

Chapter Three

Settling at Lake Huntington, New York

Where was our father, Herb Lentz from? Who were his parents and grandparents? Where did they come from? What cultural and world events shaped his early upbringing? This chapter forms a little foundation for us as we delve into our origins.

Herb Lentz was a German-American (one quarter Jewish), born and raised in the little town of Lake Huntington, named after its small lake.

Our grandfather, Henry Bernard Lentz, owned and operated a drug store along the shore of the lake in the 1920s. The town itself was a resort town, located just ten minutes west of Bethel, NY where the famous Woodstock Music Festival took place in 1969, and about two and a half hours north of New York City.

Henry married Barbara Zaengle in 1900, and they started a family in Brooklyn then moved to Lake Huntington in 1914.

Our German Origins

The short version of our ancestors' stories is that our great grandfather Heinrich Lentz immigrated here sometime shortly before 1876; and our great grandfather Joseph Zaengle immigrated to the U.S. in 1867.

A great deal of genealogical research was completed in 1997 by one of Herb's cousins, Doug Lentz, of Northfield, N.J. He sent a detailed summary of his research to Herb's younger brother Howard in Clark Mills, NY in 1997. I obtained a copy of this document in 2012 from his daughter Gert (our cousin) living in Oriskany Falls, New York.

Based on his research, our family originated in northwest Germany, from the towns of Oldenberg, Friesoythe, Altenoythe and Edewecht. The Lentz name was first mentioned in public records in 1290, in Oldenberg.

Excerpt below:

The oldest direct-line ancestor of whom we are now aware is Johannes Theodor Hermann Lentz. He was born in 1723. He was married four times. His fourth marriage took place in 1796 in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Vechta, at which time he was 73. He married Margarethe Catharina Honemann who was 35. Their first child, Johann Bernhard Friedrich Phillip Lentz was born in 1796. We are direct descendants of his.

Political Background of Germany

For most of the nineteenth century the nation of Germany did not exist. What we think of as Germany was a collection of separate states. During the early and middle 1800s the Kingdom of Prussia became the dominant military and political power in Europe, with its capital in Berlin. In 1871, after the defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian War and under the leadership of Prussia, the numerous German-speaking states unified into the modern nation of Germany.

Beginning in the late 1820s and continuing through most of the nineteenth century, many people left their homes in these German-speaking states and came to the United States in search of a better life.

In the United States the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 made it easy for new immigrants, arriving in New York harbor, to travel north to purchase the newly available and inexpensive farmland in western and upstate New York.

Paternal Ancestors

We know that Johann Bernhard Lentz (1819-1908) was born in Germany and lived in Heidelberg (southwest Germany). He married Gretha Breadgeld (1820-1896), and they had four sons and three daughters. Their first son, Heinrich Bernhard Lentz (1850-1901) was Herb's grandfather. One of their other sons, Johann Helmerich (Herman) Lentz (1859-1949), would play a role in Herb's early upbringing, as explained later in this chapter.

Heinrich Bernhard Lentz immigrated to the United States and later married Sophie Mueller, who was born in 1852 in Newark, New Jersey. We have little information about where they lived, but most likely in or near Newark, New Jersey. We do know that they had six sons and one daughter. Their first son

was **Henry Bernard** Lentz, Herb's father. He was born March 26, 1876 in Newark, New Jersey, and baptized April 16, 1876 in the Church of St. Peter, in Newark.

Stories from Herb and his brother Bernard reveal that their father was well educated. He went to Germany to live with his grandfather Johann Bernard Lentz in Heidelberg in order to study at Heidelberg University. There he studied medicine, earned a PhD, and became a pharmacist. Herb said he could speak six different languages, including Spanish, French and Hebrew. Herb recalled that his father told him his grandfather in Germany was very strict.

Herb hardly ever talked about his father, but from the research I've done using Ancestry.com files and newspaper archives, we can be proud of his accomplishments. The first he appears in records is in the New York State Census of 1892: he was living by himself in Brooklyn at age 16.

We will return to Henry's story after introducing Barbara Zaengle's side of the family.

Maternal Ancestors

This side of the family is puzzling with regard to being able to get consistent information about the birthplace of Barbara's mother. (Please see the discussion of birthplaces at the end of this chapter.)

