

SEVEN LOCAL VICTIMS OF THE SPANISH INFLUENZA PANDEMIC 1918-1920

LUTHER MARTIN FREESE (1882-1920)

Luther Martin Freese died February 15, 1920 of influenza pneumonia, during the third and final wave of the deadly pandemic. He was 37 years old. His death record shows that he was cremated in Seattle and his ashes were returned to his hometown of Edmonds for burial. The Freese family has a section at the IOOF Cemetery (today's Edmonds Memorial Cemetery)¹. At the time of Luther Freese's death, it was reported in his obituary that his wife was slowly recovering from a serious illness.

Luther Freese was born November 20, 1882, in the small village of Makanda, in Jackson County, Illinois, the son of William Harrison Freese and Martha *Goodman* Freese. In 1888, when Luther was six years old, the family moved from their farm in Illinois to Edmonds, where his father found work in one of the shingle mills along the waterfront of the town.

As a young man, still in his teens, Luther followed in his father's and his older brother's footsteps, and began working in the shingle mills in Edmonds. He started at the bottom and worked his way through each phase of a shingle mill's operations, finally working as a shingle weaver and a sawyer. He was one of the early organizers and a member of the Quality Shingle Mill of Edmonds—his last place of work before his death. He was also a charter member of the Cooperative Stores Co., a business at First and Main Street in Edmonds, managed until 1912 by his older brother Charles Thomas "Tom" Freese.

No photograph of Luther Freese has been found, but his 1918 Draft Registration gives a small description for us. His registration shows that Luther Freese was a tall man, a little bit stout, with red hair and blue eyes. As with many mill workers, especially those who rose to the position of sawyer—his left hand showed the prevalent danger involved with working at the shingle mills. Luther's thumb was missing at the first joint, his index finger also at the first joint, and his second and third fingers at the second joints. Missing parts of fingers was something of a badge of honor for shingle mill workers.

In Seattle, Luther Martin Freese married Alida *Nordenborg* on July 1, 1912. It was interesting to note that one of the witnesses for the wedding was Fred Fournier, the future long-time mayor of Edmonds. Alida *Nordenborg* was born in Sweden in December of 1883, the daughter of John and Helena Nordenborg. The family immigrated from Sweden in 1892 and first lived at Utsalady on Camano Island, where Mr. Nordenborg was a farmer. Sometime between 1900 and 1905, the family had

¹ Before 1982, the cemetery was often vandalized—with gravestones tipped over, and often removed from their original location, and at times they were even stolen. For some burials, there was no written record found—however, the records may be held by the cemetery. Also, while doing research, I found several discrepancies on the dates shown on gravestones and other errors, when compared to the death certificates.

moved to Edmonds and Mr. Nordenborg was working as a laborer for the City of Edmonds.

Theresa Nordenborg, a twin sister of Alida Freese, married Leon Roscoe, the son of C. T. and Amelia Roscoe, well-known pioneers in Edmonds. C. T. Roscoe was a former mayor of Edmonds. Alida's mother and father are both buried at Edmonds Memorial Cemetery. Anna *Nordenborg*, a younger sister of Alida died in 1905 at the age of 17, and is also buried at the cemetery in Edmonds. She also had another sister, Elizabeth Nordenborg Lamb, and a brother John N. Nordenborg. All of the family members were born in Sweden.

Luther Freese was survived by his wife, Alida. After her husband's death, Alida never remarried, and for several years lived in Seattle with her sister Elizabeth Land and their father. She died in 1967—no place of burial was found. Luther and Alida Freese had no children.

Luther Freese's biological family suffered many losses, even terrible tragedy, but even so, his obituary mentions that his home was a happy one, and that he was a big-hearted man.

Luther's mother Martha *Goodman* Freese died in 1895, at the birth of son Leo Freese. Little Leo Freese didn't survive for long, and at the age of one year died in Edmonds on April 6, 1896. Both mother and son are buried at Edmonds Memorial Cemetery.

