

Caveat Lector and a Trigger Warning

As you explore the family website and read the various stories, there is an important admonition. In many instances individuals write stories about their childhood, and even about their parents from a time before they were born. Those stories can only have been handed down from one generation to another. Often, the stories become trimmed with errors. Errors of memory and errors of misunderstanding. You will find contradictory accounts of the same story, sometimes by the same person.

The meeting between Mae Elliott and Sid Lindeman is a test case. It is undisputed that Sid was in Sedalia, Missouri, and that he was a salesman. But was he selling toys or light bulbs? Had he taken a temporary job as a floor walker in a local department store or was he there to sell and place his wares? Was he approached by Mae's mother, or by Mae and her mother together? Was he invited to their home for Thanksgiving dinner, or Christmas (or both)? These are fine details that do not matter much. The outcome is undisputed. Mae and Sid fell in love and got married.

A more challenging misunderstanding seems to have occurred due to Edith Lindeman Calisch's confusion about her grandmother's history. Probably because the story was handed down to her from her mother, Mae, who was reporting on events that long preceded her own birth. This concerns Ann McIntyre Shields. It is true that she was born in 1838 in Virginia, as was her future husband, Daniel Trigg about 1833. The narrative is that after Daniel was killed in the Civil War, Ann moved from Virginia with her two children to her sister's home in St. Louis, Missouri. That is where she met her second husband, and Mae's father, John Bruce Elliott.

The problem is that the 1850 census shows the entire Shields family, including Ann, residing in Missouri, not Virginia. The Trigg family is also located in Missouri prior to 1860. Ann could not have been older than 12 years if 1850 was the *first* year she resided in Missouri. She most likely arrived at an earlier age. So, Ann Shields married Daniel Trigg in St. Louis, Missouri about 1856, where he farmed, not in Virginia. When he died, she moved from the farm back to her parent's home in St. Louis with her two young children. Further support for the Missouri connection is that Daniel Trigg was an officer in the Missouri 5th Cavalry, not a member of any Virginia military unit.

A more egregious error is one that I found in a version of Lindeman family genealogy. There it lists "Rosenthal, grandchildren of Betty Ann and Robert." It says that I, Bill Rosenthal, had one son who is deceased. That is, of course, not true. Betty Ann and Robert had three grandchildren, all of whom are alive, as are three great grandchildren. That kind of error raises questions about the accuracy of the entire document. That is unfortunate, because there is much information in that record that is of interest. I hope to use what is verifiable and ignore the remainder.

I should not cast stones. The stories that I have written and continue to write are all subject to these same vagaries. I like to say that people never tire of rewriting the story of other people's lives.

Reader beware!

Now for the trigger warning.

Many of the stories on this family website take place in the 1800s, with some reaching even further back. These were eras of vastly different cultural norms and sensibilities. As you read these accounts—often in the actual words of our ancestors—you may encounter language and attitudes reflective of their time. Some of these expressions may seem outdated, cringeworthy, or even offensive by today’s standards.

As recently as the 1950s, terms like “Negro” were commonly used for African Americans, and “Indian” was the standard term for Native Americans. Many other ethnic and religious groups, from Jews and Catholics to immigrants from Latin America and beyond, were often subjected to pejorative labels—markers of an underlying sense of cultural and class superiority among those who used them.

Editors always face the choice of removing offensive language or preserving historical authenticity. I have chosen to faithfully present the words and attitudes of our ancestors as they were originally expressed, allowing us to confront the realities of the past rather than erase them.

Our family history is complex, shaped by both privilege and persecution. We descend not only from Irish immigrants but also Scots Irish settlers—who, despite their name, were not Irish at all but British leaseholders granted land that had been taken from native Irish communities. We have Huguenot ancestors who fled religious persecution in France, Jewish ancestors who escaped the wars and pogroms of Eastern Europe, and Holocaust survivors from World War II. Yet, our lineage also includes members of the Confederate cause and likely slave owners in the 16th and 17th centuries. We are descended from both the persecuted and the persecutors.

These stories serve as a testament to how far we have come as a family in our understanding and beliefs—but they also remind us how much further we have to go. Just as our ancestors were often blind to the harm embedded in their worldviews, we too may have blind spots yet to be revealed.

-William S. Rosenthal
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