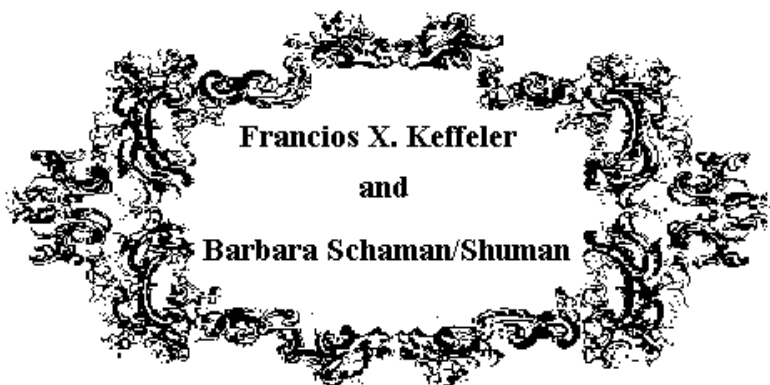


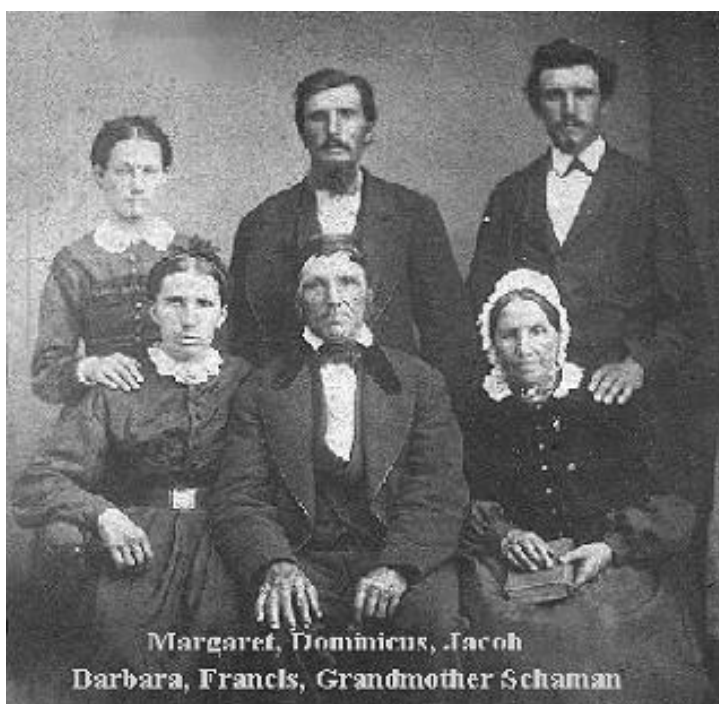
**Martha Keffeler** (1913-), daughter of John L. Keffeler and Catherine Lenertz, married **Glen Hodgen** (12/31/1906-3/30/1983) son of John (Jack) Hodgen and Sophie Schorg.



**Francois (Francis) X. Keffeler** (1812-1894) our great grandfather, also known as Franz or Frank, was born in Hassel, Weiler-La-Tour, in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. Francis' parents, **Peter Keffeler** and **Magdalena Berchem** and his grandfather **Dominique** were all from Luxembourg. His grandmother **Catherine Klein's** origins are unknown, but they point to Luxembourg.

Our great grandparents, **Francis X. Keffeler** and **Barbara Schaman/Shuman** (4/7/1811-9/13/1890), with their family, **Maria (Mary)**, **Dominicus (D)**, **Jacob (Great Uncle Jake)** and **Francis**, embarked on a long journey from the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, stopping in Le Havre, France, then crossed the ocean in what Grandpa called a **sail ship**. It was a journey of thirty-three long days on the **DECOVDAROK**. They arrived in New York May 8, 1856. Our grandfather recorded these facts in 1876.

**Who were on the ship?** Grandfather named seven in our family group in 1856:



**Francis X. Keffeler** was our great grandfather age 43 (1812 to 1894).

**Barbara Schaman/Shuman** was our great grandmother, age 44 (1811 to 1890).

**Mary Schaman/Shuman** was our great, great grandmother, age 73 (ca 1783 to 1876)  
a long journey to an unknown world for our great grandmother.

**Maria Mary Keffeler**, our great aunt, was age 15, (10/10/1840-11/11/1907).

**Dominicus (Dominic) Keffeler** our grandfather was age 7-1/2 (11/25/1848-11/8/1929).

**Jacob Keffeler**, our great uncle was 5 years, eight months (10/7/1850-3/12/1917).

**Francis Keffeler** was age 3; he died about six weeks after their arrival, (1853-1856).

According to the 1880 census in Allamakee County, Iowa, there was an adopted boy **Dominick Zroang** from Bavaria, then age 12. When he joined the family and what became of him is unknown. He is not on any other census. None of us still living ever heard of him, and he is not in any of the early photos.

**Bob Hoy** and **Biays Bowerman** both found **Schaman** on the 1860 census and concluded that this was indeed the **Grandma Shuman** to which Dominic referred, not Haman or other variants met on other records. We finally have a first name **Mary**. As with all genealogical information, it is only as accurate as the people who filled in the forms, the typist who made errors, or a translator's interpretation! Consider as you read this book that this also has the same limitations!

The **Intent to Become a Citizen** that **Francis X.** (Franz) signed is verified in Book 1, (1832 to 1856), page 1458. It is filed with the Naturalization Declaration, Dubuque County, Iowa. It is interesting to note that our great grandfather was only in this country eleven days when he applied for the **Intent paper**.

