

KNOW YOUR ROOTS

A Family That Doesn't Know Its Past Doesn't Understand Itself

Volume VIII Issue 3

FREE/ELSON

June 2003

The Geographical Ancestry
of
REBECCA FREE married 1872 in Illinois,



Mary E. Elson married
1822 in Ohio

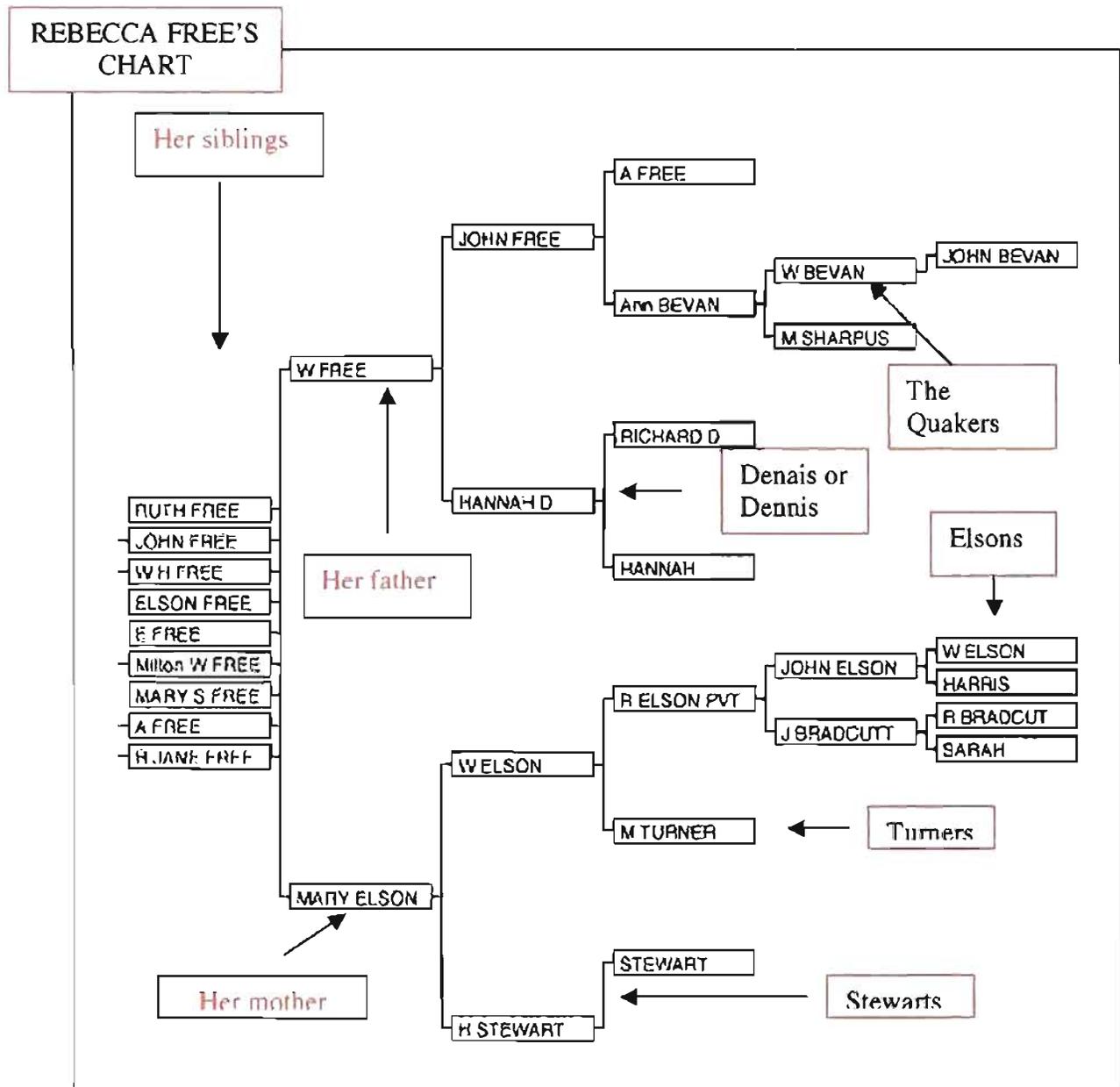
Hannah Stewart married
in 1805 in Virginia

John Free married 1770
in Pennsylvania.

