

Knuthson
name

ORANGE COUNTY CALIFORNIA GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY ONLY



Figure 1: Jacob Knuthson, ca. 1880¹

The Family of Jacob Knuthson and Regina Meier German Immigrants and Sierra County, California Pioneers

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While searching passenger lists in the *Germans to America* series for the arrival record of my great-great grandfather, Jacob Knuthson, the following entry was located:

Knuth, Jacob age 24 M Farmer²

The name was listed as having arrived in New York City on 07 May 1852 aboard the *Brig Sleipner*. Since the name was close and the age was correct, an assumption was made that this may be the entry for my great-great grandfather. Reasoning that possibly due to poor readability of the actual passenger list, the transcriber failed to correctly copy the entire surname. A review of a microfilmed copy of the actual ship passenger list found this entry among the list of 107 passengers aboard the *Sleipner*:

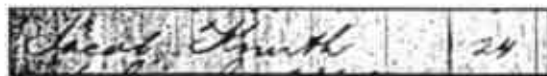


Figure 2: Scanned image of Jacob Knuth's ship passenger list entry³

1. J[ames] M[iller] Guinn, *History of the State of California and Biographical Record of the Sierras*. (Chicago: Chapman Publishing Co., 1906), 636. [Book in my possession.]

2. Ira A. Glazier and P. William Filby, *Germans to America: Lists of Passengers Arriving at U.S. Ports, 1850-1855*, Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1988, 2:358.



The name recorded is clearly "Knuth," leaving two possibilities as a possible explanation. First, this was not the record of my great-great-grandfather, and second, one that had never before been considered, the possibility of a name change. Were the similarities coincidence, or was this the passenger record of my great-great grandfather? A search of other New York City records revealed an 1855 declaration of intention to naturalize, an 1855 state census entry, a January 1856 marriage record, and an 1857 city directory entry. All of these records clearly show that Jacob used the surname "Knuth" during his seven years in New York City. He also used Knuth initially upon arriving in California in the fall of 1859. Beginning about 1861, all of the Sierra County, California, records reflect the addition of the suffix "son" or "sen" to his surname.

Jacob Knuth/Knuthson was born on a farm in Holstein, Germany on 09 September 1827.⁴ At the age of fifteen he began a four-year apprenticeship as a printer and dyer, later traveling for three years as a journeyman. Upon his return home he was drafted into the German [Prussian] army, serving for two years during the Danish and Schleswig-Holstein War. He participated in the battle of Idstedt [July 1850] in which the Germans were defeated.⁵ Following his honorable discharge, Jacob decided to leave his homeland and seek a new life in America. In the spring of 1852 Jacob and 106 other passengers boarded the *Brig Sleipner* in the port city of Hamburg, Germany, landing in New York harbor on 07 May 1852.⁶

Jacob began working as a clerk in a grocery store, eventually becoming the proprietor. While living in New York City, Jacob met Regina Meier, born 25 December 1832 in Bavaria, Germany.⁷ Regina immigrated to America, landing in New York harbor in October 1852.⁸

On 02 February 1855, Jacob Knuth filed in the Superior Court of the City of New York a declaration of intention to become a citizen of the United States.⁹ On this same day, and immediately after Jacob, John Henry Knuth filed the same declaration.¹⁰ Both renounced allegiance to the King of Denmark. A year later, Jacob named his first child John Henry.

3. Entry for Jacob Knuth; Brig Sleipner Passenger Manifest, May 7, 1852, p. __, line 93; Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York, New York, 1820-1897; Records of the U.S. Customs Service, Record Group 36, National Archives Microfilm Publication M237, roll 112.

4. Guinn, *History of the State of California and Biographical Record of the Sierras*, 637.

5. Farris & Smith, *History of Plumas, Lassen & Sierra Counties California 1882 and Biographical Sketches of Their Prominent Men and Pioneers* (no publisher, 1882) (reproduction: Berkeley, CA: Howell-North Books, 1971), 272.

6. Entry for Jacob Knuth; Brig Sleipner Passenger Manifest, May 7, 1852, p. __, line 93; Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York, New York, 1820-1897; Records of the U.S. Customs Service, Record Group 36, National Archives Microfilm Publication M237, roll 112.

7. Farris & Smith, *History of Plumas, Lassen & Sierra Counties California*, 272.

8. Guinn, *History of the State of California and Biographical Record of the Sierras*, 637. [Regina's passenger list entry has not been located and this date is uncertain.]

9. Jacob Knuth, declaration of intention, no. 347 (1855); Superior Court, New York City, N.Y.; Declarations of Intention, Germany, etc., 1850-1895, Superior Court, New York City [with index], microfilm no. 0953891, Vol. 7, no. 347, Family History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.

10. John Henry Knuth, declaration of intention, no. 348 (1855); Superior Court, New York City, N.Y.; Declarations of Intention, Germany, etc., 1850-1895, Superior Court, New York City [with index], microfilm no. 0953891, Vol. 7, no. 348, Family History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Sierra County, California deed records show that John H. Knuth sold a mining claim in Downieville in March 1859. Did John Knuth send money to Jacob and his family so they could travel from New York City to California a few months later? On 21 March 1860, only a few months after Jacob's arrival in California, John Henry Knuth completed his naturalization in Sierra County, California and became a citizen of the United States.¹¹ Jacob Knuth is listed as a witness to this action. Additional evidence is needed to determine if John Henry Knuth is a family member. Although he is not mentioned in any biography or family account that I have seen, I believe that Jacob and John Henry Knuth are brothers.

