

JOHN AND CORA (MECUM) BLUE FAMILY BRIEF HISTORY
February 2021

1. John Blue's parents, ancestors and siblings

John Blue's father **David Blue** (1836-1909) was born March 31, 1836 in Northumberland County (now **Montour County**), **Pennsylvania**, and was orphaned at an early age, losing first his mother (Elizabeth Davis Blue) when he was almost five years old and then his father (Reuben Blue) when he was seven. *David's picture at right, age 7.*



Reuben was descended from the Blue/Blaw/Blauw, Nevius, Ten Eyck and other families who had emigrated from Holland to New York when it was a Dutch colony in the early 1600's. Elizabeth was descended from a Welsh family who emigrated to Philadelphia in 1709.

After his father's death in early 1844, David was raised by his older siblings (Peter, then 22, Thomas, 20, and Mary Jane, 15). In 1850, at the age of 14, David moved to **Mercer County, Illinois**, near Aledo (northwest of Galesburg), to be with his older brother Peter and other siblings who had moved there not long before. Land was opening up in Illinois and there was nothing to tie them to Pennsylvania anymore. At age 14 David found work on different farms and labored on the Mississippi River docks at the port of New Boston, Illinois. He started with nothing but worked hard and in time became quite successful as a farmer, businessman and community leader.

John Blue's mother **Mary Ellen Guffy** (1838-1911) married David Blue on April 1, 1858 in Rock Island, Illinois. Mary Ellen was born in 1838 in Northumberland County, Pennsylvania, not far from where David Blue was born. We do not know if the families knew each other in Pennsylvania, or if David and Mary Ellen first met in Illinois. Sometime in the 1840's, however, the Guffy family headed to Mercer County, Illinois, close to where the Blue family had moved. Mary Ellen's parents were Scottish on her father's side (her grandfather **Alexander Guffy** emigrated from Scotland to Pennsylvania around 1770) and Scotch-Irish on her mother's side (her great-grandfather **Dr. Thomas Pollock** was a physician who had emigrated from County Derry in northern Ireland to Pennsylvania; the Pollock family had previously emigrated from Scotland to Ireland). Three of Mary Ellen's brothers fought for the Union in the Civil War.

David and Mary Ellen Blue had eight children, including our direct ancestor **John Blue**, and built up a farm from nothing to 530 acres of land in the area around **Aledo, Illinois**. In 1881, they sold their Illinois land and moved their family two hundred miles west to **Perry, Iowa** where they purchased farm land and built and operated a livery stable. *Their home in Perry is shown at right.* About the same time, David's older brother Peter also moved to Perry from Aledo. David became a prominent business leader in Perry, including being one of the founders of a local bank, and was also elected several times to the Perry city council. He died in 1909 and Mary Ellen died in 1911.





David Blue family photo taken in Perry, Iowa around 1894
 Front Row: (L-R) Daughter Ida Belle, David Blue, Mary Ellen Blue and John Blue
 Back Row: (L-R) Daughters Rose, Lenora Jane and Viella; son Lowell; and daughter Mary Jeanette

David and Mary Ellen's seven children in order of birth:

- Ida Belle (Blue) Van Horne
 - Born October 4, 1858 near Aledo, Illinois
 - Married William Henry Van Horne October 9, 1883
 - Widowed on March 10, 1894, never remarried
 - Ida Belle died March 14, 1947 and is buried at Violet Hill Cemetery, Perry, IA
- John Blue
 - Born March 24, 1862 near Aledo, Illinois
 - Married Cora Mecum March 6, 1890 in Jefferson, Greene County, Iowa
 - Seven children:
 - June born September 4, 1892 (Iowa)
 - Edwin born March 24, 1893 (Iowa)
 - Grace born September 11, 1894 (Iowa)
 - Mark born June 24, 1896 (Idaho)
 - Lucille born August 20, 1898 (Oregon)
 - Majel ("Billie") born August 30, 1899 (Oregon)
 - Helen born September 30, 1903 (Oregon)
 - John died March 30, 1941 and is buried at Eagle Valley Cemetery, Richland, OR.
- Mary Jeanette "Nettie" (Blue) Graham
 - Born June 12, 1864 near Aledo, Illinois
 - Married William Franz Graham August 19, 1890 in Perry, Iowa
 - At least two children – Frank and Mary Helen (Lingenfelter)
 - Mary Jeanette died July 27, 1937 and is buried at Glendale Cemetery, Des Moines, Iowa
- Lenora "Nora" Jane (Blue) Derry
 - Born March 2, 1869 near Aledo, Illinois

