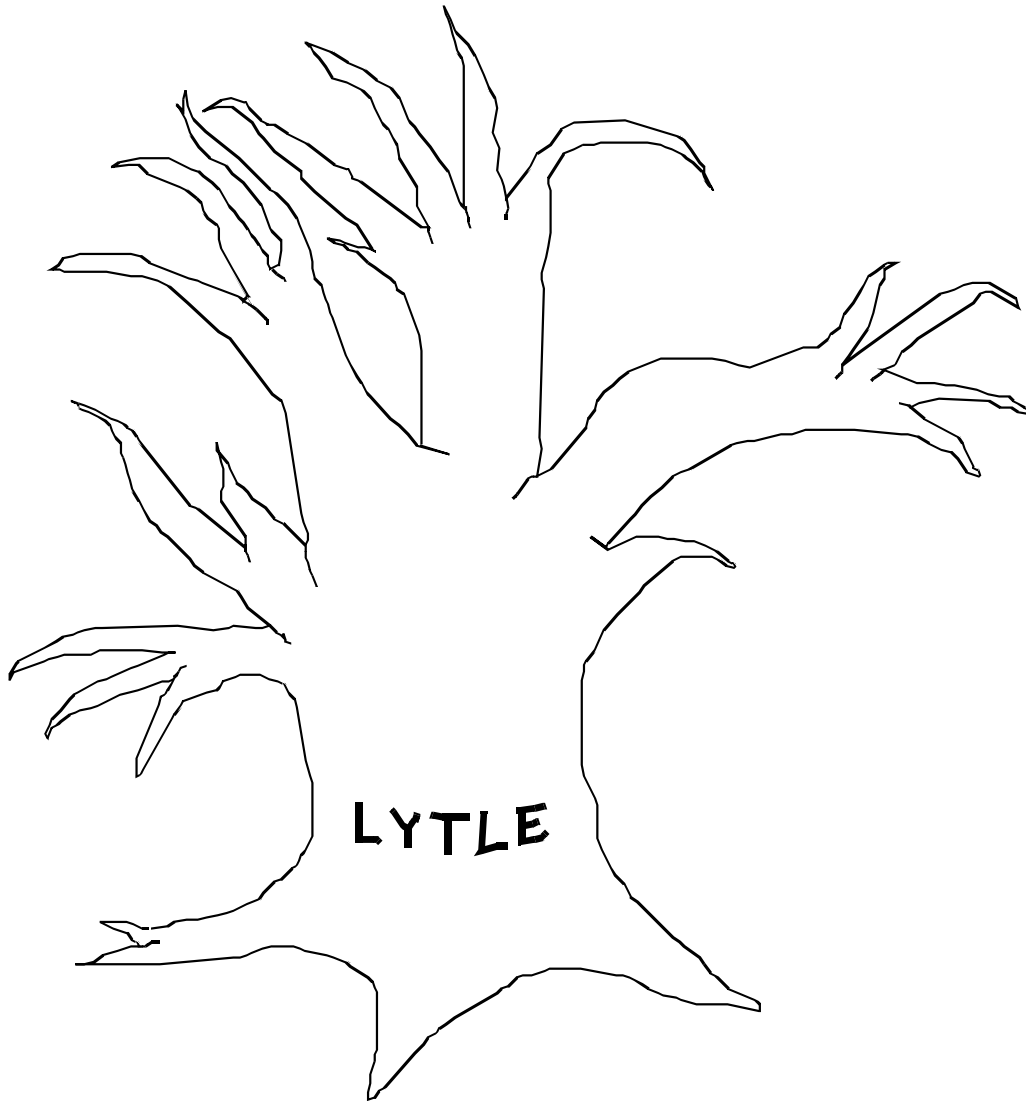


# LYTLE PLANTATION NEWS

Volume XVIII Number 1

January, 2004



# LYTLE PLANTATION NEWS

January, 2004

Volume XVIII, Number 1

## Following the Slaves

Most readers of this bulletin are descended from Frank Lytle Sr. (1773-1869). Frank leaves behind a very large number of descendants, and in fact several thousand have been traced. But Frank was only one of seven slaves freed by Thomas Lytle. Of the other six, thought to be Frank's brothers and sisters, three are known to have had children. The others are unaccounted for after about 1830.

Since Thomas' heirs could only legally free the slaves he had actually owned, most of what we know about the other slaves comes from the estate records. By the time the remaining slaves were freed, at the time of widow Catherine Lytle's death, two more generations had been born at the Lytle Plantation. The estate took several more years to settle after that, until more than 30 years had passed since Thomas' death. By 1828 the slave Esther (1775? - 1830?) had 12 children, 28 grandchildren, and one great grandchild. Pink Lytle (1788? - 1845?) had by the same time 11 children and 1 grandchild. Esther's children were all born into slavery, but Pink, being much the younger of the two women, had about half of her children after she was freed, and so they were free as well. The same can also be said of John "Jack" Lytle, who was married to Hannah and had all eight of his children after being freed. Those who were slaves mostly lived on the Thomas Lytle Plantation, which consisted of over 400 acres, up until the time of the estate settlement. They were hired out as laborers in the area, by Thomas' heirs Robert Walker and William Bell. These heirs tried to treat the slaves as freed, but it was not to be.

Thus nearly 40 slaves were sold in order to fairly pay the heirs of Thomas Lytle. It was deemed much easier to divide the sale money among the many heirs than to try to divide the slaves evenly. As it turns out, all of the slaves were sold to two attorneys involved in the case, William Hogan and Henry Humphreys. And somehow, slaves listed as sold to Henry Humphreys can be found belonging to William Hogan a few years later. A handful, somehow, were bought by Quakers and freed, though there is no record of the sales, just the freedom of these few. All of those sold were listed by name, and their arrangement on two different but nearly identical records clearly shows them arranged by family.

In all cases, the family lines are shown by children of the women only. Who the fathers were is not listed; they may have been slaves at neighboring plantations, or perhaps in the second generation some parents were first cousins to each other. But paternity was of no matter to slave owners, and no official marriages were performed. So if any of the slave men had children, there is no way to know it now.

