

“We can be proud of our heritage” - Rolan Ratzloff

# FamMail Newsletter

Volume I, Issue I

Winter 2012

Jan/Feb/Mar 2012



Photo by ~GTR

## Newest addition to the website!

In 1972 Dad recorded **Grandma Ratzloff** singing **Pretty Gray Kitty** (on cassette tape).



I've digitized that recording and it's linked on **Grandma's Featured Ancestor page**. (Or, see the FM blog for a direct link.)

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## The Old Home Place

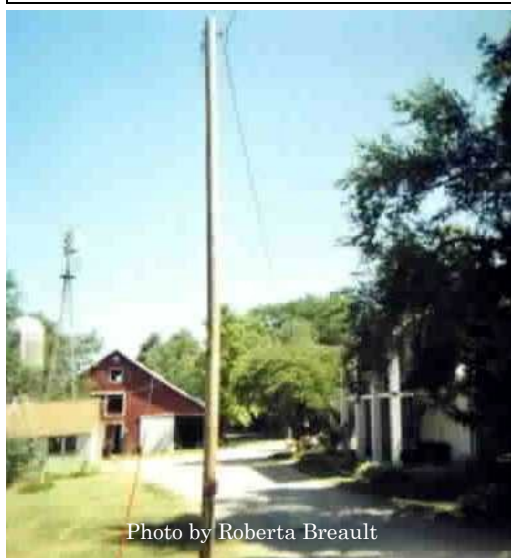


Photo by Roberta Breault

(See website for Google Earth Street View)

In my family when someone mentioned “the old home place” they meant the farm east of Canton (former home of Grandpa Jonas and Grandma Katherine) where Uncle Thomas and Aunt Viola live now.

It will always be the old home place but another house has the distinction of being the former home of Jonas and Katherine and is still in the family.



Photo by ~GTR

(See website for Google Earth Street View)

After Grandma & Grandpa moved to North Main, 109 Grove Street became the home of Rolan & Eleanor & family followed by Uncle Gene and Aunt Jean.

Oh, and one more: Jonas and Katherine never lived there but another home has remained in the family through multiple owners. The farm where Mom & Dad started their family (the first home of Gordon, Sondra and Connie) followed by Uncle Menford and Aunt Donna and then cousin Tracey.

Tracey and Marv still live on the farm of my first memories.

~GTR

## FamMail Newsletters are Online

This newsletter is a small sample of the information that is available online. You can read, download and print content from the FM Blog and the FM Website.

Please note that, even without Internet access, you can enjoy the Website and Blog with friends and family at your local library. Also, most libraries will allow you to print for free or for a nominal fee.

A printed version of the newsletter will be sent to Uncles & Aunts.

We are announcing the newsletter (and the blog and website) to others via email.

Please share this information with your family and help us update our list of email and mailing addresses for future announcements.

~GTR

## FamMail Information via Website, Blog, Newsletter (and CD)

I've created a FamMail CD for those of you who have a computer but no access to the Internet.

It contains the same information (website, photos, stories, audio and some video files) as the FamMail website (*but not the photo albums, YouTube based videos or the Blog*).

I've included brief how-to instructions and website navigation tips. The CD has been tested on six different PC's using XP, Vista and Windows 7 operating systems.

It's just a website on a disk and so should work with any browser and any computer that can read the CD.

Unfortunately the CD was out-of-date the moment it was created because the website is constantly updated via some live links to the Internet (plus our frequent updates and additions).

It is intended to be a "snapshot" of the Website as of 1/1/2012.

I don't anticipate future updates of the CD so this is a one-time way to see what FamMail is all about.

Accessing the website and blog online is the only way to keep up-to-date with the work we are doing.