William Harrison Freese, Luther's father, died at Everett Hospital on the morning of September 7, 1908, as the result of gunfire by a drunken reveler late the night before. The shooting happened at First and George (Main) Streets in Edmonds, during a Labor Day celebration. At the age of 55, and no longer physically able to work at the shingle mills, Mr. Freese had been working as a bartender. The evening of the shooting, he was walking home from work to his small room at the Knowles Superior Wrench Company on First Street, where he also served as the night watchman. His shooting was ruled accidental. William Harrison Freese is buried at Edmonds Memorial Cemetery

In 1912, Luther's older brother Charles Thomas "Tom" Freese, at the age of 38, died suddenly while at work in his store on First and Main Streets. He is buried at Edmonds Memorial Cemetery.

Younger brother, Pfc Frank William Freese, lost his life in action during WWI in France on October 19, 1918 at the age of 27. Frank Freese is buried in Lorraine, France. France awarded him a posthumous *Croix de Guerre* medal—the country's highest award for bravery. In Edmonds, Frank Freese Post 66, American Legion, is named for him. A sister gave her brother Frank's medal to the Legion Post.

MARION LESLIE GREEN (1902-1919)

Marion Green was still a teenager, only 16 years old, when he was infected with the deadly influenza virus. He died at his parent's home on Alder Street in Edmonds on July 30, 1919, just 20 days after his family celebrated his 17th birthday. The doctor gave the cause of death as pulmonary influenza. His was not a quick death as was the norm—he had been fighting the disease since April.

Marion was born July 10, 1902 in Indiana, the second son of William and Mary (Conner) Green. The family moved to Edmonds when Marion was seven years old. After the family arrived in Edmonds, Marion's father first worked as a laborer at one the shingle mills in Edmonds, and he later became a shoemaker in a cobbler's shop.

Rebuilding following WWI, many industries were still had a need for workers, thus, instead of completing school, Marion went to work as a ship worker at Skinner & Eddy Shipyards in Seattle's Duwamish area. During WWI, Skinner & Eddy was the largest shipyard in Seattle, having built 75 cargo ships.

The death records for influenza victims during 1918 through 1920, show that this terrible disease raged through the shipyards and the mills—taking the lives of men as young as Marion, to others in their 40s.

Marion Green is buried at the IOOF Cemetery/Edmonds Memorial Cemetery—Bleitz Rafferty Co. in Seattle handled the funeral arrangements, and burial was August 1, 1919. He was survived by his parents and two brothers: William E. Green, age 20, and Ernest, age seven.

NOTE: The cemetery records may show the year of Marion Green's death as 1920, but the death certificate signed by Dr. O. W. Schmidt of Edmonds gives the year as 1919.

Sometime after Marion Green's death, his family moved away from Edmonds, possibly even leaving the state.

An interesting side note about Marion's work place. The shipyard closed when it was sold in 1923, and the property sat unused. During the Great Depression in the 1930s, the land became the home for unemployed and homeless men in Seattle. They put together living quarters made from shipping boxes, scraps of wood and sometimes cardboard—whatever material they could find to build some kind of protection from the elements. Some of the makeshift dwellings showed a bit of imagination. The former Skinner & Eddy land became famous in Seattle as one of the many Hooverville communities constructed throughout the country during the Great Depression.

BETSEY ANDERSON JOHNSON (1892-1919)

Betsey *Anderson* Johnson died January 10, 1919, at the young age of 27. On her death certificate, the cause of death was listed as pneumonia, with influenza as a

contributing factor. Burial took place at the IOOF Cemetery in Edmonds, with the Edmonds Undertaking Co. handling arrangements. Her small gravestone seems to be one with errors. It shows her birth name Betsy Anderson, with her first name misspelled, and Johnson, her married name, not even on the stone; plus, the date of death is incorrect—showing her date of death as 1917 rather than 1919.

Betsey was born January 23, 1892 in Potter County, South Dakota. She was one of eight children born to Ole Anderson and Kristina *Knutson* Anderson, who were both born in Norway.

Betsey's father Ole Anderson came to America in 1880 and settled in Minnesota. Mrs. Anderson followed him in 1881, along with their two older children.