John William Elson
married 1728 in
Maryland

THE GEOGRAPHICAL ORIGINS OF FAMILIES

In the past Free/Elson issues several names were mentioned. The best way to represent how these little known names became part of our heritage would be to repeat a chart, which first appeared in the 1999 Free/Elson Issue. The diverse geographical beginnings of the original families and their subsequent westward migration points the way for Rebecca's final destination in Illinois. The cover indicates the migration patterns as families relocated when lands became available in the West. In comparing other Rebecca photos, I believe the one on the cover is her wedding photo. The Free family liked to have their pictures taken.



GERMANTOWN AND PENNSYLVANIA

There may be a new development. While I was going over my material for this issue, I began to question why I didn't have the birth date of Abraham Free. Why was this a brick wall? As I began to follow up clues to the missing piece of this puzzle, nothing in the Free background seemed to fit until I picked up a suggestion from another Free researcher. She suggested that the original name might have been Frey.

Acting on impulse, I started with the trusty Internet for Frey. Lo and behold I struck gold. Not only was there a myriad of information about the original Heinrich Frey, but one of his children was named Abraham! The time of his birth was okay but there were no data about him. There is an enormous Frey Family Group that holds reunions every year and the family has a genealogical authority on Frey history. After my presenting the material I had on our Abraham, he told me he believes that Abraham Frey, born in 1700, a son of Heinrich Frey, is our same Abraham.

Not only that, he had a deed of land in which the name Free was used and also a reference made to Uncle Abraham. Obviously, the name Free was originally Frey and somehow it got changed. There were other spellings too: Fry, Frye.

This Frey story is too exciting and too extensive to be told in this issue, so you will have to wait for 2004. But suffice it to say, not only was Germantown in existence before Pennsylvania was settled by William Penn, but also the love story of Heinrich

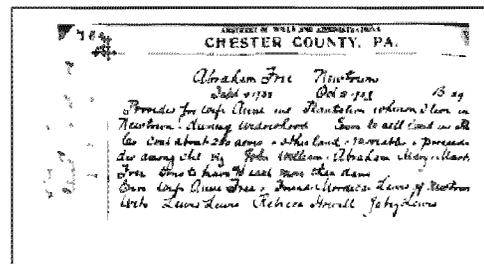
Frey and his bride has been authenticated in the Germantown Scrapbook. They married in 1692 in Germantown but Heinrich Frey arrived to the area in 1675. William Penn arrived in 1682 at which time Penn laid out the city of Philadelphia but Germantown predates it.

But a huge caveat: I need more proof before I am really sure this Heinrich Frey is our family.

Since the theme of this issue is to trace the geographical venues of marriages in Rebecca Free's background, I will by-pass the Frey story and begin with the Free story. It is interesting to note that once Rebecca's father, William, left Pennsylvania where he was born, the trek westward was begun. It was almost that he had a wanderlust for travel to virgin territory. But I must begin at the beginning.

Abraham Free married the Quaker, Ann Bevan 30 April 1730 at Christ Church in Philadelphia. Abraham and Ann's stories are in past issues.

Abraham died in 1738 in Newtown, Chester County, Pennsylvania, and left five minor children: three sons and two daughters, John, William, Abraham, Mary and Martha.



In Abraham's will he stated that his wife would inherit only if she

remained unmarried. Well, she didn't remain unmarried but married Samuel Caley. This meant that the minor children would control all his property which included not only land in Newtown, Chester County, but land in Philadelphia County. At the present time, no one can find the deed to his land in Philadelphia County.