Slowly over time, the slave descendants have disappeared. They either left the county, or in most cases were sold by Humphreys and Hogan with no record. But there are a few exceptions. Still, most have not been traced past about 1900, and none past the last census made publicly available, the 1930.

Of all those who remained in slavery through the end of the Civil War, only one line has been successfully traced through that time period. Starting with the sale of the slaves to Humphreys and Hogan around 1828, we find one family in particular, Sally, the daughter of Esther, and her children: Sam, Cynthia, Andrew, Frederick, Ben, Henderson, and Moses. The next record found of them is the estate of William Hogan, who died in 1837. Many slaves are listed there by name,

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and many names are similar to those of the Lytle estate. But only the family of Sally is conclusively from the Lytle Plantation. She is listed in 1837 with children Andy, Fred, Ben, Henderson, Fanny, King, and Anna. By this time Sam and Cynthia are no longer with Sally (there are two Sam's listed elsewhere, either of whom could be hers; both have wives and children) and three more children have been born. Since about 9 years have passed, we would imagine these children born about 1830, 1833, and 1836, respectively.

Another 21 years pass before we get another look at the Hogan slaves. In 1858, William Hogan's widow Elizabeth passed away, and again it is estate records which list the names of all her slaves. But by this time, there are only one or two possible matches. Others have been sold, inherited, or have died in the intervening years. Among the estate records is one slave named Fanny. She and two twin children (not named) were sold to John Dorsett for \$2511.00. The other possibility is "Old Anny the Cook", who may be Anna, the daughter of Pink, who was born about 1805. She was sold to John A. Holt for \$289.00

Another 12 years pass, and the Civil War occupies much of that time. And in 1870 the census is taken, the first United States census to list all former slaves as true families, with names of all family members, just like all other households have been shown starting with the 1850 census. Once again we find Fanny, and she is now listed as "Frances Dorsett", black, aged 40 years. Her age fits nicely with the estimated birth year of 1830 for Sally's daughter Fanny. She is also now married to George Dorsett, and they are shown with four children -- Mary, Jemima, Alexander, and Sherman.

By the 1880 census, the family is going by the surname Elliott. The reason behind this is not clear. It may be that George had belonged at one time to the Elliott family and at another to the John Dorsett. There is a Randolph County land transaction between Alexander Hogan and John Elliott, witnessed by John Dorsett. These families might be interrelated, but that is not known. They were certainly neighbors, and none of them lived more than a few miles from the old Lytle Plantation. In the 1880 census, there are also two grandchildren present. They are Margaret and Nora, and may be daughters of Fanny's daughter Mary. More work on this line is needed to see if there are living descendants.

Finding a living descendant may allow a genetic test, to see if there is a match to samples taken from numerous African populations. This type of test relies on a portion of DNA which passed unchanged from mother to daughter, but not from fathers to their children. In this line you will note that so far it is, in fact, a direct female line: Esther, Sally, Fanny, Mary, and then two children. The line will also trace backward to Esther's mother, and her mother, and finally back to Africa. It is most likely that Esther was Frank's sister, so finding a living descendant for this test would tell us all which African tribe or region our transported slave ancestor came from. There is a lot of work remaining before there is any chance of finding someone to take this DNA test.

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## Reunion Update!

Plans are still on for a family reunion in Lagrande, Oregon, during the last days of July. The reunion will coincide with the Union County Fair, among other things. Plan to be there! This is our first reunion in 10 years, the last one being held in Randolph County, NC, in October of 1994, which marked the bicentennial of Frank Lytle's freedom.

For updates and the latest information, feel free to contact Rik Vigeland at the address on page 5. Otherwise we hope to have the final details available in the April newsletter.

## Birthday Wishes

A Very Happy Birthday to Bertha Richardson of Lincoln, Nebraska, who turns 95 on February 6th. Her husband was Bud Richardson, a grandson of Luke Lytle (1840-1930), and I have visited there many times over the years and hope to do so again.

## In Memory

Our thoughts and prayers go to cousins Shirley and Don Searles and their family, who lost their son PATrick due to complications of an embolism. Patrick wrote a college paper many years ago on Frank Lytle and the social implications of freed slaves. The Lietz-Fraze Funeral Home of Lake Havasu City, Arizona, released the following obituary last November, which I reprint here for details.

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Patrick Ross Searles, 35, passed away November 15, 2003 in Lake Havasu City, Arizona. He was born to Donald & Shirley (Huff) Searles on October 17, 1968 in Oregon City, OR.

Patrick has been a resident of Lake Havasu for the past 3 months, moving here from DuPont, WA. He was a network engineer for the past 10 years. His last job was working for the Intel Corporation in DuPont, WA.

He served as a missionary in the Missouri St. Louis Mission, LDS Church from 1987 to 1989. His complete focus and joy was his family, children, siblings, parents, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.

Patrick is survived by his wife Nannette "Shayne" Searles, children, Megan, PJ and Donnie of St. George, UT; parents, Don and Shirley Searles of Lake Havasu City, AZ; sister, Deborah Ogden and her husband Jim of Martinez, CA; brothers, Don C. Searles and his wife Dottie of Logan, UT and Douglas Searles of the US Navy and his wife Elena.

