

EPILOGUE

Whoever brought news to the "Pennsylvania Dutch" about the desirability of the Piedmont, foothills of the Appalachian Mountains in North Carolina, was "right on" for those who loved to till the land. Young Palatines felt they had to move toward their own destiny. The youthful Peter did not find his permanent home in Pennsylvania. By 1762, much of the choice land in Bucks and surrounding counties had already been taken. If a person wanted a large landholding, one must go to less developed areas. Easily understood is the desire of these people to make a new start—they were looking for liberty of conscience, enjoying civil rights and gaining material benefits. Perhaps it was the latter that motivated the younger Peter to join one of the many groups moving down the valleys of the Appalachian Mountains to North Carolina.

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Two years after the death of Mae Ikard Hicks, her daughter Pat suggested that the cousins (Delly's and Betty's grandchildren) gather for a reunion. They were not hard to convince. All had shared memories of wonderful family times and were not willing to drift apart just because their parents' generation had passed. One hundred years to the month of the 1887 wedding of Delly and Betty, in July, 1987, their grandchildren joined in celebrating strong family ties. They decided to meet someplace in Oklahoma because so many of the cousins lived in the area. Lawton was chosen.

Jesse and Edwin served as masters of ceremony. Most of the cousins attended and brought their children and grandchildren. The two surviving widows of the generation of twelve attended, Ruth Walker Ikard Vickers, the second wife of Jesse, and Leona Salyer Ikard Fletcher, first wife of Fred. The oldest child from each of the families had the opportunity of introducing his/her own children and grandchildren. For the most part it was a joyous time. Only Carl elicited sadness when he related that his two marriages ended in divorce and in both cases he lost a child to an angry spouse.

Burton Ikard, one of the Texas Ikards who wrote *Another Time* about his cowboy father, Bob Ikard, was there with his three children, Tom, Bob and Karen. Burton was a contemporary of Fred Ikard.

Before the evening was over the group had decided to meet again in 1989 in Tennessee where Delly and Betty had married and started this large and vigorous family. Since Mildred lived in the neighboring state of North Carolina, she was given the task of making arrangements.

On her return home, she stopped in Franklin County to visit the cousins there and also checked out accommodations. Decherd and Winchester were lacking in hotel space for so many cousins. It was at Jim Oliver's Smokehouse and Lodge in Monteagle that an appropriate setting was found. It is interesting to note that Jim Oliver is a descendant of John Robert Oliver, who went to war with Elijah Harrison Ikard and was with him at his death after the Battle of Shiloh.

The setting is most attractive. The lodge sets on a the ridge of the Cumberland Mountains west of Chattanooga. On a spacious veranda large rocking chairs invite one to look over the grounds that have rustic cabins, a barn, a pond for fishing, and a pool for swimming. Indeed, a perfectly restored whiskey still tips the hat to the culture of the coves. Cool breezes blow over the ridge. Across the road from the lodge is a winery, and just down the road is Sewanee, home of the University of the South that has prepared generations of Episcopal priests to serve that denomination. One of our own, the Reverend Thomas Garner, son of Gailor and grandson of Nora Ikard Gamer is an alumnus.

The Saturday luncheon was attended by 91 relatives. Mostly it was the Delly and Betty cousins and their children, but we were joined by numerous Tennessee cousins. A long time was required to introduce all the families, but that was the highlight of the day.

A picnic followed the next day at Tim 's Ford Lake near Winchester. Even more of the Tennessee cousins joined us that day, both Ikards and Gilliams (Betty's family). When the group considered a place for the "91 reunion, it was the women cousins who pitched for various places. Barbara Ikard Constant suggested Hawaii; Pat Hicks Stephens opted for Alaska. Fred Ikard's daughter, Lanny Ikard Desautels, sang the praises of her home town of El Paso, Texas. She told of the many opportunities for entertainment, a good country club and golf course, and Juarez just across the Rio Grande River-but most of all there were a number of Texas Ikards, related to us through Elijah Harrison Ikard, who lived in the vicinity. Lanny was persuasive and won the vote. Sometime later we asked ourselves, "How did we get conned into going to El Paso in July?"

Were we ever pleasantly surprised as we drove the long miles across west Texas in July of 1991 to observe green grass and blooms along the roadside? The desert of the 1940s was not to be seen. Unusually heavy rains in 1991 transformed the landscape. Tumbleweed was growing, not blowing in immense balls across the country.

Lanny had chosen the La Quinta for our lodging. She had done a great job of organizing events. On Friday evening we drove through an upscale residential area with a magnificent view of the city, to the head of a canyon. An outdoor theater was presenting "Viva El Paso." It was a musical that followed the history of El Paso. Colorfully costumed young local musicians and dancers gave a lively performance. At intermission it began to rain, and rain. Without umbrellas we had to leave, but it had been a delightful experience anyway.

Back at La Quinta we joined our cousins in the hospitality room for refreshments, good music and conversation. We met several of the Texas Ikards including Tom and Mary Ikard Solapek who were to host the Sunday barbeque.

Saturday morning the golfers among us competed in an Ikard Golf Tournament. Many others attended a sumptuous breakfast at the Saint Theresa Country Club. We learned that the Solapek's prosperity came not from cattle or oil but from pecans. Tom and his brothers had 4000 acres in pecan trees. Marketing the immense harvest was improving because someone had invented a sheller that would perfectly shell 1600 pecans a minute. There was a demand for their product throughout the world.

In the afternoon many of us took the trolley across the international bridge to Juarez, Mexico. This experience was also a surprise, as the Juarez of the 1940s was an exceedingly poor, dirty border town. Today's cars crossing the bridge were not the jalopies we saw in the years of WWII, but were good recent model American cars. Wonder of wonders, the streets were clean and the shops bright and cheerful. The prices for art objects were not the prices of WWII, but what they would be in an American department store. We were not tempted to buy much, after all, one must carry these things home. At the Farmer's Market Jesse hooked up with a mariachi band and had a good time playing for them. Asa found bargains in pharmaceuticals.

