

Adolph Meissner  
and  
Loretta Haskins  
[by Loren Meissner, Aug 2002]

## 1. Ancestors of Adolph Frederick Meissner (1861-1939)

**Christoff** stood beside his cabin, next to a mine shaft near the top of the *Erzgebirge* (“ore mountains”). This rolling ridge lies along the eastern border of the German province of Saxony, about 3000 ft. above sea level.

Christoff, his brother Elias, and their father **Georg Meichsner** had built their cabin several years before. This cabin and others nearby were used by miners who extracted iron, tin, silver, coal and other minerals; and there was a larger building nearby that housed a glass works.

It was December (1653), and snow flurries drifted across the mountain plateau. Down the valley ten miles west, Christoff saw the village of Eibenstock where he had been born and where he lived when he was not working at the mine. About four miles east was the village of Platten, across the border in Bohemia (later, Czech Republic). No natural rampart marks the border, and battles between European kingdoms continually shifted the political boundary back and forth across the rolling ridge. For the past 100 years, since the Lutheran Reformation, Saxony had been a Protestant province. Platten had once been part of Saxony, but a battle during the Counter-Reformation had moved the border again, and Platten was now within the Catholic kingdom of Bohemia.

Miners from Platten had told Christoff there was trouble brewing in their town. In spite of a treaty that promised religious tolerance, the Catholic authorities intended to displace the Saxon (Lutheran) mining superintendent **Johann Loebel** (Löbel), charging that he had cheated on mining royalties. He would be removed from his position unless he converted to the Catholic faith. Instead, Loebel and the other Protestant families planned to leave Platten and move back across the border into Saxon territory, and Christoph and the other miners had promised to give them whatever help they could. On Christmas eve thirty-nine Lutheran families from Platten (about one hundred persons in all) trudged through the snow carrying all their possessions on their backs, and were given shelter in the Meichsner mining cabin, the other nearby cabins, and the glass factory.

The story of this migration to escape religious persecution is still well known throughout the *Erzgebirge*. It somewhat parallels the story of the Pilgrims’ voyage to America in 1620 — except that the Platten miners had to travel only about four miles.

<http://www.meiszen.net/family/2001/johanngeorgenstadt.htm>

Loebel, Meichsner, and others sent a petition to the Saxon Elector Johann Georg I, requesting permission to establish a town on the ridge. The petition was granted, with the proviso that the town should be named Johann-georgen-stadt. Johann Loebel was the first mayor.



Johann Georg I, Elector of Saxony

In 1715, about 60 years after the founding of Johanngeorgenstadt, Johann Loebel's great-granddaughter **Maria Catharina Loebel** married Christoff Meichsner's grandson **Christian Meichsner**, a Master Craftsman (blacksmith) for the mines. The number of Master Craftsmen in any village was strictly controlled by the Guilds, and a Journeyman blacksmith usually had to wait for advancement to Master status until the death of an older smith. But Master Christian Meichsner used his influence to obtain Master status for his infant son **Christian Friedrich Meichsner** at the age of four.

The boy did not take advantage of this opportunity, however. He left the mines and the mountains to study for the Lutheran ministry, at Leipzig and elsewhere in the low country. His first and only pastorate was at Schoenbach (Schönbach), some 100 miles north and east of his birthplace. The church at Schoenbach was rebuilt or extensively remodeled during his tenure (1753-1800) and is still standing. Two large portraits face each other across the front of the sanctuary: one of Martin Luther and one of Christian Friedrich Meissner.



Church at Schoenbach

In Johanngeorgenstadt, Christian Friedrich and his ancestors usually spelled their surname as Meichsner, but in Schoenbach he consistently spelled it Meissner. The first European fine porcelain factory had been established at Meissen near Dresden about 1710, and Meissner (“from Meissen”) was already a common Saxon name — usually written as Meißner, with the character ß representing double s.



