

The Family of Daniel Shenk Kreider And Barbara Risser Risser

Barbara Kreider rose early on the morning of 7 July, 1893 to make breakfast for her family. Her husband Daniel and their eight children were still in bed on their farm near Cando, North Dakota. But the hired farmhand, Albert Bomberger, was also awake. Barbara heard the first gunshot that killed her husband in the downstairs bedroom. When Albert confronted her in the kitchen, she was able to let out a shout before he shot her. The gunshots had awakened Annie, their fifteen year old daughter. Within a half hour Bomberger had also shot and killed four of her brothers and sisters. Apparently he had an affection for her, so Annie was spared. For some reason he spared the three youngest children, too. After forcing Annie to make breakfast for him and taking her father's money, Bomberger tied her hand and foot in the barn and rode away on a pony. Annie's younger brother Aaron managed to untie her and she rode into Cando to report the tragedy. It was an event that shocked the whole nation.

Daniel Shenk Kreider and Barbara Risser Kreider were both originally from central Pennsylvania. He was born in 1856 in South Annville Township of southern Lebanon County and she in 1856 in Mount Joy Township of northern Lancaster County. I have not been able to determine exactly when they were married. Their first child, Annie, was born in Pennsylvania in May, 1878 when they were both 21 years old. I would expect they were married sometime between 1876 and 1878.

Daniel Kreider was from a large, prominent family in the Annville area. His father, David, was married twice. By his first wife, Sarah Henry, he had five children. His second wife was Magdalena Shenk, who gave him six more children. Daniel was one of the latter. David Kreider was described as a progressive farmer and very religious in his Mennonite faith. All of his sons became very prominent in Lebanon County. A book of biographies published in 1903 includes articles about no less than five of his sons. The youngest, Aaron Shenk Kreider, went on to become a United States senator.

David Kreider died in 1871 when Daniel was only fifteen years old. His mother sold the farm in South Annville Township and moved to a house in nearby Campbelltown. An 1875 map of Londonderry Township shows a Mrs. Kreider owning property in that town. What Daniel did between then and 1878 is unknown.

Barbara Risser Risser also came from a prominent Mennonite family in Lancaster County. Her parents were both Risser, and were second cousins, once removed. Both are descendants of Peter Risser and Elizabeth Hershey, who emigrated in 1739 from Friedelsheim, Germany to Mount Joy

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Township. There he acquired a land grant from the Penns and established a Mennonite church, which still stands. Many of the Risser family are buried in the cemetery adjoining the church. Barbara Risser's paternal grand-father, John S. Risser, was a Mennonite minister and lived on the family homestead near the church. Her father, John H. Risser, received a farm from the original property. The family of Barbara's mother, Frances Shenk Risser, settled about two miles over the hill from Risser's church, at the junction of Lancaster, Lebanon and Dauphin counties, once called Conewago. There is a small cemetery (Coble's) on a nearby farm that contains the graves of several Risser's.

How Daniel Kreider and Barbara Risser met is not known. After their marriage and the birth of their first child, the next written record of them is found in the 1880 U. S. census, when they are enumerated in Callaway County, Missouri. This is an intriguing story, for which I have several sources of information, none of which explains it completely. The census for South Fulton Township of Callaway county shows an amazing number of people who were born in Pennsylvania. Included were Daniel and Barbara Kreider, his mother and youngest brother Aaron, and the families of his sister Lydia Bomberger. Another family group was Daniel's older half sister Mary, married to Abraham Brightbill. With the Brightbills were several children, including their oldest son Rolandis, his wife Elizabeth and her parents Henry and Fanny Bachman.

What brought all these people as a group to one spot in Missouri? Was it land that could be obtained at a good price? Were they all members of one church group? A glance through Lebanon county newspapers of that time finds several articles about people leaving for Missouri and other points west. I don't know the answers yet. A family history of the Brightbills states that Rolandis and Elizabeth were married in Bachmanville, PA on 31 December 1880 and left right after their marriage for Fulton, Missouri with his uncle Dan Kreider. Another source states that Abraham and Mary Brightbill moved to Callaway county in March of 1881. Both must be off by a year, since these Brightbills are found in the 1880 census of Callaway county.

The Lebanon County Historical Society has a collection of diaries written by Andrew Kreider, Daniel's oldest half brother. Here is the entry for 17 February 1880. "Stepmother (Magdalena Kreider) with Aaron, Lizzie and Lydia and their husbands left for Missouri where Bomberger, Kettering and Daniel Kreider bought farms near? Fulton Missouri." This further proves that the Kreider family arrived before 1881 and were there in time for the census enumeration in June. Perhaps the Brightbill wedding was in December of 1879, and Daniel and Barbara Kreider left with them early in 1880.

A 1904 biography of Aaron Kreider states that after graduating from business school in 1880, he went West to Fulton, Missouri. Here he farmed for a while and then was employed as a clerk in a Fulton business. In the spring of 1883 he left on a trip which lasted the remainder of the year. He toured several of the western states, including the Dakota territory. After the trip he returned to Campbelltown in Pennsylvania. Although the article does not say, I imagine he would have stopped in Missouri on the way back to see his family. He must have described to them what he had seen in those western states, just opening up for settlement. Possibly he sowed a seed of interest in the mind of his brother Daniel.

