

THE SEARCH FOR A COMMON MAN'S ANCESTORS

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THE SEARCH FOR A COMMON MAN'S ANCESTORS

Preface

It never fails. Talk about your family tree and you will run across someone who can trace his or her family tree back to some famous character in history. Or another's ancestors go back a thousand or more years. I would never voice doubt about their claim but underneath, there is in me, a touch of green-eyed skepticism.

Green-eyed because they were already at a place I hoped to be one day. After searching for family records for more than 50 years and unable to reach back any further than St. Domingue in the late 1700's, I feel entitled to a touch of jealousy.

Also, it is not difficult to feel some skepticism. I have used a magnifying glass researching old hand written records and I know how difficult it is to decipher them. The older the records, the more difficult, even when the author had good handwriting skills. Add in the ravages of time on the paper, crossed out mistakes, poor handwriting and drops of ink obscuring letters of possible strange words and it often makes for a guessing game. Many word spellings and definitions of words in Shakespeare's dictionary are vastly different from those in our 21st Century Webster's Dictionary¹. And that is just for the English language.

So if a one's ancestors were common people, finding them can be a daunting task for a common man. When I was a child my grandmother Mary Fizell said she heard that Fizell was a French name but she had no information to verify it. I was a young GI on temporary duty at US Airbases in France in 1955. On several occasions I asked the local inhabitants who spoke English if my name was of French origin. Most responses were negative although one gentleman thought my name meant "a piece of string".

¹ Shakespeare dictionary - <http://www.william-shakespeare.info/william-shakespeare-dictionary.htm>

Also, I did not have an affinity for the language, learning a few French words while I was there, all of which I forgot long ago.

Researching our family name has one advantage over most surnames. There are just not many of us in the world. It is rare to find the name Fizell in a telephone book as I learned in 1984. I used my computer to search every telephone book in the United States and Canada, then wrote to each Fizell located. I doubt I used one hundred postage stamps. The effort was very successful, providing approximately thirty responses, several of which were from very distant cousins.

In 2000 I created the <http://www.fizell.org> website to post our Fizell family tree on the Internet, in hopes of finding more relatives who could help add branches to our tree. I was fortunate to meet other Fizell families, unrelated to our family, and they permitted me to publish their family tree on the web site. So far, there are five different Fizell Family trees on the web site, three located in Australia.

For lack of a better name I have called our family tree the Philadelphia Branch of the Fizell Family Tree. Several years ago I ordered three microfilm strips containing records of St. Domingue's French Colony from the Mormon Church² in Utah. There was a warning that the records were written in French. In anticipation I bought an electronic English/French translator. When the microfilm arrived in the local LDS facility I believed I was prepared to go home with new family history information. However, the electronic translator could not identify many of the words in the records. Accent marks did not match up in words with the same spelling and the handwriting was poor. The LDS microfilm was to be returned to Salt Lake City in several days. I located a woman who spoke and read French. For a fee she agreed to review the microfilm and translate the records, especially the portion where I located a record of a birth of a Fizel. After two hours of trying to decipher the 18th century French scrawl, she told me it would take her many more hours with an uncertain outcome, and did I wish to continue? No!

Where in France or why they left their home in the first place is not known, what I do know is the probable path they took that led them to the United States of America, and finally to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It all began little more than 100 years before the first Fizel set foot in the New World. I believe it went something like the following –

² Latter Day Saints Research - <http://www.familysearch.org/>

Book One

Chapter One – The New World

Christopher Columbus arrived at the island of Hispaniola on December 5, 1492. On his second voyage in 1493 he founded the first Spanish colony in the New World on Hispaniola. The island came to be known as Santo Domingo, the name of the principal city on the island. Santo Domingo was the Spanish name for St. Dominic, the founder of the Dominican order of Monks.

The Spanish conquered the indigenous population, the peaceful Taíno Indians who were quickly decimated by European diseases and brutal slavery as they were forced to search for gold for the Spaniards³. Gold deposits on the island quickly became exhausted. The Spanish then focused their efforts upon Mexico and its riches of silver. With only several thousand settlers remaining, Santo Domingo became a supply station for Spanish Galleons crossing the ocean between Spain and Mexico.

