

AN ELLER FAMILY'S LIFE IN NEBRASKA AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

by Raymond Eller, 344 S. Serrano #6, Los Angeles, CA 90030



(Eds. note: Nothing seems more appropriate for this issue of the Chronicles, published on the eve of Eller Conference '91 in Estes Park, Colorado, than a story by an Eller, over 90 years of age,, who was born and reared on the plains of Nebraska. Especially is this so, when in this issue we seek to pay special tribute to those Ellers who moved west of the Mississippi River. The following from Raymond Eller's still keen memories describes in graphic detail one Eller families' life in a small town. Furthermore, no better reason can be imagined for compiling and sharing family history and genealogy than that which prompted Raymond Eller to write this candid and revealing letter to his three sons and which he now shares with the readers of the Eller Chronicles along with the history of each member of his family. We salute the impulse and the courage which prompted his action. We hope Raymond's plan to attend Conf' 91 in Estes Park comes to fruition.)

A LETTER FROM RAYMOND ELLER TO HIS SONS

My Dear Sons, Gary, James, Michael:

Living alone the last few years, I turned to writing articles about some of my earlier experiences, some that you know about and some you don't. I have no ambition to write a personal history, but you have had relatively little contact with my father's family members of whom I have written some comments in the following article. What I have written may be of limited interest to you. It might be my tardy attempt for you to become better acquainted, or at least to be better informed.

Each of you endured some unhappy times resulting from your mother's no fault divorce in your early years, including living conditions and moving from house to house, or living with your grandmother or my sisters. The divorce was unjustified and created problems that should not have occurred.

In saying that, I want to add that you had a wonderfully good mother, with her great love and care for each of you. You had some rough times, but she suffered the most. She was a strong character in most ways. Each of you have shown courage,, determination, and pride like her; qualities which enabled her to overcome her weakness by helping others, though too late to regain you.

Family is the basic cultural unit of our society and you have had limited exposure or knowledge of your mother's and my antecedents. I have a printed genealogy of my father's ancestors. I don't think your mother's people had a written or printed genealogy. At least I never heard it mentioned.

Your mother's father was George Anderson whose parents migrated from Sweden. Your mother's mother, Mamie Mincey, had English parents I believe. Trudy's aunt Ruby married James Pettit, whose daughter (an only child) married Maurice McClellan, living in the Knoxville, Tennessee area. Trudy's Aunt Pearl Shamblin I think had a son named Leon. I believe that the three sisters each had only one child. I have had no contact with any of Trudy's relatives since Mamie died which was when Michael was in the Air Service about 1965.

GENEALOGIES

I have two different printed genealogies of our closest Eller antecedents. I wish that you would preserve these and pass them on to two of your children. Logically this should be one each to Gary and James.

The latest volume of 485 pages published in 1957 is entitled: GEORGE MICHAEL ELLER AND DESCENDANTS OF HIS IN AMERICA. It was compiled by my first cousin, James W. Hook, and dates back to 1743. The book, out of print for several years, was reprinted in 1991 by the Eller Family Association. The earlier book by the same author is: FAMILY HISTORY AND GENEALOGY OF JAMES W. HOOK AND VIRGINIA ELLER. It was published in 1925 the year of a rare family reunion held in my home town of Clay

Center, Nebraska, attended by more than 100 persons from over the U.S.A. I believe the author's files are in the possession of Dwight E. Eller of Tucson, AZ.

My mother's maiden name was Bertha Adelaide Athey, daughter of Martin Van Buren Athey and Mary Elizabeth Bailey. She had two brothers, John and William.

Sister Florence and husband Ralph Ellis Cowan devoted much time and travel in the eastern States and Ireland, searching various sources of information for the Athey names. She developed a genealogy in typewritten form of which I have one copy, Supplemented by several earlier authors on Ireland and Atheys covering the period 1642 to 1975.

It is quite interesting and I suggest each of you read it and maybe make a copy. The Atheys were in Ireland for many generations, notably in the area shown on the maps as Athy, and later Galway an Ireland's west coast. It is assumed that they and many other Irish were French Norman migrants.

The Atheys go back to Richard Warrens lineage which dates back a hundred generations to 1215 as researched by Robert Glen Thurtle, who was related to the Haylitis, old family friends in our hometown. His article states that this lineage of Richard Warren included "descent from ancient, medieval and modern Kings of England, France, Scotland and Ireland." That shouldn't flatter us too much. (I won't brag if you won't). But most people would take some pride in ancestors of such lineage. Maybe we should. Thurtle and Ward Haylett became Knights of the Barter in recent years through Richard Warren's lineage.

Perhaps we can take more pride in our Mayflower lineage of Francis and John Cooke, Thomas Rogers and William White, in addition to Richard Warren, either as passengers or signers of the Mayflower Compact.

Sister Florence became . a member of the Society of Mayflower Descendants. She told me that through the same sources I could become a member of the Sons of the American Revolution. I had written James W. Hook inquiring about the S.A.R. soon after I came to California in 1927. He was lukewarm, referring me to Harley Vannoy with whom I was unacquainted. I didn't pursue it further.

Anyway, we had some great religious ancestry. My paternal grandmother who bare ten Eller sons and five Eller daughters of Harvey Eller "as French Huguenot. Many of the Vannoys were Huguenots, a Protestant Order opposed and persecuted by Roman Catholics and the Government of France over a long period of time. Many Huguenot families in Europe migrated to the American colonies, from 1660's on.

My files contain a newsletter of the National Huguenot Society entitled CROSS OF LANGUEDOC dated March 1877, which is most interesting. It lists the major events associated with the Reformation, from 1054 to 1844. It might be termed "A Short History of Protestantism." Copies can be made available,

The enclosed article on my father's family was written to impress you with the fact that your forebears were devout and religious people believing in God and Christianity. You were not exposed to enough of this in your youth for which I am to blame, though not by design.

