

## Conversations With Cousins

Spoke with **Betty Hodges Stubbe** on Feb 14, 2005. She is the daughter of Helen Essex.

Betty didn't know anything about the parents of her grandfather Charles Essex. She recalled meeting him once and said he was short and stocky.

Melissa was tall and thin. Helen was very close to her mother. Betty recalled meeting Herman once, but better knew her Uncles Freeman and Linden and her Aunt Gertrude. Linden never got over the death of his wife Sidney and never married again. Linden was driving the car in the accident that killed his father Charles and Betty said he never really got over that either. He was a drinker and eventually died of cirrhosis of the Liver in Ohio. (I've since learned from another cousin that Linden died homeless, a "skid-row bum" in Cleveland.)

Gertrude's last name, Och is pronounced like the letter "O". Gertrude's son Donald changed his name to Felder. Betty's brother William lives in Tallahassee, FL and her sister Viola is in a nursing home. [*Betty is my first cousin once removed*] (updated: Betty died Feb 2007, Viola Hodges Stelzer died in 2009; brother William died before Viola)

Betty said she had heard we descended from the Mayflower and also knew about Jim Jones...said cousin Charlotte had written letters to Helen about him. (Cousin Charlotte was the daughter of Hannah Freeman Lamb [Hannah was the sister of Melissa Freeman Essex]. Charlotte's daughter was Marceline Baldwin who died from Cyanide poisoning, 18 Nov 1978, in Jonestown, Guyana. Marceline was the wife of the infamous Jim Jones. She is buried in Earham Cemetery, Richmond, Indiana. [*Marceline is my second cousin once removed*])

Spoke with **Gordon Essex Och**, Gertrude's son, on Feb 28, 2005. Gordon was raised in Warren, Ohio. His mother, Gertrude Essex, was sent to live at the Cleveland Bible Institute after her mother died in 1916. He said his mom didn't talk much about her childhood years, but did tell him about the roof-top-rescue from the 1913 Flood and the diphtheria epidemic. Gertrude and her twin sister Gladys both had diphtheria; Gertrude survived, Gladys did not. It was Gordon's feeling that there was a lot of trauma time between Gertrude's mother's death, (her father could not keep the family intact), and when she had settled into the "family" of Cleveland Bible Institute, run by Quakers, [now Malone College in Canton, Ohio.] He recalled that his Uncle Freeman was short and resembled Charles. [*Gordon is my first cousin once removed*]

Gordon and I had emailed on a regular basis, but my emails to him recently remain unanswered. He has a great sense of humor and is just a pleasure to know. Gordon sent me the picture of Melissa. (see my "Photos" link on the Genealogy page) (Gordon died Aug 2013)

Spoke with **Virginia Trees Barbour** on Feb 11, 2005. Virginia said her grandmother Dora (Isydora) Freeman Trees [Melissa Essex' sister] was a very small woman. She read to her grandchildren, took them places and was a wonderful person. Dora let her boys choose their names. They all started with the letter "R", but the boys decided if they went by first or middle names. Virginia's father Russell was killed in a car accident coming home from a business trip with his wife. As he came around a bend in the road, the car slid on some oil and flipped over

four times. Her mother survived but took a very long time to recover. Virginia said her family traveled a lot because her father felt seeing the country was an education. [*Virginia is my second cousin once removed*] (Virginia died Nov 2011)

Spoke with **Helen Hartley Fackson** on July 8, 2003, granddaughter of Nathan H. Freeman [Melissa Essex' brother]

Helen was first married to a man named Katte and they had 12 children. She said he died in Penn. in 1969. She married Fackson in 1963. Of Helen's 12 children, several died; she had one set of twins. She doesn't know where Rheumilla is buried. Had heard it could possibly be Wheeler Cemetery in Tipton. Someone had once told her to look for the grave on the Howard County line. Said Sardis Ashley is buried in Union City Cemetery.

Helen's grandfather, Nathan Freeman, at times lived in her household while she was growing up. He died in 1946, 3 days after a fall on ice going to the outhouse. He may have stepped on his shoelace because he never tied them and they were always after him to tie his shoes.

Helen mentioned that her Uncle Dick had one daughter. Aunts Idona & Iona, twins, never had children (they lived most of their lives in Louisville, KY). Her mother Myrtle had 2 boys and 2 girls. Ori Harrel, Mary Jane Freeman's son, had a daughter named Lillian.

