

Background and Early Life - George H. F. Fienning

September 2 is of special significance to the Fienning family because it is the birthday of George Henry Frederick Fienning. He was born September 2, 1881 in Wissingen, Germany. Wissingen is a village close to Osnabrück in northern Germany. He was baptized Gerhardt Heinrich Frederick Fienning, and when his family came to the United States in 1887 his name was changed by customs to the anglicized form mentioned before.

Henry Tiemann worked with the Fienning family on the same large farm until he emigrated to the United States in 1884. Three years later, after establishing himself in Richmond, Tiemann sponsored the Fienning family to join the growing colony of Germans in Indiana. John Heinrich Fienning, George's father, was a landless farmer who hoped to protect his sons from conscription into the Kaiser's army.

The family crossed the stormy Atlantic in steerage class, the lowest priced fare available. They rode in the lowest portion of the ship, an area normally reserved for cargo. The family was forbidden to go up on deck during the 13-day voyage because young Gerhardt had the measles. They came through the port of Baltimore, Maryland.

George's father worked at Gaar Scott, a local manufacturer. He was a very strong man, and he was capable of doing things which required a great deal of physical ability. About one and one half years after they came to this country, he was working during the summer when it got very hot. He drank a lot of cold water from a spring. Soon after, he came down with typhoid fever and died. So his wife Katherine Marie Bode Fienning was left a widow in this country and spoke only German. The other two children were older than George, but I think the oldest one, Charles, was only twelve or thirteen. In between the two brothers was a sister, Elizabeth, who later became Mrs. Charles Gildenhar. (John and Katherine were also the parents of fraternal twins who were born in Germany and died there as infants.)

It was a struggle for this young family in the United States because they had no close relatives. They had some distant cousins, but no one to depend upon. My grandmother had no special skills with which to earn a living and had to start out by taking in washings. She later developed a skill for nursing. That is, the family doctor noticed she was very good handling new mothers and babies. He would recommend her for going into families and doing this chore. This was really hard work in those days because she not only took care of the mother and baby, but also took care of the entire family, which included cooking and keeping house.

This kind of work meant that she had to be away from her children for long periods of time. The oldest one, Charles, by this time was learning a trade in the foundry at the Gaar-Scott Company. He became a welder of multiple drills. It was his life-long vocation, and he was very good at it. He later became superintendent of this foundry and taught many other young men in the city this vocation.

Charles married Elizabeth Klute. (Elizabeth's brother, George Klute, married Aunt Mattie Von Pein and Elizabeth's sister married Oscar Nolte, my father's business partner.) Charles and Elizabeth had five children. John was a master welder and was in charge of a plant in Waukegan, Illinois. His wife died of tuberculosis when his children, Myron and Dorothy were young, and they were raised by their grandparents. The second child was Florence, who married Robert Sherman, Treasurer of NATCO. The third child, Carl, was

handsome and liked to party, but was a good salesman. The fourth and fifth children were identical twins: Mildred and Marie who later married brothers, Carl and Arthur Kauper.

The sister, Elizabeth, was old enough that she could help with the chores. She was 10 when her father died, tended the house and looked after George. They had moved after their father's death from a house into three rooms which were at the back of another place - The Hieger House - on S. 11th close to E. St. They had an area in the back yard where they had a vegetable garden and raised potatoes, turnips, carrots and cabbage -- things that would keep through the winter. In later life my father said that he could hardly bear to eat a carrot or turnip because at times that was about all they had to eat. He knew what it was to be hungry.

His mother was often times free on Sundays to come home and be with her family and to go to church. On Sunday afternoon, she often gathered other German ladies in the community, particularly widows, to her area of living, and would have what is known as a "Kaffeeklatch." She would make coffeecake and serve coffee, and it meant so much to the women to get together and to be able to speak in their own tongue and to enjoy the general fellowship. She always loved people and had friends, but she had very little opportunity for social life. Dr. Trueblood referred to this as a ministry. It was a ministry because it helped families. She did so well in getting the babies started and the mothers taken care of so that they could go back to their chores as a housewife. She helped these women be healthy persons and have healthy children. Also, she tried to take care of some of the emotional needs of other widows by getting them together and building up their morale.

She lived her latter years always with her daughter, Elizabeth, known as Lizzy in the family, and was with her until her death. She lived to be 81+.

Also, Katherine enjoyed participating in the church life at St. John's Lutheran Church. This was important to her. The women her own age who were church members were her friends. She always wore black when she went to church with a white lace frill around her neck. In the winter, she wore a heavy plush cape and a heavy wool shawl. In the summer, she wore a bonnet with white flowers. She always wore her hair parted in the middle with a bun in the back. Her children attended St. Johns Lutheran Church Parochial School.

She always enjoyed people. In later years, she would come to our home two days a week and do the mending. We were such a big family. When she no longer needed to make a living, she had the enjoyment of being with her children and grandchildren.

I recall that when she was at least 75 years of age, we were having just a family party in our home. My mother was playing waltzes on the piano, and Katherine danced waltzes with my father. This showed she had a great joy of living also.

There were challenges to a working mother back then. She had my father to care for. She found a job for him to go into one of the homes of a wealthier family on 11th Street that was close to Main. He went at dinner time and scoured all the pots and pans after the cook had prepared the evening meal. I think he earned 50¢ a week. It took him almost a year to save enough money to buy an overcoat. He felt he had reached a very important goal in his life when he was able to buy his own overcoat. As far as I know, she never had any outside help financially. Of course, her children helped as I have mentioned: Charles in the foundry as soon as he was confirmed; Elizabeth working at home and looking after her younger brother. They managed to get along on their own. Today, most families left destitute such as they were would have been on welfare and had a much higher standard of living. They all learned how to work and to work hard.

