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Family History of Rebecca Polk

Rebecca Polk
rebeccapolk7@gmail.com

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The Family History of
Rebecca A. Polk
28 April 2022

Rebecca A. Polk authored this family history as part of the course requirements for HIST 550/700 Your Family in History offered online in Spring 2022 and was submitted to the Pittsburgh State University **Digital Commons**. Please contact the author directly with any questions or comments: rpolk@gus.pittstate.edu

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- A1. Rebecca Ann Polk (1987-)
- A2. Anthony Joseph Mehalic II (1990-)

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- Ala. Charlotte Ann Graham (1960-2017)
- Alb. Kevin Lee Polk (1959-)

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- Alb2b1. Martha Jane Hottel (1870-1919)
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GENERATION ONE

Rebecca Ann Polk (1987-) was born on March 18, 1987, at Winchester Memorial Hospital in Winchester, Virginia, and was the first child born to **Charlotte Ann Graham (1960-2017)** and **Kevin Lee Polk (1959-)**. Rebecca was born eight days later than expected and caused Charlotte to spend 21 hours in labor. Following a short hospital stay due to an otherwise uncomplicated birth, the family of three returned to the house Kevin and Charlotte had built in 1985, in the small town of Edinburg, Virginia. Rebecca's brother, **Matthew Lee Polk (1991-)**, was born 4½ years later.

When Rebecca was born, Charlotte worked as a bookkeeper for a local physician, and ran her own computer typing business, while Kevin worked as a supervisor at a poultry plant, in addition to managing farms with his father.¹ As a result, Rebecca would spend a significant amount of her early childhood in the care of her grandparents, primarily her grandmothers **Evelyn Pauline Baker (1939-2019)** and **Gloria Jean Crotwell (1936-2020)**. Rebecca had a special bond with both her grandmothers from an early age, which continued throughout adulthood until their respective deaths in 2019 and 2020. Rebecca often felt she had three mothers because of her relationship with her grandmothers.

Rebecca's childhood was filled with periodic trips to Louisiana to visit extended family on her maternal side, who would also come to Virginia to visit once every two or three years. Due to her grand-

¹ Kevin Polk (father of the author), interview with Rebecca Polk, February 10, 2022.

mother Gloria and mother's disdain towards the idea of flying, Rebecca's family always drove to Louisiana, which was an 18-hour drive done over the course of two days. The Dulles Airport's construction in 1963 allowed families in Louisiana, such as Rebecca's great-grandmothers, **Eula Gladys Crotwell (1909-1991)** and **Sadie Estella Graham (1916-2007)**, an easy way to travel and visit family in Virginia from the 1970s to 1990s.² Rebecca's parents also took yearly family vacations out of state, which helped inspire a lifelong love of travel for Rebecca.

Rebecca's childhood was filled with opportunities to explore her interests, social activities, and time with family and friends. She would often accompany her grandmother, Gloria, mother, and her mother's sister, **Sonja Lynn Graham (1964-)**, to craft stores and fairs, and watch them crochet, sew, or cross-stitch. On weekends, Rebecca would go to yard sales, antique shops, and flea markets with her grandmother, Evelyn, and father, an activity the three enjoyed well into Rebecca's adulthood. Video games, reading, and movies were some of Rebecca's favorite ways to spend her free time as a child, and all three remained among some of her favorite hobbies as an adult.

Religion played a significant role in Rebecca's life. Her maternal family members actively attended Baptist churches, and Rebecca spent most of her youth attending First Baptist Church in Woodstock, Virginia. Growing up she regularly attended social events at church

² *The Farmville Herald*. (Farmville, Va.), 27 Nov. 1962. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn98068396/1962-11-27/ed-1/seq-4/>.

and attended church services and Sunday school weekly. Some of the social events that Rebecca attended at church included family nights, Bible studies, and Vacation Bible School. Family nights were special events that members of the church put together throughout the year that any member of the community could attend for enjoyment and to socialize. During these special events, food and drinks were provided to attendees and activities children would enjoy such as petting zoos, craft activities, and games were organized. Vacation Bible School was one of Rebecca's favorite church activities, and it was held for three hours during the evening over the course of one week in the summer and centered around an ongoing biblical story or theme. Each night featured activities that attendees would rotate through and included music, outdoor, reading, and craft activities.

Once Rebecca entered high school, her family began attending a non-denominational church. After graduating high school, Rebecca continued regular attendance and participation in church, and attended a college that was affiliated with the Church of the Brethren. As an adult, she also led a Bible study group, participated in mission projects through her churches, and served as an organizer for a hygiene ministry which distributed hygiene items to those in need. After meeting her future husband, **Anthony Joseph Mehalic II (1990-)**, in 2018, she began attending a local Catholic church.

As described in Claude S. Fischer's book *Made in America*, a theme that could be observed in Rebecca's childhood was "groups".³ Rebecca

³ Claude S. Fischer, *Made in America: A Social History of American Culture and Character* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 9.

actively participated in sports growing up such as swimming, tennis, and basketball, and she joined social groups such as 4-H and Girl Scouts. In middle school, she joined *Odyssey of the Mind*, a creative problem-solving program made up of a team of 5-7 students, which culminates in a competition once a year.⁴ During Rebecca's tenure, the competition consisted of solving logic problems and a task to create an architectural structure out of dried pasta noodles, with the highest score awarded to the team whose construction withstood the most weight placed on it. Rebecca also became active in chorus and theater in middle school. In 7th and 8th grade, she participated in all-state chorus and a yearly medieval festival hosted by her middle school for the public.

A shy and quiet child, theater became not only an example of Claude S. Fischer's group theme, but also his "mentality" theme for Rebecca. Theater provided what Fischer notes as "...self-perfecting..." and "...cognitive and practical tools to operate in the world...". In this case, it exposed her to new creative outlets, allowed her to become more outgoing, and exposed her to self-development aspects such as a deeper understanding of emotions through acting and greater empathy by projecting a different persona.⁵ Rebecca remained active in theater from middle school through college, taking part in costuming, set construction, prop design, and acting on the stage. During high school,

⁴ *Wikipedia*, "Odyssey of the Mind," accessed February 20, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Odyssey_of_the_Mind.

⁵ Claude S. Fischer and Michael Hout, *Century of Difference; How America Changed in the Last One Hundred Years* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006), 9.

she participated in a state-wide theater competition and theater productions during *Spring Wing*, an end of the year showcase of student performance arts presented to the public. At Bridgewater College, she joined the theater honor society Alpha Psi Omega and participated in performances throughout the school year.

In 2000, Rebecca's family was among the two in ten Americans who lived in a rural town.⁶ At this time, Rebecca began to feel isolated from academic and social experiences due to the isolationist hometown she grew up in. She had no interest in farming, which was a common occupation in Edinburg, and the most common occupation of the last five generations of her paternal side. She also had decided in elementary school she wanted to go to college and become a teacher. To jumpstart this path and have extra spending money, she got her first job at the age of 15 at a local printing company, Narrow Passage Press, where several members of her family worked. Narrow Passage Press, which also went by the name of the Newspaper it published until 2019, *The Free Press*, was established in 1985 after its president, Keith Stickley, left his management job at another newspaper, *The Shenandoah Herald*, to start his own company.⁷ Rebecca worked at Narrow Passage Press in the mailroom until late 2007 as a part-time employee, and periodically until 2018.

High school allowed Rebecca to deepen her interests in history, culture, languages, and writing. These inspired her to write a schol-

⁶ Fischer, *Made in America: A Social History of American Culture and Character*, 146.

⁷ Keith Stickley, "In the Beginning: A Stray Cat and a Vision," *The Free Press*, May 30, 2019.

arship essay her senior year that earned her a full two-year scholarship to the local community college, Lord Fairfax Community College. Rebecca would commute there for the next two years while working part-time and living with her parents. At Lord Fairfax Community College, Rebecca completed her general education requirements and earned an Associates of Arts and Science degree. Rebecca decided to transfer to Bridgewater College after graduation due to its well-regarded teacher education program, religious affiliation, and close-knit community.

While not a particularly large college, Bridgewater College presented Rebecca with new opportunities and experiences that had not existed in her hometown or the areas around it. These included Japanese steakhouses, Greek and Ethiopian restaurants, Kings Dominion, concerts, and a variety of clubs such as coding, martial arts, and sword fighting. The friends Rebecca made at Bridgewater were equally as invested as she was in movies, video games and board games, allowing Rebecca to diversify those interests.

One of her friends taught her to play *Magic the Gathering*, which became a popular activity within her social circle and years later allowed her to meet her future husband, Anthony. *Magic the Gathering* was a trading card game created by Richard Garfield in 1993. The trading card game was active and popular almost thirty years later in April 2022, with new sets of cards coming out a few times a year that introduce new or built upon existing gameplay mechanics. There are different play formats, but most require that players have a 60-card deck, with other play formats requiring 100 or 40 card decks. The goal of

the game is to cause enough damage to an opponent's life total, usually 20, to 0 or force them to run out of cards, using a combination of creatures, spells, artifacts, and various game mechanics. *Magic the gathering* has often been compared to a combination of poker, chess, and rock, paper, scissors.

Academically at Bridgewater, Rebecca decided to study to become an elementary school teacher: a passion fueled both by inspiring teachers and her own love of learning and sharing knowledge. Since education was not considered a true major in the state of Virginia when Rebecca went to college, she had the option to major, though technically double major, in either liberal arts or family and consumer sciences. Individuals who wanted to choose a different second major needed special permission from the dean of the desired program. Rebecca applied to major in history but was denied and told "there was no reason for an elementary teacher to major in history." Rebecca was, however, permitted to pursue a minor in history.

Rebecca graduated with honors in May 2011, earning a Bachelor of Arts in elementary education and family and consumer science, and a minor in history. Rebecca also walked away with a license to teach preschool through sixth grade students in the state of Virginia. This was the culmination of five assessment exams and successful completion of student teaching in addition to coursework. Despite this and her initial plan to teach in the fall, Rebecca had a difficult student teaching experience, and had doubts about whether to become a teacher.

Tragedy struck mere days after Rebecca's graduation from college, as her mother sat the family down and said she had to go in for tests

for possible breast cancer. Less than a week later, her mother was diagnosed with stage 2 breast cancer. Due to concerns about her mother's cancer and her difficult student teaching experience, Rebecca put her teaching career on hold indefinitely, focusing her energy towards being with her mom. During this time, she took a part-time job at a local ice cream shop and continued the part-time substitute teaching job she had started as a sophomore in college at the central campus of Shenandoah County Public Schools.

The central campus of Shenandoah County Public Schools, where both of Rebecca's parents worked, is in Woodstock, Virginia, which borders the town of Edinburg. Though it was a relatively small town with a population of 5,212 according to the 2017 census, Woodstock had several amenities including grocery stores, a post office, courthouse, and various restaurants.⁸ Woodstock was originally settled by Protestant faith, mostly Lutheran, Pennsylvania Germans in 1752, and officially chartered in 1762.⁹ Germans were the first to seek homes beyond the Blue Ridge mountains in the Shenandoah Valley, though English and Scot-Irish settlers would begin to migrate into the valley thirty years later.¹⁰ The Germans who settled in Woodstock chose to operate small farms that grew crops other than tobacco such as corn.¹¹

German influence from early German settlers can be seen in the fact that farming centric industries such as animal husbandry, food

⁸ *Wikipedia*, "Woodstock, Virginia," accessed February 1, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woodstock,_Virginia.

⁹ *Wikipedia*, "Woodstock, Virginia."

¹⁰ Wayland, John Walter. "The Germans of the Valley." *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 9, no. 4 (1902): 337–52. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4242456>.

¹¹ *Wikipedia*, "Woodstock, Virginia."

packing plants, and crop growing have remained one of the popular industries in the area.¹² As of March 2022, the most grown crop in Woodstock was corn along with soybeans, like the early Germans.¹³

Following her mother being declared cancer free in the spring of 2012, Rebecca began looking for teaching jobs in Special Education. Rebecca spent a significant amount of time working as a substitute in a special education classroom in Shenandoah County Public Schools during the 2011-2012 school year, which spurred a renewed interest in teaching. In June 2012, Rebecca accepted a job as a teaching assistant at a private day school for children with autism in Charlottesville, Virginia. Rebecca's time in Charlottesville offered her new experiences including new restaurants and shopping amenities, volunteer opportunities, social events, and allowed her to forge new friendships. However, after three years, Rebecca felt she was too far from her family, as Charlottesville was a two-hour drive from Edinburg, and the disparity between her salary and cost of living both limited her experiences and caused financial stress. In response, Rebecca began looking for jobs closer to her family in late 2014.

Several of Rebecca's friends from Bridgewater College moved to Northern Virginia after accepting jobs following graduation or to attend graduate school. As a result, she would often visit Northern Virginia, and soon fell in love with the area, also appreciating that it was only an hour from family. As a result, Rebecca applied to jobs in cities and towns that were in Northern Virginia such as Manassas,

¹² Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

¹³ Matthew Polk (brother of author and farmer), discussion with Rebecca Polk, February 1, 2022.

Woodbridge, and Fairfax. In March 2015, Rebecca accepted a job as an autism teacher in Manassas and moved in with her grandmother, Gloria, in Woodstock, while she commuted back and forth to work every day until she was able to find an apartment in Manassas.

Rebecca would work as an autism teacher in Manassas until the summer of 2016, when she accepted a job as a special education teacher at a school in Fairfax, Virginia. Shortly after starting, the cancer her mother had battled a few years before returned as stage 4 metastatic cancer. Rebecca's mother died in April 2017, and she decided to take a break from teaching at the end of the school year. Rebecca spent the months following her mom's death traveling nationally and internationally, before returning to Woodstock to live with her grandmother, Gloria. Rebecca would spend the next seven months working in the mailroom of Narrow Passage Press and as an in-home therapist for children with autism, feeling lost after the death of her mother.

In early 2018, Rebecca decided to return to teaching and accepted a position as a curriculum coordinator at a small private school in Manassas. Shortly after starting her new position, she met her future husband, Anthony, at a local comic shop where she played *Magic the Gathering* with friends on Friday evenings. The two would bond over their love of violin, silent films, travel, and video games. They began dating on May 4, 2018.

Despite wanting to be a teacher from an early age, Rebecca decided to leave teaching in 2019 and accepted a job as a government contractor. Rebecca was the second person in her family to become a

government contractor, as her maternal grandfather, *Joseph Louie Graham (1934-1994)*, was a contractor in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Like her grandfather, Rebecca demonstrated a strong understanding of technology and was placed on technology-based contracts. Rebecca's contracts as of April 2022, focused on software testing, providing technical assistance on government applications, and creating technical assistance guides and documents. Rebecca's job shifted from a physical office to a virtual space in March 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In December 2019, coronavirus disease 2019, popularly known as COVID-19 or COVID-19 virus, was discovered in Wuhan, China.¹⁴ It would spread across the world over the next few months. COVID-19 was a respiratory illness whose symptoms varied from mild and cold-like to serious illness, the latter of which resulted in the death of over 900,000 Americans in the United States alone by March 2022.¹⁵ On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic and lockdowns began to occur rapidly.¹⁶ That same day, an email was sent out to everyone in Rebecca's company instructing employees in the office to pack-up their belongings and plan to work from home for an indefinite amount of time. Rebecca was not allowed to return to the office until April 2022, at which time she decided to continue as a permanent remote employee.

¹⁴ "Basics of COVID-19," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed April 6, 2022, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/about-covid-19/basics-covid-19.html>.

¹⁵ Jiachaun Wu and Nigel Chiwaya, "Coronavirus death: U.S. map shows number of fatalities compared to confirmed cases." *NBC News*, March 23, 2022, <https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/coronavirus-deaths-u-s-map-shows-number-fatalities-compared-confirmed-n1166966>.

¹⁶ "March 11, 2020: The Day Everything Changed," *National Public Radio*, March 11, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/03/11/975663437/march-11-2020-the-day-everything-changed>.

As a national lockdown went into effect in March 2020, many public spaces were forced to shut down, including several establishments Rebecca frequently visited. These included churches, retail shops, restaurants, beauty salons, museums, and amusement parks such as Disney World and Kings Dominion. To combat the spread of the virus, mask mandates went into effect and most public places required it. Public spaces remaining open were required to perform extensive cleaning and sanitization to prevent the spread of the virus. Most schools also shut down for safety reasons, resulting in students switching to virtual learning for the remainder of the school year, and in many cases, students spent the 2020-2021 school year attending school virtually.

In the early days of the pandemic, food and supply shortages were common as people panicked and stocked up on food and important supplies like toilet paper, masks, and hand sanitizer. Shortages were furthered as more places shut-down due COVID-19 outbreaks and people left their job over concerns of catching the virus. As soon as the lockdown occurred, Rebecca went to a local grocery store, to stock up on supplies and food. It would be her first exposure to pandemic shortages, and she was shocked to see that almost every shelf was bare and that there was no produce, save for one rotten onion. While shortages continued throughout the pandemic, shortages were less common by March 2022.

Due to fears of the pandemic, Rebecca did not see her family or friends for a considerable amount of time. Tragically, this meant that she was unable to see her maternal grandmother, Gloria, before she passed away unexpectedly in April 2020. This was compounded by the

fact Rebecca's paternal grandmother, Evelyn, had died five months before. Since in-person visiting was not safe, Rebecca turned to the software application Discord, which allowed users to video chat, stream movies, play virtual games, and text with family and friends. Pre-pandemic, Rebecca often went out and spent time with friends at their houses or to places such as movie theaters, restaurants, and other entertainment venues. In place of these, Rebecca spent her evenings streaming a movie or show with friends, playing video games, having audio calls with several friends, and joined the group role-playing game Dungeons and Dragons. As someone who preferred in-person experiences and socialization, Rebecca found the pandemic experience to be a very lonely and isolating experience; a sentiment shared by many of her family and friends.

In mid-December 2020, the US Food and Drug Administration authorized the Moderna and Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines for emergency use authorization.¹⁷ The vaccines were distributed based on an individual's risk category, thus healthcare workers and individuals over 65 received the vaccine first, followed by those in lower-risk categories such as young adults over 18 with no pre-existing health conditions. A vaccine for children 12 and older and later five and older was released by the end of 2021. The vaccine allowed for more locations to open in 2021, though mask mandates and sanitization requirements were still in effect. Rebecca was able to see friends and family for the

¹⁷ Ryan Cross, "Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine to roll out across the US," *Chemical & Engineering News*, December 21, 2020, <https://cen.acs.org/pharmaceuticals/vaccines/Modernas-COVID-19-vaccine-roll/98/web/2020/12>.

first time in several months or longer. Although the number of cases would continue to go up and down, public places that had closed at the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, had almost all opened by the end of 2021 including movie theaters, churches, amusement parks, stores, and restaurants.

In early 2021, Rebeca applied to graduate school to earn her Master of Arts in history. She applied to several graduate schools and ultimately decided to attend Pittsburg State University in Pittsburg, Kansas. On December 25, 2021, Rebecca's boyfriend, Anthony, proposed to her and shortly afterwards they made plans to get married on April 29, 2023, in Middleburg, Virginia.