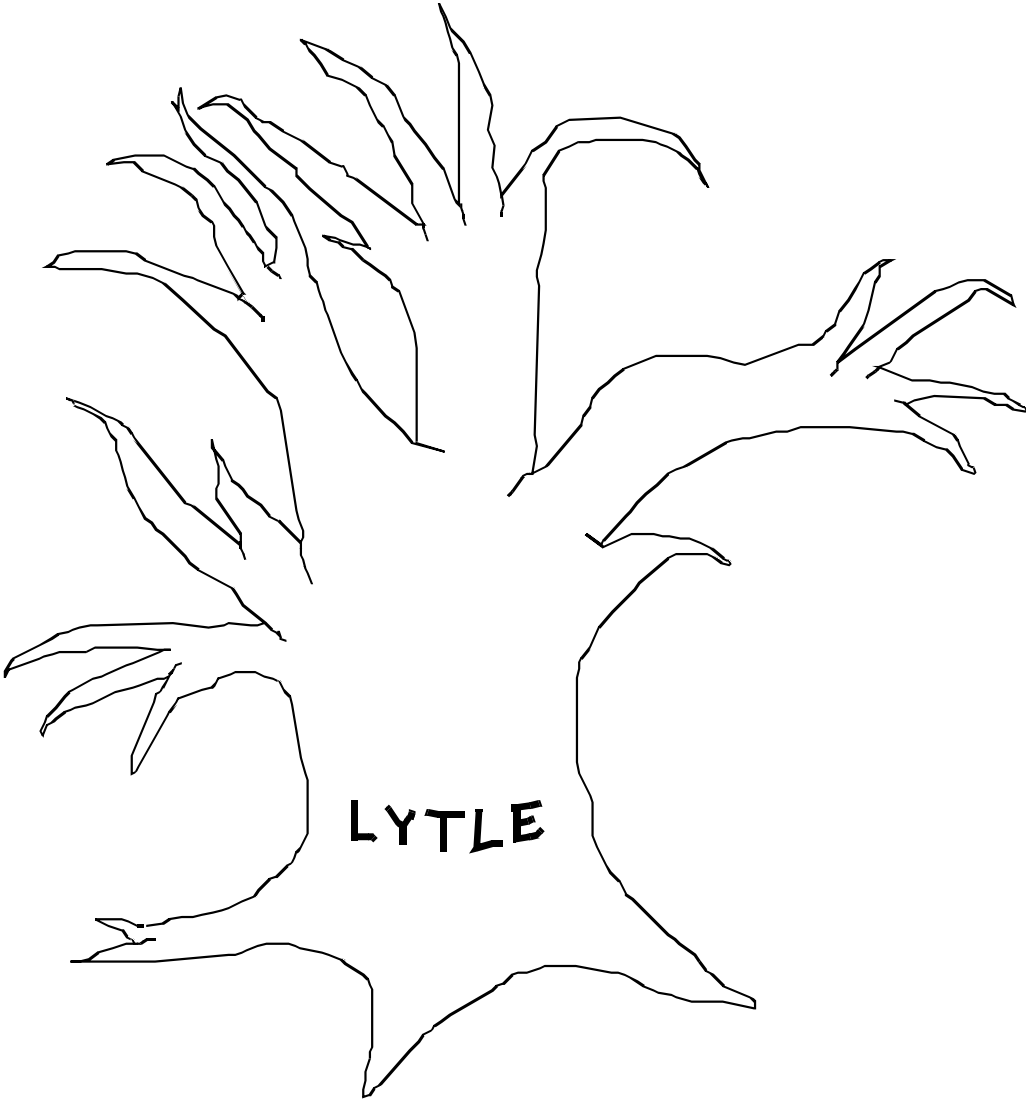
His grandparents, Robert and Wilmetta (Souders) Huff and William and Mary (Steller) Searles precede him in death.

A memorial services will be held at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 504 N. Acoma Blvd., Lake Havasu City, AZ on Friday, November 21 at 1:00 PM.

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## The Famous Zella Nicolaus

In the April, 1994, bulletin on Wesley Lytle (son of Elizabeth Lytle and grandson of Francis Lytle) there was a mention of his daughter Zella Nichols and her nationwide fame. She was mentioned as an actress in New York City. At last, I have stumbled across her under the name Nicolaus, and with that clue in hand turned up a great number of newspapers from Boston to Honolulu, in the period from 1893 to 1899. I have yet to find her in any record from 1900 or later. Here is one account, from 1894.



ZELLA NICOLAUS.



WILLIAM A. NICOLAUS.



GEORGE GOULD.

## A Beauty in Distress

That Was the Role That Was Assumed by Pretty Zella Nicolaus

The Brief Bet Eventful Career of a Woman Who Is Fascinating

She Called on George Gould -- Also Sought Advice from George W. Child and Hempstead Washburn  
Scandal loves a shining mark, and it is usually the glitter of gold that attracts her venomous shafts. It is one of the penalties of great wealth that it makes its possessor a conspicuous subject for the plots of blackmailers, and the indiscretions of a prominent man are pretty sure, sooner or later, to be brought to light.

The private life of the late Jay Gould was so ascetic that with all his millions he was never considered a legitimate subject for the wiles of an adventuress. This reputation descended after a fashion to his sons and was so generally understood that it was a decided sensation of surprise that the public heard a few

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weeks ago of a claim made against George Gould by a beautiful woman who was so young that she had to have a guardian appointed by the court to bring a suit for her.

Zella Nicolaus is the name of George Gould's accuser, and according to all accounts she is of surpassing beauty and has a magnetic manner particularly calculated to appeal to the susceptible masculine heart. By their own frank confessions it even touched the rather hardened sensibilities of her attorneys, who are the most notorious criminal lawyers in New York city.

Zella's complaint was brief, but it created a tremendous hubbub. It recited that she owned a check for \$40,000 signed by George Gould, which he had wrongfully obtained from her and converted to his own use. She sued to recover.

The charge brought forth an immediate denial from Mr. Gould in the following terms: "If I remember rightly, she called at my office in the Western Union building about a year ago. She told me she was acquainted with Mr. Pullman and other personal friends of mine in Chicago, and with ex-mayor Hewett and other men I know here in New York. Then she said she was in sore distress. I believed she told me that her husband, to whom she had been married in a town near Chicago, had deserted her, and she was without money. She wanted money to pay her fare to this town, and I gave it to her. She didn't go home, however, and she called on me the day following, or maybe several days following. After that I believe she called on me two or three times. Of course I was compelled to decline to see her. That was the last I heard of her until this talked of suit. I never gave this woman a check for \$40,000 or for any other amount. I never gave her a check of any sort. My acquaintance with her is as I have said."

Mr. Gould called on the superintendent of the New York police, and, with his customary celerity in such cases, the zealous Mr. Byrnes sprang to the defense of the persecuted millionaire. He proceeded to investigate the rather eventful career of the young woman, and threatened her with arrest and all sorts of dire consequences if she did not withdraw her suit. But Zella and her lawyers maintained their reputation for nerve and did not flinch.