Jacob Knuth and Regina Meier were married in New York City on 20 January 1856.¹² Two children, John Henry, born 17 March 1856,¹³ and Margaret [Maggie], born 01 September 1857, were born in New York City.¹⁴ In the summer of 1859 they disposed of their business interests and left their city home for the western mountains. Jacob and his family came to California by ship, via the Isthmus of Panama, landing in San Francisco in the latter part of 1859. They immediately traveled to Downieville, Sierra County, where Jacob engaged in river and hydraulic mining for several years, meeting with a fair degree of success.¹⁵ On 05 April 1860, a few months following their arrival in Downieville, my great-grandfather, George Washington Knuthson, was born.¹⁶ A Virginia City, Nevada newspaper reported that a child, a son, was born to Jacob Knuthson and wife on 07 July 1866. This child is not mentioned in any family information so I presume if this was a son of Jacob and Regina that he died young.¹⁷ Another child, Henrietta, was born in Sierra County on 09 October 1870.¹⁸

Jacob and Regina became naturalized citizens in May 1872.¹⁹ In 1874, Jacob sold his mining interests and purchased a 160-acre ranch in the Sierra Valley, just west of Sierraville. He also took up a homestead claim and purchased other tracts of land, eventually becoming the owner of a twelve hundred acre ranch. For many years Jacob engaged in general ranching, including the operation of a dairy.

In the early 1900s, Jacob and Regina retired to a comfortable home in Sierraville, turning their business interests over to their son, George. They continued to maintain an active interest

11. J. H. Knuth, petition for naturalization (March 21, 1860); District Court Minutes, Book B, page 322, Sierra County, California; Superior Court, Courthouse, Downieville, California.

12. "Manhattan Marriages, July 1853-1937," ledger entry arranged by date, microfilm copy at the New York City Municipal Archives, 31 Chambers Street, New York City, N.Y. [Note: Two printed biographies list Jacob and Regina's marriage date as 20 January 1855. I was unable to locate such an entry. Upon searching the New York City marriage records, I located their marriage entry, dated 20 January 1856.]

13. Guinn, *History of the State of California and Biographical Record of the Sierras*, 637.

14. Guinn, *History of the State of California and Biographical Record of the Sierras*, 637.

15. Guinn, *History of the State of California and Biographical Record of the Sierras*, 637.

16. Guinn, *History of the State of California and Biographical Record of the Sierras*, 637.

17. Ancestry.com database, *Territorial Enterprise*, a Virginia City, Nevada newspaper (1866-1867), issue of July 18, 1866. Downloaded 20 September 2002.

18. Guinn, *History of the State of California and Biographical Record of the Sierras*, 638.

19. Jacob Knuthsen, certificate of naturalization (May 13, 1872); Acts of Naturalization, County Court, Vol. I, April 1869-April 1880, page 112, Sierra County, California; Superior Court, Courthouse, Downieville, California. [Note: Pursuant to the law during this time period, Regina became a citizen upon her husband's naturalization.]

in their adopted Sierra County home until Jacob's death on 10 February 1910,²⁰ shortly followed by Regina's death on 15 June of the same year.²¹ They are buried in the Sierraville Cemetery, next to their oldest daughter, Margaret "Maggie" Heselton, who died in November 1887 at the age of 30.²²

On 03 January 1889, George married Ida Marie Hathaway,²³ a Sierra County native. My grandfather, Charles Meyer Knuthson, was born in Sattley, Sierra County, California on 25 October 1889,²⁴ the first of six children. George continued to run the ranch until he moved to Sacramento in 1920, turning over the ranch to his son (my grandfather), Charles. After a couple of years in Sacramento, George and Ida moved to Napa, where they lived the remainder of their life. Ida died in Napa County in 1945²⁵ and George in nearby Sonoma County in 1947.²⁶ They are buried in the Tulocay Cemetery in Napa, California.



Figure 3: The George and Ida Knuthson Family, Napa, California, early 1940s.
Left to right: Ida, Guy, Alice, Margaret, George, Florence, Charles and Marion.²⁷

On 10 June 1917, Charles Meyer Knuthson married Evelyn Gladys McElroy,²⁸ a native of Butte County, California. Evelyn was born in Palermo (near Oroville) on 25 November 1895.²⁹

20. Jacob Knuthson, death certificate, Register of Duplicate Death Certificates, Sierra County, California, 1905-1921, Book 2, page 113, Clerk-Recorder's Office, Downieville, California.

21. Regina Knuthson, death certificate, Register of Duplicate Death Certificates, Sierra County, California, 1905-1921, Book 2, page 118, Clerk-Recorder's Office, Downieville, California.

22. Maggie Heselton tombstone, Sierraville Cemetery, Sierraville (Sierra County), California. [Maggie's tombstone is located in the same plot with Jacob and Regina Knuthson.]

23. Sierra County Marriage Book 2:233, County Clerk-Recorder's Office, Courthouse, Downieville, California.

24. Charles Meyer Knuthson, Affidavit of Birth, certificate no. 19328 (1941, Napa County, California) Recorded 1946 in Book 2A, page 65, Clerk-Recorder's Office, Sierra County Courthouse, Downieville, California.

25. California Death Index (1940-1997), RootsWeb, online <<http://userdb.rootsweb.com/ca/death/search.cgi>>, Knuthson data downloaded 08 October 2000.

26. George W. Knuthson, death certificate, Death Certificates, Sonoma County, California, Volume 14, page 2214, Recorder's Office, Santa Rosa, California.

27. George Knuthson family photograph, black and white, 4½ X 5½, undated, inscribed on verso, "Knuthson Family." Inherited by me in 1974 from my grandfather, Charles Meyer Knuthson, who is in the photograph. Subjects identified and the time period estimated by my father, Alvin Charles Knuthson, in December 1981. [Photograph in my possession.]

28. Butte County Marriages, Book M, page 288, microfilm G-357, Butte County Clerk-Recorder's Office, Oroville, California.