However, I believe each of you has lived a Christian life. I trust this will always continue along with being your brother's keeper as a Christian and family precept and practice.

MY ELLER LINEAGE:	George Michael	/1/
	Peter	/2/
	John	/3/
	Simeon	/4/
	Harvey	/5/
	Jacob H.	/6/
	Raymond (me)	/7/

DESCENDANTS OF RAYMOND:

Gary Raymond	/8a/	1933
James William	/8b/	1939
Michael Anthony	/8c/	1941

NOTES: (1) Jacob H.'s middle name is not Harvey. He just wanted an initial which he chose.

(2) George Michael was an immigrant from Germany in 1743 and the principal subject of the J.W. Hook 1957 book recently reprinted by the Eller Family Association.

(3) PP. 6-16 of the Hook book provides much of interest about Peter and those early years from 1743 to 1800.

RAYMOND ELLER

March 1989



Raymond Eller - Age 27

RAYMOND ELLER, A RESUME

BORN February 23, 1900, Clay Center, Nebraska

SCHOOL Elementary 1905-14;, Clay Center, NE
High School 1915-1919 Clay Center, NE

COLLEGE Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio 1919-1920, 1 yr. Univ. of NE, Lincoln, NE, 1921-24, 3 yrs. - BScBA

MILITARY AIR FORCE SERVICE
Columbus Barracks, Ohio 1920-21, 3 wks.
Kelly Field #1 and #2, San Antonio, TX, 7 mo.
Chanute Field, IL, 4 mo.
Rolling Field, Washington, D.C., 1/2 mo.

EMPLOYMENT

1924-
25: J.H. Eller & Co., Clay Center, NE

1926- Walker & Fulk, CPA, Lincoln, NE Guaranty Fund State Commission,
27: Lincoln, NE

1927: To Los Angeles, CA in July; lived with sister Mabel 1927-31
Pacific Southwest Bank, Accrual Dept. 5 mo

1928-
35: J. Arthur Greenfield & Co., CPA in Los Angeles and Bakersfield

- 1933: CPA certificate # 1014; on leave for several months for a special audit as principal
- 1936- Auditor of Los Angeles Stock Exchange, supervising member firm's
42: financial condition
- 1942: Resigned to become cost accountant for Aircraft Accessories Corp. Kansas City, KS
- 1943: In April returned to L.A. as Treasurer of Phonette Co. in Hollywood, a war industry.
- 1944: Volunteered as Controller of Dewey-Bricker Presidential Campaign Committee
- 1945: Partner with C.L. Johnson, CPA in Public Accounting
- 1946- Free Lance and temporary work: Lybrand Ross Bros. Montgomery
. CPA firm and Accountant for Earl Warren for Governor Committee;
Accountant for Republican Central Committee of L.A. County, and
Congressional Candidates Committee.
- 1947- Opened own office at 427 W. 5th St., Los Angeles which was
. maintained until 1947
- 1948: Acted as Controller of expenditures for Dewey-Warren Presidential Committee, So. CA and most congressional campaigns in L.A. County.
- 1952: Held staff position as Controller of Republican Central Committee of L.A. County and its associated Finance Committee. Retired voluntarily July 1972.
- 1962- Initiated project to produce an annual Almanac in 1962 of elected
72: office holders in L.A. County of Legislature and Senate, and County officials, District Maps, registration and voting data on a non-partisan basis. Supervised records and expenditures as well from 1962 to 1972. A financial success with profits being donated to candidates campaigns.

1972-
82: Continued income tax work for limited clientele.

1982: Wrote and published 60 page book as a review of activities and personnel of the Republican Central Committee of L.A. County which was made available to all Central Committee members numbering 196 in 29 assembly districts.

PRIVATE VENTURES

1954-
70: Prospected for gold and other minerals in many areas in northern and central California on week-ends, holidays, and other times when not too busy. With two associates, acquired the Kelsey Gold and Silver Mine in El Dorado County which was resold in 1979 at a satisfactory profit.

RAYMOND ELLER, CPA
MARCH 1989

BOYHOOD REMINISCENSES of the JACOB H. ELLER FAMILY of NEBRASKA

(with references to the genealogies of the ELLER, ATHEY, BAILEY, VANNOY AND HOOK families)