GENERATION TWO

A1a. Charlotte Ann Graham (1960-2017)

A1b. Kevin Lee Polk (1959 -)

Charlotte Ann Graham (1960-2017) was born on October 3, 1960, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, to **Gloria Jean Crotwell (1936-2020)** and **Joseph Louie Graham (1934-1994)**. She had one younger sister, **Sonja Lynn Graham (1964-)**. After Charlotte was born, her parents returned to their home in Walker, Louisiana, where Charlotte would spend the first three years of her life.¹⁸

¹⁸ Sonja Graham (maternal aunt of author), interview with Rebecca Polk, April 3, 2022.

When Charlotte was born in 1960, Walker, Louisiana, had a population of 912 people.¹⁹ Since Charlotte's parents were born and raised in Walker, Charlotte spent a significant amount of time with extended family.²⁰ At the age of three, Charlotte's parents moved to Baton Rouge for two years, which was roughly twenty miles from Walker. Charlotte's family would move a few times throughout Louisiana over the next few years based on her father's job as an IBM operator.²¹ In 1967, her father got a job as a government contractor on a NASA contract, and the family moved to Houston, Texas, for the next four years.²² Texas was an adjustment for the family as there were over 1,200,000 people living there according to the 1970 census, compared to less than 1,000 in Walker, Louisiana, where they moved from.²³

As a child, Charlotte and her sister spent a lot of time playing with Barbies, paper dolls, and learning to cross-stitch. Charlotte and her sister also enjoyed reading Peanuts comics and reading in general, which would carry over into their adult years. At some point before the age of 10, Charlotte began taking piano and organ lessons, and later in life would play piano and organ at the churches she attended.²⁴

¹⁹ *Wikipedia*, "Walker, Louisiana," accessed February 20, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walker,_Louisiana.

²⁰ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

²¹ Graham, interview, April 3, 2022.

²² Sonja Graham (maternal aunt of author), interview with Rebecca Polk, February 19, 2022.

²³ *Wikipedia*, "Houston, Texas," accessed April 19, 2022, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Houston>.

²⁴ *Wikipedia*, "Houston, Texas."

In 1971, Charlotte's family moved again, this time because of a job Joseph got through a friend at Western Union in Middletown, Virginia.²⁵ They moved into an apartment in the nearby city of Winchester, which was roughly twenty miles north of Middletown. Winchester was a large town with a population of 14,643 people according to the 1970 census.²⁶ When Charlotte's family moved to Winchester in 1971, it provided numerous shopping and entertainment amenities including a bookstore, Sears, and two-story JCPenney on the downtown mall near their home, as well as restaurants, a movie theater, a craft store named McCormick's, and a Montgomery Ward, which was a large department store that was in operation from 1876-2001.²⁷ The JCPenney and Sears would be relocated to the Apple Blossom mall following its construction in 1982, providing additional shopping options to Charlotte and her family.²⁸ Additionally, the apartment Charlotte's parents rented was relatively close to a 7-Eleven, and Charlotte and her sister would often walk to it for snacks.²⁹

The early 1970s brought significant racial tension to Winchester, including Handley High School where Charlotte attended, and several race riots occurred in the years following the Civil Rights movement.³⁰ Due to fears over the increased crime rate, Charlotte's parents de-

²⁵ Graham, interview, February 19, 2022.

²⁶ *Wikipedia*, "Winchester, Virginia," (accessed March 25, 2022), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winchester,_Virginia.

²⁷ *Wikipedia*, "Montgomery Ward," accessed March 25, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montgomery_Ward; Sonja Graham (maternal aunt of author), interview with Rebecca Polk, April 9, 2022.

²⁸ *Wikipedia*, "Apple Blossom Mall," (accessed March 25, 2022), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apple_Blossom_Mall.

²⁹ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

³⁰ *Ibid*.

cided to move to the small town of Woodstock in 1974, which was located roughly forty miles south of Winchester and twenty minutes south of Middletown.³¹ By this time, Charlotte's parents had decided to stay in Virginia permanently, and they rented a house in Woodstock while looking for land to build a house, which they did in 1978.³²

After moving to Woodstock, Charlotte attended Central High School. In addition to her general studies, Charlotte took several typewriting courses and proved herself to be very proficient at typing, a trait that would carry over to computers when she began using them in the next few years.³³ At some point during her sophomore year, she met her future husband, **Kevin Lee Polk (1959 -)**, who asked her out on a date. Charlotte told their daughter Rebecca that she turned Kevin down several times before finally agreeing to go on a date with him to a monster truck rally. They got engaged after Charlotte graduated high school, and the two married at the Baptist church they attended on August 22, 1981.

After graduating high school, Charlotte got a job working at Leggett, a department store that primarily sold clothing, which was in downtown Woodstock.³⁴ In 1996 it was bought out by the clothing store chain Belk.³⁵ The Leggett store in Woodstock closed in the late 1980s.³⁶ Until the early 1990s, when Rebecca was a young child, the downtown area in Woodstock, where Leggett was located, had numerous amenities,

³¹ Ibid.

³² Graham, interview, April 3, 2022.

³³ Sonja Graham (maternal aunt of author), interview with Rebecca Polk, April 10, 2022.

³⁴ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

³⁵ *Wikipedia*, "Belk," (accessed March 25, 2022), <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belk>.

³⁶ Graham, interview, April 3, 2022.

including several clothing stores, grocery stores such as a Safeway, video stores, and other amenities. However, many of these places closed following the construction of Walmart in Woodstock in 1996.

After working at Leggett for a couple months, Charlotte applied for and accepted a job at Western Union where her father worked. At that time in the 1980s, Western Union focused their business model on communications and technology, and were one of the dominant forces in the telegraph industry from the 1860s to the 1980s.³⁷ Charlotte, like her father, demonstrated a strong aptitude for computers and worked within that department in their Middletown, Virginia, location.³⁸ She would often describe in amazement to her daughter how computers in the 1980s at Western Union took up entire rooms.

Charlotte's experience with computers at Western Union sparked a lifelong love of technology, which prompted her to purchase an Apple Macintosh Plus sometime in the late 1980s.³⁹ Personal computers were new technology in the late 1980s and they were quite expensive, costing \$2,599 at launch, which was equivalent to \$6,140 in April 2022.⁴⁰ Due to the price, most people could not afford to buy a computer at the time, allowing Charlotte to start her own home typing business and carve out a niche for herself, as a preference for computer typed resumes, proofreading, and other word processing services emerged.⁴¹ Charlotte also used her computer for typing personal documents and for entertainment, playing games such as *Wheel of Fortune* and *Lemmings*.

³⁷ *Wikipedia*, "Western Union," (accessed March 25, 2022), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Union.

³⁸ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

³⁹ Graham, Sonja. (Maternal aunt of author). Interview with the author, Rebecca Polk, April 10, 2022.

⁴⁰ *Wikipedia*, "Macintosh Plus," accessed March 19, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macintosh_Plus.

⁴¹ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

When Rebecca was four years old, Charlotte also purchased several education and typing games for her such as *Reader Rabbit*, *The Oregon Trail*, and *Mario Teaches Typing*. Charlotte continued to get professional typing requests until the early 2000s, although by then she had quit her business as personal computers became more affordable and common in homes.⁴²

After leaving her job at Western Union in the late 1980s, Charlotte worked for three years as a bookkeeper for a local physician.⁴³ After the birth of her son, **Matthew Lee Polk (1991-)**, in 1991, Charlotte quit her position as a bookkeeper and began running an in-home daycare, in addition to her home typing business. When Rebecca was in third grade, Charlotte stopped running an in-home daycare and began working as a preschool teacher at the Baptist Church her family attended. She would work as a preschool teacher until 2001, when she got a job as a special education teaching assistant at the middle school her daughter Rebecca attended.

At some point when Rebecca was in high school, her mom interviewed for and accepted an internal position at the middle School she worked at as a guidance counseling office secretary. She held that position for a few years before budget cuts caused the position to be eliminated, and Charlotte became the lead secretary for the school, which she held until her death in 2017. Charlotte thrived in her role and became well respected throughout her tenure and was the Shenandoah County Employee of the year in 2016.⁴⁴

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Kevin Polk, interview, February 10, 2022.

⁴⁴ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

In 2001, Kevin and Charlotte built their second home on one of the farms Kevin and his father owned in Edinburg. Around this time, Charlotte took an increased interest in farming outside of gardening, a hobby she had done religiously since before her children were born. Charlotte embraced farming culture, and started canning produce from the garden, raising chickens, and adding country aesthetics to the family's home. She also began helping her husband and son on the farm regularly by watering and feeding cows and helping harvest hay during the summer months. Her love of crafts also evolved during this time from cross-stitching to crocheting and plastic canvas: the latter of which she taught her teenage daughter, Rebecca.

Sometime after her daughter left for college, Charlotte joined a new church where she was soon appointed the minister of music and played organ during worship service every Sunday. Faith was a critical component to Charlotte throughout her life. In May 2011, Charlotte was diagnosed with stage 2 breast cancer. Following surgery, chemotherapy and radiation over the next year, she would make a full recovery. Afterwards, she began taking more trips such as annual weekend trips with friends to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, shopping trips with her husband, trips to Charlottesville or Manassas to visit her daughter, and community events such as auctions and fairs. She was cancer free for five years until 2016, when it returned as stage 4 metastatic cancer. Charlotte died at the age of 56 on April 20, 2017.

Kevin Lee Polk (1959 -) was born in 1959 in New Market, Virginia, to **Evelyn Pauline Baker (1939-2019)** and **Allen Lee Polk (1937-2004)**. He was the only child born to Evelyn and Allen. Following his

birth, Kevin and his parents returned to their home in Columbia Furnace, Virginia.

As a child, Kevin enjoyed playing with a variety of toys including matchbox cars, board games such as Twix and Cootie, and American Plastic Bricks. American Plastic Bricks were red and white bricks which snapped together, similar in concept to Legos, and were manufactured in the 1960s by Elgo Plastics Company and later Halsam Products. Kevin played football for a brief period during elementary school, which was the only sport he actively participated in as a child. Growing up, Kevin spent a significant amount of time with extended family as they all lived locally.⁴⁵ Kevin also helped his father with farm work starting at an early age.

At the age of 16, Kevin met his future wife, **Charlotte Ann Graham (1960-2017)**, at the high school they both attended. After graduating high school, Kevin became self-employed as a farmer and helped his father manage the four farms they owned together, which included one farm rented from Kevin's grandmother, **Esther Marie Heltzel (1916-2006)**. The other farms included two Kevin's father purchased when he was a young boy, nicknamed "Painters" and "Conicville Farm," and a former family farm purchased when Kevin was 19 called "Archoes."⁴⁶ The farms were primarily used for raising Angus cattle, growing hay and corn, large gardens with a variety of produce, and occasionally other livestock such as sheep and pigs.⁴⁷ Kevin and his father primarily

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Kevin Polk, interview, March 9, 2022.

raised and bred Angus cattle because they generally offered a greater profit compared to other breeds such as Charolais.⁴⁸

Due to the small profit margin earned farming, Kevin also began working for two of his uncles on his father's side, **Lewis Nagel Polk (1935-2015)** and **Lorraine Polk (1947-)**, at their company, Polk Bros Construction, which serviced Shenandoah County and neighboring counties.⁴⁹ His uncles started Polk Brothers Construction after the construction company they worked at, Westly Poland Construction Co., went out of business.⁵⁰ Their company built any type of building people requested, including chicken coops, farm sheds, barns, and houses.⁵¹

After working for his uncles for around two years, Kevin accepted a position as a supervisor at Rocco, the same chicken processing plant his father worked at which was in Edinburg.⁵² In the early 2000s, Rocco was bought out by another company and renamed George's Inc; this would be the second time the company was renamed having originally been Blue Ridge Poultry when his father started working there in the late 1950s.⁵³ Since one of the farms Allen and his father managed sat adjacent to where they worked, they were able to park their trucks on the farm to walk to work, then tend to any necessary farm work once they got off work. Additionally, all but one of the other farms Kevin and his dad managed were within one mile of their workplace, which made

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ "Obituary for Lewis Nagel Polk," Heishman Funeral Home Inc., accessed March 27, 2022, <https://www.dellingerfuneralhome.com/obituaries/Lewis-Nagel-Polk/#!/Obituary>.

⁵¹ Kevin Polk, interview, March 9, 2022.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

managing them easier, especially if farm equipment needed to be moved from one farm to another.

While Kevin's job was conveniently close to the farms, the home he and his family lived in in Edinburg was roughly ten miles away, which made it particularly difficult in the winter when the roads were bad, but cattle still needed to be fed. In the early 2000s, Kevin's father bought another farm in Edinburg, nicknamed "Racetrack Farm," which originally served as a horse farm and racetrack, and was within walking distance of where he and Kevin worked. Since the farm was close to where Kevin worked and the other farms he managed with his dad, Kevin and Charlotte asked and received permission from Kevin's parents to build a house on the farm. The house was completed in 2001, and placed Kevin within walking distance of his parents and Charlotte within five miles of her mother and sister.

Kevin's father passed away in 2004, and prior to his death, he sold one of the farms to alleviate the burden of managing multiple farms.⁵⁴ Kevin's grandmother, Esther, sold the farm he and his father rented for several years in 1999. Kevin's mother Evelyn also sold "Conicville Farm," which was furthest away, so Kevin would only have two farms to manage.⁵⁵ Kevin's son, Matthew, demonstrated a strong aptitude for farming during this time and regularly helped him manage cattle, cut hay, repair, buy, and sell farm equipment, and perform general repairs to barns and fences.

⁵⁴ Kevin Polk, interview, March 9, 2022.

⁵⁵ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

In 2003, Kevin applied for and accepted a custodian position at his daughter's high school and sometime after 2010 was promoted to head custodian. Initially Kevin worked night shifts at the school but when a staff member on day shift left Kevin was able to transition to working days. This meant that Kevin and Charlotte could commute to work together. As their children were adults at this time, the two often spent more time together by going shopping, going on short day trips to Winchester or Harrisonburg, or going out to eat after work. Kevin's wife Charlotte passed away in 2017, leaving him a widow at 57.

GENERATION THREE

Ala1. Gloria Jean Crotwell (1936-2020)

Ala2. Joseph Louie Graham (1934-1994)

Alb1. Evelyn Pauline Baker (1939-2019)

Alb2. Allen Lee Polk (1937-2004)

Gloria Jean Crotwell (1936-2020) was Rebecca's maternal grandmother. She was born on October 6, 1936, in Walker, Louisiana, to **Eula Gladys Summers (1909-1991)** and **Herman Ellis Crotwell (1906-1979)**. Gloria was the second daughter and fourth child born to Herman and Eula. Gloria had a twin brother, **Dalton Dale Crotwell (1936-2016)**. Being twins, Gloria is believed to have been the youngest of the two, but currently living family as of February 2022, are not completely sure who was born first of the two.⁵⁶ Gloria also had one older sister,

⁵⁶ Nelda Seal (sister of author's maternal grandmother), interview with Rebecca Polk, February 13, 2022.

Nelda Crotwell (1933-), and an older brother, Herman Ellis Crotwell Jr. (1936-2018).

Gloria was born during the Great Depression, a period when economic stability within the United States was difficult. This was especially true in the rural South where a significant portion of the population already faced poverty before the onset of the Great Depression, when agriculture prices reached all time lows.⁵⁷ Economic stability was still not achieved by the 1940s, and to earn extra money for the family, Gloria and her siblings helped pick strawberries from local strawberry farms.⁵⁸ She often recounted to family how most children and adults pitched in to help pick strawberries for extra money, and schools would be closed during harvest time as a result. It was hard, back-breaking work, that lasted from early morning until sunset, and Gloria said they earned little money for the bushels of strawberries they collected. Gloria's family also had a small farm on which they raised a dairy cow, chickens, rooster, and grew crops.⁵⁹

Gloria would occasionally tell stories of how aggressive the rooster they had growing up was. Gloria and her siblings all had chores on their family farm, and one of her chores was to milk the cow in the morning. For unknown reasons, the family's rooster began spearing Gloria as she was milking the cow every morning. She would tell her mom that the "damn rooster bit me" and Eula would tell her to stop lying, assuming her daughter was trying to get out of work. One day,

⁵⁷ Matthew Reonas, "Great Depression in Louisiana," *64 Parishes*, December 17, 2010, <https://64parishes.org/entry/great-depression-in-louisiana>.

⁵⁸ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

Eula happened to look out the window and saw that the rooster was in fact chasing her daughter and wildly attacking her. Eula rushed outside, got her daughter inside safely, and proceeded to hunt down the rooster and chop off its neck for attacking Gloria. The rooster was served for dinner that night, so it did not go to waste.

Gloria attended Walker High School in Walker, Louisiana, and joined her school's basketball team as a freshman. She demonstrated strong talent in basketball and eventually became captain.⁶⁰ It sparked a lifelong love of basketball for Gloria, and she would faithfully watch every season of college and professional basketball on television as an adult. Unfortunately, during a basketball game at the age of 16 or 17, Gloria went to make a shot and fell wrong, causing permanent damage to her leg.⁶¹ This caused her to end her basketball playing days early, although she remained captain of the team until graduation.⁶² Gloria would occasionally share her experiences playing 'donkey basketball', an activity the boys' and girls' basketball teams enjoyed when she was in high school. As the name implies, someone would bring actual donkeys into the gym, and everyone would get on one. Then, they would attempt to play a game of basketball while riding donkeys, which Gloria said was especially difficult because they were constantly trying to buck the rider off.

After graduating high school, Gloria babysat for local families until getting a job as a clerk at the local schoolboard office. As a clerk at the schoolboard office, Gloria primarily managed textbooks

⁶⁰ Seal, interview, February 13, 2022.

⁶¹ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

⁶² Ibid.

and reading material used in local schools. Gloria likely spent time with her future husband, **Joseph Louie Graham (1934-1994)**, when she was younger as he was friends with her older brother, Herman. The two re-connected after Joseph returned to Walker from the Airforce in 1957, and soon after they began dating.⁶³ Gloria and Joseph married on June 4, 1958, when Gloria was 21 and Joseph was 23.⁶⁴ Gloria's wedding dress was made by both her mother-in-law **Sadie Estella Graham (1916-2006)** and her mother Eula.⁶⁵ Gloria and Joseph welcomed their first daughter, **Charlotte Ann Graham (1960-2017)**, two years later and a second daughter, **Sonja Lynn Graham (1964-)**, four years after Charlotte was born.

