

THIS IS THE PROMISED LAND

"The Saga of a Mill Family"

An Autobiography

By

Gus Meyner

*12/22/91 residence.
372 Lincoln St
Phillipsburg NJ 08865*

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CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction	i
Time Capsules:	
Years 1907-1914	Easton, Pa. 1
Year 1915	E. Maunk Chunck, Pa. 2
Years 1915-1919	Phillipsburg, N. J. 4
Years 1919-1924	Paterson, N. J. 7
Years 1924-1926	Phillipsburg, N. J. 12
Years 1926-1927	Philadelphia, Pa. 18
Years 1927-1928	Phillipsburg, N. J. 20
Years 1928-1932	Detroit, Mich. 22
Years 1932-1933	Highland Park, Mich. 30
Years 1933-1945	Southfield, Mich. 34
Years 1945-1956	Verona, N. J. 45
Years 1956-1961	Pittsburgh, Pa. 56
Years 1961-1962	Brooklyn, N. Y. 63
Years 1962-1965	Lexington, Mass. 69
Years 1965-1976	Billerica, Mass. 71
Years 1976-1982	Vacaville, CA 82
Years 1983	Vacaville, CA 85

INTRODUCTION

This is the story of one individual that tells the American story over again. He is a third generation American.

His lineage was predominantly German, with some Swiss and French. The German work ethic and sense of accomplishment was strong. The paternal side of the family had its roots in New England; the maternal side in New Jersey. Both sides of the family were silk mill people, whose adult work started as early as the age of twelve.

Family ties on the paternal side were strong, though emotions were contained. This may be hard to understand by many for whom "touch" is important. In case of adversity there was no lack of open-hearted understanding and giving in the family. As a child there was no greater anchor than Mom and Pop.

With these beginnings, the children of this mill family made their niches, one becoming Governor of a state, the other an executive in the industrial field, and a sister married to a ship's captain.

The lessons learned in the formative years were taught through example. Pop was liberal for his time, which was probably the result of Grandpop's background activities in New England. His father, though having relatively good positions in silk mill operations, tried to remedy such conditions as child labor in the mills. As this was ahead of his time, he not only was not successful, but damaged his own career. Mom took care of our religious education at home.

The finances of the family were handled by Mom. She "made do" with what Pop earned. At no time was there a surplus. Home remedies were the practice for sickness (a drop of Sloan's liniment on a spoonful of sugar cured a sore throat). Food and shelter were adequate; recreational affairs were home centered.

All in all, it was a good life for us, and none of us would trade it for anything different. We have lived in the era from horse-drawn vehicles to the space age. Who could ask for anything more? And "The Best is Yet to Be", despite the challenges to be overcome in the future.....

THE YEARS - 1907 to 1914

I was born in Easton, Pennsylvania, a town of 25,000, at the junction of the Lehigh and Delaware rivers. The area of Easton, Pa., Phillipsburg, N.J. served as a trade area for approximately 100,000 people. It was a railroad center with six railroads serving the area - the Pennsylvania, Lehigh Valley, Central of New Jersey, Easton-Western, Delaware & Hudson, and the Lackawanna Railroad.

The area was highly industrialized, with foundries, heavy machinery manufacturing, silk mills, paper converting, and locomotive shops. Coal barges on the Morris Canal across New Jersey to Newark were still in use.

Our house on Wood Street was comfortable for the times. We had kerosene lamps, coal stoves for heating and cooking, and an outhouse. All three children were born at home in Easton, the last being my sister, who was six years younger than I, the oldest.