My father, then, after he was confirmed went to work briefly at Duning's bicycle Shop and then at the Starr Piano Company. It was customary, particularly in German families, that when the young men were confirmed (usually by age 13) that they learned a trade unless they had the means to enter the clergy or follow some other profession. My father learned to be a cabinet maker at the Starr Piano Company, and two of his bosses were brothers Fred Von Pein and Matt Von Pein. Frances Von Pein met George Fienning through John Von Pein, son of Matthew. John worked at the Starr Piano Company also. When my father visited his friend, John, he ultimately met my mother (John's first cousin) and fell in love with her.

Background and Early Life - Frances C. V. P. Fienning
and
S. Fredericka V. P. Fienning

Frances Charlotte Von Pein Fienning was the oldest child of Frederick and Lena (Stromberg) Von Pein. The Von Peins were from Emden, Germany near the North Sea on a bay. There were five brothers, and Frederick was the second oldest. Their father, John Von Pein, was a ship's carpenter and as such made trips around the world on ships that would require a ship's carpenter and a blacksmith. This meant that they were large ships. Sometimes these trips would last for a year or two. John Von Pein married a woman, Etta Claassen, who was from the side of the bay that was a part of Holland. So she was legally a Dutch woman. After they had three sons, she said to her husband that she didn't want to raise sons by herself with him gone so much of the time. Also at that time the political situation in Germany was such that they required military training of the sons in order to protect Germany from invasion. So our great-grandparents decided to bring their sons to the United States. They came through the port of Baltimore and settled in Cincinnati. There our great grandfather was able to make a living by building ships on the Ohio River, and he was not required to be away from home. The five sons were, Matthew, Frederick, John, George, and Edward.

Frederick Von Pein was a master craftsman and came to Richmond to be head of one of the departments of the Starr Piano Company when it was formed. His brother, Matthew, came also and was head of another department. These Von Pein brothers played a very important part in the early history of the Starr Piano Company.

Sometime after the two older boys moved to Richmond, their parents and the three younger brothers moved to Richmond. One brother, Matt, lived on the corner of 7th and South J, and he owned all the land down to L Street. Then the other side of the block - that was 8th and South J - was owned by Fred Von Pein. Then there was an older, smaller house in the center between these two bigger houses. That is the one where the parents of Frederick Von Pein settled. I don't know when they came there to live. It is where they lived their later days, and they died in that house.

The three younger boys learned different crafts, but they did not become master craftsmen. John seemed to like business. He eventually became the western manager for a large national paint company headquartered in Chicago. He married a woman, Edith Krumme, from Cincinnati, and they settled in River Forest, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago. George Von Pein went into the laundry business in Indianapolis, and he married a woman by the name of Margaret Smeur (always known in the family as Maggie). He had a

partnership in what was called the Model Laundry which at that time was the largest laundry in Indianapolis and in the state of Indiana.

The youngest brother was Edward, Edward John. He seemed to have "itching feet." He would try one thing and then another. Edward really had a creative mind, and he was very inquisitive about a lot of things and was supposed to have taken correspondence courses - a different one every year. He covered a number of subjects so that his mind was not only creative but very alert and active. He would be able to carry on long conversations on various things. He eventually landed a job with the National Cash Register Company in Dayton, Ohio. He left Richmond and took up residence there and acquired a wife, Stella Dingfelter. He stayed with the National Cash Register Company until Mr. Thomas Watson decided to start the International Business Machine Corporation in Endicott, New York. He asked Uncle Ed to go with him to start this company and to be his chief of mechanical engineering. So Uncle Ed was a consultant to IBM as long as he lived, and he lived into his late 80's I believe. They did not have any children, and his wife, Stella, did not live a long time. He eventually married a second time, a niece of Aunt Stella who was also an Edith. She looked after him as long as he lived. They seemed to have a good life together and always went to St. Petersburg, Florida in the winter.

All of these Von Pein brothers had a good life style. I recall that one time that all five brothers took their wives and went to Havana, Cuba for a vacation. Another time, they went to the World's Fair in St. Louis in the early nineteen hundreds. Those are merely examples of the kinds of things they did.

In 1912 or 1914, Matthew J. Von Pein, the oldest brother, decided to go back to Germany and look up relatives there. He wanted to see where he was born and that sort of thing. When he came home, he laughed and said, "You know, when I walked down the street with my relatives, people of prominence would tip their hats to our relatives because they had a title (Von)." It was given to them I think way back in the 11th century, and supposedly they got it for defending--or helping to defend--the northern part of Germany in a war with England. The family originally came from Peine, which is some distance from Emden, close to Hamburg. They were given a coat of arms. This coat of arms has a hammer which denotes the master craftsmen that they must have been for generations. The other part of the coat of arms is the scepter which is a sign of royalty. Matthew brought back a sketch of the coat of arms.

Only recently was I able to see a genuine coat of arms because in San Antonio this last winter (1986) I discovered a Von Pein in New Braunsfels, Texas. He came from another branch of the family. Although his family also had originally come from Peine, they had settled in another part of Prussia; and they left Prussia also to escape the militarism. They went to the West Indies instead of to the United States, but migrated to America in 1907. They came through Galveston, Texas and settled in Dallas. This James Henry Von Pein that I discovered said that his father paid for their home in Dallas with guilders, and, of course, that was the currency of the Dutch West Indies. His grandfather had been a governor at one time of this island down at the tip of Venezuela: Curacao.

James Henry Von Pein has the coat of arms is. He brought it to our apartment in San Antonio last winter, and I have a picture of it. I took a picture of it to the Fienning Family Reunion in 1987 in Richmond, Indiana. I'm hopeful of getting a facsimile eventually in a more concrete form, perhaps in wood. As soon as I saw it, I said, "I know you're a Von Pein because you have the same coat of arms." We have not been able to establish just how closely related we might be. But at least we know we are from the same family back several generations.