By the early 1600's Spain had completely abandoned the western end of Santo Domingo. France quickly took up the void, planting French settlers on the northwestern coast of the island and on the near by island of Tortuga. Tortuga, already occupied by pirates, smugglers, run-away-indentured servants, and deserters from passing ships, posed problems for the French. In order to maintain a semblance of law and order and in an attempt to domesticate the pirates, women in French prisons, accused of prostitution and thievery were sent to Tortuga. France named her portion of the island of Hispaniola, St. Domingue, the French name for Saint Dominic. The French families with the surname of Fizell would not reach St. Domingue until the 1780's.

³ Hispaniola.com site - http://www.hispaniola.com/dominican_republic/info/history.php

However, another French settlement included a Fizel family. They were members of the French Acadians who settled along the East Coast of Canada. Finding themselves pawns in the frequent wars between England and France in the 17th and 18th century's, the Acadians declared themselves neutral, refusing to take up arms for either side, which proved disastrous for the Acadians.

The War of the Grand Alliance⁴ against France resulted with the complicated treaty of Ryswick in 1697⁵. France was ceded the western third of the island of Hispaniola creating two permanent colonies, St. Domingue for France and Santo Domingo for Spain. Unfortunately for the French Acadian settlers along the coast of Canada, the treaty of Ryswick awarded England the sole ownership the provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island and they became subjects of England.

When the French and Indian war began in 1755 the British government demanded the Acadians take an oath of allegiance to the British monarch but because the oath also required renouncing a key article of their Catholic faith, they refused. In retaliation 12,000 Acadians, three fourths of the Acadian settlers, were dispersed in what was called the Great Expulsion and their homes were burned. The largest group was returned to France, while others were resettled in small groups throughout North America.⁶ Some were transported to St Domingue, some to Louisiana⁷, and others to segregated settlements throughout the American colonies⁸. The Julien Fizel family living in Louisbourg, Nova Scotia may have been part of those Acadians returned to France. There may be a thread between Julien Fizel and Simon Fizell, who appears in St. Domingue some 30 years later.

St. Domingue had been the destination for many French settlers since the early 1600's and soon became one of the richest colonies in the world, primarily producing cane

⁴ Grand Alliance - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_of_the_Grand_Alliance

⁵ Wikipedia encyclopedia - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Ryswick

⁶ History of the Acadians - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Acadians#Elsewhere

⁷ Acadian exile - <http://www.acadian-cajun.com/exsd.htm>

⁸ History of the Acadians - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Acadians#Elsewhere

sugar. As the colony developed, the planters required an unlimited supply of labor but the Taíno Indians were nearly extinct. An estimated 800,000 African slaves were imported during this time period so that by 1788 St. Domingue's population consisted of 27,717 whites and 476,987 blacks. Ninety five percent of the blacks were slaves.

The French Revolution was underway⁹ and the United States successfully won its freedom from England in 1783¹⁰. With freedom in the air, the fuse was lit for a slave rebellion and it exploded on the night of August 22, 1791 when many white settlers and black free persons were massacred. By 1804, the only successful slave uprising in the history of the world would establish Haiti as a free country.¹¹ A Fizel family was killed and their house burned according to information found on a web site I came across while searching on the Internet several years ago. Unfortunately I lost the link to the web site so there is no footnote here. Should any reader of this history come across the site, please forward the link on to me. The email address is joe@fizell.org

Note: September 4, 2006. Thanks to France's Mr. P. Gorse. He found the reference to the slain Fizel, however the year was 1815, the location the island of Martinique.¹² You may need to translate this link in Google.