By RAYMOND ELLER

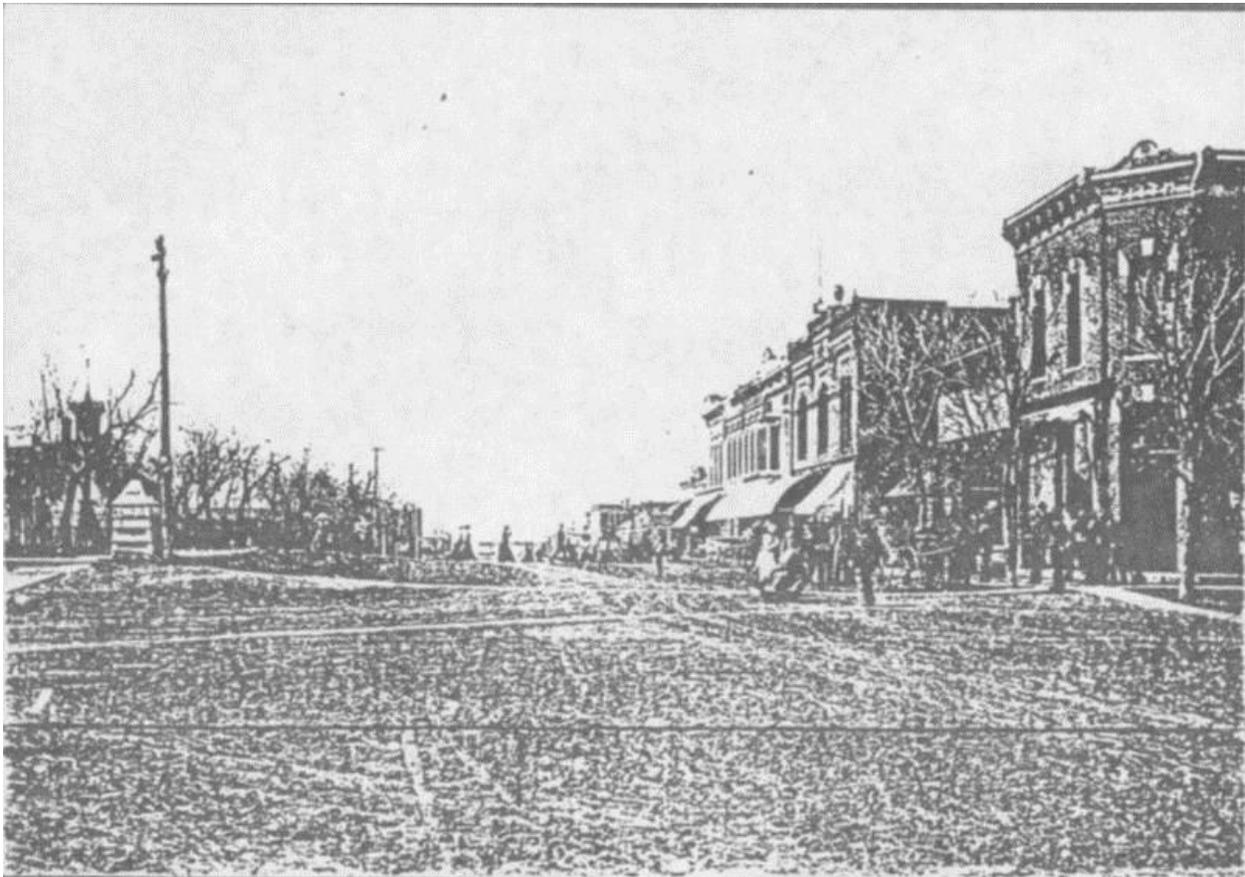
(written in 1988-1989)

GRATITUDE

After I wrote a half dozen articles about my business activities as a C.P.A. and my gold prospecting years, my niece, Frances Rollins Rankin urged me to write something of my father's family life. This was shortly before her death in 1988. I started writing then and continued to August 1989.

CLAY CENTER, NEBRASKA

HOME TOWN OF THE JACOB H. ELLER FAMILY



The photo above of the main business street looking west from Brown Avenue was taken prior to 1914. The exact year is unknown. The first brick two story building on the right was occupied in early decades

by the Clay Center State Bank until the Federal "Bank Holiday" of 1933. It was built in 1889 by my uncle Jesse F. Eller with whom my father was associated in a real estate business before opening merchandise stores in 1894. The Eller name and the date, 1889, appear in white letters beneath the cornice facing the intersection. The J.H. Eller & Co. store buildings are half-way up the block. The Clay County Courthouse is located in the center of the block to the left, which was replaced by a new two story structure in the early 1920's.

Clay Center did not have any paved streets until 1918 when the City Council finally authorized a tax increase for the purpose. The main street, named Fairfield, was paved with brick from Highway 14 on the east to the Burlington R.R. tracks and depot on the west, and encircling the Courthouse block.

There are no automobiles in the photo. It depicts the later Horse and Buggy Years.

HORSE AND BUGGY YEARS

Our family was born and raised in a small village on the plains of Southern Nebraska of less than a thousand citizens, during the thirty years from 1888 to 1918. That period is appropriately referred to since as Horse and Buggy Years as the first passenger automobiles were invented and produced in the early 1900's.

The first car in mass production was the Ford with prices ranging from \$290 to \$800. I remember the first three in town. M.M. Johnson, the chicken incubator man, took us smaller children for short rides around town with envious adults watching. I think that this was about 1908 to 1910. The Overland car with a much larger body was also popular, selling for \$1500. Jesse Jessup of Clay Center and Uncle Jesse Eller of Harvard each had Overlands with five passenger bodies and moveable soft tops, in which we and our cousins particularly liked to ride.

Dozens of auto factories began manufacturing their new makes of cars in the middle West. One factory, the Johnson Company opened in our town with a car called the Black Hawk. I think they stopped production after the first three or four cars. It was a fun game to learn the names of all cars we saw on the roads, even in that agricultural areas, as they seemed to appear out of nowhere.

However, the term "Horse and Buddy Years" was applicable to living conditions other than transportation, such as production of water, light, power, heat, refrigeration, sewage, irrigation, and road paving. Each needed improvement badly.

HORSE AND BUGGY YEARS WATER AND POWER

There was little surface water available near our town. The closest river being the Little Blue twelve miles to the south and Sandy Creek, often dry, six miles away. There was swamp land a few miles southeast of town too shallow and impure for household use, though excellent for hunting wild fowl during the migratory periods. This group of ponds and swamplands became officially designated as the

Sacramento Game preserve in later years. California thought it had the only Sacramento, the Capitol of that State.

There was plentiful, good sweet, water beneath the town however, and wells of fifty to two hundred feet became the source of most drinking water. We didn't have a well, but were permitted to obtain water from a neighbor's well pumped by a windmill. The owner was a barber, and one must wonder now how he could afford such facilities and provide free water when haircuts were only two-bits and shaves fifteen cents.

Rainwater could be saved and used if a cistern was used to collect the runoff from roof tops and drains. We had one about fifteen feet deep with a hand pump in the pantry. This water was used for washing clothes, hair and kitchenware, but not for drinking.

But the relics of windmills and cisterns had to be improved or replaced for better service and safety for the entire town, small though it was. In 1905 the City had dug a deep well with a central pumping plant and a hundred feet high steel tank for storage and gravity pressure. Ditches had to be dug to serve the town through steel or concrete pipes.