Gloria continued to work at the school board office until her daughter Charlotte was a year old, at which time she realized that the amount she made at the school board was equal to the amount of money she was paying her daughter's nanny.⁶⁶ She quit her job and became a stay-at-home mom until both her daughters graduated high school.⁶⁷ The Grahams would move a couple of times over the next few years based on Joseph's job as an IBM operator until 1967, when her husband accepted a job as a government contractor, and the family moved to Houston, Texas.⁶⁸

Gloria, a talented seamstress, made her daughter's dresses growing up, and several photos exist with the two wearing matching dresses along with matching bowl haircuts. Since her daughters loved playing

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Graham, interview, April 3, 2022.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

with barbies, and due to the cost of barbie clothes in stores, Gloria would often take leftover scraps from the dresses she made and sewed barbie clothes for them.⁶⁹ Gloria enjoyed crocheting and cross-stitching, both of which she did throughout her life, and she passed this skill and love on to both of her daughters. Faith was very important to Gloria throughout her life, and she and her family attended the local Baptist church in each of the cities they moved to.⁷⁰

The Grahams moved to Winchester, Virginia, in 1971, after Joseph got a job at Western Union in Middletown, Virginia. While Gloria continued to be a stay-at-home mom during this time, she also began making and selling jewelry part-time.⁷¹ The Graham's moved to Woodstock in 1974 and built a house in Woodstock in 1978.⁷²

Sometime after her daughter Sonja got a job at Narrow Passage Press in 1985, Gloria accepted a part-time job there as a mailroom supervisor, which she held until she was 65 in 2001. While working at Narrow Passage Press, Gloria, the president Keith Stickle, Sonja, and another staff member saw a community need during the holidays for children whose families couldn't afford presents. They established the Empty Stocking Fund for this effort, and Gloria would make up to 500 stockings every year for children identified as being in need. The stockings were stuffed with goodies and handed out to children, in addition to a few presents costing up to \$50 based on lists parents had provided the organization. The organization was later transferred to

⁶⁹ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

the Ruritan club in the early mid-2000s, due to its large size and capacity to support growing community needs, at which time the organization was renamed Ruritan Empty Stocking Project.

Gloria's granddaughter, Rebecca, was born in 1987, and she often watched her during the day, due to her daughter Charlotte and son-in-law Kevin's work schedules. She would continue to watch Rebecca during the day until Rebecca started kindergarten. As was tradition in her family for grandmothers, Gloria had her grandchildren call her 'maw-maw'. Gloria remained very involved in her grandchildren's lives through their adult years until her passing.

Gloria enjoyed doing yardwork and took pride in the upkeep of her yard and flowerbeds. She and her husband Joseph spent time planting trees in their back and front yards, as well as setting up several flowerbeds. The two also enjoyed taking out-of-state road trips with their daughters and visited historical sites, museums, the beach, state parks and Mexico.⁷³ Tragedy struck the Graham's in late 1993, when Joseph was diagnosed with a rare blood disease. It turned into cancer months later, and Joseph passed away in 1994.⁷⁴

In Figure 4.10 "Americans Who Live Alone, by Age and Gender," Fischer and Hout divide the percentage of Americans who lived alone from 1900-2000 into two separate line charts, one for men and one for women. They break this down further by using four separate lines on each chart to track this trend over four different age ranges: 18 to 29, 30 to 44, 45 to 64 and 65 and older. Looking at both charts, it

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

can be observed that the number of American men and women who lived alone, especially over the age of 65, increased between 1900-2000. As sub-titled by the chart, it can also be seen that this was especially true for women who were 65 and older, as starting in the 1960s at least 20% of women in this age group lived alone. As of 2000, roughly 35% of women over the age of 65 lived alone compared to around 16% of men 65 and older.⁷⁵

In 2000, Rebecca's maternal grandmother Gloria was 64 years old and among the 14% of women aged 45-64 living alone. She began living alone in 1994 following the death of her husband Joseph. This was the first time Gloria had lived on her own as she had lived with her parents and siblings until marrying her husband in 1958. She lived on her own for 26 years until her death in 2020. This was also true for Gloria's mother Eula, who in 1980 was among 38% of women 65 or older who lived alone and around 39% of women 65 or older in 1990 who lived alone.

Gloria's cooking was well-regarded by family members, especially her spaghetti, which she made a giant pot of every Monday for several years. Since Gloria grew up in the south, she often made dishes she had grown up with such as sweet potato pie, coconut pie, gumbo, and jambalaya. Following the death of her husband, Gloria began cooking lunch every day during the week for her and her daughter, Sonja, who stopped by on her lunch break. Gloria also made biscuits and hot cocoa from scratch, as well as fried bacon for breakfast on Sunday mornings.

⁷⁵ Fischer and Hout, *Century of Difference; How America Changed in the Last One Hundred*, 82.

Usually, it was only her and her daughter Sonja, but occasionally her granddaughter Rebecca and Charlotte would join as well. Gloria also made homemade candy during Christmas time every year including pralines, cocoa fudge, and turtles. These treats would be distributed amongst family, friends and staff at Narrow Passage Press.

Gloria retired from her job as a mailroom supervisor at Narrow Passage Press in early 2000, but due to her strong work-ethic and ability, was asked to come back and work part-time in the mailroom to do independent work assignments such as stuffing envelopes and binding newsletters. She continued this until her daughter Charlotte became sick with cancer in 2011. After this, she would come in on rare occasions when there was a shortage of help in the mailroom until she officially retired in 2017 at the age of 81.⁷⁶

On April 27, 2020, Gloria passed away unexpectedly at the age of 83 from unknown causes, possibly a stroke. Prior to, Gloria had been in good health and had no significant ailments. She was buried in the same cemetery where her daughter Charlotte and husband Joseph were buried.

Joseph Louie Graham (1934-1994) was Rebecca's maternal grandfather. He was born on January 1, 1934, in Corbin, Louisiana, to **Joseph Barnett Graham (1908-1985)** and **Sadie Estella Graham (1916-2007)**. A sister, **Janell Graham (1954-2017)**, was born twenty years later. Joseph often went by his middle name, Louie, and had a tattoo of it on one of his arms that he got when serving in the Air Force.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

As a child, Joseph attended Walker Elementary School in Walker, Louisiana, from 1940-1948, according to his security clearance paperwork. There was no junior high or middle school, so students in Walker attended first through eighth grade at Walker Elementary School and ninth through twelfth grade attended Walker High School, which Joseph did from 1948-1952.⁷⁸ At some point in his youth, his mother taught him how to play guitar, and later in his youth learned to play mandolin and banjo; Joseph played all three throughout life.⁷⁹

When Joseph was a teenager, he became interested in working on cars, a passion that would last his entire life. It was this passion that also allowed him to befriend **Herman Ellis Crotwell Jr. (1934-2018)** in high school, who was equally interested in cars.⁸⁰ He also began attending church at Walker Baptist Church with Herman and his family.⁸¹ After graduating high school, Joseph spent a few months trying to find a job, but employers were hesitant to hire men of enlistment age because they could be drafted due to the Korean War.⁸² As a precaution, Joseph decided to enlist and joined the Air Force, which he served in until 1957.⁸³ After he returned home from the Air Force, he began dating Herman's younger sister, **Gloria Jean Crotwell (1936-2020)**, and continued to attend Walker Baptist church with her family.⁸⁴

⁷⁸ Graham, interview, April 3, 2022.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Nelda Seal (sister of author's maternal grandmother), interview with Rebecca Polk, March 15, 2022.

⁸² Graham, interview, April 3, 2022.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Seal, interview, March 15, 2022.

Joseph married Gloria in 1958, and worked as a well logger and salesman at a local dairy factory.⁸⁵

During his time in the Air Force, Joseph demonstrated a strong aptitude with computers and became an IBM operator.⁸⁶ Prior to the birth of his daughter Charlotte in 1960, Joseph accepted a job as an IBM operator for the government. Over the next few years, Joseph was contracted by various establishments and companies, including a university, a pharmacy, and banks to help set up their computing systems.⁸⁷ This resulted in his family having to move periodically throughout Louisiana and briefly to Maryland until 1967.⁸⁸ In 1967, he was hired by the government contracting agency Lockheed Martin on a NASA contract, resulting in the family moving to Houston, Texas.⁸⁹ When reviewing Joseph's tax records between 1967 and 1971, it appears that Joseph may have stopped working as a contractor and was hired directly by NASA.⁹⁰ In 2022, it was not uncommon in government contracting for a contractor to be hired directly by the client due to stellar performance, and it is likely this was also the case in the 1960s and 1970s.

Joseph worked in the control room at NASA during the Apollo 11 mission in July 1969. He received color satellite images of space and diagrams that he was allowed to bring home, as they were distributed to employees, and his daughter Charlotte, and sister Janell, took them to school for show and tell.⁹¹ In 1971, there were threats of layoffs

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Graham, interview and review of tax documents with the author, April 3, 2022.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

at NASA, likely due to cuts in funding, and Joseph started looking for a new job due to layoff concerns.⁹² A friend of his had moved to Virginia years prior and was working at Western Union in Middletown, and told Joseph there was a job opening for a computer operator. Joseph said he was interested in the position and moved his family to Virginia, interviewed for the job, and got it. He worked at Western Union for 23 years until his death in 1994.

Joseph and his family moved to Winchester, a town that was roughly twenty miles from Western Union in Middletown, and in 1974 moved to Woodstock. Joseph and his family, along with members First Baptist Church in Woodstock, built their home in 1978. To commemorate the completion of their home, Joseph, his wife, and two daughters carved their initials into the wet cement of the stone sidewalk that curved from the house, through the yard and to the driveway. Gloria once told her granddaughter Rebecca that they spent so much money constructing the house that they couldn't initially afford living room furniture and sat on the floor. Once they saved up enough money, they bought furniture at Montgomery Ward in Winchester.⁹³

The completion of the house in Woodstock allowed Joseph to further pursue his interest in cars and carpentry. Joseph periodically purchased older cars to fix and sold them. Joseph was also talented in carpentry and set up a woodworking shop in the garage of the house. Over the next several years, he built dozens of pieces of furniture, including but not limited to bed frames, shelves, toyboxes for both

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk, and verified from old Montgomery Ward receipts.

his grandchildren, dressers, a microwave cart, and quilt racks. He further extended his woodworking abilities by building the first home of both his daughters and most of the furniture in his youngest daughter's house. Joseph was active in his church and community and helped build First Baptist Church in Woodstock where his family attended and helped with the interior construction of Narrow Passage Press, where his daughter Sonja and wife worked.⁹⁴

Joseph became sick at the age of 59 and was diagnosed with a rare blood disease that turned into cancer a couple months later. His granddaughters last memory of him was seeing her grandmother Gloria take him to his bedroom to sleep when they visited, as her family did not want her to see how sick he was, and only saw him by chance. Prior to, he had been actively involved in his grandchildren's lives. Joseph passed away at the age of 60 at his home on August 14, 1994.⁹⁵

Evelyn Pauline Baker (1939-2019) was Rebecca's paternal grandmother. She was born on May 12, 1939, in Mt. Jackson, Virginia, to **Amanda Elizabeth Reid (1905-1985)** and **Luther Edward Baker (1904-1989)**. She was the youngest of five children which included three sisters **Gladys Virginia Baker (1926-2010)**, **Nellie Frances Baker (1928-1985)**, and **Helen Edith Baker (1936-)**, and a brother **Floyd Edward Baker (1934-2019)**.

In High School, Evelyn played basketball and attended school with several of her cousins.⁹⁶ According to her senior yearbook, she was part of Future Business Leaders of America, was voted one of the 'most

⁹⁴ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Kevin Polk (father of author), interview with the author, Rebecca Polk, February 24, 2022.

studious' in her class, and had already started dating her future husband, **Allen Lee Polk (1936-2004)**. Evelyn and Allen would marry in Mt. Jackson in 1959 when Evelyn was 20 and Allen was 22. They welcomed their only child, **Kevin Lee Polk (1959-)**, later that year.

Prior to their marriage, Allen and Evelyn began construction on and completed the house they would live in until their respective deaths in 2004 and 2019, in Columbia Furnace.⁹⁷ Allen's sister, **Sylvia Jean Polk (1940-)**, and her husband, **Clifford Ray George (1935-2009)**, purchased the lot to the left of their house, and built their home sometime around or after Evelyn and Allen finished the house. Evelyn and Allen's home was located along one of the main roads in Shenandoah County, U.S. Route 42. It was also within a mile of all, but one farm Allen would own in his lifetime, making it a convenient place to stop for lunch, take an afternoon nap, or meet-up. One of the farms, nicknamed "Painters", could be accessed from a path at the back of the house lot that led directly to the farm.

Since the house was along a busy road, every spring and summer Allen and Evelyn, later along with their son, daughter-in-law, and grandchildren, hosted yard sales every year to sell unwanted goods and items Allen bought from auctions and estate sales. It allowed everyone an opportunity to not only get rid of unwanted goods but earn extra money. Anything that didn't sell would be taken to the local thrift store or packed up to sell at the next yard sale.

⁹⁷ Kevin Polk, interview, February 24, 2022.

The outside of Evelyn and Allen's house had a sheltered one-car porch, which was built after 1960 according to a photo of Evelyn holding her son, Kevin, around the age of one.⁹⁸ To the right of the house sat a field, and landscapers made a roughly one-foot incline between Evelyn and Allen's property and the field. Allen and Evelyn planted several apple trees on the inclined hill from the road to the end of their backyard, though these were removed in the late 1990s due to their required maintenance and disease.⁹⁹ Additionally, a large, vertical rectangular backyard allowed for the construction of two sheds and a small workshop, large garden, and space to temporarily house farming equipment and trailers.

Evelyn and Allen's house was a ranch style house with white vinyl siding, and it contained three bedrooms, one bathroom, a dining room, living room, kitchen, and sizable basement. The main entrance for the house was from the sheltered car porch into a one-car garage that was used for storage and allowed for indoor access to the basement. An attic could also be accessed in the garage via pull-down steps. Due to the cool temperatures in the garage, freshly picked vegetables and potatoes were stored here as well.

Evelyn was a meticulous cleaner, a skill she passed on to her son and granddaughter, **Rebecca Ann Polk (1987-)**, and took great pride in the aesthetics and decoration of the house. She painted each bedroom a different color and instead of calling them by their purpose, she referred to them by color: green room, lilac room, and blue room. All

⁹⁸ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

floors in the house, except for the kitchen and bathroom, were hardwood floors with a laminate finish. The kitchen and dining room each featured a small, four-person table, with the one in the dining room used exclusively for when Kevin's family came over for dinner. The dining room featured several display cabinets with personal memorabilia, collectables, and dishware.

The basement at Evelyn and Allen's house had three rooms. The first room entered from the access door was the laundry room. The room straight back from the entrance was a tool storage room that also housed a woodstove. To the right, there was a curtained entrance to a large room that housed numerous supplies, decorations, and other items for storage. When Kevin was growing up, this room was used for hosting parties, including Christmas and New Year's parties, which several members of the family would attend.¹⁰⁰

Although Evelyn's mother Amanda did not work outside the home, Evelyn was among the one in five women in the 1960s who worked outside the home.¹⁰¹ Evelyn got a job at Winsor knit, a large clothing manufacturer in Edinburg at the age of 19.¹⁰² Prior to the 1960s, there were several clothing factories in Edinburg and Woodstock, including Windsor Knit and a Wrangler jean factory.¹⁰³ However, by the late 1980s, all the clothing factories had closed, most likely due to the manufacturing of clothing being moved overseas.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Kevin Polk (father of the author), interview with Rebecca Polk, March 27, 2022.

¹⁰¹ Fischer, *Made in America: A Social History of American Culture and Character*, 137.

¹⁰² Kevin Polk, interview, March 27, 2022.

¹⁰³ Graham, interview, April 3, 2022.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

After working at Windsor Knit for nineteen years, Evelyn got a job working as a housekeeper at the local hospital, Shenandoah Memorial Hospital. She worked there for twenty-nine years and retired in 2006.¹⁰⁵ Evelyn's husband died in 2004, prompting her to sell "Conicville Farm" in Conicville which was the furthest away to ease the workload of her son Kevin.¹⁰⁶ Evelyn lived alone for the next fifteen years but often spent time with her son and his family, watching TV, going shopping, or sharing meals together. Evelyn would often help her son and grandson on the farm and ran errands in Winchester or Harrisonburg, which were roughly thirty to forty miles to the north and south of Columbia Furnace, respectively.

Evelyn and her granddaughter Rebecca occasionally went driving throughout the Shenandoah Valley, and Evelyn would use this time to show her where she grew up. Evelyn had grown up in Mt. Jackson but spent considerable time in the neighboring towns of Conicville, New Market, Orkney Springs, and the former town of Moores Store, as family lived throughout these areas.¹⁰⁷ Evelyn would point out where some of her grandparents lived, farms that had fallen into disrepair, and former stores that had been closed for decades, and was able to recount everyone who once lived there and how busy the area once was. When asked what happened, Evelyn told Rebecca that many people's children moved into the larger towns of Edinburg and Woodstock, or the property

¹⁰⁵ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Don Silvius, Jackie Milburn and Warren Swartz, "Map of Shenandoah County," Shenandoah County GenWeb Project, accessed April 27, 2022, <http://www.vagenweb.org/shenandoah/vashenan.html>.

was abandoned after the individual who owned the store or lived on the property died.

Evelyn became more active in the Methodist church she attended, which was near her home, following her husband's death. Faith was important to Evelyn throughout her life. When she was younger, she attended a Lutheran church.¹⁰⁸ Later in life, she changed denominations and attended a Methodist church in Edinburg for several years before joining one by her house in Columbia Furnace.

In her 40s, Evelyn developed a passion for ceramics which included both sculpting and painting. She regularly went to a local ceramics studio and took classes, and made items such as ceramic trees, Christmas ornaments, and decorative figurines that she displayed in her house or gave as gifts.¹⁰⁹ Evelyn was an avid reader with her favorite books focusing on Amish culture and the Christmas season. During the evenings, Evelyn enjoyed watching television including Hallmark movies, the news, and weather.

One of Evelyn's favorite hobbies throughout her life was going to auctions, flea markets, yard sales and antique stores. She would often attend these with her son, husband and later her grandchildren. During these adventures, she began collecting 'hen on nest' glassware and actively sought out to collect each color produced, which she displayed in glass cases within her house.¹¹⁰ Hens on a nest, also known as

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

'chicken on nest' were trinket-holding glass dishes originally imported from England to the United States in the 18th century.¹¹¹ In the late 19th and early 20th century several manufacturers sold hen on nest, including Westmoreland, Fenton, and Anchor-Hocking, and created them in a variety of sizes.¹¹² There was a revival in which new designs and colors were sold between the 1970s-1990s, furthering their collectability.¹¹³ Evelyn primarily purchased pieces produced in the early 20th century.¹¹⁴

Evelyn's health began to decline in her late 70s and in late 2017, she had a bad fall which resulted in her staying at the hospital for a short while. Evelyn had a second fall in July 2019. Evelyn would be in and out of the hospital over the next few months and she passed away on November 18, 2019, from heart failure.¹¹⁵

Allen Lee Polk (1936-2004) was Rebecca's paternal grandfather. He was born on March 20, 1936, in Edinburg, Virginia, to **Esther Marie Heltzel (1916-2006)** and **Stanley Woodrow Polk (1912-1975)**. Allen was the third born of eight siblings which included three sisters: **Doris Dale Polk (1938-1995)**, **Sylvia Jean Polk (1939-)**, and **Anna Mae Polk (1945-1945)**, and four brothers: **Eugene Woodrow Polk (1934-2016)**, **Lewis Nagel Polk (1935-2015)**, **Lorraine Polk (1947-)**, and **Edward Thomas Polk (1941-)**.

¹¹¹ "Antique Spotlight: The Hen on Nest Glass We Grew Up With," Dusty Old Thing, accessed March 26, 2022, <https://dustyoldthing.com/antique-spotlight-hen-on-nest/>.

¹¹² Dusty Old Thing, "Antique Spotlight: The Hen on Nest Glass We Grew Up With."

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

Allen grew up on the farm his parents owned in the unincorporated community of Columbia Furnace, Virginia, which borders the town of Edinburg; the two often being lumped together by locals as one town.¹¹⁶ In 1959, Allen married **Evelyn Pauline Baker (1939-2019)** and the two welcomed a son, **Kevin Lee Polk (1959 -)**, later that year. Prior to their marriage, they built a house in Columbia Furnace close to where Allen's parents lived.