Returning to our immediate family, Matthew was the oldest son, and he built his home first. That was the home at South 7th and J Street. When he came home from the factory, he would clean up very carefully and put on a dinner jacket, and he ate his meals in courses. I realized from this that this family did have a very high standard of living. I recall seeing the same kind of silver and dishes in my own grandmother's family that were in the family of the Matthew Von Peins. Incidentally because they would have large family gatherings, they had the same pattern of Haviland and silver so that they could set a very fine table. They each had settings for 24, so that almost 50 people could appear at a sit down dinner. I don't know the name of the Haviland. I do know my Aunt Edna fell heir to my grandmother's Haviland china and one of her daughters has it. The china pattern had blue and pink small flowers in the patterns, and it had some roses. I remember my grandmother's china cupboard that had the individual salt dishes and things in it that were used to set the table properly. This stack of 24 dinner plates, cups, silver and so on is quite a memory.

Matthew and his first wife had five children: Etta, Fredericka, Frederick, John, Elsie. Etta suffered from terrible headaches. One summer day when she was in her late twenties, she walked into water at Glen Miller Park that was over her head and drowned.

(Sophia) Fredericka, or Ricka as she was called, took over the management of the household and the care of her younger siblings when her mother died. Elsie was still a baby. As discussed later, Ricka would become George Fienning's second wife some time after her first-cousin, Frances, died.

Matthew married a second time. His second wife's name was Emma Kloecker, and they had two children: Matthew and Julia. Matthew died from pneumonia during WWI while serving on a submarine. Julia married Clarence Porter and lived much of her adult life in Missoula, Montana. (Clarence was Superintendent of Schools there.)

This oldest brother, Matthew, became a leader among the German population in Richmond by virtue of his job and being a teacher of many of the men who came to learn how to manufacture pianos and who were of German ancestry. He was a representative of the Starr Piano Company when the Reid Memorial Hospital was formed, and he served on their board for a number of years. In the city itself, the government was headed by a mayor and a Board of Works. (I think at that time there was not a real Council.) This Board of Works ran the different departments in the city. Matthew Von Pein was the head of the Board of Works. Mother used to laughingly say that they always had good garbage collection and so forth because they wouldn't want to get a bad reputation with the boss. As far as I know, this was not a paid job; he did it as a volunteer.

Both Matthew and Frederick had an interest in the southern part of the city where so many German people had settled. The German people liked trees and flowers and fountains and things. At South 7th and E Street kitty-corner across from the big German Lutheran Church, known as St. John's, there is a little park. It is my understanding that these two brothers were influential in acquiring this park for the city.

And then there was another organization of German people known as the South Side Improvement Association. Matthew and Frederick were active in this organization. This group of people had a club house in a woodsy setting that was less than a 1/2 mile from where I lived. My brother, Dick, and I knew how to walk there. They had a fence around it because the club house needed to be protected. It was used as a recreation center by the German families. I can recall going to picnics there. They would have music and dancing in a big room with a dance floor. Then there were rooms where the men would love to play cards and other games. There were other festivities as well.

This group was responsible for the South G Street Bridge being built across the Whitewater River to give the people who lived in the south side of Richmond a more direct route to the west side. The west side of Richmond was settled by the Earlham College Campus. Earlham started as a boarding school I think about 1847. They had quite an acreage. There is a cemetery called the Earlham Cemetery which eventually became the Protestant cemetery for those other than the Lutherans. The Lutherans had their own cemetery, Lutherania, out on Liberty Pike. Also on Liberty Pike, the Catholics had their cemetery. I believe when leaving the city you reach the Catholic cemetery on one side of the road before you reach Lutherania on the other. At Lutherania, the Von Peins have a beautiful big plot with granite head stones. My great-grandparents, grandparents, parents, and sisters, brothers, nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles, cousins are all buried in Lutherania, so that I probably have six generations of this family buried in this cemetery.

Now back to my grandfather, Frederick Von Pein. As I said, he moved from Cincinnati to Richmond to be a department head of the newly created Starr Piano Company.

One of my grandfather's jobs was to select lumber for the construction of the pianos. As a result, he went to various parts of the country to get the kinds of woods that would be used for the various parts of the piano. All musical instruments usually depend on certain kinds of woods to bring out the proper timbre in the tones, the musical tones of that instrument. It was important that he pick out the right kinds of woods.

One of the places he went to was in the region of Oklahoma, around Paul's Valley near Ardmore. In this area, he met John Stromberg who was a lumber broker. John said to Fred, "Why don't you come home with me this weekend and spend it with my family?" So, Fred went to Fort Smith, Arkansas where the Stromberg family lived. After getting there, Fred discovered that John had three (or more) marriageable sisters. Fred fell in love with the one known as Lena although she was baptized Louise Carolena Stromberg. She was known in the family as Lena.

The Stromberg family had come from Bielefeld, Germany. They entered this country through New Orleans. There is a cousin in Ardmore, Oklahoma -- William Stromberg (married to Mary Love) -- who has a wooden desk that William Stromberg (Lena's father) floated up the river from New Orleans. The Strombergs were Presbyterians. When Lena's parents settled in Fort Smith, they could not find a Lutheran church that was convenient. This is why they joined the Presbyterian church. (Fort Smith was one of several locations in Arkansas that offered settlers protection from the Indians.)