- Married John Robert Derry on March 31, 1891 in Perry, Iowa
- Six children
- Lenora died March 3, 1945 in Springfield, Missouri and is buried at the Maple Park Cemetery there.
- Rose (Blue) Gregg
 - Born November 27, 1871 near Aledo, Illinois
 - Married Amzi (“Ed”) W. Gregg November 25, 1890 in Perry, Iowa
 - Four children. The family lived in Eagle Valley, Oregon for awhile (1910 census)
 - Rose died 1955 Coos Bay, Oregon and is buried at Sunset Memorial Park there
- Lowell David Blue
 - Born 1874 (according to death certificate) near Aledo, Illinois
 - Married Mary Alexander probably in Perry, Iowa
 - Lived in Iowa until sometime in the 1920’s when they moved to Sumner, Washington, which is where he and Mary died and are both buried at the Sumner Cemetery. Lowell died September 28, 1942 and Mary died in 1955
- Viella “Ella” Blue
 - Born February 14, 1877 near Aledo, Illinois
 - She never married and died October 23, 1896 at the age of 19
 - She is buried next to her parents at Violet Hill Cemetery in Perry, Iowa

1890 and 1891 were busy years for marriages: John in March 1890, Mary Jeanette in August 1890, Rose in November 1890 and Nora in March 1891.



Portrait taken in Perry, Iowa circa 1909/1911
 after the funeral of either father David (1909) or mother Mary Ellen (1911)
 Back Row (L-R): Belle Van Horne, John Blue and Jeanette “Nettie” Graham
 Front Row (L-R): Rose Gregg, Lowell Blue and Lenora Jane “Nora” Derry

David Blue and Wife Celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary

Wednesday being the Golden wedding anniversary of Mr. and Mrs. David Blue their children who are in this city all planned a surprise for them. With well filled baskets the families of L. D. Blue, W. F. Graham and Mrs. Van Horne went to the home of their parent for a six o'clock dinner. The parents had made no plans whatever for the day and their surprise can be easily imagined.

The children presented Mr. Blue with a gold headed cane and Mrs. Blue with a gold thimble. The following bit of history concerning this estimable couple will be interesting to their friends.

David Blue was born in Montour county, Pennsylvania, March 31, 1836.

member of a family of four sons and two daughters. At the age of fourteen he came to the west, having run away from home. He made his way to Illinois and first worked for twenty five cents per day as a farm hand near New Boston, Mercer County, Ill. He was diligent, frugal and economical and in the course of years he saved from his earnings a sufficient sum to enable him to purchase land at ten dollars per acre.

As years passed by he added to this property from time to time until he became the owner of thirteen, forty acre tracts and ten acres of timber land. In 1881 he sold his property in Illinois and came to Iowa, locating at Perry. He

Since 1895 he has lived in town practically a retired life yet superintending his farming interests.

Mr. Blue was married on April 1st, 1858 to Mary E. Guffey who was born in Northumberland, county Penn., July 4, 1828. Mr. and Mrs. Blue were the parents of seven children of whom six survive. They are L. D. Blue, Mrs. Van Horne and Mrs. Will Graham of Perry, John Blue and Rose Gregg of Richland Oregon and Mrs. Nora Derry who lives in Missouri. One daughter, Ella, died at the age of 19. Mr. Blue is a member of Otley Lodge, A. F. & A. M. His political support is given to the democrats.

Article on the Golden Wedding Anniversary of David Blue and Mary Ellen (Guffy) Blue appeared in the Perry, Iowa 'Daily Chief' on April 2, 1908. David Blue passed away April 12, 1909 and Mary Ellen died in 1911.