In an audio recording of a 1984 family reunion Herb can be heard saying that his mother, Barbara Zaengle, was half Jewish. There is a hand written note in Herb's handwriting on one of the pages of the Lentz family tree indicating that her father was "German/Jewish."

Barbara's father was Joseph Yaengle (Zaengle), and he was born in Baden, Germany in March of 1841. He came to the U.S. in 1867 at the age of 26. Close scrutiny of census documents reveals that he must have changed his name from Yaengle to Zaengle shortly after the 1880 census. We assume that he was Jewish.

Barbara's mother Katherine Berri, was born on September 8, 1843, and baptized in Pfalz, Germany on September 17, 1843.

Joseph and Katherine were married on May 8, 1869 in New York. In 1870 Joseph and Katherine were living in Brooklyn and his occupation was listed as "saloonkeeper." By 1875 they had a child named Katie, who was one year and

four months old at the time of the census. It's possible that something may have happened to her because she does not show up on any later census documents.

Barbara Zaengle was born on November 5, 1879 in Brooklyn, N.Y. The 1880 census shows the family living at 180 Boerum Street, in Brooklyn. Living with them were their two children Elizabeth (2) and Barbara (1), and a 17-year-old servant named Mary Keracar.

Jumping ahead 12 years to an 1892 state census report, we find Joseph is still employed as a saloonkeeper. Their children are Barbara (13), Francis (11) and Joseph (7). We do not know what happened to Elizabeth, who was only one year older than Barbara.

In 1894, when Barbara was only 15, her mother Katherine passed away at the age of 51. Joseph remarried in 1896, at the age of 55 to Wilhemina Schmidt who was only 34 years old. That same year their son Anthony was born. Then Wilhemina passed away just two years later in 1898.

Joseph and his children appear in the US Census of 1900. The family lived at 178 Boerum St., Brooklyn and by now Joseph owned the house. His occupation was listed as "Wire dealer." The children at home were Barbara (20), Francis (18), Joseph (15) and Anthony (4).

It's interesting that in the US Census of 1880, Joseph's last name is shown as **Yaengle**. In the 1900 census it is **Zaengle**. Perhaps he changed the spelling of his last name so the family would fit in better in their Brooklyn community. But we may never know why he changed their name.

Joseph certainly experienced his share of life's disappointments. His first daughter, Katie, died when she was very young. His second daughter, Elizabeth, also died young. His first wife died after they had been married 25 years; then his second wife died only two years after they had been married.

Henry Lentz and Barbara Zaengle

At the time of the 1900 Census, Henry was 23 years old, still single, and living at 1074 Halsey Street in Brooklyn. He was employed as a Drug Clerk. Later that year he met Barbara Zaengle, who was living at home with her parents at 178 Boerum Street, in Brooklyn. They got married on December 5, 1900 in Kings County in Brooklyn by a Lutheran pastor. Henry was 24 and Barbara was 21. Shortly after getting married Henry and Barbara moved into their own home at 1093 Hancock St., Brooklyn according to a 1902 record of Joseph Zaengle's will.

Barbara had experienced an awful lot of loss in her family, up to this point in time. She would have experienced the death of two of her sisters when they were very young (one of them passing away between 1875-1880; the other between 1880-1890). Her mother died in 1894 when Barbara was only 15, and then her stepmother passed away just four years later. Then four years after that event, in 1902 Barbara's father Joseph passed away. These events in Barbara's youth must have had a profound effect upon her. She experienced the death-of two sisters, her mother, her stepmother, and her father in a space of less than 23 years.

Three years after they were married Henry and Barbara gave birth to their first child, Bernard Henry Joseph (our Uncle Bernard) on December 26, 1903 in Brooklyn. At that time, at age 27, Henry was a pharmacist in Brooklyn.



Henry Lentz holding his new son, Bernard, in 1903.

Henry, Barbara and Bernard traveled to Germany in 1906. We have record of a passport issued April 20, 1906. On the application his occupation is listed as "Druggist." He applied for himself and his wife Barbara and son Bernard. Records show that they arrived back in New York from Germany on September 20, 1906.

