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Marjorie Aseneth Munter

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by

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MARJORIE ASENETH MUNTER

My great-grandmother, Marjorie Aseneth Munter, is my oldest-living blood relative. Her family tree has been traced back to Reverend George Phillips who immigrated from England to America on June 12, 1630. He was the founder of Congregationalism in New England and is also credited with being the first advocate of representative in the United States. In the religious controversies which moved the people of England at the time, he was a nonconformist and early fell into sympathy with the Puritan element of that section of England where he was located. Reverend Phillips was closely associated with John Winthrop, Sir Richard Saltonstall, and others who were leaders in the movement, which finally led to the establishment of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

Reverend Phillips, along with Richard Saltonstall, became one of the founders of the new colony of Watertown, Massachusetts. Within a month after his arrival in the New World, he was settled as the first pastor of the church in Watertown, and held that position until he died fourteen years later.

He was one of the strongest and most influential men of his period, and the result of his religious and civil activities and his far-seeking understanding of affairs is seen in many of the institutions of New England to the present day. He was first to urge the principles of church polity that ultimately developed into Congregationalism and has been called the founder of Congregationalism in America.

He was highly esteemed in his own generation by those who knew him best. The Reverend Cotton Mather eulogized him in the warmest manner and praised the great work which he did during his short life in the new colony. He was held in particularly high esteem by Governor John Winthrop, who frequently wrote of him and his work in unreserved approval.

In the Phillips' fifth generation, the Honorable Samuel

Phillips was engaged in the mercantile business and owned one of the largest corporations in America at that time. During the Revolutionary War, his factories manufactured gun powder. It is also said that he was a staunch Whig. The crowning act of his life was the co-founding of the Academy at Andover in connection with his brother, the Honorable John Phillips. At the time of his death he had accumulated a large estate, which he left by will to the good of the public.

In the seventh generation of Phillips, there was another nonconformist, Wendell Phillips. After graduating from Harvard Law School at age twenty, he came under the influence of the anti-slavery movement due to his witnessing the mobbing in Boston of William Lloyd Garrison in 1835. He gained fame as a great speaker of African Americans and was also held with high regard in the white communities.

By the end of the nineteenth century my great-grandmother's mother was born, Aseneth Mae Phillips. She was of the ninth generation of Phillips. Aseneth was born in Bellevue Jackson County, Iowa. She was employed as a school teacher for much of her life and married James Buchanan Bayne on February 28, 1882.

Aseneth Mae and James remained in Bellevue Jackson County until early 1892 when they moved to Cedar County, Nebraska. To this union, ten children were born, five boys and five girls. My great-grandmother, Marjorie Aseneth Bayne, was born November 14, 1903 at Coleridge, Nebraska. She was the eighth child of James and Aseneth. One of her earliest honors was winning the cutest baby contest in Coleridge at one and a half years old. She received a gold watch as a prize for winning.

My grandmother has always been very thankful for her Christian family. Some of her earliest memories are of her father reading her stories out of the Bible. She learned a lot about the Bible from him. As children they never asked if they were going to church, they always looked forward to going. Her family travelled to church in a two seat carriage. During the winter months, her mother would heat oats the night before travelling so they could keep their feet warm for their trip the

following morning to church. When the pastor would come to visit them, my great-grandmother and her sister, Ruby, would take care of their two younger sisters, May and Lola. They all were to be quiet, as children were to be seen and not heard. She and Ruby were afraid of the pastor. She remembers him always wearing a long black coat and hat and he would never come near them. The children were never allowed to eat at the same table with the pastor. They also thought he was someone from heaven.

A memory that seems very important to my great-grandmother is her baptismal day. She was twelve years old and wore a new white dress made by her mother for the occasion. She clearly remembers the congregation singing the hymn, "I Come, I Come," as she walked down the steps into the water. As she was lifted from the water, she remembers feeling, "the hand of Jesus," on her. I'm told that words can not express her feelings on that most beautiful moment.

My great-grandmother loved to play the piano and sing. Every Saturday she went to Coleridge for music lessons in a horse and buggy. She first learned to play on a pump organ and later her father bought a piano.