Mr. Byrnes had no doubt it was a case of blackmail. It is quite likely that he was right, but Mr. Gould evidently concluded that discretion was the better part of valor, for, it is alleged, he finally compromised the case by paying the woman a certain unknown sum of money and she sailed for Europe, leaving many thankful hearts behind her.

It is alleged that a good many men well known to New York and Chicago society will breathe freer when the ocean rolls between them and Zella Nicolaus. According to the veracious chroniclers of the press, Zella's career as an adventuress began at Wabash, Ind., when she was only 14 years old. She was Rosella, or Zella, Lytle then. She went driving with a traveling man named Christmann, and when they returned she told a harrowing tale and had him arrested. Christmann swore that it was a put up job and was acquitted. Zella then went to Chicago, where her beauty and vivacity made her many friends.

In 1891 she was married at Milwaukee to William Adler Nicolaus, a dry goods merchant of Joliet. After a brief residence in Joliet, the couple moved to New York. Their married life was not very harmonious and Nicolaus finally left his wife and went to Philadelphia, where he was employed as a clothing salesman.

Zella made several trips to Philadelphia to institute a suit against her husband for desertion, and on one of her visits she called on George W. Childs. She told a tale of woe that enlisted the sympathies of the philanthropist and he bought her a railroad ticket to Wabash, Ind. She did not go to Wabash, however,

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and in the light of subsequent events, it is suspected that she sought to get a hold on the eminent Philadelphia editor that would enable her to blackmail him.

Mrs. Nicolaus reappeared in Chicago last spring and started out with a bold attempt to bunco Mayor Hempstead Washburne. She called at the mayor's office and, with many languishing smiles, told him that she had lost her trunk. Next day, just as he was putting the police to work on the lost trunk, she came in radiant. She had recovered the trunk, and now she wanted advice. She was young and inexperienced. She had just come into possession of a large sum of money, and she longed to consult with a gentleman of the mayor's attainments in investments.

Not long after, when Mrs. Nicolaus made her third appearance in the office, the mayor was very icy. She desired to consult with him about buying a flat on the North Side. The mayor fixed her with a stony glare and said he had a friend who was just the man for her to consult on money matters. He took her to B.F. Richolson, assistant to City Attorney Trude, and that ended her attempts to ensnare the mayor.

When told that Mrs. Nicolaus referred to him, George M. Pullman denied all knowledge of the woman and said he had never seen her. A number of Zella's Chicago friends say she told them George GOuld was her friend and that he paid her bills at the Great Northern hotel in that city and the Sturtevant House in New York.

Al Ruhmann, the man who was appointed guardian to Mrs. Nicolaus by the court and who accompanied her when she sailed from New York the other day, is a Hebrew who was employed in a Kansas City clothing store a few years ago. He reappeared there last August with a woman whom he introduced to various persons as his wife. To some others, however, he announced that she was not his wife, but was a relative of the Goulds, and that her husband was a very wealthy man. They stopped at the Centropolis hotel and were ordered out because of their failure to pay their bills.

Dishonored hotel bills figure frequently in the history of Zella Nicolaus' adventures. She has been put out of several New York Caravansaries for failing to satisfy their cashiers and is said to have had a similar experience at Albany last summer. While it is not positively known that Zella Nicolaus made any money out of the Gould case, it is alleged by those who pretend to know that she acquired a sufficient sum to pay her hotel bills till she can find a fresh victim across the pond.

To be continued in the next bulletin!



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## **In Memory**

I received word of the passing away of my mother's first cousin, Leo Charles "Kingfisher" Norman just after the last bulletin was printed. He passed away on January 22, 2004. Leo was a great grandson of Luke Lytle (1840-1930) and a historian in his own right. He and his wife Norma have been very helpful with information very close to my own line from the Lytles, including finding the unmarked grave of Anna (Lytle) Borrows, my great grandmother. From Leo's memorial:

Leo was born July 30, 1919, in Stromsburg, Nebraska, to Charles Leo and Bertha (Borrows) Norman, he attended school in Stromsburg. He married Norma LoJean Rinck on June 14, 1946. He was employed at Overland Sand and Gravel for thirty years.

Leo was a well-known historian for Stromsburg and Polk County. His many friends would gather around his table for coffee and his famous stories. If anyone wanted to know something about the history of the area, they would always come to see Leo. He will be greatly missed by his family and friends.

## **Reunion Update!**

Due to setbacks, the Huff-Lytle reunion has been postponed until next year. Due to impatience and enthusiasm on the part of others, we hereby declare an official Lytle Family Reunion, to be held in Canby, Oregon, on August 7th, 2004. Please pass on the word to all your relatives near and far about this upcoming event. See the next page for the official flyer. Please copy it and pass it along! There is quite a bit of interest already, and I have tentative commitments from cousins in five states already!

It's been 10 years since our last reunion, so it's time for another one. If you've been waiting for a chance to come, this is it!

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**Descendants of the  
Old Lytle Plantation of Randolph County, North Carolina  
and of the**

**Homesteads in Grant County, Indiana**

**will gather on**

**August 7, 2004**

**in**

**Canby, Oregon**

**Related families include: Benbow, Blizzard, Breazile, Brewer, Buller, Clark, Edgerton, Freeman, Hill, Huff, Johnson, Laughlin, Poole, Quinn, Robbins, Robinett, Spangler, Swaney, Walden, and many others**

There are literally several thousand descendants from the old Lytle Plantation. We expect at least a few dozen of them and would love to have you come be part of the reunion of lost branches. Tell your aunts, uncles, cousins, and all the family history hunters who might be interested!