Since all the children were minors, they would not be able to inherit until they became of age. Samuel Caley died in 1787. By then all the children had reached their maturity including our ancestor John, our William's father.

During this ensuing time, things became very complicated with the land.

John first appears on the tax list in Newtown as a freeman in 1752. Do not be confused with the prerevolutionary term of "freeman." It simply means that John had property and was a single man. Therefore, he had to pay taxes. Records show that this continued on at least through 1769 in Newtown.

In 1770 John married Hannah Dennis in Old Swedes Church in Philadelphia. Now that he was married he was listed on the tax records as an inmate. This term indicated a married man with property.

After that things really got jumbled as there are deeds that show the land changed hands, was bought back, in some instances, was never paid for in others, so it looks like Abraham's assets were the subject of many changes.

John died in 1801 in Haverford without a will. The list of his inventory names him John Free, the elder, probably to differentiate him from his son John. While I do not have the exact date of his birth, I estimate it to be about 1732 which means he was about 69 when he died.

In a deed dated and recorded April 8, 1809 in Delaware County, Hannah and her children either bought or sold some land to a John and Mary Free. The deed itself is unreadable but whatever the cause of the deed, in it were mentioned all of Hannah's children: Mordecai, John, Elijah, Jane, Mary, Hannah, Ann, and two which were minor children, Elizabeth and William. William's birth was 1796. Needless to say, when I compared this list with the list in William's handwriting which was found in the Dorlant book, I had all the proof I needed to authenticate our Free ancestry.

William was five when his father died in Newtown, Pennsylvania. Hannah then became the head of the family but it is a possibility that she went to live with one of her older children. The 1810 and 1820 census do not show Hannah as head of the household.

William's note with his sibling's names said, "father-German, mother-Scotch-Irish." Noted before, his mother was Hannah Dennis. The Scotch-Irish mention brought an entirely new dimension apart from the German to the ethnicity of Rebecca. This is the first Scotch-Irish reference in our ancestry. There will be another. Hannah Dennis was born in Pennsylvania on May 22, 1756 in Philadelphia.

How and why our William began his Westward trek is not known. What is known is that all of his ancestors were Pennsylvanians and this was the end of Rebecca's Pennsylvania heritage for William was in Ohio when he married Mary Elizabeth Elson in 1822.

So we leave Pennsylvania to take up the heritage of Mary Elizabeth Elson.

THE ORIGINAL ELSON FROM MARYLAND

Before the marriage of Mary Elizabeth Elson and William Free in 1822, it is necessary to retrace the Elson geographical background which began in Maryland.

There is a great deal of controversy regarding the first Elson. His birthplace has not been proven. Some say he was born in Wales, others in Kent, England.

There is a record of a William who was granted a ticket May 20, 1678 in the ketch beginning for New York. Inasmuch as many indentured servants and also convicts made up the early residents of Maryland, it would be interesting to know who purchased that ticket. A possibility exists this William was either a convict or an indentured servant.

But the John William in our background that has been proven begins with his marriage February 1728 in Prince Georges County, Maryland to Joanna Bradcutt. I have not found a record of his birth or his parentage so any one of the three mentioned above could relate to his background.

He and Joanna had five children, all born in Maryland. At least we know for a fact, our Revolutionary Soldier Richard, was born in 1738 in Prince Georges County in Maryland. He was the middle child.

His father died in Maryland in 1750 and his mother in 1774. Interestingly, she was a midwife and had property called "Turkey Flight Enlarged" of 167 acres.