Lena and Fred eventually were married in Ft. Smith, and she came north to Richmond, Indiana with him to live. This was a very difficult and lonely time for her because she was a long way from home. The only method of transportation in those days was to travel on the train, and it was rather expensive. So there wasn't much of her being with her family because of the transportation problems. She had been a teacher in a one room school house in the area of Ft. Smith and was always interested in reading and studying. In fact, some teased her and said that she was more interested in the books than in housekeeping. This information is reassuring. The fact that I am her granddaughter and sometimes have this same tendency, I know that I come by it honestly. I recall that when she was at least 80 years of age, I discovered that she was taking a correspondence course in Psychology because she wanted to know more about how the human mind functioned and at that time Psychology was a new--or a young--science and there wasn't too much to be known about it. She was eager to find out all she could.

I recall the home of the Fred Von Pein's as a child. They had a high standard of living. That is, they had, for instance, the only telephone in the neighborhood, and, of course, they had neighbors coming in wanting to make calls every now and then. They had a bathroom and the lavatory was made of marble. There was a big enamel-like tub with crowfeet legs, and the toilet had the wooden box up high and the flush came down by pulling a chain. In their living room was a beautiful grand piano. It was not a small grand, but a concert grand. My mother learned to play, and she loved to play. As a child, I didn't appreciate all the fun we had from her ability. I recall going to some programs at the church where she would be down at the piano playing the music selections. I guess at one time she was listed as an assistant pianist for the Sunday School. When one realizes she had many small children, one understands she could not take on the responsibility of the full time pianist. But it was a hobby for her. My father was always very proud to think that other people enjoyed her music as much as he did.

Frances was the oldest child of Fred and Lena Von Pein. The one after her was Matilida Jane, and then the next one was Jeanette (I have forgotten her middle name). Then there was the only son who was Alfred Nicholas, and then the youngest were fraternal twins: Edna Marie and Edward John. Baby Edward John died of what they commonly called "summer complaint", an enteritis that babies often got. I think he died when he was one year of age. My grandmother ended up with five children. She was the grandmother who had the fraternal twins. Inasmuch as I'm the only one in my generation to have fraternal twins, it has given me a very close bond with her.

She built a house next door to us after my grandfather died in his fifties. It was a sudden death because he committed suicide. He was known to be very quiet, sensitive, intellectual type. He had learned his skills, of course, because that is what one did in those days. I could never understand or get the details of what happened. It seems the reason he committed suicide was that a close friend had done something that caused him to lose his job at the piano factory. Also, he became so upset by it that he developed stomach problems. They thought perhaps he had cancer. The family would never say much about it, and so I really don't know the actual details. There is one little bit that I will mention. His death was April 4, 1907, and my birthday is April 6, 1906. I was playing in a buggy under the grape arbor in his backyard on the day he ended his life. When he came down the walkway to the barn with a gun, he picked me up and hugged and kissed me. I am supposed to have been the last person to have seen him alive.

This left my maternal grandmother with five children and two grandchildren. Previous to my grandfather's death, my father and mother had built a house across the street from them in 1904 or 1905 because my grandfather had purchased land all the way from J Street to L Street--that would be two blocks on each side of the street. Grandpa and Grandma lived in this nice big house on the corner. To one side of the house were beautiful grounds with bushes, trees and flowers. To the back of the lot was a summer house with grape vines growing up all over it. It must have been 12-15 feet in diameter, and it was a place where the young people had parties. I can just barely remember playing in this area.

I can also recall that the barns extended beyond the summer house and the grape arbors. The barn had two stories, and one could climb up a rack and reach the haymow. The horses and the carriages were on the first floor. My brother Dick and I (he was 2 1/2 years older) were adventurous enough at one time to think it would be fun to see if you could fly out of the second floor. We got in the haymow with an umbrella and jumped out and landed in hay below. We found out the umbrella was not sufficient as a parachute, but it didn't harm us in any way. I always liked to tag along after this brother because he was enough older that he did more adventuresome things.

This area--because of Fred Von Pein's investment in real estate and having the street put through--is called the Fred Von Pein addition to the city of Richmond. It was a source of income for my grandmother. She had some houses as rental property, and then she sold all of the lots so that every lot had a house built upon it.

Before grandmother built the house using the lot next door to us, it was an orchard, and we would build tents and gather apples, pears, and cherries. It was quite a playground for us. After grandmother built a smaller house there, all that was left of the original orchard was one pear tree up toward the front of the house, a big apple tree to the back, and a walnut tree by the barn. She raised chickens because she had raised them back in Arkansas. She had lived in a rural atmosphere there because her father was a horticulturist and raised all kinds of bushes and trees and vegetables. She always had an interest in growing things. I can recall her trying to graft several kinds of apples on this apple tree.

Sometimes when I have faced difficult times, I have been inspired by my grandmothers. One came from a foreign country, did not speak English, and as an unskilled widow had to earn a living and raise three children. The other grandmother lived far from her "birth" family, became a widow, and had to raise five children. They managed; in fact, they managed very well. Their examples have given me strength to work through problems I faced, such as living away from my "birth" family and my first child being stillborn.

George Fienning and Frances Von Pein were married October 2, 1902. My father would have been 21, and my mother, whose birthday was February 2, (1882), was 20 years of age. They had a wedding that was quite a delightful social occasion.

They were married at my grandparents' lovely home, perhaps in the summer house which was surrounded by the gardens I mentioned. As you know, they had this beautiful concert grand piano, and they hired a man who was visiting from Germany to play the wedding march and other music for the wedding. I think it was an outdoor wedding because it was such a big family, but I'm not sure. The pictures I have of my parents in their wedding outfits were taken by a photographer in the studio and do not give me a clue about the outdoors. An article that appeared in the paper about their wedding is included in the notebook of Fienning Memorabilia I have collected.

My father got into trouble because he did not marry a daughter of a family who attended St. John's Lutheran church. Frances was a member of the Reid Memorial Presbyterian church as was the rest of her family. Lena Von Pein never became a Lutheran. Frances joined the Lutheran church and was active in it as I have described.