⁹ French Revolution - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Revolution

¹⁰ American Revolutionary War Dates - <http://homepages.rootsweb.com/~hoppes/RevWarDates&Battles.html>

¹¹ History St Domingue - <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~saintdomingue/Brief%20History.htm>

¹² Madinina 1502 - <http://madinina1502.free.fr/histoire/frise/1822.php>

Chapter Two – Philadelphia Fizell Genealogy

Simon Fizel (1)

When tracing your roots in Philadelphia, two very good genealogy resources are the US Census and the Philadelphia City Directory. Beginning in the late 1700's and continuing until 1936 Philadelphia published an annual city directory that listed alphabetically the name of the head of each household, their occupation, and street address for each residence and business in the city. The directories provide a good chronological record for the Genealogist. They are the primary source I used for tracing my family tree back to Simon Fizel.

Prior to 1790 Simon Fizel took his wife Ann and son Lewis to St. Domingue. Whether his reasons for doing so were due to political or religious unrest in France, or whether his family had been part of the French Acadians repatriated to France from Canada or he just had the desire to seek a better life for his family is not known. Lewis was born in France. Simon and Ann's daughter Emily was born in St. Domingue in 1790 according to the 1850 US Census listing her birthplace as Santo Domingo. Her birth is also found in the St. Domingue government records. The original records are saved on microfilm in the LDS archives. However, these records are in handwritten "old" French script, difficult for today's French speaking people to translate.

The St. Domingue slave uprising on August 22, 1791 began an exodus of white planters, merchants, and tradesmen from the island. Most of the refugees went to the French colony of Louisiana while some went to the United States, Cuba or other Caribbean islands. Simon Fizel took his family to Cuba before moving on to the United States. Cuba was listed as their son Eli's birthplace on a later US census.

On January 20, 1798 Simon Fizel was the executor of a will for one Jean Mares, an Inhabitant of St. Mare, St. Domingo. The record of that Will, filed in Trenton, NJ,

confirms Simon was a “former resident of St. Mare, now residing at Trenton, New Jersey.”

According to the Philadelphia City Directory of 1799 Simon Fizel lived at 73 New Street (a small street between Race and Vine Streets that ran from 158 N 2nd Street to 93 N 4th Street.) For ‘Occupation’ he was listed as “Gentleman”. I don’t know if he was a person of means, retired or disabled. Possibly Gentleman was a dignified way of saying a person was unemployed?

Neither Simon, nor Ann is included in the Philadelphia City Directory again until 1808 when Ann Fizel was listed as a shopkeeper at 125 N 2nd. The original building has been replaced with a large commercial brick storefront building occupying land that would have included at least 4 or 5 vintage buildings from 1808.

The 1810 US Census lists Ann Fizel as head of household living in the front of 125 N. 2nd Street at the corner of Elfreth’s Alley. Elfreth’s Alley is the oldest residential street in America, running east to west between Front Street and 2nd Street. Ann was a Dry Goods shopkeeper with two younger females and no males living in the household. The 1810 census also indicates Ann was over 45 years of age, one female was under 10 and the other’s age was 16 through 25. I assume the latter is Emily who would have been 20 in 1810 and have yet to learn the identity of the female under 10 years of age. It is interesting to note from the census records that two other families, unrelated to Ann Fizel, lived in the back of 125 N. 2nd Street, indicative of how cramped the living quarters were.

The Philadelphia City Directory for 1812 was missing so there were no addresses for Eli or Lewis Fizel although both served in the War of 1812. Eli (Ely) Fizel was on the muster rolls of the 4th Detachment (Rush’s), Pennsylvania Militia, while Lewis Fizel was on the muster rolls of Thompson’s Regiment, Pennsylvania Militia.

The 1813 City Directory listed Ann as a Widow living at 74 S. 5th Street. Today, the land this house stood on is within the city block occupying the Liberty Bell and the Liberty Bell Center, all part of the Independence National Historic Park. Also in 1813 Lewis Fizel, a carpenter, resided on Prince Street near Crown Street close to the ship building docks along the Delaware River. Prince Street is the present Girard Avenue and Crown Street is the present Crease Street. The following year Eli Fizel was a Playing Card Maker at 153 N 4th Street, Lewis Fizel, a carpenter was now at Crown Street near Queen Street. Queen Street became Richmond Street then Delaware Avenue, now today's Christopher Columbus Boulevard. The 1813 directory also listed a Susanna Fizel, a teacher living at 3 Patton's Court. No information on her, nor have I found a record identifying the exact location of Patton's Court.