According to the naturalization records for 1860 to 1875, **Francis X. Keffeler** became a citizen on September 28<sup>th</sup>, either in 1863 or 1873. The clerk forgot the tens column. It is interesting to note that the witnesses were a judge, a sheriff, a Lansing clerk, and a clerk from Dubuque County - a rather impressive array of people for new immigrants to face! As so many documents do, they interchange Germany and Luxembourg. In one part, they state he is from Germany and he is called Franz, not Francois that is on his birth certificate. In the part where he had to renounce his foreign allegiance, it is to the "Grand Duke of Luxembourg".

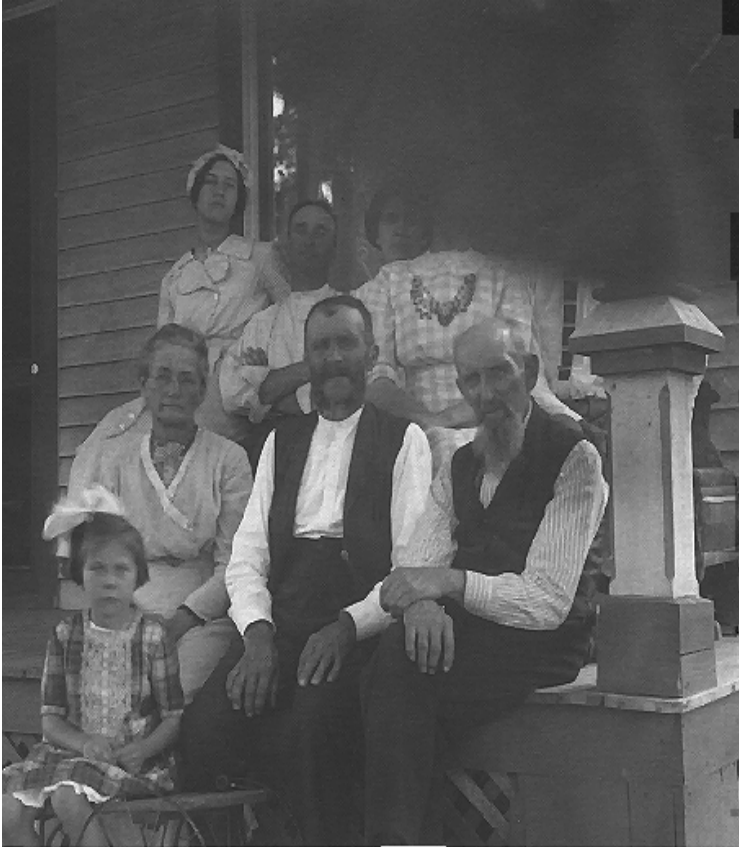
Women did not have citizenship then so that is when the whole Lansing Keffeler Klan officially became **AMERICANS!**

### ***ONWARD ... TO ALLAMAKEE COUNTY***

**Francis** and **Barbara Keffeler** bought 108 acres of land at \$10 an acre from an Ernest Muller, seven miles west of Lansing. It was sold 3/8/1913 for \$89 an acre to **Henry Marti**. Church was considered a village, Lansing was an incorporated town, but in older accounts, Church is used interchangeably with Lansing.

Note: It was still in Henry's possession in 1929. A later owner was **Harold Kerndt** who still lives in Waukon. The Kerendts were related to Great Uncle Jake on his wife Emma's side and to the **Nierlings** through Lena.

**J. P. Keffeler**, Francis' nephew helped clear the land. They chopped down trees and erected a log home. July 3, 1856 marks the family's arrival at their new home in their new country!!! That sets the scent for a whole new generation of American Keffelers yet to be born. How exciting for these immigrants to be settled on their first July 4<sup>th</sup> in America!



**Dominicus (D) & Anna Rottler Keffeler's family  
with Francis X Keffeler?**

Great Grandfather died December 30, 1894 at age 82 according to both cemetery records and the Lansing Mirror. The Allamakee Journal reads:

***“Francis Keffeler, the aged father of Dominic Keffeler, the well known farmer and for several years one of the town’s trustees, died suddenly Sunday morning, about 8 o’clock, at the family home in Lansing township. The old gentleman, although in feeble health for some years has not been ailing to speak of and his demise was as calm and peaceful as the going out of a candle that had burned in the socket...”***

To me the description is very colorful. Here at Marian Hall I have seen many deaths just like that - fire dwindling ... then no more.

It is exciting to think our great grandfather Francis, an older immigrant, lived to see his son a trustee in America. It goes on to say that he was survived by sons **Dominic** and **Jacob** who was then in Sturgis, SD and a daughter **Mary Gander**, all of whom were born in Luxembourg. At the death of our great grandparents Dominic assumed the old homestead.

**Barbara Keffeler’s** obituary in the Lansing Mirror Friday, 9/19/1890 reads:

***“... Mrs. Keffeler, wife of Francis Keffeler, died at her home out at Lansing Ridge Saturday morning last. Her age was 86 years...”***

The death certificate from the state has her birthplace as Germany which is what they called Luxembourg on most of these records; her age is given as 79 years, 5 months, and 7 days with the death as 9/13/1890 at 7:00 a.m. The cemetery has 9/8/1890 as the death date. The cause is given as probably pneumonia. The best I can do is give the variety of ages offered.