George Fienning - At Home

Initially (1902-1904 or so) George and Frances lived in three rooms at the back of a house at S. 8th and G Street. (Going south it was the second house from the corner on the right or west side.) Richard was born there September 3, 1903.

In 1904 or 1905, they built the first part of the house at 1011 S. 8th Street. The builder was Hasecoster who was both honest and thorough. Once I saw the contract for building the house. The original house consisted of a parlor, a dining room or sitting room,

a downstairs bedroom with a walk-in closet. (The babies were born in that bedroom. I was the first child to be born there.) The other parts of the original house were a large kitchen and pantry, a second floor with two bedrooms on the second floor with an attic in the back. Back of the kitchen was a concrete slab with a roof over it. During this time, there was no heat to the bedrooms on the second floor.

The house was added onto at the back later. On the second floor, a bathroom, a hallway, a closet, and a bedroom with a walk-in closet were added. As well, a stairway was built to the third floor attic; a bedroom was built there with walk-in closet; and, three gables were installed. Also the ceilings were plastered throughout, and a floor and some cupboards were added. (Rainwater was stored in a big tank in one of the gables.) These changes provided storage space and two more bedrooms on the third floor. At this time, a hot air furnace was added under the dining room which provided heat to all bedrooms.

There were a lot of enjoyable things for a child to do. Outside we played in wagons. There was a concrete sidewalk 5-6 wide. All the neighbor children would bring their wagons and we would have parades. There were insects to watch and flowers to smell. My father made a tent over the back wooden fence which covered the sandbox and a small platform. I liked to play school there. He built a tree house for Dick in the large elm tree which was close to Grandma Lena Von Pein's back yard. I liked to climb trees, and sometimes I played or read in the treehouse.

Inside we had a wooden hobby horse named Kernel. There was a train on a track, and we would make a tent by putting a comforter over the dining room table.

Our parents and Grandmother encouraged us to read. As I mentioned, Grandma Lena had been a school teacher. She subscribed to the Youth's Companion and The Christian Herald on our behalf. The Morrison Reeves Library was about 1 mile away, and we got books there. We also owned books. I remember The Five Little Peppers and How They Grew, Black Beauty, a book of Bible stories, a book of fairy tales, a book of stories by Hans Christian Andersen, Hans Brinker and the Silver Skates. Of course, the Lutheran Standard, the publication of the synod of our church, was always around also.

I always liked to read and would seek places where I could do so. I referred to the tree house. My brothers and sisters teasingly remember that sometimes I would linger in the outdoor bathroom ("Chic Sales") to read, particularly when it was time to do dishes. But one of my favorite ways to read was at night. There was a light in the upstairs hallway. My bed was situated next to the doorway so that I could lean over and read by the hallway light. With so many people around, it was quieter at night. (I wasn't supposed to be reading at night like this.)

Like many families, we spent a lot of time in the kitchen. The cupboards had pots and pans we played with. There was a wood burning stove with a grate and a place for water storage.

On Saturday evening we participated in a bathing ritual. Water was put in a large tub which was heated on top of the stove. Then each person had a turn at taking a bath. You tried to get as much dirt off as possible before you got into the tub. Provisions were made to assure some privacy.

In the pantry adjacent to the kitchen was a sink with hot and cold water spigots. There was a water pump to the side that pumped stored rain water. Also, there was a mirror to the side of the pump and combs and brushes were stored on a shelf with a mirror over it. There was a wooden drain board that was part of a dish cleanup area. One of my

early memories is of Dick washing the dishes, and me standing on a stool drying the dishes. We did this routinely. I must have been 3 1/2 or 4.

In the pantry, there was a three burner gas stove as well as cabinets with shelves. (This pantry later was converted into a downstairs bathroom.) We did not have paper towels. There was a roller towel by the sink in the pantry which was changed at least once a day.

We usually had 10 or more people at a meal. We would have two sets of serving dishes with meats and vegetables, one for each end of the table. Grandmother Lena joined us for meals, and she helped. An older child was seated next to a younger one. Just in case someone misbehaved, Grandma had a switch in her lap, and its quick flick would restore order. A cloth tablecloth was put over the oilcloth for dinner and we used cloth napkins. In the early years, we ate most dinners in the kitchen. Later, Fredericka used the dining room only for Sunday dinner.

We ate reasonably well. As you know, my father ran a grocery. Sometimes he would bring home what needed to be used up. I was a grown woman before I realized peaches and bananas didn't always have brown spots for example.

Once a week we had a meal of potato pancakes, sausage, and applesauce. You would mix raw grated potatoes with eggs and flour and fry them in butter until they were golden brown. Then you would put syrup on them. (Raw grated potatoes were also used to treat burns. Once I remember Esther burnt her hands on the hot grate of the stove. We put raw grated potato on them immediately.) Sometimes we used left over corn instead of the potatoes for pancakes.

We always had more than one kind of bread - bread made with graham and rye flour as well as white flour. Of course, we baked our own bread. Saturday was usually baking day; bread and pies were made. I remember Fredericka baking the whole day. She also made a large pot of soup, vegetable, bean, pea or turtle.

I was my mother's helper in the kitchen. I remember that by age 10, I could bake a lemon meringue pie, and I won a prize for it that year or the next. I also liked to make Apple Brown Betty.

There were three tart cherry trees in the yard, so we had cherry pies in season and canned cherries also. There was a grape arbor around the swing behind the house. Next door, Grandma's apple tree yielded yellow delicious apples. We stored these in the basement under the front porch.