Albrechtsburg Castle at Meissen, site of first European fine porcelain factory

**Friedrich Adolf Meissner**, grandson of Christian Friedrich, was born in 1804 at the Schoenbach parsonage. His father **Ernst Meissner** (who had succeeded Christian Friedrich as pastor at Schoenbach) died in 1817 when Friedrich was 12, and his mother died about two years later. His mother’s brother, a gardener at the Saxon court in Dresden, became Friedrich’s guardian and sent him to an Agriculture school.

[http://www.meiszen.net/family/2001/fam\\_letters/0.htm](http://www.meiszen.net/family/2001/fam_letters/0.htm)

About 1824 Friedrich left Saxony on a trip to America, and on his way he met Elise Henriette Sophie Von Mithofen in Hamburg. He returned from America and in Feb 1827 he married this lady. Their daughter (Karoline) was born in Nov 1826. The marriage was not a happy one. In Feb 1838 his friend Doris Sennewald gave birth to a son, Georg Heinrich; Friedrich Meissner was probably the boy’s father.

In 1843, when Friedrich was 38 years old and Karoline was 16, he built a large brick house in Kummerfeld near Hamburg (which is still standing), with the help of Georg Gerstenberg and others. In Sep 1845 he left his wife and daughter and sailed to America. Soon afterward Karoline married Georg Gerstenberg.

Doris Sennewald, now widowed, accompanied Friedrich to America, with Georg Heinrich (known as Henry) and her three older children. They lived for a few years in New York and Massachusetts, then moved to Florida where Doris died in 1853. By 1856 the other children had left and Henry, now 18 years old, moved with his father to Wisconsin. Henry later enlisted in the Civil War and lost a leg, returned to Wisconsin for a short time, and then moved west.

Friedrich lived alone on his Wisconsin homestead for two years. Judging from his letters, he was again feeling the need of female companionship, and in 1858 (now 53 years old) he met 21 year old Eva Dorathea Krauss who had immigrated from Germany to Ohio about 10 years before. They were soon married and eventually had five children: Ernest (b 1859), **Adolph** (b 1861), Dorathea (b 1863), Carl (b 1864), and August (b 1866). Friedrich continued to farm on the homestead; when he was almost 80 he complained that his grown sons liked to go to bed late at night and rise late in the morning, which made them useless as farm helpers. He died in April 1899, a few months after his 94th birthday, and was buried in a plot on the farm.

Dora and Carl never married. Their mother Eva died in 1926, Carl in 1933, and Dora in 1946; all were also buried on the farm north of Cashton WI. When Dora died, the farm was sold except for the burial plot and an access easement to it.

Eva's brother Henry Crouse moved west in 1873 and settled in Utah; Ernest later joined him there and then proceeded to Oregon where most of his descendants settled. Most of August's family remained in Wisconsin.

## 2. Ancestors of Loretta Haskins (1865-1924)

**James Cole**, Loretta's 6th-great-grandfather, was born in England in 1600, came to America in 1632, and died in Massachusetts in 1688. Various records more or less agree that he was married in England around 1625, but they disagree as to whether the marriage was in London to **Mary Lobel** or in Barnstaple (Devon) to Mary Tibbes.

Although Mary Tibbes seems to be favored by the evidence, Mary Lobel has a more interesting background. Her father, **Mathieu Lobel**, was born 1538 in Lille, France. He was a physician at Montpellier, Germany, Italy, and Switzerland. He also practiced medicine in Antwerp, being attached as Physician to William of Orange; from Antwerp he came to London and was Physician to James I.

Besides being a distinguished physician, Mathieu Lobel was a student of Plant Physiology, and wrote several books about medicinal plants. He discovered the medicinal qualities of the plant Lobelia and named it after himself. The next time you see a row of tiny dark blue flowers bordering a walkway, you can say to yourself, "That plant is named after Mathieu Lobel, who *might be* one of my ancestors." If true, the Frenchman Mathieu Lobel is *almost* the only known ancestor of Adolph Frederick Meissner or Loretta Haskins who was not either German or British (including England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales) by descent.