An Allamakee Journal article Wednesday, 9/17/1890, page 4, column 2 reads:

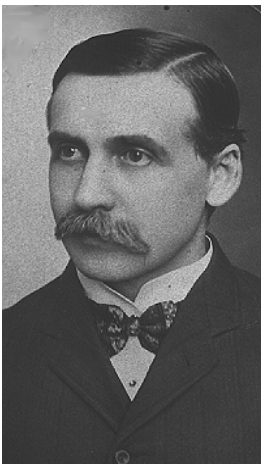
***“The aged consort of Francis Keffeler of this township died Friday last principally of old age, having attained within a few months of 4 score years. She was the mother of Dominick, with whom she lived and Jacob of Sturgis, SD and the Mesdames F. Stirn and F. Gander of this township. Her funeral took place from the Catholic Church in this city Monday. The gentleman himself has been prostrated by severe illness since her death and for a time his life was despaired of, but at this writing we are pleased to report his condition improved and favorable to recovery.*”**

Mrs. Frank Stirn, mentioned in the article, was **not** Barbara's daughter. She was **Anna Maria Rottler Stirn**, a sister of our Grandma **Anna Margaret Rottler Keffeler**. Mrs. Stirn was very close to our family as our grandmother had lived with the Stirns so the error is understandable.



*(Great Uncle Jake)*

The little boy **Jacob** (1850 to 1916), who left his Luxembourg homeland at age five, traveled across the Atlantic Ocean in 1856 only to continue exploring the different worlds of business, agricultural, mining, and politics as a young man. His explorations took him from Luxembourg to the United States and then to Iowa, Dakota, and Alaska.



Emma Haas Keffeler 1890

Jacob Keffeler 1885



Jacob Keffeler and Emma Haas had two children:

**Herbert Oswald (Herb or Kinsey) Keffeler**

(1885-1948) married Mary Barron.

**Meta Nora Keffeler** (1888-1945) remained single.

An article in the North Star Journal written 5/23/1877, page 3, column 4, gives us a little of the flavor of life in Dakota four years before he married **Emma Haas** (1860-1943), daughter of Jacob Haas and Clara Kerndt, in 1881:

### ***A VOICE FROM THE BLACK HILLS***

***“Jacob Keffeler, a young man well-known hereabouts, who recently went out to the Black Hills gold fields, has been heard from. A letter received a few days ago by his brother, [Dominic, our grandfather] says that he has arrived safely at Crook City. Among other information, he gives the prices of some of the***



***commodities in the market there: flour \$15 per hundred, potatoes \$7.50 per bushel, salt port 40 cents a pound, beer 50 cents a glass, whiskey 25 cents a drink, and rot gut at that, and everything else in proportion. Jake says there is plenty of gold in the hills, but it costs money to get it out. He says there are at least 8,000 men in Deadwood City without work, money, food, or shelter."***

In the 1880 census, we can locate him living with his cousin JP Keffeler and family and farming in Bear Butte Valley about twenty miles from Sturgis. My first discovery of Great Uncle Jake's wife and children was found in *The Black Hills Region Compendium of Biography*, published in 1898. It gives family information, which is covered elsewhere, and a concise picture of the sequence of events that I include here:

***"Jacob Keffeler, treasurer of Meade county, South Dakota, is one of Sturgis' best known and most popular citizens ... his parents came to this country, and settled in Allamakee county, Iowa, where he obtained his education and spent most of his early life. At the age of nineteen he left the homestead, and began to shift for himself, and eight years later removed to Lansing, in the same state, where he found employment as a bookkeeper in one of the business houses.. Two years later he went to New Albin, Iowa, and there bought wheat during the following five years. In 1877 he went to the Black Hills and mined there for three years. He then settled in Galena, South Dakota and opened a general merchandise store, which he conducted for two years. In 1882 he went into the cattle business in Meade county, and during the next four years carried it on very successfully. He then established a dry-goods store in Sturgis, and also took up milling in the same place. In the fall of 1896 he was elected treasurer of Meade county on the Republican ticket, and he is now discharging the duties of that office. He has always taken an active part in local affairs, and has held a number of minor public positions..."***

We know some of the various ways the pioneers could acquire land. **The Pre-emption Act of 1841** had provisions for a maximum land price of \$1.25 an acre and limited to 160 acres. **The Homestead Act of 1862** had different provisions - 160 acres of land was free provided the settlers fulfilled the residency laws, improved the land, and lived on it for five years. Land could be bought if not restricted under federal laws.

Jacob's land patent, sent to me by **Jack** and **Gloria Sinclair** and signed by President Grover Cleveland, was under Acts of March 3, 1873, March 13, 1874, and June 14, 1878 which, if I understood correctly, were established to encourage the growth of timber on the plains. In his letter 7/28/1912, he speaks of the land he used to own.

Sancti Spiritus Bay

July 28-1912

My dear Juliette!

