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## Act 1: The Ocean Smell (1624-1938)

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**Act 1:**  
**The Ocean Smell (1624-1938)**

Among my earliest memories is a game, one of many, the family played on the ride to the beach on Maryland's eastern shore. The winner was the first to smell the ocean.

Prevailing in this competition was no mean feat because sibling rivalry among us then was keen. Moreover, my parents' cigarette smoke fouled the air in the vehicles they drove. There were no hard or fast rules, but Dad had to verify the children's claims, even though he had lost his olfactory sense at a young age (which is perhaps why he used so much Old Spice aftershave). Mom had the final word.

Each of us jockeyed for scarce space by the auto windows well before we crossed the recently constructed Chesapeake Bay Bridge (no one wanted to sit in a middle seat under any circumstance). We knew the bay was not the ocean; it was altogether too small. And we knew that State Route 404 would take us an hour through southern Delaware before we approached the Atlantic. For kids the trip was interminable.

By the time we passed the quiet center of Georgetown, my ostentatious sister sniffed and grinned in provocative pleasure as she proclaimed victory. Ben protested, and I whined that Weezie had cheated once again. My father did not need to look to my mother for the verdict. Anxiously we awaited the next town, Millsboro, near the brackish waters of Indian River Bay. Its odor almost always led to dispute; like Christian Dior's Eau Sauvage, the salty scent was virtually the real thing. My mother explained to us the fine distinction.

It was not until the final stretch of road from Route 113 to Bethany Beach, right

We know, properly speaking, no strangers;  
this is every person's country.  
--J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur (1784)

before the inland waterway, that the Atlantic was perceptible at last. The sandy landscape of scrub pines and solitary seagulls suggested as much. By then, however, the stalemate in the game and the tedium of the long afternoon on the road elicited instead a tiresome question from one of us: “Are we there yet, Daddy?” In bemusement my mother announced the ocean smell herself.

We no longer cared who won. We were too excited by the prospect of August at the beach. Each summer, for more than a decade after I was born, we spent a month in Ocean City, first at 16<sup>th</sup> Street downtown, then at 70<sup>th</sup> Street uptown. Our pastimes were typical of children in those days. We ducked waves, built sand castles, collected seashells, crunched on gritty sandwiches, and waited a listless hour after every meal before daring to swim again. Between innumerable innings of baseball, we slathered ourselves with Coppertone suntan lotion and Noxzema skin cream, both now richly redolent of childhood’s ebullience at the shore.

Until 1962 when a winter storm washed away much of Maryland’s Atlantic coast, including our rental house on 70<sup>th</sup> Street, we were neighbors to the Eatons. Richard Eaton owned radio stations in Washington, DC. Married to a woman he met in France before World War II, Mr. Eaton had two boys about our age, Pierre and Danny, who enjoined our ball games on the beach. Mrs. Eaton, I am sure, was responsible for the adoption of five, secretive, and strange orphans: Margot, Michelle, Monique, Dickie, and Françoise (a.k.a. Cookie for no reason we could discern). All of them were either too young or too shy to play games with us.

While Mr. Eaton was aloof in his lameness and preoccupied by his business, Mrs. Eaton became a warm and gracious family-friend, her accent an added charm (I still won-

**Comment [1]: Richard Eaton**

Our Ocean City neighbor, Richard Eaton (1900-1981), was president of the United Broadcasting Company, a minor media empire whose outlets were the first to specialize in ethnic audiences. WOOK and WINX were his best-known stations in the Washington, DC, area. The Richard Eaton Foundation now funds academic programs in broadcasting, such as the one in the Philip Merrill College of Journalism at the University of Maryland in College Park. Like the Allens, few of the Eatons are local any more, much less at work in the media business. Long after the parents divorced and Dickie committed suicide in 1976, I have often wondered what became of my Ocean City playmates.

der why we never called her Madame Eaton or just Marguerite). Each time my surfcasting father caught an odd fish – a thorny skate or blowfish, a juvenile sand shark – Mrs. Eaton was ready, skillet in hand, to prepare it for us to sample. I remember well the sea scallops, sautéed in sweet butter, sprinkled with fresh lemon and parsley. This whiff of continental cuisine complemented the language the Eatons all spoke and I had yet to understand. Some exotic portent, I sensed, had wafted my way.

Mrs. Eaton and her children were my first conscious encounter with immigrants. Unlike the domestic variety of migration, such as Jessie’s kin from rural Virginia, this French family shared our society because they could. They were white in Maryland’s late-to-integrate eastern shore, where the abolitionists Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman had been slaves. In an imperfect world, the Eatons represented a certain middle-class culture, the *savoir-vivre* of respectable Europeans. They were not that different from our family; my mother was herself only two generations removed from the immigrant experience. Akin to our distant relatives, the Eatons had crossed the Atlantic to America.

#### *Manchester-by-the-Sea*

The ocean brought my father’s forebears to New England in 1624. A young carpenter, William Allen (1602-1678) left Manchester, England, for Gloucester on Cape Ann in Massachusetts Bay Colony. Four years later, he joined the “Separatist” Puritan and later Governor, Captain John Endecott, to build houses in Salem. The young sawyer remained on site until 1640, when he finally settled at the far eastern edge of the township by “Jeoffereyes Creeke.” There, with William one of the founding fathers, a tiny community of settlers, all 63 of them, established Manchester in 1645.

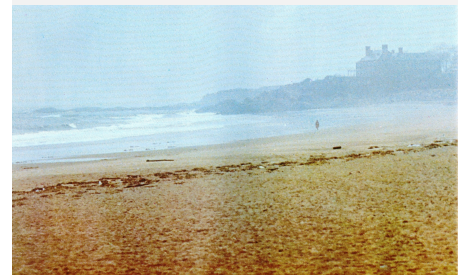
This village was home to many Allens and their extended relations from Boston

Harbor to the North Shore. Despite the plague of smallpox that decimated the local tribe, the Agawams allowed the families to stay and in 1700 relinquished “all right, title, and interest in the land.” Only one immediate family member, Josiah (1703-1758), had trouble with indigenous peoples; he died during the last French and Indian War.

For nearly two centuries, just a few hundred folks inhabited Manchester. The struggling economy did little to attract more until after 1800 when the community developed a woodworking cottage-industry and then a fashionable beach resort. With some notable hotels and oversized homes along the bouldered shoreline, it became known grandly as “Manchester-by-the-Sea,” thanks to publisher James T. Fields, ostensibly to differentiate it from the landlocked Manchesters in Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Vermont. The affectation irritated Oliver Wendell Holmes whose return address in letters to friends living there included the mock “Boston-on-the-Charles.” Its presumption aside, the town is now a picturesque locale with its quaint harbor and sweeping beach, population 5,370.

Although William Allen lived by his hands, he acquired 400 acres in a goodly estate worth £189, which he bequeathed to his surviving wife and three sons. “An influential and enterprising man,” according to contemporary chronicler, Richard Brackenbury, William undoubtedly worked the orchards and pasture himself. But the soil was too shallow and rocky to support a farm, so he built a sawmill and continued to build houses for the neighbors. After the allocation of landed property to the second generation, the Allen men turned increasingly to the sea for their livelihood as sailors and fishermen. For 140 years none of them did any better than William. Seafarers had hard lives; the ocean was as unforgiving as the land.

The Allen wives were from local families. Elizabeth Bradley of Salem married



William in 1630; Sarah Tuck of Beverly married their son Samuel in 1660; in turn, Mary Pierce of Manchester married Sarah and Samuel's Jonathan in 1709; Lydia Hooper of Manchester married the first Azariah Allen in 1736, and Sarah Leach also of Manchester married the second in 1760. Besides the Tucks, the Hoopers, and the Leaches, there were other Allens, clearly remote relations, in town and nearby in Beverly, Salem, Hamilton, and Gloucester. My kin regarded their new family as members of a little commonwealth, not necessarily one ordained by God. These folk were too practical to be doctrinal Puritans in quest of the New Jerusalem.