However, before his mother died, Richard married Mary Turner presumably in Maryland because their

first three children were born in Prince Georges County, Maryland

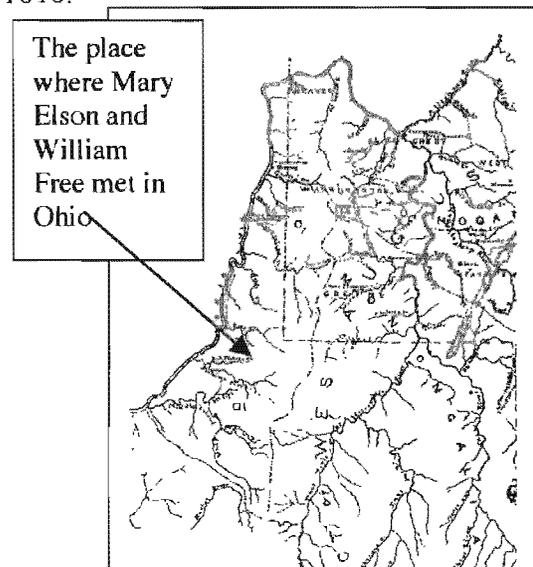
Beginning in 1771 we find the family in Virginia where three more children were born, including our ancestor William born in 1784.

However, before the birth of our ancestor, Richard, his father served in the defense of Virginia in the Revolutionary War. After the war he was appointed constable in Yohogania, a part of Augusta County, Virginia. This area became part of Ohio and West Virginia.

It is here that William grew up in the midst of his father being part of the policing system.

This area is also a part of the Scotch-Irish migration which will be discussed next. The area changed in 1776 when Ohio County was formed from the West Augusta district.

William married Hannah Stewart from Virginia in about 1804. Our Mary Elizabeth, his first child, was born in Virginia. However, he went to Ohio in 1810 and bought government land. His deeds were signed by James Madison, President of the United States, on July 5, 1816.



THE SCOTCH-IRISH

This story is about two wives who had the same ethnic background, Scotch-Irish, namely Hannah Dennis and Hannah Stewart. Hannah Dennis was born in Pennsylvania in 1756 and Hannah Stewart in 1785. The information about Hannah Dennis was in a previous story but it is necessary to recall her ethnicity when I report on Hannah Stewart.

Unfortunately you are dealing with two Hannahs which might be confusing, Dennis in Pennsylvania and Stewart in Virginia, but the saga of the Scotch Irish migration cannot be told without including both as history intertwines the two.

Hannah Stewart was the mother of Mary Elizabeth Elson. If you recall, Hannah Dennis was the mother of William Free. William and Mary Elizabeth married in 1822, each one bringing the customs and the history of the Scotch-Irish to the union.

With the desire for a better opportunity, the Scotch-Irish crossed the ocean in great numbers during the 18th century. Between 1717 and the Revolutionary War some quarter of a million Ulstermen came to America from Ulster which was that part of Ireland that had been settled by the Scots who were banished from Scotland. That history is extensive and was briefly outlined in a former newsletter.

The first group went to Boston but was not permitted to remain. Some attempted to erect a church at Worcester, Massachusetts, but the Puritans destroyed it. The intolerance of the coast regions forced them to the frontiers

where they had to form a barrier against the Indians.

William Penn had advertised the attractions of his colony by personal journeys to Europe. Therefore, the migration to what was to be Pennsylvania began. Land was cheap and the soil fertile. Thus the first wave of the Scotch-Irish to Pennsylvania began in 1717.

While Hannah Dennis was born during the time of this first group there is no record of when her ancestry began. It could have been at the time of a disastrous drought in Ulster, Ireland.

In this early period the practice of indenturing oneself as a servant was common. All we know about Hannah's parents is that her father Ricard died in 1756, presumably in Pennsylvania.

The year 1730 was the effective date of the opening of the Valley of Virginia to the Scotch-Irish. And this is where our second Hannah was born in 1785. Trying to trace Hannah Stewart's parentage is like looking for a needle in a haystack. There is a myriad of Stewarts and Stuarts. I have yet to find one with a daughter Hannah. But remember at this time, the war was going on and there was much upheaval in the Colonies.

