

## **WHITE FAMILY GENEALOGY**

**by Lydia Clara Dodimead Lucht**  
**Written about 1970**

I am sure there are many families of "Whites", which was my mother's maiden name, over the United States. In this story or account, I have only been interested in her particular ancestors of Whites. My mother H kept in close touch with her father's family. We visited them whenever we were in Rockville, so I knew most of them well. My Aunt Clara kept in touch with the family history. It is from her letters, notes, clippings and our memories that I have tried to compile this history, which is true as much as we can trace.

In those early days of America and the settling of the various states, men traveled in all directions. We wonder why they picked a particular location to settle. Our ancestors chose Indiana. Parke County on the map is a small square on the west side of Indiana. Only the narrow strip of Vermillion prevents Parke County residents from looking onto the flat lands of Illinois, The Wabash River bounds it on the west and it is dotted with small towns. Small creeks run across it to feed the river and it is rich in trees and woods. It has more covered wooden bridges still standing than any other county in Indiana. Each year in October, they celebrate it with a festival and tour of those bridges.

Vincennes, farther south on the Wabash, was the first town in Indiana, founded in 1702. Occupied by the British during the Revolutionary War, it was captured by George Rogers Clark. Later in the 1700's, General William Henry Harrison came to Vincennes and bought 300 acres, upon which he built a mansion, named Grouselands. He led Indiana's soldiers to victory in the last war with the Indians, and he became Governor of Indiana - the first Governor when it became a state, as Vincennes was the first capitol. Grouselands became the first Governor's Mansion. I looked on an old map with the picture of Grouselands, but did not find the small house that was a part of the White history.

I have no record of the years until my great-great-grandfather Johnson (or John) White came to Indiana in the early 1800's. He came from the East, possibly Pittsburgh, as he was a licensed river boat pilot at the age of 16, and piloted river barges up and down the Ohio, perhaps to New Orleans. He married Elizabeth Shedd. They had five children - Nathan, Andrew, Ared, Mary and Johnson Shedd. Since Johnson wanted to stay with the river, he bought land in Illinois on the Wabash River and started a ferry across it.

The boys were all trained for river work. Besides operating the ferry, they continued the barge business, traveling not only the Wabash, but the Ohio and Mississippi with produce and goods. After they had been there a few years, Johnson (the father) and a neighbor planned a long trip to New Orleans with several barges of produce. This was hoped to be a very profitable trip, although a long one. Communications were not as they are today, so the family could only wait and hope for his safe return. Months later, the partner returned with the news they were in a bad storm, the boats were overturned and lost and Johnson was drowned. Although the partner was plentifully supplied with money and they suspected a different story and foul play, they had no way of finding out the truth. Sorrow again came as Nathan, trying to make the long trip to New Orleans once again, was killed in a boiler explosion at Natchez. It was the main stopping point and called the wickedest city on the river. I can remember one of the great-aunts saying one time, in talking about the family, "Uncle Nate was killed at Natchez-Under-The-Hill."

So much sorrow, caused by their river work, must have made the family very disheartened. Andrew moved to Illinois and Ared to Wisconsin. This left Johnson Shedd, the youngest, his mother and little sister, Mary. They had nothing left of their barge business and had to sell the ferry. They were having a hard time getting along. Governor Harrison, feeling sorry for the small family, invited them

to live in the small house on the Grouseland estate. My mother told one time that her great-aunt Mary used to tell of their time spent there. She boasted of playing on the lawn with the son of a President and the father of a President, for both Governor Harrison and his grandson became Presidents of the United States. They lived there only a few years for Johnson Shedd moved his family to Parke County. My grandfather, Johnson Shedd's son, used to say he cut and hauled the logs for some of the first covered bridges.

Mary White married Caleb Richards 3/12/1841. They had three children - Wallace, Helen and Clara. Wallace moved to Terre Haute, we did not keep in touch with him. Clara died at 18 years of age. Helen lived at Montezuma, she never married. She used to visit us when I was small. The "Clara Vase" we have handed down, came from Clara Richards. It went to my Aunt Clara, then to me as another Clara. Since we have no other Claras in the family, I have given it to my eldest granddaughter, Julie. The "Mary Vase", a bisque figurine, came from Mary White Richards. It was given to Mary Murphy, her niece, then was to be given to my cousin, Mary Frances. Since she had no children, she let me keep it for my daughter, Mary JoHannah, who in turn will pass it down to her daughter, Mary Victoria.

Johnson Shedd White married Hannah Jones, 2/18/1838 in Parke County, Indiana. Their children were Charles, Mary Frances (who died in infancy), Ared, William, Frank, Mary and Martha.