The new water system in the town, of course, did not benefit the farms. Each farm had its own windmill which gradually became supplemented or replaced by water pumps. As rural electrification became available, some pumping used the new power source, though more expensive to operate. Water production moved out of the horse and buggy period, slowly but surely.

Electric power producing equipment was also tardy in arriving in the town. There was some power available from the flour mill, but inadequate for general use. The Johnson incubator factory produced its own power, but again not sufficient for general use. In 1910, Johnson erected a plant adequate to serve the entire town. Until then, reading at night required kerosene lamps. Even one in each room didn't produce much light a few feet away. Carrying a lighted lamp from room to room or from downstairs to upstairs was the custom. Housekeeping included washing the glass globe and trimming the wick ever so often to get the maximum light available.

The principal grain crops in those years were corn, wheat, and oats. Livestock consisted of beef and dairy cattle, swine and fowl. After irrigation was "discovered", soy beans and mild maize and alfalfa became paying crops. But irrigation was practically unknown in our area until after the Dust Bowl days of the early 1930's. One of the first deep wells for irrigation purposes was drilled in 1940 by a farmer near Harvard.

Why farm irrigation was not initiated earlier is a puzzle in retrospect. The volume of rain fluctuated from year to year and so did the grain crop. Out of a five year cycle the average might be one really good year, two average years and two poor ones. There was underground water flowing from the Platte River southeastward toward the Republican and Blue Rivers at relatively shallow depths in several counties including Clay. This was well known and of record in the Geography Department at the University of

Nebraska. This knowledge has been fully utilized in the forty or more years since 1940 and corn crops of 100 bushels or more per acre are usually realized.



J. H. ELLER

OH, MY PAPA

To me he was so wonderful! Eddie Fisher said it all in that song he popularized many years ago in his stereo album.

My great delight as a small child was to listen to him read stories to me after dinner on cold winter evenings. It was one of the few regular activities he exercised at home. He ran the store for long hour days, but mother and grandmother Athey ran the house. All decisions about living conditions were made by Mother, and Dad, executed them. I don't recall ever hearing them argue. It was always a discussion of how and when.

At an early age, I became aware that each of my four sisters had two given names, though the second one was seldom spoken, but I had only one. I couldn't understand that and yammered about it so much that my parents told me that I could choose my own middle name. Naturally I chose Dad's name of Jacob.

This was quite enjoyable to me for some time until customers at the store began to call me "Jake" or "Little Jake" often with smiles and undue emphasis. What I had done in choosing another name had boomeranged and annoyed me. In a temper fit I told one adult that if he didn't stop calling me Jake, "I'll shimmer you." He replied, "alright, shimmer me then". I did. I kicked him in the shins. However, the nickname stuck with me through the lower grades and high school.

Though the entire family loved music there was no radio or television prior to WWII, and we got our music from an organ with motive power of two foot pedals. Later when Merle specialized in music we got a piano. It stayed in the family until Frances settled in California. She left it for me and when I also went west, it fell to Florence and was moved to her home near Lincoln, and later Wichita.

Phonographs or gramophones, playing wax records, were becoming more popular but few families had one, including ours, probably due to the cost. Some Sunday afternoons Dad would hitch Old Jim to the buggy and the two of us would drive a mile north of town to the farm house of the Snyders. They had a phonograph with a large purple horn which resembled an oversized morning glory flower, with a good variety of favorite music, vocal and instrumental, of the era.

I don't recall suffering corporeal punishment during boyhood, reprimands but nothing worse.

Unlike some fathers, Dad never engaged me in sports such as playing catch with a baseball or football. I doubt that he had enjoyed this as a boy. Too much farm work and chores. When I played sport games in high school he never left his store to watch me. Nor did he attend class plays, and such events when I was in high school. Not that it mattered much to me. He just wasn't oriented toward sports. He got his exercise lifting cases of canned foods, bags of flour, and hundred pound sacks of sugar. I used to admire his strong hands and biceps, which had first developed with farm work.

He had only two weaknesses, the telephone and tobacco. He had to phone long distance some wholesale salesmen on a weekly basis to place orders for fruit and merchandise. Telephone service was poor at best locally, but long distance service was a nightmare which aggravated him at times to distraction. The other "vice" was chewing "Horse shoe" plug tobacco. Who is perfect ? He considered the consumption of alcohol to be the worst vice in the world. Marijuana, cocaine and "crack" were no problem in our town, nor probably elsewhere on the great Western plains.

Dad seldom missed attending Sunday School at the Congregational church, and church twice each Sunday. He joined the Masonic Lodge as I did later as he wanted me to do.

He liked people and as his store was patronized by farmers from over most of Clay County he got acquainted with them all, and sooner or later learned their family connections. Even after he retired at age 87 people would come to his house to inquire about others they had lost track of. What a memory. He could have run for political office in the community on a first name basis. He was always a Republican, his greatest idol after Abraham Lincoln, was Teddy Roosevelt. He was very pleased that I became a spoke in the wheel of the G.O.P. in Los Angeles County as a long time Controller of the Central Committee.

Getting an education on the plains in the years following the Civil war of 1861-1865 was not the simple matter that it is now where public school attendance is mandatory. The country was poor and trying to renew its economy to become more than an agricultural nation. The Homestead Acts of Congress made raw land available and also caused the construction of new railroads across the nation which created need for new industries and services. The Homesteaders with new land had to scratch the soil and nature's resources to make a living. It wasn't easy.

Grandfather Harvey Eller and wife Caroline and family of seven came to Iowa from North Carolina in 1853, buying a farm near Hedrick in Wapello County where eight more children were born, including Dad. Most of them had meager educations due to lack of schools and funds for private schools. Dad finished the sixth grade and probably had few regrets about what he had missed. He made do with what he had acquired.

One of his greater attributes was his fairness in all matters and to all people. I think it is fair to him to paraphrase the oft quoted statement of Will Rogers that he never met a man he didn't like, to say that no one who knew Jake Eller disliked him, be it man, woman or child.