**Note: This is a computer CD (not an audio CD).** ~GTR

For the latest updates

**Visit the FamMail Blog at:**

<http://fammail.blogspot.com>

**And link to the website at:**

<http://ceilingunlimited.com/fammail>



## The (only) Seat of Education for Decades in Canton

How many of us went to school in this brick building? Built in 1915, many members of our family took classes here including my Dad. This was my school building from 1st grade through 6th. The new (then) grade school was completed in 1958 where I attended 7th and 8th grades. Then back to this building for freshman through the first semester of senior years (through 1963). The new (then) high school was completed just in time for the

second half of my senior year and so my class of 13 was the first to graduate from the "new" high school in 1964.



By the way, *we students* moved the high school (desks, equipment, materials, etc.) across town (3/4 of a mile?) to the new building.

I remember some of the older boys carrying chemistry supplies, down the main front stairs, in a large cardboard box, when it came apart spilling and combining who knows what chemicals (and prompting a hasty evacuation of the area).

~GTR

## Errors & Corrections

If you find errors (no matter how small) please contact us at our email address (see blog/website) or by mail (see return address label on this newsletter).

Our family history books are filled with misspelled names, incorrect dates, etc. While we appreciate the effort it took to produce those treasured books, we've entered a new era

where source documents can be cross checked, compared and corrected.

In the past, corrections to errors in family history books have been done by penciled in notes or by inserting an addendum.

Thanks to computers, FamMail is a great place where we can compare various sources of information and

easily (and instantly) correct the online data. Old incorrect files can be overwritten and incorrect printed sheets can easily be replaced with newly printed (and corrected) pages.

Let's begin by noting errors in any of the printed family histories you may have. We will compile the corrections and add them to FamMail.

~GTR

## Please Share Your Stories, Photos and Ideas

One of the main objectives of this project is to gather as much information as possible in one place to be shared with the family.

The full potential of this project will only be realized with the participation of interested parties.

Please share your ideas, stories, photos, videos (or 8mm movies), audio files, scans of letters, documents and anything else that would be of interest to the family and can be preserved for future generations.

Many of us took pictures at picnics, weddings, reunions, or other family events and many of those photos have never been shared, even with the other people who were there.

Also, if you can correct the dates, names or any other information in

the blog, website, or newsletter, please do so.

### The FamMail Museum

The website will have a special "museum" feature with pages devoted to photos and descriptions of items of interest that belonged to our ancestors or give us a glimpse into history to better understand their times.

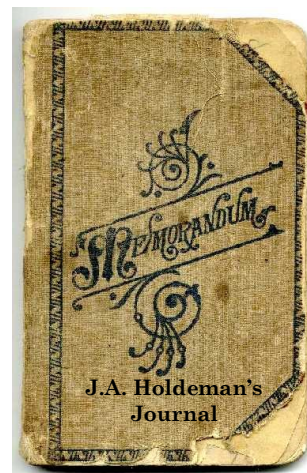
Audio and video files, photographs and scans of tools, dishes, quilts, rings, knives, etc. can be shared with everyone.

**There will be sections for the various family branches.**

Lets all share our own family related items with our relatives.

If you would like to share something and prefer that it not be on the blog or website, let me know. We can make those items available to family only (as attachments or downloads).

~GTR



## My Genealogy Collection

Over the years I've acquired books and binders, scribbled hundreds of notes and saved Internet articles and emails. Here are some of the family history references I have:

### Family Histories

The Kilmer Family History (1980) by Ralph and Mildred Kilmer, The Andreas Decker Family Record (1959) by Lydia Eck Cooper, the John David Nightengale Family Record by Lillian Nightengale Voth, The Nightengale binder by Aunt Hattie (Nightengale) Unruh, The Holdeman Descendants Vol I (1937) by Edwin Weaver and Vol II (1973) by Ella Holdeman (thank you Uncle Thomas), The Jacob Ratzlaff book (1958) by Marie (Ratzlaff) Schneider and Aunt Jean's update of that book, The Bernard Ratzlaff Family Record by Suzanna Unruh, the David S. Holdeman book (1951) by Mr. & Mrs. Obed Johnson and Mr. & Mrs. Orville E. Wiggers, Carolyn Regier's Henry J. and Katherine Ratzlaff binder (2001).

