Family History Assignment

Today I interviewed my grandmother, Ms. Virginia(Ginny) Humphrey. She is my mother’s mother. My great grandmother is still alive and 91 years of age, however she has Dementia. This is about her side of the family. I learned about my great great great great grandfather George Philip Lienesch. He is from Ankum, Germany. He was aire to farm land there where he is from, given to them by German Kaisers. He relinquished his rights to his farm in the middle 1800’s to travel to America. He came here to prove himself, to make something of his own, and to start fresh.

George came by ship and arrived in the port of New Orleans. He traveled up the Mississippi to find work and ended up at the Shiloh Valley, today known as Shiloh, Illinois. He first started working on a farm in Mascoutah. “It was hard labor,” she said. America wasn’t what he expected. He was working hard, struggling, and he didn’t feel respected around here. He wanted to give up. He then found another farm job to a (Latin Farmer), a well-educated man. He had a daughter named Mary Ann Thomas. He liked this job, and he was very fond of her.

He took a trip back home to Germany to visit his family. At this time, he was homesick and debating on moving back home. He was not sure if he wanted to be in America anymore, but love brought him back. My grandmother said he choose to come back for Mary Ann. He wanted to marry her. So he did. They stayed in Shiloh. Unfortunately, she passed away and later George remarried to Ada McFarland whom is Scottish and my descendent. (Overall he was married four times.) They got enough money to farm their own land. They farmed corn, wheat, beans, and they raised chickens, and cattle. The 3 generations of boys who lived there all farmed with horses.

George went back to Germany by boat again to pick up his father. He brought him here to show him what he had accomplished, then took him back. His dad didn’t wish to stay. George crossed the Atlantic Ocean a total of 9 times by boat in his lifetime. The farmhouse and farmland my family owned was sold about 10 years ago. The land is off of Franks Scott Parkway, which is a very popular area, the money my grandmother gained is what is helping pay for my education today.

I also interviewed Daniel Calderon. Him and family are of Hispanic ethnicity. Valentine and Maria his parents are from Michoacán, Mexico. They came to America in the 1980’s. They took the voyage to the United States to give their children an opportunity to prosper.

“I remember my mother telling me about the journey she embarked on when she was only 20 years old,” Daniel said. She was a young new mother of two little girls. She made the toughest decision a mother would ever have to make. She left the country she was born and raised to seek a better life in a foreign land. The trip would almost cost her, her life. Coming to America illegally has cost many people their lives. Her and her husband took the trip by foot and by car at times. She told him about being robbed by bandits and not having enough water in the middle of a multi-day walk in the desert. His mother has not seen her parents or siblings since the day she left Mexico. Although she made the conscious decision to come to America she is more or less a refugee. A refugee from poverty.

His parents first made it to Chicago. His father had one sibling there. They lived with them while they found work. They then found better jobs that brought them to the St. Louis area. So they settled in Fairmont City, Illinois and both worked in warehouses. Valentine for Pepsi Cola, and Maria for a fruit/vegetable packaging company. Valentine sadly was deported when Daniel was 12 years old, due to getting in trouble with the law. Maria stayed here and continued to raise all 7 of their children and has worked at the same job from the start.

It seemed that his family had to take many more precautions when coming to the United States than my great grandfather did. Either due to race or to that different eras. One came by boat and then I am not sure how else he got around. The others mainly by foot. I could not imagine either way. It would have been terrifying. In the 1800’s it seemed that getting the land first made it easier since there were not many people here yet and wanting to come later on after more establishment it was harder. Either way they both had trouble finding jobs. They all struggled. Getting a good paying job was hard and still hard. Being accepted and respected was hard. My family worked on a farm, and they worked in warehouses. However, his grandparents back in Mexico were also farmers, and now his dad is a farmer there as well.

Overall, I loved digging into our family’s history. It made me want to learn more. I want to talk to my other grandparent to see where else we are from and I want to start making a family tree. It is good to know where you are from and to stay true to who you are.