



Relations

...sharing and preserving our heritage for generations to come

P.O. Box 631961 821 North Street Nacogdoches, Texas 75963-1961 Telephone: 936-462-9315 www.rudisillfoundation.org

Quarterly Newsletter

No. 2, April 2004

The Rudisill Family Foundation is a member of the American Association for State and Local History.

Founder's Note:

We are for real! We are family!

Shortly after mailing the premier issue of *Relations*, a RFF Director called me to say that a close cousin of hers had received her copy and asked: "Is this for real?" Needless to say, the Director's response was affirmative, and she added more background information about the 1896 House and the Foundation. After hearing this story, I realized that we all get a lot of junk mail and bogus solicitations. So it was not unusual for a cousin to be suspicious about something so unique as RFF. This was a good reminder that like our name, we Rudisills are unique; our RFF mission is "sharing and preserving our heritage for generations to come." We are family. Let us never forget that. And let us always help each other and appreciate the special qualities that identify us as Rudisills.

Heartfelt thanks to all our cousins who wrote me such kind letters and to those who have made donations to the RFF. Special thanks to Joyce Rudisill for donating six Henkel Harris dining chairs to match the ones that Ibbey Rudasill Hunt donated. Because the dining table can be extended to accommodate 18 people, please let us know if you happen to have or find more of these chairs. (See the last issue of *Relations* for a picture.) Thanks also to Carolyn Sullivan Clinton, Thomas Malon Ballew, Elizabeth Smith, Jack Rudisail and Sandra Turner for their letters and family information.

In appreciation of our family's diversity, I should like to mention two letters that deserve special recognition. One was from a woman who had been married to a Rudisill whom she divorced. I wrote her saying that every family had its "dark side," I was sorry for her unpleasant experience, and offered her a complimentary holiday at my Village Inn, which many of you have visited. Another letter was from a bright, young man who is a cousin living in

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Seminar: Great Tours

In April your Founder attended a seminar on "Thematic Tours for Historic Sites" sponsored by the American Association for State and Local History, at Melrose, a plantation located just south of Natchitoches, LA (a sister-tribe city to Nacogdoches). The seminar was designed specifically for historic house tours. The major premise was that historic homes should tell a story about its occupants and the people associated with its building and its locale, and about the furniture and other artifacts in the house. There can be multiple tours and each should have a specific theme so visitors can enjoy returning and learning something new each time. To make the experiences seem "real," the tour guide can dress appropriately for a specific period and act and speak from that person's perspective. Items in the house will reflect

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Donkey in the Vineyard

Several years ago, in a used-book shop in Amsterdam, one of the American Rudisill clan bought a coat of arms carrying the name "De Riedesel d' Eisenbach" because he wondered if this might be from an overlooked family line. The symbols were on a shield in four quarters. Sections 1 and 3 held the face of a donkey with three leaves in its mouth and sections 2 and 4 were crossed jousting lances. A small inserted shield in the center showed three castle towers on a red background. Since he had never been aware of valid arms held by any Rudisill, he was intrigued when another copy of the blazon came up with blue ground for the head instead the red, suggesting two branches of a family. Along with the fact that pieces were cut from a large Dutch armorial produced in the 1880s by the master European heraldry historian

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Name This Picture

Is this a Rudisill family reunion? Clifford Rudisill believes the lady who is the second person from the left on the back row is his grandmother, Mary Lenora Lively Rudisill. The picture was displayed in the center hall of the 1896 house for over 60 years. Can you help to identify other people, where and when it took place? Send the RFF your photos that need identification and it will be published in *Relations* for other cousins to help identify.

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J.B. Rietstap, the two posed some questions:

1) "Riedesel" is not a Dutch name. The "De" ahead of it is a Dutch article "the," and the "d" translates as "of." The surname and its location of Eisenbach are German, so what might put someone of that origin into a Dutch armorial?

2) If the images were German and thus possibly falling between puns and being literal, what significance was there in a donkey's head with leaves in its mouth when set against crossed lances and the inescutcheon of three castle towers?