At some point after graduating high school and before marrying his wife Evelyn in 1959, Allen got a job working at Blue Ridge Poultry. Blue Ridge Poultry was a chicken processing plant that was bought out twice while Allen worked there, becoming Rocco sometime before 1987 and later George's Inc. in the early 2000s. Allen became a supervisor at the company at some point, a position he held until his death in 2004.

Allen was a farmer his entire life and managed five farms. He primarily focused his farms on raising Angus cattle, and growing hay and corn.¹¹⁷ Allen purchased his first farm in the neighboring town of Conicville, which the family nicknamed "Conicville Farm", and Allen primarily raised cows on it. At some point, Allen realized he could make money off gathering the walnuts that fell in the late summer and early fall from the over 100 walnut trees on the farm, and he and his family gathered them every year in the fall to sell.¹¹⁸

In the 1970s, Allen purchased his second farm, which was in Columbia Furnace, and nicknamed it "Painters." The farm had two houses

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

that Allen rented out, a barn, and a large field for cattle grazing.¹¹⁹ The farm was conveniently connected to a walking lane behind his house, allowing easy access for feeding cattle or checking on the farm itself. After Allen's father died in 1975, Allen's mother agreed to rent the fields, equipment, and barns on the farm she lived on to Allen and his son, Kevin.¹²⁰ Allen rented the farm until his mother moved to a nursing home in 1999. When he learned his mother wanted to sell the farm, Allen attempted to buy the farm from his mother, but she refused for unknown reasons.¹²¹

Allen purchased two additional farms during his lifetime. One of the farms, "Archoes", was originally owned by his grandfather, **Perry Lee Heltzel (1890-1980)**, and sat adjacent to where Allen worked.¹²² Perry had offered to sell it to Allen in 1959 but Allen couldn't afford to buy it since his son had just been born.¹²³ When Archoes came up for sale again in the late 1970s, Allen purchased it since he could then afford it.¹²⁴ Allen and his son raised Angus cows, grew corn, rented two houses, and briefly raised pigs and sheep on the farm.¹²⁵

Farms did not come up for sale often during the late 20th century, so in 2000 when a farm near where Allen and his wife lived came up for auction, he bought it.¹²⁶ The farm was 52 acres in size and originally a horse racetrack, although it ultimately failed in this endeavor.¹²⁷

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Polk, interview, February 24, 2022.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

It had several large fields for horses to graze, two large horse stables, a defined racetrack, and a large section of natural woodlands. Allen and his son turned the horse fields into hay fields and cattle pastures and used the forest to generate firewood to use and sell during the winter months. After Allen purchased the farm, Kevin and his family built their second home on the property.

Edinburg, where two of the farms Allen managed were located, is historically a farming community. It borders the towns of Woodstock, Maurertown, Conicville, and the unincorporated community of Columbia Furnace.¹²⁸ Before Edinburg was incorporated in 1852, it was known as Shryock and Stoney Creek, having been given the former name by Prince Bernhard of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach in 1825 while passing through the area.¹²⁹ When Allen purchased his first farm in Edinburg in the 1960s, the population was 517, and the population had remained steady at between 452-574 people over the previous 100 years.¹³⁰ The population almost doubled in the next 50 years, as in 2010 there were 1,041 people living in Edinburg, though this also means the area has not seen significant growth since its incorporation in 1852.¹³¹ Edinburg is also the location of several places on the National Register of Historic Places, including the Campbell Farm, Dr. Christian Hockman House and Lantz Mill.¹³² Interstate 81 connects to Edinburg, which allows for individuals living there to more readily travel to other areas, and in

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *Wikipedia*, "Edinburg, Virginia," accessed April 20, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edinburg_Virginia.

¹³⁰ *Wikipedia*, "Edinburg, Virginia."

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

the case of farmers, to livestock sales in nearby Harrisonburg and Winchester. The main Route 11 allows for easy travel for tractors and farmers delivering goods such as hay, livestock, and farming equipment.¹³³

Shortly after buying Racetrack Farm in 2000, Allen suffered a stroke. After recovering from his stroke, Allen began regularly going to church, something he had not done since he was younger. His health continued to decline for the next few years and on the morning of February 22, 2004, he suffered a fatal heart attack. His granddaughter, Rebecca, remembers waking up that Sunday morning to see her parents speeding down the driveway, as Evelyn had called Rebecca's parents immediately after she called an ambulance. Her mother attempted CPR on Allen while waiting for the ambulance to arrive but was unable to revive him.

GENERATION FOUR

A1a1a. Eula Gladys Summers (1909-1991)
A1a1b. Herman Ellis Crotwell (1906-1979)

A1a2a. Sadie Estella Graham (1916-2007)
A1a2b. Joseph Barnett Graham (1908-1985)

A1b1a. Amanda Elizabeth Reid (1905-1985)
A1b1b. Luther Edward Baker (1904-1989)

A1b2a. Esther Marie Heltzel (1916-2006)
A1b2b. Stanley Woodrow Polk (1912-1975)

¹³³ Ibid.

Eula Gladys Summers (1909-1991) was the mother of Rebecca's maternal grandmother, Gloria. She was born in Walker, Louisiana, on October 13, 1909, to **Alvin Norris Summers (1875-1957)** and **Mamie E. Miller (1887-1972)**. She was the oldest of three siblings which included a sister, **Clariette "Aunt Rhett" Wilmer Summers (1916-1961)**, and a brother, **Gordon Dalton Summers (1911-1991)**.¹³⁴

Eula lived in Walker, Louisiana, her entire life, although all but one of Eula's children would leave Walker in adulthood. Walker was located within Livingston Parish. According to the census in 1910, a year after Eula was born, the population of Walker was 592 people, and the population grew to 3,727 by 1990, a year before Eula's death.¹³⁵ Walker was declared a city in 2011, following the 2010 census population count of 6,138.¹³⁶ Walker was considered a rural area during Eula's lifetime, though it offered many important amenities for its citizens including schools, a post office, grocery stores and restaurants.¹³⁷ Walker was roughly twenty miles east of the capitol of Louisiana, Baton Rouge, meaning that Eula and other family members in Walker were not far from amenities not offered in Walker.¹³⁸

Like her children, Eula attended and graduated Walker High School.¹³⁹ At some point before 1940, Eula met and married **Herman Ellis Crotwell (1906-1979)**, and the two would have four children, **Nelda Crotwell (1933-)**, **Herman Ellis Crotwell Jr. (1936-2018)**, **Gloria Jean**

¹³⁴ Seal, interview, February 13, 2022.

¹³⁵ *Wikipedia*, "Walker, Louisiana."

¹³⁶ *Ibid*.

¹³⁷ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

¹³⁸ *Wikipedia*, "Walker, Louisiana."

¹³⁹ *Ibid*.

Crotwell (1936-2020), with the youngest two being twins.¹⁴⁰ According to Eula's daughter Nelda, having twins was very difficult for Eula and Herman, and they sent Nelda to live with family across the street until Gloria and Dalton were around two years old.

At some point between 1940 and 1950, Eula got a job working at the Walker Post Office as a clerk, a position she held for many years.¹⁴¹ During her children's childhood, her husband Herman began drinking and became an alcoholic.¹⁴² This may have caused Eula to take a job to earn money to provide for her family since her husband's employment was unstable. Once her children were grown, she divorced Herman sometime in the 1960s.¹⁴³

Eula's daughters periodically told younger family members that she was an excellent cook. She was also good at making ceramics and made items such as ceramic flower pictures for each of her children as well as Santa coffee mugs, which are currently in the possession of her great-granddaughter, Rebecca.¹⁴⁴ Faith was important to Eula, and she attended Walker Baptist Church with her children and her parents,

¹⁴⁰ "United States Census, 1940," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QSQ-G9MR-LS5F?cc=2000219&wc=QZXP-CJ2%3A790102701%2C790858801%2C790867601%2C790867602> : accessed 5 April 2022), Louisiana > Livingston > Police Jury Ward 2, Walker > 32-3 Police Jury Ward 2, Walker Village > image 2 of 16; citing Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, NARA digital publication T627. Records of the Bureau of the Census, 1790 - 2007, RG 29. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 2012.

¹⁴¹ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

¹⁴² Polk, personal knowledge.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

Mamie and Alvin. Several members of Rebecca's maternal family have attended Walker Baptist Church or were buried there, and the church was built in 1907.¹⁴⁵

After her youngest daughter, Gloria, moved to Virginia, Eula periodically visited her and her family until her health declined in the late 1980s.¹⁴⁶ In her 70s, she began to develop Alzheimer's disease but by the time of her death, it had not prevented her from living on her own.¹⁴⁷ She passed away from unknown causes on May 4, 1991, though her daughter Nelda has remarked they believe it may have been stomach cancer. She was buried in Walker Baptist Cemetery in Walker, Louisiana.¹⁴⁸

Herman Ellis Crotwell (1906-1979) was the father of Rebecca's maternal grandmother, Gloria. He was the oldest of two children born to **William Finch Crotwell (1874-1961)** and **Amanda Ella Barnett (1881-1910)**. A sister, **Mary Lottie Crotwell (1908-1989)**, was born prior to his mother's passing.¹⁴⁹ His father remarried after his mother's death resulting in two half siblings, **Ida Lee Crotwell (1914-unk)** and **Wardella Mardella Crotwell (1916-1998)**.¹⁵⁰ It is likely that Herman's

¹⁴⁵ Jill Malmberg (ministry assistant at Walker Baptist Church), phone conversation with Rebecca Polk, April 27, 2022.

¹⁴⁶ Graham, interview, April 3, 2022.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ *Find a Grave*, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/30793886/eula-crotwell> : accessed 12 April 2022), memorial page for Eula *Summers* Crotwell (13 Oct 1909-4 May 1991), Find a Grave Memorial ID 30793886, citing Walker Baptist Cemetery, Walker, Livingston Parish, Louisiana, USA; Maintained by Shirley Covington (contributor 46922360).

¹⁴⁹ "United States Census, 1910," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MPY4-R9N> : accessed 23 February 2022), Herman Crotwell in household of William Crotwell, Police Jury Ward 2, Livingston, Louisiana, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) ED 64, sheet 4A, family 68, NARA microfilm publication T624 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1982), roll 518; FHL microfilm 1,374,531.

¹⁵⁰ Seal, interview, March 15, 2021; *Find A Grave* database and images, (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/142882465/herman-ellis-crotwell> : accessed 5 April 2022), memorial page for Herman Ellis Crotwell Sr. (13 Mar 1906-13 Jun 1979), Find a Grave Memorial ID 142882465, citing Palmetto Cemetery, Walker, Livingston Parish, Louisiana, USA; Maintained by Kerry Keller (contributor 47943824)

childhood was difficult and emotional due to losing his mom at a young age as well as his stepmother.

In his youth, Herman demonstrated strong academic aptitude and could have gone to college but did not either for lack of desire or due to financial constraints.¹⁵¹ According to the 1930 census, Herman was a laborer who worked at an ice plant.¹⁵² At some point prior to 1940, Herman left his job at an ice plant and began working as a truck driver for a retail grocery store.¹⁵³ After working as a truck driver, Herman worked as a machinist and occasionally worked with his father-in-law, **Alvin Norris Summer (1875-1957)**, in a sugar cane factory.¹⁵⁴

When his children were young, Herman began drinking which led to him becoming an alcoholic. While it is not entirely clear why he began drinking, it was suspected by family that it was triggered by going out with friends to drink.¹⁵⁵ He made the lives of his family miserable due to his alcoholism and caused economic hardship on his family as a result. Gloria told her granddaughter, Rebecca, that he would get drunk every Friday after getting paid and would occasionally end up in jail, resulting in his father bailing him out. Herman and Eula separated and divorced when their children were young adults.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵¹ Seal, interview, March 15, 2021.

¹⁵² "United States Census, 1930," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XMYL-TJ8> : accessed 5 April 2022), Herman Crotwell in household of W F Crotwell, Walker, Livingston, Louisiana, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) ED 3, sheet 5A, line 8, family 80, NARA microfilm publication T626 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 2002), roll 798; FHL microfilm 2,340,533.

¹⁵³ 1940 U.S. census, *Family Search*, Livingston Parish., LA, pop. Sch., ED 3, sheet 1B, line 75, Eula Crotwell.

¹⁵⁴ Nelda Seal (sister of author's maternal grandmother), interview with Rebecca Polk, April 23, 2022.

¹⁵⁵ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

¹⁵⁶ Graham, interview, April 3, 2022.

Herman's alcoholism serves as a testament to how drastically alcoholism can change a person. His daughter, Nelda, once told the story of how when Herman was returning home one evening from work as a truck driver sometime in the late 1930s or 1940s, a man who had fallen on hard times asked him if he would buy a clock that had been in his family for years so he could afford food for his children. Herman said he couldn't because he had four little ones at home, and money was tight. Seeing the desperation in the man's eyes to feed his own children, Herman bought the old clock, to the dismay of his wife. Some family conversations and stories indicate he was an intelligent, hardworking person before alcoholism took its hold on him. However, most family stories remember him as the person he became, someone who got angry and yelled at family who visited him in a nursing home.¹⁵⁷

At some point after Herman and Eula divorced, Herman went to a nursing home due to his declining health.¹⁵⁸ He passed away from the residual effects of his alcoholism in a nursing home on June 13, 1973. He was buried in Palmetto Cemetery in Walker, Louisiana.¹⁵⁹

Sadie Estella Graham (1916-2007) was the mother of Rebecca's maternal grandfather, Joseph. She was born in Walker, Louisiana, on December 10, 1916, to **Russell Graham (1884-1967)** and **Estella Bernice Sibley (1888-1967)**.¹⁶⁰ She was one of fifth child born to the couple and

¹⁵⁷ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk; *Find a Grave*, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/142882465/herman-ellis-crotwell> : accessed 27 April 2022), memorial page for Herman Ellis Crotwell Sr. (13 Mar 1906–13 Jun 1979), Find a Grave Memorial ID 142882465, citing Palmetto Cemetery, Walker, Livingston Parish, Louisiana, USA ; Maintained by Kerry Keller (contributor 47943824).

¹⁶⁰ "United States Census, 1920", database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MQQB-QW7> : 1 February 2021), Estella B Grayham in entry for Russel E Grayham, 1920. (It should be noted this census misspells the Graham last name).

had two brothers: **Horace Russell Graham (1925-1995)** and **Albert Jackson Graham (1908-1994)**, and four sisters: **Lillie Graham (1906-deceased)**, **Mary Eliza Graham (1913-1983)**, and **Virginia Graham (1910-2002)**, and **Ruby Eloise Graham (1920-1921)**.

Sadie's mother died when she was eleven years old and according to family oral history, her father didn't know how to raise a child alone.¹⁶¹ As a result, she stayed with several different family members until she was 14 years old.¹⁶² Sadie married **Joseph Barnett Graham (1908-1985)** in 1931 when she was 14 years old and he was 22 years old.¹⁶³ Her son, **Joseph Louie Graham (1934-1994)**, was born three years later when she was 17 years old, and her daughter, **Janell Graham (1954-2017)**, was born twenty years later at the age of 37.¹⁶⁴

At some point after the birth of her son, Sadie began working as a hairdresser and had a room added to the house where she ran her shop, which she did for several years.¹⁶⁵ Sadie was also skilled at sewing and knitting, and made dresses, quilts, afghans, and Barbie doll clothing for her daughter Janell, granddaughters **Sonja Lynn Graham (1964-)** and **Charlotte Ann Graham (1960-2017)**, and great-granddaughter **Rebecca Ann Polk (1987-)**. Sadie gave Rebecca a handmade dress every year throughout elementary school, including one with a black and white horse print, as Sadie knew Rebecca was obsessed with horses at the time.

¹⁶¹ Joey Smith (cousin of the author), interview with Rebecca Polk, April 14, 2022.

¹⁶² Smith, interview, April 14, 2022.

¹⁶³ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

Two of Sadie's greatest passions in life were gardening and music. Sadie maintained several flowerbeds and took great pride in their maintenance. Sadie was also a gifted musician and she played guitar and sang. She would often record songs that she recalled hearing from others or during her childhood and wrote some of her own songs.¹⁶⁶ She would pass this love and talent for music onto her son Joseph, who proved to be an equally talented guitarist and the two would often play and sing together.¹⁶⁷

It is possible that one of the newspapers that Rebecca's maternal great-grandparents read in the early 1900s was *Sugar Planter*. It was published in West Baton Rouge, now called Port Allen, beginning in the mid-1800s and it was renamed *Port Allen Observer* in 1926.¹⁶⁸ The newspaper was still in publication as of March 2022, but under the title *The West Side Journal*.¹⁶⁹ Walker, where much of Rebecca's maternal side lived, was within twenty miles of Baton Rouge. Baton Rouge was the closest city to Walker, meaning locals may have relied on it more for state and national news. The *Sugar Planter* provided a range of information for readers including advertisements for ailments such as Eczema & colds, shops located in Louisiana and other states such as Kentucky and Ohio, local and national news, and as the name implies, agricultural news and articles.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ Graham, interview, April 3, 2022.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ "Sugar Planter," *Chronicling America: Library of Congress*, accessed February 22, 2022, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86079096/>.

¹⁶⁹ "About Us," *The West Side Journal*, accessed February 22, 2022, <https://www.thewestsidejournal.com/site/about.html>.

¹⁷⁰ *Sugar planter. [volume]* (West Baton Rouge [i.e., Port Allen, West Baton Rouge Parish, La.]), 13 Dec. 1919. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86079096/1919-12-13/ed-1/seq-3/>>

After Sadie's daughter got married, Janell and her husband Allan (unk-), built a house on the property behind Sadie and Joe's house.¹⁷¹ The property that Sadie and Joe's home sat on was part of a large piece of property, as it eventually accommodated three homes with enough space for yards and flower beds that sat a reasonable distance away from each home.¹⁷² The close proximity allowed for Sadie and her husband to spend significant time with their daughter, son-in-law Allan, and later grandson, **Joey Smith (1970-)**.¹⁷³

At some point after 2000, Sadie began displaying significant cognitive issues, and was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. Her daughter decided that the best thing for her was for her to live in a nursing home, and she moved to one in Baton Rouge.¹⁷⁴ Over the next few years, Rebecca's grandmother, **Gloria Jean Crotwell (1936-2020)**, would get news of her health fluctuating from doing very well to being close to death, and relay this to family. In March 2006, Gloria took Rebecca with her to Louisiana since she was on spring break, to see family and possibly visit Sadie for the last time before she died. During their visit, Rebecca was repeatedly called by her mother's name, and was instructed not to correct Sadie. At that time, Sadie believed she was living in the 1970s. Sadie passed away on November 24, 2007, at the

¹⁷¹ *Sugar Planter*, "Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers.

