2017: A Year of More Genealogical Discoveries

My favorite family holiday is Thanksgiving—not Christmas. Thanksgiving has a simple ageless theme comprised of a wholesome blend of gratitude, family and friends, and the sharing of good food. For one day (if we don't run out for the late day launch of Black Friday mania), we are reminded to stop everything and spend time giving thanks and renewing bonds. Sometimes those bonds have been frayed by misunderstandings or distance or by the loss of someone who is no longer here to pull up a chair at the dinner table. Joining together gives us a chance to mend fences, reconnect, and to remember those no longer with us. No gifts involved—except perhaps a covered dish brought by a guest.

Speaking of those who went before us brings to mind my gratitude for the opportunities I had to assist people searching for their family roots this past year. Those research projects were both a challenge and an adventure that I took very seriously knowing the trust people put in me in asking for my help. As always, the road to this year's discoveries was winding and marked by unexpected revelations. My genealogy research journeys took me to Ireland, Wales, Poland, Lithuania, Morocco, France, Italy, Germany, Canada, and Russia. Some families were, like my own, later arrivals (mid-19th to early 20th century) in the United States. The objective of those search projects was to reconnect immigrants to their geographic origins. Still other projects involved charting the history of families whose roots were put down in America two centuries or more ago. Each project was fascinating, surprising, and unique. Each discovered tale gave dimension and color to a family story—informing us about the realities of the lives of our ancestors. Talk about a *gift!*

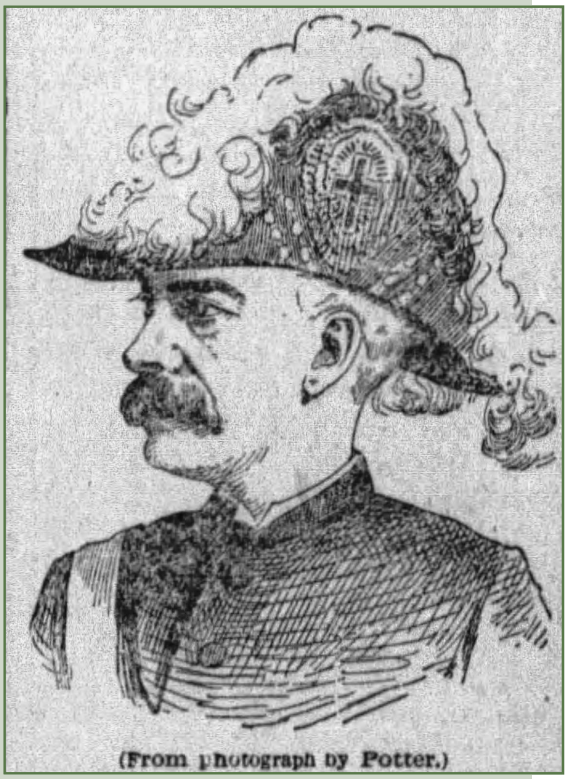
Lest you think me a humbug when it comes to Christmas and the opening of brightly wrapped presents, I have a little holiday story for you. As most of you know, I have a weakness for antiques—particularly for miniature items. Some years ago, I happened upon a small sled, the painted surface all but worn off. Being only about 15 inches long, the sled was much too small even for a young child. I thought it was likely made for a doll or was perhaps a salesman sample. Over the years,

I came across only a few other similar sleds with varying states of paint wear—some very well preserved. I also saw full size children's sleds almost identical to their smaller versions, that lending credence to the idea that the miniature ones were salesman samples, probably dating to the late 1800s.

One of the miniature sleds I now own is inscribed on the underside: "Marguerite Bange, Christmas 1897." It is a sweet little red sled with hand-painted floral decoration and soft blue painted metal runners. Of course I decided to search for little Marguerite and find out more about her. A quick trip to Ancestry.com yielded results. Marguerite Bange was born in Ohio in October 1889, meaning that she was 8-years-old when she received the little red sled as a Christmas gift. Her father, George Riley Bange, was born in Pennsylvania in 1850. In 1888 in Ohio, he married Margaret "Maggie" Kennedy, the daughter of Irish immigrants. Marguerite was their only child.

George Riley Bange, then age 29, was recorded in the 1880 US census living in Richland County, Ohio, in a boarding house in Mansfield. He told the census-taker he was employed as a jeweler. When the 1900 U.S. census was taken, George, Maggie

and Marguerite Bange were living on West Third Street in Mansfield and George was still working as a jeweler. Sadly, George Bange passed away a year later in 1901. According to local newspapers, he was a music aficionado and the leader of a popular area orchestra. In 1892, nine years before his death, *The Weekly News* of Mansfield ran an article titled "G. Riley Bange: A Name and a Face Familiar to Nearly Every Citizen." That article said that George was born in Hanover, Pennsylvania and was the son of William Bange. George reportedly left school at a young age preferring to learn the "jewelry trade" from a prominent local jeweler and serving a three-year apprenticeship before going out on his own. The article highlighted his "successful, snug and complete jewelry store" in Mansfield and mentioned his active membership in the Masons organization. His musical interest was described as follows: "For the past 18 years Riley Bange's voice has been a guide to the feet of the devotees of Terpsichore in this city . . . with Zay's Orchestra and with the American Orchestra . . . as a prompter and master of ceremonies."


(From photograph by Potter.)

Maggie Kennedy Bange was an entrepreneur in her own right. She was a professional milliner who regularly advertised her services in local newspapers beginning in the 1890s and continuing for over 30 years until the late 1920s.

George Riley Bange was buried in Mt. Olivet Cemetery in his birth home, Hanover, Pennsylvania. His wife Maggie is also interred there.

Their daughter Marguerite married in 1920 at the age of 30 to a widower with children who, like her father, was a jeweler. There is a clue on the underside of Marguerite's little sled that tells me that she kept the sled into her adulthood. In addition to Marguerite's name, there is another named penciled on the bottom of the sled—that of Marguerite's step-daughter Lenore!

Happy Holidays!!

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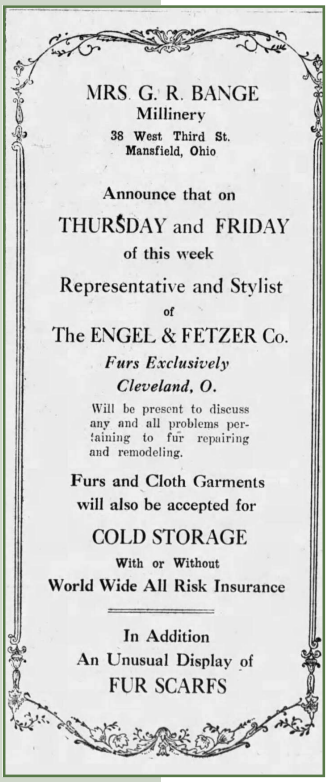
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