

Our Grand Mothers – I

Fredericka Sophia Von Pein Fienning
10/22/1879 – 4/8/1969

“I consider it a miracle that Ricka Von Pein was available and willing to take on the responsibility of raising us children after mother Frances’ death.” (Ed)
“I marvel how Mother (an unclaimed blessing or old maid) was able to come to 1011 and raise 9 step-children and then one of her own. This surely was a Herculean task but she did it with flying colors. I don’t know what the family would have done if she hadn’t arrived on the scene when she did.” (Esther)

The world fell apart for the Fienning Family at 1011 S. 8th St. on October 17, 1918. Frances Charlotte Von Pein Fienning, the wife of George Henry Frederick Fienning, and mother of their nine children died of the influenza that killed millions world wide.

Even though George was weakened by the flu and was experiencing agonizing grief, he was determined to keep his children with him under one roof. This would not have been possible without the generous help of Frances’ first cousin, Sophia Fredericka Von Pein, who came to live with the family.

Family Background

Frances and Ricka shared family history, family get togethers, as well as a strong commitment to caring for family, home, and the church. Frances was raised a Presbyterian but joined St. John’s Lutheran Church when she married George. Ricka had been raised Lutheran and had attended St. Paul’s Lutheran Church until she moved to the Fienning residence.

Ricka’s father was Matthew Von Pein, the oldest son of a German father, Johann Heinrich von Pein born in Emden, Germany (2/1825) and a German mother, Etje “Etta” Classen, also of Emden (3/1828). Emden was a fortified port in the province of Hanover. They were married in 1850 and started a family. Mathias 2/18/1852 and Frederick Nicholas 7/1854. John and Etta along with their two sons immigrated to the USA aboard the steamship Harmonia from Hamburg arriving in New York 9/16/1856. They settled in Cincinnati. (J. Stewart) John was a ship’s carpenter and helped to build ships which sailed on the Ohio River, a major U.S. waterway in the mid-nineteenth century. They had five sons: Matthew, (Ricka’s father), Frederick, (Frances’ father), John, George, and Edward.

It is probable that Matthew and Frederick were good friends as well as brothers. Matthew and Frederick were master cabinet makers and moved together to Richmond, worked at the piano company, and eventually become the head of departments of what was now the Starr Piano Company. Matthew and Frederick were among the second generation of German immigrants who "helped produce the pianos, caskets, and furniture made in Richmond in the 19th century (Royer 90)." The Starr Piano Company "produced some of the finest upright and grand pianos being made in the United States. Starr pianos won top awards at Expositions in Cincinnati in 1880, Chicago in 1893, Nashville in 1887, St. Louis in 1904, and Seattle in 1909 (Royer, Supplement, 6.)"

During Matthew's 30 years at the Starr Piano Company, he "made an exhaustive study of the sounding board, and the sounding board now being used with its special features, is the outcome of Mr. Von Pein's years of experiments.. He oversaw the construction of over 50,000 pianos." (Daily Palladium 10/24/1905, p.1 col.4)

Matthew was the first to build his home which was at South 7th and J. He owned all the land down to L. On the other side of the block--8th and S. J--Frederick built his home and owned all the land down to L. It is probable the brothers helped each other build their homes. The families got together easily. Matthew's family had the same silver and Haviland china as the Frederick Von Pein family. They combined dinnerware to serve guests up to 50.

Frances played at the Matthew Von Pein home and Ricka (3 years older) sometimes joined in. The women were friends as they grew older. Frances and George's children knew Ricka.

Matthew and his first wife, Sophia Carolina Knauber, (6/8/1859) were married in Eaton, Ohio 4/17/1876. These are their children listed in the front of the Matthew Von Pein Bible (MVPB; See Sources): Henrietta Otilda, "Etta" (3/20/1877), Baby Boy (10/1/1878-12/22/1879), Frederica Sophia (10/22/1879), John Henry (10/28/1881), William Matthew (10/26/1883-1886), Frederic Nicolous (12/29/1885), Elsie Caroline (3/3/1896). It would not seem an accident that Matthew and Etta named one daughter Fredericka and as well a son Frederick Nicolous. Rather, they honored Matthew's brother with these names. Ricka's mother died of complications from childbirth March 24, 1896. (MVPB) The baby, Elsie, born 3/3/1896, survived.

While Sophia was ill in March of 1896 and during the years after her death, it is reasonable to assume that Etta, a redhead, (19) and Ricka (17) took over managing the household and taking care of other younger siblings. They did this while grieving their mother's death, and taking care of a one-month-old baby, Elsie.