Ann Fizel and her son Eli Fizel lived near each other in the vicinity of 3rd and Race Streets between 1814 and 1828, the last year Ann was listed in a City Directory. Between 1817 and 1821 Ann and Eli lived in the same house at 314 Sassafras Street, which later became Race Street. Ann's occupation was listed either as a shopkeeper or widow. Eli was a Playing Card Maker but he eventually became a paperhanger. Later City Directory listings indicate Eli moved his family west within the city and that he earned his living as a paperhanger, as did his sons.

Chapter Three

Lewis Fizell (2)

Lewis Fizel's City Directory listings show he moved north, outside the city limits into a section then known as Kensington, Philadelphia County. There is not much detail available for Lewis. As noted above, he served in the Pennsylvania Militia during the War of 1812. Between 1813 and 1822 his address was Prince Street near Crown Street in Kensington. He was a ship's carpenter and lived near the shipyards along the Delaware River. Important to note, after 1818 Lewis' name was spelled Fizell in the city directories. For a Genealogist it is also important to note that the Fizell name was misspelled often enough to require due diligence when searching records.

Lewis disappeared from the City Directories after 1822. Nine years later, in 1831 through 1833, Mary Fizell, a widow residing at Queen Street above Otter Street appeared. Another assumption, I believe Mary was Lewis' wife and if so, she was born in Ireland according to their son Thomas's 1860 Census record. The 1820 US Census lists Lewis Fissell, his wife, two sons and two daughters living in Kensington, a lower section of the larger Northern Liberties. Occupations were not listed in the 1820 census. The census recorded that one male under 10, one male between 10 and 15 and one male 26 to 44 years of age, with two females under 10 and one female 26 to 44 years of age.

Chapter Four

Thomas Fizell (3)

Thomas, son of Lewis, was born in 1809. He married Francis Palmer. Thomas and Fanny, as she was known, had nine children. Their names are listed on the website <http://www.fizell.org/fizell.htm>

Thomas's occupation was Ship's Carpenter and he lived in Kensington his whole life. Thomas and Fanny raised most of their children while living in a small three story house at 331 Allen Street, a short walk to the many ship building docks that lined Richmond Street. Thomas died on January 11, 1881 and Fanny died February 21, 1882. They are buried in the Palmer Cemetery Charitable Grounds, Palmer & Belgrade Streets, Philadelphia, PA, (contact Jos. McGough, 1521 E. Palmer St, the keeper of the Palmer Cemetery records when I contacted him in the 1970's).

Three of Thomas and Fanny's sons, Lewis, Andrew, and George W served in the Union Army during the Civil War:

Lewis served with Company K, 106th Battalion (Regiment Volunteers) Pennsylvania, from May 4, 1864 until July 11th, 1865 when he was given an honorable medical discharge. A gunshot he received at the battle at Petersburg, VA on June 16, 1864 fractured his right arm below the elbow requiring amputation. Lewis' occupation was a ship's joiner and he was 33 years old.

Andrew served with Battery E, First Regiment Pennsylvania Light Artillery from March 17, 1865 to July 20, 1865 probably at the siege of Petersburg and Richmond April 1865. He was 31 years old and a ship carpenter.

George W. became ill soon after enlisting and was in a military hospital. He unfortunately died of the illness. He was only 22.

I trace our family back to Simon Fizel through Lewis Fizell. Eli Fizell's history will be covered in a later essay. But I wanted to note here that Eli's grandson, also an Eli, during the Civil War he enlisted for one year in Company A, 3rd Regiment of Pennsylvania Cavalry on August 11, 1864. He was paid a bounty of \$33 with the sum of \$100 due him upon completion of his enlistment. He was 38 years old when he enlisted and was a tailor by trade.

