

Oliver Family Story

One of the first places beginning genealogists are taught to look for information is within their own family. This includes family stories. We are also taught that every piece of information should be verified in at least two different ways or from two different sources. When checking out those stories we have heard from childhood, we often learn that while they may be colorful and interesting, they have many inaccuracies. But there is almost always a kernel of truth in them. Somehow they changed and evolved in the telling. A recent request sent to the website of the Buffalo County Historical Society illustrates this phenomenon

Original request:

“I’m working with my daughter, studying our family history. My maternal great great grandmother was reportedly the first woman to settle in Buffalo County when her wagon wheel broke somewhere near Fort Kearney. She stayed and opened a boarding house with her two children. One of her children was Ora Oscar Hayman, my great grandfather. He was a regional velocipede champion. I’m wondering if you have any information about his mother. I’m afraid I don’t know her name even. Thanks!”

Using back issues of Buffalo Tales and the bound volumes of Gibbon/Shelton newspaper obituaries in the archives at Trails & Rails Museum, it was possible to trace this person’s genealogy back to find out what really happened.

From an article in Tales of Buffalo County, Vol. IV, written by Maxine Hayman Schroeder we find that Ora Oscar Hayman was born in 1876 in Ohio. His parents were Mr. & Mrs. S. S. Hayman. The family came to Nebraska in 1883 and lived on a farm. Ora took up bicycle racing at age 16. He often trained by riding from Grand Island to Shelton. On May 10, 1885 he won first prize in the five-mile cup race. He also became Nebraska’s State Champion bicycle racer. He met Bertha Haug when they were both living in Holdrege, Nebraska in 1903 or 1904. Ora and Bertha were married in 1907 at the Shelton Methodist church.

Obituaries:

Ora Hayman was born in Syracuse, Ohio September 17, 1876 and died July 14, 1966 at a Kearney hospital. On December 28, 1904 he married Bertha Haug. They were parents of 3 children.

They lived in Holdrege and north of Wood River, Nebraska for 14 years, moving to Shelton in 1919. His wife died February 12, 1963. He lived on the farm until March 1966 when he moved to St. Luke’s Home in Kearney. Burial was in the Shelton cemetery. He was preceded in death by a son, Stephen. He leaves a daughter and a son:

Maxine Schroeder, Shelton, Nebr.

Douglas Hayman, Shelton, Nebr.

Bertha Haug Hayman was born November 28, 1882, daughter of Frederick and Sarah Oliver Haug, near Shelton, Nebraska. She attended Shelton school and Peru State College and taught school in Hall, Buffalo and Kearney counties for 22 years. In 1904

she married Ora O. Hayman and they farmed in Hall county until 1919 when they moved to Shelton.

Burial was in Shelton Cemetery. She was survived by her husband, daughter and son; Mrs. Fred (Maxine) Schroeder and Douglas Hayman both of Shelton. [Bertha Haug Hayman died February 11, 1963]

Frederick Haug was born in Pennsylvania November 4, 1851 being one of a family of nine children. He died December 3, 1919.

His parents, who were natives of Germany, came to America in 1848 and settled in Pennsylvania. In the year 1871 the family moved to Nebraska locating in Buffalo county west of Shelton, where his father and mother passed away. Fred Haug was about twenty years of age when they come to this community and he continued to reside at home until he was twenty-seven years old, when he began operating a homestead which he filed on in 1872. For ten years he farmed that place after which he purchased his present farm in Shelton township.

In 1880 he married Sarah Oliver, who was born in 1860, daughter of James and Ellen Oliver. Mr. Haug is survived by two children:

Bertha (Mrs. O. O.) Hayman

James A. Haug

W. W. Haug and Mrs. Henry Echternacht are his brother and sister. Mrs. Haug died in August 1910.

Interment was in Shelton Cemetery.

