

ROGUE VALLEY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

3405 South Pacific Highway
Medford, Oregon
97501

The Rogue Digger is a quarterly publication of the Rogue Valley Genealogical Society (www.rvgsociety.org), a non-profit organization located in Medford, Oregon, which operates the Jackson County Genealogy Library (www.rvgslibrary.org). To submit an article, contact our editor caradavisjacobson@gmail.com and copy president@rvgslibrary.org. Cover images and design © RVGS, 2008.

Editor's Note:

In this edition of *The Rogue Digger*, The Rogue Valley Genealogical Society is pleased to present a recent presentation from our Quilts and Genealogy talk series and an article by one of our members about an important genealogical discovery. We are currently seeking articles for publication. If you would like to submit an article for *The Rogue Digger*, please contact our editor at caradavisjacobson@gmail.com and copy president@rvgslibrary.org.



QUILTED VEST HISTORY

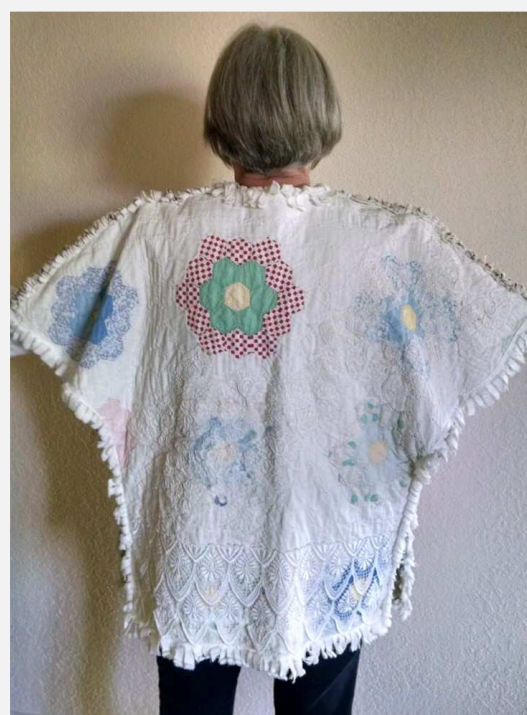
by Judy Krueger McGarvey

The original quilt was made by my Great Aunt Alice Earll, my maternal grandfather's sister, born in Noble County, Indiana, in 1859. She was married in 1892, at age 33, to Albert Seeley. Later, in 1903, at age 44, and widowed, she married a man named Lloyd Coverston, who was 20 years her junior. My Aunt Marian Earll Phelps wrote: "I remember him. In fact I remember them as a couple. Aunt Alice and Uncle Lloyd – no children that I know of. Her son, Earl Seely, married and all I ever heard about them was that when Aunt Alice died, Earl's wife wouldn't allow Earl to claim her body, and she was buried in a 'potter's

field.' It was the first scandalous thing I ever heard of in the Earll family." Alice did die at the age of 76, and she was buried in a potter's field in 1935 in Cook County (Chicago), Illinois.

She gave a "Flower Garden" quilt to my parents, after their marriage in 1933. It was used as a double bed quilt in Hammond, Indiana, and Findlay, Ohio, on my parents' bed. Later, I think I remember it on my bed. It was ultimately relegated to become a mattress cover, and it ended up with rust stains.

When I was about seven or eight, they thought I had tuberculosis (TB) because I had had a positive skin test for the disease. I had to undergo X-rays in the hospital, which required an overnight stay and was quite traumatic! It turned out that I did not have TB, but I continued to run a low-grade fever. Both my sister and I were required to take an hour's rest every afternoon in the summer, usually on this



special quilt, and under an apricot tree on our property. We were about five blocks from the courthouse, and we could tell the time while we lay there by listening to the chimes on the courthouse clock, which rang on the quarter hours. By now, the quilt was getting worn, and the backing, a rather ugly grey striped flannel, had holes in it.

Now, I must tell you about my sister, Kay Krueger Steils. We are very different! She did machine embroidery and other crafts. She gave me a machine-embroidered framed saying that read: "I smile because we are sisters. I laugh 'cause there is nothing you can do about it!" Somehow she acquired the old worn flower garden quilt from my mother. After trying to bleach and wash the material and trying to repair it, she met a lady who was very involved buying and using old quilts. The lady would collect special lace and other materials to cover the worn spots.