Charles Nathan was my grandfather, born in 1839, the eldest. He attended the Old Rockville Seminary, but his education was limited as he had to help his father. He tried to enlist during the Civil War, but was turned down for bad eye sight. Eventually, he became completely blind in the early 1900's, as very little treatment was known then for eye diseases. I know he went to several doctors, but there seemed to be no remedy. Charles married Sarah Victoria Lang on 1869 and they had four children - Earl Gilbert, Hester Hannah, Clara Martha and William Johnson. Victoria came from the area near Catlin and Rosedale. They set up housekeeping there on a farm, where Earl and Hester (my mother) were born. All of her life, my grandmother had a very bad cough. Today, it would probably be diagnosed as asthma or an allergy and treated accordingly, for she had no signs of tuberculosis. So, while the two children were small, grandfather decided to move to Kansas, hoping the dry air there would help her. They made the long trip by covered wagon, with a group of other settlers going out to live. After months of traveling, they reached Kansas and laid claim to land for a farm. Since there were few trees and little lumber, most of the people lived in so-called "sod houses". They were dug partly out of the ground with sod forming the upper part and the roof. Clara was born there. My grandmother never liked the wild flat country, where they could see for miles and had few close neighbors. There were few trees and little greenery, and Indians were still roving in bands. She finally said, "I am no better here than at home. If we stay here, I will surely die. If I die any place, I want it to be in Indiana." Although she was a small frail woman, she lived to be 78 years old. They finally came back to Rosedale, where William Johnson was born. After grandfather began losing his eye sight, they moved to Marshall and bought a small house at the edge of town. We always called it the "Little Yellow House". I can see it now, setting in a large yard, with grandmother's favorite lilac bushes, and a garden plot in the back. A few years before they died, they were unable to live alone and moved in with my father and mother in Marshall.

Earl married Lilli \_\_\_\_\_. He was a coal miner at Mecca. They had no children, eventually separated and were divorced. He was very unhappy and unsettled, and drifted around. Finally, he went to Arkansas, where he died and was buried.

Hester Hannah, my mother, married my father, David Dodimead, in 1902. They lost a son and triplet daughters at birth. I was the only living child. They met at Cousin Lydia Wymore's hotel in Marshall. Dad was staying there for a time and mother went to help out. They were married at her home near Rosedale, but grandfather was so opposed, he stayed in the barn during the ceremony. (Note 2011: It was believed that David was born in 1847, but he was baptized 9/29/1939 in

Woolrich, England so he was actually 36 years older.) My father was 28 years older than my mother, an Englishman, a Democrat, and a member of the Primitive Baptist Church. Grandfather was a dyed-in-the-wool Republican (as they called them), a life-long Methodist, and a member of one of Indiana's early families. He changed his mind, later, and accepted the marriage.

Clara never married. She was engaged to Herbert \_\_\_\_\_. He was drafted in the Spanish-American War and was lost at sea. She was a Practical Nurse, was very good in baby cases, and was kept busy nursing in the home. After her parents died, she went to California to visit some cousins. She liked it there so well, she made her home in Long Beach. She visited back here every two years or so, but never wanted to come back to live. In the 1950's, she had a massive stroke. I went out, but could not leave her alone there in a nursing home. I brought her back to Madison, where she lived for three years in a nursing home until her death. She was completely paralyzed, couldn't talk and her mind was affected - I never knew if she knew me. It was sad as she was a very capable and independent person. She is buried at Marshall.

William Johnson, the youngest, was a teacher. He married Lelia Wright of near Terre Haute. Mary Frances was their daughter; we were both born in 1905. Lelia died when Frances was a baby. Earl and Lillie took her to live with them for a while (before their separation), then she came to grandmother's. We were together as much as possible and were like sisters. We still are. When she was in the grades, Uncle Will married Jessie Nelson of Montpelier. They took Mary Frances to live with them, which broke my heart, but she had a home and a mother at last. Will and Jessie had two daughters, Victoria Magdalene and Martha Ellen. I believe they lost a son at birth, but I don't remember. Uncle Will died several years ago. Jessie now lives in Florida.

Except for Frank who lived in Terre Haute, all of Grandfather' White's brothers and sisters were in Rockville. They visited grandfather occasionally, but due to his blindness, he went very little. Travel, then, was by train or horse and buggy. Few automobiles were in use and they were slow. His family was known to be nature lovers and fun-loving. My grandmother was of Scotch descent, and I feel now she did not approve of their joke-making and pranks. They were never very close to any of his family, except my mother.

I found an editorial, from an old paper, writing about the "Rockville Whites" and I quote:

"William J. White - a man whose personal charm was at once apparent, whose beautiful voice was given freely at any call, whose gift of pantomime was so superlative, only those who knew him well could be sure he was acting.