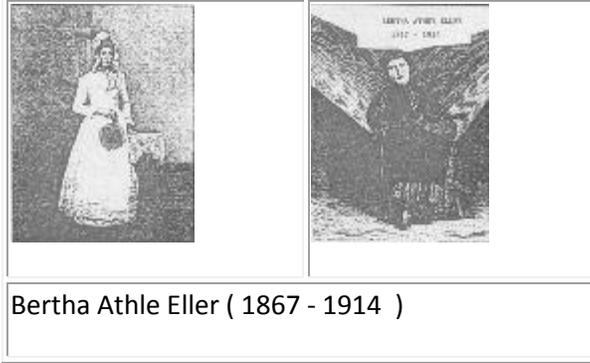
I REMEMBER MOTHER

Yes, indeed, I remember mother. Who doesn't remember theirs? My memories are those of great love.

My earliest recollection was at the age of three. There was a small barn on the alley at the rear of the lot, with a shed roof sloping down to the chicken pen. One day mother and I climbed on to the roof to watch the penned chickens. Nothing happened, but suddenly I became aware of a great feeling of love for her, as the dearest closest person to me in my young life. I have never forgotten that image of her.

There aren't many unusual occurrences in the first several years of life. Or can this thought be simply an alibi for not remembering more that is worth recording? I recall an incident involving the loss of mother's purse. Apparently I was permitted access to it. Why, I don't know. When it disappeared for some time, such as several days, I was held accountable. Memory failed me. I was impressed with my malfeasance walking up and down the sidewalk in front the house. No doubt there was suspicion I had lost the purse then. Not so. Several days later father discovered it in the barn hay loft.

I recall some visitors at our home in the south section of the town of 900 named Clay Center. Mother's brother, Bill Athey, there several times during his bachelor years from his job as a guard with Nebraska State prison in Lincoln. He was always hale and hearty and held me on his lap. Then there were some of the Campbell family, Maude and Carry. Of course, there were neighbor children nearby. Eppersons lived at the corner with a large lot between theirs and ours. Charles, Mildred and Kathryn were of similar ages to my four sisters, Merle, Mabel, Florence, and Frances. In playtime sports were the three Haylitts, Fannie Ward and Gerald. Eugene came later. Mrs. Epperson and Mr. Haylitt were sister and brother. An old photo of most of the three family playmates is still discernable. I am the youngest, as a baby sitting on Mabel's lap.



At age three I also recall when Uncle Tom Eller's family moved to a farm in Hitchcock County, leaving town on a train which passed one long block from our back door with everyone waving goodbye. We lived on the right side of the tracks.

I felt closest to mother before my teens when we two were alone. The most frequent occasions were Sunday mornings. After Sunday school, we came home while the rest of the family stayed for Church services. I helped her prepare some types of food for Sunday noon dinner; weekday dinners were at night even though it was called "supper" in our neck of the woods. I washed and peeled root vegetables like potatoes, carrots and turnips. If the piece de resistance was to be fried chicken, I would kill a chicken from our flock and sometimes remove the feathers and mother would take it from there. I don't recall having two chicks for a meal, but can't explain now why one was enough for seven people.

If we needed a dessert, mother prepared the ice cream ingredients and I did the freezing with cracked ice, rock salt, and lots of elbow grease. We didn't talk much, but the closeness was delightfully absorbed by both. While turning the freezer handle, I often day dreamed about what it would be like to live in the Holy Land as depicted in the Bible. Maybe in that day's Sunday school lesson, of Nazareth, the Dead Sea, Corinth, Samar and many other places so often mentioned. I travelled there often at age 11 to 14 in my mind's eye.

Mother was an excellent cook. We had much plain food especially vegetables, fresh canned or bottled, including store cans and glass mason jars. She had her own recipes of desserts and other specialties, savored by all and consumed in toto, meaning there was seldom much left over at the first helpings.

Mother died in February 1914 just short of her 47th and my 14th birthday. A kidney infection finally was diagnosed as nephritis, but we were told it was Bright's disease. Hospitals were not in vogue on the Nebraska plains. I doubt if there was even one closer than Lincoln. Her bed was set up in the front living room as the only downstairs bedroom was too small. She lay there for weeks with enduring spells of pain. Doctors came from other towns to learn of this strange ailment and possibly to diagnose and prescribe. I recall a group of at least five MD's present at one time.

We children were warned not to touch her as even bodily sweat might be poisonous. Later stages of the

disease included hallucinations. I shall never forget near the end her singing sweet songs, one especially "Mary, Queen of the Scots". There were also Irish melodies, but I don't recall specific ones, nor does Frances.

I doubt if any of us felt trauma, as younger children might. We were family, all in one home with the constant presence of mother in her sick bed in the living room as we came and went.

I personally had another solace. Quite some time after she left us, I had a vision or lifelike dream of her and me. As I approached, she was sitting with hair loosely falling to her neck and a slight joyous smile which was followed by tears as she opened her arms to hug me close to her and kiss me. In that posture I have seen her a thousand times since as clearly as the first time. Was it only a dream? It couldn't have been more real to endure in mind as it has. Or was it a vision from Heaven?

GRANDMOTHER

Grandmother Athey moved in with us after the upper half story was made whole, with five bedrooms, and later a sleeping porch holding several beds. She did some of the housework while able. Mother helped Dad in the store a great deal especially with the books, but she usually prepared breakfasts and evening dinners. As Grandmother failed, a live-in-maid was employed for \$4 per week with board and room. That was about 1908-1910. Grandmother's limbs and neck became a painful problem and she called on Frances and me to massage her frequently. It was a chore, but worth it when she would perk up and then thank us.