In 2005, I received a letter from my sister, who lived at the time in Texas. She said that she had our Christmas presents all planned. She wouldn't tell me what they were, but she said that I needed to send her \$30 and any old or antique buttons that had meaning for me, to be used as part of her gift to me. Easy—no shopping or postage; she would take care of the rest. She wouldn't tell me more. Of course, I always did what my sister told me—she was younger by 19 months, but bossier!

At Christmas, I received this amazing quilt vest (and she has one similar)!

Embroidered inside the vest was this:

DECEMBER 2005
DESIGNED FOR
JUDY MCGARVEY
FROM FLOWERGARDEN
QUILT HANDMADE
ABOUT 1938
BY
GREAT AUNT ALICE





THE RIDDLE OF THE RING

by Diane Claypool

Retrieved from a blue velvet pouch in my jewelry box, too big for my fingers, my grandmother's wedding ring felt solid and substantial like the "Grandma" I remembered from childhood. It was passed down from my father to me: a large six-sided burgundy gemstone flanked by six small diamonds on a wide gold band. Sunlight bounced off the stone's facets, creating crimson shadows in its depths. I turned it over. The ring's interior held no clues to its origin—no inscribed message from the past.

Joe Harry Smith, from England, had given this gift to Mary Jane Jones, a woman of Welsh descent. I couldn't have made that up. Those were my grandparents, with the two most popular surnames in England and Wales. Trying to find their story seemed overwhelming, one tiny ripple in a sea of Smith and Jones.

The ring was far from my mind as my husband and I drove to Healdsburg, California, for my 50th class reunion. Despite an unusual heat wave, we began exploring the town where I was born and raised.

The thermometer was climbing toward 105 degrees as we trudged along the scorching sidewalks. Sweat trickled down my face,

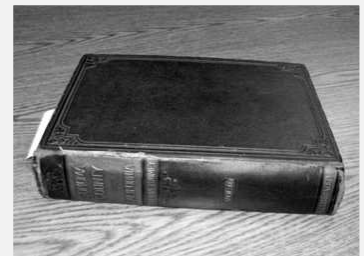
stung my eyes, and left the taste of salt on my lips. Up ahead I recognized a white two-story building, the library I had frequented as a girl. But the sign near the base of the stairs now read Healdsburg Museum.

"I'm not interested in looking at old artifacts in this heat," I said.

"I'll bet it's cooler in there," my husband Robert said. "Let's have a look."

He was right by about thirty degrees. In the cool interior, we ambled back a century among

photos and furnishings, tools and toys, and clothing and quilts from Grandma's day, and then meandered downstairs where the archival records were stored. A dark-haired woman was seated at a computer. Holly Hoods looked up with a big welcoming smile, and we exchanged introductions. I mentioned my grandparents, who had lived in Healdsburg, and I grumbled about the futility of finding them





Joseph Harry Smith

among names as common as Smith and Jones. We were just leaving when Holly suggested we look in the index of names for a book titled the *History of Sonoma County, California*.

Certain that this was a waste of time, I browsed through the index. Suddenly the name “Joseph H. Smith” jumped off the page. Could this possibly be my Joe Harry Smith? Not likely, but I pointed it out to Holly, who offered to retrieve the volume. She turned her attention to a shelf on one of the book-lined walls.

“It’s not my grandfather. His birth name was Joe, not Joseph,” I whispered to Robert.

Holly placed an old tome on the desk in front of us. Bound in embossed black leather with gilt lettering, the edges of the spine were split from decades of use. I opened the cover and began turning yellowed leaves, careful

not to damage the eighty-year-old paper. Robert put his arm around my shoulder as we hovered over the story.

There was Joseph Harry Smith, heading up his own chapter and sprawled across two pages:

“Individual enterprise, which is the just boast of the people of California, is forcefully exhibited in the career of Joseph H. Smith, one of the leading and successful ranchers in the vicinity of Healdsburg, Sonoma county.”