The family moved to Seneca, South Dakota in 1885 and lived there until 1891. They then moved to a farm east of Lebanon, South Dakota, where Betsey was born. The family lived on the farm for four years until Mr. Anderson purchased land in Arena, South Dakota. It became the family's permanent home. Mrs. Anderson died in 1895 at the age of 41. Betsey was only three years old when her mother died.

About 1907, Ole Anderson and his daughters, Jennie, Carolina, Betsey and Agnes, moved to Edmonds. His sons, August and Albert, both Christian ministers, also joined the family. Mr. Anderson died in 1914, and his remains were sent back to Lebanon, South Dakota for burial next to his wife, and near the homes of his other two sons, Neil and John Anderson.

Betsey's sister Carolina in 1908 married Joseph Yost, a son of Allen M. and Amanda Yost, early-day pioneers of Edmonds, and they moved to Arlington, Washington. Joseph was the only Yost son to choose to live in another town besides Edmonds. In 1913, Betsey's younger sister Agnes Anderson, married Samuel Yost, another son of Allen and Amanda Yost. Samuel was a major figure at the Yost Auto Company.

Older sister Jennie Anderson Conner was the wife of William Conner of Edmonds. She died in 1928 at the age of 42, and is buried at Edmonds Memorial Cemetery.

On June 28, 1917 in Seattle, Betsey Anderson married Eldon Ereska Johnson who was born at Camp Harney, Grant County (now Harney County), Oregon. At the time of their marriage Betsey was living with her sister Agnes and brother-in-law Samuel Yost at their residence on Fifth near Main Street in Edmonds.

Betsey's husband Eldon Johnson was the younger brother of Ada Mae *Johnson* Jaeger Mothershead of Edmonds. Their parents were William Warren Johnson and Caroline *Harris* Johnson.

Eldon's mother Caroline Johnson once had a home on Glen Street, just west of 7th Street. However, in 1910 she was living on George Street in Edmonds and her son, Eldon, age 30, was living with her.

Betsey and Eldon Johnson had such a short marriage (only one and half years), little was mentioned about their personal life together. One reference to Betsey's new husband was found in a report in the local newspaper for December 28, 1917: "Eldon Johnson informs us that beginning today, he will inaugurate passenger service between Edmonds and Seattle's 85th Street (Greenwood) using a nine-passenger Winton motor car."

Betsey and Eldon Johnson moved to Burns, Oregon, and were living there when Eldon registered for the WWI draft on September 6, 1918. Just four months later, they were still in Edmonds, and Betsey died there.

In 1920, the widowed Eldon Johnson was still living in Edmonds, boarding with his sister Ada Mae and her husband Stonewall Mothershead. Eldon then returned to Burns, Oregon, where he worked as a carpenter and house painter. Eldon Johnson returned to Edmonds to stay with his sister, Ada Mae in the 1940s and then returned again to Oregon, where he died in 1953 at the age of 72. He is buried at Burns Cemetery in Burns, Oregon. Betsey and Eldon Johnson had no children, and he never married again.

LEONARD B. KEELER (1892-1919)

Leonard Keeler died at his home in Edmonds on November 23, 1919, at the age of 27 - cause of death: pneumonia involving the upper lobe of his left lung, with the contributing factor given as influenza. Like so many victims of this virus, he was employed at a shingle mill in Edmonds.

Leonard was born in Michigan on May 7, 1892, the son of William Keeler (1862-1911) and Nancy L. (Ellen) *Lennon* (1868-1951). The family moved to Edmonds prior to 1900. Leonard worked as a shingle-weaver in Edmonds, and was not married. He was buried at the IOOF Cemetery/Edmonds Memorial Cemetery on November 25, 1919, with Edmonds Undertaking Co. in charge of the funeral arrangements.

Leonard's father was the owner of the Keeler Shingle Mill Co. in Edmonds. He served on the Edmonds City Council and was then elected mayor in 1910. However, he died in March of 1911, before finishing his term. He died intestate and the probate of his estate indicated he left a comfortable estate for his family.