At age 34, Henry and Barbara lived at 1698 Myrtle Ave, Brooklyn. This was in the community of Ridgewood Park, situated halfway between Brooklyn and Queens. Henry owned his own home. His occupation was "druggist" and he owned his own drug store (1910 Census). At the time of the census, Barbara was 30 and Bernard was six years old.

Just two years later (1905 census) the family still lived at 1093 Hancock St., Brooklyn. Barbara was 25 and living with them were Bernard and Barbara's 22-year-old sister Frances Zaengle. Henry's occupation was listed as "drug store."



Henry Lentz' Drug Store on Myrtle Ave., Brooklyn

Moving to Lake Huntington

When asked where Lake Huntington was, Herb often explained that Lake Huntington was part of a region in the lower Catskills which was a popular vacation spot. He sometimes referred to it as the “Jewish Alps.”

Borscht Belt, or Jewish Alps, is a colloquial term for the (now mostly defunct) summer resorts of the Catskill Mountains in parts of Sullivan, Orange and Ulster counties in upstate New York. These resorts were a popular vacation spot for New York City Jews between the 1920s and the 1970s. Most Borscht Belt resorts hosted traveling Jewish comedians and musicians; many who later became famous began their careers there.

The town of Lake Huntington actually is within the boundary of the city of Cochection, Sullivan County, situated on the Delaware River, across from Pennsylvania.

Geography of Cochection is marked by ridges and narrow valleys. The leading pursuit of the early white residents was lumbering, while the advent of several hundred hardy and industrious German farmers made agriculture notable. From “History of Sullivan County” (1873) by James Quinlan.

Photos of Lake Huntington below, taken in 1996.