Your papa that I read  
the paper & his welcome  
letter. You folks had  
quite a time with Red  
Keffeler so he is not young  
good luck to him. Tell  
papa that there is no  
matany here to witness  
my signature to the  
papa. I am 48 miles  
from the nearest one  
but if he is in a hurry  
for it I will make the  
trip if not I will wait  
until I go to Valdez.  
It rained all but 3 days  
since the Mount Katmai  
Volcanic Eruption. The  
bad as when Veno Plutonic

2  
on your 2 sisters and  
my name. Oak are  
Ranchman in San Juan  
good for them. ~~the~~  
They see the section  
I used to own? Meta  
wrote me about her  
good. Mine she had  
with my niece's cat  
Candy. Tell papa  
I will attend to that  
paper as soon as  
possible. Give love  
to mama papa & all  
the bunch & love to  
you. I see you are quite  
a painter your Uncle  
Admas. I am

Valdez Alaska

Jake's great grandson **Ted Keffeler** and his wife **Nancy** connected me with Ted's father, **Herbert Theodore**, (who is known as **Bert**) and his wife **Fran**. We had a fantastic visit with Bert, Fran, Ted, Nancy and their children Brittany, and Savannah Keffeler celebrating the "found" missing link in Francis X. Keffeler's line. **Bert**, Jacob's grandson, added much color and life to his grandparents' story.

Jake's son **Herbert Oswald Keffeler** went by **Herb**  
Herb's son **Herbert Theodore Keffeler** uses **Bert**  
Bert's son **Herbert Theodore Keffeler Jr.** goes by **Ted**

The middle name of Theodore is in honor of their Haas uncle. **Theodore (Theo) Haas** (2/8/1862-2/10/1950) was Emma's only brother. When Great Uncle Jake died a pauper, it was Theodore Haas who provided for his sister and niece until they died. **Theo** has earned a spot in family history. According to an undated obituary sent by Gloria Sinclair, Theodore was a man who enjoyed hunting, fishing and birds. Theo was a successful druggist [**Bert** has his Pharmacist certificate dated March 12, 1886.] as well as banker. When Theo died in Sturgis at age 88, he was given full Masonic rites. Great Uncle Jake was also a Mason. He and Theodore Haas are under a list of Grand Masters and officers in the Early Day History of Sturgis and Fort Meade Volume 1.

The family story as told by Bert:

***"Jacob Keffeler and Emma Haas met when she fell into the Mississippi River and he jumped into the river and saved her. They started dating and were married April 27, 1881 in Lansing, Iowa. They moved to Sturgis, SD where Emma's brother Theo Haas owned and operated a pharmacy. They left Lansing because the Kerndts] were Lutheran and the Keffelers were Catholic. Emma's mother Clara was a Kerndt."***

***"My grandfather Jacob owned a dry goods store, [Opened 10/28/1887] did some ranching and was elected Treasurer of Meade County, SD. He prospered in his many enterprises and soon made over a million dollars. He asked Emma if he should quit and she said, 'No, let's go for two million'."***

***"The next year there was a crash and wheat and cattle prices fell to rock bottom, but being the man he was, he paid all his debts and ended up broke. At that point he and his son Kinsey (Herb) age 14 went to Alaska during the gold rush."***

Perhaps Great Uncle Jake protected his young son from any disadvantage a news article could bring.

In Great Uncle Jake's 10/6/1911 letter he says,

***Nordale Hotel  
Telephone 208***

***Oct 6, 1911***

**My Dear Jeanette,**

***Your most welcome letter rec'd lately. Was glad to hear from you and I know you are all well. As to when I will visit Lansing is a question I can not answer for, maybe a long time. I presume Emma and Meta were in Lansing ere this [as of this time]. My last letter stated that they would make the trip. My son Herbert [age 26] is in Seattle. I hear from him regular. We have a very nice fall, not a bit of cold as yet. It is raining a little today. This country is quite lively compared to towns of the same size in the States. The market now, is full of game such as Moose,. Caribou, Mantice, Sheep, Grouse and Pheasants, Rabbits. The woods are full of them. They get so plentiful that every 7 years they die off. We have only about 2 thunder storms in a season and they are very mild. This country has the most even climate there is. Not knowing what to write for this time I will close with lots of love to Papa and Mama and all you youngsters. Tomorrow is my birthday, 61 not so slow and not an ache or pain and strong. Had not a sick day since I was sick in Deadwood in 1878. Well So long.***

**Your Uncle  
Jacob Keffeler**

**Address  
Fairbanks, Alaska**

Note: the above letter could not be scanned clearly, therefore it was typed.

Now to the wedding, the Lansing Mirror Friday 4/29/1881 reads:

***“Esquire Nachtwey united in marriage on Wednesday morning last, at the residence of the bride’s father, Mr. Jacob Keffeler and Miss Emma Haas, daughter of Jacob Haas. Mr. Keffeler has spent the winter here returning from the Black Hills, where he met with business success. The bride is one our most esteemed young ladies and deservedly popular with both young and old. They have heartfelt congratulations. The afternoon train carried them to their new home near Deadwood.”***

Bert said Emma’s side of the family [Haas] was so wealthy that they chartered the ship that brought them to America! While the Keffelers were not poor as they bought their own land, even as immigrants, they certainly were not in the class of the Haas and Kerndt families. The Kerendts too started out in this country with very little. In the Kerndt family history their early struggles are depicted as well as their substantial successes.