### Books Containing Family Names

Brothers in Deed to Brothers in Need and The Holdeman People (both by Hiebert), Spring Valley Mennonite Church 1873-1973, The 1963 Histories of the Congregations (Mennonite) and Directory of Civilian Public Service.

### Related History Books

The Pennsylvania Dutch (1950) by Fredric Klees, The Coming of the Russian Mennonites (1927) by C. Henry Smith, The Helpless Poles by Abe J. Unruh, Menno Simons' Life and Writings (1936) and in Plautdietsch: a book of stories and poems and a dictionary.

Community books for Canton and Galva, several other unattributed and undated booklets and binders.

Of course, the Internet is filled with pedigree charts, family histories, maps and reference materials far beyond the imagination of pencil and paper genealogists in the past.

### "The" John Holdeman

I also have three books by John Holdeman: Spiegel der Wahrheit (1880 (in old German typeface)), A History of the Church of God (1938) and Magistracy and War (1928).

"Johnny" founded the Holdeman branch of the Mennonite Church and is a 1st cousin three times removed to Gordon, Sondra & Connie.

*Christian and Christiana's sons, David and Amos were brothers. John A. Holdeman (son of David) and Johnny (son of Amos) were 1st cousins. That makes Katherine (Holdeman) Ratzloff his 1st cousin once removed and Rolan Ratzloff a 1st cousin twice removed and so we are 1st cousins thrice removed.*

I'm using the registered version (there is a free version) of Legacy Family Tree 7.5 by Millennia to research, enter and organize information, print charts, timelines, etc.

~GTR



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Photo by Eleanor

*I wrote about this photo in a letter to Connie in 2000: It's Dad standing by one of his old tractors and on the back, in his handwriting, it says: "1936 Model D 1920 Man" I've had the picture for years and years and just recently noticed that bit of humor. So Dad reached out to me here in May, 2000 and made me smile. Miss him so... GT*

# Looking Back

## Brief Overview

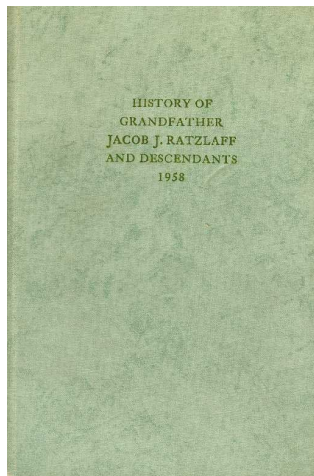
The earliest names we have of our direct line, where they came from and the dates they came to America include: Nicholas Haldeman (Switzerland - 1727) and, thanks to Rachel Godshalk's lineage, Gerhard Hendricks (Germany - 1685) and Jacob Gottshalk (Holland - 1702).

They settled in what eventually became the state of Pennsylvania. Our people then moved west along with the expanding nation.

In the coming months I will expand on this information, provide links to websites and blogs pertinent to our family history and post photos, documents and pedigree

charts on the FamMail website to illustrate the various branches of our family tree.

Rolan and Eleanor now have 17 Great Grandchildren who can trace their family tree to those pioneers.



We are all indebted to them and to our ancestral lines of Becker, Bensigner, Boese, Buzzard, Decker, Foth, Holdeman, Jantz, Jantzen, Kilmer, Kime, Koehn, Kuster, Linderman, Nachtigal, Nightengale, Pankratz, Pletcher, Ratzlaff, Ratzloff, Schultz and Voht plus the

many unnamed and unknown, for having the foresight and the courage to displace themselves and their families to seek the land of freedom and opportunity that we now enjoy.

Again I quote my Dad:

**“We can be proud of our heritage.”**

FamMail was originally created around 1995 as a newsletter (never sent). I set up the FamMail blog 9/2/2009 but didn't do anything with it until I decided to create the FamMail website.

The FamMail website has been online since 4/4/2011 and the Newsletter was added 1/1/2012.

~GTR (Gordon Thomas Ratzloff)