The other exception is Loretta's great-grandmother, whose name may have been Ellen, and who is said to have been one-quarter Indian.

[http://www.meiszen.net/family/2001/wm\\_brey\\_anc.htm](http://www.meiszen.net/family/2001/wm_brey_anc.htm)

Loretta's maternal grandfather, **William Brey** (originally Bray), wrote in his Family Bible his own name and those of his brothers and sisters: "Anthony Johnson, born 1814; William Bray, born 1819, Towanda PA; Mary Ann Clark, born 1822; Elizabeth Clark, born 1823; John Robinson, born 1828." Armed with this scant evidence, along with the family tradition (prob-

ably originating from William himself) that "William's father was a red-haired Irishman and his mother was one-quarter Indian,"



Doris Klock started searching for clues in and around Towanda PA. She found traces of a group of Indians and part-Indians who had migrated from the Mohawk Valley in New York to the Towanda area soon after the American Revolution. They were treated as outcasts, and even today many historians and genealogists in the Towanda area pretend they never existed.

According to well documented historical records, William Johnson emigrated from Ireland in 1738 to develop land in the Mohawk Valley (in upper New York state) on behalf of his uncle, Peter Warren. Tremendously ambitious, he led settlers to his uncle's land claim, established farms and a trading post, and proceeded to acquire property, influence, and political power. As a British major general in the French and Indian War, he defeated the French at the battle of Lake George. As a reward, he was made a baronet.

One element of Sir William Johnson's success was his shrewd partnership with the Mohawk tribe of Iroquois Indians, which kept them on the British side in the wars against France (1754-1763), whereas most other Indian tribes sided with the French. The British government made him Superintendent of Indian Affairs for much of what is now New York, Pennsylvania, and southern Ontario. He gradually acquired more than 500,000 acres of land in the Mohawk and upper Susquehanna river valleys, which he ruled almost as a feudal lord. He founded Johnstown as the "capital" of his huge domain.

Sir William's first wife, Catherine Weissenberg, bore him three children: his principal heir, (Sir) John Johnson, and two daughters named Ann and Mary. After Catherine died in 1759, Sir William married Molly Brant, daughter of an important Mohawk sachem and sister or half-sister of Joseph Brant who was later an important chief of the Mohawks. However, their marriage was never recognized according to British law. They probably had seven children, who were named Peter (apparently conceived before Catherine's death), Magdalene, Margaret, George, Mary, Susanna, and Anne.

Besides his ten children by Catherine and Molly, Sir William recognized two boys, Brant and William, fathered with now-unknown Indian women prior to Molly's first pregnancy. Few records were kept of relationships within the Indian colony in and around Johnstown, and it is possible that besides the twelve children who he formally recognized, Sir William may have fathered other part-Indian children.

Molly Brant provided considerable assistance in maintaining the Indians as British allies. Sir William and Molly were also Loyalists (British sympathizers) during the years leading up to the American Revolution. Although Sir William died in 1774 (and his son John succeeded him as Indian agent), Molly continued to influence the Mohawk tribe to remain loyal to the British cause throughout the war.

When the Americans occupied the Mohawk Valley in 1777, the Indians' loyalty to the British cause resulted in their expulsion from Johnson's domain. Molly and her children moved to Canada and lost most of the legacy promised by Sir William's will, although British authorities in Canada compensated her in part.

A large contingent of these Indians and part-Indians migrated down the Susquehanna valley and settled along the river near what is now Towanda PA. They intermarried with other settlers from a variety of racial backgrounds, including negroes and Dutch immigrants. Among the latter was Anthony Vanderpool (whose wife was *not* a daughter of Sir William, as sometimes stated), and residents of the settlement were ultimately known as the "Pool clan." They were discouraged from associating with the townspeople of Towanda, and even today are treated as outcasts. To achieve any sort of success, a Pool child with any ambition still has to move away from the colony.

Back to William Bray's Family Bible: the oldest child listed there was named Anthony Johnson; in Towanda, this name shouts "Pool clan" and would have been a very unlikely name "uptown."