Leonard was survived by his mother, who died in 1951 at Pleasant View Hospital in Edmonds. He was also survived by a brother Clifford W. Keeler, age 29. The parents, Mr. and Mrs. Keeler, are both buried at Edmonds Memorial Cemetery. His brother Clifford had continued to live in Edmonds until 1931 when he was admitted to Northern State Hospital at Sedro Wooley, Skagit County, Washington, which became his home for over 24 years. He died at the hospital in 1955 and is also buried at the Edmonds cemetery. Like his brother, he never married.

The Keeler's home in Edmonds was on the north side of George Street, between 6th and 7th Streets. The family's shingle mill was located on the waterfront, north of the

City Dock. Before the mill was sold following probate of William Keeler's estate, Leonard and his brother Clifford, worked at their father's mill—Leonard as a tallyman, and Clifford as a packer.

JOHN GUSTAVE LAMBE (1853-1918)

John Lambe (sometimes spelled Lampi or Lambie) died February 14, 1918 at the age of 64. He was one of those who died during the early stages of the spread of the influenza, before it was officially recognized as a pandemic—although, there had been reported influenza deaths of U.S. Army troops stationed in Kansas. The cause of John Lambe's death was given as chronic nephritis, with influenza as the contributing factor.

The year after the death of John Lambe, on March 18, 1919, Hilda Lambe, his 13-year-old daughter, who had been a student at Cedar Valley School, also died as a result of the deadly Spanish influenza. Hilda had been suffering from tuberculosis, and influenza was listed as the contributing factor for the cause of her death.

The Spanish flu was a serious threat to the residents of the two local tuberculosis institutions, Firland Sanitorium at Richmond Highlands (now Shoreline) and Aldercrest Sanitorium at Snohomish, and many patients were infected with the virus and died as a result. One newspaper article reported that influenza had pretty much ended what had been a tuberculosis epidemic.

John Lambe and his daughter Hilda, were both buried at the IOOF Cemetery (Edmonds Memorial Cemetery) alongside several other members of the Lambe and Sampson families. Family papers noted that John Lambe and daughter Hilda, had both died during the world-wide influenza outbreak. Although John Lambe's gravestone shows his middle initial of H, family records give his middle name as Gustave.

John Lambe was born John Lampi, on August 22, 1853 in Finland. He came to America in 1881, and in the mid-1880s settled on a 120-acre homestead in what became Cedar Valley. After completing the requirements for ownership of his homestead, the farm became his lifetime home.

Probate of the estate of John Lambe in 1919 showed that besides the 120-acre homestead, miscellaneous farm tools and the household furniture, he left the following personal estate: four milk cows, two horses, two heifers, four calves, four pigs, and 12 chickens, showing that he was a prosperous rancher.

While still making his home in Finland, John Lampi married (1) Suzanne *Ranta*. She followed him to America. Two children were born to them before Suzanna's 1902 death from tuberculosis. Suzanne is buried at Edmonds Memorial Cemetery (Block 3, Lot 2). Infant Lambe (no dates given) is buried in the same plot as Suzanne Lambe. This is evidently a child of John and Suzanna Lambe, possibly the son born to them in Edmonds on June 29, 1894, a few months prior to the death of Suzanne

Lambe. The one surviving child of John and Suzanne Lambe was John "Jack" Hilman Lambe, his information is shown later in this biography.

In 1905, widower John Lambe, married (2) a widow, Hilma *Sampson* Lake Jarvie, who was also born in Finland. She was the daughter of Matt Sampson.

In 1908, the Edmonds newspaper reported that John Lambe had built a new house on his Cedar Valley property. Also, that same year the newspaper reported that John Lambe was erecting a barn (50x80 feet) on his farm at Lambie Street and Second Avenue South.

Of historical interest: the Lambe family owned the only grocery store east of Edmonds, and son John "Jack" was the proprietor. At times, it also served as a saloon. The store was just a short distance west of the Seattle Interurban rail line, which first ran from Seattle to Hall Lake, and then in 1910 extended its run to Everett.

In 1910, the Lambe family sold the store to a young bachelor, Adrian Middleton, who not only took over the grocery business, but also became the first postmaster for the Seattle Heights Post Office, which was established that year. Located about five miles east of Edmonds, it was the first post office in that area. It also preceded the Alderwood Manor Post Office by several years.

In 1909, Cedar Valley pioneer John Lambe became a charter member of Cedar Valley Grange #306.

John Hilman "Jack" Lambe (1890-1919) the son of John Lambe and his first wife Suzanne, served in the Army in Nome, Alaska during WWI, and following the war, he went to work as a logging railroad engineer working at logging camps on the Olympic Peninsula in Washington state. Jack was accidentally killed on June 25, 1919, while at work—crushed by a runaway locomotive. Jack Lambe was only 29 years old, and was unmarried. He is buried at Ocean View Cemetery in Port Angeles.

The senior John Lambe, and his second wife, Hilma Lambe, had six children: Hilda E. Lambe (1905-1919), William E. "Bill" Lambe (1906-1995), Nilo G. Lambe (1909-1971), Esther Lambe Adams (1910-1984), Otto A. Lambe (1912-2000), and Aili E. Lambe (1913-1916).

After the death of John Lambe in 1918, Hilma was left alone to raise the younger children, as well as to manage their large ranch. Thus, her father Matt Sampson made his home with his daughter in order to help with the ranch work. He continued to live there until his own death by suicide in 1926.

Hilma Lambe never married again, and remained living on their ranch in Cedar Valley until her death on December 1, 1958 at the age of 91. Hilma Lambe is buried with other members of the large Lambe/Sampson family at Edmonds Memorial Cemetery.

Note: An erroneous gravestone date—the Lambe-Sampson gravestone lists the wrong year for the death of Hilda E. Lambe, daughter of John and Hilma Lambe—it should read 1919 and not 1918

And, FYI: Jenny E. Lake (1900-1918) mentioned on the Sampson side of the family gravestone, was Hilma Lambe's daughter from an earlier marriage to John Lake.

MATTIE CORNELIA WELBOURN OTTO (1868-1918)

Mattie Otto died at her home on the evening of December 10, 1918 from what was diagnosed by Edmonds' physician O. W. Schmidt, M.D., as influenza pneumonia with chronic nephritis and pulmonary edema as contributing factors. She was 50 years old. Mrs. Otto was buried at the Odd Fellows Cemetery.

Mattie *Welbourn* Otto was born June 23, 1868 (as shown on her death certificate) in Des Moines County, Iowa, the daughter of William H. Welbourn (1837-1918) and Abigail Haight *Terrill* (1835-1916). For many years, Mattie's parents owned a sheep ranch near Creswell, Oregon, later they moved to Algona in King County, Washington. When Mrs. Welbourn died in 1916, Mr. Welbourne moved to Edmonds to live with daughter Mattie, her husband James Otto, and their eight children. Mr. Welbourn died in Edmonds in January of 1918. Both William and Abigail Welbourn are buried at Edmonds Memorial Cemetery. A large upright gravestone marks their burial spot.

Mattie married James Nathan Otto on January 27, 1889 in Smith River, Del Norte County, California. After their marriage, and while still living in Del Norte County, James and Mattie Otto were hotel keepers.

By 1903, James and Mattie Otto and six children had moved to Edmonds, where Mr. Otto opened a meat market and became active in city affairs. With a large family to care for at home, Mattie Otto probably wasn't able to help much with the family's business, but she was active with the Edmonds Library committee.

The first six children of James and Mattie Otto were: William Nathan Otto, Paul Otto, Joseph L. Otto, Clara B. Otto, Maggie May Otto, Pearl Otto, and born after the family moved to Edmonds, were children: Abbie F. Otto and James E. Otto.

Since the days when James Nathan Otto, by trade a butcher, first opened a meat market on Main Street, the Otto name became a well-known one in the Edmonds business world. Myrtie Otto, a daughter-in-law, who was divorced from their eldest son, worked as bookkeeper at the grocery store and then eventually opened her own businesses in Edmonds.