Bert described his grandmother **Emma Haas Keffeler** as an elitist. The **Haas** obituaries give us some background on Emma’s family. The Haas family was wealthy, and Emma was the younger child, the only girl, and her mother **Clara**

**Kerndt** died when Emma was 16 so it is not surprising that her father and brother **Theo** spoiled her. **Jacob Haas** was written up in the *Lansing Journal* September 20, 1882, page 4, column 3:



#### **EARTH TO EARTH**

***Jacob Haas, Proprietor of the Lansing  
Brewery, Goes the Way of all Flesh“***

***In the death of Jacob Haas, which occurred at his residence on Main Street, on Tuesday, Sept. 18 at 3 o'clock p.m., Lansing loses one of her oldest and best known citizens. He was closely identified with the business interests of the city for the last twenty-six years and was a man of fine culture and rare traits of character and possessed fine qualifications. He was a genial, kind hearted gentleman, beloved and respected by all that knew him. His purse was always open to relieve the poor and destitute and never would he refuse when called upon in the interest of his adopted city. In all public enterprises of our city he would take the lead. He was the prime mover in the enterprise of starting the city water works, his investment in the same being larger than any other of our wealthy citizens, in recognition of which he was elected as its first president. His word was as good as his a bond and we all mourn the loss of a kind friend and a good man...”***

The article is very lengthy, and it tells of his immigration to America from Esslingen, Wuertenbert, Germany in 1853, three years before our family arrived from Luxembourg. He was the fourth son of a wealthy merchant, and his education was indeed impressive, both as a potential minister for which he studied, but did not pursue, and at the royal Agricultural Academy in Hochheim where he learned the business skills which he later applied in Lansing in his beer brewing business. His wife **Clara Kerndt** died young; he remarried and left his widow and a young son **Oscar** by the second marriage. The German Verein took charge of the funeral the

article said. [No, I do not know what the German Verein is!]

Emma's mother's death was described thus:



**STRICKEN DOWN!  
MRS. JACOB HAAS FALLS DEAD  
From a stroke of Apoplexy**

***"In the midst of life, we are in death."***

***"On a recent occasion, when addressing a large assemblage of mourning friends called to pay the last eloquent divine [Yes, that is the word used] who conducted the religious exercises referred in most feeling and awe-inspiring words to the 'series of calamities which had fallen upon this community during the last few months.' Fire, passion, accident, have all gathered victims, [My goodness!] and now death comes in for an additional subject in a manner both sudden and appalling."***

***"Wednesday afternoon, about half-past three, Mrs. Clara Haas was stricken down, without a moment's warning, and while in the enjoyment of ordinary health. Mrs. Haas who was naturally corpulent, while passing into the main room of the brewery building, and while in the act of crossing the threshold near the bar-counter."***

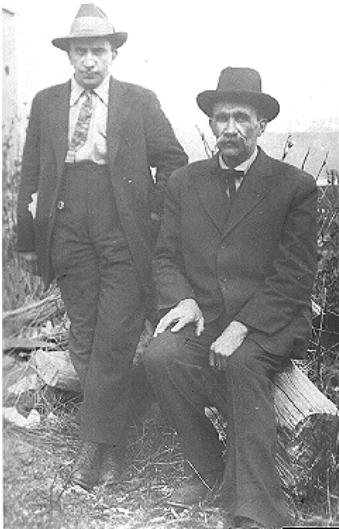
**SUDDENLY FELL TO THE FLOOR**

***“Without uttering a word, and apparently stricken with instant death. No one was near but an employee of the premises, who hastened for assistance, but all semblance of life had departed. Dr. Craig was called in, and after examination, pronounced the death the result of congestive apoplexy, from natural causes incident to that disease, probably in this case brought about by over exertion in the stifling heat of the afternoon...”***

It goes on to identify her husband **Jacob Haas** and the **Kerndt family** of which she was the youngest member.

Emma’s mother, **Clara Kerndt Haas**, sister of the Kerndt Bros., well-known businessmen in Lansing, was only 38 when she died unexpectedly. The description in the Lansing paper 5/18/1877 was written in language which seems amusing today, but it recreated the drama as the journalist saw it:

Knowing something of Emma’s family background helps us to understand why it was important to her that Great Uncle Jake succeed in a monetary way, and why it was important to him to please her needs in that respect.



### **THE ALASKAN JOURNEY**

Let’s look a little closer at **Great Uncle Jake’s** efforts to recoup financial security as an Alaskan gold prospector. This older Jake never lost his sense of family, wonder, or his adventurous spirit as his letters to Aunt Jeanette Waters show, nor did he lose the respect of those who chose to write about him:

Bert and Fran, their daughter **Sharon**, husband **Alberto Gavarre**, and children **Paul** and **Eric** went to Alaska last year and saw the narrow trail in which this story takes place.



**Main St. Dawson, Yukon Ter. 1898-1899**

This article to which Bert referred earlier shows us Jake's early days in Alaska. Since he was still treasurer in Meade County, SD in 1898 and in Alaska in March of 1899, we assume he went to Alaska in the latter part of 1898 or early part of 1899. This article was found in the *Klondike Nuggett* 3/29/1899:

### ***Another "Tramroad" Robbery***

***"Jacob Keffeler, an old time miner in the Black Hills country, arrived in Dawson Monday, accompanied by Walter Merritt, another experienced miner from Coolgardie, West Australia. The gentlemen "mushed" their outfits with a horse to the foot of Lake Labarge, where they cached the one and disposed of the other, and then continued on foot, with only a light robe each to Dawson. Mr. Keffeler, who is a very intelligent man and used to traveling says their jaunt comprised just 800 miles and enabled him to demonstrate to his satisfaction that the only way to come in or go out is afoot and without dogs. Gold has undoubtedly been found in paying quantities, he said, on the Big Salmon."***

***"A Swede recently arrived down from the upper waters and took back with him a crew of men whom he had cutting cordwood for the steamers on the river. Two roadhouses were closed to allow the proprietors to go with them. Mr. Keffeler says that many old miners of experience will be here early in spring; they are working their outfits to the foot of Labarge, where many scows are being built. Many have horses that will be brought through Dawson with the opening navigation. On the night of Feb, 21<sup>st</sup>, the temperature was 51 degrees below zero at Bennett City and***



***several people were badly frozen. Windy-Jim was met at the Reindeer roadhouse laid up for repairs. At the head of Miles Canyon a toll-gate bridge was established the day before Mr. Keffeler arrived, where the rate of one cent per pound was charged for everything hauled over the road."***

The pioneers considered the toll gate costs "robbery" therefore, the title. When Bert found this article, his first concern was that his grandfather was involved in a crime!