Their father remarried about 1899. His second wife's name was Emma Kloecker and they had two children: Matthew, Jr. (1900) and Julia (1902). The two older sisters no doubt continued to help with cooking, other household tasks, and childcare.

Etta suffered from terrible headaches (ELFM). One summer day in 1902, Etta, 26, walked into a pond at Glen Miller Park which was over her head and drowned. The Von Pein Reunion scheduled for that year was cancelled. (Edith Krumme Von Pein's descendant in a 1998 letter to Joan Kuipers.)

Ricka knew the deep grief of losing a mother, her "big sister," and her young brother, William. She also watched her mother die from delivering a baby at 37. (This may have been considered old for childbearing at the time.) Ricka was a strong woman who helped her family carry on when tragedy struck and when she faced a high risk pregnancy at age 45.

About 1908, William Bockhoff, (the original owner of the building which became the Fienning's Fine Foods, the family grocery) wanted to found the National Automatic Tool Company or NATCO. Bockhoff had built his first company, a cash register company in Indianapolis. He eventually sold it to the National Cash Register Company. His family stayed in Indianapolis, and William lived with his brother-in-law Matt Von Pein at 703 South J Street (ELFM), which became the first mailing address of NATCO. The younger Von Pein children—Matt and Julia—were "the first mail clerks or couriers for NATCO. " When mail for the company arrived at the Von Pein home," these two promptly carried all NATCO mail across the fields and railroad to the new plant. Their salary was 25 cents a week." ("Early National Automatic Tool Company History" in the FFHistory box—no named author. I do not find William Bockhoff in the genealogical materials. Does anyone know more about him?)

Ricka not only cooked for Bockhoff during this time, but also served as Natco's first secretary and telephone operator at the Von Pein home since the plant was so far out in the country. She took all calls and recorded their messages and most likely performed other secretarial duties. This job could have lasted a number of years. The source mentioned at the end of the previous paragraph states that Ricka received no pay. I question that. If she did receive a salary for her work, it would explain the source or one source of funds she would later use to pay Mrs. Nolte her share of the grocery mortgage and use as well to pay the mortgage at 1011. (Georgianna said Grandma Ricka told her she provided that money. When I was discussing family history with other older cousins recently, one commented "Georgianna would tell it like it was." Another commented "Money matters like this were often not discussed openly in families especially during this time. It's believable that others did not know about Grandma's financial help and that she confided in Georgianna.")

Ricka knew the repetitive, backbreaking work involved in raising children and managing a household. As well, she knew from her own experience how important a comforting stabilizing presence would be for the Fienning family. Ricka went to care for the Fienning family “because she loved Frances, because she knew how desperately she was needed, and because she wanted to. She offered to come.” (Edith)

After Ricka had managed the household at 1011 for about a year, she and George were married (November 26, 1919). They had a son, Rudolph, November 26, 1924.

Ricka Through the Eyes of the Original 10 Children

(The Edith LF Morris accounts of Fienning Family History are the sources for most of this section.)

Several children described Ricka as a good cook. Esther recalled “Mother was a good cook and there was always room for one or two more at the table. I never heard her complain about all the cooking and baking she did.”

She had to be creative in her cooking because George was always bringing home food that was about to spoil. Sometimes the vegetables and fruit had become rotten before they could be used. She would wrap these items in newspaper and have someone take them out to the trash in the alley when George wasn’t looking.

Every Saturday, the women baked bread—often 20 loaves, Ruth recalled. Her German Potato Salad was a popular dish at picnics.

Rudy remembered helping with the baking and the house chores also. He helped Grandma bake bread and pies. He had especially fond memories of her Dutch Apple pie. It was made with a green, transparent apple that was smaller than a Granny Smith apple. She would put some rhubarb in with the apples to help it “set.” Then she would add some “wherewithal,” (some liquor). She made delicious glazed doughnuts, and she always made lots of Christmas cookies. One of her favorite cookies was a sandwich cookie filled with mincemeat or apricot preserves.

Esther related: “We all had to help with the chores—washing, ironing, doing dishes, cleaning, canning, etc. The girls did most of the inside work and the boys the outside work. I learned to use the electric ironer (or mangle and ironed many a shirt, sheet, store apron, and so on.”

Mother would have “Kaffee Klatches” for the women family members on their birthdays. Aunt Elsie baked delicious yeast coffee cakes. We also had fresh

applesauce, coffee, and cake. Aunt Mary Von Pein, Aunt Katy Von Pein, Aunt Elsie Beyer, Sis Von Pein, and Lillian Beyer were usually present.