All the Scotch-Irish had problems with the Indians. They had problems with their churches being destroyed but because they were usually Presbyterians and strong in their faith, they would always rebuild.

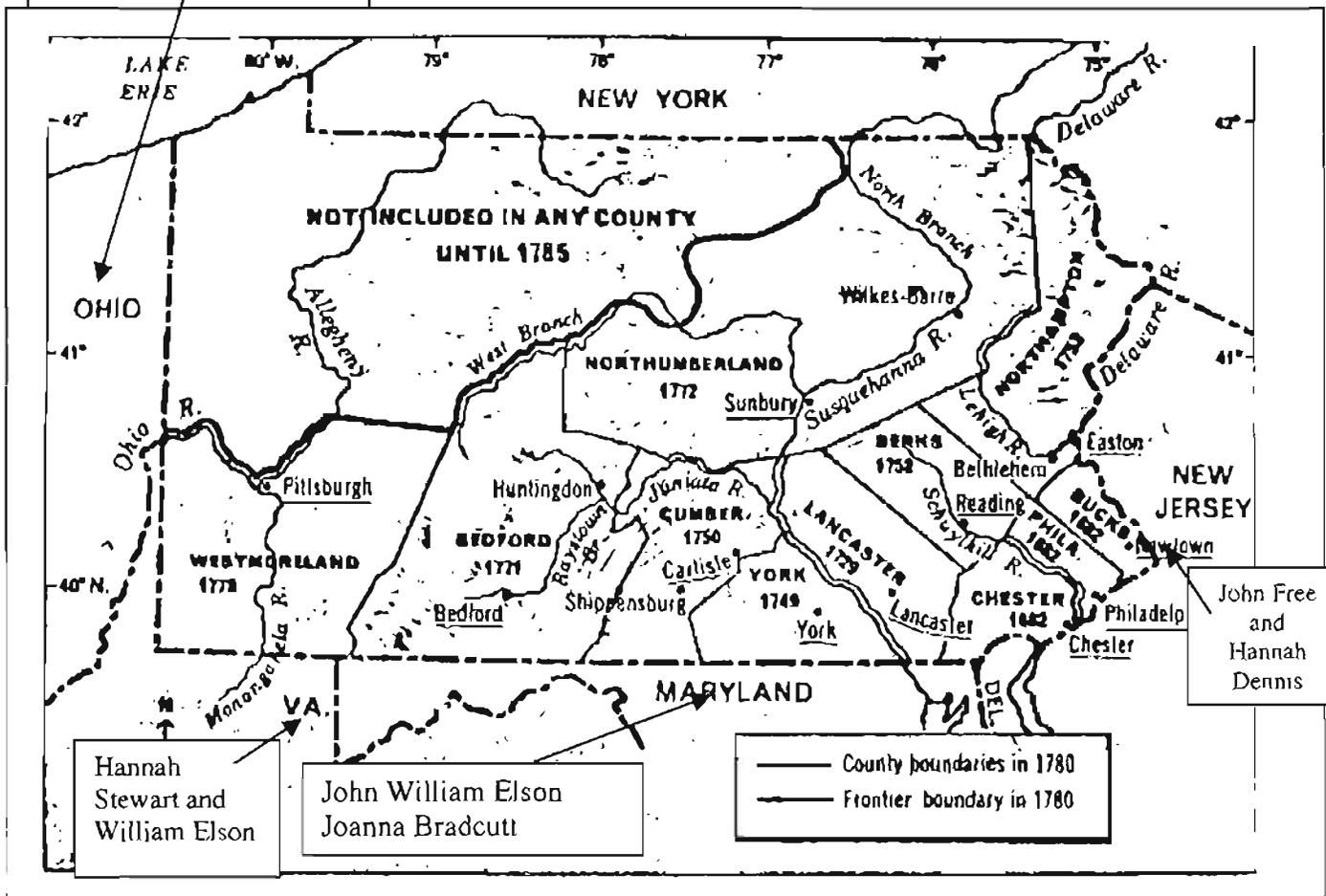
One such accounting is the story of Castle's Woods. In it the name of Stewart is mentioned but I have no idea

if this is our Stewart. However, it is a true picture of frontier life. It includes a considerable amount of lawlessness that graphically describes the scalping of many innocent victims. I have a copy of this and maybe someday someone in the family would like to read it as it is considered a true depiction of frontier life gory as it was.