**Canby, Oregon is conveniently located!**

½ hour from Portland, Oregon's largest city and nearest airport

½ hour from Salem, the State Capitol

2 hours from Oregon's famous Pacific coast

3 hours from Seattle, Washington, or 4 hours from famous Crater Lake

**Cost: \$15.00 for adults, \$5.00 for children, and includes:**

Picnic Lunch

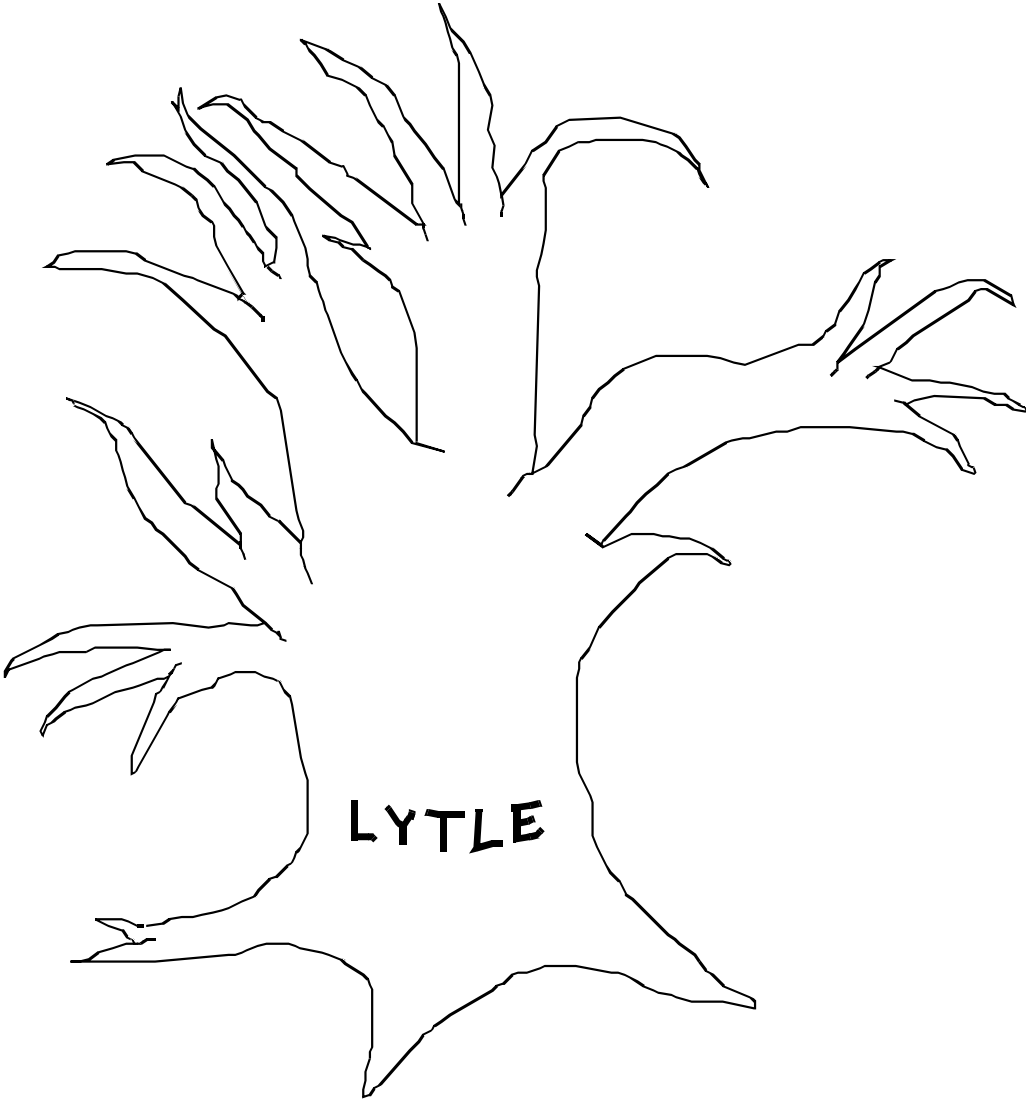
Dinner

Games and Door Prizes

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## We Had a Reunion!

We sure did, and that's why your bulletin is a bit later than usual, so we can tell you all about it. It's been 10 years since the last one, which was in Randolph County, NC. This time around we met at the Vigeland's house in Canby, Oregon, on August 7th, 2004.

Represented were brothers Francis and Albert Lytle who moved from North Carolina to Grant County, Indiana, in the 1830's and 1840's. Francis had over 25 children, but we're only sure of 16 that have living descendants. Six of those branches were represented - James, Thomas, Tobias, Jane, Sarah, and Luke. From Albert's seven children, five are known to have descendants, and two of those branches came - George's and Enoch's.

Now, as for numbers, the breakdown for each branch was as follows:

James - 1

Thomas - 2

Tobias - 1

Jane (Benbow) - 4

Sarah (Huff) - 5

Luke - 29

George - 3

Enoch - 6

Two family friends, (one an exchange student from Japan) were also here, for a total of 53 people. The strong showing of Luke's descendants was a bit of a surprise, but such a great number of Luke's descendants are in the western states, whereas many of the other branches are more concentrated in the midwest, south, and southwest states. And speaking of states, we had folks from Washington, Oregon, California, Montana, Colorado, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.

By any measure, the day was a great success. Though several games were planned, most people had a great time just visiting newfound cousins. The weather even cooperated, too. The two days before the reunion saw rain, and the days since have been quite hot. But right in between was a perfect 80 degree day with beautiful clear skies, which meant we could be indoors or out. Croquet, horseshoes (appropriate for Lytle blacksmiths!) and other sports were played outside.

Attendees had a catered lunch, a pizza supper, and all went away with their very own Lytle Reunion mug, featuring the Lytle Tree which has been this newsletter's logo these 18 years.

A few extra goodies were handed out as door prizes. We had winners for Furthest Traveled, Worst Joke or Pun, Looks Most Like an Ancestor (we may have to print this one!), Most Number of Close Relatives Met (one fellow met three first cousins for the first time), and Most Unusual Talent (Would you believe tongue folding? Yes, we had a few teenagers here.) Names are withheld to protect individual reputations!

We need to do this again sometime, as it had been too long; we just have to schedule it and do it. Anyone else want to host the next one?

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## Lytle Gals

Here we have some research notes on a number of our Lytle-born gals.

Descendants of **Esther Lytle** have been found. Esther was one of Thomas Lytle's slaves, and was apparently about the same age as Frank based on the number of children and grandchildren she had during the time that the Lytle estate was settled.