¹⁷² Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

age of 90.¹⁷⁵ She was buried at Walker Baptist Cemetery in Walker, Louisiana.¹⁷⁶

Joseph Barnett Graham (1908–1985) was the father of Rebecca's maternal grandfather, Joseph. He was born on July 1, 1908, in Walker, Louisiana, to **Newtown Jackson Graham (1862–1927)** and **Mary Ann Stafford (1862–1951)**.¹⁷⁷ Joseph had seven siblings: **Adnell Wilson Graham (1897–1961)**, **Theodore Cornelius Graham (1895–1962)**, **Louise Graham (1894–1981)**, **Abie Stella Graham (1901–1994)**, **Steve Graham (1900–1972)**, **David Graham (1893–1969)**, and **Isom Jackson Graham (1905–1986)**.¹⁷⁸ Joseph went by the nickname "Joe" and his three grandchildren called him "Paw-Paw Joe".¹⁷⁹

In 1930, when Joe was 21 years old, he was living with his parents and he listed his occupation as farmer, like his father, Newton.¹⁸⁰ In 1933, when Joe was 25 years old, he married **Sadie Estella Graham (1916–2007)**.¹⁸¹ Sadie and Joe were married for 52 years and had two children, **Joseph Louie Graham (1934–1994)** and **Janell Smith (1954–**

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ *Find a Grave*, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/23136221/sadie-graham> : accessed 14 April 2022), memorial page for Sadie Graham (10 Dec 1916–24 Nov 2007), Find a Grave Memorial ID 23136221, citing Walker Baptist Cemetery, Walker, Livingston Parish, Louisiana, USA ; Maintained by Rita Graves (contributor 46836288) .

¹⁷⁷ "United States Census, 1920", database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MQQB-M3P> : 1 February 2021), Joe Graham in entry for Newtown Graham, 1920; *Find a Grave*, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/111148538/joseph-b-graham> : accessed 14 April 2022), memorial page for Joseph B "Joe" Graham (1 Jul 1908–18 Feb 1985), Find a Grave Memorial ID 111148538, citing Walker Baptist Cemetery, Walker, Livingston Parish, Louisiana, USA ; Maintained by Kerry Keller (contributor 47943824) .

¹⁷⁸ Edward Livingston Historical Association: History Book Committee, *History of Livingston Parish, Louisiana* (Texas: Curtis Media Corp, 1986).

¹⁷⁹ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

¹⁸⁰ "United States Census, 1930," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XMYG-JZL> : accessed 28 April 2022), Joseph Graham in household of Mary Graham, Police Jury Ward 08, Livingston, Louisiana, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) ED 14, sheet 3A, line 21, family 39, NARA microfilm publication T626 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 2002), roll 798; FHL microfilm 2,340,533.

¹⁸¹ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

2017). Joe was a farmer and owned his own land according to the 1940 census.¹⁸² At some point after 1940 he quit farming and got a job as a machinist at a plant, which he did until retirement.¹⁸³

In figure 5.6 "Occupational Distribution of the Economically Active Population: Persons Age Twenty-Five to Sixty-Four," Fischer and Hout examine occupational trends of Farmers and Farm Laborers: Blue Collar and Service Workers, Professional, Clerical and Sales Works, and Managers and Proprietors, over a 100-year period. In examining this data, they note a trend where white-collar jobs grew as farming disappeared. The "Farmers and Farm Laborers" chart shows that roughly 28% of the working population, persons aged 25-64, were farmers, and an additional 8% were farm laborers. There is a notable downward trend that occurs for both metrics over the course of the next 100 years, with no upticks, which ends with roughly 3% of the population working as a farmer and 3% as a farm laborer in 2000.¹⁸⁴ Rebecca's great-grandfather, Joe, was a farmer in 1930, which was the occupation of 19% of the population, although he would not meet the 25-64 range until 1933.

Joe would leave farming sometime after 1940, and the Farmers and Farm Laborers chart shows a steep decline from 19% to 11% of the population working as a farmer. This could be due to several factors including economic factors, particularly those brought about by the

¹⁸² United States Census, 1940," databased with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QSQ-G9MR-LSTV?cc=2000219&wc=QZXP-HXD%3A790102701%2C790858801%2C790109001%2C790858802> : accessed 14 April 2022), Louisiana > Livingston > Police Jury Ward 1 > 32-1 Police Jury Ward 1 > image 8 of 44; citing Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, NARA digital publication T627. Records of the Bureau of the Census, 1790 – 2007, RG 29. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 2012.

¹⁸³ Graham, interview, April 3, 2022.

¹⁸⁴ Fischer and Hout, *Century of Difference; How America Changed in the Last One Hundred Years*, 109.

Great Depression, the onset of World War II, and other job opportunities that presented more value to individuals. After 1940, Joe took a blue-collar job as a laborer, along with 39% of the population aged 25-64 at the time.

Joe and Sadie began attending Walker Baptist Church after their son, Joseph, began dating his future wife, Gloria.¹⁸⁵ Prior to that, they were not active members of any church.¹⁸⁶ Joe passed away on February 18, 1985, at the age of 76, from an infection that occurred after he had gallbladder surgery.¹⁸⁷ Joe was buried in Walker Baptist Cemetery in Walker, Louisiana.¹⁸⁸

Amanda Elizabeth Reid (1905-1985) was the mother of Rebecca's paternal grandmother, Evelyn. She was born on May 19, 1905, in Moore's Store, Virginia, to **Noah James Reid (1884-1971)** and **Mary Ellen Weatherholtz (1889-1957)**.¹⁸⁹ Amanda had three siblings: **Floyd Houston Reid (1907-1980)**, **Guy Miller Reid (1910-1992)**, and **Pauline Virginia Reid (1917-1976)**.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁵ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Joey Smith, text message to Rebecca Polk, April 27, 2022.

¹⁸⁸ "Joseph B "Joe" Graham," *Find a Grave*, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/111148538/joseph-b-graham>.

¹⁸⁹ "United States Census, 1910," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MPGD-RRY> : accessed 23 February 2022), Amanda E Reid in household of Noah J Reid, Lee, Shenandoah, Virginia, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) ED 92, sheet 10B, family 200, NARA microfilm publication T624 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1982), roll 1648; FHL microfilm 1,375,661.

¹⁹⁰ "United States Census, 1920," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33SQ-GRV8-9MJ5?cc=1488411&wc=QZJB-CC6%3A1038215501%2C1039703501%2C1036505301%2C1589332542> : 14 September 2019), Virginia > Shenandoah > Lee > ED 114 > image 12 of 34; citing NARA microfilm publication T625 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).

Amanda grew up in Moore's Store, a rural village which was located along Holman's Creek near Quicksburg, Virginia. Prior to her beginning school, the local school, Abram Knupp Land, was destroyed by a fire, which prompted the construction of a new school, Jones School, in 1911.¹⁹¹ According to a photo, Amanda attended school here in 1912 with at least 31 other students who were taught by one teacher, Robert Getz.¹⁹² In 1925 at the age of 19, she married **Luther Edward Baker (1904-1989)** and the two would have five children, **Gladys Virginia Baker (1926-2010)**, **Nellie Frances Baker (1928-1985)**, **Helen Edith Baker (1936-)**, **Floyd Edward Baker (1934-2019)**, and **Evelyn Pauline Baker (1939-2019)**.¹⁹³

In Figure 4.3 "Number of Births over a Lifetime, by Year of Prime Childbearing Age," Fischer and Hout examine 4-year samples of data of the number of children women had across four periods: 1900-1904, 1935-1939, 1960 to 1964 and 1985, which are shown on four separate charts.¹⁹⁴ Fischer and Hout further breakdown this data by showing the number of children born and the percentage of women who had that many children. Their charts also demonstrate that women converged on having two children, showing that between 1985-1989, the mean number of children born to a woman was 1.93. Amanda and her husband Luther had five children by 1939, as their youngest child Evelyn, was born that year.

¹⁹¹ Joseph Floyd Wine, *Life Along Holman's Creek* (Stephens City: Commercial Press, 1985), 151.

¹⁹² Wine, *Life Along Holman's Creek*, 151.

¹⁹³ "United States Census, 1930," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:CN28-Z3Z>; accessed 28 April 2022), Amanda Baker in household of Luther Baker, Ashby Magisterial District, Shenandoah, Virginia, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) ED 3, sheet 1A, line 29, family 8, NARA microfilm publication T626 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 2002), roll 2460; FHL microfilm 2,342,194.

¹⁹⁴ Fischer and Hout, *Century of Difference; How America Changed in the Last One Hundred Years*, 66.

The chart for 1934–1939 shows that roughly 5% of women had five children whereas 65% had 0–2 children during this time frame.

Amanda was a housewife her entire life, based on census records in 1930 which listed her occupation as 'home', Amanda's death certificate listing her occupation as 'housewife', as well as family oral history.¹⁹⁵ Due to her health declining in later life, Amanda was unable to live with her husband, Luther, and moved to a nursing home.¹⁹⁶ Amanda passed away at the age of 79 on January 21, 1985, from respiratory arrest.¹⁹⁷ She was buried at Christ Reformed Church Cemetery in Conicville, Virginia, where her husband Luther would be buried almost exactly four years later.¹⁹⁸

Luther Edward Baker (1904–1989) was the father of Rebecca's paternal grandmother, Evelyn. He was born on February 18, 1904, in Virginia.¹⁹⁹ He was born to **James Franklin Baker (1870–1934)** and **Annie Jenetta Rupert (1873–1919)**.²⁰⁰ He was likely born in Ashby, Virginia, since the 1900 census listed this as where his parents lived, and the

¹⁹⁵ "United States Census, 1930," *FamilySearch*, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:CN28-Z3Z>.

¹⁹⁶ Kevin Polk, interview, February 24, 2022.

¹⁹⁷ "Virginia, Death Certificates, 1912–1987," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C9RD-NS63?cc=2377565> : 20 August 2018), > image 1 of 1; from "Virginia, Marriage Records, 1700–1850," database and images, Ancestry (<http://www.ancestry.com> : 2012); citing Virginia Department of Health, Richmond.

¹⁹⁸ *Find a Grave*, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/62564329/amanda-e-baker> : accessed 16 April 2022), memorial page for Amanda E Reid Baker (19 May 1905–21 Jan 1985), Find a Grave Memorial ID 62564329, citing Christ Reformed Church Cemetery, Conicville, Shenandoah County, Virginia, USA ; Maintained by Gathering Roots (contributor 47213048).

¹⁹⁹ *Find a Grave*, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/62564337/luther-edward-baker> : accessed 16 April 2022), memorial page for Luther Edward Baker (18 Feb 1904–12 Jan 1989), Find a Grave Memorial ID 62564337, citing Christ Reformed Church Cemetery, Conicville, Shenandoah County, Virginia, USA ; Maintained by Shock (contributor 47473371).

²⁰⁰ "United States Census, 1910," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MPGD-3QS> : accessed 28 April 2022), Luther E Baker in household of Frank Baker, Ashby, Shenandoah, Virginia, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) ED 86, sheet 7B, family 130, NARA microfilm publication T624 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1982), roll 1648; FHL microfilm 1,375,661.

1910 census listed Luther as living in Ashby.²⁰¹ Luther's teenage years were likely difficult as his mother died when he was 15 years old. Luther had at least eight siblings: **William Cornelius Baker (1891-1977)**, **Ella Florence Baker (1893-1975)**, **Ollie Arbela Baker (1898-1969)**, **Charles Lester Baker (1900-1967)**, **Bertha Bedelia Baker (1906-1987)**, **Medford Ray Baker (1909-1992)**, **Oscar Baker (1912-unk)**, and **Jane Baker (1918-unk)**. Luther married **Amanda Elizabeth Reid (1905-1985)** in 1925 at the age of 21.²⁰² Luther and Amanda would have five children who all survived to adulthood.²⁰³

Rebecca's paternal grandmothers' parents, Luther and Amanda, may have read the *Edinburg Sentinel and Valley Advertiser*, which was published between November 1893-1918.²⁰⁴ It was later renamed and published as the *Edinburg Sentinel*.²⁰⁵ While it ceased production when Amanda and Luther were teenagers, they may have seen it in their households as a newspaper their parents read and that they themselves read, for local news and advertisements. One interesting aspect of these newspapers is that they provided a significant number of advertisements for local banks, local town gossip, and entertainment options for all ages such as the Dixie Theater.²⁰⁶ The Dixie Theater is

²⁰¹ "United States Census, 1900," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HT-6737-4P4?cc=1325221&wc=9B7Q-9LT%3A1030552301%2C1034321801%2C1034324101> : 5 August 2014), Virginia > Shenandoah > ED 72 Ashby District (west part) Mount Clifton village > image 10 of 40; citing NARA microfilm publication T623 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.); "United States Census, 1910," *FamilySearch*,

²⁰² "United States Census, 1930," *FamilySearch*, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:CN28-Z3Z>.

²⁰³ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

²⁰⁴ "Edinburg Sentinel and Advertiser," *Chronicling America: Library of Congress*, accessed February 23, 2022, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn94060209/>.

²⁰⁵ "Edinburg Sentinel and Advertiser," *Chronicling America: Library of Congress*.

²⁰⁶ *Edinburg Sentinel and Valley Advertiser*. [volume 22, Number 48] (Edinburg, Virginia), 16 September 1915. *Virginia Chronicle: Library of Virginia*. < <https://viriniachronicle.com/?a=d&d=ESVA19150916.1.1&e=---en-20--1--txt-txIN----->>

permanently closed and is in downtown Staunton but may have been a special family outing for Luther and his family as Staunton was within an hour's drive of where Amanda and Luther grew up.²⁰⁷

Luther worked as a carpenter starting as a young age and was likely taught by his father, who was also a carpenter.²⁰⁸ For unknown reasons, he switched careers and began working in trucking as a hauler sometime before 1940.²⁰⁹ He only did this temporarily, as he switched back to carpentry for the remainder of his life, as family always knew him as working as a carpenter.²¹⁰

In his later years, Luther went to live in a nursing home due to declining health which prevented him from living on his own.²¹¹ His wife, Amanda, moved to a nursing home prior to her passing.²¹² Luther passed away at the age of 84 on January 12, 1989, in Woodstock, Virginia, and was buried at Christ Reformed Church Cemetery in Conicville, Virginia.²¹³

Esther Marie Heltzel (1916-2006) is the mother of Rebecca's paternal grandfather, Allen. She was born on November 2, 1916, in Madison, Virginia, to **Perry Lee Heltzel (1890-1980)** and **Grace Vietta**

²⁰⁷ Personal Knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ "United States Census, 1940," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QSQ-G9MR-7W9M?cc=2000219&wc=QZXG-DJ3%3A794217401%2C799848401%2C799664401%2C799859401> : accessed 16 April 2022), Virginia > Shenandoah > Ashby Magisterial District > 86-4 Ashby Magisterial District E of road 611 and W of State Road 260 > image 8 of 14; citing Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, NARA digital publication T627. Records of the Bureau of the Census, 1790 - 2007, RG 29. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 2012.

²¹⁰ Kevin Polk, interview, February 24, 2022.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ "Luther Edward Baker," *Find a Grave*, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/62564337/luther-edward-baker>.

Heishman (1893-1955).²¹⁴ Esther was the oldest child born to Perry and Grace and had eight siblings: **Clifton Lee Heltzel (1918-1918)**, **Bessie May Heltzel (1919-2004)**, **Kathleen Elizabeth Heltzel (1922-1923)**, **Roy Franklin Heltzel (1926-unk)**, **Earl Grant Heltzel (1928-2022)**, **Renetta Florence Heltzel (1929-2003)**, **Russell Alan Heltzel (1924-1924)**, and an unnamed sister who was stillborn.²¹⁵

Esther married **Stanley Woodrow Polk (1912-1975)**, who also lived in Madison, sometime between 1930 and 1940, likely before 1935, as the 1940 census shows her as married with three children; the oldest of whom was five years old in 1940.²¹⁶ Esther and Stanley had eight children: **Doris Dale Polk (1938-1995)**, **Sylvia Jean Polk (1939-)**, **Anna Mae Polk (1945-1945)**, **Allen Lee Polk(1937-2004)**, **Eugene Woodrow Polk (1934-2016)**, **Lewis Nagel Polk (1935-2015)**, **Lorraine Polk (1947-)**, and **Edward Thomas Polk (1941-)**.²¹⁷ Esther and Stanley's daughter Anna

²¹⁴ "United States Census, 1920," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9RV8-15N?cc=1488411&wc=QZJB-CTV%3A1038215501%2C1039703501%2C1036542701%2C1589332482> : 14 September 2019), Virginia > Shenandoah > Madison > ED 117 > image 16 of 26; citing NARA microfilm publication T625 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).

²¹⁵ "United States Census, 1930," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:CNPV-8ZM> : accessed 29 April 2022), Ester M Heltzel in household of Perry L Heltzel, Madison Magisterial District, Shenandoah, Virginia, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) ED 18, sheet 3B, line 53, family 66, NARA microfilm publication T626 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 2002), roll 2460; FHL microfilm 2,342,194.

²¹⁶ 1930 United States Census," *Family Search*, ED 18, sheet 3B, line 53, family 66, Esther Marie Heltzel; "United States Census, 1940," database with images, *FamilySearch* ("United States Census, 1940," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VR1H-8KH?from=lynx1UIV8&treeref=KLM4-3JJ> : accessed 28 April 2022), Virginia > Shenandoah > Madison Magisterial District > 86-22 Madison Magisterial District N of State Road 261 and W of State Road 260, Jerome (part) > image 6 of 25; citing Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, NARA digital publication T627. Records of the Bureau of the Census, 1790 - 2007, RG 29. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 2012.

²¹⁷ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

was a "blue baby", meaning she was dead at birth due to lack of oxygen.²¹⁸ Anna Mae's death had a profound impact on the family, especially Esther, who took great strides to ensure she was remembered. Announcements within the family, such as obituaries and marriage announcements always included her, and Esther would mention her in conversations.²¹⁹

At some point after 1940, Stanley, who was a farmer, bought several acres of land in Columbia Furnace near a Methodist church, and the family moved from Madison to Columbia Furnace.²²⁰ It is unclear what prompted the move, though Stanley had been born in the neighboring town of Edinburg.²²¹ The farm in Columbia Furnace would eventually have a silo, large red barn, butcher house, several fields for cattle grazing and crop growing, sheds and a chicken coop. Once their children were grown, Esther and her husband had them and their eventual children over for dinners on Sundays.²²² Esther was a housewife her entire life.²²³

After Esther's husband died in 1975, she rented the family farm to one of her sons, **Allen Lee Polk (1937-2004)**, and his son, **Kevin Lee Polk (1959-)**. Since Allen and Kevin had four separate farms and nicknamed each, they nicknamed Esther and Stanley's farm "Grandma Polk's farm." In the 1990s, Kevin's daughter, Rebecca, would occasionally

²¹⁸ "Virginia, Death Certificates, 1912-1987," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C9PB-963S?cc=2377565> : 20 August 2018), > image 1 of 1; from "Virginia, Marriage Records, 1700-1850," database and images, *Ancestry* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : 2012); citing Virginia Department of Health, Richmond.

²¹⁹ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

²²¹ 1930 United States Census," *Family Search*, ED 18, sheet 3B, line 53, family 66, Esther Marie Heltzel.

²²² *Ibid.*

²²³ *Ibid.*

visit the farm with her family. She would often visit Esther as a result, who would use the time to tell family stories.