On the first page, Joseph’s parents, Luke and Hannah (Fielding) Smith, were mentioned; in 1878, they had emigrated from England to Michigan. Joseph’s various occupations were listed, none familiar to me. According to this story, he’d been a machinist, first with the San Francisco Fire Department, then at the Great Western Mine in Sonoma County, California. But my grandfather was a farmer. Nothing countered my doubts that this was my Joe Harry Smith. Then we turned to the second page. The very last paragraph made me gasp.

“In 1890 Mr. Smith was married to Miss Mary Jane Jones, who was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, a daughter of Charles Jones. They now have three children, Joseph Harry, Luke Leonard and Vernon.”

“It’s Grandpa Joe. It’s really him. Look!” I pointed to a name on the page. My voice raised. “There’s my father, Luke Leonard Smith. And my two uncles.”

I looked around to see if anyone had heard that outburst. I waited for the librarian’s stern “Ssh!” that I’d heard as a young girl within these walls. But it was quiet—only Robert and Holly were present, and they were smiling. I turned my attention back to the book for the last few lines about my grandfather’s vast land purchases.

“Mr. Smith’s career has been characterized by well defined purpose and successful execution of his plans by



Mary Jane Jones Smith

means of indefatigable effort. From the beginning of his active career he let nothing deter him but forged steadily ahead. His judgment indicating to him the future possibilities of Sonoma county, he had the courage to back his faith by his acts, the result being that today he is numbered among the representative citizens of this locality and is in very comfortable financial circumstances."

"He was like a giant among men," I murmured.

I scanned through other narratives about his neighbors. "Wait a minute. Look at this story—a fellow with '*individual enterprise*.' And here's another with '*sound judgment and indefatigable industry*.'"

"Sounds like he was in the company of a lot of other giants," Robert said. "Maybe that's what it took to survive in the early 1900s, hard work and sheer determination."

Back home in Oregon, the mystery of my grandmother's ring nudged the corners of my mind. Now intent on discovering its history, I began hanging out most Saturdays at the Jackson County Genealogy Library, less than three miles from my doorstep.

With the help of able staff members and a computer station, I started with www.familysearch.org, but I couldn't locate my grandparents' marriage in 1890, the year stated in the *History of Sonoma County, California*. I tried Joe or Joseph by himself. No luck. Then I took Joe out of the picture and typed in "Mary Jane Jones—1890—Milwaukee, Wisconsin." I found her! With the right parents—Charles Jones and Ann Thomas. But Mary was wed to the wrong man! What? Not just a mix-up between Joseph or Joe, the groom's first name was Christopher, and his last name wasn't Smith.

Then a long forgotten story trickled back into memory. Years ago, my father had told me that Mary had a spouse before Joe.

"She didn't talk about it much; said she had to end the marriage because her husband had epilepsy. She believed it was contagious if an infected person crossed over you," Dad explained.

So, when did Mary get together with Grandpa Joe? I tried different year spans, different name combinations, different states. Nothing worked.

I looked online through Ancestry.com, only to learn from staff members that the 1890 Federal Census had been destroyed by fire. A search through the 1900 census revealed a myriad of Smiths, but not my Joe and Mary. "Where are you?" I whispered.

Then, in the 1910 California Census, up popped a listing for Joseph Smith, Mary, and the three boys—Joe, Luke, and Vernon. Joseph (Joe) was listed as a farmer on the very same ranch property where I'd picked prunes as a girl. That wasn't a surprise. Mom told me long ago that Dad and his brother Vernon paid off Grandpa Joe's mortgage in 1936 and acquired his property—nearly 800 acres of Sonoma County land in Knights Valley.

One column, "Number of years of present marriage," noted "18" across from the names of Joseph and Mary. This meant they probably exchanged wedding vows not in 1890, but in 1892, four years after Joe's arrival in this country. But where?

Months later, still on a mission to find the history of the ring, I decided to search through my father's papers for clues. I climbed to the attic and moved bins of Christmas decor, shoved aside boxes of fishing gear, lifted off a carton of books, and located the wooden trunk with leather straps containing my father's memorabilia. Dad had passed several years ago, and I missed him so much I hadn't had the

courage before now to poke through his belongings. I knelt on the floor pulling out mementos of his life: photo albums, a rolled up diploma from Heald Business College, a diary of his trip to England and Wales, maps of California real estate. I lifted the flap of a plain brown envelope and teased out a fragile piece of paper, a letter signed by Mary, dated 1893.