The line found is as follows:

Esther Lytle (1775?-1830?)

Sally Lytle (1796? - ?)

Frances "Fanny" Hogan (1830 - ?) m. George Dorsett

General Sherman Dorsett (1868-1940) m. Mary Watkins

Willett Dorsett (1903-1979) m. Fred Dixon Sr.

Fred Dixon Jr. m. Anna Gannaway

Mr. and Mrs. Dixon live in High Point, North Carolina. They do not know any cousins related in the above line, though, so we are still searching for a strictly female-line of descent to do DNA tests for African origins. General Sherman Dorsett had two sisters, so we may yet find someone else in this line.

The family of **Anna Lytle Brown** (1820 - 1866?) has been found in the 1870 census. Anna was one of the older daughters of Francis Lytle Jr. (1796 - 1880) and Winnie Blizzard and was married to Henry Brown in 1847. Unfortunately, Anna is not with the family, and so may have died around 1866, when the youngest child was born.

The family is identifiable by the presence of Henry and some of the children found in previous censuses. In 1870 they are living just south of Grant County, Indiana, in Boone Township, Madison County. None of Anna's children have been found beyond the 1870 or 1880 census, but there were 10 children: Francis M. (son), Melissa, William L., Amanda C., Mary E., Daniel, Wallis, Joseph, Elwood, and Zilpha. From Grant County marriage records, we find an Amanda Brown married to Abraham Spencer in 1880, and a Mary Brown married to Adam Hullinger. Brown being a common name, it is not certain if these were Anna's daughters.

**Deborah Lytle Brewer**, daughter of Francis Lytle Jr. and Martha Bulla (1815-1854) has been found again, if only briefly. She was first married to Willis Brewer, who was then killed in the Civil War. Her last known location was Atchison County, Missouri, where she filed one of her widow's pension forms to the U.S. Government. A check of the counties' marriage records under the name Brewer turned up a match. She was married to George Kephart in 1867. The bad news is that neither of them has yet turned up in a search of the census. Still, Deborah is presumed at this point to be the sister who died in Colorado in 1903. Sisters Demaris and Louisa were reported by the newspaper to have been at their sister's funeral in Colorado. All other known sisters have been accounted for with other death dates.

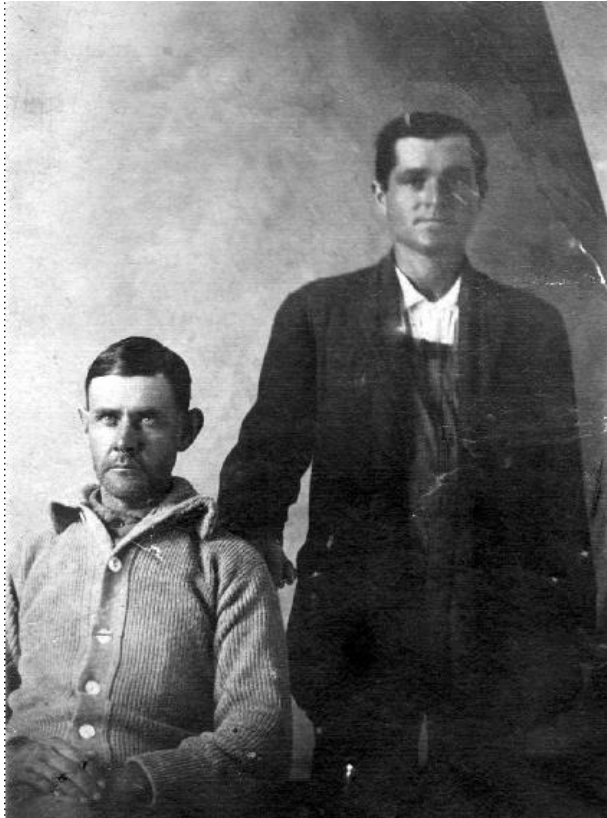
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## Together again!

With the recent acquisition of two more photos, we can now reunite three Lytle brothers for the first time since 1864, if only in print. Here are three sons of Albert Lytle (1802-1879). Shown are George W. Lytle (seated) with son Ernest; Enoch Lytle, with wife Mildred Palestine Bailey; and Lewis Lytle.