Some days we could predict the meals. On Saturday, we always had vegetable soup. At Sunday dinner, we always had fried chicken, mashed potatoes, waldorf salad, and pie. At Sunday supper in the winter, we had oyster stew, crackers, celery, cocoa or milk, cookies or pie, and in later years, ice cream. Sunday supper in the warm weather, we had more seasonal food, often sandwiches, lemonade, iced tea, (but no soda pop). Sunday supper was the time you could bring a friend. We played games afterwards and they were suitable for different age groups.

We played cards and games in the dining room. Favorite card games for the kids were Old Maid and Flinch. The adults played Sheephead and Auction Bridge. My grandmother liked to play games on the checkerboard.

We enjoyed music. My father had a piano made for my mother about 1905, and it was placed in the parlor where company was entertained. We would go into the parlor, and she would play while we sang. Sometimes we would sing "old favorites" or popular songs. Sometimes we would sing hymns. She also played classical music and marches. We would get pans and kitchen utensils from the kitchen and march in line in rhythm with the music. Later my father bought my mother a phonograph.

Pets were a "no-no." However, Dick raised Belgian hares in order to sell them for meat, especially during WWI. The hutches were back by the barn (garage). Later, Bob kept snakes -- blue snakes and rattle snakes. He would milk the venom of the rattle snakes about once every month so they weren't dangerous. At least once, a blue snake was found on the clothes line. And, once a blue snake got out of its cage and was lost. It caused quite a stir.

During the summer we went on picnics. We would find a farm that had a meadow and a stream and picnic there. We played in the water. I had a swim suit that covered my bloomers that had a jersey on top. It was navy or black. I wore tennis shoes with this to go in the water.

We did have good times. I remember both of my parents' vitality and enjoyment of these times. But most of the time, we worked. The children participated in the chores.

I helped my mother regularly. One chore that stands out in my memory is the washing. In the earliest days, there were no electrically powered machines. There was a water powered machine that would squish the clothes back and forth. This machine was for colored clothes. If you wanted hot water, you had to heat it and pour it in. There was no soap powder, so any time you wanted soapy water, you had to cut up soap as finely as possible and put the flakes in hot water.

The white clothes and diapers (and there were always plenty of diapers) were first put into a big oblong copper boiler (with handles at each end) which was heated on a 3 burner stove or hot plate. (The area where we washed clothes was in the basement, the first room after you went down the stairs. Of course, there were no dryers, so the clothes had to be hung outside or in the basement to dry.) After the white clothes had boiled a while in soapy water, you stirred them with a broomstick. At a certain point, you lifted an article of clothing out on the broomstick and put it in the first of three rinse tubs. (You needed to get the soap out or the clothes would be too harsh.)

The first rinse tub got a lot of soap out, and you changed the water often. Then clothes were put in the second rinse tub. The third rinse tub had some blueing in it in order to make the clothes look whiter. The clothes were put through a wringer and hung to dry. So washing was an involved process.

As soon as an electrically powered wash machine and wringer became available, (I think I was about 10), my father purchased one for my mother. But washing still involved a lot of vigorous moving of clothes from one container to another.

I had long hair at the time that came at least to my shoulders. Mama offered to tie it back or to braid it because it was loose and she was afraid it might get caught in the wringer. I declined her offer. Sure enough, though, my hair caught in the wringer, and I screamed. Mama pulled the plug on the machine, and this automatically released my hair. Then Mama fainted. I was frightened and ran next door to get Grandma. She came right away and took charge. After that, I always pulled my hair back when I did the wash. A

clump of hair about the diameter of a nickel got pulled out of my scalp, and it took some time for it to grow back.

When asked if she had ever gotten into trouble, Edith replied: There was a declivity near the blacksmith's place, and when it rained it filled with water. Once when Dick was about 10, and I was about 7, we had Ruth with us. We could see the water, and we went and played in it. As I have described, washing was a more demanding task than now. As well, we always wore black cotton ribbed stockings. When we played in the water, we got ourselves wet and muddy. When we got home, mother made us scrub our dirty clothes on a washboard. Sometimes I would follow Dick down the railroad tracks to the South Side Station and beyond. There were freight trains and passenger trains. The Chesapeake and Ohio came through north and south and the Pennsylvania Railroad which went from New York City to St. Louis. It was exciting to see the trains.

Eight children were born at 1011 before October 1918. As mentioned, Richard was born September 1903, in the house at S. 8 and G Street. The children born at 1011 were:

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Edith Louise Fienning | April 6, 1906 |
| Ruth Marie | November 22, 1907 |
| Esther Charlotte | October 1, 1909 |
| George William | January 7, 1911 |
| Paul Frederick | July 12, 1912 |
| Martha Jane | March 27, 1914 |
| Edward Henry | May 26, 1916 |
| Robert Louis | December 25, 1917 |

My childhood came to an abrupt end in the fall of 1918 during the flu epidemic. I was 12 and the first to catch it. Then others got it including my mother. On the morning of October 17 the minister was at our home when we got up. As he knelt to lace my high top shoes, he said, "The angels came last night and took your mother to heaven." I was unable to speak for the entire day.

My father had the flu, and I was terribly worried that he would die also. When mother's funeral was held (in our home) several days later, he had to be carried downstairs. This was performed by George Klute (brother-in-law) and Oscar Nolte (business partner).

His business partner, Oscar Nolte died from the flu three weeks later. My father had not really recovered from it, and, understandably, he was depressed. He went to work anyway and sat and did the deskwork. Dick, who was in his second year of high school -- and a good student -- joined my father in the store and assumed overall responsibility for it. This was to be a temporary measure, but it became permanent. Eventually, Dick bought out my father. and kept the store until 1976.

The children were cared for by various friends and relatives. The youngest, Bob, 10 months, was cared for by Elsie Beyer for an entire year. It became a major goal of George to bring the family together again under one roof. He was ably assisted by my mother's first cousin, Fredericka Von Pein.