February 19, 1893

My Dear Mother and Sister and the children,

I suppose you are wondering how I get along in the city. I got here all right and found Joe at the depot awaiting us. Well, Mother and Ella, I am on the third floor, two rooms, bedroom and kitchen, eight dollars a month. They are nice clean rooms.

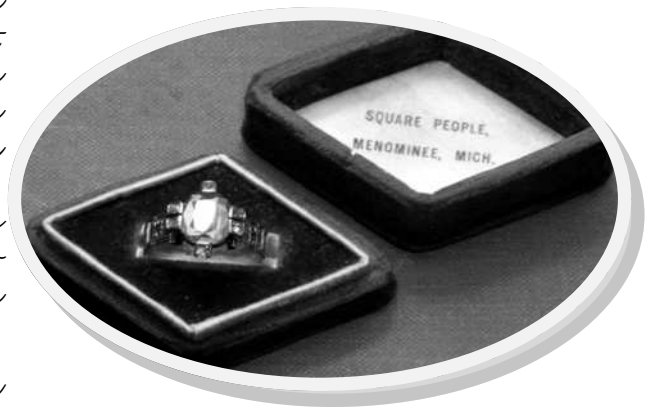
We have a nice view from our bedroom window. It looks out onto South Park. People are in that little park from early in the morning until late in the evening. There are several families in this building. They seem to be tony. If they could meet me and my little boy [we] breathe just the same.

My trunk came all right, not a thing broke in the shuffle. We went up to Chinatown last night. It is a beautiful sight but our arms were pulled out of the sockets carrying Charlie. I like the City. I can look out of the window all day and not get lonesome. I am going to wash tomorrow. Joe is working, but there are thousands walking the street, not working. Everyone that I speak to says that Joe is awful lucky for a stranger to be working.

Mr. Clark carried my trunk into the depot in Gilroy. There were about 100 young girls sitting outside in the depot in Gilroy like a dime museum beauty show. I never seen the beat. Joe says it was the same when he came through every time.

Be sure and write soon. My number is 19 South Park, San Francisco, Cal.

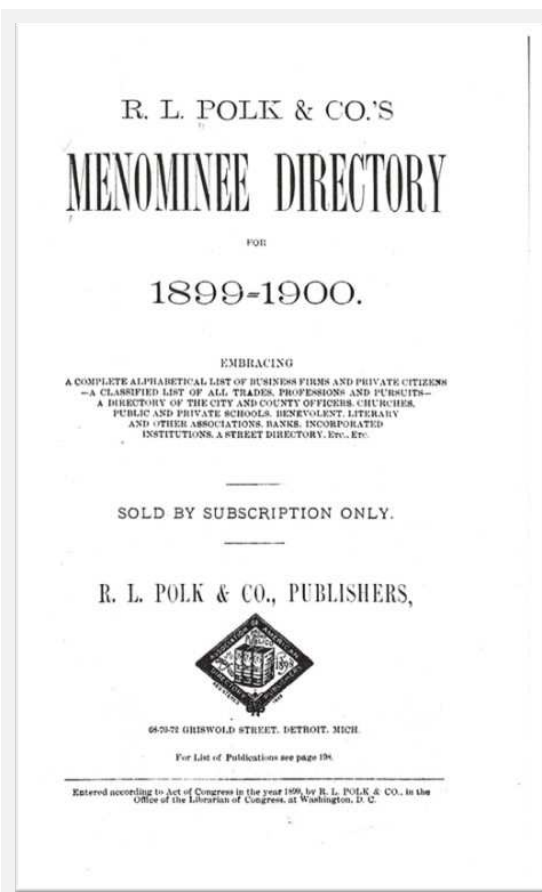
Love to you all from your dear pardner for 10 weeks. Mary



Mary's note had breathed life into her story, an amazing substitute for missing census records. One year after their probable date of marriage, Mary stayed with her mother and sister for ten weeks—time enough for Joe to find work and get settled; time enough for a baby to be born, nurtured by the women in Mary's family. In 1893, Joe and Mary Smith were living in San Francisco with Charlie, their firstborn child. My father had told me long ago that his oldest brother Charles "died young" of polio.

