of our knowledge, all persons named Elwer in the United States are descended from the two sons of William and Christina, Henry William Elwer and Joseph B. Elwer. (Note: Otto Hellman married an Elwer and lived on the old Elwer property on Route 66, just south of Delphos.)

We have traced our direct ancestors, the Schmedts, back to 1625 with the birth of Jasper Schmedt in Fuchtorf, our 7th Great-Grandfather. Research indicates that the Elwer surname has disappeared in the Fuchtorf region. One of the descendants of Anna Gertrudis Elwer is Professor Heinrich Ostholt from Germany, whose genealogical research provided much of the ancestral data for this story and tracing Fuchtorf family ancestry back to the 1600s.

Gabriele (Uphues) O'Sullivan from London, England, a cousin through the Schlebbe side of the Elwer-Schmedt family, provided the back story of the Elwers and the Schmedts and how the family came to be. We also acknowledge Bob Ebbeskotte for his contributions and

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genealogical research. Excerpts from a letter by the late Imogene Elwer were also included. Just recently, Evy received an e-mail from another cousin, Sister Maureen Wild, of British Columbia, Canada. Sister Maureen is coming to Cleveland for a retreat. During that time, she plans to visit Delphos and her many Elwer cousins. Sister Maureen said that Virgil and Rita Elwer and Virgil's sister, Irma Grismore, visited them in Canada in the 1970s. Urb and Ruth Osting had also visited with John Henry Wild.

Sister Maureen would like to visit with her Elwer relatives when she comes to town. She plans to arrive in Delphos on Thursday, June 21. Her visit will be brief, because she has to leave for Cleveland by 2 p.m. on the 22nd.

Interested Elwer relatives can contact Evy at: martinevy@hotmail.com.