David and Mary Ellen are buried at Violet Hill Cemetery in Perry, Iowa (picture above), next to daughter Viella who died at 19. Four of their seven children left Iowa at some point. John left Iowa in 1896, initially to Idaho and then to Oregon. Rose moved to Oregon sometime prior to 1910. Lowell remained in Perry until sometime in the 1920's when he and his family moved to Sumner, Washington. Sometime after she married in 1891, Nora and her husband and children moved to Kansas, then to Missouri. Nettie remained in Perry until sometime after 1910 when she and her husband and children moved initially to Webster, Iowa then to Des Moines. Only two children remained in Perry. The youngest daughter, Viella, died in Perry at age 19 in 1896. Their oldest daughter, Ida Belle, remained in Perry until her death in 1947, a widow for 53 years after her husband died in 1894. Most likely Ida Belle was the one who cared for David and Mary Ellen in their old age.

SCHEDULE I. Free Inhabitants in *Illinois* **enumerated by me, on the** *10th* **day of** *November* **1850.** *Lewis Thompson, Ass't Marshal.*

1	2	3	DESCRIPTION.			7	8	9	10 11 12			13
			4	5	6				Married within the year.	Attended School within 2 years of age.	Who cannot read & write.	
The Name of every Person whose usual place of abode on the first day of June, 1850, was in this family.			Age.	Sex.	Color, or race.	Profession, Occupation, or Trade of each Male Person over 15 years of age.	Value of Real Estate owned.	PLACE OF BIRTH. Naming the State, Territory, or Country.				
		Joseph McKee	19	M		Farmer		Ohio				
		John A. McKee	17	M		Farmer		Ohio				
		Thomas J. McKee	13	M				Illinois				
		Mary J. McKee	13	F				Ohio				
		Amanda McKee	11	F				Ohio				
		David McKee	8	M				Ohio				
870	871	Peter Blue	29	M		Farmer		Pennsylvania				
		Phoebe Blue	25	F				Ohio				
		Hannah H. Summers	4	F				Ohio				
		David Blue	14	M				Ohio				
841	841	William Leary	34	M		Laborer		Massachusetts				
		Mary J. Leary	34	F				Ohio				
		William H. Leary	10	M				Massachusetts				
		George A. Leary	8	M				Ohio				
890	891	Matthew Sitt	43	M		Laborer		Pennsylvania				
		Elizabeth Sitt	40	F				Ohio				
		Wm. Pratten	15	F				Ohio				
		Hebert Huth	31	M		Laborer		Indiana				

1850 census (Illinois) shows David Blue age 14 living with older brother Peter and his wife Phoebe

FIRST NATIONAL BANK
OF PERRY, IOWA.

CAPITAL, - - \$50,000

D. J. PATTEE, ALLEN BREED, H. J. HOLMES,
 President, Vice-Pres. Cashier.

CORRESPONDENCE:
 National Park Bank, New York. Citizens
 National Bank, Des Moines.

DIRECTORS:
 D. J. Pattee, Allen Breed, N. Platt, Peter
 Blue, David Blue, M. E. Moody, John Cle
 ments and W. T. Holmes.
 Foreign Drafts and Tickets Sold.

David Blue was one of the founding Directors of the First National Bank of Perry; Peter Blue also.



David's brother Peter and wife Phoebe are also buried in Perry, Iowa

2. Cora Mecum Blue's parents, ancestors and siblings



Photos above show John Blue and Cora Mecum about the time they married in 1890. Cora was born on the Mecum family farm near Woodhull, Illinois but moved to Iowa when her father sold their Illinois farm and purchased a bigger place near Rippey, Iowa around 1875 when Cora was 12. Rippey is about ten miles from Perry. David Blue made the similar move with his family from Aledo, Illinois to Perry, Iowa six years later in 1881.