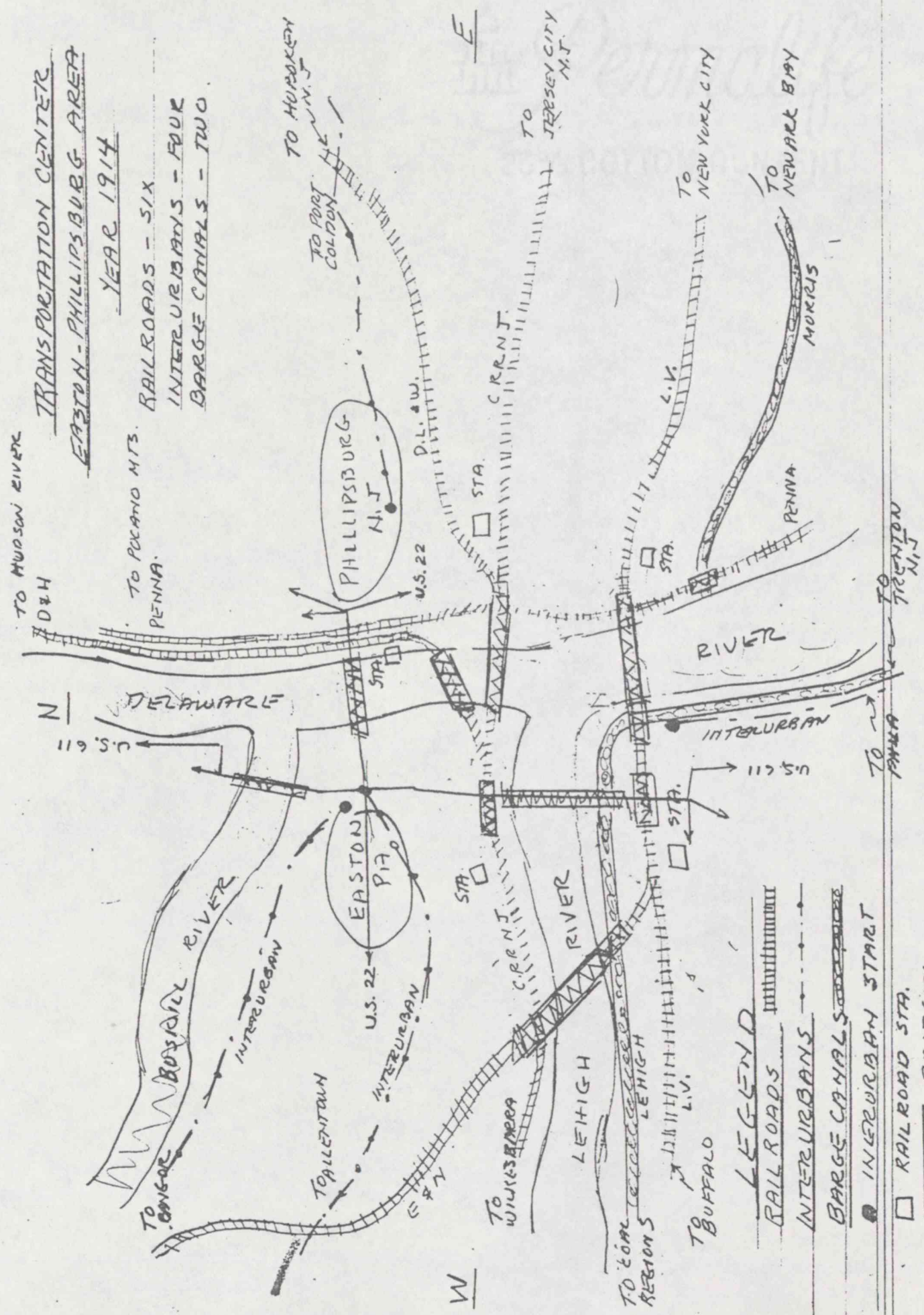
My brother and I had our chores, even at a very young age. Our room had to be picked up, we would run errands for Mom, and the one job we hated was working the handle on the manual washing machine for twenty minutes. That was boring. Our playmates were limited - one boy whose dad was a dentist, two brothers our ages across the street - and my idol, a boy of eleven or twelve who had a boomerang that when thrown would come back to him. The empty lot next to us that was overgrown with brush was our jungle.

Like most mill folks at that time, Pop came home for dinner at noon, and there was always supper on the table at night. Bed was relatively early, as Pop went to work around seven in the morning. Transportation was on foot, and the mill was about two miles away.

We got a thrill out of the trained horse that the coal company had at the bottom of the hill, about a mile away. This horse was used to help the two-team wagons of coal up the hill. At the top, in front of our house, the driver would unhitch the horse, and he would go back to the coal yard by himself. Occasionally he would stop to graze; then someone would corral him and lead

TRANSPORTATION CENTER
EASTON-PHILLIPSBURG AREA
YEAR 1914

RAILROADS - SIX
 INTERURBANS - FOUR
 BARGE CANALS - TWO



- LEGEND
- RAILROADS
 - INTERURBANS
 - BARGE CANALS
 - INTERURBAN START
 - RAILROAD STA.
 - BRIDGES.
 - CENTER CITY ROADS

G.H.M.

him back.

Every Saturday was Mom's day to go to the movies. It cost a nickel. Pop would take care of us, and we would all meet her after the show. We would all have a nickel ice-cream cone, and we heard about Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, Beverly Bain, Frances Bushman, and others in their prime in that era.

Every Sunday was church for Mom and us boys. Sister stayed at home with Pop. That was a four-mile walk each way. My first communion and confirmation were about a month apart. It seems that the Bishop who conducted the confirmation ceremonies came only on a limited basis to Easton. At least the new suit did double duty.

I started school at seven years of age. My first haircut preceded my entrance into first grade. Up to that time I had long hair, and my mother would curl it like a girl's. I hated it. The week before school started Pop took me to the barber and I was shorn, thank goodness!