In 1999, due to Esther's declining health, Rebecca spent part of the summer helping Esther around the house, while listening to stories about farming and Esther's siblings. Rebecca and Esther would also watch Wheel of Fortune and Jeopardy together during lunch, as Esther enjoyed both shows.²²⁴ In the fall of that year, Esther's health declined further, and it was decided by family she could not live on her own anymore and needed to live in a nursing home. Due to the cost of the nursing home Esther was going to, all her belongings and farm were sold so she could afford to stay there. Allen asked to buy the farm directly from his mother since he had been renting it for over 20 years, but Esther declined. Rebecca attended the auction along with her mother and grandmother, Evelyn, and bought a few items including ceramics and furniture.²²⁵ Esther lived in a nursing home for roughly six years until her death in 2006 at the age of 89 due to natural causes.²²⁶ She was buried at Sunset View Memorial Gardens in Woodstock, Virginia, next to her husband.²²⁷

Stanley Woodrow Polk (1912–1975) was the father of Rebecca's paternal grandfather, Allen. He was born on July 6, 1912, in Edinburg, Virginia to **Thomas Gideon Polk (1887–1930)** and **Martha Jane Hottel**

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ *Find a Grave*, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/170913023/esther-marie-polk> : accessed 16 April 2022), memorial page for Esther Marie *Heltzel* Polk (2 Nov 1916–28 Feb 2006), Find a Grave Memorial ID 170913023, citing Sunset View Memorial Gardens, Woodstock, Shenandoah County, Virginia, USA ; Maintained by JeMM (contributor 47174080) .

(1870-1919).²²⁸ He was the ninth child born to Thomas and Martha, and had nine siblings: **Annie Ellen Polk (1898-1979)**, **Rodney Lloyd Polk (1901-1962)**, **Lestie Mae Polk (1903-1998)**, **Oliver Cromwell Polk (1904-1984)**, **Edgar Lee Polk (1906-1907)**, **Mary Edna Polk (1906-1974)**, **Roy Franklin Polk (1908-1909)**, **Julia Polk (1910-deceased)**, and **Earl Hope Polk (1914-2007)**.²²⁹ At some point between 1912 and 1920, Stanley's family moved to Madison, Virginia.²³⁰ The move may have been motivated by the death of Stanley's mother, who died when Stanley was six years old. Stanley's father would die when he was 18 years old.

Sometime between 1930 and 1940, Stanley met his future wife, **Es-ther Marie Heltzel (1916-2006)**, while living in Madison, and the two would likely get married prior to 1935, based on the 1940 census.²³¹ Stanley purchased farmland in Columbia Furnace, which was very close to where he was born in Edinburg, sometime after 1940, and moved there with his family. Stanley was a farmer his entire life.²³²

On Saturday, December 13, 1975, several members of the family were over for dinner. At one point during the evening, Stanley said he needed to go feed the cows and would be back. When a significant amount of time passed and he did not return, one of his grandsons went to go check on him. Stanley's grandson found him in the barn sitting

²²⁸ "United States Census, 1930," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:CNGW-26Z> : accessed 23 February 2022), Stanly W Polk in household of Thomas J Polk, Madison Magisterial District, Shenandoah, Virginia, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) ED 18, sheet 10B, line 60, family 240, NARA microfilm publication T626 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 2002), roll 2460; FHL microfilm 2,342,194; Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

²²⁹ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

²³⁰ "United States Census, 1920", database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MJVS-R2T> : 4 February 2021), Stanley Polk in entry for Thomas G Polk, 1920.

²³¹ 1940 United States Census," *FamilySearch*, Madison County, Virginia, pop. sch., ED 86-22, sheet 3B, fam. 45, line 46, Stanley Wood Polk.

²³² Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

against one of the barn doors, dead from a heart attack at the age of 63.²³³

GENERATION FIVE

- Ala1a1. Mamie E. Miller (1887-1972)
- Ala1a2. Alvin Norris Summers (1875-1957)

- Ala1b1. Amanda Ella Barnett (1881-1910)
- Ala1b2. William Finch Crotwell (1874-1961)

- Ala2a1. Estella Bernice Sibley (1888-1927)
- Ala2a2. Russell Edward Graham (1884-1967)

- Ala2b1. Mary Ann Stafford (1862-1951)
- Ala2b2. Newton Jackson Graham (1862-1927)

- Alb1a1. Mary Ellen Weatherholtz (1889-1957)
- Alb1a2. Noah James Reid (1884-1971)

- Alb1b1. Annie Jenetta Rupert (1873-1919)
- Alb1b2. James Franklin Baker (1870-1934)

- Alb2a1. Grace Vietta Heishman (1893-1955)
- Alb2a2. Perry Lee Heltzel (1890-1980)

- Alb2b1. Martha Jane Hottel (1870-1919)
- Alb2b2. Thomas Gideon Polk (1873-1930)

Mamie E. Miller (1887-1972) was the mother of Rebecca's maternal grandmother's mother, Eula. Family is unsure what Mamie's middle name was, but it started with an 'E' according to the 1920 census.²³⁴ Eula

²³³ Kevin Polk (father of the author), interview with Rebecca Polk, February 20, 2022.

²³⁴ "United States Census, 1920," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9RX2-DK7?cc=1488411&wc=QZJR-Z9Z%3A1036471301%2C1037459801%2C1036478301%2C1589332652> : 11 September 2019), Louisiana > Livingston > Police Jury Ward 2 > ED 69 > image 1 of 8; citing NARA microfilm publication T625 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.); Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

was the daughter of **Louisiana Narcissa Cockerham (1846-1915)** and **William Jackson Miller (1845-1921)**.²³⁵ She had two siblings: **William Christopher Miller (1880-1956)**, who went by his middle name Chris, and **Oquilla Coula Miller (1876-1953)**.²³⁶

Mamie's family grew up in the Hebron community, which was located five to six miles south of Walker and in present day Denham Springs.²³⁷ Mamie's father was a farmer.²³⁸ Sometime before she was 23 years old, Mamie met and married **Alvin Norris Summers (1875-1957)**.²³⁹ The two would have three children together.

Mamie only completed school up to 5th or 6th grade, as the area she grew up in was rural, and it was common that girls were only taught up to that age during that period of time.²⁴⁰ This is compatible with data in *Century of Difference* as Figure 2.2 "High School Graduation Rates for All and by Gender, Region, and Racial Ancestry, by Year Person Turned Twenty-One."²⁴¹ According to the gender chart, around 23% of women aged 21 in 1910 had graduated high school, and 23% of individuals living in the south had. It can be inferred that since Mamie

²³⁵ "United States Census, 1900," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HY-6QR9-47K?cc=1325221&wc=9BWM-VZV%3A1030552101%2C1032409601%2C1032418301> : 5 August 2014), Louisiana > Livingston > ED 58 Wards 3, 7 > image 31 of 37; citing NARA microfilm publication T623 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.); *Find a Grave*, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/42752225/william-j-miller> : accessed 16 April 2022), memorial page for William J Miller (14 Feb 1845–26 Dec 1921), Find a Grave Memorial ID 42752225, citing Hebron Baptist Cemetery, Denham Springs, Livingston Parish, Louisiana, USA ; Maintained by Jerry Biggs (contributor 46959146) .

²³⁶ Seal, interview, April 23, 2022.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ "United States Census, 1910," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MPY4-HB8> : accessed 16 April 2022), Minnie Summers in household of Alvin Summers, Police Jury Ward 2, Livingston, Louisiana, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) ED 64, sheet 2A, family 33, NARA microfilm publication T624 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1982), roll 518; FHL microfilm 1,374,531.

²⁴⁰ "United States Census, 1910," *FamilySearch*, <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MPY4-HB8>.

²⁴¹ Fisher and Hout, *Century of Difference: How America Changed in the Last One Hundred Years*, 13.

was 21 in 1908, the data in 1910 is comparable, thus it was not unusual that Mamie was not a high school graduate.

Only attending school until 5th or 6th grade did not hold Mamie back from being a vicarious reader. According to her granddaughter, Nelda, Mamie read as often as she could and would read anything she could get her hands on. Mamie was highly respected in her community and church, Walker Baptist Church.²⁴² She was viewed as a Bible scholar, read the Bible every day, and taught Sunday School to seniors.²⁴³

Mamie passed away in 1872 at the age of 84 or 85.²⁴⁴ Family alive in April 2022 are unsure of her exact date of death, or her cause of death.²⁴⁵ She was buried at Hebron Baptist Cemetery in Denham Springs, Louisiana.²⁴⁶

Alvin Norris Summers (1875-1957) was the father of Rebecca's maternal grandmothers' mother, Eula. He was born in Denham Springs, Louisiana, and was the son of **Missouri Loucadia Lee (1849-1945)** and **Franklin Pierce Summers (1853-1936)**.²⁴⁷ Alvin was the third born of eight which included **Henry Jefferson Hugh Summer (1874-1898)**, **Almon Doris Summers (1875-1955)**, **Anna Belle Summers (1877-1882)**, **Charles**

²⁴² Seal, interview, April 23, 2022.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ *Find a Grave*, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/42752338/mamie-m-summers> : accessed 16 April 2022), memorial page for Mamie M Summers (1887-1972), Find a Grave Memorial ID 42752338, citing Hebron Baptist Cemetery, Denham Springs, Livingston Parish, Louisiana, USA ; Maintained by Jerry Biggs (contributor 46959146).

²⁴⁵ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

²⁴⁶ "Mamie M Summers," *Find a Grave*.

²⁴⁷ "United States Census, 1880," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MD6Y-BDY> : 14 January 2022), Alvin Summers in household of Franklin P. Summers, Police Jury Ward 7, Livingston, Louisiana, United States; citing enumeration district , sheet , NARA microfilm publication T9 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.), FHL microfilm.; Preliminary research shows that 'Police Jury Ward' referred to what became Denham Springs.

Carue Summers (1878-1955), Alancie Goss Summers (1881-1960), Adrian Claude Summers (1881-1955), and Jabus Harnet Summers (1883-1974). Alvin's mother, Missouri, went by her nickname "Kate" and her grandchildren called her "Grandma Kate."²⁴⁸

At some point before 1910, when Alvin was 35, he met and married his wife, **Mamie E. Miller (1887-1972)**. Alvin and Mamie had three children together, including **Eula Gladys Summers (1909-1991)**. Alvin was a farmer and grew strawberries on a relatively large farm for several years.²⁴⁹ Since growing strawberries is seasonal, Alvin worked in a sugarcane factory during the winter months.²⁵⁰ His job initially at the sugarcane factory was to tend to the fires and he was eventually promoted to supervisor of the sugarcane factory.²⁵¹ At some point, he changed his seasonal job at the sugarcane factory and began working part-time at a nearby mental hospital.²⁵² He worked there part-time for a few years before being offered full-time employment, at which point he retired from farming.²⁵³ Alvin worked at the mental hospital for twenty or so years.²⁵⁴ Although his exact role isn't known, his granddaughter Nelda recalls that the hospital helped individuals who had nervous breakdowns, anxiety, and similar ailments.

²⁴⁸ Seal, interview, February 13, 2022.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

Alvin died sometime in 1957 at the age of 81 or 82, as an exact date of death is not known.²⁵⁵ He was buried in Hebron Baptist Cemetery in Denham Springs, Louisiana.²⁵⁶ His wife, Mamie, would be buried alongside him several years later in 1972.

Amanda Ella Barnett (1881-1910) was the mother of Rebecca's maternal grandmother's father, Herman.²⁵⁷ She was born in Livingston Parish, Louisiana, and was the daughter of **Jhillum Barnett (1833-1918)** and **Abitha Amanda Albritton (1849-1881)**.²⁵⁸ Amanda's mother, Abitha, appears to have died of complications after giving birth to Amanda on November 4, 1881, due to her death occurring a few days after Amanda's birth.²⁵⁹ Amanda had at least five brothers, and her father remarried at some point afterwards.²⁶⁰

Amanda died in her early 20s, possibly from influenza according to her granddaughter, Nelda. As discussed in *Made in America* by Claude Fischer, it was not until after WWI that the typical mother would see her children reach adulthood.²⁶¹ This proved true for Amanda and her

²⁵⁵ *Find a Grave*, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/42752336/alvin-summers> : accessed 17 April 2022), memorial page for Alvin Summers (1875–1957), Find a Grave Memorial ID 42752336, citing Hebron Baptist Cemetery, Denham Springs, Livingston Parish, Louisiana, USA ; Maintained by Jerry Biggs (contributor 46959146) .

²⁵⁶ "Alvin Summers," *Find a Grave*.

²⁵⁷ Seal, interview with the author, February 13, 2022.

²⁵⁸ "United States Census, 1900," database with images, FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MS58-QY5> : accessed 17 April 2022), Ella Barnett in household of Jhillum Barnett, Wards 2, 9, Livingston, Louisiana, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) 57, sheet 6B, family 113, NARA microfilm publication T623 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1972.); FHL microfilm 1,240,568.

²⁵⁹ *Find a Grave*, database and image (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/39977133/abitha-amanda-barnett>: accessed 21 February 2022), memorial page for Abitha Amanda "Abi" Albritton Barnett (11 Mar 1849-14 Nov 1881), Find a Grave Memorial ID 39977133, citing Amite Baptist Church Cemetery Old, Denham Springs, Livingston Parish, Louisiana, USA; Maintained by Jim Lee (contributor 46942055); "United States Census, 1900," *FamilySearch*, <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MS58-QY5>.

²⁶⁰ 1900 United States Census" *FamilySearch*, Livingston Parish, LA, pop. sch., ED 57, sheet B6, line 78, "Ella Barnett".

²⁶¹ Fischer, *Made in America: A Social History of American Culture and Character*, 18.

mother Abitha, who died before the onset of World War I and died before their children reached adulthood. In the case of both sides of Rebecca's family born after World War I, nearly every mother lived to see at least her children reach adulthood, if not her grandchildren and great-grandchildren reach adulthood.

William Finch Crotwell (1874-1961) was the father of Rebecca's maternal grandmother's father, Herman.²⁶² He was born in Scott, Mississippi, on February 1, 1874, to **Uriah C. Crotwell (1833-1886)** and **Caroline Adeline Ellis (1842-1922)**.²⁶³ He had an identical twin brother, **Addison Baugh Crotwell (1874-1964)**.²⁶⁴ According to a family story, the two were so much alike in mannerisms and looks that when Addison came to his brother William's funeral, someone passed out thinking it was him back from the grave.²⁶⁵ William had fourteen additional siblings, though not all of his siblings survived to adulthood.

William married his first wife, **Amanda Ella Barnett (1881-1910)**, sometime after 1900 when she was 19, as she was listed as single according to the census that year.²⁶⁶ William and Amanda had two children, **Herman Ellis Crotwell (1906-1979)** and **Mary Lottie Crotwell**

²⁶² *Find a Grave*, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/42724516/william-f-crotwell> : accessed 17 April 2022), memorial page for William F Crotwell (1 Feb 1874–16 Mar 1961), Find a Grave Memorial ID 42724516, citing Palmetto Cemetery, Walker, Livingston Parish, Louisiana, USA ; Maintained by Jerry Biggs (contributor 46959146).

²⁶³ Ibid; "United States Census, 1880," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M4PS-NHY> : 14 January 2022), W.f. Crotwell in household of Uriah Crotwell, Beat 3, Scott, Mississippi, United States; citing enumeration district , sheet , NARA microfilm publication T9 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.), FHL microfilm.

²⁶⁴ Seal, interview, February 13, 2022.

²⁶⁵ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

²⁶⁶ "United States Census, 1900," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MS58-QY5> : accessed 17 April 2022), Ella Barnett in household of Jhilliam Barnett, Wards 2, 9, Livingston, Louisiana, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) 57, sheet 6B, family 113, NARA microfilm publication T623 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1972.); FHL microfilm 1,240,568.

(1908-1989). Amanda died in 1910, leaving him widowed with two young children.²⁶⁷

After Amanda died, William struggled to manage by himself due to having a sizable farm and two young children.²⁶⁸ As a result, he hired a woman to help him manage his house and care for his children.²⁶⁹ Around a year or so later, William met and married **Sarah Ellen Felps (1894-1917)**.²⁷⁰ Together the couple had two children, **Ida Lee Crotwell (1914-??)** and **Wardella Mardella Crotwell (1916-1998)**.²⁷¹ Sarah died in 1917, likely due to influenza.²⁷² William did not remarry after Sarah's death.²⁷³

William was called "Poppa Will" by his grandkids. His granddaughters Gloria and Nelda often said that William was a respected man in the community, who went out of his way to do the right thing.²⁷⁴ His son, Herman caused his family considerable stress due to his alcoholism, and William would often intervene, be it to reprimand him or get him out of jail.²⁷⁵ William's farm and house were behind the house where Herman and his family lived.²⁷⁶

²⁶⁷ Seal, interview, February 13, 2022.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ *Find a Grave*, database with images (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/42724516/william-f-crotwell>: accessed 22 February 2022), memorial page for William F Crotwell (1 Feb 1874-16 Mar 1961), Find a Grave Memorial ID 42724516 citing Palmetto Cemetery, Walker, Livingston Parish, Louisiana, USA; Maintained by Jerry Biggs (contributor 46959146); "United States, GenealogyBank Historical Newspaper Obituaries, 1815-2011", database, *FamilySearch*(<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q5MN-77YZ> : 18 July 2020), Herman E SR, 1979.

²⁷² Seal, interview, February 13, 2022.

²⁷³ *Find a Grave*, William F Crotwell; Seal, interview, February 13, 2022.

²⁷⁴ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Seal, interview, April 23, 2022.

William was a very successful farmer and had one of the biggest farms in Livingston Parish.²⁷⁷ William was a farmer his entire life and he grew a variety of crops on his farm, including cotton and corn.²⁷⁸ William had four Satsuma orange trees which was a testament to his wealth, as they were very expensive in the 1930s and 1940s.²⁷⁹ His granddaughters Nelda and Gloria often recounted that he loved sharing the oranges with his grandchildren when they were ripe. Whenever they were ripe, he would come to his grandchildren's house and say "come on kiddies, the oranges are ready" then take them back to his house.²⁸⁰

William died at the age of 87 on March 16, 1961, of unknown causes. He was buried at Palmetto Cemetery in Walker, Louisiana, next to his second wife, Sarah.²⁸¹

Estella Bernice Sibley (1888-1927) was the mother of Rebecca's maternal grandfather's mother, Sadie.²⁸² Estella was born on February 24, 1888, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, to **Mary Roxanna McKnight (1855-1942)** and **Albert Grey Sibley (1850-1889)**. Her parents had at least five children together: **Charles Thomas Sibley (1874-1930)**, **Walter Estel Sibley (1874-1937)**, **Louise Elizabeth Sibley (1877-1965)**, **Albert**

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ "William F Crotwell," *Find a Grave*.

²⁸² *Find a Grave*, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/30766736/estella-graham> : accessed 17 April 2022), memorial page for Estella Sibley Graham (24 Feb 1888–29 May 1967), Find a Grave Memorial ID 30766736, citing Friendship United Methodist Church Cemetery, Livingston Parish, Louisiana, USA ; Maintained by Shirley Covington (contributor 46922360) .

Louis Sibley (1879-1959), and **Zella Sibley (1880-1980)**. Estella's father died when she was only one year old.²⁸³ By 1900, Mary had remarried Albert's brother, **George Abner Sibley (1849-1919)**.²⁸⁴ Estella usually went by her nickname "Stella".