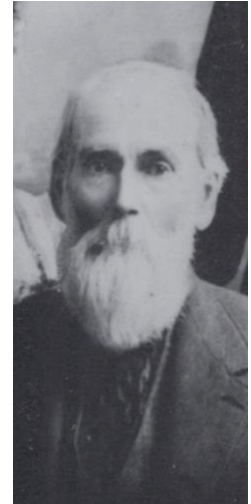
Cora's parents were **Charles Burt Mecum** and **Frances Ellen Richards** (*photo of Frances Ellen at right, taken about the time of her marriage to Charles in 1854, when she was 19*). Charles was born in Springfield, Massachusetts in 1822, one of nine children born to James Tear Mecum (1793-1877) and Juliette Dewey (1791-1877). A number of the children headed west to Illinois when they were old enough to be independent, including Charles and his older brother Robert, who started farming near Galesburg, Illinois.



As soon as gold was discovered in California, many young men caught the fever to go seek their fortune and this happened to Charles who was 26 and unmarried. He joined a group of Knox County, Illinois men who left for California in the spring of 1849. As fate would have it, Luther Richards was also part of this same wagon train and he and Charles became best friends. After Charles returned from California in 1854, he married Luther's little sister Frances Ellen Richards.

When the Knox group arrived at Salt Lake City, they made the fateful decision to become the first overland party to cross Death Valley by the as-yet-unexplored southern route. Fear of getting caught in early snows in the Sierra Nevada Mountains caused them to consider the riskier route through drier country.

Little did they know how difficult their trek would be. It was a harrowing trip about which several books have been written, including an excellent one entitled *Grit and Gold* by Jean Johnson. Water was hard to find and gradually they were forced to abandon equipment and kill their oxen and horses for food. Toward the end many in the company even dropped their rifles, unable to carry the weight. The last four hundred miles were trudging on foot. At one point Luther Richards is credited for saving Charles Mecum's life by not allowing his friend to drop and die as he wanted, but pushed him to get through the worst of it. The Knox County group finally made it across southern Nevada, Death Valley and the Mojave Desert before stumbling into a Spanish ranch near present-day Ojai, California in January, 1850, emaciated but alive. They were still six hundred miles from the mining areas but by spring most had made it there. Charles stayed in California four years before returning to Illinois (via the isthmus of Panama) to marry Frances Ellen Richards on November 22, 1854 and used his California earnings to buy land near Woodhull, Illinois, begin farming and start a family. He became a successful farmer and he never again did any 'adventuring'. *His picture shown at right in his later years.* Charles and Frances Ellen had eight children but three died in infancy. Cora, born in 1863, was their third.



Cora's mother Frances Ellen Richards (1835-1910) was born in Vermont but orphaned at the age of 5 and raised by her older sisters; at age 16 she moved to Illinois with some of her older siblings, following others who had already moved there. Her older brother Luther Richards had been one of the early ones to move to Illinois and in 1849 he joined up with the same group of Knox County men who traveled to the California gold fields with Charles Burt Mecum. Frances and Luther were descendants of Thomas Richards who emigrated from England to the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1635 and who was one of the founders of Hartford, Connecticut in 1637/1640; and were also descended from Captain Azariah Wright, a prominent Vermont patriot who served as an officer in the Vermont militia during the Revolutionary War and played a principal role in events leading up to the Westminster (Vermont) Massacre on March 13, 1775, pre-dating the battles of Concord and Lexington.

In 1931, Cora's brother Edwin Mecum wrote a family history. Following are some of his observations about growing up on the Mecum farm in Illinois during the 1870's:

"Father was a great reader and kept well informed on the general topics of the day."

"In Illinois we children walked a mile and a quarter to school. We had a good school and father was always interested in our education."

"Broom-corn was one of the main crops in Illinois. Father was a natural leader. 'Raw Swedes' came in large numbers at harvest time to cut and prepare the crop. Neighbors would get father to take charge of them. Frequently he would have 150 men in the field at once. A good, regular wage was paid."

"In Illinois we had a good home and a well improved farm. Father also had a fine orchard."