Grandmother Athey helped with the noon meal if mother was working at the store, and with the dishes, washing of lighter clothing and sewing us children's clothing, darning and replacing buttons. One day when I was four or five she called me to her side to inspect a piece of underwear known then as a union suit. It was a hand-me-down of Frances which she had grown out of, and I, into. An old, old custom in many families. Pointing to a small hole midway in the front of the garment Grandma said, "Raymond, have you seen a little mouse that might have made that hole?" Thinking very fast, I replied, "Yes, I think I saw one in the barn last week." "Oh". she said, "I thought so." As the J.H. Eller store had a full line of children's wear, I felt short changed that I was not provided with a boy's type of underwear.

For me the usual customs and household routines lived on during my earlier years as though I was a fifth girl since I followed my sisters by ten years. My best dress-up, Sunday go-to-meeting outfit was a scotch kilt and a homemade white shirt with cuffs and a high collar trimmed with lace. And, not to forsake femininity entirely, my hair was allowed to grow to considerable length, then, braided across the top of my head. I still have a six inch long braid from the last (and first) cutting, with a two inch tail of lovely, live, median brown hair looking as fresh as it might have been originally; this was kept all these years in a disintegrating leather purse. The hair is accompanied by a pair of spectacles made of thin black wire with lens pieces one and one-half by one inch with glass missing.

"How did Grandmother, living with grandchildren, amuse themselves in those years early in the century without radio, television, phonograph or even electric lights? It sounds like a dull old age compared with home life of old folks now.

Grandmother, never in a hospital, they were scarce on the plains, died in our home in 1910. Burial was in the Fairfield cemetery, where her husband had long preceded her. Services were held in our home. The horse drawn carriages left for the sixteen mile round trip in an extremely cold blizzard with snow on the ground and still falling. I was not allowed to go with the entourage, and really didn't want to experience the cold nor witness the deposit of her casket in the grave. We all loved her very much and missed her greatly. She had taught me much of the basic truths for my age. My only complaint about Grandma was that she insisted that I, at age 7, take a doll to an afternoon party of Frances' Sunday school class of boys and girls several years older than I. The boys had great fun tormenting me as a sissie playing with dolls; a push came to shove and being outdoors I opened fire with stones of some size, finally pinging one boy on his foot with considerable pain to that member. Then I was left alone, but after hiding my Dolly, where she belonged.

My Eller grandparents lived in Wapello County, Iowa among several of their children who never migrated further west as had many of the others of their fifteen offspring. Harvey and Caroline had migrated to Iowa in 1852 with their first ten children. They were opposed to slavery and the liquor traffic in North Carolina. Grandfather visited father in our home in 1906 shortly prior to his death. Grandmother whom I had never known, died in 1904".

SISTER MERLE



MERLE ELLER ROLLINS
1889 - 1966

After mother had passed on, sister Mary Merle, eleven years my senior, ran the Eller household after she and husband, Calvin Rollins, moved in from a rented house in the same block. Florence was working in the post office, Frances was in high school, and I was in the eighth grade. Father and Cal were at the store most daylight hours. . .

Merle made the decisions and guided me through my teens. Most education I got outside of school

originated with her. For spending money she taught me to clip selected music from the monthly magazine, Etrude, for twenty-five cents per issue. She gave me lessons on the piano. I never learned to play with two hands, but I did learn to read music which became useful when I took violin lessons in the two summer months. I had a greater desire and aptitude for baseball with neighbor boys and didn't become proficient on either the piano or violin. Previously at age eleven she had given me a book on what a young boy should know about sex. As I advanced in my teens, I realized that the book method is much preferable to word of mouth, promiscuous as that can be. Present mothers should be so smart. I don't recall father ever mentioning the subject.

Mary Merle did not confine her "caring" to those in the home. She felt some of the neighbors needed help or guidance and she was never slow to act if someone was in trouble. When Willy Ingram, living across the street, blew a thumb off with a dynamite percussion cap she heard the explosion and was first to arrive on the scene in Ingram's kitchen, providing first aid and phoning Bill's father's store for help. . .

In my forties, after her four children had become adults, she rescued a nine year old cousin named Dwight from an orphanage, and raised him in her home or where ever she might be. Dad may have suggested it. She just thought that he should have a better chance out of the institution than in. So she did it. Whether that had any bearing on her husband's Reno divorce, most of us don't know.

Merle took Dwight with her to a new war-created job as dietician for trainees at Doane College. After the war, she took him with her to start a new life in Montana, having found a position as chef at a large Dude ranch. Dwight finished high school in Bozeman and worked on horse ranches there and later in Arizona. He liked Arizona so entered law school there and obtained his degree. Active in Young Republican organization, he obtained an appointment (non-political) as assistant City Attorney for Tucson, a position he still occupies. Merle helped with the financing. .

Merle's four children were Catherine, Frances, Calvin, and Marjorie. Having been born in our village, Sister Frances and I, being closer to them in age than my three elder sisters, considered them to be part of our father's family. . .

Catherine (Kay) married Robert Browne, an airplane pilot and flying instructor, in 1938. She operated Tea Rooms in Lincoln and later in Des Moines. Bob stayed in aviation all his life, as flying instructor during the war, piloting for Slick airlines for many years, then for Cummings Diesel Motors of Columbus, Indiana where he became chief pilot until his retirement. . .

Frances married Elwood Rankin, a trainer of gaited horses, who rode his own horses at many shows in Pacific coast cities of three ' states. Together they bought a four acre property in Bellvue with horse training and boarding facilities. They built a new house and used the existing smaller one as a quest house. Elwood also sold marine hardware for a wholesaler on the coast requiring some travel. . .

Calvin, Jr. finished study at the University of Nebraska "with high honors," in the summer of 1941 and

was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa. He also was awarded the Dan Walter Miller undergraduate scholarship with a purse of \$750 in his senior year. He then attended Cornell University for graduate study on a Russel Sage Foundation scholarship which was terminated until after the war by the draft for military service in 1942.

After his return from the service he was awarded a Rhodes scholarship at Oxford, England followed by a Rockefeller Foundation scholarship at Cambridge.