She also enjoyed the neighborhood parties that were held year round. During the summer months they would be outdoor parties. She recalled how delicious the homemade candy was to eat. In the winter when the families got together, they would put runners under their wagon boxes and go for a sleigh ride. The boys always enjoyed turning the wagon over on its side so the girls would go tumbling into the snow.

My great-grandmother was also very close to her mother. She remembers her mother as someone that always knew when she was ill, or unhappy, and she knew what to do to make things better. She taught my great-grandmother how to be a good wife and mother.

Marjorie met my great-grandfather, Robert (Bob) Munter, at a dance in Coleridge, Nebraska. He asked to take her home and she said no because she was there with a friend but, accepted a date for the next weekend. When Bob came to get her on that cold January night, he was driving an old 1916 Dodge Touring car which

was in poor condition. She got so cold because the side curtains constantly flopped in the wind. On their next date, Bob came in a new 1922 Dodge Roadster. Four months later on May 3, 1922, they were married. On May 4, Bob took her to the farm that would be their home for the next forty-two years. It took her some time to win his families' support because they felt she would not be a good farm wife and worker because she was such an attractive woman. But she did win their love and lived a happy life on the farm, where five of her six children were born.

Elmer, the oldest son from Bob's first marriage, was the eldest child. He was born January 6, 1918. His mother and twin siblings had died from the flu. Marjorie always loved him and thought of him as her own son. Elmer was never thought of as not being completely part of the family. In fact, not until I did research for this report did I learn that he was not born to my great-grandmother. Elmer passed away October 26, 1985.

Robert Duane Munter was the next child born on May 3, 1923, to Bob and Marjorie. He recently passed away on September 18, 1994.

Avis Lorraine (Munter) Anderson, my maternal grandmother, was born November 4, 1924. Then Iris Nadine (Munter) Herse was born October 13, 1926. On August 31, 1928 Arlene (Munter) Freitag was born. James Gotlieb Munter was born October 5, 1938. He followed in his ancestor's footsteps by also becoming a pastor.

In those days when my great-grandparents were raising their children, their recreation consisted of Sunday family gatherings, going to church, and socializing Sunday night at the outdoor movies in Beldon, Nebraska. On the fourth of July, they would have a picnic lunch, put American flags on the car fenders and radiator, and go for a ride to Beldon, or around the country side. Later in the evening they would eat ice cream and shoot off fire crackers.

Historical memories that my great-grandmother recalled was that in 1922, Harding was elected as the President of the United States and Henry Ford led the way putting America on wheels in

his Model T cars. Charles Lindberg flew solo across the Atlantic Ocean in 1927. President Hoover was elected President in 1929, his administration hardly began when the country suffered the worst business crash in its history. Banks failed, factories shut down, stores closed, and farm prices fell low. Angry farmers prevented mortgage foreclosures with pitchforks and workmen demanded governmental action.

During the Great Depression my great-grandfather employed a few men who came to him seeking work in return for room and board. He didn't have the heart to turn them away as he realized how fortunate he was to have a home, family, and food to eat. These men dug the basement of my great-grandparent's home. I am very proud that my family was able to keep their farm during the depression, when many could not. I think it says a lot about the strength that my great-grandparents had.

My great-grandmother Marjorie Munter has had many family members serve in the armed forces. Her Uncle Alex served in the Civil War, her brother, Marion, served in World War I, her sons, Elmer and Duane served in World War II as did her son's-in-law, several of her grandsons served in Viet Nam, and she has one great-grandson in military school. She is very thankful that they all came home safely.

As time passed on, Robert and Marjorie were no longer able to continue the farm work so they rented out their land, but still lived in their country home. They continued to have a great interest in farm affairs, but this came to an end when the time came to sell the farm. My great-grandmother was greatly saddened to sell their house that she remembered to be so pretty with white fences, and beautiful evergreen trees they had watched grow. They realized it was important to make the move while they were still able. On January, 1964, they sold their farm and decided to build a home in Laurel, Nebraska.

Before the farm sale, the whole family was fortunate enough to spend one last Thanksgiving together on the farm. My great-grandmother remembers that day as being full of mixed emotions. She was happy to see the family all together, but sad

because she knew that never again would the family be coming back to the place called home. She knew that they were leaving the known to a future of the unknown. But they trusted the Lord with all their hearts to continue to guide them. This was a time when she learned the real meaning of thanksgiving which was to be thankful that life was so beautiful.