Besides Anthony Johnson, William Bray's mother had only one other child prior to the 1820 census, namely William himself who was born 21 Aug 1819. William's father, the mysterious red-haired Irishman, must have been somewhere in the vicinity of Towanda in Dec 1818 or Jan 1819 (when William was conceived), but he does not appear in the 1820 census and he was out of the picture by the time Mary Ann Clark was born in 1822. Being William Bray's father, his surname must have been Bray, but absolutely nothing more is known about him — not even his first name.

Doris Klock searched the 1920 and later census records for the Towanda area, and found a woman named **Ellen** who matches the known facts fairly closely. The supposition is that Ellen "escaped" from the Pool clan some time around 1820. The other three children listed in the Brey Family Bible are surnamed Clark and Robinson — Doris found later census records for "uptown" families headed by men named Ebenezer Clark and George Robinson, who could have been Ellen's husbands and fathers of her children. (Ellen seems to have had another daughter named Jane [Robinson?] with whom she was living in 1870, but this daughter might have been born after William lost contact with his mother.) So, until further evidence appears, Ellen is nominated as William Bray's "one-quarter Indian" mother. She very likely emerged from the "Pool clan," and she would have had some non-Indian ancestors which might have included Anthony Vanderpool or even Sir William Johnson.

### 3. Adolph and Loretta

**Adolph Meissner** and **Loretta Haskins** were married at Cashton, WI on 17 September 1883 and moved west soon afterward, first joining Adolph's brother Ernest in Oregon. They remained in southern Oregon for more than ten years, raising food crops which they sold to miners. The list of birthplaces of Adolph and Loretta's eleven children reveals something of their sojourn:

Thalia Dorothy Dillie b: 25 May 1884 in Cashton, WI  
Albert William b: 14 Aug 1885 in La Crosse, WI  
Adolph Elmer b: 08 Dec 1889 in Merlin, OR  
Louis Carl b: 13 Feb 1893 in Merlin, OR  
Manly Maderio Wadsworth b: 02 Mar 1897 in Merlin, OR  
Charles Whittier b: 03 Oct 1898 in Merlin, OR  
Carrie Hilda b: 18 Aug 1900 in Merlin, OR  
Paul Revere b: 13 Nov 1901 in Graves Creek, OR  
Lillian Olive b: 01 Nov 1903 in Gold Hill, OR  
Edith Goldie May b: 28 May 1906 in Colfax, WA  
Percy James b: 19 Jun 1907 in Pullman, WA

From 1908 to 1911 the family lived in Texas. By this time the four older children had left the family: Dillie first married in 1906, Albert in 1911, Adolph in 1910, and Louis in 1915.

They lived near Medina, Oaxaca, Mexico from August 1911 until April 1914, then moved to Upland CA where Dillie was living.



Adolph and Loretta with children (L to R) Paul, Edith, Carrie, Percy James, Lillian, Charles, and Manly.  
Identity of the man at far left is unknown.  
This picture appeared in McClure's Magazine, June 1914.

In 1916 Adolph and Loretta moved to Panama with Manly, Charles, Paul, Lillian, Edith, and Percy James; Carrie remained in CA and was married in 1918. In Panama the two older boys worked on the final stages of Panama Canal construction; by 1920 the others had moved to an upland "plantation" (jungle clearing) near the Costa Rica border.

[http://www.meiszen.net/family/2001/loretta\\_letters.htm](http://www.meiszen.net/family/2001/loretta_letters.htm)



Panama, 1919. (Back row:) Manly, Charles, Loretta, Adolph, Paul; (Front row:) Edith, Percy James, Lillian.  
Carrie did not go with the family to Panama.

In 1922 they returned from Panama to Southern CA, where Dillie, Albert, and Carrie were living. In June 1924, Loretta died in an auto accident while seeking yet another "promised land" near Palmdale CA. Four years later Adolph married Mattie Applegate McLennan and farmed on her land in Oklahoma until his death in 1939.