As professor of philosophy he had a long and varied career at the following institutions:

Nebraska Wesleyan University	1951-1952
University of Melbourne, Australia	1952-1954
Brooklyn College	1954-1956
Oberlin, Ohio College	1956-1965
University of Wisconsin Summer	1956
University of Pittsburg, Visiting Fellow	1962-1963
Australian National University at Canberra as Visiting Lecturer	Fall 1964,1965,1967
University of Connecticut	1967-1987

Head of Philosophy Dept. 6 and 1/2 yrs.

He was also visiting professor at the University of North Carolina a half year in 1965 and the University of Western Ontario 1967-1968.

At all ages Calvin was close to his grandfather's family.

As a very young boy he would telephone us in the home town, too frequently about nothing in particular. He visited the store often, and talked with his grandfather more than his father. At age eleven he wrote a letter to us in California which I still have. He has written me several times a year since his return from teaching in Australia. Twice we have fished for salmon together with his son Mark, off Westport, Washington, while visiting his sister Fran in Bellevue. Despite his remarkable scholastic and teaching careers, he has never appeared the least bit pedantic to us, though well he might have. .

Marjorie (Mari) was also born in our home town, while I was in College and I remember her first on a trip Merle made to see Calvin, Sr. during the months he spent at Mayos with goiter trouble. She asked me to meet her on the train in Lincoln which she was taking to Omaha. I did so and while waiting for her train to Rochester she asked me to hold six month old Marjorie while she visited a rest room in Omaha Grand Central depot. She became fretful, active and loud, and a combination of all three produced a crescendo that filled the depot. To my consternation, she stiffened like a board and turned scarlet as a boiled lobster. It occurred to me that I might be accused of kidnapping, but I was not accosted, and the worst attention I got was looks of pity.

Marj attended the University of Chicago and then followed Merle to Bozeman where she continued her education at Montana State University. She married Bill Huffine a member of a well-known rancher family. They operated a ranch just east of Bozeman, specializing in raising thoroughbred black Angus cattle, and entering some of their best ones in cattle shows. Some of the Huffine brothers had a meat market featuring their own smoked meats, especially bacon and ham of the finest flavor.

Marj became an accountant and had responsible accounting positions in Bozeman during much of her married life and since Bill died. The ranch is about to be sold for a price of six figures which removes all her worries. She has a town house in the same area that Fran lived in. The two lovely daughters, Ann and Jane, are both employed out of Bozemen at the present time.

SISTER MABEL



MABEL ELLER JESSUP
1890 - 1966

Mabel preceded me by ten years, so I know little of her earlier years. When I was seven, I recall Dad and I taking the Dolly (a railroad train) to Crete to help both Mabel and Merle move into a dormitory on the Doane College campus. Some furniture and bedding from home accompanied or maybe preceded us. I don't recall helping in the move, if I did at all. But it was the most unusual occurrence in my life 'til that time. I could have bragged, and probably did, that I had been to college at age seven. Twelve years later, I could and possibly should have enrolled at Doane College. Instead, I chose to go a thousand miles east to Oberlin, Ohio for my freshman year. The principal reason for that was because Frances' husband Ralph was a graduate of Oberlin and was varsity football quarterback. Wasn't college for athletes?

Mabel's year at Doane was followed by summer school at Peru Normal College. She became teacher of the second grade in the home public school and I was one of her pupils. She enjoyed teaching and was more innovative than many. From her schooling, she brought new songs and teaching methods into her classroom which became quite popular.

Her teaching was limited to a few years. Our cousin, Caroline Trexler, wife of Jesse Jessup, with two daughters, died in 1909. Mabel married Jessup in 1911 and they and the girls, Dorothy and Carol, moved to California in 1912. That she raised them is praiseworthy. That she had no children of her own was, if not tragic, at least unfair. She would have been a wonderful mother for she had so many great qualities. She had a full life, as it was. She taught psychology at a private school in Los Angeles. She owned and managed a publication devoted to religious music, cantatas, and entertainment for Church groups. She was a leader in P.E.O. of which she was State President in 1948, an organization Director soon after.

Her home was open to the family, short term or long. Most of us had lived in her home at times, Frances and Ed, Fran Rollins, Dorothy and a son, and Carol's children. I lived with Mabel and Jesse three years upon coming to California and occasionally later on. I stayed in California through her influence.

She, like Merle, died at age 75 with a similar heart disorder. Another great loss to our family and her P.E.O.

SISTER FLORENCE



FLORENCE ELLER COWAN

1892 - 1982

RICHARD ROBERT & CHARLES

As both Merle and Mabel were married and left our home when I was quite young, I felt closer to sister Florence. . .

Florence had some of her high school friends at our house for a party one evening when I was ten. I recall little of it except that Halley's Comet was at its brightest that night. Sixty years later my memory was confirmed by one who attended the party, Charles H. Epperson, an attorney in Stockton. The Comet was due west and brilliant to naked eyes at maybe 45 degrees vertical. The next appearance, so widely publicized in 1976 was anti-climatic, at least in Los Angeles where the smog was too thick to permit visual penetration. . .

While in "Bizad" school at University of Nebraska in Lincoln I lived in the home of Florence and Ralph two years, and off and on working there in 1926 and 1927. They moved to Wichita in 1929 and started a concrete block plant. I visited there once a year, many of the years from 1948 to 1981, usually traveling by auto.

Their family of three boys was one of unusual accomplishment. All three had early College courses at Friends College in Wichita. Robert Duane, the eldest, obtained his degree from Johns Hopkins University and became a nuclear physicist at Los Alamos, retiring in 1986. In 1981 he authored the 700 page book, "The theory of atomic structure and spectra" which also contains extensive articles by other nuclear physicists. Robert was honored with a Ph.D. by Lund University of Sweden. .