Chapter Five

Thomas Fizell (4)

Thomas and Fanny's oldest child was another Thomas, born 1830 in Philadelphia. He married Mary Ann in 1855 and had three children by the time the Civil War started. The names of Thomas and Mary Ann's children are on the http://www.fizell.org/thomas_fizell.htm web page. Thomas was a shoemaker by trade. He and Mary Ann lived in Kensington near his parents, siblings and cousins until the mid 1870's when he and Mary Ann moved to Tacony, a rural section of Philadelphia county further north along the Delaware River. They lived at 63 Mary Street.

Tacony was a fast growing community largely due to the Henry Disston Saw Works located on the banks of the Delaware River. The company bought large parcels of land to build a company town¹³. Thomas probably worked for Disston making work shoes not saws. Thomas continued earning his living as a shoemaker until 1884 when he opened a Fish and Oyster Shop at Tulip and Hamilton Streets in Tacony. He died in 1893 and Mary Ann continued to operate the Fish and Oyster shop for another 10 years. In the early morning hours Mary Ann would carry an empty basket on a trolley car, south on State Road, continue south on Richmond Street to the wholesale markets at Dock Street. She bought her fish and oysters for the day, retracing her trip back on the north bound trolley car. She died in 1907.

My father told me a story about Thomas that was handed down to him. Thomas was a short jovial man who played the harmonica. He had a small dog he trained to dance to the music of his harmonica. After he retired he would take the dog to the local Tacony tavern on State Road at Longshore Street around noon when the Tavern served free lunch to the patrons. Thomas and his dog would entertain the customers who in their appreciation for the entertainment would buy Thomas a drink. And another tale

¹³ "A Place to Live and Work: The Henry Disston Saw Works and the Tacony Community of Philadelphia" by Harry C Silcox

related how Thomas, going home from the Tavern one evening, fell. It was snowing and he slept where he fell until someone found him. This may have contributed to his death, which was officially recorded due to Dropsy. Dropsy is a contraction for Hydropsy, the presence of abnormally large amounts of fluid and congestive heart failure.

Mary Ann died in 1907. She and Thomas are buried in the Magnolia Cemetery on Levick Street between Ditman and Cottage Streets. Mary Ann belonged to the Tacony Methodist Church, located on the corner of Longshore Avenue and Hegerman Street. On June 24, 2001 Tacony Methodist Church closed their doors forever. While attending the final service I had one last look at her name imbedded in the stained-glass window that had been given to the church by her family in her memory, nearly one hundred years before.

Chapter Six

Joseph Fizell (5)

Of Thomas and Mary Ann's children, for this narrative I will only be concerned with my great grandfather Joseph. Joseph was the fifth child of Thomas and Mary Ann, born in 1865. He married Clara Fuller in 1886. Clara was from Titusville, New Jersey. For the names of their children and a photo of them, see <http://www.fizell.org/jfizell.htm>. Joseph lived his whole life in Tacony. He was a file maker at Disston Saw Works until he retired, except for a period in 1903-1907 when he was working in downtown Philadelphia in City Hall as a messenger. Disston Saw Works owned many of the homes in Tacony, and at one time employed most of Tacony's inhabitants.

All the public schools in Tacony were named for Disston family members. Disston also built the block of homes on Mary Street between Tulip and Keystone Streets, named after Mary Disston. When first married Joseph and Clara lived with his parents, Thomas and Mary Ann, then moved to their own home on Mary Street. Mary Street's name was changed to Knorr Street in 1898. In 1908 Joseph and Clara bought a large house on the main street of Tacony, 6643 Torresdale Avenue. Clara was an active member of Tacony Methodist Church although Joseph was not baptized until 1915 when he was baptized on the same day as his grandson, Roy and Mary's son Joe. Joseph died in 1927 and Clara took in boarders to make ends meet. Some of the boarders were workmen on the Tacony Palmyra Bridge that was being built 1928-1929. Clara also worked for the local Undertaker, George Wright, applying makeup and the final hair style for the dearly departed. She moved in with her son Roy and his wife Mary at 6722 Jackson Street and remained with them until she died in 1950.

