



KNOW YOUR ROOTS

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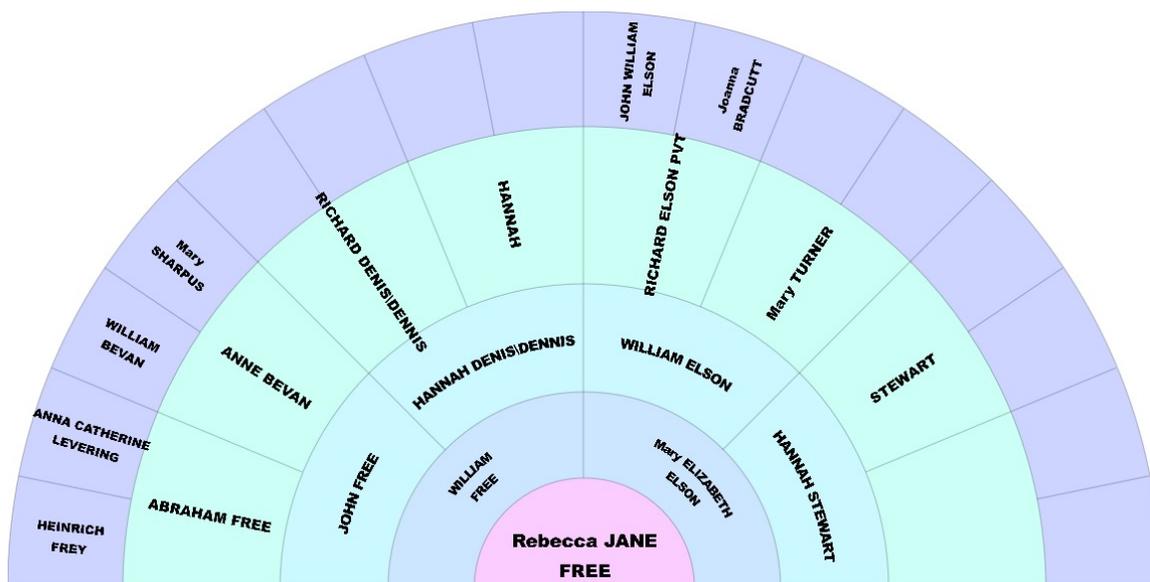
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PRELUDE TO BECKY

In the January newsletter you saw how our relationships to the Kings and Charlemagne were traced through women. It was also explained that women were mentioned very little in the past, so information is very difficult to find. I want you to know these grandmothers of ours and so this year will be the “year of the grandmothers.” That is to say, I’ll try and acquaint you with those of our ancestors who have had little or no mention in any records.

Rebecca Durland nee Free is the first one of our grandmothers in the series. (Durland is from our grandfather James Youngs Durland, her husband.) Prelude to Becky introduces you not only to the name she was referred to by her nieces and nephews but “prelude” also refers to the beginning of a booklet about her which, when finished, will be included with the other booklets of the family. The following chart will give you a hint of some of the other grandmothers to be covered in 2010 on the Free side, namely Mary Elizabeth Elson, Hannah Denis, Mary Turner, Anne Bevan and Joanna Bradcutt. Of course their families will also be a part of their history. This chart will be your future reference for those women. In the meantime, read about your grandmother Becky Free and her family.



Over the course of the years, in my search for information, I found a second cousin whose grandmother was Alwilda Free, a sister of our Rebecca. This second cousin is the one who told me that everyone referred to Rebecca as Aunt Becky, so Becky she will remain for me.

Becky was born 26 July 1848 in Carrollton, Ohio, the youngest daughter of nine children of William Free and Mary Elizabeth Elson. What is surprising to me is that, if my records are correct, her mother was 43 when she was born. Becky's oldest sibling Ruth was 21 at her birth.

It is very interesting to note, in days gone by, the naming of the family children. Ruth was not a common name with Free but in my research I discovered that in the Pennsylvania records, Becky's father was a minor when his parents died. I believe that Ruth, the wife of his uncle Abraham, reared him. Her name was Ruth Evans.

John, the first son of William's marriage to Mary Elizabeth Elson, followed the true German family tradition of naming the first son John. John later became the head of the family and that is a story I will tell some other day.

William Henson is next and though in 1850 he wasn't in the census, I knew he was a brother because of an old tintype photo I have which is labeled Uncle Henson. Then came Elson, which of course was the maiden name of Becky's mother. Along that line are two sisters, Mary and Elizabeth, both having the name of her mother.

When we come to Milton in the picture along with Alwilda and Rebecca, who knows where those names came from? Those three are not family names. However, it was fascinating to trace the first six.

This family picture is the earliest picture I have of Becky, and it includes three of her sisters and her brother Milton and his wife. Becky is the one with the red arrow.

I believe this picture is dated around 1872 which would make her 24 years old.

Both Alwilda (on the left) and Becky in the 1870 census are listed as housekeepers. The two girls in the middle are Mary and Elizabeth, one a dressmaker and one a schoolteacher. I was able to follow them when they went to live with their brother John in Jersey County, Illinois after their father died. Their lives in Jersey County are the subject for another newsletter in the future, for I have all of John's records. Milton was in the Civil War and I also have his records. He went to Oklahoma when it was a territory. I'm sure there is a story there too.

The story of this grandmother will be continued in the Becky booklet with Becky's marriage in 1872 to James Youngs Durland, along with her story in Flora, Illinois.



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