Later James Otto owned and operated the Home Store, a downtown grocery store and meat market. Ironically, in early November of 1918, Mr. Otto appeared to be the only one to publicly acknowledge the dangers of the contagious influenza. His advertisement in the *Tribune-Review* announced "While the flu is still in our midst, use your telephone. We exercise great care in filling telephone orders and, while

under ordinary circumstances we prefer to have our patrons come in and shop personally, at the present time, we believe it is everyone's duty to avoid crowds. Telephone 53 for meat, and 201 for groceries." In December of 1918, his wife Mattie became one of the victims of the dreaded disease.

Sometime after his wife's death, Mr. Otto moved to Sequim, Washington, and married again; and was once again widowed. He died at the Sequim Valley Hospital in 1955 at the age of 89, and is buried at Mt. Angeles Cemetery in Port Angeles.

CHRISTOPHER TUFFIELD "C.T." ROSCOE, Sr. (1843-1919)

C. T. Roscoe, Sr. was one of the more elderly victims of the deadly influenza. He died on May 10, 1919 at the age of 76, from a myocardial infarction due to an influenza infection. The Edmonds Undertaking Co. handled his cremation in Seattle, and funeral services were conducted at the Edmonds Federated Church, with Edmonds Lodge of the Masonic Order officiating. Mr. Roscoe had been an active member of the Masonic Order for over 50 years. His ashes were then buried in the IOOF Cemetery (Edmonds Memorial Cemetery), next to his wife Amelia.

A son of Edwin William Roscoe died February 1, 1919 at the age of 45, also from the influenza virus. His body was cremated, but there is no record of the location of disposal of his ashes.

C. T. Roscoe was born in Mont-Saint-Gregoire, Montraie Region, Quebec, Canada on November 7, 1843/1844 (his death certificate gives his birth date as 1843, but his gravestone has the date as 1844). He was the son of Theophile Roscoe and Mary *Onley*. His father was born in Vermont and his mother was from Quebec. While C.T. was a young child, the family moved to Clinton County, New York.

In 1861, at the age of 18, at Churubusco, Clinton County, New York, C. T. Roscoe enlisted in the Union Army as a private. He served in Company H, 98th New York Regiment, Infantry. The following year he was promoted to Corporal. On June 3, 1864 at the Battle of Cold Harbor in Virginia, he was severely wounded during the fighting, and while recovering was furloughed. He was nominated for Second Lieutenant, but felt that he lacked the education for so much responsibility, and declined the promotion. In August of 1865 in Washington, D.C., he was mustered out of service because of his disability.

In 1867 in Clinton County, New York, he married (1) Amelia *Nichols*. In 1880, C. T. Roscoe and his wife Amelia were living at 513 Apple Street in Muskegon, Michigan, and C. T. worked as a blacksmith. At that time, they had eight children ranging in age from 14 to newly born. The children were: Lavinia, Christopher Tuffield, Jr., Almyra Rae, Emma, Edwin William, Reuben T., Minnie Agnes, and Leon Frank.

The family moved to Edmonds in 1888. C. T. Roscoe became active in city affairs and served as a councilman, marshal and mayor for two years, 1895-1896. Later, he was employed at one of the shingle mills as a tallyman. He built a beautiful home

on the southwest corner of Fourth and Bell Streets. The house is one of the nicest and well preserved historic homes in present-day Edmonds.

C. T. Roscoe's wife Amelia died in 1912, and she is buried at Edmonds Memorial Cemetery. Mr. Roscoe married (2) Rose Abbott, the widow of Theodore Abbott. Both Mr. and Mrs. Abbott had been longtime friends of C. T. and Amelia Roscoe.

Rose (Abbott) Roscoe died in 1917—she is buried at the Edmonds cemetery. Her first husband, Theodore Abbott, is also buried at the cemetery.

Altogether, C. T. and Amelia had ten children—nine lived to adulthood. However, only five survived their father's 1919 death. The surviving offspring were: Christopher T. Roscoe, Jr.; Reuben T. Roscoe; Mrs. Emma (Ernest) Heberlein; Mrs. Minnie (Daniel) Brackett; and Mrs. Mabel Macomber.