Chapter Seven

Roy Neel Fizell (6)

Joseph and Clara had three boys. The first two died as infants before my grandfather Roy Neel Fizell was born in 1894. When Roy was 5 years old Joseph and Clara moved to Torresdale Avenue. Roy was in school when he met and fell in love with Mary Hyslop. Mary Hyslop arrived in the USA from Scotland in 1905 with her mother, Martha Hyslop, and 9 siblings.

The story of my great grandmother Martha (Granny) Hyslop is unique and very much a part of Roy Fizell's life. On December 31, 1883 Martha married her first husband, William Hyslop in Coatbridge, Scotland. They had seven children before he died on December 15, 1895, two weeks shy of their twelfth wedding anniversary. Two years later, in 1897 she married a widower, Duncan McInnes and proceeded to have five more children by him. If she did not know it before, she soon learned that Duncan McInnes had a major drinking problem.

Sometime around 1900 Martha's older sister, a spinster named Elizabeth (Lizzie) McElroy, emigrated to the United States and became the companion for the children of a wealthy family in the western part of Philadelphia. In 1904 at the age of 19, Elizabeth (Bessie) Hyslop, Martha's eldest child also emigrated to the United States and met up with her Aunt Lizzie. In 1905, Martha was pregnant with her thirteenth child, Duncan's sixth child. Living with an abusive man who could not control his drinking habits, Martha made a drastic move. After Duncan went to work one morning she sold every piece of furniture in the house. She bundled up nine children, left on a ship from Glasgow, Scotland and sailed for Ellis Island, NY. From information obtained from the ship's manifest they were listed as Martha Hyslop at 40 years of age and her children, Robert 18, Jean 16, Mary 9, Williamina (Bill) 8, Peter 6, Mattie 5, Chrissie 4, Madge 2, and Angus (Donald) at 11 months. Also, each child had the surname of Hyslop. The manifest record indicated Martha was to meet up with her

husband William Hyslop in Philadelphia, (although he had been dead these past nine years). She had Fifty dollars with her. Of Martha's other two children by William Hyslop, Barbara Wilson Hyslop died as an infant in 1890 and Alexandrina Hyslop, born in 1892 would have been almost 13 years old when they sailed in 1905 but there was no mention of her, nor have I found any other records for her.

Arriving in Philadelphia Martha first resided near with her sister Elizabeth in west Philadelphia, not with a William Hyslop as indicated on the ship's manifest. Soon she moved her children to Tacony where her daughter Elizabeth (Bessie) was established and waiting to help support the family. Martha's baby, Ina, died shortly after birth. Just how long Bessie, Robert and Jean remained at home, contributing to the family upkeep before going out on their own, is not known. What is known is that Martha was strict and a tyrant when it came to being the matron of her clan and all her children had to contribute to the family upkeep as soon as she felt they were able.

Mary left school when she was 14 years old to work in one of the local factories, as did Bill (Janet Williamina) the next year, then other children when they reached working age. Child labor laws were still pretty much nonexistent. Mary and her sister Bill worked in the same hosiery mill. They pleaded with Granny (Martha) to let them quit because the foreman kept making advances on them. Granny would not hear of it, instead insisting they stand up for themselves against the foreman. It was common family knowledge Granny would resort to physical punishment if her children disobeyed her.

Roy and Mary often said they were the only sweethearts they ever had. Mary loved to tell how she and Roy would go to see the movies at the Liberty Theater on Torresdale Avenue. Both were sixteen years old yet she would go to the cashier first and purchase a child's admission because she was small and looked no older than 12 years of age, Roy then paid as an adult.

In 1914 Mary and Roy wanted to marry but Granny forbid it, claiming to need her income to help support the younger children, even though Peter and two of her sisters were probably working too. So in July 1914 Roy and Mary ran away to Elkton, Maryland and were married. The photo of Roy and Mary on their honeymoon in Wildwood, NJ shows the face of a pensive Mary. It was said her face reflected the type of reception she and Roy faced from Granny, when they returned to Tacony.