Letters to Aunt Jeanette Waters, his niece, filled in Great Uncle Jake's later Alaskan years through nine fragile, well-preserved, handwritten letters. They were filled with inquiry about family and friends back home as well as about his life as prospector. They add to family a sense of history as we view pioneer life through our great uncle's eyes. I would add for clarification that wherever he refers to "Mama or Papa" he is speaking of **Aunt Jeanette's** parents, his brother **Dominic** and sister-in-law, **Anna Margaret**, our Lansing Keffeler grandparents.

My favorite letter dated 12/23/1911 has a nostalgic feel. He asked about his sister **Mary Gander**, her daughter **Josie**, as well as other relatives and friends. It is amusing to read this prospector's anticipation of the Christmas meal: turkey, beer, and cigars and his shock when he met someone from Galena who told him about Prohibition! One can sense his yearning for family. Great Uncle Jake also mentioned his future hopes. The dream of finding gold added hope to his letter. They had struck a rich rock in their mine, and he said that in some rock a person could see the gold. He hoped they would be rich enough to come back. There is something of the poet in this rugged prospector. I quote part as written:

***"Then we will yet see that crowd of Nephews & Nieces and hear the whippoorwill sing and the meadow larks and eat hickory nuts from the tree. I have not seen a hickory nut since I left Iowa..."***

He asked Aunt Jeanette to get a "No. 8 thread box", fill it with hickory nuts and send it so he might see how they taste that far north. It was especially poignant because it was written two days before Christmas. He adds at the end the sad news their cabin and all their clothes burned except "**what they had on**". He ends it with these words, "**So much for the poor**". Knowing now that he was a millionaire at an earlier stage of his life, it is especially poignant.

Caroleacks Chary P. O.  
Dec 23 - 1911

My dear Jeanette

Your most welcome letter was duly recd. was happy to hear from my itty Niece. Well yesterday was the shortest day & soon we will have our Christmas Dinner. Turkey, Beer & Cigars. By the way a Man from Galena Ill. told me this summer that a Person Cant get Beer in Allamakee as it went dry. Is that so? You tell your Mamma that my Pipe is with me always unless I Mislay it. Say how is Mary, Yander & Jase & Josephine & Anna? Are they still on earth. Is Chris River dead? Ed Jacob Fless on the Zenhart Place. Yesterday we struck very rich rock in our mine, in some rock a person can see the gold if it only keeps on there we will get see that Crowd of Hepherns & Nieces and here the Whippoorwill sing & the Meadow Larks.

Farlow's Cherry P. O.  
Dec 23 - 1911

My dear Jeanette

Your most welcome letter was duly rec'd. I was happy to hear from my itty Niece. Well yesterday was the shortest day & soon we will have our Christmas Dinner. Turkey, Beer & Cigars. By the way a Man from Galena Ill. told me this summer that a person can't get Beer in Allamakee as it went dry. Is that so? You tell your Mamma that my Pipe is with me always unless I mislay it. Say how is Mary, Yander & Jane & Josephine & Anna? Are they still on earth? Is Chris's River dead? Ed Jacob Flees on the Lehigh Place. Yesterday we struck very rich rock in our mine, in some rock a person can see the gold if it only keeps on then we will get see that Crowd of Nephews & Nieces and here the Whip-poor-will sing & the Meadow Larks.

and eat Hickory Nuts from the Tree  
I have not seen a hickory Nut since  
I left Iowa, only those 2 sack your Papa  
sent me to the Hills. Say Jean, get a  
No 8 Thread box & fill it with Nut & send  
it by Mail to me I want to see how  
they taste this far North, we now have  
10 inches of snow on the ground  
we needed it very much. There are  
now storms in this country maybe 2 small  
grumbling Thunder storms in a year  
it is the most even climate on Earth.  
Has your Papa got a bald Top? I have a nice  
one. I only wear a Moustache. Had a letter  
from Meta & Mamma since they got home.  
Herbert writes very regular. He is in Seattle.  
Will give my love to Papa Mamma and  
all your unknown Bros & Sister from  
your Uncle Jacob Pfeiffer

Fairbanks, Clearing P.O.,  
Alaska

Our Cabin nearly burnt  
up you can see by  
the paper, we lost all  
our clothes except what  
we had on, so much  
for the poor.

In the Fairbanks Daily News Miner, Tuesday, Dec. 26, 1911, it refers to a fire in Ester on Saturday that destroyed the Occidental Hotel, burned two adjoining cabins, and threatened to destroy the town. Either the microfilm was damaged or incomplete so we do not have the part where the second owner is named, but Jake's cabin was destroyed by fire on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and Saturday was the 23<sup>rd</sup>. So it seems a reasonable conclusion since he referred to a newspaper article that this was it.

In the 12/23/1911 issue of the same paper on page 4, column 6, it states that the trail is in excellent condition now and then in the next paragraph refers to Jake and his partner **Frank Odekover** of the Jupiter Mars property as preparing a small shipment. The copy is poor but it appears to be ore.