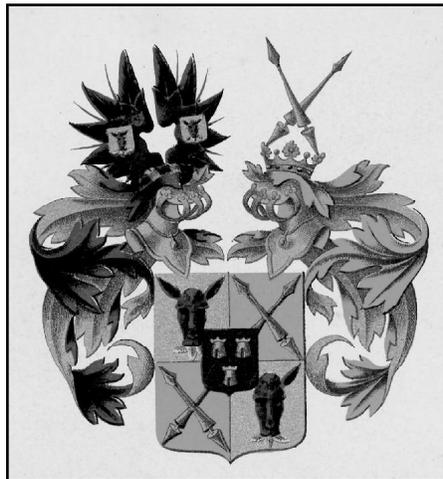
3) Who were the Riedesels and how might they connect to Rudisills?

A source on American history referred to a "Baron Friedrich Adolph Ridesel (1738-1800)," a Hessian army general who fought for the British in the American Revolution. The Baron was a brilliant tactician, but he was captured anyway and held for about two years and then exchanged, going right back into the field. He returned to Germany in 1783. In 1788, he commanded the Brunswick part of a force sent to the Netherlands to help the Dutch ruler against an invasion by France and England seeking to take the throne for the British. He succeeded in the fight so well that the Dutch reconfirmed his title and arms and a resident descendant was later granted a full Dutch version of the blazon. From 1784 till his death in 1800, he was a Lieutenant General in command of the city of Brunswick.

Thus far, there was no sense that the man or his descendants related to the Rudisills, and earlier historical details were unknown. German dictionaries clarified that the name was a joining of two words: "ried," meaning reed or a marshy area where reeds grow, and "esel," meaning donkey. This emphasized a German pun style for the blazon, but an Austrian-German dictionary cinched it further by noting that "ried" could be a small patch of vineyard, hence the three-pointed leaf in the donkey's mouth. The Rietstap armorial text on the family suggested a very tentative ground for a Rudisill connection to Riedesel. The Riedesel family was traditionally believed to have originated in Hungary. In Hessian records the name then occurs as early as 1149, and other mentions show one man as a knight for the land grave of Thuringia around 1226.

Now uncertainties arise. How did these people get from Hungary to Hesse? The most likely route for movement that early

would be from Hungary around or through Austria, perhaps to or around Switzerland, and on to Germany. Austrian German language tends to be based on older forms than words from Germany itself, and the grape leaves rather than reeds in the blazon tenuously suggest possible origin from a freeman's work in fields of vines. If a movement through Switzerland did occur, it is typical for the Swiss to modify any language that comes into their aura, and the Germans have a history of reversing the practice. Thus, the original form of the name, whether Riedesel or Rithesel or Rytesel, might have been changed into something with umlaut-marked letters "u,"



which would sound rather like a rounded German "ie." If this was not the pattern, the family may not have been in the region long enough, or a branch may have set off north into Germany, while the main line went on west to Hesse. It is known that some members went south into Italy, where they have disappeared into the past without being researched in modern times. Since the Rudisill clan history indicates a reversed direction of these movements in the sixteenth century, it must be emphasized that these migrations are much earlier and probably indicate more than one generational move.

It is equally possible that the later "Rüdisühli" (or as a modern Swiss form has it, Rüdüsüle) of the Rudisill clan is a Swiss revision of a German form of the name held by clansmen moving down to the region of Canton St. Gallen, Switzerland. Since some members moved around 1659 up to Michelfeld, Germany (now a suburb of Heidelberg), that direction might imply a previous connection there that had been disrupted by famine in the Thirty Years War of 1618-1648. Of course, without solid research evidence, all these

possibilities are speculative at best and need to be tempered by more research.

If the arms with the donkey head were granted early enough, in Hungary or Austria or Germany, they came long before any title of nobility. They may derive from loyal work or military service to a lord and might have accompanied a giving of freeman status while still under some obligation. Even if the arms actually originated in Germany, they are old enough to predate any Swiss period. The grant title of Baron is an extension of the thirteenth-century Thuringian-Hessian knighthood (whence the crossed lances likely came) and was formally bestowed in 1680 by the Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I. The title was reconfirmed for the Dutch branch in 1819, but that line died out in 1910, so both the title and the blue-field blazon are defunct today in the Netherlands, leaving only the German line still in force.

It must be recognized that the title grant of 1680 came after Hans Rüdüsühli (1643-1723) was not at hand and that it was specifically localized to a Riedesel person in Hesse without reference to Heidelberg or to any relatives of Hans who migrated to Pennsylvania to begin the lines of Rudisill and the variant names in America. Thus, there can be no Rudisill claim to the title at all and no valid claim to the Riedesel arms unless a current branch arises through later immigration from the direct lines in Europe, which generally appears not the case; and no American Rudisill or variant family should claim or use the arms without permission from the present Baron's family in Germany. While these obstructions prevent wishful thinking about nobility or arms, it is reasonable to consider a lesser possibility. The numerous and at times similar early spellings of both names suggest that there could be a joint lineage for both the Riedesel and Rudisill clans if enough research were done to verify all the wandering and diminished branches back to origin. But that is another part of the story yet to be found.

Footnote:

The author shared this information with Clifford Rudisill during dinner at a Santa Fe restaurant last summer, whereupon Clifford shared with him the following. In the early 1980's, Clifford greeted a guest in the Village Inn dining room who identified himself as a Rudisill. (He had come to dine with his wife because he had heard that a Rudisill had become one of the new owners.) As he asked if Clifford knew

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1896 House Renovation

Substantial progress has been made on the restoration. But before describing the physical improvements, you should know that in December, 2003, legal title to the House was officially transferred from the Rudisill Maintenance Trust to the Rudisill Family Foundation, Inc. Your Founder's original intention was to transfer title when all of the restoration was completed. But since most of the major work is done, he decided to make it official during 2003.

A new back entrance and small porch designed in the style of the front entrance has been built and a custom-made reproduction door installed. The kitchen has received a new custom-made counter top and sink. A new reproduction, custom-made window has been added to replace the modern one that was installed during the 1950's renovation of the kitchen. The new window not only looks great but admits much more light than the modern one. A new stove and refrigerator complete the major kitchen equipment. The three full baths and one half bath are finished. Antique gas chandeliers have been installed in the living and dining rooms, two of the bedrooms and kitchen. Four antique light fixtures have been installed in the center, front and back halls. These fixtures are of the same period as the house and all look like they have been there always.

The entire electrical system has been replaced and a new control panel relocated to the laundry room off the kitchen. The center hall staircase is framed and all the custom-made moldings, treads, banisters and railings are ready to be installed. The geothermal system will be completed in April: all components will be set in place



The antique chandelier in the living room.



Front porch and entrance to the 1896 house in Nacogdoches. Notice the "gingerbread" pattern that was copied for the RFF logo.

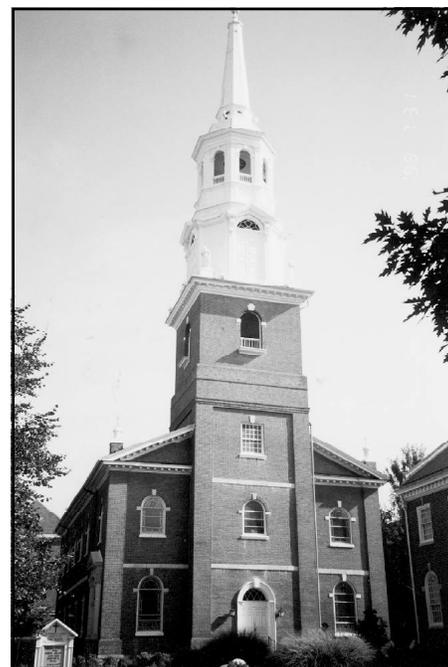
and connected and the duct system will be installed. The heating/cooling system will then be operational. Sheetrock will be installed over the interior wooden walls. (In consultation with experts, it was decided to do this rather than to install canvas on the walls because the sheetrock will not limit the type of wallpaper to be used and will provide insulation and some fire retardant.) This work should be finished by late April, when the wallpaper will be installed. Many books of historic wallpapers are being studied, taking into consideration the period of the house and the antique furniture and oriental rugs that will be in each room. Several of the mahogany doors have been stripped of years of paint and are ready to be stained. The final interior work will be refinishing the floors. Outside, the back yard has been leveled (where the 12 water wells were dug) and several truckloads of top soil added. Grass seed has been planted but with one of the wettest years on record in East Texas, it has not been able to germinate. A wall will be built along three sides of the house and landscaping will be done, including the installation of paving stones placed at intervals in the grass to keep the appearance of a lawn and to allow parking.

So we are in the "home stretch" of a restoration project that began over six years ago. There is cause for optimism! But since the project will be predictably behind schedule, it is felt that a reunion here should be postponed to later this year or possibly next year. However, there will be a Board of Directors' meeting in the House the second or third week of May; and as these are "open" meetings, all cousins are invited. If you want to attend the May Directors' meeting, call any director or the RFF for the exact dates. Meanwhile, we can all look forward to the completion of the restoration of this historically significant and important Rudisill family home, where all Rudisill cousins will be welcomed to visit for generations to come.

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the origin of the Rudisill name. He was an airline pilot and travelled to Europe frequently. On trips to Germany and Switzerland he had been able to do some independent research on the family and had discovered records that revealed the origin of the name. Apparently a man had ingratiated himself with the lord of the manor by some good deed, so the master said he would reward the man by giving him all the land of his estate that he could circumscribe by riding a donkey from sun-up to sun-down. He did so and prospered, and took the name "Riedesel" which translates as "Ride A Donkey."

Is this story a piece of the puzzle? What do you think? Send RFF your comments!



Trinity Lutheran Church, Lancaster, PA

This is the church where many of our ancestors worshipped and is an important site to visit at the next reunion of the Rudisill Family Association, September 16-18, 2004. Call Ted or Dick Rudisill for more details.

Donations

As a special gift to his extended family, Clifford Rudisill is providing every cousin who would like to receive it, a complimentary subscription of *Relations* for one year (four issues). Thereafter cousins who contribute at least \$25 a year will receive the RFF newsletter. Please help the Foundation with your tax deductible contributions!

Remember that all contributions to the RFF are tax deductible. For a list of donor categories, please contact any RFF Director or refer to the premier issue of *Relations*.

Seminar *from page 1*

influences on the inhabitants or the people who are being portrayed. An event can be chosen as the focus of the tour. For example, "The lives of the Rudisill family were changed forever by...". The character of the family or individual member can be reflected by their possessions: clothing, furniture, letters, photographs, etc. A theme can be the influence of wars, migration, religion, etc. Was our family willing to take risks not only to survive but to succeed? Have they been determined to follow their dreams (your Founder, for one, identifies strongly with this theme!)? What has been the historical context of certain family events? Who made a certain object? How was it used? What story does it tell? The role of the guide is to use evidence (objects) to interpret certain themes, and to tell a story to make it real and interesting. Experts in certain fields can be consulted to enrich the historical context or to help describe certain objects. How can various themes best be communicated to the visitors? What is the single most important lesson a visitor should go away with? Why

is it important to tell the "difficult" stories, the ones that might create some tension?

And what does all of this have to do with YOU? Your "souvenirs" and memories tell the stories about the lives of your loved ones who have gone on before us. It is that memory, that story, that can be preserved for future generations of cousins at the Rudisill Family Foundation. Here, your stories can be preserved and made "live" for future generations to learn from and to experience. But you need to help the RFF by writing and sending your family "stories" and any objects you want to be preserved.

Too, would you be interested to learn more about being a guide for tours at the 1896 House? Because of geography, you would be limited to when you might do this. But think about a tour to focus solely on your story. The possibilities are limited only by your commitment to provide the story. The RFF will do its part to preserve and share the memory of your loved ones. Think about it! Let us hear your story so your family history can be retold by the RFF at the 1896 House and shared with future Rudisill generations!

We Are For Real! *from page 1*

Philadelphia. He called me to apologize; and when I asked why, he simply said "I am black." I assured him that not only was there no need to apologize, but also and most importantly he was a valued member of the Rudisill family. I hope to meet both of these fine people some day.

So, the RFF has begun and is off to a good start. A dialogue has been established among cousins who were unknown to each other. A collection has been begun for our archives. Contributions have been made in memory of our departed cousins. And other progress has been made which you will read about in this issue of *Relations*. We are for real! We are family!