Household archives show little concern with the women; their births and deaths are scarcely mentioned. Even less is known of the girls born to them, just their birth or baptismal dates. The daughters' husbands are listed only if they married in Manchester's Congregational Church. Otherwise, they became names in someone else's genealogical tree, such as Persis (b. 1631), Elizabeth (b. 1634), and Deborah (bapt. 1637), William's surviving daughters. Unless they left other documents, their lives as individuals are lost, "history unknown." At least the records indicate that none of them had anything to do with the Salem witchcraft trials. Martha Allen Carrier, convicted and hanged as a witch in 1692, was from Andover not Manchester.

From roughly 1640 to 1780 – the first five generations on the North Shore – the Allen families averaged seven children. This numerous progeny resulted from a limited loss among the youngest, only 10 percent before age one and 15 percent before age five. These numbers seem horrific to us, but they were far better than the early childhood mortality of 25 percent that families experienced elsewhere in colonial Massachusetts and back in pre-industrial England. In the absence of adequate nutrition and proper hygiene,

life then was fickle if not “solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short.”

In the period Allen women were relatively fortunate. Very few of them failed to survive childbirth, a perilous moment in a mother’s life. They lived to age 43 on average. By comparison, life expectancy at birth for Allen men was just 33 years, much lower than the average of 37 in New England. These numbers did not change much until 1780 when regional industry and commerce began to raise material living standards. Today, owing much to the twentieth-century’s industrial economy, longevity is almost double for females (79) and more than double for males (77).

The seafaring Allen men faced abbreviated lives because fully a third of them perished on board ship; more than 25 were “lost at sea” before 1780. This terrible risk women did not run, with one matronly exception: Hannah Lee Foster Allen (1805-1900) accompanied her husband Benjamin on his voyages (her one and only child died a toddler). The ocean’s hazards were discreetly acknowledged by the houses with a widow’s walk on the roof where anxious wives, mothers, and sisters watched for returning crews.

Lydia Hooper (b. 1714), for instance, awaited the two Azariah Allens, one a husband and the other a son, both of whom died at sea in 1752 and 1777, respectively. During the Revolutionary War, Elizabeth (1756-1833) waited five years for her fiancé, William Hassam, to return from impressed service on a British frigate before they were married in 1780. For the next 53 years, William had either better karma or a safer line of work; he expired within six months of Elizabeth.

It was not until the last decades of the eighteenth century that the ocean finally rewarded the Allens’ perseverance. Two related skippers named John Allen (1757-1822, 1776-1834) became prosperous shipmasters in Salem. They joined the growing guild of

boatmen in town, at one point more than 40 of them with their own ships. Other Allens turned to woodworking as artisanal cabinetmakers with a large urban market. The merchant trade in Boston contributed to this success and the arousing aroma of coffee brought from more distant destinations.

The first John had three sons who subsequently took up their father's business. The latter John, my great-great-great grandfather, was commander of a tall, three-masted schooner, the *Mary Beach*, which he commemorated in a proud painting. By 1824 he was also builder of the stately, three-story, brick house, across from the town cemetery where weather-worn, Allen tombstones still stand. The home on Washington Street remained in the family for nearly 175 years, an uneasy legacy for six generations.

This John's son, Benjamin Leach Allen (1803-1865), husband to the venturesome traveller Hannah Lee, proved to be an alert, dandified businessman and sometime mayor of Boston. Telescope in hand, with mutton-chop sideburns, he represented a new society; by 1780 wily Yankee entrepreneurs succeeded the subsistence-minded immigrants and their immediate descendants. Like some great white whale, the larger world beckoned.

#### *Westhampton Beach*

The tight community of kindred faithful and struggling fishermen gave way to the more varied company of propertied men engaged in shipping. Although Allens were deacons in the local church and selectmen in town – with one of them an alderman of Boston – they were not well educated. Seafarers seldom spoke with the eloquence of writers, pastors, lawyers, or teachers. So in 1864, my great-grandfather John (1840-1918) laboriously penned an ungrammatical letter to his sister Harriet Johnson, which began, "I am alive & well[, ] as yet [I] have been oblidge [sic] to pass through a good many trials," including a

#### **Comment [2]: 13 Washington Street**

The Manchester house at 13 Washington Street last belonged to my father's cousin Bert and his wife Anne. In keeping with familial tradition, they had established strong local commitments, such as to the Masonic lodge and the Congregational Church. But Bert and Anne decided not to retire in Manchester, for reasons I never understood. After consulting everyone of us with a possible interest in the house, they sold it in 1998 and relocated to the west coast to live near their son Jonathan, a cardiologist with Kaiser Permanente. They soon moved to Hawaii (where a shipwrecked John Allen, Bert's grandfather, wrote home in 1864). After Anne died in 2009, Bert returned to Salem. The families of three children still live in the Manchester area, not far from many other kin.



shipwreck near desolate Baker Island far off in the Pacific. A man more of faith than of letters, John knew first-hand life's hazards, as did his ocean-wary relations: "they that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters, these see the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep" (Psalms 107.23-24). Nature took care of the rest.

As New England coastal-dwellers before the full development of an industrial economy, the Allens did not entirely control their fate. Sea voyages were long and harsh, bespeaking better lives elsewhere, first north to New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine, then west to New York, Missouri, and California. By 1850, the lure of the land was no different for the Allens than it was for the new influx of immigrants, this time from Ireland, Italy, and central Europe in the east; from China in the west; and from Mexico in the south. The slave trade from Africa ceased after 1807.

On two occasions, national events intruded on their private lives. Josiah Jr. (1730-1777) died in the Revolutionary War, the second member of the family to fall afoul of the British. The number of Allen men caught up in the Civil War was more substantial. Isaac was killed at the major battle of Antietam near Sharpsville, Maryland, in 1862. The next year his brother William and Edward, a distant kinsman, disappeared at Belle Isle Prison, a notorious detention center for captured Union soldiers in the James River near Richmond. A later Benjamin (1829-1864), of Company F, Eleventh Regiment, Massachusetts Volunteers, was killed near Washington, DC (where Allens lived a century later). For four years the Civil War, America's most deadly conflict, overtook the sea as the leading source of male mortality on the North Shore.

The next successful Allen, Benjamin Leach (1874-1939), the second by that name, was born just nine years after the war. He left Manchester in 1894. The great-

grandson of one Captain John and the son of another (the shipwrecked letter-writer), my grandfather instead banked in New York. He began as a teller in Knickerbocker Trust, becoming a vice-president in 1903. Thanks to his cool-headed work during the panic that ruined the company in 1907, he helped manage the merger of the bank's remaining assets with Columbia Trust in 1912 and then Columbia's merger with Irving Trust in 1923. He retired in 1934 as a vice president of that firm, a precursor to the Bank of New York Mellon, before starting his own, B.L. Allen and Company.

Ben's nose for possibility was infallible. As Jay Gould's outlandish "gold conspiracy" demonstrated after the Civil War, Wall Street was the financial lodestar in a new economy. But a year of business study at Gordon College before leaving Manchester had given Ben other interests: Consolidated Laundries, New York Harbor Realty, and Capuchinas Holdings. And he purchased the Wines family farm, 30 acres on Quiogue near Westhampton Beach, Long Island. Land values there had grown dramatically after 1870 when a rail-line finally reached the sleepy village and made it a resort town.

Ben's love of the sea also seemed insatiable. As a young man, he frequently sailed or took the train back to Manchester. In 1921, with a household of his own, he began work on the Wines farmhouse just to the east of the Aspatuck Creek estuary. In time, Ben relocated the homestead and added enough space to it for the Allens to inhabit year round. Well protected from ocean storms, including the devastating hurricane in 1938, Notamiset, so he called the site, served as a natural refuge for wildlife and their hunters.

In fact, Ben built a cabin a short hike from the main house that would become his own haven from importunate neighbors and kin. Here, across from a duck blind in the estuary, he kept better company with his retriever, Happy. The ocean was less than a mile

away. Like Charles Robert Patterson's painting of Donald McKay's famous clipper ship, "The Glory of the Seas" (ill. 3), which Ben hung visibly over the mantelpiece at home, the Atlantic always reminded him of his former home in Manchester. Westhampton Beach then was not much different in its quaint New-England-town appeal to the accidental New Yorker whose flagging olfaction revived in the crisp, ocean breeze.

Ben was never as flamboyant or as reckless as Jimmy Gatz, the protagonist in F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel, The Great Gatsby (1925), a younger contemporary of Ben's in "the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty." Briefly Ben lived like Gatsby at New York's fashionable Plaza Hotel where he met with clients and partners. In the prosperous 1920s, both men cleverly turned circumstances to their profit, only Ben had a more mature, stable personality and kept his eye on much more realistic achievements in banking in lieu of bootlegging. He put his own green light at the end of the dock.

The Great Depression and early retirement affected Ben's good fortune. At his death in 1939, his estate was appraised at \$116,379 (about \$1.5 million today), not much for so prominent a banker who might have fared better with a college degree in hand. He remained an upright citizen, donating generously to the Union League in New York and to St. Mark's in Westhampton Beach. Ben suffered no illusions of grandeur in business; he cared more about his family with a wiser woman than Gatsby's Daisy Buchanan.

In 1900 Ben married Louie Sutherland (1874-1950) of Orange, New Jersey, a half hour's train-ride from Manhattan. Her father, Louis Volz Sutherland, left no records of his mysterious death, in Salt Lake City, eight full months before she was born. Her mother Anna, however, kept an informative diary from the year 1900, a Christmas gift from Ben to his future mother-in-law while she was still living on Park Avenue. The



daily entries are formulaic – mere litanies of what the household did – but the musty end-leaves contain photos, news clippings, and marginalia about Ben and Louie’s families.

After centuries of ancestors in the New World, the couple’s situation informed the continued, now muted influence of the early immigrant experience. The hundreds of thousands of new people arriving each year seemed to have nothing in common with such long-settled families, a tiny minority of whom the novelist Edith Wharton guardedly referred to as “old New York.” In a rapidly changing cityscape, the lives of old and new, of abundance and destitution, differed self-consciously, conspicuously.

#### *New York*

Although one newspaper article refers to Ben’s “distinguished English lineage” – the old salts in Manchester would have scoffed – Louie’s New York kin were far more noteworthy. In 1659 the ship’s list for the “De Moesman,” arriving in New Amsterdam from Rotterdam, includes the name of Willem Jansen (c. 1632-c. 1668), a fisherman, with his wife Janettje Jans (1636-1676). Their surname, Roome, first appeared in 1684 when their son, Pieter Willemsse Roome (1660-1729), was married to Hester Van Gelder (1662-1729) in the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church.

According to church and city census records, the next five generations of Roomes lived in New York – or so New Amsterdam came to be known in 1664, population 800 (now 8,008,278). They united with families such as the Le Chevaliers (1717), the De Groots (1761), and the Lewis (1797). Very few of the Roomes died in infancy, and the rest had long, fruitful lives. Little else is known about them other than they were prolific, averaging more than a dozen children per marriage well into the nineteenth century. Nicholas Roome (1775-1824) and his wife Jemima Lewis had eighteen.

**Nota Bene:**  
*Subheadings also serve as signposts for readers to pause. Feel free to dip in and dip out, as you wish, at such breaks in the text.*

Nicholas was the first notable Roome. Ostensibly to sustain his burgeoning brood, he became a merchant (in no way connected with slavery) and a public-spirited citizen (in civic organizations like the Freemasons). One of the treasures of the National Heritage Museum is a Masonic Past Master's Jewel with the inscription, "Presented by Independent Royal Arch Lodge No. 2 to W[orshipful] P[ast] M[aster] Bro[ther] Nicholas Roome[,] New York[,] December 27<sup>th</sup> A[nno1811].... His Works Were Approved." According to the lodge's minutes, however, the large gold, silver, and copper pendant was formally presented to him on March 17, 1812 (Lord knows why).

Nicholas sought out more public activity than Masonry's secret rituals. Starting in 1820, he served on the vestry of St. Luke's in the Fields, on Hudson Street. He contributed to the church's construction in 1822 after a hurricane leveled much of the city. Four years later there erupted an anti-Masonic political movement, which gave Freemasons in New York (and beyond) a nefarious reputation for the next decade. It is nice to know Nicholas did nothing memorable to discredit either family or community.

Nicholas's eleventh child, Charles Roome (1812-1890), would outshine his well-respected father. Charles was a capable civil engineer by training and a vigilant military officer by choice. In 1835 he captained Company D, Seventh Regiment of the New York State Militia, charged with keeping order after a huge fire in town. During the Civil War, with money from banker Moses Taylor, he raised, equipped, and commanded the 37<sup>th</sup> Regiment, some 600 men who defended the capital of Pennsylvania during the battle of Gettysburg in 1863. Charles saw no more action in the war, but he was brevetted a Brigadier General "for gallantry" two years later.

By then Charles had returned to his work as president of the Manhattan Gas and

Light Company, which was eventually superseded by Consolidated Edison of New York. In the 1880s he took his own turn as the Grand Master of the New York Freemasons, the second Roome to be so honored, a signal achievement in the Craft, thanks to his contributions to the city's monumental Masonic Temple. He was a genuinely frank and affable fellow; his informal manner was evident in an appearance before the New York Gas Investigating Committee in 1886. "It is a long story, if you want to know," he began his explanation of a pipeline explosion; the commission waited patiently for him to tell it.

Charles's daughter, Anna Catharine (1842-c. 1910), named after her mother Anna Catharine Wheeler, was proud of her father's many accomplishments. She also admired her half-brother, the Reverend Claudius Roome, rector first of Christ Church, then of St. Luke's, the church his grandfather Nicholas helped to build. Even more prominent was William Harris Roome, another half-brother, who played a role in organizing New York's grassroots opposition to Tammany Hall's political machine. An attorney and leader in the Clean Government movement, William was instrumental in the election of the city's first Progressive Era mayor, William L. Strong, in 1894.

While Anna's diary says little more about Claudius and William, the two boys born to Charles Roome's second wife, it says nothing about her husband, Louis (1842-1873), or their son, Charles (1873-1889), whose memory had faded away by the time she was writing. On the other hand, Anna was happy to note, at least marginally, the accomplishments of the women in the family. Carefully clipped and pasted into the diary were poems by Ethel Lynn Beers, the wife of Anna Wheeler's cousin William and a descendant of Boston's John Eliot, the "Apostle to the Indians."

According to The Annals of America, Ethel Lynn is remembered for writing "All

Quiet Along the Potomac To-Night,” the most popular poem during the Civil War. It first appeared as “The Picket Guard” in the November 30, 1861, issue of Harper’s Weekly, but it soon got its new title from familiar newspaper headlines in the early months of the conflict. After The London Times printed it, the poem circulated widely in the South where its sentiments of unrecognized sacrifice were set to music.

Because the original lyrics had been signed only with Ethel Lynn’s initials, three men claimed to have written them. Years later Ethel Lynn stated emphatically, “With my paper across the end of my sewing machine, I wrote the whole poem before noon, making but one change in copying it.... Nothing was ever more vivid or real to me than the pictures I conjured up of the picket’s lonely walk and swift summons.”

“All quiet along the Potomac to-night,  
No sound save the rush of the river;  
While soft falls the dew on the face of the dead,  
The picket’s off duty forever.

Ethel Lynn went on to write verse and stories for children, including General Frankie: A Story for Little Folks (1863) and her collected works in 1879. She died just one day after her first and only volume of poetry was published.

The other women in the Roome family were less remarkable. Anna Sutherland had two daughters, Allis (1868-c.1940), a.k.a. “Daisy,” and Louie, both of whom lived at home with their mother in Orange (we know a bit more about them than we can glean from Anna’s diary). An unapologetic hypochondriac, Daisy loved opera and had a brief, unhappy marriage late in life. Louie, however, was much spryer, and for good reason. Her fiancé Ben came to dinner almost every evening in the nine months leading up to their wedding on October 10, 1900. Theirs was a long and pleasant betrothal and holy wedlock. Together, they shared the felicitous aura of newly baked bread.

**Nota Bene:**  
*The rich mix of settlers over the centuries is what made the US such an immigrant nation and contributed to its incredible vitality but also to its deep social inequalities.*  
(page 40)

The impression one has from reading Anna's diary is of a warm, upright, literate, and comfortable household. The women got along well, kept an impeccable house, and read to each other as they sewed; they also supported charities at Grace Church, visiting the sick and the infirm as well as friends and relations. With the money bequeathed them by the Roomes and the Sutherlands, they struggled only to find servants who could live up to their demanding notions of domestic work. There were no fewer than three women – a cook, a chambermaid, and a seamstress – under their close direction.

The absence of men did not seem to matter to this fortunated family of females. Fathers, husbands, and brothers were not missed. Far removed from the early immigrant experience, the women were perfectly at home with themselves. This self-sufficiency is evident in the landscape painting that Anna Wheeler copied from an Albert Bierstadt mountain scene, with a large lake front-and-center, once on display in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The barely discernible human figures seem unfazed by the enormity of their natural setting. For these women, civilization was already always there.

After a big wedding – there were 1,400 invitations – and a honeymoon in Québec, Ben and Louie started life together in New York. The birth of their first child, Catharine (1901-1956), must have encouraged them to build a home of their own on Park Avenue in East Orange, where Anna and Daisy assisted with the other babies who were delivered at uneven intervals: Evelyn (1903-1953), Benjamin Leach (1904-1965), and Louis Sutherland (1910-1989), my father.

The children picked up many of their parents' habits and traits: playful, sociable, ambitious, and duly diligent. The Allens were fond of practical jokes, such as Ben Jr.'s endless ribbing of Lou. This generation grew up during the Roaring Twenties, which



marked them as indelibly as the prolonged economic slump that followed. Although Ben Sr. was a wealthy businessman, he insisted that his children earn their way in the world, just as he did. True to Manchester tradition, however privileged, the men worked. It was a moral duty because of the advantages they enjoyed until the New Deal.

Portraits of Ben and Louie in the 1930s say something about their character. A photograph of each one faces the other in a folded, double frame. Ben is seated, sporting a woolen three-piece suit, a gold watch chain encircling his expanding waistline. He holds a scroll of parchment in his hands to signify his professional status. For her part, Louie is dressed in a raven-black, fur-lined dress with a lengthy necklace of glass beads. Both of them have cocked their heads ever so slightly in a quizzical, almost sly look, as if to engage their viewer in conversation.

A letter from Ben to my mother, just before she was married to my father, reinforces this impression of witty sociability. After praising his son's choice, he asks her if she is privy to his faults. "Based on my own personal experience, I warn you that your dressing gowns, slippers, shaving utensils, hair tonic, perfumery, etc. should be kept under lock and key." Evidently my father had a lazy habit of borrowing and failing to return such items. Ben's gentle irony effectively highlighted a magnanimous welcome to the family fold. He was a much less complicated person than Louie.

For fifteen or so years Ben spent weekdays in New York and retreated weekends to Long Island until he died unexpectedly of a cerebral hemorrhage in 1939. By then all the children were married and on their own. Louie continued living in Westhampton, gardening gladly, receiving visitors, frowning at her grandchildren's antics, in the company of Charlie and Helen Belson and Henrietta Furlong, her familiar Irish help of all-trades.

Years earlier, a mediocre portrait of Louie by Perry Allen, an unknown connection, captured the expressive brown eyes of an assertive woman. Dressed in a loose-fitting silk dress with fringed sleeves and a shawl fashionable in the 1920s, the decorous Louie calmly commands the cynosure of all viewers. It was not how she wished to be remembered, and the portrait languished in a closet for decades. Louie preferred to be known affectionately as “Garga,” her familial pseudonym. When struck down by a myocardial infarction in 1950, she was buried next to Ben in Westhampton Cemetery.

The children strived to live up to their mother’s expectations. The girls settled well. In 1925 mild-mannered Evie married Lewis E. Pierson, Jr., the son of Ben’s boss at Irving Trust and the scion of a New York Social Register family. The lame but cheerful Kay fell for the congenial Frederick St. George Smith, whose inheritances from English relatives arrived with convenient regularity; the two were wed in 1936.

By then Ben Jr., short and gamely acerbic, had beguiled Hilga Pearson, a dear and demure soul from Oil City, Pennsylvania, who worked as an executive secretary in New York. Together Ben and Hig operated an upscale gift shop in Port Washington before building a house in Westhampton across the estuary from Notamiset. And in 1938 my robustly handsome father, Lou, espoused my mother, the lovely Marie Louise Smith (1915-2002), whose own relations had still more fragrant stories to tell.

### *Newark*

Much closer to the immigrant experience were my maternal grandparents, James Smith III (1878-1930) and Lillian Christine Krueger (1878-1923). Within three months of Ben and Louie’s wedding, my mother’s parents exchanged their vows in Newark, the great industrial city adjacent to suburban East Orange. Here the tales of the Smiths and

the Kruegers are more familiar to the 30 million Europeans who migrated to the US between 1860 and 1920. Their heroic labor made profitable the manufacture of leather, beer, and chemicals, whose suffocating stench hung heavily over the harbor just eight miles and two bays west of lower Manhattan.

The rival Irish- and German-American communities in Newark (population 246,070 in 1900) arose from the nation's surging immigration, at the rate of a half million a year in the decades after the Civil War. These newcomers joined their less prolific predecessors. The rich mix of settlers over the centuries is what made the US such an immigrant nation and contributed to its incredible vitality but also to its deep social inequalities. This familiar historical pattern was especially true of late nineteenth-century New York and its urban hinterlands on the Passaic River in northern New Jersey.

By far the most tenacious of my mother's clan to cross the Atlantic was her grandfather, Gottfried Krueger (1837-1926). In 1853 he landed at Castle Garden, New York, fresh from Sulzfeld, a tiny farming village in Baden 35 miles east of Karlsruhe, now in southwestern Germany. The Kruegers had been of farmer-stock for many generations until Gottfried's father went to work as a lowly carter in Mannheim. At age 15 without a penny or a word of English to his name, Gottfried escaped his family's modest state to America. He apprenticed at a brewery on Newark's Belmont Avenue managed by his uncle Johann Laible.