Jake's letter of 3/14/1912, thanked Jeanette for her kindness in sending the hickory nuts received three day before. He and his friend Ed Bacckfingen ate the nuts and thought they were again in old Lansing.

News in 4/25/1912 included the invention of the wireless and cable. He was remarkably well-informed about U.S. news due to those inventions. Great Uncle Jake expressed sadness concerning the news about that large vessel going down [Titanic].

In his 7/28/1912 letter from Landlock Bay he refers to Alaska's biggest volcanic eruption.

***"It rained all but three days since the Mount Katmai volcanic eruption. The ashes were very plentiful."***

He told **Jeanette** to tell her Papa [his brother Dominic] that there was no notary for 48 miles, and if there were no hurry, he would wait until he got to Valdez to have his signature witnessed for the papers her father sent him.

For an idea of the volcano's impact, I checked in the World Book Encyclopedia. Hot ash traveled fifteen miles. The top of Mt. Katmai collapsed forming a basin 3 miles wide and 3,700 feet deep! The lava and ash formed the Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes. The ashes must have indeed been plentiful!

In 11/20/1912, Jake comments on Wilson as the next President and thinks it is good news for the country. He has sent the papers his brother Dominic requested for Papa duly signed.

In his 3/17/1913 letter he was starting a 140 mile hike to Cook Inlet for gold mining and quartz. Of Alaska, he writes:

***"Alaska is the nicest country on earth. No (body) very rich & nobody is suffering more equality than in the States."***

In several letters, including this one, he mentions he has not been sick a day since 1878 which then was thirty-five years ago! He also comments on railroad developments. He describes them this way:

***"It now looks as if Uncle Sam will build us 2 railroads in Alaska,***

***one from Seward 700 miles, one from Cordova to Fairbanks 500 miles. They will cost \$35,000.000. [This is how the amount is written] Then we will have a great country."***

Great Uncle Jake and his partner possessed Huskies. He mentioned (3/3/1914) that a 25 mile haul was \$50 a ton. They hauled one ton per trip or 1000 lbs. to each Husky on the team.

In an article List of Pioneers who died at the Sitka Home Prior to Oct. 1920 in the Fairbanks Alaska Daily News Miner, 12/7/1920, page 2, a Jacob Keffeler is listed as having died April 9, 1917. It strains credulity that we could have another Jacob Keffeler in the same time-frame that prospected. I suspect they listed prominent pioneers and depended on hearsay for dates. Possibly he resided there at some point. His residence was listed there as Anchorage.

**Karole Angerillo** also recalls that our Lansing **Grandmother Keffeler** had a brother who also went to Alaska. He sent home for money, which the **Rottlers** did not send, much to the chagrin and anger of the Keffelers. He was never heard from again which is sad. We concluded he was the John Rottler who was living with the Stirns in the 1870 census.

**Martha Keffeler Hodgen** tells me that her Uncle Lambert Keffeler also went to Alaska and mentioned our Jake. He was the story teller in Nick's line of descendants. For some reason he never spoke much about that trip.

Bert recorded that his Grandfather (Great Uncle Jake) stayed in Alaska till 1916 when he became sick, and his son Herbert brought him to Seattle, Washington, his final journey. He died there 3/16/1916 and was buried in the Pioneer Cemetery in Seattle, Washington.

This pioneer now has an eternity in which to explore and meet his family and all those nieces and nephews and branches on the family tree!

Great Uncle Jake confirms so much I know and have learned about the Keffelers. Adversity or success, poverty or wealth, seem to be taken in stride. One doesn't sense a disillusioned or bitter man in Great Uncle Jake as once more he starts over. How many of us could speak of an 800 mile trek as a "jaunt" when done on foot? He enjoys what he still has while he has it, the climate, his health, and the hopes. One sees this over and over in the stories. The spirit, mind, and dreams have no parameters, and constantly push them in different directions in their life's journey. **JP, Dominic**, and **Margaret** came over in their youth; **Francis X.** and **Nick** with families already established. Herbert went to Alaska when a mere lad of twelve. It is exciting to realize how we have all come together to discover our common roots despite the different directions our journeys have taken us.



**Meta Keffeler**, (8/19/1893-1945), daughter of Great Uncle Jake Keffeler and Emma Haas, never married.

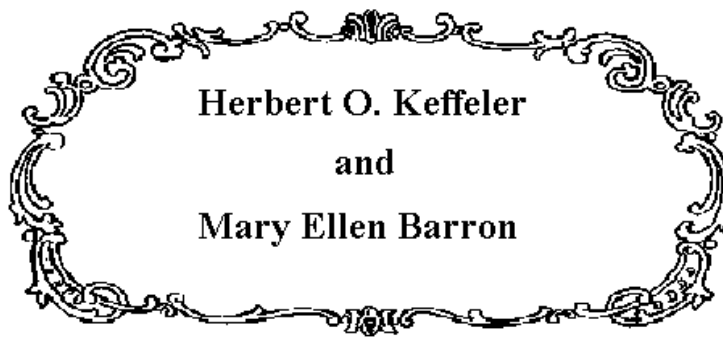
Bert described his aunt **Meta** as the neatest lady, and one who would have made a wonderful mother. Meta was a talented pianist

Bert said that the home that Jacob built for his family in Dakota was made with Iowa stone as he didn't trust the stone of the prairies. According to Gloria's research, he bought property 6/14/1889 from T. S. Saunders and built his house at 1205 Davenport.