The morning of the farm sale, she felt so sad. People were buying and taking away the machinery they had purchased through the years that had made a living for them. The farm life as they had always known was soon to pass and was going to belong to new owners. My great-grandmother told me she believed this to be just another step in life.

In conclusion, my great-grandmother Marjorie Aseneth Bayne Munter, has lived to see seventeen Presidents elected which were T. Roosevelt, Taft, Wilson, Harding, Coolidge, Hoover, F. Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush, and Clinton. Some of these Presidents were elected for more than one term in office.

All through her life she taught Sunday School and Vacation Bible School. At one time she was president of her church's women's club in Beldon, Coleridge, and Laurel, Nebraska. She was elected to serve on Indian Missions in the Central District for five years. During this time she enjoyed attending many board meetings and meeting a number of pastors.

My great-grandmother never had a college education but one of her favorite things to do is to read. She was elected president of a book club in Coleridge and Laurel and served on the Laurel Library Board for five years. My great-grandmother also enjoys travelling. She has seen the Holy Lands, South America, Old Mexico, and many states in the United States. She still wants to visit Switzerland and England where her ancestors immigrated from.

Robert and Marjorie were married for sixty-six years. She told me that she could not have had asked for a more loving, understanding, or kind husband. In over a half century they did a great amount of living as well as giving. She is thankful and

pleased with her six children, eight grandchildren, and twenty-two great-grandchildren, and one great-great-granddaughter. She said grandchildren are the crown of the aged and grandparents serve as a refuge to which youngsters can go to for comfort and advice. Later in deep thought she added, "That a family has a mutual love for one another, a bond of faith, that even time can not sever. Families are a gift to last through out our lives. A family is forever." And she wants me to remember, to let God hold my hand, and that I am to do the trusting. In addition to this my great-grandmother believes it is the responsibility of every parent to keep a watchful eye, a keen ear, and a prayer in their heart that their children grow up and lead the life that God has planned for them. She said, "It is not until your last child takes their walk alone in the world, then and only then, do you realize your duty as parents has been fulfilled. Mothers and fathers begin to lean on each other more and more. At night fall, the rooms are empty, never to be filled again with love and noise of your children."

After my great-grandfather Munter passed away on May 11, 1988, at 93½ years old, my great-grandmother Munter moved from their home in Sun City, Arizona, to a retirement resort in Peoria, Arizona. To this day, my great-grandmother has stayed active with her church work, travelling, and all her hobbies.

I am so thankful that I have been blessed with the opportunity to know my great-grandmother. She is a very special woman and is important in my life. Because of our mutual love for each other, I know that I can trust in all the advice she has given me. Isn't it a comforting thought to know that every night you're in the prayers of someone so special!

My final thought is that her memories are of a home on a hill and a yard where her children and grandchildren played. It has been years since she last saw that house on the hill. The yard is so empty now. It no longer echoes the memories of children's feet. It is so still. But she remembers and she remembers it well.

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Aseneth Mae Phillips
Betrothed to
James Buchanan Bayne



The happy couple took the train for Nebraska where where they went to visit the bride's brother, Mr. A. J. Phillips. The bride is one of Bellevue's fair daughters, where she is well and favorably known by a large circle of friends. She was the recipient of numerous valuable presents and congratulations of friends. She has done well, as the man whom she has chosen for a life companion is said to be well-to-do and a gentleman of high standing. The *Leader* tenders its congratulations.

Local Briefs: The very interesting exercises given by Miss Phillips' pupils in the fifth room of our public school last Friday afternoon was attended by quite a number of appreciative visitors. The young folks acquitted themselves grandly in their several parts, and the thorough discipline and order maintained by the scholars is sufficient evidence the Miss Phillips theory of teaching the *young idea* is practical and deserving of the most favorable comment. Those who were present will agree with us in this assertion.

The sister in whose home May was married was Emma G. (Phillips) Worth, wife of Robert L. Worth and mother of three children at the time. May taught in the public schools in Bellevue after her marriage. Her teaching talents were properly recognized on May 10, 1887 when this article appeared in the *Bellevue Herald*: