

To continue from International Women's Day from yesterday, I decided to honor my grandmothers and great-grandmothers, and a few of my great-great grandmothers.



My grandmother, **Marie Reimers Kelley**, had to quit school after 8<sup>th</sup> grade to work in the family restaurant in the small town of Holstein, Iowa. She was the first woman to bob her hair in that small town. She had 3 living children. She was head cook of 5 cooks and often served 100-200, up to 300 patrons on a Saturday when farmers and others came to bring their products and livestock to the railroad station. She also helped run the family rooming house. Later, she cooked at other motels/restaurants in Mapleton and Carroll, Iowa. She managed a boarding house and then an apartment house in Omaha, Nebraska. She died at age 74 in Lynwood, California after complications from a stroke.



Her mother, my great grandmother, **Marie Brocksen Reimers**, immigrated from Schleswig-Holstein in Germany to Iowa in 1884, by herself, when she was 25 years old. Her sister had immigrated with her husband the year before. Marie had 8 living children. She managed the Reimers Lodging House in Holstein, Iowa, as well as kept a farm where she raised produce. She would put up 15-30 gallons of wine every year, which she kept in a wine cellar. She and her husband would entertain the railroad workers that came to town. She speculated in real estate, buying and selling property in Holstein, Iowa. She died at age 63 from cancer of the liver and stomach.

My grandfather's mother, **Ida Auen Kelley**, immigrated to the U.S from East Friesland in Germany with her parents when she was 4 years old. She grew up on a farm and had an 8<sup>th</sup> grade education. At age 16, she became the 3<sup>rd</sup> wife of Andrew Alfred Kelley. He wrote this poem about her:

*No waxen-faced, pale doll is she;  
This wife that I have chosen.  
Nor does she wear a number three  
"Bottine," and yet I think that she  
Is worth a good, round dozen  
Of those pale, sickly city belles;  
Those devotees of Fashion.  
Her artless face full plainly tells  
Each phaze of love's pure passion.  
She dwells within no marble halls,  
No silks bedeck her form  
No sparkling, precious pendant falls  
From ear or neck, nor bracelet galls  
The plumpness of her arm.  
No new-style "Derby" crowns her head,  
No feathery plumes nod on it.  
She makes a first rate loaf of bread,  
But can't "fix up" a bonnet.  
She cannot strum the ivory keys,  
She's "not much of a singer."  
But yet her hands are fit to squeeze  
The clothes without a wringer.  
She's healthy, young, she's good and true;  
I know she loves me dearly.  
Perhaps she "would not do" for you.  
But I know she suits me--nearly.*



She had 6 living children. Her husband died when she was 49; she lived for another 38 years in a small house in Arcadia, Iowa. In her later years "she always wore a large overcoat, winter and summer. She said it kept her warm in winter and cool in summer."—Some kids thought she was a witch. She died at age 87 from a cerebral hemorrhage due to cardiovascular disease.



My grandmother, **Alice Cornett Clifford**, was only 8 years old when her mother passed away. She had to be scrappy to hold her own against her older brothers and “supposed stepmothers” on the tenant farms where her father worked near Independence, Kansas. Luckily, her older sister, **Virgie Cornett Miller**, took over many of the household duties and help raise her siblings. Alice quit school after 7<sup>th</sup> grade. She worked as a Mother’s Helper to Rose McKnight in Bartlesville Oklahoma and then as a Telephone Operator in Tulsa. After marrying my grandfather, she worked as a cook at the Pig Stand restaurant they owned with my grandfather’s brother. Although she went along with his desires to partner in that restaurant and then move to Colorado and California, she did not like living with

his relatives and always urged him to arrange for them to get their own place. She worked at a Candy factory after her 1<sup>st</sup> son was born. After that, she mostly concentrated on raising her 3 children, through the depression years and beyond. During the war years, she was a treasurer for the Blue Star Mothers of America. In the 1960’s and 70’s, she worked as an inspector for the voting precinct in the Valley of Enchantment. (Crestline, California). She died at age 95 of congestive heart failure due to hypertensive cardiovascular disease.



Her mother, **Mary Ellen Woodrum Cornett**, was born in 1872 in Fall River, Kansas. She was still in school at age 18 at Twin Falls, Kansas, average scholarship 94. She married at age 24. The wife of a tenant farmer, she had 6 children. She fell ill with chronic Bright’s Disease (Nephritis) at age 40. She went to Excelsior Springs, Missouri and Eureka Springs, Arkansas for treatment prior to her death. She died at age 42.



My grandfather's mother, **Sarah Jane Verbryck Clifford**, was born in Indiana in 1866. She moved with her family to a homestead in Montgomery County, Kansas when she was 8 years old. She quit school after 5<sup>th</sup> grade. She married Charles Clifford when she was 20 years old. They had 6 children. Her husband was a farmer, but later went to work at a cement factory. After the death of Charles' brother, he devoted much of the time going to court to get the money his brother had promised him. He eventually was committed to an insane asylum due to the influence of his brother's widow's lawyer brother-in-law. Sarah legally separated from Charles in 1914 and divorced in 1919, claiming that he deserted her and "has been guilty of gross neglect and...has failed to support her." She did housework for private families. Later in life, she lived with each of her children in turn and died at age 82 in Tulsa, Oklahoma of cerebral hemorrhage, due to arteriosclerosis heart disease, and pneumonia.

I don't know much about my great-great grandmothers on my dad's side:

**Mary McKettrick Kelly** gave birth to at least 4 children during and after the Irish Potato Famine. She died sometime before her husband and children immigrated to the Iowa ~1867.

**Jantje Meinen De Buhr Auen** gave birth to 11 children, 8 surviving to adulthood. She immigrated with her husband and 5 older children from East Friesland in Germany to the U.S. in 1868. She was a farmer's wife. She at age 82 of mitral stenosis.

**Anna Catharina Arps Reimers and Elsabea Samman Brockes** were both wives of laborers in Schleswig-Holstein, Germany.



*Jantje Auen in front of their farmhouse*

On my mother's side, my great grandmothers were hearty pioneer women:



**Mary Ann Irwin Clifford** was born in 1820 in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania came with her husband and 9 children to settle on a claim of 114 acres in Sycamore Township, Kansas in 1871. Her husband died in 1877 just 6 years later. She continued to farm the homestead with her sons. She joined the Friends Church (Quakers) in 1895. She died at age 84.



**Sarah Hildebrand Verbruyck** was born in 1826 in Ohio and grew up in Indiana. She first married Horace Riggs, with whom she moved to Iowa. Her husband died of Cholera before his 3<sup>rd</sup> child was born. She moved back to Indiana where she married Richard Verbruyck and had 5 more children. Sometime between 1871 and 1875 they moved to Montgomery County Kansas. They had homestead of 40 acres in the floodplain of the Elk River. He grew big corn and other crops, but the property flooded frequently. At age 58, she legally separated from her husband. She died at 90 of senility? (contributory fractured hip ~ 5 years) at the home of her son in 1917.



**Elvira Stamper Cornett** was born in 1844 in Grayson County Virginia. She married Hezekiah Cornutt in 1859. They left Virginia after the Civil War and lived a few years in Missouri prior to settling in Greenwood County Kansas with their 7 surviving children, sometime between 1880 and 1886. Her husband died in 1891 of consumption (tuberculosis). At some point she moved into town in Eureka, Kansas where she had “a good house with cistern, chicken yards, smoke house, shed, stable. Main street just north of city park,” which she sold in 1906. She worked as a housekeeper. She later moved to Sawtelle, California to stay with her daughter, where she died at age 74 of vascular disease of the heart.



**Emily Jane Baugher Woodrum** was born in 1840 in Illinois. She moved with her husband to Greenwood, County, Kansas about 1868. His homestead of 160 acres was registered in 1872, just a month before her husband’s death. My great grandmother was born just 10 days before her father’s death. With the help of her 2 sons, she continued to farm the land. At age 33, she remarried Ezra Walters. She had another daughter who died after a few months. She filed for legal separation at age 36, claiming abandonment, and divorced at age 40. She died of acute nephritis at age 77.