"Butchering time was a period of great interest there, especially the butchering of hogs. Neighbors would help each other. Generally it was late fall or early winter. Father had a nice smoke house where he prepared sugar-cured hams. We would also have sausage, mincemeat, head cheese, souse, pickled pigs feet, steaks, rib roasts, lard, etc. Each fall a beef or two were

killed and cut up. We had turkeys, chickens, ducks, besides wild game in abundance was shot. Mother made wonderful feather beds and pillows out of the feathers and down of the ducks, geese and bryants shot. We had butter and eggs in abundance and milk and cream. Also all kinds of fruit: sauce, jams, jellies, preserves, pickles, etc., and all kinds of vegetables. The basement cellar was full. Father was a good provider. The children were rugged and had fine appetites. Mother was a wonderful cook and the table was filled with products of our own raising. I never ate a loaf of baker's bread till I was over 14 years of age."

Charles and Frances Ellen had eight children but three died in infancy. The first four listed below were born in Illinois and Maude was the only one born in Iowa. In order of birth, their five surviving children:

- William Francis Mecum born January 10, 1856 near Woodhull, Illinois.
 - Attended law training and became a lawyer, practicing in Nebraska and Wyoming
 - Married Kate Roush of Grand Island, Nebraska in 1888 and moved to Douglas, WY in 1895
 - Five daughters
 - In addition to practicing law, during his long career William also served as Justice of the Peace, Deputy Sheriff, County Attorney and Superintendent of public schools.
 - William died August 22, 1935 in Douglas, Wyoming and is buried there along side his wife Kate who died in 1944
- Harry LeRoy ("H.L." or "Roy") Mecum born March 16, 1859 near Woodhull, Illinois
 - Married Leticia Youngman but she died in childbirth along with the baby. He then married Mrs. Jennie Bott who had a young daughter from a previous marriage. He served as a Deputy Sheriff in Greene County, Iowa in the 1880's and later became a salesman and company representative. He was living in Mason City, Iowa in 1904, Flatonia, Texas in 1910 and then settled in Mangum, Oklahoma sometime before 1920. For many years he was an agent for International Harvester Company.
 - He died 1939 and is buried at Riverside Cemetery in Mangum, Oklahoma
- Cora Ella Mecum born April 5, 1863 near Woodhull, Illinois.
 - Married John Blue in Jefferson, Iowa March 6, 1890
 - Died September 17, 1957 in Payette, Idaho and buried at Eagle Valley Cemetery, Richland, Oregon. Husband John had preceded her in death March 30, 1941.
- Edwin Welton Mecum born November 25, 1867 near Woodhull, Illinois
 - In 1898 he married Mary L. Turrill of Jefferson, Iowa (she was born August 4, 1872)
 - Edwin graduated from Des Moines Business College and received degrees of A.B. and A.M. from the Des Moines Baptist College. He was ordained as a Baptist Minister and served in several states before moving to California in 1906 where he pastored at Camarillo and Los Angeles.
 - He died April 30, 1952 In Los Angeles, California
 - His wife Mary preceded him in death July 28, 1949 in Los Angeles. Burial place unknown.
- Maude Frances Mecum born September 3, 1884 near Rippey, Iowa. Her brother Edwin called her "truly the autumn flower" of the family with her late birth – mother Frances was 49 when she gave birth to Maude and father Charles was 62.
 - She moved to California where she taught school and was a principal at a school in Camarillo. By sometime prior to 1910 she was an assistant librarian in charge of all faculty books at the University of California in Berkeley, where she also took post-graduate work. Her mother Frances Ellen died in Berkeley while visiting Maude in 1910. In 1916 she married Charles L. Limes in Los Angeles, California. They had two children, Alice and Dorothy.

- On December 5, 1919, Maude died shortly after the birth of their second daughter. Burial place unknown.

Cora was about 12 when her family pulled up stakes and moved to Rippey, Iowa from Illinois. According to Edwin Mecum, the Illinois farm was sold for \$100 per acre and his father shipped the machinery and livestock to Rippey by train. The family reached Iowa on March 5, 1875. Edwin says in his family history “This was truly a new and pioneer country. No fences. Thousands of acres of prairie on every side.” In time, Charles planted a fine orchard on the new farm, including “winesaps, Gennings, Baldwins, Pippins, Duchess, Jonathans, sweet apples, Siberian Crabapples.... and many kinds of raspberries, blackberries, currants, goose-berries, strawberries, etc.” according to Edwin.