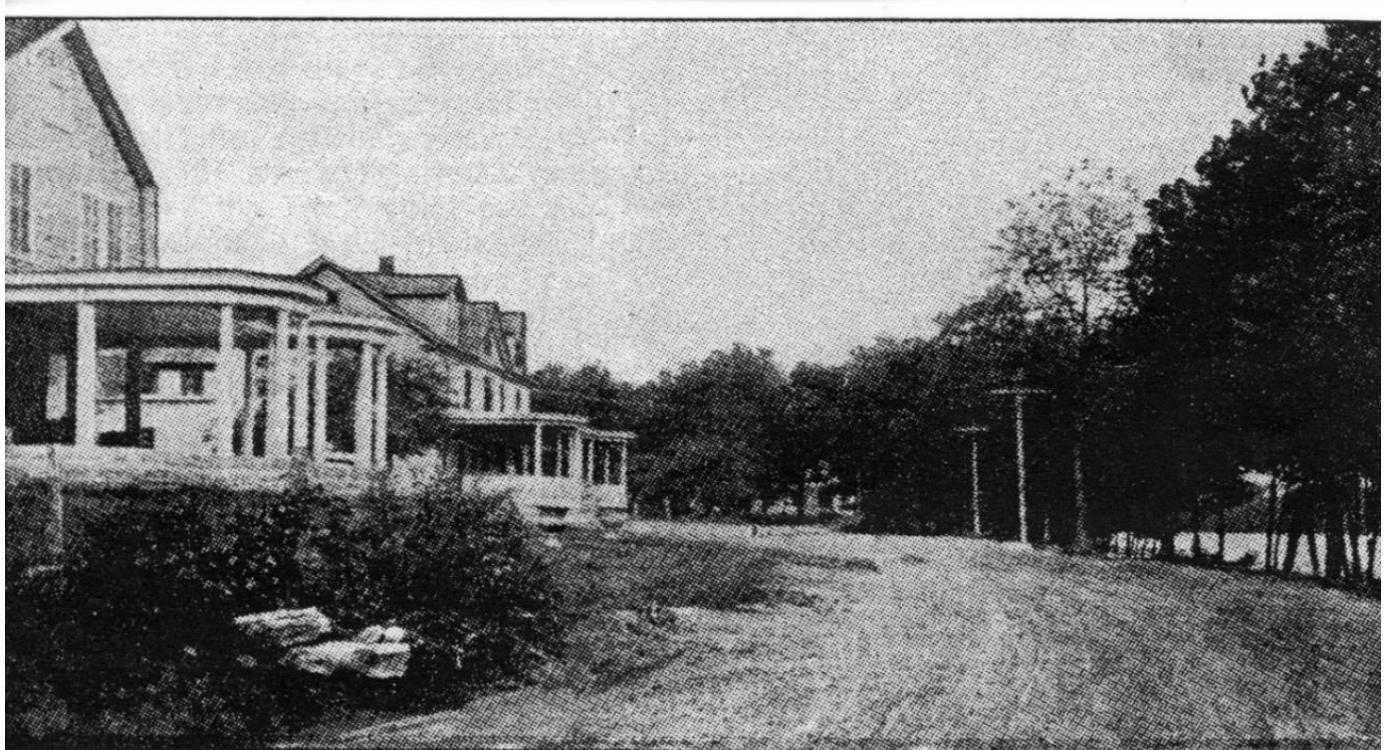


The Drug Store in Lake Huntington

We must admit Henry was an entrepreneur. And owning a drug store in Brooklyn would have helped him acquire resources to venture out. He probably saw business opportunities with the growth of resorts in the Catskill Mountains in upstate New York. Perhaps he also wanted to move to the country and get out of the city.

Lake Huntington's first drug store was built by Augustus Mayer, MD. We have a newspaper photo from 1912 in our collection showing it as a Red Cross Pharmacy. The *Sullivan County Record* announced on December 3, 1914 "Mrs. Josephine Mayer has sold her drug store property in Lake Huntington to a Mr. Lentz, a druggist of Brooklyn."

Below: The Pharmacy and Nutshell Hotel on Main Street of Lake Huntington in 1914



An unusually quiet day (probably early fall) on Lake Huntington's main street back about 1914. The two buildings at left, the pharmacy, and the Nutshell Hotel still look out over the lake as they have for over 75 years.

Soon after making the purchase, Henry (age 38) and Barbara (age 36) along with Bernard (age 11) moved to Lake Huntington. Henry operated it year-round as the H.B. Lentz Drug Store. The family lived on the second floor of the building, above the drug store.



Above: The H.B. Lentz Drug Store

Much of the following information about Henry Lentz is from the *Sullivan County Record*, published in Jeffersonvile just nine miles north of Lake Huntington. The newspaper had a section with short reports from each of the small communities in Sullivan County that it served. The news items mostly were about who was coming or going. It was interesting that often there were announcements about who purchased new automobiles.

On January 21, 1915 the *Sullivan County Recorder* reported that Henry B. Lentz and family of Brooklyn were in town. "Mr. Lentz is the gentleman who bought the drug store property of Mrs. Josephine Mayer here. Mrs. Mayer has gone to Brooklyn to live."

When they appeared in the 1915 Census as residents of Lake Huntington, Bernard was eleven years old.

On March 25, 1915 the newspaper reported that "Mr. Lentz is in the city for a few days buying stock for his new store." Then on April 29, "Henry Lentz is greatly improving his drug store property by painting and grading. He has restocked the store."



Above: Henry Bernard Lentz in front of his store, and on Lake Huntington

We know that Henry and Barbara often went to Brooklyn to visit friends and possibly family members. In the years 1914 to 1919 Henry's four siblings ranged in age from the mid-20s to late 30s (Theodore, Wilhelm, Bernhard and Joseph).

A small local Brooklyn newspaper gives interesting accounts of his activities. From these we learn that at one point in time Henry Lentz was President of the Ridgewood Park Board of Trade in Brooklyn. In subsequent years, after moving to Lake Huntington, Henry had managed to maintain ties with his former business friends in Brooklyn. He visited during winter holidays each year.

After his yearly pilgrimage to the old home town, Henry B. Lentz, former president of the Ridgewood Park Board of Trade, has "hied" himself back to Lake Huntington, N.Y. where he has been located for the past four years. Every year Henry makes it a point to visit Ridgewood around the holidays. Needless to say, his stay is made very pleasant. Always glad to see you, Henry. (The Chat, Brooklyn, NY, January 4, 1919)

Henry B. Lentz, onetime president of the Ridgewood Park Board of Trade, manages to break away from his abode at Lake Huntington occasionally to

attend a meeting of said board. He has been doing that for the past three years and it seems he is made an honorary president each time, the last meeting being no exception. Merely the action of some fond member who forgets previous proceedings and, of course, the formality is carried out to oblige said member. Henry regards it as a habit now. (The Chat, Brooklyn, NY, January 18, 1919.)

