

A Tree and It's Branches: Chapter One

By Anna Von Reitz



By sharing information about James, my husband, and his family, I hope to satisfy an understandable curiosity about early America and how our current situation came to be. Instead of starting at the beginning in 1608, when the first American Belcher helped build the first permanent dock in Boston Harbor, I am starting in the middle in order to cast more light and sooner on our present situation.

Be patient then, as we shall endeavor to work the middle out to both ends, and provide a satisfying portrait overall. To begin....

Benjamin Belcher had fifty (50) children, one for every State of the Union. He did this honestly, with three young wives. The children were all born in wedlock and all loved and brought up according to good standards at the time; the girls were educated through at least Eighth Grade with some completing High School and at least two completing College. The boys were each taught a trade and expected to pursue at least one branch of Higher Learning.

This meant that Belcher men could always earn a skilled living for their families, as accomplished tradesmen, if all else failed. But they were also college men, able to debate and keep accounts, enter into philosophical and religious discussions, and more often than not, rise to prominence in one of the professions.

Being able to physically, mentally, and spiritually support a family was seen as a primary goal in one's personal life, and it's a good thing, because Benjamin was called upon to be a Father and a Good Father to fifty men and women who would face all the same challenges we all face, at a time that was especially traumatic for the Belcher Family as a whole.

Benjamin, who was named ultimately after Ben Franklin, and his large flock of children, lived in what became West Virginia in 1863 in the middle of the Civil War. This lovely wild corner of Virginia favored the North, while the rest of the State favored the South.

This oddly mirrored the situation within Benjamin himself. He sided with the South on the issue of Secession and with the North on the issue of slavery. As always among the Belchers, discerning "the heart of the issue" was paramount, and justice an overriding concern.

In the end, the moral issue of slavery presented a greater concern than the more legalistic issue of secession, and the Belchers overall came down on the side of the North, but it was a very hard choice for the Patriarchs of the family and they never lost sympathy and understanding for their Southern neighbors and individual family members who sided with the South. After the War, they worked hard to mend fences and ease the pain, but a permanent split had been engendered.

From then on, there would be the Northern Belchers and the Southern Belchers, and though peace would reign and love would overcome, the Family Tree was split in two branches along the lines compelled by the Civil War Conflict. The Southern Belchers spread along the vast expanse leading west through the Cumberland Gap and down into the Southern States of Georgia and Florida and from their perspective at the time, the Western States of Tennessee and Kentucky.

Most of Benjamin Belcher's children either stayed in West Virginia or headed west. A couple of them made it all the way to California, but the largest contingent of new pilgrims settled in Tennessee and Kentucky, where the

beauty of the land and the pastureland for horses and cattle, seemed like "a new Garden of Eden".

Over many decades the Northern and Southern branches have largely lost track of each other, each one following a difficult path of their own: the Southern Branch bearing the brunt of the British Territorial predation following the Civil War Conflict, and the Northern Branch suffering a different, but nonetheless potent brand of the same evil.

While the Southern Belchers were taxed to death and impoverished and suffered every kind of social and economic hardship, the Northern Belchers were set upon by barely disguised Union Troops in civilian clothing, ambushed, attacked, slandered, burned out, and in some cases, forced to flee -- not because of the Civil War, but because of their part in the Original Government, which the Union Army Generals and their British Territorial partners sought to displace behind a smokescreen of confusion following the armed hostilities.

Having been separated by physical distance and the Great Conflict, the two branches of the family formed during and immediately after the Lincoln Administration would not be in close proximity again for over a century and a half.

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