She said Grandfather Richard Freeman had money. Said he owned several stores and homes in Richmond from N. 10th Street to 15th Street. She one time asked a family member what happened to all his money and was told that he drank his money.

Helen also spoke of Lydia (Freeman) Workes' daughter Daisy Wilcoxon. Said Daisy had twin boys that died and that she adopted a girl named Marthaleen.

Helen said she has photos of many of the Freeman family including Melissa. Sarah Freeman Percifield used to have family reunions now and then and they would take pictures. She said there is a group picture and she doesn't know all of the people in it, but knows Melissa is one of them because of her nose. I asked what was wrong with her nose and she said it must have been broken at some point in her life and that it was "different".

She told me of a story about her grandfather Nathan Freeman which the family was very hush, hush about. He was very close to his sister Mary Jane Harrel. He saw some silverware that had his sister's initials and wanted to give it to her. He stole it from a home in New Paris and then took a jewelry box from the trash of Jenkins Jewelry store to put the silverware in. The police suspected him and Nathan finally confessed when the police said they were going to arrest Mary Jane for the theft. He spent about 5 years in jail. [*Helen is my second cousin once removed*] (Helen died in 2005)

Spoke with **Barbara Felder** on April 5, 2005. Barbara is married to Stephen Felder, son of Donald Och Felder [*Donald (my first cousin once removed) is Gertrude Essex Och's son*]

Barbara wasn't able to offer any information on Charles Essex, but shared with me an amusing

family story about Freeman Essex. The family gets a chuckle out of remembering Freeman's "famous pancake breakfast." Freeman loved to travel and did it quite often. Even though he was financially comfortable, he always made sure he found ways to save money. As he'd go from town to town or state to state he'd arrange to stay with relatives. When he left one relative he would have that person drive half way to meet the other relative who would pick Freeman up and drive the other half to their home. To show his appreciation Freeman would make a pancake breakfast for the family. I asked Barbara if the pancakes were good. She said, "No! They were horrible." [*Stephen Felder is my second cousin*]

Cousin **Steve Jester**: Steve's email correspondence with **Barbara Felder** Jun 19, 2011: "Charles was some sort of merchant marine and was out at sea a lot. ... thought maybe it was for England and maybe he never naturalized..." When Melissa died, Charles sent Gertrude to a Bible College at the age of 16. He thought it would be better for her since he wasn't home enough to watch after her properly." [Melissa died in 1916 when Charles was 53 years old...not sure he'd still be at sea]

### Cousins:

**Steve Jester** is my *1<sup>st</sup> cousin*. Nearest common relatives are our grandparents Herman Essex and Susan Hardesty. Steve and I continue with genealogy research hoping to one day find the names of the parents of our Great Grandfather, Charles Essex. Right now we're following a possible "Merchant Marine" tip from Barbara Felder, above.

**Carol Butzer** is my *2<sup>nd</sup> cousin*. Nearest common relatives are our great-grandparents Harry Hardesty and Carolyn Pfoutz. Carol recently had a grave marker placed on Grandpa Harry's unmarked grave at Woodland Cemetery in Dayton, Ohio.

**Steven Gardiner** is my *3<sup>rd</sup> cousin*. Nearest common relatives are Richard Freeman and Rheumilla Ayres (descends from Sardis Freeman, Melissa's sister). Steven and I shared genealogy information and keep in touch through email. He surprised me one day with pictures he emailed to me after making a trip to the Earlham Cemetery where he took pictures of several Essex and Freeman family headstones.

**Barbara Campbell** is my *3<sup>rd</sup> cousin once removed*. Nearest common relatives are Richard Freeman and Rheumilla Ayres (descends from Hannah Freeman, Melissa's sister). Barbara's family is in possession of an old Freeman bible with birth & death dates on Richard and Rheumilla's children.

**Reta Barker** is my *5<sup>th</sup> cousin once removed*. Our Nearest common relatives are William Ashley and Phebe Howe, our link to Mayflower ancestor, William White. Reta was a great help to me with the documentation process and sharing of information needed for membership in the Mayflower Society. She also took pictures at the Earlham Cemetery for me while on vacation in Indiana.