Judge Ared White - an eminent jurist, a forceful eloquent orator, a writer and poet, whose voice was music, whether he spoke or sang.

Frank White, - a splendid cornetist, an actor of high ability.

Mary White Murphy - a character actress unsurpassed in impersonations.

Martha White McDivitt - the best raconteur of them all. She had the ability to animate objects and animals with a personality, comparable to Uncle Remus."

Ared F. White was born 5/27/1843 (died 1/11/1914), the second son of Johnson Shedd and Hannah. He worked in his father's saw mill until he enlisted and served through the Civil War. After coming home, he entered Asbury College, later Depauw at Greencastle. After finishing school, he practiced law in Rockville. He was Judge of the Parke Circuit Court for eighteen years and was known for his fairness, wise decisions and oratory. Ared married Sarah Catherine Strouse (c. 10/21/1869). They had four children – Jacob S. (born 1877, died 1962), Nellie, Helen and Fannie. Jacob became a well-

known lawyer in Indianapolis. He married Bertha C. Stark and had one son who died at about one year and one daughter, Ruth H. The last years of his life he spent in California with her. Nellie was also a lawyer, but never practiced; she only acted as a consultant. At that time vocations for women were limited there were no women lawyers. Fannie (I imagine her name was Frances) married \_\_\_\_\_ Sulgrove. They lived in Terre Haute. I never knew her or if she had a family. Helen married Walter C. Maud and they had one daughter, Mary K. After her husband died, they moved to California with Nellie.

William Johnson White (born 7/29/1850) married Martha Jane Miller on 11/12/1874. They had three children – Mable (born 9/25/1875), Hubert (born 9/2/1877), and Robert (born after 1880). I did not know Hubert. Mable married William Thompson, a well-known grocer. They had a son, William, who had two children - Billy and Nancy. Aunt Clara stayed with them, I visited and baby-sat. Billy graduated from Harvard and Annapolis. In World War II, his ship was bombed in the South Pacific and he was killed the day he was to leave on furlough. I don't know where Nancy is. Robert, William's other son, graduated from the Chicago Conservatory of Music with a Master's Degree in violin. He played with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra for years and taught. He tried to enlist in World War I, but was rejected, so he served by going to all the hospitals, playing for the wounded.

Incidentally, my own music lessons started with Robert. He offered to give me free violin lessons, when he was home one summer, if mother would get me to Rockville. I refused - I couldn't get interested in the "fiddle". My mother informed me I was going to learn to play some instrument, so I started on the organ, later piano. I would rather have "been out playing", but I had to practice so much each day. Mother would sometimes sit beside me to see I practiced, although she didn't know one note from another. I never became an outstanding musician, but I know she was proud when I finally could play for Church and Sunday School. I've been very grateful for the knowledge I do have. (Note 2011: Lydia, my mother, played the pipe organ at St. Mary's Church in Madison, Indiana for years and was the organist for Lytle Funeral Home until she died.) I'm sure I would have been a disappointment to Robert, for I never could even learn to play a uke.

Also - William J. White started the first band in Rockville (June 1873). At first, it was composed of rattle-boxes, harmonicas, and anything they could use for music. Later, they were able to buy instruments and the town became very proud of their band. His father, Johnson Shedd, would never permit a violin to be played in his home, but William borrowed one and learned to play in secret. One night, at a musical entertainment, he was asked to play "Poor Nellie Gray" on his violin. In spite of the fact his father was in the audience, he played it. When he finished, his father rose from his seat, walked down the aisle, took the violin from him and said, "Son, you didn't play that right." He played it over and other numbers as well for the people would not let him stop. His family was so surprised, they had not known he played at all and thought he disliked the instrument. Finally, when he stopped, he told the audience what had happened. He had been a violinist and loved it, but one time when he was still on the river, he had made a boat trip to Cincinnati. While there, he attended a revival service. The minister preached on Sin and the Devil. He stressed that the violin or fiddle was the work of the Devil, luring people into sin. He must have been very persuasive, for Johnson went home, broke his violin to pieces, and had never touched it again until that night. He remarked, "I am glad people are getting more broad-minded, for music, no matter how it is played, is God's greatest gift to man."

Uncle Will's wife, Martha, was the last of the group to go. I stopped to see her shortly before she died. She kept saying, "I'm the last leaf, I'm the last leaf" as if she were anxious to go for she was homesick for all of them. They had all been very close and she was ready to be with them.

