

Preserving the Past ...Charting the Future
By Carey Potter

I am online about 16 hours a day, almost every day. I get emails from Governors, colleagues, strangers, friends... and more SPAM than I care to receive, even with stringent firewall protections. Generally with hundreds of emails in the Inbox, and another fifty or more in the Junk, things get missed. I admit that on busy days, if I don't know the Sender, I will skip it and tend to business.

On March 31, I received two separate emails that came from complete strangers. They, like me, are interested in genealogy and ancestry, and belong to Ancestry.com, an online genealogy research site. A few years ago I created family trees while doing research for the Friend Historical Society. I was researching Phoebe Moon. Phoebe was an old maid that once owned my home. After great digging and sleuthing, I learned that Phoebe was the half-sister to Raymond Page, the owner of Lincoln Aircraft Corporation. They were members of the Moon/Page families that resided here in Friend. Ray went on to local celebrity when he befriended Charles Lindberg. Lindberg learned to fly at Ray's flight school and the two remained close friends until Ray died. Ray Page is buried, with Phoebe Moon and other family members at Andrew's Cemetery.

I had also posted my Asmus/Scheidt family tree on Ancestry.com. This allows others who are searching for family ties to contact you with information or questions. Instead, I was contacted and alerted that there was an Asmus family bible for sale on eBay. Was it my family's bible? How did it end up on eBay? Thankfully these people found me, and I found the Bibles and Stuff seller in Texas. I confirmed the names and birthdates in the German bible printed in Stuttgart in 1882. It was my great-great grandparent's bible. The one they had brought from Kliplev when they came to the United States in 1877! After a few days of anticipation the bible was bought and it was returned to me and my family this week. The simple leather binding is in rough shape, but the pages are intact, including the family's page of notes identifying all of the Asmus children born to Hans (John) and Caroline Asmussen (Asmus), some cut out papers written in old German, and even a pressed four-leaf clover tucked in with the Evangeline Luca:6 (Book of Luke) Scriptures.

The Bibles and Stuff seller told me he'd bought it from someone in Nebraska, who purchased the bible at an auction years ago. How it strayed from the family is unknown. April 2, 131 years later, it was again sold on eBay and returned to its family. The seller was as thrilled as I was. He told me the saddest purchases he makes are from sellers who contact him saying "this was at my grandmother's house, nobody knows who these people are." That, indeed, is sad. As families grow apart in years and distance, our heritage and ancestry is disappearing. It is so important to us to know where we came from and who our ancestors were... where they lived and what businesses downtown they worked in. It helps us to understand who we are.

Because of the kindness of strangers, part of my family history came back to Friend, Nebraska, where it began. As the Friend Historical Society prepares to kick off fund raising this spring, it is important to keep the goal of the Friend Historical Society in mind; "Preserving the Past... Charting the Future." When the FHS Committee calls upon you for your support, please consider helping our efforts to preserve Friend's past and to help chart our future.