Barbara and son Bernard also took trips into New York on occasion. As told by the local paper serving Lake Huntington on May 13, 1915 "Mrs. Lentz and son Bernard have returned home, after spending time in New York." The following year we find a similar report on April 20, 1916: "Mrs. H. Lentz and son Bernard are spending two weeks in Brooklyn."

Uncle Bernard had recalled during an interview in his later years, "Barbara looked Jewish and people would come into the store in Lake Huntington and speak to her in Yiddish." Bernard claimed she was pretty, strawberry blond, and with brown eyes.

In 1916 there are also two notices in the *Sullivan County Recorder* about a person working at Henry's drug store during the summer. On July 6: "Miss Amy Abplanalp had gone to work at Lentz's drug store at Lake Huntington for the summer season." Then on September 21 "Miss Amy Abplanalp returned home from working at Lentz's drug store at Lake Huntington."

In October 1917 Henry was nominated for a public office. As reported by the *Sullivan County Recorder* "The Democrats in Cocheeton nominated Henry B. Lentz for Clerk." Henry was experiencing success in his life.

World War I

Just a few years before Herb was born, World War I erupted.

World War I began in 1914. At the outbreak of fighting, the United States remained on the sidelines, adopting a neutrality policy favored by President Woodrow Wilson while continuing to engage in commerce and shipping with European countries on both sides of the conflict.

Neutrality, however, was increasingly difficult to maintain in the face of Germany's unchecked submarine aggression against neutral ships, including those carrying passengers. Widespread protest over the sinking of the British ocean liner Lusitania—traveling from New York

to Liverpool, England with hundreds of American passengers onboard—in May 1915 helped turn the tide of American public opinion against Germany.

In February 1917, Congress passed a \$250 million arms appropriations bill intended to make the United States ready for war.

By the fall of 1918, the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire) were unraveling on all fronts. The Ottoman economy and land had been devastated, and the Turks signed a treaty with the Allies (Great Britain, France, Russia, Italy, Romania, Japan and the United States) in late October 1918.

Facing dwindling resources on the battlefield, discontent on the homefront and the surrender of its allies, Germany was finally forced to seek an armistice on November 11, 1918, ending World War I. [Note: This established what is now observed as Veterans Day.]

World War I took the lives of more than 9 million soldiers; 21 million more were wounded. Civilian casualties caused indirectly by the war numbered close to 10 million. A total of 16 million people died.

Herb is Born

Herbert Victor Lentz was born on March 8, 1917. It is curious that there was no announcement of that event in the local newspaper. Herb wrote in one of his letters to Louise that he was named for the composer Victor Herbert, who wrote the song “Sweet Mystery of Life,” a song about love. Also, he was born only a month after the United States Congress authorized preparation for the U.S. to enter WWI. Then a tragedy occurred a year and a half later.

Visit to New York City Ends in Tragedy

In December 1918, Henry and Barbara traveled to New York City for their annual visit to the city. While there, Henry attended a meeting of the Ridgewood Park Trade Board. A mention of that meeting appeared in the local paper *The Chat*, on December 14, 1918. “Former president Henry B. Lentz, who is now a resident of Lake Huntington, N.Y. attended the meeting

and on motion by President Edward Miethke he was escorted to the chair where he presided throughout the meeting."

Henry and Barbara were staying at 2330 Myrtle Ave. in Brooklyn, not far from where their home was before moving to Lake Huntington and not far from the drug store that Henry had owned.

That month Barbara became very ill with the Spanish Flu (See end of chapter for information about this deadly pandemic). She died on December 29, 1918. According to Herb, the manner of his mother's death was unusual. Indeed, other family members would many years later talk about the suspicious circumstances surrounding her death. Some said it was suicide. Some said she was pushed. We will never know. Below is our father's account.

One of the symptoms of the flu was weakening of the lungs and an inability to get enough oxygen. During his mother's illness one day she was gasping for air and ran to the window of her upstairs (third floor) bedroom to get more air. Trying to open the window, she fell out and fractured her skull when she hit the ground. She was only 39 years old.

According to one obituary, she was found dead at 968 Forest Ave., in Ridgewood (in Queens, just north of Brooklyn). The cause of death shown on the death certificate was "fractured skull" with the explanation "Resident fell from window during delirium from pneumonia."