Gottfried was tireless. He became plant foreman in five years, a naturalized citizen and husband in seven. By 1865, just twelve years after his arrival, he had saved \$2,000, borrowed another \$8,000, and found a partner, Gottlieb Hill, to buy the business. Ten years later, in 1875, Krueger raised another \$55,000 to payoff his partner's heirs to

**Comment [3]: America's Demographic Tapestry**

The diaspora of innumerable ethnicities is speedily refashioning our society. By 2050, if not sooner, Americans of European descent will no longer be the majority of the US population; they will constitute fewer than 50 percent of all inhabitants, thanks to the continued influx of peoples from around the world, not just from Mexico, after the Hart-Celler Act of 1965. Since the seventeenth century, however, waves of immigration have reconfigured major cities such as Boston, New York, and Washington, DC, where my roots lie, but also our small towns such as Carbondale and Makanda Township, where I live as a domestic migrant little different from neighbors who were not born here either, but in Ethiopia, Iran, Ukraine, Guyana, and Thailand. Our kinship owes to much more than mere proximity, and it transcends the ethnic rivalries of the Germans and the Irish in turn-of-the-century Newark.

own the brewery outright (at the time, these sums were worth 20 times more). He was 38 and already well-to-do, moving to invest in other breweries, real estate, and finance, including the German Savings Bank. For his success, Gottfried was elected to the New Jersey Assembly (1876-1882), where he cast the decisive vote for US Senator John R. McPherson in 1877; and he was appointed a lay judge on the New Jersey Court of Errors and Appeals (1892-1903), whence the honorific “Judge Krueger.”

Gottfried’s personal life was not half as charmed as his brewery. In 1860 he married Katarina Horter (1839-1873), who lived long enough to bear nine children, only two of whom, the two youngest boys, reached adulthood. In 1874 Gottfried remarried, this time to Berta Johanna Laible (1854-1921), a cousin, who gave birth to eleven kids, seven of whom survived infancy. Despite their munificent financial fortune, Krueger’s subservient wives and children had much to endure. The paterfamilias dominated his relations the way he did his employees, relentlessly: bad beer reeked at home for many years.

In 1889 the family moved from a large second-floor apartment near the brewery to a Bavarian castle at the corner of High and Court Streets, the most expensive private residence ever built in Newark (it cost \$250,000 then, more than \$5.5 million today). Now a registered historical monument, designed by architect Herman Schultz, the ornate mansion boasted three full stories, baroque dormers, and a tall central tower. Its bevy of domestics required an elevator to serve all 40 rooms. Such a stylistically eclectic edifice befitted Gottfried’s status and collection of art by the likes of Dürer, the Cranachs, and the Holbeins. For 25 years the Kruegers inhabited this palatial pile of brick and mortar.

This was not all. Krueger built each of his nine adult children a fully furnished home of their own at marriage, most of them along Newark’s High Street. Then in quasi-

retirement, he erected another sprawling structure on Cedar Avenue in Jersey shore's Allenhurst. He never did anything humble, perhaps to compensate for his short stature. Defying the odds of historical conditions, Gottfried thrived right through the Civil War (1861-65), Reconstruction (1865-1877), and the Long Depression (1873-1896) to manage the magic of a modern American Midas. Krueger gilded America's industrial expansion well into the Progressive Era.

World War I presaged tougher times. The eruption of European hostilities in August 1914 occurred during Krueger's annual visit to his former homeland and complicated the return trip. Gottfried and Berta were literally trapped in Germany. In order to ensure the proper operation of his copious interests, Gottfried granted power of attorney to his son Bill. This provision proved exceptionally wise after the United States entered the war in April 1917. Declaring Krueger an "enemy" because he was residing in Berlin with one of his daughters, the Alien Property Custodian moved to seize his US assets. Only Gottfried's political connections averted commercial ruin when Colonel Edward House, President Woodrow Wilson's diplomatic adviser, intervened on his behalf. After four years in Europe, the Kruegers were repatriated in October 1918.

Matters grew worse. Members of Krueger's extensive relations had been on both sides of the conflict, a source of despair for this bicultural German-American. Just fourteen months after the Armistice in November 1918, Prohibition began, which stanching the beer baron's principal cash flow. Gottfried's beloved helpmeet Berta passed away in 1921. And he was too old and too feeble to continue his social and philanthropic involvement in Newark. So the man who had lived for business, family, and community had little more to do. He died of pernicious anemia in Allenhurst in 1926, not quite sure what

would become of the troubled brewery in the hands of his son Bill, who saw his body laid to rest in the Krueger mausoleum at Newark's Fairmount Cemetery.

As for Gottfried's business, its fortunes revived in 1933. After Prohibition and a bitter labor strike, the company started selling beer in cans. It was a novel idea that the brewery had tried in 1908 and forsaken because the metal reacted with the beer. But that problem was solved in collaboration with the American Can Company; the Kruegers wax-lined their new containers initially shaped like bottles with metal caps, which could be removed with a regular bottle opener. Sales increased briskly. The brewery recovered its lost luster, at least until the alcoholic beverage industry began incorporating to invest more money into production and promotion of a lighter lager.

What had been and remained a regional product was finally surpassed by national brands well adapted to popular tastes (by contrast, Krueger had favored a hoppy pilsner). In 1959 an investment syndicate bought the operation. Two years later, after losing \$1 million (\$6.8 million today), the investors liquidated the brewery that Gottfried had made into a minor corporate empire. Its rueful vestiges are now ephemeral paraphernalia – pitchers, coasters, and trays – little more than collectors' piffle auctioned off on e-Bay.

#### *Newark, Again*

At the turn of the nineteenth century, Gottfried Krueger's much vaunted ambitions allied him with an equally single-minded public citizen living on Newark's Washington Place, hard by the industrialist John Ballantine. This was the senator James Patrick Smith, Jr. (1851-1927), my mother's other grandfather, whose eldest son Jim III married Gottfried's Lillie. They embody another tall but true tale, this time of Irish immigrants.

Jim Jr.'s parents, James Smith (1822-1894) and Mary Lyndon (1826-1888), had

arrived in New York from Galway, Ireland, in 1841 just ahead of the great potato famine. Despite the deadly misery back home, they brought with them an interest in local politics – Jim Sr. was soon elected a Newark alderman and New Jersey state assemblyman – but they could not have predicted the future achievements of their eldest son, born in Newark ten years later.

The Smiths had sufficient capital to start a successful dry-goods store. The family thus enabled Jim Jr. to attend local, private schools and St. Mary’s College, a prominent Catholic institution in Wilmington, Delaware, before it closed its doors in 1866. His folks also launched him in what became J.H. Halsey and Smith, a huge manufacturer of patent and enameled leathers. Hardly impecunious from birth, Jim Jr. made this business (enlarged by other tanneries he bought, like T.P. Howell) the second largest of its kind in the country. Along the way, in 1904, he gained control of the Federal Trust Company.

Jim Jr. also acquired a newspaper, The Newark Morning Star (1895-1915), now The Newark Star-Ledger, which printed its first evening edition in 1902. He developed a number of other interests, including the receivership of United States Shipping and the appraisal of Prudential Life Insurance, both headquartered in Newark. Thanks in large part to speculation on the commodity markets, his assets were reportedly worth \$5 million in 1905, the equivalent of more than \$100 million today. Here lay the material basis of “Boss” Jim Smith’s political power in New Jersey.

Jim Jr. was first elected city alderman in 1883, president of Newark’s board of works, and chairman of the New Jersey delegations to the Democratic National Convention in 1884, 1892, 1896, and 1904. In the latter capacity he was instrumental in the nomination of President Grover Cleveland in 1892, though he needed more than moral sua-

**Nota Bene:**  
*In our own way we are all still  
immigrants.*  
(page 54)

sion to win election to the United States Senate that same year. He had originally promised to aid former New Jersey Governor Leon Abbett to the office; after tasting politics at the national level, however, he decided to stand for it himself. According to New Jersey historian James Kerney, Jim Jr. mobilized his immense wealth and *ad hominem* rumor mill to achieve this raucous victory in the state legislature.

