



# KNOW YOUR ROOTS

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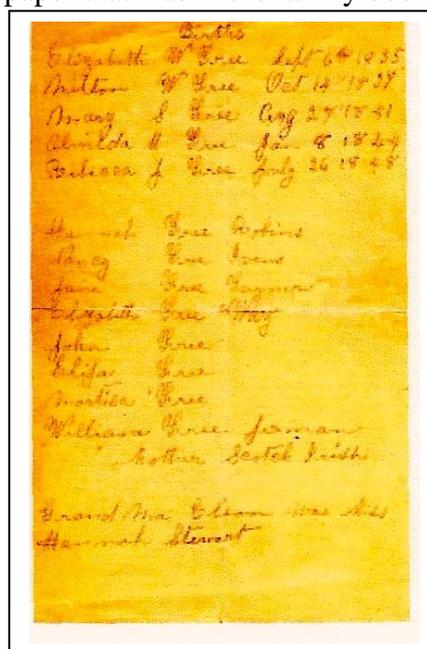
## WILLIAM FREE HIS HISTORY BEFORE HIS MARRIAGE

This newsletter is more information about this paper that was in the family book and how it relates to William Free, the father of the five children mentioned with their births at the top of the paper. I already told you about the reference to Grandma Elson, but I have not told you the story about the list of names which were a complete enigma to me until I found a fellow researcher, Nancy Jackson. She unraveled the mystery for me by sending me a copy of a deed of property after the death of John Free, which not only included all the names in the list as the family of the widow, Hannah Free, but it also included Elizabeth and our William as minor children. So to Nancy I send a public “thank you” for her generosity through the years.

First I have to tell you I found Nancy through an inquiry she made looking for information about the Free family. I responded and we met in Philadelphia. Nancy has been wonderful in sending me deeds and information about what happened when Hannah became a widow but her records tell me nothing more about our William, the minor child.

From that deed mentioned above, I learned William’s father was John and that followed the German naming pattern as William’s first son was John, obviously named after the father. His mother was Hannah nee Dennis (sometimes Denais). But, and this is a big but, the naming pattern did not hold true for William’s first daughter; she was called Ruth. Where did the name Ruth come from? She should have been Hannah but there is no Hannah in William’s family. I could feel a scenario developing.

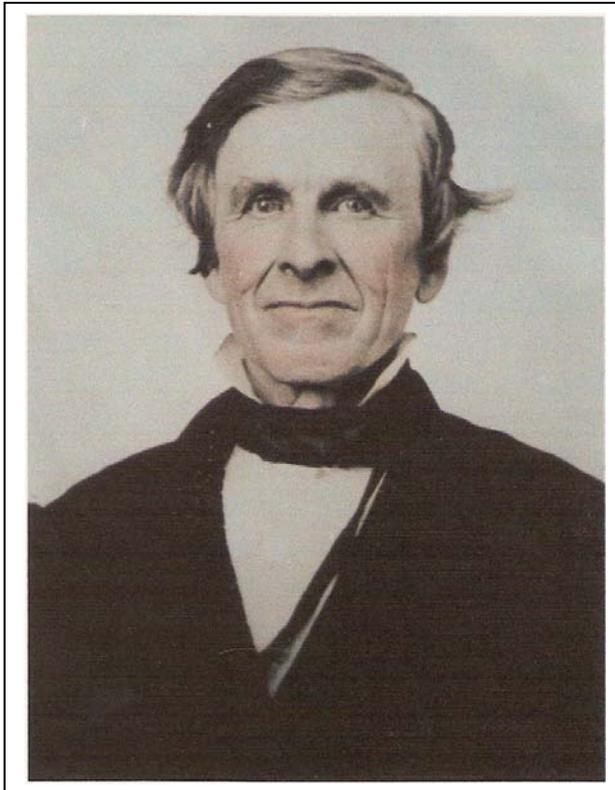
William was named in only one deed of sale, that of 1807 that Nancy sent me. His father must have been involved with much land and other legal matters, and that one deed was my last mention of William for many years. Nancy sent me a list of seventeen legal papers that she had found involving mostly sales of lands that John owned, some



that he hadn't finished paying for. Only William was mentioned in the one when he was eleven years old, still a minor.

Piecing everything together, it was hard to know what happened to William and why Ruth became the name he used for his first daughter. I have absolutely no proof but I have to believe that somehow William became a part of his uncle Abraham's family because they had no children and his wife is the only one named Ruth throughout the family. Unfortunately Ruth died in 1805 when William was only nine years old. I can conjecture from all the land sales which did mention his mother and some other siblings there was much going on that he was shielded from as a minor. For that reason Ruth during her short life could have somehow become very important to him and his mother was not.

I have searched all the censuses but in those early days names were not mentioned, only ages and with all his siblings having children, it is not easy to ascertain where William was and with whom. Maybe Nancy, who does a more thorough job than I, will find some evidence of William's childhood and early adulthood. Until then, he



begins his life with us with his marriage to Mary Elizabeth Elson in 1822 in Columbiana, Ohio when he was 26 years old. I have no record of when he went to Ohio. All my records show that after he was married he was a farmer. Perhaps Nancy who is a gifted researcher can find the answers for the period of his life I am missing, but without that yellowed scrap of paper which gave us so much information about him, his siblings, his ethnic heritage, the Scotch Irish in our genes and the name of a very important person I have yet to tell you about, Miss Hannah Stewart, much less would have been known.

This ambrotype of William is the last one I have and as you can see, William is quite mature. Ambrotypes were not made after 1856 so William, judging from the clothing of the time,

seems to be in his late fifties. I think he meant this to be his portrait for posterity because, not only is it larger than any of the others, it has been colored.

I want to bring you up to date on the June issue of this year regarding the Free DNA test that would be definitive about whether or not our Free was Frey in the beginning. Well, it turned out to be a flop so we are no further ahead on our proof. We still have to go by what records we have which prove nothing.

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