Mother also had a green thumb. We always had to deposit any coffee grounds (and there were a lot of them) on the flowerbeds. It made the soil more loamy. The beautiful flowers made lovely bouquets on the table.

However, there were problems. Edith recounted that when Ricka came to 1011," it was difficult for all of us. We were grieving Frances' death. Ricka managed the house well, but she did it differently than Frances. I didn't get along well with her."

Reading through correspondence these recent weeks, I was struck by the efforts of both Ricka and Edith to be accepting of the other. They sent each other birthday cards and letters, and visited in each other's homes. But they still had disagreements from time to time. I assume that the prayer Edith wrote for the main dinner at Ricka and George's 25th wedding anniversary was at least in part a gesture of reconciliation. (Martha included it in her lively account of the weekend of festivities.) Rudy read it before the dinner.

Come Lord Jesus, be Thou our guest,
For this celebration, and these parents so blest.
Preserve their health and all which they hold dear,
Grant that they be with us for many a long year.

Teach us to love and serve Thee better each day,
Keep us with Thee, in our work and in our play.
We thank Thee for all our blessings, and each a
safe return implore,
Keep us together in Spirit, with Thee, now, and
forever more.

For Jesus' sake, Amen

Ricka was a loving mother and laughed easily. She enjoyed being a Navy Mom during WWII. She got dressed up for the meetings and wore her pins proudly.

Sometimes, she would braid wildflowers –Lilies of the Valley or whatever flower was available, in her hair when she was going out. She loved to wear hats—and to watch wrestling on TV.

She was a passionate player of Sheephead (Shafskopf). She had a long argyle sock in which she kept nickels. She won often and the sock would grow heavier.

She didn't get rattled easily. Robert kept various animals in cages in the basement—a rat and snakes among other things. Frances Jean wrote (Spring 2003) of having to help do the laundry in the basement and that it was spooky because

Uncle Bob had snakes in cages down there. (Dan said they were rattlesnakes. Edith said Bob milked the venom from the rattlesnakes which he then sold to help earn his way through college. Dana agreed.) Once a snake was missing, said Frances Jean. "It curled up on the register in the dining room. You should have heard Grandma! It happened several times." Perhaps it was another time when a snake was missing, Grandma walked into the kitchen and was greeted by a rope-like creature hanging from the heating vent. She gave a muffled scream, then said: "Bob! I found your snake. Come get it!"

She was a woman of integrity. "Our father and mother taught us Love and Respect. We never called our seniors by their first names. It was Mr., Mrs., Aunt, Uncle, etc. We learned to treat each other with love and respect."

"Our family was surely blessed to have such good elders. Until one has his or her own family, one does not realize how great our parents were." (Esther)

We are grateful, "not only for the determination of our father to keep us together as a family, but also for the love and sacrifice given us by our God provided Mother, Fredericka. Robert Fienning, December letter, 1969."

Written by Edith Fienning Morris Croake
Daughter of Edith Louise Fienning Morris
July 2015