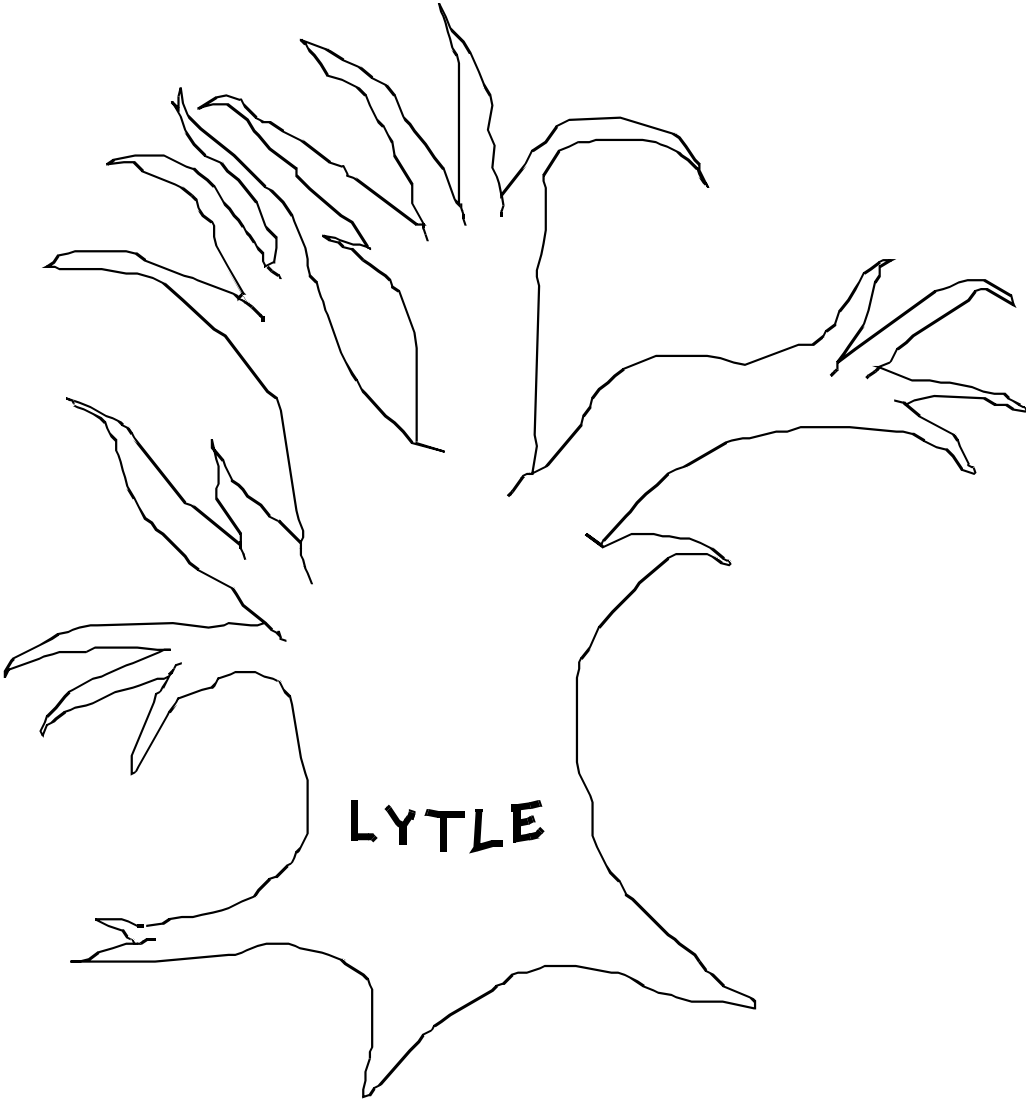
Enoch & Mildred Palistine Bailey Lytle



# LYTLE PLANTATION NEWS

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# LYTLE PLANTATION NEWS

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## The Fame of Zella Nicolaus

The story of Rosella Lytle, daughter of Wesley Lytle and Mary Jane Freeman, continued from the July issue. Told here in newspaper accounts from the 1890's

*Nevada State Journal*, December 14, 1893: Mrs. Zella Nicolaus has left New York and she says she is glad to leave. She has absconded the prosecution of her suit against George Gould to recover \$40,000, the amount of a check which she claimed he had taken from her. Mrs. Nicolaus refused to tell what motive had prompted her in her abscondment of the lawsuit. She would only say that the matter had been "arranged" and that the arrangement was satisfactory to her. The counsel for Mrs. Nicolaus deny that she and her "guardian" sailed for Genoa yesterday, or that her suit against Gould is settled.

*Decatur Daily Republican*, December 23, 1893: Wabash, Ind., David [should be Wesley] Lytle, father of dashing Zella Lytle Nicolaus, who resides in this city, this week cashed two drafts, one for \$250, and the other for \$200 at local banks. The drafts were issued by a New York banking institution, and as the parents of Mrs. Nicolaus are not in the habit of receiving remittances, there is little doubt that she forwarded the exchange to him just before her departure for Europe.

The Trenton, New Jersey *Times*, May 28, 1894: Mrs. Zella Nicolaus and her husband are at Muscatine, Iowa, and have retained counsel to procure a divorce.

*The Fort Wayne Sentinel*, January 10, 1895: New York - Zella Nicolaus, whose fame rests thus far upon her \$90,000 claim against George Gould, and swift and sudden flight across the ocean, is secluded in this city so that she may concentrate all her energies upon becoming a footlight favorite. She will make her first appearance on stage of the Imperial Music Hall on the evening of January 28, in "Robbery Roy", a burlesque, by John O'Neefe, of Devokan & Smith's opera, "Rob Roy."

*The Fort Wayne Sentinel*, February 6, 1895: Zella Nicolaus, the giddy young thing who, according to her own voracious statement, traces her lineage to the time of William the Conqueror, will not go on stage, as she had fondly hoped to do. A Chicago paper of Sunday has a telegram from New York relating to the cancellation of her engagement, which reads: "Although Zella Nicolaus signed a contract with Manager Krause, of the Imperial Music Hall, to appear in the production of his new burlesque, "Robber Roy," her debut is unannounced. It is said that George Gould objects to her appearance and so renew the talk about the suit she once brought against him. To give color to this idea, Zella Nicolaus was seen at the Imperial a week ago Monday, when she was engaged in conversation with an unknown man. It is suggested that he made her an offer to cancel the engagement. She has not been seen since.

*The Fort Wayne News*, February 18, 1895: Wabash - Wesley Lytle, of this city, father of Zella Nicolaus, is without a home, if his statement to a newspaper man yesterday is the truth. Wesley claims his wife and Zella's sister, Mrs. Wetherbee, have made life a burden to him the last six weeks, and finally drove him out of the house and refused to let him return. Mr. Lytle asserts that for a long time he was obliged to do the family washing, polish the china, sweep the entire domicile and make the beds. In spite of his faithful service as a housekeeper he received nothing but approbrious epithets from both women.

*The Fort Wayne Gazette*, March 23, 1895: Our Zella Nicolaus is not adverse to seeing her name in print. Of late she has been conspicuous as a witness for Dr. Parkhurst's investigating committee in New York City.



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The *Atlanta Constitution*, April 30, 1895: Zella Nicolaus is again attempting to squeeze money out of Mr. George Gould. This time the Nicolaus woman, who figures as Mrs. Ruhman, claims \$50,000 damages for malicious prosecution. Her suit grows out of her effort some two years ago to extort money from Mr. Gould. In 1893 Zella Nicolaus, through her guardian Al Ruhman, sued Mr. Gould for \$40,000. The plaintiff was then eighteen years old. She was a dashing, pretty woman and when she declared that the millionaire had given her a \$40,000 check and had afterward recovered it in some way not clearly explained, there were some people halfway inclined to believe her story. The defendant positively denied that he had given the pretty siren a check. He had twice given her money to pay her fare to Chicago because she came to him for a pass and represented that she was acquainted with Mr. George M. Pullman and other prominent men. When she came a third time he refused to see her. A few days later the woman married Ruhman and went to Europe with him stating that her suit against Mr. Gould had been satisfactorily arranged. Since her return to this country she and her husband have figured under various names and have been in hard luck. She claims that she was paid a large sum to go to Europe and was swindled out of it, and that Mr. Gould had her arrested out of malice.