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A 1900 biography of David Brightbill tells us that "he went with an uncle (Dan Kreider) to Dakota with some stock for speculation, and taking a fancy to the country decided to remain there and accordingly entered claim to land in sections 19 and 20, in township 158, range 67, in Towner County. He and his uncle lived together and rented land and cropped about three hundred and twenty acres." Several of Brightbill's brothers and sisters eventually came to Cando. This biography gave several clues that led me to the discovery of land records for Daniel Kreider and the Brightbills in the National Archives.

Daniel Kreider's first entry for the purchase of land was on 7 August 1886. He purchased 120 acres for a homestead for \$150 and 160 acres for the purpose of growing timber for \$14. David Brightbill filed claim for land in June of 1886. According to testimony required of the claimant and witnesses, Daniel first settled on his land on 13 August 1886 and built a house. On 15 October his family moved into the house, which was fourteen by twenty feet and had three rooms plus an eight by 12 foot addition. In testifying that the land was continuously farmed and occupied, Daniel stated that he was away from 15 February to 31 March 1887 to attend to business in Missouri.

In April of 1888 Daniel paid \$14 for another 160 acre homestead a bit closer to Cando. He built another house on this land and moved the family into it. This is where Daniel and Barbara Kreider were living at the time of their death. He still owned the original two lots when the estate was settled.

The first place Annie Kreider went after her escape from the tragic circumstances at her farmhouse was the home of Samuel Brightbill in Cando. He was one of the nephews of Daniel Kreider who went along years earlier to settle in North Dakota. A posse was immediately formed, which sent first to the farm and then picked up the trail of Bomberger. They did not catch up with him until two days later in nearby Manitoba, Canada. He was brought back and jailed at Grand Forks, North Dakota.

Samuel Brightbill must have been very close to the family. The day after the murder he accompanied the four surviving children and the bodies on the train to Pennsylvania. Annie was at 15 the oldest child. The other three were the youngest; Aaron, 5; Eva, two days shy of 4; and Henry, 2. The train left on Saturday and arrived at Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania on the following Tuesday. The next day the funeral was held at Risser's Mennonite Church, about three miles east of Elizabethtown. This was the church founded by Barbara Risser's ancestor, Peter Risser. The funeral drew 15,000 mourners, the largest ever in Lancaster county. The six bodies were laid side by side in one large grave in the church cemetery.

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The Kreider children remained in Pennsylvania. Their guardianship was given to their uncle Tobias Bomberger, husband of Daniel's younger sister Annie. The day of the funeral Daniel's brother, Aaron S. Kreider and a brother of Barbara Risser left for Cando to settle the affairs of the family. Aaron took care of selling the land and the home. Whether he stayed the whole time is not known, but he signed estate papers in Towner county on 6 September 1893. On 22 September he signed the papers to finalize the land Daniel had purchased years earlier. The total received for the sale was \$8,800. The final papers to confirm the sale were signed in Annville, Pennsylvania on 17 April 1897 by Tobias Bomberger as guardian for the children.

Although Tobias Bomberger was their legal guardian, not all of the children remained with him. According to Eva Conners, Annie Kreider's daughter, her mother lived with Aaron S. Kreider for a while and then with Lydia Kreider Kettering, Daniel's sister. Henry stayed with Bombergers until he was about 18 years old. Eva and Aaron remained with them for a few years, but by the 1900 census they were living with others. Eva was given to be raised by the youngest brother of Barbara Kreider's mother. Samuel S. Risser and his wife Mary had one son and another Risser girl besides Eva living with them in 1900. Aaron is listed with Josiah and Sarah Brandt living in South Annville Township. It is interesting to note that both Eva and Aaron are classified in the census as servants.

Annie Kreider was married to John Dougherty in 1899. The following year a son, Carl was born. Eva was born in 1901 followed by twins Paul and Roy in 1903. Roy died the next year of whooping cough. The family lived first in Chester, Pennsylvania before moving to Annville after the children were born. Annie died in 1960 at the age of 82.

Aaron Kreider married Emma Wenger and was a farmer south of Campbelltown all his life. He had four children; Mary, David, Dorothy and Lloyd. He died in 1967 at the age of 80.

Henry Kreider left the home of Tobias Bomberger at age 18 and headed west. He eventually settled in Montana, where he married Gladys Williams. They farmed and ranched at Sand Springs for over thirty years. Henry was the first of the children to die in 1956 at age 65. Gladys died at the family ranch in 1987 at the age of 85. They had nine children.

Eva Kreider remained with Samuel and Mary Risser, who moved to Florin, Pennsylvania sometime before 1910. Eva attended Millersville Normal School and began teaching at country schoolhouses. In 1914 she married Abram Greiner, who was a fifth cousin through the Reist family. They took up farming and settled on the south end of Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania. They had three sons; Arthur, Henry and Robert. Abram died at the age of 55 in 1943. Eva sold the farm and with the proceeds helped her sons start a grocery store in Elizabethtown. She remained in that town until entering the Mennonite home in Lancaster, where she died in 1984 at the age of 94.

Albert Bomberger was arrested with no resistance in Canada and brought back to jail in Grand Forks, North Dakota. For this he was fortunate, since the general populace was eager to string

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him up immediately. It was only the wily efforts of the local sheriffs that brought him back alive. He was arraigned on 21 November 1893 and sentenced on the 23rd to be hung. On 19 January 1894 the sentence was carried out. This was the first legal hanging for the young state of North Dakota, which had just been formed in 1889. The execution was carried out on the Kreider homestead, with Bomberger facing the scene of his crime. At 1:40 PM the trap was sprung.