Roy went to Temple University at nights and studied accounting. Roy and Mary had three children, Joseph Fuller, Milda Hyslop and Roy Neel. At 6 years of age young Roy was running with an ice cream popsicle in his mouth when he tripped and fell flat on his face on the concrete sidewalk. The wooden stick handle holding the ice cream punctured the back of his throat. The wound became infected. Antibiotics were yet to be discovered and young Roy succumbed to the infection.

Roy and Mary were very active in the life of Tacony Methodist Church. Roy had a marvelous voice and was the Music and Choir Director while Mary was a Sunday school teacher. Roy's mother, Clara, sold her boarding house on Torresdale Avenue and moved in with Roy and Mary in 1930. Roy became the head bookkeeper for a factory that made fruit jellies, jams and preserves, American Preserves Company, later became Smucker's, located on American Street below Lehigh Avenue in Philadelphia.

October 1929 brought the Great Depression to America and by the middle of 1930 work was scarce in Tacony as it was elsewhere. Roy held onto his job but the husbands of three of Granny Hyslop's daughters did not fare as well. Granny lived in a large rented house at 4350 Unruh Street. According to the 1930 census she was the head of household and living with her was her unmarried son Donald and three married daughters, Mat, Madge, and Chrissie, along with their husbands and five children. Not sure how long they had to live like this but without electricity or indoor plumbing, it was certainly crowded and austere.

According to one of her grandsons, life at 4350 Unruh Street was not without entertainment. "Every Thursday Granny dressed like Queen Victoria, with a goofy plumed hat, long heavy skirt and ensemble that almost touched the ground and a great big bustle," he told me and "Thursdays was his day for the "Grande Dame stroll". A couple of his friends used to wait for them and would sit on the curb and laugh as the entourage went by. Granny, her grandson and a dog name Tiny. Tiny was bigger than he was so they kept their mouths shut but, "Boy was that a rotten day of the week for Me." he confessed.

I was 9 years old when Granny died in 1946. Aunt Lizzie died in 1948. My best memory of Granny was visiting her at Aunt Chris' house on the south side of Longshore Avenue between Marsden and Ditman Streets. Granny's bedroom was upstairs at the rear of the second floor where I believed she spent most of her time.

By 1936 Roy and Mary's children, Joe and Milda, were married and making their own lives. Roy, Mary and Clara lived in Tacony until 1947 when they moved to the "country". They bought a new Cape Cod home in the rapidly developing Rhawnhurst section of Philadelphia. It was right after WWII and the northeast area of Philadelphia was in a building boom. The farms in Philadelphia County were rapidly disappearing.

Roy's mother Clara was a short, soft spoken lady whose favorite exclamation was "Sugar", at least while small the children were in her presence. She made terrific pies with light flaky crust and she always made sure there was homemade dessert in the refrigerator when the grandchildren or great grandchildren came to visit. She also visited my family for several days at a time during the war when we were living on Lippincott Street. My mother would go down into the basement in order to smoke a cigarette, away from Grandmother Clara's disapproving looks. After several moments Grandmother would stand at the top of the basement steps, calling down "I know what you are doing down there, Naomi!" At 85 years of age Clara died in her sleep in 1950.

For years the owners of the factory where Roy worked as head bookkeeper had promised him the promotion to an officer of the company but they procrastinated and finally brought in the owner's son instead. Roy was heartbroken to be passed by after so many years of faithful service. Roy suffered a fatal heart attack one evening after dinner while sitting in his favorite chair and reading his daily newspaper dinner in 1953.

Mary married Harry Erny in 1954 and moved to Shark River Hills, NJ before she and Harry built a house in Somers Point, NJ, while spending the winter months in Florida. Harry died in 1969 and several years later, in her 70's married Jules Witte, who was close to 80 years old. Mary was too independent and Jules tried to control her friends and activities. She did not like living with Jules. They were divorced and she lived alone in an apartment in Ocean City for several years before entering the Methodist Home on the boardwalk in Ocean City, NJ. Mary suffered with painful angina for many years, telling me she constantly asked God why she was still here, before welcoming her end in 1978 at 84 years of age.