*The Newark Sunday Advocate*, May 19, 1895: Zella Ruhman, more widely known as Zella Nicolaus, has decided to sue for a divorce from Albert Ruhman. Alexander Simpson, her lawyer and guardian, says she has made the discovery that her husband is maintaining an actress in the city. The name of the actress will not be made known until the papers are ready to be filed in chancery court. Her suit to get \$40,000 from George J. Gould is pending.

*The Fort Wayne News*, August 24, 1895: Next Monday evening Miss Zella Nicolaus, an Indiana girl, and for a time a Fort Wayne girl, now a young woman of national notoriety, will make her debut on the stage at the Lyceum theatre, Philadelphia, in the role of Selma, the leading character in a burlesque entitled "The Gilded Edge." She has become classical among the sensational women of the day since she has commenced a \$40,000 suit against George Gould and is now attempting to bring another similar suit for \$50,000 more. She will doubtless attempt to elevate the stage.

*The New York Times*, September 1, 1895: The Gaiety Theatre, formerly Herrmann's and later St. James's Hall, will open tomorrow with a production of "The White Crook," and the appearance of Zella Nicolaus on the stage for the first time in this city. Two performances will be given daily, at 2:15 and 8:15 P.M. Alfred Aarons is the new manager of the house, and he proposes to devote it continuously to burlesque and vaudeville. Many changes have been made in the theatre during the summer for the comfort of patrons.

*The Atlanta Constitution*, September 8, 1895: The western woman, Zella Nicolaus, who had the temerity to bring suit against George Gould and got a great deal of notoriety out of it, was the central figure in a bad production called "The White Crook," which ought to have been put out on the Brewery, but in some way strayed about three miles from its natural moorings and got into the new Gaiety theatre. The Gaiety under a number of different names has had a good deal to stand, but this seems to have been about the worst. The references to Zella as a central figure seem entirely out of place, however, for from all accounts she has no figure at all. Her chief beauty is a lot of hair of the unbleached flax order. She was brought on toward the end of the performance and tried to give a couple of stanzas of "Osler Joe." It was a dead frost.

*The Fort Wayne Sentinel*, November 30, 1895: A.L. Ruhman, husband of Zella Nicolaus, assured a reporter today that his wife had settled her case with George Gould in which \$40,000 was involved. "You can say that the suit against George Gould, brought by my wife, has been settled and all the legal

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proceedings dismissed. I prefer that Mrs. Ruhman tell the terms of settlement herself. She will do so a 4 o'clock this afternoon. We leave for Chicago on Monday. It is Mrs. Ruhman's intention to return to the stage." The report is current in Jersey City, where the Ruhmans counsel resides, that the amount paid by Mr. Gould was not more than \$5,000, of which sum Mrs. Ruhman received \$1,000, her husband \$1,000, and counsel \$1,000, the balance going to pay for the costs of litigation.

*Hawaiian Gazette*, December 13, 1895: Zella Nicolaus has been paid \$5,000 by George Gould, and the millionaire railway magnate has been dismissed.

*The Fort Wayne Sentinel*, December 26, 1895: Zella Nicolaus is in St. Louis - incog, as it were - a guest at the Planter's Hotel. On the register are the names Mr. and Mrs. A. Ruhmann. Mrs. Ruhmann is Zella Nicolaus. Her mission in St. Louis is to secure an engagement with the New York theatrical managers, Davis & Keogh. The traveling manager of the firm, Cud Given, is in St. Louis, and it was to Mr. Given that Zella Nicolaus made application for a special engagement of "The Hustler," to be followed by a permanent engagement with one of the companies. Mr. Ruhmann opened up negotiations and Manager Given asked him to come right to business and name terms, whereupon Mr. Ruhmann sent for Zella, who said: "Well, I guess I ought to be worth about \$400 a week." Mr. Given is nothing if not an icebergian, and his response was "Thanks, young lady, you have another guess."

The Olean, NY, *Semi Weekly Democrat*: Information is received that Zella Nicolaus has blossomed forth as an authoress. She has nearly completed the manuscript of the work, which bears the lurid title, "A Glad and Sad Young Girl; or, "The Child Adventuress." This purports to be a sketch of Zella's life. The young woman is expected to arrive at Wabash, Ind., in a few days, on a protracted visit to her father, Wesley Lytle, proprietor of a small grocery.

*The Fort Wayne News*, January 1, 1896: Zella Nicolaus declares that she has separated from her husband. It is safe to predict that she won't be long separated from somebody's husband.

*The Fort Wayne Daily Gazette*, January 12, 1896: Cincinnati - Caseman's European Vaudevilles, who have been playing here for a week, took the train for Louisville without Miss Zella Nicolaus tonight. Caseman's effects were attached this evening, but released on bond. Miss Nicolaus is virtually stranded here. She says that Caseman has not paid her one cent during her engagement, which has lasted two weeks. She says she was to have 25 percent of the net receipts, but Caseman said there were no net receipts, and refused to let her manager see the nightly receipts.

Rosella Lytle Nicolaus has not been found in the 1900 census. When her mother, Mary Jane, was listed in the 1910 census, she informed that only one of her six children was living. When Mary Jane's estate was settled in 1917, we see that the living daughter was Helen Shesgreen. Zella's sister Marie Wetherbee had died at age 34 in 1897. The other children of Wesley and Mary Jane were Mrs. Elizabeth Shields (1855-1890) and Elmer E. Lytle (1870-1893). The name of the sixth child is unknown, and perhaps died quite young.

So far no other records have been found to indicate whether Zella remained married to Albert Ruhman, or if she ever had any children. The latter seems unlikely, given her preferred lifestyle.