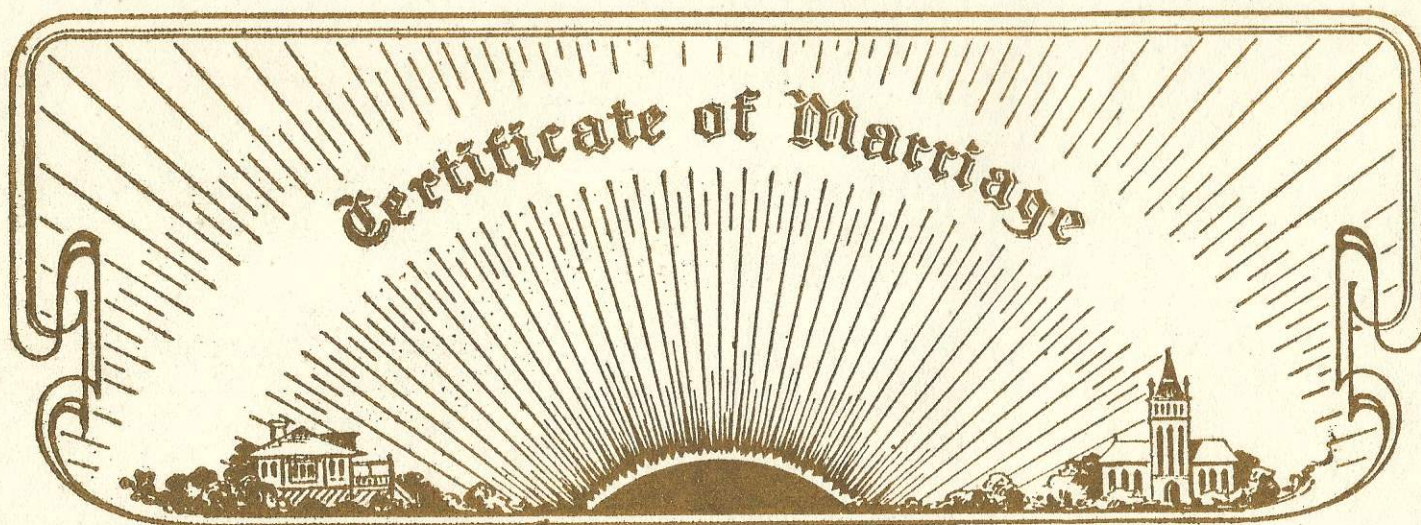
*George + Lika's
marriage certificate*

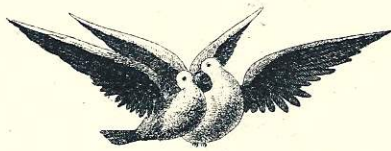
Clerk of the Wayne Circuit Court

RICHMOND

INDIANA

Certificate of Marriage





THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT

Mr George H. Fienning Miss Sophia F. Ricka Von Pein
of Richmond, Ind. and of Richmond, Ind.

were by me united in

Marriage

on the twenty-sixth day of
November

in the Year of our Lord 1919.

at Richmond, Ind.

Oscar T. F. Tresselt, pastor
Trinity Ev. English Lutheran Church,
Richmond, Ind.

Witness
Mr. Matthew Von Pein
Mrs Emma Von Pein.

May 26

4309

2

QUIT CLAIM DEED

Emma K. Von Pein,
Widow,
et al,

TO

476

Frederica Von Pein Fiening.

Mail

Ses. Fiening

1011 So 8th

RECEIVED FOR RECORD

The 26 day of May
A. D. 1927 at 2 o'clock P. M.
as recorded in Record 169
page 476

Mrs. Carrie A. Pomeroy
Recorder of Wayne Co. Ind.

30 cert. Pd

Denkspruch
für *Sophia Friedericka Von Pern,*
Zur Erinnerung an den Tag der Confirmation,
Richmond, den 23. ten Sep. 1894,

Sorget nichts; sondern in allen Dingen laßet eure Bitte
im Gebet und Flehen mit Dankagung vor Gott kund
werden. Phil. 4, 6.

Schaff' Du ein reines Herz in mir,
Ein Herz voll Lieb' und Furcht zu Dir,
Ein Herz voll Demuth, Preis und Dank,
Ein ruhig Herz mein Leben lang.

Von Deinem Seelsorger,

C. Huber,

When married
had \$500 in bank
First Division of
Dad's estate \$2100
Emma's \$2000
By estate of Lawyer
\$385
By Uncle Ed's \$700
I spent all of Uncle Ed's
on Hospital bed for
Broken hip
\$21.00 went on Dad's
account in the bank
\$2000 went to pay
mortgage on home

2
Insurance Policy by
Prudential \$500
Double indemnity in
case of accident
The home goes to
Martha after our
deaths
If Bob wants our
bedroom set he may
have first choice
Also three copper boiler
tripot which belonged
to his Grandgrand
mother Won Peiro
will be given to him

9
The silver teapot
will go to Edith

white. bead
desk ~~in~~ the Georgia
gold set (Ruby)
red picks (glass)
What not in living
room
old fashioned dishes
in attic
2 plates + bowl
from Grandma ~~Peers~~
Large stake dish
Aunt Lena R. Peers

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Glass case plate
2 or 3 glass bowls from
my mother
square bowl (china)
with fruit in center
I think Ruth ask
Better pots
Evale + Ruby
Good set of dishes
Remain in house
at long as Martha
lives in it

DELAWARE ENGRAVING & LITHOGRAPH COMPANY, INC.
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Bob is to have
the copper bottom
teapot that belonged
to Grandpa (Ethel)
Edith will have
the other one
Table linens in
warden seat to be
divided as they see
best

DELAWARE ENGRAVING & LITHOGRAPH COMPANY, INC.
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Private

Do not
open

Rick Fearing