



Dennis Historical Society Newsletter

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Send letters & stories to Dennis Historical Society, Box 607, S. Dennis 02660 or to pjhowes@verizon.net

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The next Board Meeting is Tuesday, April 12 @ 2:00 P.M., 2nd floor, Dennis Memorial Library, Old Bass River Road, Dennis Village

From Cabin Boy to Soldier, the American Odyssey of Frederick Bergmann

*Charles Edwin Handren and Joan McRae Stoia,
with Burton N. Derrick of the Dennis Historical Society*
Conclusion

Having no children of their own, Joshua and Minerva had adopted a little girl named Louisa, who was orphaned in 1852¹. Together the couple showered love and affection on their daughter, even allowing her to have a pony on board during one of several voyages during which she and Minerva accompanied Joshua." A demanding captain, Joshua also knew how to be a loving father. It is clear from the correspondence regarding the "little German Boy" that Joshua had become more fatherly than supervisory with regard to young Fred, in spite of his crew.

By 1860, Frederick appeared to have been completely absorbed into the Sears family. In a chatty letter to Louisa ("Lulu") from sea on June 6, Fred refers to Joshua as "Father," sends his love to "your dear mother" Minerva and "our" cousin Georgietta, and informs Lulu that he has become "speedily friends" with Minerva's nephew Moses Edwin Handren.

In September of that year, we find Fred on dry land in Dennis, behaving, it seems, like a normal teenager.

In a letter to Minerva dated September 16, 1860, Joshua wrote (sic):

"I am glad you think so favourable of Frederick No doubt he will soon get broke into domestic life. Tell him that I have just seen a Capt. direct from "Bremen" & Says that his Father & Family are well ...Don't let him go with the Horse much, & don't let him have it without asking for it. I don't like to (have) him rode Horseback Any. It will spoil him for a Carriage Horse."

Fred had quickly settled into life in the seacoast town, and was enjoying himself far away from the rigors of shipboard life. Joshua was delighted to hear that Minerva shared his enthusiasm for the boy. While his letter takes a fatherly tone, the reader can infer from the content of previous correspondence, that Joshua may

have been relieved to be free from the conflicting roles of employer and guardian with regard to Fred. He appears to have been as happy to have Fred as a son as Fred was to have Joshua as a "Father." However, just a year later, in 1861, larger events impacted the family's life as war fever broke out in New England. According to Civil War historian Bruce Catton, the fall of Fort Sumter unleashed a fervor of patriotism throughout the North. Canon writes:

"There were 'war meetings' everywhere, mayors made speeches, citizens paraded, and military recruiting stations were swamped."

It would have been hard for Fred to resist these forces. Early in 1861, while Joshua was away at sea, Frederick followed the example of other boys his age from Dennis and enlisted in the 43rd Massachusetts Volunteer Militia, perhaps incentivized by the \$250 signing bonuses being offered at that time. Regardless of the method used to compare those bonuses to today's dollars, \$250 would have been an enormous amount of money to a 19 year old in 1861. What is perhaps more startling, however, is the method by which he enlisted. The records show that in the summer of 1862, when the 43rd was organized as a regular regiment, the young man from Dennis appeared in the rolls of Company A of the 43rd Regiment Massachusetts Volunteer Militia as a private under the name "Thomas H. Hall." Frederick had signed on under an *assumed name*.

Fred's family was quick to react. In a letter dated September 28, 1862, his sister Henriette F. (Bergmann) Evert, who lived in Boston, wrote to Captain Sears on behalf of her parents regarding the enlistment. Initially, the tone is formal but ends on a note more consistent with the close personal relationship between the two families (sic):

"Dear Sir, Frederick Bergmann is at present with us! He says that when at East Dennis he enlisted. Father and mother would be very much obliged to you if you would be so very kind as to write them the particulars. He says that he has put his name down and received \$250.00 bounty. Is this true? We were very much opposed to his enlisting, and tried to persuade him from doing so on account of his parents. If it would not be too much trouble we should all like to hear about it from you soon... Father mother and all others of the

¹ Actually, Louisa's father (if her mother had actually been married!) had apparently died. Margaret, her mother, could not afford to keep her and Capt. Joshua found out somehow she was available. Louisa was born in 1852 and adopted in 1855. Bo Durst

family send their kind regards to you and Mrs. Sears."