Florence's second son, Richard Eller Cowan, after one year in Oberlin, joined the military service and was sent from boot camp to Belgium. The war was going badly and allied troops were being pushed back by the Germans in the area which became known as the Battle of the Bulge. Green infantrymen were moved into the trenches as seems to be the normal practice to save the regulars from early extinction, and Dick was among them. He was killed in action near Krinkelter Wald December 3, 1944. The previous day he had alone held off a panzer tank and eighty foot soldiers when our lines were penetrated; killing most of the Germans with his machine gun, he was the last to leave the battle scene. He was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor after the war was over. The citation is of record in the George Michael Eller genealogy, compiled and published by James W. Hook, our first cousin, the son of my father's sister, Virginia, and James Hook.

CITATION OF RICHARD ELLER COWAN

From James W. Hook's Genealogy of
George Michael Eller pp. 236-238

"Private Cowan, was a heavy machine gunner in a section attached to Company I in the vicinity of Krinkelter Wald, Belgium, 178 December 1944 when that company was attacked by a numerically superior force of German infantry and tanks. The first six waves of hostile infantrymen were repulsed with heavy casualties, but the seventh drive with tanks killed and wounded all but three of his section, leaving Private Cowan to man his gun, supported by only fifteen or twenty riflemen of Company I. He maintained his position, holding off the Germans until the rest of the shattered force had set up a new line along a fire break. Then, unaided, he moved his

machine Gun and ammunition to the second position. At the approach of a Royal Tiger tank, he held his fire until about eighty infantrymen supporting the tank appeared at a distance of about one hundred and fifty yards. His first burst killed or wounded half of these infantrymen. His position was rocked by an 88 millimeter shell when the tank opened fire, but he continued to man his gun, pouring deadly fire into the Germans when they again advanced. He was barely missed by another shell. Fire from three machine guns and innumerable small arms struck all about him; an enemy rocket shook him badly but did not drive him from his gun. Infiltration of the enemy had by this time made the position untenable, and the order was given to withdraw. Private Cowan was the last man to leave, voluntarily covering the withdrawal of his remaining comrades. His heroic actions were entirely responsible for allowing the remaining men to retire successfully from the scene of their last-ditch stand.

Signed HARRY S. TRUMAN

The third son, Charles Russell Cowan, graduated from the University of Kansas and in 1947 from Northwestern Medical College with an M.D. degree. He located for some time in Los Angeles in 1948 as an intern at Good Samaritan Hospital and we became well acquainted. Following this, he went to the U.S. Medical Corps and for some years was in charge of the U.S. Hospital in Paris. In the 1960s, he and his family returned to California and he began his medical practice in Garden Grove, specializing in treatment of allergies. . .

Florence was the only one of our immediate family who had an abnormal interest in genealogy of the Eller and Athey family trees. The Eller and Hook American forebears had been thoroughly researched by James W. Hook, published in book form in 1925 and 1957 in volumes of 173 and 485 pages respectively. Though there are several later generations, she confined her supplement to our immediate family, trusting that younger Ellers would update the rest of the Century, which I believe is contemplated by one of us. . .

SISTER FRANCES



FRANCES ELLER ANDERSON

1896 -

1916 photo

Frances, being closer to my age than the other three, and I were playmates for some years before I was school age and later while both were in grade school. She played most of the games that neighbor boys of my age played, with the exception of baseball. Such games as run-sheep-run, cops and robbers, Indian fights (usually with hedge balls), prisoner base, climbing trees and the oldest exercise, plain foot racing. She was good at all of them. A next door neighbor, Earl, at present the oldest citizen in the home town, claims she outran all the boys up to and including high school years. Some called her a tomboy. . .

Another party I recall also, quite informal, occurred when (Frances) was in high school. It seems that some high school boys from Harvard (town, not University) had discovered our high school beauties and besieged them after school one day and our front porch became the rendezvous. They were all several years my senior, girls and boys alike. I considered the meeting improper. I think I had a fixation about other towns and schools, why I don't know. I felt I had to do something about such an invasion which I blamed on the boys. So I hooked up the water hose at the side of the house and sprayed the whole crowd who were hemmed in by railings. A teacher living with us heard the shrieking and put a stop to it by closing the water valve, and banishing me to the barn. Dad thought it was hilarious that I would so protect my sister and other defenseless girls. Not so, the wet girls.

Frances must have had some of the same brain genes that Dad had. She always could recall people's names, words and melodies of music and poems. If you gave her a snatch of a tune, she could identify it and usually sing it more or less completely. She could recite poetry similarly, some of several verses. This has been true through her 80s and that's a long time. I look for her to equal or surpass our father's age of 94. She "lives right" and has all her faculties, except maybe a minor affliction of cold hands. She can "rest" on them.

Frances was the second of our family to migrate to California. She spent some months in 1919 with Mabel and Jesse in Tulare County where they lived on a citrus ranch, returning to keep house for Dad after Florence moved to Lincoln. When Dad remarried in 1924, after ten years as a widower, she returned to Los Angeles where the Jessups had moved after selling their orange orchard and home.

In 1925 she married Edward Anderson, a printer by trade, as was Jesse Jessup. Both worked for Jesses' cousin, Carl Bundy, who owned the Quill and Press. After Bundy died, Jesse retired and Ed was pressman

for several other printers, the last of which was the Grover Jones Press of Sawtelle, then owned by Mrs. Suzie Jones Talmadge. He became the estimator and later manager for several more years until she sold out and moved to Carmel. Suzie's great compliment to, and of, Ed was that he was the most honest person she had ever known.

Frances and Ed had two daughters. The first, Marilyn, died in two months. The second, Joyce, is the light of her life. Joyce is married to "Rick" Richardson, a hydraulic engineer, and they have three adult children, Kristi, Karen and David, all of whom are married and living in close proximity to their parent's home in Lakeview Terrace near Sunland where Frances had her last home. Frances now lives with Joyce and Rick.