I explored deeper in the wooden trunk, pushed aside some documents and photos, and my fingers found a small diamond-shaped box wedged in a corner. It was empty, with a broad slot for a missing ring. On the underside of the red velvet lid, the label read, "Square People—Menominee, Michigan," the very city where Joe Smith and his family had settled when they arrived from England. Could this be the box for Mary's ring?

I raced downstairs to retrieve Mary's wedding band. Heart pounding, I eased the wide ring into the



broad satin slot—a perfect fit!

Back at my computer, I eagerly searched online through an 1899 city directory for Menominee, Michigan—no listing for Square People. I had to give up. But curious to see what people bought in the 1890s, I browsed through illustrated ads. Ornately carved wooden chairs with slender curved arms, upholstery pads for back and bottom, were supported by slim legs that seemed so fragile, I thought a doll placed on the chair seat might cause them to break. With a click of the mouse, I began flipping online pages back toward the front of the book. I almost missed it. One large half-page ad featured *A. Dudley Cycle Works*, a big two-story factory with horses and buggies parked out front.

Beneath that square, the lower part of the page listed “Smith & Peterson, General House Furnishers,” and sellers of “Jewelry”; then, using the first initials of Smith & Peterson, the subtitle “Square People.” This clever wording let customers know they would be treated honestly, fair and square.

What a find! That’s where Joe Harry Smith had purchased a

ring for Mary Jane Jones. I might never locate their marriage site, but the promise of their life together had started in 1892 in Menominee, Michigan, in a general store that sold carpets and chairs, fiddles and wedding rings. One of those horse-and-buggy rigs parked outside the cycle works probably carried them off into their future.



8 R. L. POLK & CO.'S

A. DUDLY CYCLE WORKS,
MANUFACTURERS OF
BICYCLES and MACHINES
and Tools for Bicycle Construction.

NEW FACTORY AND OFFICE: LIBERTY AND RIDGE STS.

MENOMINEE, - - MICHIGAN.

RICHARD H. SMITH. PETER M. PETERSON.

SMITH & PETERSON,
SQUARE PEOPLE.
General House Furnishers.

Hardware, Carpets, Bicycles,
Sewing Machines.

Musical Instruments, Jewelry, Notions,
Etc.
CASH OR CREDIT.
355-361 GRAND AVE.,
MENOMINEE, - - MICHIGAN.

FOOTNOTES

1. Cramb, A. (2009, Dec 16) 'Smith and Jones Most Popular Names in England and Wales', *The Telegraph*. Retrieved from www.telegraph.co.uk. Cites a 'study of the geography of surnames' comparing a century of data beginning with 1881, by Findmypast.co.uk.
2. Tuomey, H., *History of Sonoma County, California, Volume II*, (S. J. Clarke, Chicago-San Francisco-Los Angeles, 1926), 'Joseph H. Smith' pp. 921-922.
3. Penned notation: Wedding of Charles Jones to Ann Thomas, 15 Nov 1858, Bedwellty, Wales, bound page in the *Domestic Bible, Illustrated*, by The Rev. Ingram Cobbin, M.A. (Case, Lockwood and Company, Hartford, 1866). Stored at the home of Diane Smith Claypool.
4. *Wisconsin, County Marriages, 1836-1911*, retrieved online from www.Familysearch.org.
5. *1910 U.S. Federal Census, Knights Valley, Sonoma, California*. Retrieved online from www.Ancestry.com.
6. Sonoma County Recorder's Office, Santa Rosa, California: *Grantor Vol. 419*, (61-62) confirmed the family story.
7. 'A Letter from Mary, 1893' transcribed by Diane Smith Claypool, 2016. How the letter to Mary's mother came into the possession of Luke Leonard Smith, Mary's son, remains a mystery.
8. Statement of Luke Leonard Smith, 1990—unconfirmed.
9. *Menominee Directory 1899-1900, Menominee, Michigan* (R. L. Polk & Company, Detroit). Retrieved online from www.Ancestry.com.