There is no record of a reply from Joshua and little time, in any event, as things were moving fast. That September, Fred was at Camp Meigs in the Readville section of Boston, where the 43rd was mustering, training and preparing for war. He was assigned to Company "A", a distinguished unit formed from the Boston Light Infantry, known as the "Tigers," giving the entire regiment the name "Tiger Regiment." On November 10, 1862, spurred on by a parade in Boston, Fred's regiment left Boston aboard the steamer Merrimac for Beaufort, North Carolina, and eventually, Camp Rogers, located outside the city of New Bern (referred to as "Newbem" in documents and by Fred). Union troops occupied New Bern for much of the Civil War, saving it from destruction. From Camp Rogers, Fred's unit participated in numerous engagements, initially at Kinston, Whitehall, Goldsboro and Trenton. In the early months, he reports in his letters that they also spent time marching, drilling and building fortifications. Four of his letters to Joshua survive, written between March and May of 1863, which contain rich, and sometimes harrowing, accounts of the action and burst with his pride at finally being "an American," a member of one of the "best drilled and spankiest (sic)" companies, and "strong and fearless in defending the union." He describes himself as being in robust health and has clearly come into his own as a young man. Finally, the little German boy belongs.

The four letters provide clarity about his motives for enlisting and a surprising revelation that Joshua not only approved of the enlistment but may have suggested using an assumed name. In the letter dated April 7, 1863, Fred attributes his decision to enlist not to the signing bonus, but rather, to his patriotism and the illustrious origins of the Tiger Regiment:

"After finding out that the Regiment was not full I determined to join it. I have not, so far, regretted my (sic) choosing the 43rd Rgt. It is a tip top one and I hope that we will have a chance to growl once more at the Rebels."

In each of the letters that survive from the period of his enlistment, Fred reiterates his love and affection for the Sears' extended family back in Dennis and his gratitude to Joshua for his caring guardianship. He is steadfast in his pride in the Regiment and the part he and his comrades are playing in the service of the Union; his excitement and conviction about the work are palpable. Apparently, he believes he cuts a dashing figure in his uniform, writing: "I shall send my likeness the first chance I get."

Fred ends his April 7 letter on a more somber

note, regretting his misrepresentation of the facts surrounding his trip from the Cape to New York en route to Boston. He confesses to "false pride" and hopes that he has not damaged the Sears good name in the process. He offers to "alter my name a little, so there will be no fear of recognition or mistakes." The last letter from Fred to Joshua was written on October 29, 1864 from Bremenhaven, where Fred had returned to live with his biological family. In it, he is downcast and disappointed at the decline of the once bustling seaport, due in part to the disruption of trade during the American Civil War. He signs this last letter "Fredk Bergmann."

After this the trail goes cold. Although Charles Edwin Handren believes that Fredrick returned to America, there is no further information about him in the DHS archives or the accessible historical record. Whether this is because he changed his name "a little" or because this chapter of his American odyssey was simply over, the authors can only speculate. Mr. Handren invites anyone with information about the later life of Joshua Sears' "little German Boy," Frederick Bergmann, to contact him through the Dennis Historical Society.

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The Story of the Peter and Mary Alleman Family's Immigration to the U.S. And the Solving of a Family Mystery

Conclusion

After their arrival in New Orleans, the Allemans would have been met with several choices to continue their journey. In the same newspaper that announced the arrival of the *Amulet*, there are several ads for packet ships (steamer riverboats) that took passengers up the Mississippi to points north. The ships steaming to St. Louis included the *JM White*, *Westwood*, *Harry of the West*, *Pride of the West*, *Olive Branch*, and the *Convoy*. By 1 Jun 1850, the Allemans were living in Prairie du Sac, Wisconsin. The family included²:

Peter Allyman [Alleman] (age 40, b. 1810)

Mary Allyman (age 38, b. 1812)

Samuel Allyman (age 17, b. 1833)

George Allyman (age 15, b. 1835)

Margret Allyman (age 13, b. 1837)

Peter Allyman (age 12, b. 1838)

² Alleman, Peter. 1850. Prairie du Sac, Sauk, Wisconsin; Roll: M432_1006; Page: 39A; Image: 80. Ancestry.com. 1850 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Original data: Seventh Census of the United States, 1850; (National Archives Microfilm Publication M432, 1009 rolls); Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29; National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Ursula Allyman (age 10, b. 1840)
Anna Allyman (age 4, b. 1846 in Switzerland)
Mary Allyman (age 2, b. 1848 in Wisconsin)

There are a few inconsistencies in these records. The first is Ursula's birth date. Her age in 1846 on the ship is listed as 4 which would put her birth date in 1842. In the 1850 census, her age is 10 which puts her birth date in 1840. Family records indicate her birth date was 25 Apr 1841. If the family date is correct, that would make Ursula 5 on the ship and 9 in the census. I chalk this up to imperfect record-keeping of the time. Or maybe there was a discount for young children on the ship.