Meta 1905

Bert continues,

***"Meta and Emma came to California (1916). They were asked to leave Dakota because of their pro-German feelings. They lived in the Los Angeles area of Southern California until they passed away, Emma in 1943 and Meta in 1945. Emma and Meta were supported by Emma's brother Theodore Haas the whole time they lived there."***



**Herbert O. (Herb) Keffeler** (1885-1948) was born in a covered wagon in the Badlands of South Dakota on April 8, 1885. He married **Mary Ellen Barron** (4/9/1897-9/1981) on December 10, 1924 in Oakland California. In time they separated, but Bert said his dad faithfully sent support. Mary Ellen and the



boys had a little business on the side, which supplemented their income as they raised laboratory animals that they then sold to local universities. Herb and Mary Ellen had two boys:



**Herbert (Bert) Theodore Keffeler** (1926 -) married Frances Bernice Johnson.

**Thomas (Tom) William Keffeler** (1927-) married Catherine Irene Hartt.

← Bert

Tom →

Bert next tells us about his father, Herbert O.:

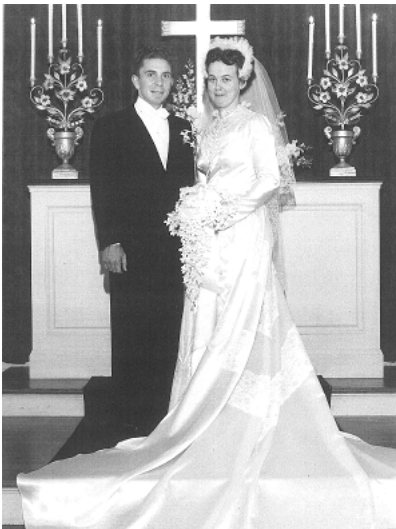
***“My Dad left Alaska in 1906 sailing to San Francisco, and when they were 200 or 300 miles from San Francisco, the captain turned around and went back to Seattle because of the earthquake April 18, 1906. Herb then returned to Alaska. After his father’s death, Herb went to San Francisco, California.”***

***“Herbert’s mother and sister [Emma and Meta] thought he was dead until a family friend saw him in Seattle in 1906 and let them know he was alive and well.”***

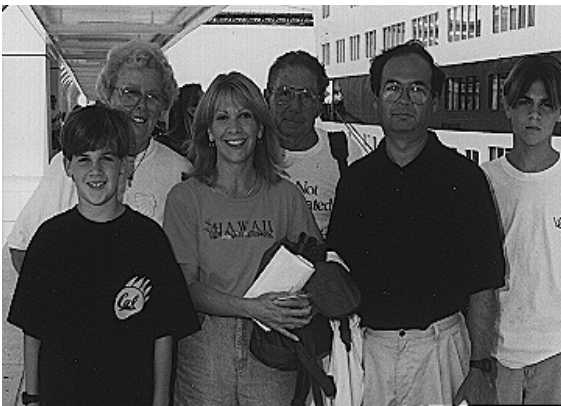
***“Herbert learned to cook while in Alaska (I guess it is more profitable than mining) so when he got back to San Francisco he got a job cooking for the construction crew on the railroad being built between San Francisco and Eureka in northern California. After the railroad was completed he moved to Oakland, California, across the bay from San Francisco.. He met and married Mary Ellen Barron Dec. 10, 1924.”***

***“My father (Herbert O.) worked as a cook several different locations in California until his death. His last job was as a chef in a faculty club at the University of California at Berkeley, California. He had to quit due to health and died March 7, 1948.”***

**Bert and his family**



**Herbert (Bert) Theodore Keffeler** and **Frances Bernice Johnson** were married December 1, 1951 in Berkley, California and are the parents of two children, **Sharon** and **Herbert (Ted) Theodore**.



Bert and Frances December 1, 1951

L to R back: Bert and Frances  
Front row, Eric, Sharon, Alberto and Paul



**Sharon** married **Paul Gavarre** and they have two sons, **Alberto** and **Eric**

← **Herbert (Ted) Theodore Keffeler** married **Nancy Rhodes** and they have two children: **Brittany** and **Savannah**.

← L to R Nancy, Brittany, Savannah and Ted

***“The present effort to make a national park out of the country along the Mississippi River from Bellevue, Iowa, north to the Minnesota border, ought to remind corn belt people how close at hand is one of the remarkable beauty spots of the United States. Sometime, we hope, there may be an all-weather road following the river from the Missouri line to the Minnesota line. Now however, most of our good highways have the unpicturesque habit of trying to get some place in a hurry and as a result anyone traveling on the main roads through Iowa is likely to remain ignorant of what stretches of beautiful scenery we have in various parts of the state.”***

***“...All along the Mississippi there are beautiful, quiet little towns, fine stretches of country, hills that look as they did when the first fur trader poled his keel up stream. As for historical interest, the country is full of it...”***

***“Either as a national park or as a state part we hope that this beautiful stretch along the upper Mississippi from Bellevue to Lansing may be preserved...”***



**Lansing, Iowa, April 1996**

We know now our great grandparents, grandparents, and our parents settled in an area that was beautiful, enough for readers to hope for its preservation. **Bob Hoy** told **Lois**

**Grummer, Fern** and **Tom Stallsmith** to look at one particular scenic spot, and visualize what those early pioneers saw. Fern took that picture.