From the newspaper *The Standard Union*, Dec. 30, 1918: Funeral services for Barbara were held at the home of Dr. Adam Wolf, **968 Forrest Ave.**, Ridgewood. This notice further read that She was survived by her husband, two sons, two brothers and one sister.

Barbara's previous residence as recorded on her death certificate was 2330 Myrtle Ave, Brooklyn (Glendale neighborhood). This location is less than a mile from the home of Dr. Wolf, where funeral services were held.

The following month, Henry was still in Brooklyn as he was mentioned again in *The Chat* on January 18, 1919, with events of the meeting of the Ridgewood Park Board of Trade. "The members paid their respects to the memory of the wife of Henry B. Lentz who died December 29th following an attack of influenza. In

expressing their sympathy, the members stood in silence for several moments. A letter was also ordered sent to the members of the bereaved family.”

Living with Grand Aunt and Uncle in New York

When Barbara died Herb was only one and a half years old, and Bernard had just turned 15. After their mother's death, Herb was sent to live with their Grand Uncle Herman Lentz, one of his grandfather's brothers, and their Grand Aunt Mary Lentz, in New York City. In one of his letters Herb wrote that he also got the flu during the 1918 pandemic. “I was a pretty weak kid they tell me.”

In one of Herb's letters to Louise, he wrote that his Aunt Marie “who is a very kind soul took care of me for quite a while” (*February 9, 1938*). Herb was with them from the time he was two until he was four, when his father remarried.

The 1920 Census record shows that Herb (age 2) and Bernard (age 15) were living with Herman and Marie Lentz and their two daughters, ages 23 and 19. Herman (age 60) was born in Germany on October 27, 1859 and Marie (age 53) was born in Sweden. They lived at 710 Monroe Street in Brooklyn. Herman's occupation was listed as “store salesman”, and Marie was Lutheran.

Herman Lentz also served in the U.S. Army with the Sixth Cavalry Regiment from 1883 to 1888 in what were known as the “Indian Wars.” Herb sometimes told us stories of a great uncle who narrowly escaped being assigned to the cavalry regiment led by General Custer, the one that was famously defeated at the Battle of Little Big Horn in 1876. Note that the event was seven years prior to Herman's years of military service.

About Bernard Lentz, Herb's Older Brother

From the *Sullivan County Recorder*, we learn about Bernard's progress in school. The newspaper faithfully reported the names of all students who had passed one or more of New York State's Regent Exams. Bernard was listed as passing his exams at Jeffersonville School. This must be where he went to school through the eighth grade. In June 1916 he passed Spelling and Geography; in February 1917 he passed Elementary English, Reading, and Writing; and finally, in June 1917 he passed Arithmetic. We can assume that he graduated 8th grade in June 1917.

Not long after Herb was born, Bernard went off to New York. Henry and Barbara sent him to attend high school in the city. By contrast, Herb went to high school in the town of Narrowsburg, 10 miles to the west of Lake Huntington. This fact becomes relevant later on in our story.

Bernard most likely attended high school starting in the fall of 1917 when he was 14 years old and finished in 1921. Unfortunately, we have no information about where he went to school.

For the purpose of reconstructing our family history, it seems likely that the family Bernard was living with while attending high school was the same family that took in Herb following their mother's death. Most likely, then, Bernard would have been living with Herman and Marie Lentz in Brooklyn since the start of his high school career in the fall of 1917.

Herb returned to Lake Huntington after his father remarried in May 1921. We have no indication from any records as to when Bernard returned to Lake Huntington. But he probably continued living with his grand Aunt and Uncle in New York until he graduated from high school in 1921.

Where was Katherine (Berri) Zaengle really born?

Bernard had told us that their maternal grandmother Katherine Berri was born in Alsace-Lorraine, France and that members of her family were French Hugonants. Several records, including the 1880 US Census, however, clearly indicate that Katherine's birthplace was Bihia, Germany. When researching ancestry files this was problematic because I was unable to locate a town named Bihia in either Germany or what is now Alsace-Lorraine. However, in the 1910 US Census, the birthplace of Katherine (Berri) Zaengle was listed as France – or as abbreviated: Fr. (unrecognizable).