In his 1931 family history Edwin Mecum also says “My parents largely did their own doctoring. They were well-read in Homeopathic symptoms and remedies. With it they raised us children. The neighbors would also call upon them for aid when sick. They kept a good supply of medicines.”

Cora graduated from high school at Rippey, Greene County and taught school in Greene County several years before she married John Blue in 1890, when he was 28 and she was 27.



Cora’s father Charles died in 1905 and her mother Frances died in 1910. Both are buried at the Jefferson Cemetery in Jefferson, Iowa (*photo above right*). Although Charles and Frances are known to have been living at their farm near Rippey in 1892, it seems likely they sold their farm sometime prior to 1900 and started living with children. By 1892, Charles was 70 and by all appearances none of his children were interested in taking over the farm. In fact, all five of their children left Iowa at some point. The oldest son William left first, in the mid 1880’s, settling in Nebraska, then Wyoming by 1895 (Charles and Frances show up in the 1900 census as living with him there). Cora left in 1896 and we know that Charles and Frances visited her more than once when she was living in Oregon. LeRoy left Greene County sometime after 1895, was living in Texas in 1910 and then moved to Oklahoma, where he lived for the rest of his life. Edwin lived in various states after being ordained as a Baptist Minister, probably around 1900. Maude ended up in California where their mother Frances died in 1910 while visiting her at Berkeley.

3. John and Cora Blue and their family

John and Cora began their family in Iowa where June, Edwin and Grace were born. In 1896, they moved to Garden City Idaho (near Boise), where Mark was born. By 1898 they had resettled in Eagle Valley, Baker County, Oregon where Lucille, Majel and Helen were born, rounding out their family. The 1900 census shows John and Cora owning a home free of mortgage and by the 1910 census they own a farm but subject to a mortgage. Their last child, Helen, was born in 1903. All the children received a good public education at the local schools. Mother Cora had been a school teacher back in Iowa and no doubt encouraged education.

Soon their children began to marry. Grace was the first, marrying Ezra ("E.R.") Curfman at the family home on June 7, 1913. E.R. was a graduate of Marshall College in Huntington, West Virginia and had come west to Oregon in 1910. By 1912 he was teaching school at New Bridge, Oregon and boarded with the Blue family, which is where he met Grace and the rest of her family. June married WWI veteran Guy Bolton in 1919 but he died in 1928. In 1934 she married Archie Prindle of Payette, Idaho where they lived for many years. June was an accomplished oil canvas painter, mostly landscapes (her mother Cora had also done some nice artwork) and Archie ran a woodworking business. Lucille married Gil Wright and they lived on a small farm in New Bridge. Edwin married Emma Pritchard in 1930 and moved to Walla Walla where he died in 1940 at the age of 46. Helen married William Franklin Campbell in 1924 but they divorced in 1932. Mark never married.

The 1920 census shows John and Cora at the same farm in Eagle Valley with all of their children living at home except Grace and June who had married by then. By the time of the 1930 census they had moved from Baker County to Malheur County, Oregon where they lived on a small farm near Ontario with son Mark who was then 33. At that time, their daughter Grace and her husband E.R. were living just a few miles away in the town of Ontario. In 1931 Edwin wrote in his family history that Cora and John were living in Payette, Idaho, which is also just a few miles from Ontario. By 1940 the census shows John and Cora living in Baker, Oregon in the same household as Grace and E.R. John died in 1941 but Cora lived until 1957. In her later years she alternated her time living with Grace, June and Lucille and their families.



Photo Above: L-R: Cora Blue, Grace Curfman, John Blue and Lucille Wright. Photo taken in the late 1930's.

Photo at Left: The five daughters and two sons of John and Cora Blue at their farm near New Bridge, Oregon. Photo probably taken around 1913.

Top Row (L-R): June, Lucille, Majel, Helen, Grace
Bottom Row (L-R): Mark and Edwin

During the First World War, Edwin joined the U.S. Navy and Mark the U.S. Army. Grace married in 1913 and June married in 1919.



Cora Blue with great grandchildren 1953



Eagle Valley Cemetery, Richland, Oregon