A big treat for us was to watch Pop play soccer in the Allentown - Bethlehem - Easton league. That was my Pop! Later he became manager and could take the ball home. On special occasions he would let us kids kick the ball around - but only under his supervision. I guess the ball was a valuable asset to the team.

So much for the years 1907 - 1914. We then made our first move of the many that followed.

THE YEAR 1915

We moved! It was quite a thrill and experience for us. We watched the big van load our furniture, and off it went. We learned later that the movers had to let some air out of the tires to get under some of the bridges on the way to East Maunk Chunk. Later, Maunk Chunk - across the river - was named Jim Thorpe, after the great Indian athlete.

We arrived by train the day the mover arrived. From a house with kerosene lamps and an outhouse we moved into an apartment house that had gas lights and an inside toilet! The apartment was on the edge of town and about a block from the silk mill

where Pop worked.

Maunk Chunk was the staging area for coal cars from the coal mines near by. It was also the shopping center for many of the coal mining towns - many of which had Indian names, such as Tomackway and Nescahoney.

Our house, being on the edge of town, was adjacent to wild life. It was here that we met the Arnolds, who had two boys the same ages as my brother and I. It was a relationship that lasted a good many years. Their dad worked in the same mill as Pop and lived in the same apartment house.

From our jungle (the lot next to us on Wood Street) we now had a whole wild life area to explore. So the Meyner and Arnold boys became Indian scouts, explorers, and hunters. At first our ventures were close to home but later we would be gone all day, roaming the mountains. One thing we did learn; when we became lost we could follow a creek, knowing that all water ended in a ravine that took the water past our house to the Lehigh River.

Have you ever been scared enough that your hair went straight up? We were out in the woods one moonlit night, approaching a ridge, with the moon behind the ridge, when the form of a brown bear on its haunches was silhouetted against the moon. We didn't stop running all the way home. What a thrill! You should try it sometime!

By this time, my brother and I were old enough to hike with Pop. The places of interest in our area were many. There was the Switchback Railroad that ran from Maunch Chunck to Summit and back. The cars would be pulled by cable to the top of the mountain and by gravity run to the Summit 12 miles away. The same thing happened at Summit. Flagstaff Mountain was also interesting. From the top you could see the Poconos and Allegheny ranges. The trolley cars that took you up to the top of Flagstaff were safeguarded by switches, so that if the brakes failed, going up or down, the car ran up an incline to bring it to a stop. The area was called "The Switzerland of America".

We also took the inter-urban electric to some of the coal mines - all of which were deep shaft types. The mine cars were cable-operated, and went down level by level - from which the

hard coal was mined. We also went into the Breaker Sheds, where slate and other foreign materials was hand picked as the coal came down an incline. Sitting on benches were boys, for the most part, picking the foreign material out of the coal as it went by.

Winter was a wonderland in the area. Bobsledding was Utopia for my bother and me. The mountains close by had a run that was thrilling. The group (eight to a sled) would see how close they could come to the edge at one turn. Luckily we were not on the run the night one went over the edge into the ravine. Many were hurt.

Summer was for hiking with Pop. Winter was for Mom. Pop didn't like the cold. Our stay in E. Maunch Chunk was short-lived. Pop was offered a job in Phillipsburg, N.J. We moved again. So did the Arnold family, shortly after.

THE YEARS 1915-1919

Now we are back in the Easton Phillipsburg area in Phillipsburg. Our house was a section of eight connected houses. Now we had mantle gas lights which were much brighter than the plain gas flame. We also had a basement with a coal furnace for heating. It was also here that we established family relations with my father's family and I got to know some of my uncles, aunts, cousins and grandparents. These were also the years of World War I.

Pop was night foreman at a silk mill not too far off. It was also the time when it became dark that Mom closed the shutters and we would all be off to bed. I guess Mom was not used to being without Pop at night.

We had a small backyard but it was utilized in that Pop built a small chicken coop and we had chickens and ducks. The ducks became so tame they would follow us around -- even trying to get into the house. We also had a small vegetable garden. Later on during the war we had a large Victory Garden plot about a mile away. At this time I surmise that the idea of my being an entrepreneur was born. The surplus vegetables were put on a little wagon and I sold them to neighbors and my aunts who lived close by. It was a thrill being in business. I even had dreams of

expanding the business. It is so nice to be able to dream even when you grow to an adult. From dreams I have found come plans and reality and satisfaction in accomplishment.

It was at this time that the pleasure of visiting relatives (the Meyner Family) was experienced. Pop, with us two boys, would make the rounds while Mom prepared the dinner. Sometimes Pop would have a little too much "schnaps".