For the next six years, the Senator undertook little of note in the nation's capital, except to help wreck the Wilson-Gorman Tariff Reform Act of 1894. The imbalance between very high prices for industrial goods (which were protected) and very low ones for agricultural products (which were not) continued to serve large-moneyed interests like Smith's. He publicly railed against all customs duties while privately engaged in trading stocks whose value rose on investor speculation over how Congress would change import duties. "My impression was that I bought a thousand shares of sugar," he later testified at a Senate hearing on his profiteering in commodities. But when the Senator realized how little solid evidence there was to implicate him, he disingenuously retracted his testimony. From then on, Jim Jr. was known in the press as the "Sugar Senator."

Unaccustomed to such unfriendly publicity, Smith found membership in the US Senate, albeit an exclusive club, too restrictive for the free-wheeling political action he had enjoyed back home. With the New Jersey legislature in Republican hands, Jim Jr.'s re-election was doomed anyway. He served only one term in Washington (1893-1899) and returned to the businesses he owned and to the business he could master, like his eldest son's marriage into another phenomenal family.

Well before his time in Washington, Senator Smith had married Katherine R. Nugent (1852-1910), a hefty, strong-willed lass who hailed as a babe from Wexford, Ireland,



in 1853. Her father, Thomas Nugent, was also deeply involved in New Jersey politics, lending Jim Jr. still more influence in partnership with his wife's agile-witted nephew, James Nugent, the Democratic state party chairman. The entire clan had a hand in power.

In their personal lives, the immigrant Smiths were no luckier than the immigrant Kruegers; they had ten children, the first four of whom failed to attain adulthood. These losses represent doleful misfortune in the midst of such swagger and sway. Imagine what grief the family faced. Senator Smith may have been an astute businessman and magisterial politician, but these advantages brought little consolation to his wife Kate, even less to the detriment of their dead offspring. In fact, the imposing Senator terrified one of the surviving children, the eldest. Jim III was hard put to meet his father's demands, perhaps those of his stalwart mother, as well. This was no ordinary, ill-fated Irish folk.

Although Jim Jr. returned from the US Senate without much to show for it, he remained a political boss in New Jersey for another fifteen years. His machine was based in Essex County, one of the state's wealthiest, where it was easy to raise cash from and for special interests. Long used to politics as employment patronage, local Democrats developed an unsavory reputation at a time when the Progressive Era was correcting such overt corruption. Consequently, Boss Smith and his political allies were persuaded to accept a finely calibrated dose of apparent reform.

The idea was to recruit Woodrow Wilson, the president of Princeton University, to run for governor. The politically inexperienced Wilson appeared to be the perfect candidate to project a cleaner image for the party while the bosses retained political power. More disinterested figures, like Colonel George B.M. Harvey, the editor of Harper's Weekly in New York, urged Wilson to accept the party officials' offer. To everyone's

surprise, including Jim Jr.'s, Wilson agreed with no preconditions and no promises. After losing a bruising battle with one of his more powerful deans, the university president must have dreamed of tamer times in New Jersey state politics.

In 1910, still recovering from his wife's sudden death in April, the Boss oversaw Wilson's nomination, sinking the last of his stretched financial assets into the campaign. The plan presumably was to use Wilson's ascendancy as a means for Democrats to regain control of the state legislature, which Jim Jr. expected would return him to the US Senate. There he hoped to recover the money he had lost in the panic of 1907 as well as what he had spent in politics over the years, perhaps as much as \$1.5 million (\$30 million now). Or so he must have thought. Smith did not articulate his personal political interests while working on Wilson's behalf. He explicitly denied any aspirations of his own.

Just before the campaign in September 1910, Boss Smith and his fellow state-party leaders visited the gubernatorial candidate at his picturesque, Princeton residence. Jim Jr. had been by there many times before; three of his sons had attended the school. On this occasion, however, he was even more impressed by the tidy campus in all its ripe, autumnal glory and remarked upon it to his entourage. While awaiting Wilson in his book-lined study, the Boss reputedly asked, "Can you imagine anyone being damn fool enough to give this up for the heartaches of politics?"

The answer was not long in coming. After his landslide election, Wilson was adamantly opposed to Jim Jr.'s surprise quest for the Senate in January 1911. The reform-minded governor believed on principle that the winner of the statewide preference primary should be ratified, not contravened, in the legislature. So Wilson prevailed upon New Jersey legislators to elect James E. Martine instead by an overwhelming margin

(47 to 3). The old party boss was devastated. Commented Wilson uncharitably after Jim Jr.'s stinging defeat, "He wept, they say, as he admitted himself utterly beaten. Such is the end of political power – particularly when selfishly obtained and heartlessly used." Smith would try his luck in the senatorial primary of 1912, only to lose again to Wilson's candidate, Judge William Hughes.

In spite of Jim Jr.'s active resistance, all of Governor Wilson's legislative initiatives passed. Wilson soon became President of the United States (1913-1921), and Boss Smith's opposition no longer mattered. In 1915, after years of mounting debt, Jim Jr.'s empire collapsed. The Controller of the Currency, John Skelton Williams, inquired into Smith's finances at the Federal Trust Company, which led to the disclosure of \$2.3 million (more like \$46.1 million today) in uncovered notes. With the loss of \$3 million (\$60 million now) during Augustus Heinze's American Copper scheme in 1907, Jim Jr. had borrowed substantial sums to shore up his failing newspaper and leather businesses. Then came World War I, and the cost of raw materials spiked in global markets to tip the balance against Smith's concerns. His creditors received just six cents on the dollar.

Bankrupt and discredited, Smith retired from public life. He moved from town-center Washington Place to suburban Mount Prospect Avenue. And he sold off the out-sized beach estate he had bought from the heirs of the late President James Garfield in Elberon. No longer at the center of political action, Smith languished at home in the company of his daughter Mary Rose, an ironic end for this "Chesterfield of a man," as one historian described him. He was buried with some pomp next to his wife Kate in East Orange's Holy Sepulchre Cemetery in 1927. Boss Smith remains little more than a minor figure in the history of New Jersey and its many immigrant communities.

#### **Comment [4]: The Senator**

It is implausible that Woodrow Wilson dismissed James Smith, Jr., as a "Roman Catholic ... shanty Irishman," which my aunt Popsie alleges in her memoirs. These two men had long since broken politically when she has Smith seeking an appointment in Wilson's first presidential administration. After his electoral defeat for the US Senate in 1912, Smith had done everything he could to frustrate Wilson's progressive political agenda. On the other hand, it is probably true that Smith once called Wilson a "Presbyterian priest," a truly tortured oxymoron. According to Ray Stannard Baker's historical assessment of Smith, "He was, in short, besides being a human and likeable man, a shining exemplification of all that was worst, most hopeless, in American political life."

### *Newark and Beyond*

Back in 1901, Senator James Smith Jr. was still busy. He found it easy to cajole his namesake, James Smith III, into marrying Lillian Christine Krueger on January 23, even though the two hardly knew each other. Jim III did not seem to care much, but Lillie did. Her first and only love had been Gustave Weidenmeyer, a blond, blue-eyed, Teutonic ideal and son of a rival Newark brewer. This attachment failed in the face of political interest and parental authority.

The newlyweds, one as Irish as the other was German, were not a match. Jim III enjoyed high-stakes poker games, tall tumblers of whiskey, traditional Irish storytelling, and moments of genuine remorse at Catholic mass. His degree with honors from Seton Hall College had not broadened his cultural interests appreciably. Lillie, on the other hand, preferred the classics of German art, music, and literature, and was committed to Lutheran concepts of salvation by scripture, faith, and grace. Private tutors and trips to Germany refined her sensibilities. Like New Jersey's immigration politics, the union of these two antithetical people may well have been cussed and discussed first in acrid, smoke-filled rooms at Delmonico's of New York.