Estella met and married **Russell Edward Graham (1884-1967)** sometime before 1910, as they are listed as married with two children in the 1910 census.²⁸⁵ Estella and Russell would have six children together who survived to adulthood, with an additional un-named child who died in 1922.²⁸⁶ Estella died at the age of 39 of unknown causes and was buried at Friendship United Methodist Church Cemetery in Walker, Louisiana.²⁸⁷

Russell Edward Graham (1884-1967) was the father of Rebecca's maternal grandfather's mother, Sadie. He was born on November 4, 1884, in Walker, Louisiana, to **Ebeneza Jackson Graham (1854-1929)** and **Virginia Susan Sibley (1859-1928)**.²⁸⁸ He was one of at least twelve children born to the couple and family has indicated "there were a lot of

²⁸³ "United States Census, 1900," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HY-6QR9-C5T?cc=1325221&wc=9BWM-VZF%3A1030552101%2C1032409601%2C1032409602> : 5 August 2014), Louisiana > Livingston > ED 56 Wards 1, 8 > image 36 of 36; citing NARA microfilm publication T623 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).

²⁸⁴ "United States Census, 1900," *FamilySearch*, <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MPY4-HBH>.

²⁸⁵ "United States Census, 1910," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MPY4-HRV> : accessed 28 April 2022), Stella Grayham in household of Russell Grayham, Police Jury Ward 1, Livingston, Louisiana, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) ED 63, sheet 3A, family 44, NARA microfilm publication T624 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1982), roll 518; FHL microfilm 1,374,531.

²⁸⁶ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

²⁸⁷ *Find a Grave*, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/30766736/estella-graham> : accessed 17 April 2022), memorial page for Estella Sibley Graham (24 Feb 1888-29 May 1967), Find a Grave Memorial ID 30766736, citing Friendship United Methodist Church Cemetery, Livingston Parish, Louisiana, USA ; Maintained by Shirley Covington (contributor 46922360) .

²⁸⁸ "United States Census, 1900," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MS58-X92> : accessed 17 April 2022), Russel Graham in household of Eb J Graham, Wards 1, 8, Livingston, Louisiana, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) 56, sheet 8A, family 137, NARA

them."²⁸⁹ Russell has been described as a "cowboy kind-of-guy" by family, and as documented by census records was a farmer.²⁹⁰

Russell and his wife Estella had six children who survived to adulthood, including **Sadie Estella Graham (1916-2007)**. Estella died young, and Russell reportedly felt 'lost' afterwards, and had his youngest daughter, Sadie, stay with family members.²⁹¹ Russell did not remarry following his wife's death.²⁹² Russell died at the age of 83 on December 4, 1967, and was buried alongside Estella in Friendship United Methodist Church Cemetery in Walker, Louisiana.²⁹³

Mary Ann Stafford (1862-1951) was the mother Rebecca's maternal grandfathers' father, Joseph. She was born on December 12, 1862, in Corbin, Louisiana, to **Stephen Andrew Stafford (1827-1923)** and **Louisa Diane Young (1845-1892)**.²⁹⁴ Mary had at least six siblings: **Frances J. Stafford (1870-1893)**, **Martha Eugene Stafford (1878-1946)** and **Lottie Elizabeth Libby (1859-1939)**, **Steven Robert Stafford (1861-1949)**, **Joseph Samuel Stafford (1873-1947)**, and **Burlin E. Stafford (1876-1881)**.²⁹⁵

microfilm publication T623 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1972.); FHL microfilm 1,240,568.

²⁸⁹ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

²⁹⁰ Smith, interview, April 14, 2022; "United States Census, 1920," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9RX2-D5D?cc=1488411&wc=QZJR-Z19%3A1036471301%2C1037459801%2C1036471303%2C1589332483> : 11 September 2019), Louisiana > Livingston > Police Jury Ward 1 > ED 67 > image 22 of 23; citing NARA microfilm publication T625 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).

²⁹¹ Smith, interview, April 14, 2022.

²⁹² Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

²⁹³ *Find a Grave*, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/30766748/russell-e-graham> : accessed 17 April 2022), memorial page for Russell E. Graham (4 Nov 1884–4 Dec 1967), Find a Grave Memorial ID 30766748, citing Friendship United Methodist Church Cemetery, Livingston Parish, Louisiana, USA ; Maintained by Shirley Covington (contributor 46922360).

²⁹⁴ "United States Census, 1880," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MD6B-4VP> : 14 January 2022), Mary Stafford in household of Steve Stafford, Livingston, Louisiana, United States; citing enumeration district , sheet , NARA microfilm publication T9 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.), FHL microfilm.

²⁹⁵ "United States Census, 1880," *Family Search*, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MD6B-4VP>.

She married **Newton Jackson Graham (1862-1927)** in 1891 according to the 1900 census.²⁹⁶ She and her husband Newton would have at least nine children together including Rebecca's great-grandfather, **Joseph Barnett Graham (1908-1985)**.²⁹⁷ Mary died when she was 88 years old on July 7, 1951, and was buried at Steven Stafford Cemetery in Walker, Louisiana.²⁹⁸ Given the name of the cemetery, it is possible she was buried in a family cemetery.

Newton Jackson Graham (1862-1927) was the father of Rebecca's paternal grandfather's father, Joseph. He was born on July 1, 1862, in Walker, Louisiana, to **Isham George Graham (1810-1881)** and **Eliza Jane Wascom (1824-1902)**.²⁹⁹ Isham had come from Ireland along with his brother, **Billy Graham (unk-deceased)** when they were both young.³⁰⁰ Newton had five siblings who survived to adulthood: **Francis L. Graham (unk-deceased)**, **Elena Corrine Graham (1858-1932)**, **Tinker Graham (1866-1955)**, **John Graham (unk-deceased)**, and **Ebb Graham (1854-1929)**.³⁰¹ Newton was born during the Civil War, and his parents may have known someone who died in the war, as one in eight Caucasian men of fighting

²⁹⁶ "United States Census, 1900," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MS58-XMQ> : accessed 17 April 2022), Newton Graham, Wards 1, 8, Livingston, Louisiana, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) 56, sheet 8A, family 130, NARA microfilm publication T623 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1972.); FHL microfilm 1,240,568.

²⁹⁷ "United States Census, 1910," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MPY4-48R> : accessed 17 April 2022), Newton J Graham, Police Jury Ward 8, Livingston, Louisiana, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) ED 70, sheet 1A, family 8, NARA microfilm publication T624 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1982), roll 518; FHL microfilm 1,374,531.

²⁹⁸ *Find a Grave*, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/34953239/mary-graham> : accessed 17 April 2022), memorial page for Mary Stafford Graham (12 Dec 1862-7 Jul 1951), Find a Grave Memorial ID 34953239, citing Steven Stafford Cemetery, Livingston Parish, Louisiana, USA ; Maintained by Ashley Mizell Stafford (contributor 47088610).

²⁹⁹ Edward Livingston Historical Association, *History of Livingston Parish, Louisiana*.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*

age died in the war. He likely witnessed considerable stress in his early years and in the aftermath of the Civil War.³⁰²

Newton married **Mary Ann Stafford (1862-1951)** in 1891, and the couple had at least 9 children. Newton did not learn to read or write.³⁰³ Newton appears to have been a farmer his entire life, as the 1920 census lists his occupation as farmer and that he owned his farm.³⁰⁴ Since the type of listing is "general farming" it is likely he grew a variety of crops and raised livestock, which provided food and livelihood for his family. Newton died on May 18, 1927, and was buried at Salem Cemetery in Walker, Louisiana.³⁰⁵

Mary Ellen Weatherholtz (1889-1957) was the mother of Rebecca's paternal grandmother's mother, Amanda. She was born on October 7, 1889, in Lee, Virginia, to **Elias Weatherholtz (1841-1909)** and **Amanda Hall (1842-1930)**.³⁰⁶ She had at least two sisters and two brothers.³⁰⁷

³⁰² Fischer, *Made in America: A Social History of American Culture and Character*, 33.

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ "United States Census, 1920," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9RX2-8H1?cc=1488411&wc=QZJR-8QK%3A1036471301%2C1037459801%2C1036597201%2C1589332395> : 11 September 2019), Louisiana > Livingston > Police Jury Ward 8 > ED 75 > image 2 of 12; citing NARA microfilm publication T625 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).

³⁰⁵ *Find a Grave*, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/24382102/newton-j-graham> : accessed 17 April 2022), memorial page for Newton J Graham (1 Jul 1862–18 May 1927), Find a Grave Memorial ID 24382102, citing Salem Cemetery, Walker, Livingston Parish, Louisiana, USA ; Maintained by Jerry Biggs (contributor 46959146).

³⁰⁶ "United States Census, 1900," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HT-6737-QP2?cc=1325221&wc=9B7Q-9L8%3A1030552301%2C1034321801%2C1034335901> : 5 August 2014), Virginia > Shenandoah > ED 78 Lee District (west part) > image 13 of 35; citing NARA microfilm publication T623 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).

³⁰⁷ Ibid.; "United States Census, 1870," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HT-6723-5YW?cc=1438024&wc=KLKY-DP8%3A518656301%2C519513201%2C518716501> : 11 June 2019), Virginia > Shenandoah > Lee > image 11 of 54; citing NARA microfilm publication M593 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).

As a young child, Mary likely received unwanted attention from the community and witnessed significant stress and sorrow within her family due to her older brother, **Elmer Weatherholtz (1870-1897)**, murdering his wife **Minnie Ann Silvious (1874-1896)** on February 4, 1896, by shooting her in the head with a shotgun.³⁰⁸ Elmer had already been arrested for other crimes prior to, including physically assaulting his wife.³⁰⁹ While a warrant for his arrest was out for murdering his wife, his father, **Elias (Eli) Weatherholtz (1841-1909)**, issued a warrant for his arrest, charging him with beating his mother, **Amanda Hall (1842-1930)**, with intent to kill.³¹⁰ Elmer was put on trial and was found guilty for the murder of his wife and for attempting to murder his mother.³¹¹ He was taken to the Virginia State Penitentiary in Richmond, Virginia, where he would supposedly commit suicide two months later when Mary was seven years old.³¹² However, verbal history and rumors state his death was staged and he hid out in the woods for years near Ohio after his supposed suicide.³¹³

Mary married **Noah James Reid (1884-1971)** in 1905 at the age of 16, according to the 1930 census.³¹⁴ However, a family obituary lists them as getting married in 1903 when Mary was 14.³¹⁵ The couple would

³⁰⁸ Wine, *Life Along Holman's Creek*, 194, 196.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Wine, *Life Along Holman's Creek*, 196, 197, 203-205

³¹¹ Wine, *Life Along Holman's Creek*, 196, 203-205

³¹² Ibid, 208-209.

³¹³ Don Silvious, "A Little Mystery," *Shenandoah County GenWeb Project*, accessed April 24, 2022, <http://www.vagenweb.org/shenandoah/cem/mystery.html>.

³¹⁴ "United States Census, 1930," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:CN5Y-P3Z> : accessed 28 April 2022), Mary E Reed in household of Noah J Reed, Lee Magisterial District, Shenandoah, Virginia, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) ED 14, sheet 6A, line 31, family 122, NARA microfilm publication T626 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 2002), roll 2460; FHL microfilm 2,342,194.

³¹⁵ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

have four children: **Amanda Elizabeth Reid (1905-1985)**, **Floyd Houston Reid (1907-1980)**, **Guy Miller Reid (1910-1992)**, and **Pauline Virginia Reid (1917-1976)**.³¹⁶ Sometime before 1920, Mary's mother Amanda came to live with Mary and her husband Noah, possibly following the death of Mary's father in 1909.³¹⁷ Since census records do not indicate an occupation for Mary, it is likely she, like the average American woman at the beginning of the 20th century, spent her adulthood caring for her children, cooking, performing household chores.³¹⁸ Mary was a devout Christian and was a lifelong member of Solomon's Lutheran Church in Quicksburg, Virginia.³¹⁹ Mary died at the age of 67 on February 7, 1957, following an unknown critical illness that lasted for several weeks.³²⁰

Noah James Reid (1884-1971) was the father of Rebecca's paternal grandmother's mother, Amanda. He was born in either Lee or Timberville, Virginia, on February 17, 1884, to **Claude H. Reid (1859-1940)** and **Mary Elizabeth "Lizzie" Wean (1866-1903)**.³²¹ Noah was the first

³¹⁶ "United States Census, 1920", database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MJVS-FRW> : 4 February 2021), Mary E Reid in entry for Mandy Weatherholtz, 1920.

³¹⁷ "United States Census, 1920, *FamilySearch*, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MJVS-FRW>.

³¹⁸ Fischer, *Made in America: A Social History of American Culture and Character*, 137.

³¹⁹ *Find a Grave*, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/143390080/mary-ellen-reid> : accessed 17 April 2022), memorial page for Mary Ellen Weatherholtz Reid (7 Oct 1889–7 Feb 1957), Find a Grave Memorial ID 143390080, citing Solomons Lutheran Church Cemetery, Forestville, Shenandoah County, Virginia, USA ; Maintained by Shock (contributor 47473371) .

³²⁰ *Find a Grave*, Mary Ellen Weatherholtz Reid, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/143390080/mary-ellen-reid>.

³²¹ "Virginia Births and Christenings, 1584-1917", database, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:X568-KFJ> : 28 January 2020), Noah Reid, 1884.

child born to his parents and had at least four siblings: **Annie Barbara Reid (1884-1971), Mary E. Reid (1895-1984), Nina R. Reid (1899-deceased),** and **Sarah Clifford Reid (1902-1903)**.³²²

Noah Reid grew up around the village of Moore's Store, which was along Holman's Creek, a stream in Shenandoah County near Quicksburg, Virginia.³²³ Moore's store was a progressive and thriving village during the 19th and early 20th century, and featured numerous businesses and amenities including two physicians, a funeral home, maple sugar factory, general store, post office and log schoolhouse.³²⁴ In 1911 a string band was formed which included six men including Noah Reid, though it is unknown which string instrument he played.³²⁵ The village of Moore's Store ceased to exist by 1985, with most of the businesses and post office having closed by then.³²⁶

Noah worked as a laborer his entire life, though it is not clear what specifically he did as census records state he did 'odd jobs'.³²⁷ He and his wife Mary were lifelong members of Solomons Lutheran

³²² "United States Census, 1900," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HT-DCX7-FVH?cc=1325221&wc=9BQN-RM6%3A1030552301%2C1030550002%2C1034227301> : 5 August 2014), Virginia > Rockingham > ED 64 Plains Township (Timberville Precinct) Timberville town > image 6 of 31; citing NARA microfilm publication T623 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).

³²³ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

³²⁴ Wine, *Life Along Holman's Creek*, 38.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

³²⁷ "United States Census, 1930," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9R8Z-93BR?cc=1810731&wc=QZF4-FMR%3A648805201%2C650851201%2C648825601%2C1589282368> : 8 December 2015), Virginia > Shenandoah > Lee > ED 14 > image 11 of 14; citing NARA microfilm publication T626 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 2002).

Church. Noah died on October 25, 1971, at the age of 87, and was buried alongside his wife in the cemetery at Solomons Lutheran Church.³²⁸

Annie Jenetta Rupert (1873-1919) was the mother of Rebecca's paternal grandmother's father, Luther. She was born on June 22, 1873, in Lee, Virginia, to **Siran Peter Rupert (1847-??)** and **Luvina Frye (1844-1907)**.³²⁹ Annie was the second oldest of five children born to her parents and her four siblings were **Ophelia C. Rupert (1870-1938)**, **William Christian Rupert (1876-1941)**, **Charles Luther Rupert (1883-1947)**, and **Cornelia Suvilla Rupert**.³³⁰ Annie's father was a farmer, and her mother was a housewife.³³¹

Annie married **James Franklin Baker (1870-1934)** at the age of 15 or 16 as she had been married for 10 years according to the 1900 census.³³² Annie and James lived in Ashby, Virginia, which would eventually be incorporated into Mt. Jackson along with Lee, Virginia.³³³ The couple had at least nine children, **William Cornelius Baker (1891-1977)**, **Ella Florence Baker (1893-1975)**, **Ollie Arbela Baker (1898-1969)**, **Charles Lester Baker (1900-1967)**, **Luther Edward Baker (1904-**

³²⁸ *Find a Grave*, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/154438164/noah-james-reid> : accessed 17 April 2022), memorial page for Noah James Reid (17 Feb 1884–25 Oct 1971), Find a Grave Memorial ID 154438164, citing Solomons Lutheran Church Cemetery, Forestville, Shenandoah County, Virginia, USA ; Maintained by Shock (contributor 47473371) .

³²⁹ "Virginia, Death Certificates, 1912-1987," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-89GL-L2CT?cc=2377565&wc=H94Z-PPY%3A1505092401%2C1505493002> : 20 August 2018), Shenandoah County > 1919 > image 10 of 267; from "Virginia, Marriage Records, 1700-1850," database and images, Ancestry (<http://www.ancestry.com> : 2012); citing Virginia Department of Health, Richmond.

³³⁰ "United States Census, 1880," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33SQ-GYBG-BFB?cc=1417683&wc=XWTQ-PTL%3A1589415431%2C1589415876%2C1589395058%2C1589394994> : 24 December 2015), Virginia > Shenandoah > Lee > ED 88 > image 61 of 61; citing NARA microfilm publication T9, (National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C., n.d.)

³³¹ "United States Census, 1880," *FamilySearch*, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MCRW-P69>.

³³² "United States Census, 1900," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MMJW-58Y> : 11 March 2022), Annie Baker in entry for James F Baker, 1900.

³³³ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

1989), **Bertha Bedelia Baker (1906-1987)**, **Medford Ray Baker (1909-1992)**, **Oscar Baker (1912-unk)**, and **Jane Baker (1918-unk)**. Annie was a housewife her entire life.³³⁴

Annie died at the age of 46 on January 21, 1919, of Spanish Influenza.³³⁵ Spanish Influenza was one name given to the virus that caused a worldwide pandemic from 1918-1919. It infected an estimated 500 million people worldwide, roughly 1/3 of the world's population at the time, and caused the death of 50 million people infected, with an estimated 675,000 deaths in the United States alone.³³⁶

James Franklin Baker (1870-1934) was the father of Rebecca's paternal grandmother's father, Luther. He was born on April 23, 1870, in Ashby, Virginia, to **Samuel Baker (1844-1926)** and **Annie Catharine Fry (1851-1933)**.³³⁷ James was the oldest of at least six children born to his parents.³³⁸

James married **Annie Jenetta Rupert (1873-1919)** at the age of 22 in 1882. James and his wife had at least eight children, including Rebecca's paternal grandmother's father, **Luther Edward Baker (1904-1989)**. James was a home carpenter and owned the home his family lived

³³⁴ "Virginia, Death Certificates, 1912-1987," *FamilySearch*, <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q57-89GL-L2CT?cc=2377565&wc=H94Z-PPY%3A1505092401%2C1505493002>.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*

³³⁶ "1918 Pandemic (HaN1 virus)," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed April 20, 2022, <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic-resources/1918-pandemic-h1n1.html>.

³³⁷ "United States Census, 1880," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MCRW-L4J> : 15 January 2022), James F. Baker in household of Samuel Baker, Ashby District, Shenandoah, Virginia, United States; citing enumeration district , sheet , NARA microfilm publication T9 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.), FHL microfilm.