When Frances died, someone was urgently needed to manage the household and to care for the family members who remained at 1011. Fredericka was Frances' first cousin, and they were close enough in age that they did things together as young women. Also, the Von Pein's had family reunions. Family members came from Ohio, Chicago, and other places. They shared this family background.

As mentioned earlier, she had managed the household for her father after her mother died. I remember going over to play at Matthew Von Pein's house. (We outlined houses with small logs then cut out paper dolls to put in them.) I remember Ricka being cordial to us children and serving us hot chocolate.

On the one hand, Fredericka was one of the few persons available to help manage the Fienning household. But, she wanted to do it. She loved Frances and cared for us children. She offered to come.

First, she came to manage the household. Then, in November 26, 1919, George and Fredericka were married. Their son, Rudolph, was born November 2, 1924, the first to be born in a hospital, Reid Memorial Hospital.

It was difficult for all of us. We were grieving Frances's death. Ricka managed the house well, but she did it differently than Frances with whom I was used to working. I didn't get along well with her. After she and my father were married, my father asked me to call her "Mother," and I wasn't ready. Sometimes, I would go next door to Grandma Lena and complain. Grandma Lena was firm: "She is your mother now. You wouldn't be together if it weren't for her." I knew she was right. "She got me back over there to 1011."

We are indebted to Fredericka for many things. She enabled the family to stay together. She cared for George throughout the rest of their lives. She was the only mother the younger children -- probably from Martha on -- knew. She was so proud of them! I think she knew how grateful all of us, including myself, were.

George Fienning - At Work

As noted earlier, George worked outside the home at an early age scrubbing pots and pans at the home of a prosperous family. When he was 13, he quit attending St. John's Parochial School to work at Duning's Bicycle Shop.

In 1895, he began working at the Starr Piano Company as a cabinet maker. He worked there for 10 years. During this time he met and married Frances Von Pein, and his first child, Richard was born. However, he did not particularly like the factory environment. He knew he enjoyed being with lots of different people. As well, he had stomach problems. (I remember my father being told regularly to eat more slowly and to chew his food.) He thought working more in the out-of-doors would help. Yet he was always a fine cabinet maker, and he was handy at repairing things throughout his life. As well, he was a good salesman. This served him well in the grocery business.

He began selling groceries for the A & P Tea Company. This meant he would take a horse and buggy from the headquarters of the company and load it with coffee and tea and non-perishable goods. He built up a route of customers. He enjoyed the work, and he dreamed of owning his own grocery.

His dream was realized when he opened his own store at 11 and South D streets on June 28, 1909, with his partner Oscar Nolte. As noted, Oscar Nolte was married to the sister of his brother's (Charles Fienning's) wife. The Nolte's were members of St. John's Lutheran Church. As well, Nolte had worked at the A & P Tea Company, but on the "inside." He had an office job. It was agreed that Oscar would be responsible for the inner

"inside." He had an office job. It was agreed that Oscar would be responsible for the inner working of the store and that George would cultivate new customers. The partnership worked well, and the store flourished.

It really was more than a grocery store. It was more like a general store and they had a delivery service from the beginning. They sold yard goods and notions. They carried bandanas, overalls, thread, and the black, cotton ribbed stockings all children wore. They had galvanized tubs, buckets, brooms, pots and pans, kerosene lamps. They sold chicken seed and kerosene. These were just some of the items.

The store had a chicken coop. Chickens were brought from farms, purchased, and stored live in the coop. Customers would select a particular chicken. Then one of the grocery staff would kill and dress the chicken.

The heads of the chickens were cut off out back. Underneath Dick's house (adjacent to the store) in the basement was a three burner stove. A pot of boiling water was ready there so the beheaded chicken could be plunged into it. One could then remove the feathers. Next, one would remove the entrails. I knew how to do this, but I didn't do it very often.

Later the back room that had housed the yard goods and equipment was turned into a meat market. There was a huge cooler which was at least 12' long. It took lots of ice. After this change, we only sold groceries and meat.

My father was at the store from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. He would come home in the early afternoons and have dinner. (Everyone had dinner midday. The children all came home from school with a few exceptions. One year in high school I was taking 6 solids, and I was allowed to eat in the cafeteria. But that was unusual.) Frances or Ricka would save Dad's dinner. The children went back to school. Dad came home and ate. Then he took a nap. Then he went back to the store. The store was open from 6 a.m. - 10 p.m.

I didn't go to the grocery much as a young child, but I did begin to help there when I was in junior high. Garfield Junior High was at 12th and South A Street. The grocery was at 11th and South D. That was a five block walk and shorter than if I walked home. I was already 1 year ahead of the class I started with in kindergarten. So, I was about 11 when I went to Junior High. I got to put up provisions. I swept and dusted. I fixed the candy case. I didn't wait on customers yet.

I could have a snack. If I stayed through supper (the evening meal), we had a sandwich. My father built a small office above the store. It had a desk and a couch. He would do his office work there -- or sometimes rest. I could study there.

I also worked in the grocery after school during high school. It was a walk of at least a mile to high school. There was a bus that went from the corner near our house to the front door of the high school. But it cost 5¢. Our father said we couldn't afford it and insisted we walk unless the weather was very bad or we were half-sick.

So again the walk to the store was shorter than home. By this time I was waiting on customers. Math came easily for me, and my father taught me how to keep the books. He also taught me how to take care of depositing money in the bank and other transactions like this. He and Dick were very busy with the business of managing the store. (Dick was especially good at advertising and had a knack for displaying things well.) All of us had our turn working in the store.

Other Relatives During This Time

We kept in touch with our aunts and uncles. As you recall, Frances was the oldest child of Frederick and Lena Von Pein. The next oldest child was Matilda, Aunt Mattie. She spent two years at the W. K. Kellogg Sanitarium in the 1920's learning dietetics. She taught me things about good nutrition, including the importance of grains. (She gave Frances a 1920 cookbook from there by Lenna Cooper which was eventually given to me.)