Together the couple worked out a passive, distant relationship, barely tolerating each other's proud foibles. Their children were to be reared Catholic, the father's faith, but they were also to learn German, the mother's tongue. The cost to the Senator and the Judge for this marriage of convenience was high; it was a lavish wedding in the Krueger mansion, a brand new house across the street, and an income to support the new family comfortably in its domestic anguish. The Senator sealed the deal with a wedding gift of \$10,000, the equivalent of more than \$200,000 today. In an equivocal gesture, the bride

and groom saved a slice of wedding cake in an aromatic silver box (a bouquet of allspice and cinnamon now emanates from the desiccated pastry).

What the Smiths left of themselves confirms this implicit quid pro quo. All 303 pieces of their silverware, for example, were inscribed with Lillie's married initials. Instead of interweaving "LCS" for Lillian Christine Smith, the monogram read "LKS" for Lillian Krueger Smith; the bride still belonged to her father. The flatware, Gorham's Old Baronial, was fashionable at the time. The catalog stated, aptly for the occasion, "This design will be appreciated by those who seek a pattern especially designed to suit massive surroundings." As it was, Lillie and Jim III's massive surroundings did not suit them at all in the conjugal constraint they suffered for the sake of others.

Photographs of the pair suggest a stiff, uneasy formality lacking from the images of their parents' manifest comfort with social status and responsibility. In her fine and frilly wedding dress, Lillie's veil shades a distracted, vacant stare. The elaborate attire seems small consolation to her evident distress. Years later, Jim III looks more determined, thanks to his stiffly combed hair and even stiffer collar, but his recessive double-chin betrays a certain slackness of character, however dutiful to his family he tried to be. Thanks to a remunerative sinecure at his father's leather factory, Jim III's real work seemed to have been making the best of his life with Lillie.

After a leisurely honeymoon to the venerable Homestead resort in Hot Springs, Virginia – a journey lasting "six weeks to the day," Lillie wrote later – the Smiths coped well enough to have four children. The first was Elizabeth Lillian (1903-1987), a.k.a. Popsie, who years later wrote generously of her parents. After twenty-six years of life in Cuba, she would have her own difficulties with the dashing Frank Steinhart, Jr., and

his marital infidelities. Their union was annulled in 1948 just two months before she married William Malone, a kindly, ailing executive with General Motors.

Eight years after Popsie was born came identical twins, Gottfried (1911-2009) and James IV (1911-2001). These lively boys embodied their father's sense of humor at its sober best; their high spirits were a source of constant amusement for everyone – for themselves, of course, but also for their wives, Go's Rosario de Blanck and Jim's Laura Lyon Buchanon. The twins' youthful zest for piloting planes, in the spirit of their hero Charles Lindbergh, owes a lot to their spontaneous, venturesome personalities.

Then in 1915 came the last child, Marie Louise, my mother, who was always "Sister" to her family. Her formal name was too much of a mouthful to pronounce. Temperamentally she resembled her subdued mother and elder sister, but she cracked up at her brothers' affectionate animation. For years "Sis" was just a kid, a reclusive waif whose self-effacement everyone – including Sis – warmly embraced.

The youngsters needed each other because their parents provided them minimal emotional sustenance. The move from Newark to East Orange's suburban Park Avenue in 1916, a year after Jim Jr.'s bankruptcy, did not improve relations between the disaffected spouses. Jim III pretended to deserve a salary at his father's failing leather factories. His heart had never fixed on much, and he sought diversion as he could (very likely he suffered as an alcoholic). After two voyages to Europe – one in 1916, the other in 1918, to rescue his in-laws from Germany during World War I – Jim III found work with the Pierce-Arrow Motor Company at its headquarters in Buffalo. Luck of the Irish, this windfall came from a serendipitous acquaintance with the company president at New York's Saratoga races whose wagers were well watered at the bar.

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(page 57)

Meanwhile, during the virulent influenza epidemic of 1918, Lillie came down first with pneumonia, then with tuberculosis. It is hard to say if there was any connection between these respiratory ailments and the “Spanish” flu that killed more than 50 million people worldwide. Popsie euphemistically termed her illness emphysema, a less threatening disease to mention in public. The doctors prescribed a temperate climate, such as existed in Asheville, North Carolina, well known for its TB clinics. Lillie and the children relocated there in 1919, a year after Jim III had departed for Buffalo.

In a home that Gottfried built for her on Sunset Parkway, in the town made famous by the grandiose Biltmore mansion (and somewhat later by Thomas Wolfe’s autobiographical *Look Homeward, Angel*), Lillie survived stoically until her death at age 45. She was buried in the Krueger mausoleum in Newark. Her husband managed on his own in Buffalo until he died, lonely and depressed, of a heart attack seven years later in 1930. He was not quite 52. Overshadowed by family, Jim III was buried, apart from his wife, in the Smith cemetery plot in East Orange; his children were cared for by their spinster nurse, “Aunty” Christine Ekegren, with the succor of many Kruegers.

#### *America*

My parents, Lou Allen and Sis Smith, were the progeny of these types. My father’s families were harrowed by treacherous seas out of Manchester, but heartened by shrewd, merchant work in New York. The Allens and Roomes succeeded, however, slowly and steadily until their emotional bonds were assured by a more predictable chance at life, at least in the nineteenth century. My mother’s families, on the other hand, reveled in the adventure of manufacturing in the Gilded Age and the excitement of sudden wealth and public prominence. For their daring dynamism, the immigrant Smiths

and Kruegers paid dearly in disproportionate death and disappointment.

These two fortuitous traditions were married in 1938 and framed the future of another generation. Theirs was a curious, ethnic blend of stout New England Yankee and resolute New York Dutch, on the one hand, and of brash Irish Catholic and assertive German Lutheran, on the other. With my parents' wedding, this cultural amalgam set sail from New York for Nassau in the Bahamas, ostensibly to honeymoon, but also to launch a life very different from those of their many predecessors on the high seas. This travel brought our immigrant experience, one of many like it, to a close.

This is not to say that comparable historical change was over. On the contrary, the social and geographical mobility of the family continued unchecked, just in unanticipated directions. In lieu of immigration from other lands came migration to opportunities nearer home. As the American demographic centroid shifted to the country's midriff in central Missouri – now near Plato, population 109 – my parents moved from New York to Washington, DC, and their children forged further south to Florida and west to Illinois and Utah (where Louis Volz Sutherland died). My parents also witnessed the transformation of gainful business as they knew it into the professional capital their children realized as adults. Education became a key to prosperity of another sort in the twentieth century.

This familial development was necessarily for neither the worse nor the better. None of us now, I think, would happily return to the frightful dangers at sea that the Allens confronted out of Manchester or to the cruel childhood mortality that the Kruegers withstood in Newark; their glamour was someone else's notion of them. Otherwise, we may envy the civic-mindedness demonstrated by the Roomes or the profligacy and influence enjoyed by the Smiths; their public service was prodigious. Reminiscent of both



steady application and singular sorrow, the family's past is redolent of raw, unfinished wood – sycamore, cedar, oak, and pine – to work well but also to burnish sadly.

In our own way we are all still immigrants. We are not that much different from the hearty souls from Europe who arrived to uncertain lives in the New World. Those who came first, the Allens and the Roomes, did no better than those who came later, the Kruegers and the Smiths. It is hard to say whether or not our fortunes will remain the same. With each passing year, we enter into a moment hardly of our own making. So historical memory accords some sense of control and continuity to counter change.

There are no true Horatio Alger stories here. Senator Smith, Judge Krueger, and the banker Allen began life with decided advantages; their families proffered timely and substantial support early in their careers; all three of them, however, chanced ruin from events such as the panic of 1907, World War I, or Prohibition. The laissez-faire state, with no fiscal or monetary policies for the greater public interest, helped to make – and unmake – these men's destinies. In a period when the gap between rich and poor rifted more broadly than at any other time in American history, that is, until recently, severe income inequalities contributed much to the Great Depression after 1929. For my parents' various families, their achievements were indeed precarious.