The story of the Scotch Irish would not be complete without mentioning the qualities of their character. Their contributions to American life stand high; they influenced education, religion and politics. All this can be seen in their descendants today.

Mary Elizabeth Elson
and
William Free

MAP OF PENNSYLVANIA SHOWING THE
ABUTTING STATES



This map illustrates how all these families from all these areas culminated in the geographical heritage of our Rebecca Free. Their culture, their religion, their political beliefs were all instrumental in shaping the generations that followed: William Free's lust for the West, Rebecca's Free staunch religious beliefs stemming from her Presbyterian background. Their pioneer spirit. These characteristics are noted in all the information written about them. They never said they were German; they never said they were Scotch-Irish; they never said they were English. They said they were Americans who fought for and contributed to their freedom in the Revolutionary War.

MARY'S MESSAGES



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This issue is two weeks early because of the Reunion,

Because of my gathering so much genealogy material over the years, and because I would like to share these records with the family, I have decided to do a series of booklets on different subjects. Some of you already have two booklets: The Chicago Clusters and the reprint of the 1898 Dorlant book.

The next booklet will be a collection of Harry Durland's papers. Most of the papers will be in his own distinctive handwriting. It will not be a biography but will have some pictures. The publication date will be the end of 2003 or possibly early 2004.

The two booklets to follow will be of Grandma Minnie and Aunt Jo, and one on Nana. However, their publication depends on how soon I receive the memories I have requested from Jane, Mitzi, and Joan. Each one of them will also have pictures.

There will also be a surprise booklet.

Just keep in mind that not all the booklets planned will be completed immediately. It is a project covering a couple of years, some of the content depending on the receipt of material I receive from the aforementioned sisters.

Although each booklet is family oriented, each one focuses on different subjects. Therefore, it was necessary to connect them as a unit. Through the help of

Virginia Caudill I was able to locate a book binder that will make a case so that collectively the booklets will fit into one hard cover, which is called a slip case. This slip case will then contain these unique family histories and will be an accompaniment to the Schueneman book.

Because this slipcase is custom made to the measurements of the booklets, I will bring a demo to the Reunion in July and will take orders for anyone who wants one. The cost will depend on the quantity ordered.

Something happened not too long ago that made these newsletters all worthwhile. I had an email from one of my grandnieces, Sarah Hodge. She said she had been studying about Charlemagne in school and another grandniece, Emily Larkin, told her about our connection to him. Sarah asked her grandmother, Joan, about it and Joan showed her all the Know Your Roots about the family but, Joan said, "you cannot receive the newsletter unless you send in a coupon."

This is when I heard from Sarah. She was all excited about the newsletters and sent me an email asking for a coupon. She made my day. This is why I'm so motivated to spend all the time and effort on these newsletters. If, in posterity, when the children study our American history and they know that their ancestors had a part in it, I'm sure history becomes more interesting for them and the records of our family and their contributions will not be lost. This issue as with others deals with the history of our country and family.

And about family, I just received an email saying Emily Larkin had been presented with another award for the second time. Her peers presented her with the "musicianship award" given annually to the outstanding female musician in each high school class. Congratulations to Emily. And condolences to Sally, Nicholas, and Sarah Hodge, who lost their husband and father, Nick, to a sudden heart attack in the time since I wrote this page. Condolences also to Melinda Larkin, wife of Jerry, who is a sister of Nick's. I'm so sorry.