The other mystery involves the family story of the "baby lost at sea". Family records indicate that there was a baby born at sea that didn't survive or that there was a 1-2-year-old that didn't survive³. There has also been a child named Samuel that didn't have a recorded birth or death date and so it was assumed this was the lost child. According to the ship records, Samuel is actually the eldest Alleman child and was alive and well in Wisconsin in 1850. However, he was nearing adulthood in 1850 and doesn't appear in any of the family's future census lists, which is likely why he was somewhat mysterious. Interestingly though, Anna Alleman appears on the 1850 census with a birth date of 1846 in Switzerland but doesn't appear on the passenger list. (This may be because there was no fare for children under 1 year of age. Perhaps they weren't recorded as passengers if there was no fare.) Family records indicate Anna's birth date was 5 May 1846. Incredibly, if the ship's passage took 45 days, that means it departed Le Havre on 11 May 1846. If accurate, that means that Mary gave birth 6 days before setting sail, probably on the road or in Le Havre while awaiting the ship to be ready. She would have given birth in transit to the United States, but not at sea. And the baby survived. Mary was a tough, tough woman!

One final note: despite the undeniable hardship of bearing and traveling with a newborn, it was incredibly fortunate that the family emigrated when they did. They traveled just before a massive surge in emigration from Ireland and Germany due to the Irish famine and also fevers and hunger in Germany that occurred in 1847⁴. In part due to over-crowding, the body lice-borne Typhus Fever ran rampant through the ships, killing 50-70% of the people who were stricken

with it. Arrival ports were overwhelmed with their sheer numbers, especially since so many of the arriving immigrants were so sick and needed to be placed in crowded quarantine facilities. New York received 18,000 immigrants in the month of April 1847 alone. The ship *Virginus* departed Liverpool on 28 May 1847 with 476 passengers. When it arrived in Quebec, 106 passengers were sick (including 9 crew) and 158 had died on the passage. The doctor in charge of quarantine at the port noted, "second officers and seven of the crew, and the master and the steward dying, the few that were able to come on deck were ghastly yellow looking spectres, unshaven and hollow checked, and without exception, the worst looking passengers I have ever seen..." Many children disembarked as orphans as both their parents had fallen ill and died. Even the Master of our immigrant's ship the *Amulet*, Anthony Howes, fell ill on the very next voyage of the *Amulet* in July, 1846, but recovered. From the *Amulet's* ship journal⁵:

[Page 01: Draft of a letter:]

"Vigo Bay 21 Sept 1846

John Glidden Esq

New Castle Maine

Sir

Capt Howes being sick and unable to write has requested me to write you. he was taken very sick with the Typhus fever on the 24th of July and continued very sick all the passage out, but I am happy to say that he is now recovering and is in hopes soon to be able to attend to his business himself. We arrived here on the 12th inst after a tedious passage of 57 days from the bar, and have to perform 15 days quarantine, which is the same as all other Ships have from N. Orleans. several of the crew have been sick on the passage out but have all recovered with the exception of one who is in the hospital. I shall endeavour to do all I Can for the prosperity of the voyage during his sickness

Your Obt servt

A Howes"

As difficult as the Alleman journey was, it was only a short time before the conditions became much, much worse.

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³ Alleman family records book. Original held by Joan (Alleman) Twedt, accessed photocopy held by Verda (Floden) Alleman.

⁴ <http://www.theshipslist.com/1847/>

⁵ <http://archive.dennishistsoc.org/handle/10766/596>

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*****MEMBERSHIP REMINDER*****

If you have not yet paid your Dues, please send in your renewal check as soon as possible.

In addition to paying by check (preferred), you will now be able to pay through PayPal on the DHS Website.

Do you have some old letters? Interesting family material that you would like to share? Stories? Articles about Dennis or of general Cape Cod interest? Ideas for articles?

We are ALWAYS searching for Newsletter articles! You can remain anonymous if you wish!

There is still so much material of reader and historical interest hidden away in drawers and boxes! Help your Society bring new material to our readers and see your material in print.

Your Cheerful Editor

Saturday, April 23, 2:00 P.M.

Cape Cod – Collected

presented by:

Jack Sheedy

Tales from his books with
Jim Coogan & Other Sources

\$5.00 Donation

Dennis Memorial Library,
1020 Old Bass River Road, Dennis Village

~~Friday~~, *May 21, 1:00-4:00 P.M.*

“Dennis-The Sea Captain’s Town”

Hear Some Of Their Amazing Stories

1800’s Schoolroom at
Dennis Maritime Museum
West Dennis Graded School

Open For The Season
67 School Street, West Dennis