Mrs. Fred Haug [Sarah Oliver], daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James Oliver who were among the earliest pioneers of this section of Nebraska was the first recorded white girl baby born in what is now Buffalo County.

She was the mother of two children, James Haug and Mrs. O. O. Hayman. She died August 15, 1910 in an Omaha hospital. Burial in Shelton.

There were no obituaries for James Oliver or Ellen Oliver. However, the Buffalo Tales article written by Grace Oliver lists James as a son of Edward Oliver, Sr. and Sarah Oliver. She describes him as the son who brought his wife, Ellen, and son, Harry, with the family when they came from England.

Sarah Oliver was born in England and came with her husband, Edward Oliver, Sr. to Nebraska in 1860. Her husband was a convert to the Morman faith and went to Utah where he died. She located a claim near to what is now the village of Shelton and here raised her family. She died in 1871 at her home in Shelton township and was buried on the Oliver homestead west of Shelton.

Her children were James, Edward Jr., John, Sarah, Robert, and Jennie and Eliza. [This information about Sarah Oliver was not an obituary printed in the newspaper because these two newspapers did not begin publication until soon after 1880. The information was obtained from other sources and printed in the bound set of volumes along with obituaries copied from the Gibbon and Shelton papers.]

From the obituaries and articles, we could establish the generations as follows:

Maxine and Douglass were children of Ora Oscar Hayman and Bertha Haug
Bertha Haug was the daughter of Frederick Haug and Sarah Oliver
Sarah Oliver was the daughter of James Oliver and Ellen
James Oliver was the son of Edward and Sarah Oliver

The story of the Oliver family is a well-known one to those interested in the history of Buffalo County. Grace Oliver's story in Buffalo Tales and other information about the family at Trails & Rails supplies the details of this story.

Edward and Sarah, with their children, son Jame's wife and baby, and a maid who accompanied the family, came from England to join other Mormons in Utah. They traveled west across Nebraska on the Mormon Trail in the early summer of 1860. Shortly after passing the road ranche of Joseph Johnson at Nebraska Center (later the town of Shelton) the axle broke on the Oliver's wagon. They returned to Nebraska Center to make repairs. Because wood was a scarce item on the prairie, Mr. Johnson did not have any seasoned wood on hand. He helped them select a tree from along the Wood River near his place to use as an axle. They started on their way again but did not get far when the green wood of the new axle began to bend. By now it was early July and the family knew they would not have time to cross the mountains before the winter snows started. They decided to stay there near Nebraska Center through the winter. It is unclear whether they found an abandoned cabin or built one but they spent the rest of the summer and following winter in a log cabin. [They must have been very crowded considering the fact that cabins were not large and there were many members of that family.]

When spring arrived Edward was ready to pack up and continue on to Utah but Sarah refused to go. The children all decided to stay here with their mother. Edward and the family maid were the only ones to go on to Utah. There Edward married the maid and they raised a family of seven children. At one point, about a year after settling in Utah, Edward wrote to his wife inquiring about her welfare and urging her to come to Utah and take her rightful place at his table. But Sarah did not respond. Apparently it was only Edward who had been converted to the Mormon religion and the concept of polygamy. Sarah was having nothing to do with it.

Let's look again at the family story. *"My maternal great great grandmother [g,g,g,g, grandmother] was reportedly the first woman [one of the first] to settle in Buffalo County when her wagon wheel [axle] broke somewhere near Fort Kearney [across the Platte River north of the fort]. She stayed and opened a boarding house [sold farm products to and perhaps had travelers stay over night at her farm since she lived along the Mormon Trail] with her two [seven] children. One of her children [great granddaughters, Bertha Haug, married] was Ora Oscar Hayman, my great grandfather. He was a regional velocipede [also known as a bicycle] champion. I'm wondering if you have any information about his mother. I'm afraid I don't know her name even."* [We do not have Ora's mother's name but we believe it was his wife's great grandmother, Sarah Oliver, who is referred to in this family story.]