The biggest event of the reunion was to be dinner and dancing at the Saint Theresa Country Club. It began with a "happy hour," very happy. Conversation seemed to be mostly about the golf tournament. At the head table Old Floyd Ikard, a contemporary of Fred Oklahoma Ikard and grandfather of the give-no-quarter golfers, thoroughly enjoyed the antics of these fellows. Bill Ikard gave a brief history of the Texas Ikards. Ikard Smith of Wichita Falls spoke about Hose, the black Ikard cowboy who came with Isabella and her little boys from Alabama and Louisiana to join Milton in Texas. Hose was a legend in the ranching days.

Sunday morning, my brother Gerald and I were invited to the suite of Burton Ikard and his sons. There we saw the contents of an Ikard trunk that had been in storage for many years. It was a treasure of pictures, letters and other memorabilia, collected by another Mildred Ikard who never married.

Late in the morning we linked up in a caravan to drive to the Solapek ranch. On the way we stopped in the historic village of Mesilla, New Mexico, just as the catholic church on the square was ending services. A miniature park in the square is surrounded by first-rate shops and restaurants. A leisurely hour was spent soaking up the culture, chatting with our new found relatives and doing some shopping.

The Solapek ranch is near Las Cruces, New Mexico. The land is level, elaborately watered by a maze of irrigation ditches, with pecan trees as far as the eye can see. Tiny settlements are spread among the trees to house resident laborers.

The Solapek's ranch house was low slung and meandered among the trees that were small in comparison to the pecan trees of the Southeast. One spacious room flows into another, all furnished with lovely old things. Mary's guests moved from table to table on a glassed in veranda to choose from a remarkable assortment of barbeque, salads and assorted goodies, then moved on to attractive tables among the pecan trees to eat. I was impressed! The conversation was gentle. Edwina Ikard Boyd, granddaughter of Elisha Floyd, great granddaughter of Dr. John Milton Ikard and family historian was there. She was ninety-seven years old at the time, tenderly attended by the young people of the family. She prepared the Sketch of Ikard History that was distributed at the Ikard reunion at Weatherford, back in 1966. We are indebted to her for her careful research. In a lovely setting the Oklahoma Ikards and Texas Ikards had a reunion long to be remembered.

As always we were reluctant to say our goodbyes. No one who celebrated "Ninety One in the Sun" will ever forget it. Lanny delivered on all her promises.

The vote in Las Cruces was to have the next reunion in Reno, Nevada. It was the clear choice of the Texas majority. The Oklahoma minority was not inclined to continue to go further west, almost a continent away from many of our homes.

Their choice was to return to Oklahoma for the '93 reunion. July has always been the month chosen because of the number of teachers in the family. Jesse and Gayle took on the responsibility of making arrangements. This time Oklahoma City, was chosen for many reasons.

In July of '93, the cousins took shelter in a motel that was a huge square doughnut, the center of which had a pool and numerous seating areas surrounded by plants for informal conversation. Of course, the air conditioned splendor encouraged small groups exchanging memories and bursting with laughter at jokes, about the antics of the very young and very old kin.

An interesting feature of this get together was that the three daughters of Marvin Hamilton, the oldest of the cousins, long since dead, came from California. Marvin married late in life so Barbara Winslow, Nancy Bacca and Bernice Rice are young. They had never met the family and were pleased to be warmly welcomed.

The cousins could ignore the heat of July in Oklahoma in this comfortable setting. Our formal meeting was a Saturday evening dinner in the hotel. Jesse and Joyce provided seamless music for the event. Younger members of the family had never seen the like of the singing and dancing that flowed with familiar music.

With memories of many joyful trips to the Wichita Mountains a part of one's childhood, the group caravanned to Meers Store at the base of Mount Sheridan for lunch on Sunday. From Oklahoma City it was a round trip of about 160 miles. Meers is a historic landmark, having served the mountain community since the 1800s. The facade is unchanged, a real western relic. Inside, one must wait in line to be seated in rustic corners to order the plate-size hamburgers that are the specialty of the house. We had a ball! The Wichitas are far enough from Lawton to escape urbanization. Those colorful mountains look just as they did in the 20s, 30s, and 40s.

Before saying "95 in-," the cousins decided to return to Tennessee in 1995. Our parents' first cousins and their children make us welcome. Visiting family landmarks like the Ikard cemetery, is satisfying, and the breezes in Monteagle promote spirited talk on the verandas.

And so, from people of either east France, Switzerland or southwest Germany, all of whom lived in the Palatinate of Germany, restless, ambitious individuals responded to the lure of the New World about 300 years ago. This chronicle attempts to weave together the story of the journeys of the Ikards.

The Ikard men tended to choose strong, independent women for spouses, giving added strength to their own highly motivated lives. The current generation of Ikard cousins are evidence that the daughters of these families tend also to develop the spirit and pride in a family of modest means, but large scale patriotism. They are a vigorous lot. Ikards have borne arms for their new country's conflicts since before the American Revolution. In peace and war, the concept of citizenship is strongly embraced.

The Ikards have been religious people, with many protestant denominations claiming their loyalty. The means of making a living have changed with the times. The sturdy farmers of previous generations would shake their heads to contemplate the variety of occupations of the 20th century cousins. The young ones now are honing skills for the "information age". --

The writer hopes that this book is the first in a series; that research will continue - and weak links in connecting generations will be strengthened; that the Carls, Isabelles and Mildreds of future generations will correct the mistakes of this book and write new ones.