³³⁸ "United States Census, 1880," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MCRW-L4F> : 15 January 2022), Samuel Baker, Ashby District, Shenandoah, Virginia, United States; citing enumeration district , sheet , NARA microfilm publication T9 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.), FHL microfilm .

in.³³⁹ According to census records, he was a carpenter until at least 1930.³⁴⁰

James' wife Annie passed away in 1919 from Spanish Flu. By 1930, James had remarried **Catharine Ryman (1871-1942)**.³⁴¹ James died on July 10, 1934, at the age of 64, and was buried with his first wife, Annie, in Solomons Lutheran Church Cemetery.³⁴²

Grace Vietta Heishman (1893-1955) was the mother of Rebecca's paternal grandfather's mother, Esther. She was born on February 11, 1893, in Hardy, West Virginia, to **Readus Franklin Heishman (1858-1921)** and **Hannah Louise Sager (1860-1936)**.³⁴³ Grace had at least ten siblings and her father was a farmer.³⁴⁴

Grace likely grew up with her future husband, **Perry Lee Heltzel (1890-1980)**, who also lived in Hardy, West Virginia, and the two married on October 22, 1914, in Hardy, West Virginia.³⁴⁵ The couple would have eight children, **Esther Marie Heltzel (1916-2006)**, **Clifton Lee**

³³⁹ "United States Census, 1900", database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MMJW-58Y>)

³⁴⁰ "United States Census, 1930," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:CNG8-MZM> : 8 December 2015), Virginia > Shenandoah > Lee > ED 14 > image 6 of 14; citing NARA microfilm publication T626 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 2002).

³⁴¹ "United States Census, 1930," *FamilySearch*, <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:CNG8-MZM>.

³⁴² *Find a Grave*, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/119592690/james-frank-baker> : accessed 18 April 2022), memorial page for James Frank Baker (23 Apr 1870–10 Jul 1934), Find a Grave Memorial ID 119592690, citing Solomons Lutheran Church Cemetery, Forestville, Shenandoah County, Virginia, USA ; Maintained by Gathering Roots (contributor 47213048).

³⁴³ "West Virginia Births and Christenings, 1853-1928", database, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:X5TB-4PT> : 30 January 2020), Gracie V. Heishman, 1893.

³⁴⁴ "United States Census, 1900," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M9CV-NL5> : accessed 28 April 2022), Gracie V Hishman in household of Redersy Hishman, Capon district (east side) Wardensville town, Hardy, West Virginia, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) 33, sheet 6B, family 107, NARA microfilm publication T623 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1972.); FHL microfilm 1,241,759.

³⁴⁵ "West Virginia Marriages, 1780-1970," database, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:FR6Z-KPP> : 11 February 2018), Perry L. Heltzel and Grace V. Heishman, 22 Oct 1914; citing Hardy, West Virginia, item 1, county clerks, West Virginia; FHL microfilm 1,846,250.

Heltzel (1918-1918), Bessie May Heltzel (1919-2004), Kathleen Elizabeth Heltzel (1922-1923), Roy Franklin Heltzel (1926-unk), Earl Grant Heltzel (1928-2022), Renetta Florence Heltzel (1929-2003), Russell Alan Heltzel (1924-1924), and an unnamed daughter who was stillborn.³⁴⁶

According to Grace's daughter Esther, an unnamed daughter was born with a cleft palate who died as a result.³⁴⁷ Cleft palate was a common birth defect, and it occurred when a baby's facial structures don't fuse correctly in the womb.³⁴⁸ Once born, this introduces several difficulties for the baby, including difficulty eating, swallowing, and later in life can cause difficulties with speaking or causes ear infections and tooth decay.³⁴⁹ After Grace and Perry's daughter was born with a cleft palate, Grace had to feed her very carefully because of her cleft palate. Grace and Percy called for a doctor but because they did not have a lot of money nor was there much the doctor could do, she died nine days after being born because she was unable to swallow properly.³⁵⁰

Sometime prior to the 1930s, Perry purchased farmland in Edinburg, Virginia, and the two built a house and farm there. Grace was a housewife her entire life, but also helped her husband on the farm.³⁵¹ The couple would live here until Grace had a heart attack sometime in

³⁴⁶ "United States Census, 1930," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9R8Z-9385?cc=1810731&wc=QZF4-XJ3%3A648805201%2C650851201%2C649279801%2C1589282404> : 8 December 2015), Virginia > Shenandoah > Madison > ED 18 > image 6 of 24; citing NARA microfilm publication T626 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 2002).; Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

³⁴⁷ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

³⁴⁸ "Cleft Lip and cleft palate," Mayo Clinic: accessed April 18, 2022, <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/cleft-palate/symptoms-causes/syc-20370985>.

³⁴⁹ "Cleft Lip and cleft palate," Mayo Clinic.

³⁵⁰ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*

the early 1950s, which resulted in significant health impairments.³⁵² As a result, Perry retired from farming and sold the farm and the couple moved to a house in Edinburg.³⁵³ Perry provided Grace with constant care, as she had difficulty with motor movements following her heart attack.³⁵⁴ Grace would die of a cerebral hemorrhage at her home on August 1, 1955.³⁵⁵

Perry Lee Heltzel (1890-1980) was the father of Rebecca's paternal grandfather's mother, Esther. He was born on April 14, 1890, in Hardy, West Virginia to **Joseph Perry Heltzel (1858-1940)** and **Anna Cornelia Bowers (1858-1939)**.³⁵⁶ Perry had at least seven siblings.³⁵⁷

Perry married **Grace Vietta Heishman (1893-1955)** in 1914 when he was 24 years old, and they had eight children, including Rebecca's paternal grandfather's mother, **Esther Marie Heltzel (1916-2006)**.

Sometime between 1920 and 1930, Perry purchased a significant amount of farmland in Edinburg, and constructed several farm buildings including a barn and storage sheds. He also built a silo years after purchasing the farm, with the engraving "1930 PLH" which still stood and was in use as of April 2022.³⁵⁸ Perry and his wife also built a

³⁵² Polk, interview, February 24, 2022.

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ "Virginia, Death Certificates, 1912-1987," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C9PY-1SFZ-7?cc=2377565&wc=H989-TBC%3A1505092401%2C1529100202> : 20 August 2018), Shenandoah County > 1955 > image 13 of 133; from "Virginia, Marriage Records, 1700-1850," database and images, Ancestry (<http://www.ancestry.com> : 2012); citing Virginia Department of Health, Richmond.

³⁵⁶ "United States Census, 1900," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M9CV-N2Y> : accessed 24 February 2022), Perry L Heltzel in household of Joseph P Heltzel, Capon district (east side) Wardensville town, Hardy, West Virginia, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) 33, sheet 6A, family 104, NARA microfilm publication T623 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1972.); FHL microfilm 1,241,759.

³⁵⁷ "United States Census, 1900," *FamilySearch*, <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M9CV-N2Y>.

³⁵⁸ Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

house at the edge of the property closest to the main road and next to where Blue Ridge Poultry would be built, which is where his grandson **Allen Lee Polk (1937-2004)** and great-grandson, **Kevin Lee Polk (1959-)** would work years later. They would raise their children here and at some point, constructed a second house by the barn and fields.³⁵⁹

Perry, like several members of Rebecca's family, was a farmer for most, if not all his life. Perry's father, Joseph, was one of the 80% of Americans during the 1800s, who was a farmer.³⁶⁰ When Perry was 20 in 1910, 15% of Americans were farmers with an additional 18% of Americans working as farmers.³⁶¹ Ninety years later in 2000, at least one of Perry's grandchildren, Allen, and at least one great-grandchild made up the roughly 1% of Americans who were farmers.³⁶² Conversely, members of Rebecca's family such as her paternal grandmother's parents Noah and Amanda, and maternal grandfather's parents, abandoned farming by the early 20th century in favor of blue-collar jobs, or newly created jobs such as jobs in hospital or computing jobs.

Perry was 27 years old, World War I broke out and he was required to complete a draft registration card as he was young enough to be drafted.³⁶³ On his draft registration, he claimed exemption from being

³⁵⁹ Polk, personal knowledge.

³⁶⁰ "United States Census, 1900," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HY-DCZS-G5P?cc=1325221&wc=9B7N-Y4B%3A1032173901%2C1032822201%2C1032822202> : 5 August 2014), West Virginia > Hardy > ED 33 Capon district (east side) Wardensville town > image 11 of 26; citing NARA microfilm publication T623 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).

³⁶¹ Wyatt, Ian D., and Daniel E. Hecker. "Occupational Changes during the 20th Century." *Monthly Labor Review* 129, no. 3 (2006): 35-57. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41863049>.

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ "United States World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33SQ-GYBS-94FJ?cc=1968530&wc=9FHS-W38%3A928355001%2C928808901> : 24 August 2019), Virginia > Shenandoah County; A-Z > image 1563 of

drafted due to needing to care for his wife, Grace, and his then seven month old daughter, Esther.³⁶⁴ Years later, World War II broke out and Perry was again required to register for the draft in 1942 at the age of 51 or 52.³⁶⁵

Sometime prior to 1955, Grace had a heart attack which caused significant health problems.³⁶⁶ As a result, Perry retired from farming, and they moved to a new house along one of the main roads in Edinburg, U.S. Route 42.³⁶⁷ Perry would care for his wife until her passing in 1955. A few years later, Perry offered to sell the farm he had lived on to his grandson, **Allen Lee Polk (1937-2004)**. Allen was unable to buy it at the time due to the recent birth of his son, **Kevin Lee Polk (1959-)**.³⁶⁸ Instead, Perry sold the farm to a woman whose last name was Aroches.³⁶⁹ In the 1970s, Allen bought the farm from the woman who originally bought it.³⁷⁰ The family thereafter nicknamed the farm "Aroches after the woman who had bought it from Perry, and as of April 2022 it was run by Perry's great-grandson Kevin and Kevin's son, **Matthew Lee Polk (1991-)**.³⁷¹

4078; citing NARA microfilm publication M1509 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).

³⁶⁴ "Perry Lee Heltzel," United States World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918.

³⁶⁵ "United States World War II Draft Registration Cards, 1942," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:V1KT-4JK> : 13 March 2020), Perry Lee Heltzel, 1942; citing NARA microfilm publication M1936, M1937, M1939, M1951, M1962, M1964, M1986, M2090, and M2097 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).

³⁶⁶ Kevin Polk (father of the author and farmer), interview with Rebecca Polk, February 20, 2022.

³⁶⁷ Kevin Polk, interview, February 20, 2022.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*

The next several years appear to have been relatively uneventful for Perry, and at the age of 90, Perry was still in good health.³⁷² On the morning of December 24, 1980, Perry walked across the road to get the newspaper from a neighbor, whom he shared a subscription with.³⁷³ While crossing the road, a car struck him and caused several severe injuries. He was rushed to Winchester Medical Center where he died because of his injuries.³⁷⁴

Martha Jane Hottel (1871-1919) was the mother of Rebecca's paternal grandfather's father, Stanley.³⁷⁵ She was born in Shenandoah County, Virginia, though the exact town is unknown, on April 5, 1871, to **William H. Hottel (1834-1910)** and **Barbara Ann Seix (1834-1906)**.³⁷⁶ Martha married **Thomas Gideon Polk (1873-1930)** on November 7, 1897, although the individual completing her marriage license misspelled her last name as 'Huddle'.³⁷⁷ Martha and her husband had at least ten children: **Annie Ellen Polk (1898-1979)**, **Rodney Lloyd Polk (1901-1962)**, **Lestie Mae Polk (1903-1998)**, **Oliver Cromwell Polk (1904-1984)**, **Edgar Lee Polk (1906-1907)**, **Mary Edna Polk (1906-1974)**, **Roy Franklin Polk (1908-1909)**, **Julia Polk (1910-deceased)**, **Stanley Woodrow Polk (1912-**

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ "Virginia, Death Certificates, 1912-1987," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C9PY-BSZJ-P?cc=2377565&wc=H989-TKP%3A1506306401%2C1529097602> : 20 August 2018), Winchester (Ind. City) > 1980 > image 63 of 540; from "Virginia, Marriage Records, 1700-1850," database and images, Ancestry (<http://www.ancestry.com> : 2012); citing Virginia Department of Health, Richmond.

³⁷⁶ *Find a Grave*, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/62591720/martha-jane-polk> : accessed 18 April 2022), memorial page for Martha Jane Hottel Polk (5 Apr 1871–25 Jan 1919), Find a Grave Memorial ID 62591720, citing Christ Reformed Church Cemetery, Conicville, Shenandoah County, Virginia, USA ; Maintained by Shock (contributor 47473371).

³⁷⁷ "Virginia, Bureau of Vital Statistics, County Marriage Registers, 1853-1935," database, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:ZK7J-882M> : 21 January 2022), Martha J Huddle in entry for Thos G Polk, 7 Nov 1897; citing Marriage Registration, Shenandoah, Virginia, United States, Virginia State Library and Archives, Richmond.

1975), and **Earl Hope Polk (1914-2007)**³⁷⁸ Martha may have been a housewife as the 1910 census lists her as having no occupation.³⁷⁹

Martha died at the age of 47 on January 25, 1919, in Staunton, Virginia.³⁸⁰ Since Martha died in 1919, and a few days after **Annie Jenetta Rupert (1873-1919)**, she may have died from Spanish Influenza. It is possible that the pandemic was spreading in the Shenandoah Valley during this time.

Thomas Gideon Polk (1873-1930) was the father of Rebecca's paternal grandfather's father, Stanley. He was born on October 9, 1873, in Ashby, Virginia, to **Ananias Polk (1847-1920)** and **Mary Ann "Polly" Hepner (1845-1923)**.³⁸¹ Ashby was later incorporated into the town of Mt. Jackson, and the town of Ashby no longer exists.³⁸² Thomas had at least five siblings: **Sarah Catherine Polk (1869-1934)**, **John Robert Polk (1872-1898)**, **Charles William Polk (1875-1963)**, **Terrinda Ellen Polk (1877-1968)**, **Bertie Alice Polk (1880-1910)**.³⁸³ Thomas' father was a

³⁷⁸ "United States Census, 1920," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33SQ-GRV8-9MMZ?cc=1488411&wc=QZJB-CTV%3A1038215501%2C1039703501%2C1036542701%2C1589332482> : 14 September 2019), Virginia > Shenandoah > Madison > ED 117 > image 20 of 26; citing NARA microfilm publication T625 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).

³⁷⁹ "United States Census, 1910," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MPG6-DGM> : accessed 28 April 2022), Martha J Polk in household of Thomas Polk, Madison, Shenandoah, Virginia, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) ED 95, sheet 25A, family 281, NARA microfilm publication T624 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1982), roll 1648; FHL microfilm 1,375,661.

³⁸⁰ *Find a Grave*, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/62591720/martha-jane-polk> : accessed 18 April 2022), memorial page for Martha Jane Hottle Polk (5 Apr 1871–25 Jan 1919), Find a Grave Memorial ID 62591720, citing Christ Reformed Church Cemetery, Conicville, Shenandoah County, Virginia, USA ; Maintained by Shock (contributor 47473371) .

³⁸¹ "Virginia, Bureau of Vital Statistics, County Marriage Registers, 1853-1935," database, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:ZK7J-88W2> : 21 January 2022), Thos G Polk, 7 Nov 1897; citing Marriage Registration, Shenandoah, Virginia, United States, Virginia State Library and Archives, Richmond.

³⁸² Personal knowledge of the author, Rebecca Polk.

³⁸³ "United States Census, 1880," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MCRW-FV4> : 15 January 2022), Thomas G. Polk in household of Ananias Polk, Ashby District, Shenandoah, Virginia, United States; citing enumeration district , sheet , NARA microfilm publication T9 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.), FHL microfilm .

farmer.³⁸⁴ Thomas married **Martha Jane Hottel (1871-1919)** on November 7, 1897, and the two had at ten children, including Rebecca's paternal grandfather's father, **Stanley Woodrow Polk (1912-1975)**.³⁸⁵

Rebecca's paternal side of the family has primarily lived in Shenandoah County for over five generations, which includes the towns of Woodstock, Edinburg, Mt. Jackson, Columbia Furnace, and former towns of Moores Store, Ashby and Lee. The *Shenandoah Herald* was published from June 28, 1866 until December 25, 1925, though the paper existed under different titles dating back to 1817.³⁸⁶ The Newspaper was circulated throughout Shenandoah County, and by the early 1900s it was read by 1,300 people, or around 25% of households in the area.³⁸⁷ It is highly likely that members of Rebecca's family, such as Thomas Gideon Polk, Martha Jane Hottel, James Franklin Baker or Mary Ellen Weatherholtz read the paper during its circulation. The paper primarily provided local news, sales, and politics, but also offered town gossip such as "Mr. and Mrs. Wade Zirkle...moving to their home recently purchased on corner of Main and Center Street" (in Edinburg).³⁸⁸ Information, such as a family moving, selling property, or even deaths, could have informed locals, including Rebecca's family, of potential land coming up for sale they may be interested in.

³⁸⁴ "United States Census, 1880," *FamilySearch*, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MCRW-FV4>.

³⁸⁵ "Virginia, Bureau of Vital Statistics, County Marriage Registers, 1853-1935," database, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:ZK7J-882M> : 21 January 2022), Martha J Huddle in entry for Thos G Polk, 7 Nov 1897; citing Marriage Registration, Shenandoah, Virginia, United States, Virginia State Library and Archives, Richmond.

³⁸⁶ "Shenandoah Herald," *Virginia Chronicle: Library of Virginia*, Accessed February 20, 2022, <https://viriniachronicle.com/?a=cl&cl=CL2.1920.01&sp=SH&e=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN----->.

³⁸⁷ "Shenandoah Herald," *Virginia Chronicle: Library of Virginia*.

³⁸⁸ *Shenandoah herald. [volume]* (Woodstock, Va.), 03 Sept. 1920. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85026941/1920-09-03/ed-1/seq-2/>>

Thomas was a farmer his entire life, was one of the seven in ten Americans who lived in rural areas in 1900.³⁸⁹ At some point he moved to Madison, Virginia.³⁹⁰ Thomas died at the age of 54 on August 26, 1930, due to a heart attack.³⁹¹ As a result, it is likely his two children under the age of 18, were raised by his three children over the age of 18 who were living in his household in 1930.³⁹²

³⁸⁹ Claude S. Fischer, *Made in America: A Social History of American Culture and Character* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 146.

³⁹⁰ "United States Census, 1930," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:CNGW-36Z> : accessed 28 April 2022), Thomas J Polk, Madison Magisterial District, Shenandoah, Virginia, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) ED 18, sheet 10B, line 55, family 240, NARA microfilm publication T626 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 2002), roll 2460; FHL microfilm 2,342,194.

³⁹¹ "Virginia, Death Certificates, 1912-1987," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-89GL-1LSJ?cc=2377565&wc=H9HJ-5R3%3A1505092401%2C1506114402> : 20 August 2018), Shenandoah County > 1930 > image 178 of 256; from "Virginia, Marriage Records, 1700-1850," database and images, Ancestry (<http://www.ancestry.com> : 2012); citing Virginia Department of Health, Richmond.

³⁹² "United States Census, 1930," *FamilySearch*, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:CNGW-36Z>.