Aunt Mattie married George Klute whose first wife had died and who had one son Eldred. (It was this cousin who pulled the chair out from under me when I was a freshman at Earlham, injuring my back and changing my life.) George was in the dry goods and clothing business and a distant person.

The next child was Jeanette or Aunt Jenny as we always called her. Jenny had polio as a child, and as a result one leg was shorter than the other. She walked with a limp even though she had a lift on her shoe. She was a wonderful seamstress, and she always smiled. She married Lester Turner, who was raised by Mrs. Beeson on a farm outside of town. He was a "ladies man" and was always well dressed. (Aunt Jenny had to manage her money very carefully.) They had two sons, Stephen and John. They lived in Baltimore. Once when Aunt Jenny was visiting, Dick and I walked all the way out to the Beeson farm to see her. When they retired (Uncle Lester sold insurance), they moved back to Richmond. They lived for a while in Grandma Lena's house which they bought. Then they sold it and spent their final days in a Presbyterian home.

The next child was Alfred Nicholas. Alfred and his wife, Pansy, had five children. Donald, the oldest, first worked with the Boy Scouts of America in Chicago after graduating from college. Later, he earned a Ph.D. (the first in the family to do so), moved to Yakima, Washington, and was in charge of Special Education for the state. Eugene was an expert on diesel engines. He worked in Persia under the Shah's program for developing oil fields. He married an American and had two sons. Wanda, who was beautiful, married Fred Brandt, did secretarial work, had a son, and lived in Louisville, Kentucky. Arlene, another of Alfred's children, did secretarial work, had three children, and lives in the Pittsburgh area. The youngest child, Clifford, went to the University of Pittsburgh and has worked for corporations and spent most of his life with the IRS.

The youngest child of my Von Pein grandparents was Edna Marie. I noted before that her twin brother, Edward John, died as an infant. Edna was only 10 years older than I was, and she was one of the important persons in my life. She lived next door with Grandma Lena until she married Windsor Harris (a lawyer).

Edna accompanied Aunt Mattie to the W. K. Kellogg Sanitarium in Battle Creek. She studied Physical Education while Aunt Mattie studied Dietetics. When she returned, she taught physical education at the Starr Elementary School (The children in George's family went to Hibberd Elementary School.)

She became engaged to Windsor Harris, but he had to serve in the Navy during WWI. He was due to return to the States. So for both professional and personal reasons, Aunt Edna took a course in Mental Health and a course in Genetics at Columbia University during one summer. She wanted to be in New York when Windsor Harris returned.

I remember that one time when Windsor was courting Edna, they had another couple over to play cards. (This would have been next door because Edna lived with Grandma.) Dick and I played a prank. We crept up and pulled the plug turning out the lights. Confusion resulted. Uncle Windsor had a lovely sense of humor. He probably got back at us somehow, but I don't remember it.

Edna and Windsor were married. They lived in Richmond. After her marriage, Edna gave a talk to the PTA at the Starr School on physical maturation and how to teach your child about sex education. Word got around, and she wound up giving her speech to nearly every PTA in town.

She was on the Board of the YWCA and in charge of swimming. She didn't instruct, but she administered the program including taking attendance. Sometimes when Edna wouldn't go to take attendance, she sent me.

It was probably as a member of the School Board, however, that she had her greatest civic impact. She was the first woman to be a member of the School Board, and she served for 12 years. She was the Secretary. During this time, the school system underwent significant change. The curriculum was reorganized to include more art and music. A new high school was built close to the river. (Martha was the first in the George Fienning Family to attend the new high school.)

(The old high school which I attended had an art museum, a gallery, on the third floor. It had a separate building with an auditorium for music which was used by both the high school and the community. After school on Tuesday, phonograph music was played so the students could dance. A couple of faculty members chaperoned.)

During the time Edna served on the School Board, the Board managed its planning and finances so well that it had over 1 million dollars in the Building Fund. Because there were no debts or urgent needs, this money could be used to implement the new, fuller curriculum which included music and art.

She belonged to the Women's Club (a city organization) and the PEO a secret organization of women who get together to fraternize, similar to the Masons.

She was active in the Christian Church. Her father-in-law, Benjamin Harris, had been a founding member of this church. She refused to be baptized by immersion at least until after her children were grown. "They have to take me as I am." (Remember that she had been baptized and confirmed a Presbyterian.) However, she was aware that others didn't regard her as a "real" member as a result.

Edna and Windsor lived at 624 National Road West at the corner of 7th and National Road across from Earlham College. Windsor became mayor of Richmond in the 1930's; and as a result, she had to make a number of public appearances. She remarked that she didn't like these appearances, but she did it.

They had three daughters. Winifred, the oldest, graduated from Earlham in Home Economics. Joan, graduated from Indiana University's School of Nursing, married a dermatologist, and lives in Lexington, Kentucky. Beverly went to Hanover for a while and married Karl Kolger, an attorney, who eventually took over Windsor's law practice.

She lived to be almost 90. At the end of her life, she was in the same nursing home as Charles Youngflesh. Edna died before Charles.

Edna was a sounding board--a source of stability--for me, particularly when I was a teenager. She took a special interest in what I did. I benefited from her example and her affection.

One of the most striking things to me as I recount this history is the importance of a strong family life. We learned to look after each other growing up. Everyone knew that if you did anything nasty to one of us kids, you have the rest of us to answer to. You could always find a brother or a sister to share things with. You might share different things depending on the audience, but you were not alone. In that family, we learned to share, to love, to be considerate of each other, and to live the Golden Rule.