Luckily they dodged many scourges; they escaped the difficulties of farming communities in midwestern and western states in the 1890s. Nor did they ever work the sweatshops of New York, which were regulated only after hundreds of people perished in them. My parents' families were also spared the new exclusionary laws that in 1924 placed quotas on "objectionable" ethnicities from Eastern Europe and the Far East. Affecting blacks especially, Jim Crow segregation laws and the rise of the KKK in the Deep

South forced 4.5 million impoverished sharecroppers and their families to migrate northward in the twentieth century to repopulate cities like Newark. Native Americans, whether or not they had been enslaved, finally lost their sacred, ancestral lands.

My parents told us none of these facts. They were not much interested in history beyond published genealogies of the Allen and Roome families, Anna Sutherland's diary, or Boss Smith's ties with Woodrow Wilson. Aunt Popsie's All About Me is typical of their selective memory. Besides the usual, incidental errors, it gilded the past for the sake of family so not to give "much cause for worry or anxiety." The result was a narrow narrative in which the wider world did not matter much.

My own version of this saga is somewhat less insular. There are plenty of people and events I do not recount, beginning with everyone overseas. History did not begin or end in America. Whatever happened to the hundreds of families, such as the Sutherlands, who married "into" ours? Or to their daughters who married "out"? Like the Kruegers who fought for Germany in the wars – one of them joined Hitler's Nazis, my mother said – their stories are not privileged but still noteworthy. The wealth, power, and notoriety of a few are no reason to overlook the lives, tales, and fortunes of the many.

Gottfried Krueger's old home in Newark, for instance, looms larger when we learn what became of it after 1914. Before the place was sold as a local Masonic lodge in 1928, it housed a construction company. Thirty years later Louise Scott, New Jersey's first African-American millionaire, bought the house in a much-changed part of town, which had once been the center of a secure, WASP middle class (ill. 4). This relic on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Boulevard has been abandoned and in disrepair since the city foreclosed in 1982. It is known now as the Krueger-Scott mansion in honor of the two

**Comment [5]: Immigration and Social Inequality**

After Native Americans arrived about 30,000 years ago, all subsequent immigrants were unwelcome newcomers, many of them land-hungry farmers and religious dissidents. Others were unwilling captives, like African slaves, or indentured servants, like many European women. The (re)peopling of America has not been a happy story for everyone; and the saga continues as we decide what to do with still more unwelcome, now illegal, newcomers. Of course, education is no guarantee of their improved material welfare, as my example here will show; nor is it the sole factor in redressing inequalities, as economists can demonstrate. But cultural capital, especially in public education, provides the wherewithal to mitigate the most objectionable impunities that erode political stability, social mobility, and international understanding.

once-prominent families who lived there. Akin to the Jewish “Swede” Levov in Philip Roth’s *American Pastoral*, these folks used the site to create their own communities of historical memory in the making of Newark. Their stories gave life to the spaces they fashioned for themselves and the collective legacy they ultimately left for us.

### *Ocean City*

Nearly every morning at the beach, before breakfast, my father went swimming. The ocean seemed calmer at dawn. With the water mirror-still in the early light, Dad paused, almost in meditation, before splashing into the shallow wash and slicing into the rolling waves before him. He swam straight out from the shore, due east, as though he were headed to some distant homeland. I often watched and wondered if he would ever reach the glowing horizon.

Years later I recalled my father’s physical rituals when I first read Henry David Thoreau’s appeal to our better selves: “We must learn to reawaken and keep ourselves awake, not by mechanical aids, but by an infinite expectation of the dawn, which does not forsake us in our soundest sleep.” This literary trope expressed well, I thought, our family’s deepest expectations over the years, not by Walden pond but by the Atlantic shore.

Although my father could not smell, be it rotting bait or fresh wet sand, he loved the sea. He sought his pleasures wherever the water’s briny coolness slapped gently at his feet as he stood, fishing, with rod and reel in hand. Such compensations for his anosmia captivated him. Like the generations of his relations who lived by the ocean, he had ample mnemonics in nature to save him from sensory oblivion.

For all our games at the beach each summer, however, we children heeded little



of our parents' memories. They were little more than yarns they spun at cocktail hour to the likes of Mrs. Eaton when she brought us pungent morsels of sand shark cooked in white wine. Because we had so few experiences of our own to recollect, we simply took for granted the ocean's sensory presence. It was always reassuringly there.

Our parents' patter was far removed from the more serious matter at hand: who would pitch on my brothers' team now that Danny Eaton had to mind his adopted siblings? His mother was talking with my folks about her former life in France. Despite how little she swam, Mrs. Eaton liked to recount her past from overseas.

The ocean makes that happen, one way or another, so many miles from home. It is well worth taking a deep breath to remember.

### **Dialogue with Eveline Forster Allen**

**JSA:** *"I don't believe I know you."*

**EHA:** *"No, James, I suppose not. Related to the historian Henry Adams's clever wife Clover, I was a Hooper before I was an Allen."*

**JSA:** *"How I'd like to know more about that. You're one of four great-grandparents I don't have any stories or papers about, much less pictures or portraits."*

**EHA:** *"Still, you know where I lived in Manchester. As a youth you visited the house on Washington Street every year, it seems."*

**JSA:** *"Yes, I did, Eveline. I must have slept in the same bedroom as you and Captain John."*

**EHA:** *"That front room was ours when he retired from the sea. After we married I made him quit and leave his men to sail the ships. The merchant trade was too dangerous for a family man. One shipwreck in the Pacific is more than enough. I can assure you, he was no Captain Ahab."*

**JSA:** *"How come?"*

**EHA:** *"Why don't you ask your father's cousin Bertie? He'd be more than happy to tell you. After all, he had the house after his uncle Everett."*

**JSA:** *"Bertie is a great story teller. With all his religious fervor, he has an expansive personality. Often times he'll start singing a favorite hymn, and he thoroughly expects you to sing along with him, no matter where you are. He once had a whole diner in town singing 'Jesus loves me'."*

**EHA:** *"Isn't he a character? – more like his aunt Eva than like his dad – Gentleman Bert, folks called the old fellow. How curious it was for the Gentleman to have so many*

*unmarried siblings, all of them living on Washington Street. Only two of them ever married. Ben and Henry were tougher; they got out and had their own families.”*

**JSA:** *“I guess they needed to leave behind the ghosts in Manchester.... A lot of Allens were buried in town.”*

**EHA:** *“How could I forget, James? Their spirits all lived in the house. That was their space, too. We were stewards of the homestead; it belonged to everyone, dead or alive. That’s how I always thought of the place.”*

**JSA:** *“Is that why my grandfather Ben returned so often?”*

**EHA:** *“Actually Manchester, specters and all, went to visit him in Westhampton. He was never far away. In fact, he had a hand in meeting the expenses of 13 Washington Street. Ben was not just the most successful of my children, he was my darling.”*

**JSA:** *“Yes, I know, he named one of his girls, Evelyn, after you.”*

**EHA:** *“Wasn’t her fight with sprue a tragic tale? Before the discovery of antibiotics, no one knew what to do. For years the surgeons just slashed at her intestinal infections.”*

**JSA:** *“Ugh... But true to Allen tradition, my uncle Ben and aunt Hig continued to look after Bertie long after he was on his own.”*

**EHA:** *“As your great-grandfather John liked to say, a sailor’s heart is always at sea because, you know, family is everywhere, such as the Irish and Germans in your mother’s relations.”*

**JSA:** *“So?”*

**EHA:** *“You’ll see, James. Just wait.”*