We also have evidence that she was baptized in Pfalz, Germany. Looking at a map, we find that the Pfalz region is located in central south-west Germany, adjacent to the Alsace-Lorraine region of France.

Also adjacent to the Alsace-Lorraine region of France is the region where Joseph Zaengle was born and likely raised. The 1880 US Census indicates he was born in Baden, Germany. Baden is a former state on the east bank of the Rhine River in the southwestern corner of Germany, now the western part of the state of Baden-Württemberg. It is just to the east of Alsace. This lends credence to Uncle Bernard's story of where Katherine Berri was born.

Historical Note: The German-speaking region of Alsace was part of the nation of France, but was annexed to Germany in 1871. After World War 1, Alsace and Loraine were returned to France.

Spanish Flu Pandemic of 1918

Every year, H1N1 flu viruses make people sick. Even the garden-variety flu may kill people, but usually only the very young or the very old. In 1918, the flu mutated into something much more virulent.

This new, deadlier flu acted very strangely; it seemed to target the young and healthy, being particularly deadly to 20- to 35-year-olds. In three waves from March 1918 to the Spring of 1919, this deadly flu pandemic spread quickly around the world, infecting hundreds of millions of people and killing 50 million to 100 million (upwards of 5% of the world's population) with about 675,000 deaths occurring in the United States.



Hospitals quickly became overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of patients. When hospitals filled up, tent hospitals were erected on lawns. Nurses and doctors were already in short supply because so many of them had gone to Europe to help with the war effort.

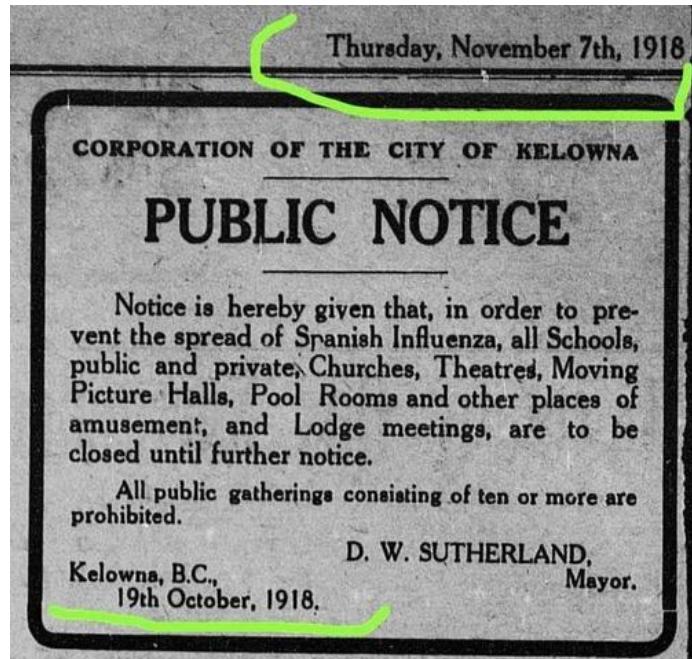
The Spanish flu struck so suddenly and severely that many of its victims died within hours of coming down with their first symptom. Some died a day or two after realizing they were sick.

The victims of the 1918 Spanish flu suffered greatly. Within hours of feeling the first symptoms of extreme fatigue, fever, and headache, victims would start turning blue. The patients would cough with such force that some even tore their abdominal muscles.



Some cities ordered everyone to wear masks. Spitting and coughing in public was prohibited. Schools and theaters were closed.

Vaccines had not been developed yet, so the only methods of fighting the pandemic were quarantine, good hygiene practices, disinfectants and limiting public gatherings.



On November 11, 1918, an armistice brought an end to World War I. People around the world celebrated the end of this "total war" and felt jubilant that perhaps they were free from the deaths caused by both war and flu.

However, as people hit the streets and gave kisses and hugs to returning soldiers, they also started a third wave of the Spanish flu.

The third wave of the Spanish flu was not as deadly as the second, but still deadlier than the first. Although this third wave also went around the world, killing many of its victims, it received much less attention. People were ready to start their lives over again after the war; they were no longer interested in hearing about or fearing a deadly flu.

The third wave lingered. Some say it ended in the spring of 1919, while others believe it continued to claim victims through 1920. Eventually, however, this deadly strain of the flu disappeared.