Mary White, or Mamie as she was called, married Clinton Murphy (born 3/14/1846). They had two children - Mary (little Mamie) and Maurice (born 1892). Mamie died when she was about seven years old. Maurice graduated from DePauw and was admitted to the Bar. He was drafted in the First

World War, was in France where he was gassed. He spent some time in the hospital, but never fully recovered. During his school years, he had worked as a reporter while on vacation. He became interested in Indiana railroads and their history. After his discharge from the army, he was Head of Public Relations for the New York Central Lines, in Indianapolis. Going from there to Chicago, he was editor of the Chicago Journal of Commerce and wrote many articles on the railroads. He married Ruby Claypool Bradford of the Indianapolis Hotel family. They were only married a very short time when he died from the effects of the gassing in the army. They had no children.

Aunt Mamie, as we called her, I knew best of all - she was a very unforgettable person. She was very fond of mother and we visited there often. I wish I could remember some of her stories, for they were so amusing. I always spent our time there laughing. Mother used to tell me not to laugh at Aunt Mamie, she only stretched her tales out more. They lived in a large house, not far from the Court House. Uncle Glint had one room as a library, completely lined with shelves of books. I loved books, so was always fascinated with this room, although I wouldn't have been interested in reading those! Aunt Mamie gave me all of little Mamie's toys when I was old enough to play with them - dolls, dishes, cupboard, high chair and beds. Now, they would be antiques and valuable, but I played with them so much, I suppose I wore them out or threw them away when I was older.

After Maurice died in 9/12/1930, Ruby (his wife) moved back to Indianapolis. She insisted Aunt Mamie come to live with her. Aunt Mamie wrote for mother to come up and help her with the breaking up and selling of her home. Since mother was with us here at the hotel and my son, John David, was a baby, I took them both up. Aunt Mamie held John on her lap and said over and over, "This is my great-great-grand-nephew. I never thought I would live to say this." She had already given us the "Clara" and "Mary" vases. At this time, she gave us Uncle Glint's collection of Dickens's Works. There are sixteen volumes, printed in 1860s, and are still in very good condition. She also gave me her silver coffee or tea set with tray and Aunt Martha's complete set of silverware that she had when she was first married. They are not sterling, but are all heavy and heavily carved. Aunt Mamie lived to be almost a hundred years old.

Martha White married Robert C. McDivitt. They had a daughter who died in infancy and a son, Robert Carl. I do not remember Martha as well, but she was very heavy and always jolly and laughing. Carl never married. He was in the abstract business and became a recluse-of-sorts. I remember mother and Aunt Mamie going over and trying to get him to clean his house. It was so dirty and full of trash. They talked, scolded, even hired a woman to clean it, but he would let no-one touch anything. It was rumored he was very wealthy. If so, he must have buried it or hidden it in the trash, for nothing of value was found.

Grandfather and grandmother are buried at Marshall. A few years ago, Mary Jo and I made a trip to Rockville on a search for some of this history. We found most of the others of Johnson Shedd White's family buried in the old Rockville Cemetery. To my knowledge, there are few descendants of any age of that family who were so much a part of the history of Parke County and Indiana. Some of the old names are still with us - Mary, Martha, Victoria, Clara, and John (instead of Johnson).

We, four, grand-daughters of Charles White, and our families are probably the largest group of descendants of that Johnson White who came down the Ohio, then up the Wabash to settle at Vincennes.

Mary Frances married Dale Biddinger of New Castle. They had no children, but she has a step-son. Dale Junior's mother died when he was small, so he has known no other mother but her and treats her as if she were his own mother. Dale, her husband, has passed away, but they still live in New Castle.

Victoria Magdalene married George Pierce. They have a son, Jon, and live in California.

Martha Ellen married Ivan Frakes. They have three children -Alice Ann, Janet and Thomas. They

live in Florida. I have lost touch with Victoria and Martha Ellen, but Mary Frances and I have stayed in close contact and we still live in our "Indiana".

I, Lydia Clara, married John E. Lucht of Madison where we live. We have two children - John David and Mary JoHannah. John David married Shirley Spreen of Jacksonville, Illinois. They have six children - Mark Allen, Julie Ann, Jennifer Jo, David Michael, Jodie Marie and John Matthew. They, too, live in Madison. Mary Jo is married to Robert Schlomann of New York City. They live in Downingtown, Pennsylvania and have two daughters - Mary Victoria and Ruth Ann.

This has been more of a story than a genealogy. So far as I know, it is true, although many of the details are missing. I wish I had kept more of them. It has been enjoyable, reading the old clippings, etc. and remembering the things I knew from those by-gone years.

I often look down on the Ohio River from my house on the hill above it, and think of that Johnson White - coming through those waters as they were then - choosing the wilds of a new country. And where we would have been, if he had chosen differently. This must be Destiny .....