On Easter it meant new clothes and going to church services. Yes, Mom made sure we went to Mass every Sunday and also to Sunday School. I remember one time the priest came to our house to talk to Pop on going to church. Seems like when Mom and Pop got married she thought she might get Pop to embrace Catholicism. He could not accept the dogmas associated with being a Catholic. In any event the conversation between the priest and Pop became heated. When he criticized Pop about being an Odd Fellow--that ended the meeting. My brother and I had heard much of the loud part of the conversation from the adjoining room. Another incident that exemplifies the attitudes of the time was while attending Sunday School one Sunday the Sister asked me why my father didn't come to church. I mentioned he was an Odd Fellow (probably because of hearing the conversation I mentioned previously). She told me he was a sinner and would end up in hell. To a young mind this was shocking, and I said something to Mom later. Pop was never told. Having later gone to a Catholic University taught by the Jesuit Fathers much of these attitudes are, thank goodness, treated more kindly.

It was also at this time I had the experience of feeling part of a group of boys - but not wholly accepted because we were new. We lived in the section of town called Firth Town. Adjoining Firth Town was a large dump and adjoining the dump was the Percell Hill section of town. Seems like there was some kind of rivalry between the two groups. Maybe it was just a means of releasing pent-up energy but the two groups would meet at the dump and make body to body contact. It was fun and nobody really got hurt. When they started using Bee Bee guns that ended my participation -- Mom found out about it.

It was also at this time that my sister had grown to the

point where she would want to tag along with my brother and me. Mom would insist at times that we take her with us. Once we wanted to go someplace and we didn't want her along. We got some medium sized rocks and made something like a nest. We told her that if she sat on the rocks she would get eaglets. Seems later that Mom saw her sitting on the stones. When she was asked what she was doing, she told Mom that if she sat on the eggs she would have eaglets.

One of the main chores my brother and I had was to go to the grocery store on Saturday for Mom. She would give us a written list of items to be bought. The clerk filled the order and put the price after each item. Our wagon would always be full. It seemed that Saturday was shopping day for everyone. Grocery stores such as the A&P and Acme were taking the place of the Mom & Pop stores. People would be lined up at the counter three and four deep. The clerk had to run to the shelves for each item. Once in a while my aunt, who lived close by, would want me to go to the store for her. She paid me a whole nickel!

It was during this period that I had my first and only buggy ride. The owner of the silk mill where my Pop worked had a fringe buggy (4 seats). He let Pop have it on a Sunday. Neither Pop or Mom knew anything about harnessing a horse to a wagon -- but between them it was accomplished without help -- my Pop was a mechanic which helped though it was much different than fixing silk looms. Well, the horse was well trained -- when we got to a hill too much for him, he would stop and we would have to walk up the grade -- now that is horse sense!

I remember the day the War ended. It was during the night that the bells and whistles started. Of course, the most noise came from the steam whistles on the locomotives -- remember we had six railroads in our area. We all got out of bed and walked to downtown Easton. Everybody was hugging and kissing to celebrate the end of the war. I remember the day shortly after when the boys came home. Everybody turned out. They came in on a troop train at the Pennsylvania Station in Phillipsburg and marched across the bridge to Easton. The old bridge began to sway with the march cadence -- thank goodness the order was given

to break cadence.

Shortly after the war ended, we moved to Paterson, N.J.

THE YEARS 1919-1924

We moved to Paterson, N.J., which had been called the Silk City of the World before the mills moved west to the Phillipsburg-Easton-Bethlehem-Allentown area. Paterson was part of the New Jersey-New York metropolitan area. It was "big" city to us -- coming from a small town area. The street lights were lighted by mantle gas lamps which were manually turned on at dusk and turned off in the morning. Every night the cop on the beat would go by swinging his billy in a fantastic rhythm. Periodically, the junk man would go by calling "Rags, bones, bottles". All this was new to us. Ethnic groups seemed to locate in certain areas -- there was Shantytown (Irish), Little Italy (Italian), the Ghetto (Jewish), and we located where the Squareheads (Germans) lived. Of course, there were other sections of town which were not identified as to ethnic groupings. Like in other places we lived, downtown was the shopping center though we had many Mom and Pop stores in neighborhoods.

It was in Paterson that we got to know Mom's family, the Baumle's, her mother and two sisters. It was a much closer family relationship than with the Meyner family. My one aunt was blind and crippled from polio, and later died from cancer. Despite all this, she never lost faith with her God. She was a devout Catholic, and it was probably this faith that made her a cheerful, happy person to bear her unfortunate illnesses. I say this now, but it probably had much to do with the attitudes I have today. Especially having faith in "The Best is Yet to Be" which today both my wife and I adopt as our philosophy -- 'taint easy sometimes.

My brother and I would take my aunt to high mass on Sundays. Then high masses were of one hour and a half duration; other masses took one hour. We also set up an altar in the living room at my Grandma's home taking turns being priest and altar boy. Who would attend? Grandma and my aunt. It was great play-fun, especially with such an appreciative audience.