

FOREWORD

Every family has a story though many of the parts can be misplaced, or lost, or never even brought to light. On September 3, 1866, John Jacob Frautschi arrived in New York City from his home in Saanen, Switzerland, with his brother Christian F. Frautschi. They had come at the urging of their uncle J. Jakob Frautschi who had immigrated aboard the *Lancashire* out of Le Havre, France, to America on May 21, 1852, with his wife, Marie Elise Perin, and his two young children, Elisa M. and Jacob Theopilous. After only fourteen short years in White Mound, Sauk County, Wisconsin, their Uncle Jakob had lost his beloved wife, Marie, in February 1866. One can speculate that Jakob was worried about continuing to operate his farm alone, but more likely he might have missed his Swiss relatives. There is usually more than one reason why immigrants came to America and all of these reasons involve either a push to leave where one currently is or a pull by a place where one thinks they should be. John Jacob Frautschi's motivations for immigrating are likely just as complex. However, in a letter written on December 6, 1868, from New Albion, Butler County, Iowa, to his brother Christian F. Frautschi he says, "Even though times have been hard I won't despair because in this country one can hope to make up for losses in better times to come...and even if my life here doesn't turn out to be the greatest I still think that God wanted me to be here because if I got wrapped up in worldly things I would have forgotten God and would have reaped eternal misery."

The correspondence that follows is composed of ninety-one individual letters and two postcards. They are a part of the story of John Jacob's "hope" for a better life in America. The letters start in 1863, three years prior to his arrival in New York and continue for over fifty years until April 21, 1914. The letters are largely his side of a running correspondence he maintained with his brother Christian who lived in the towns of Baraboo, Black Hawk, Mazomanie, and Black Earth in Sauk County in the first two years until he permanently relocated and started a "cabinet and coffin" business in Madison, Wisconsin, toward the end of 1868. John Jacob's letters to his brother start from their home village in Saanen, Switzerland, prior to 1866 through a series of letters from Cedar Falls, Black Hawk County; New Albion, Butler County; and Swanton, Butler County, Iowa, after they immigrated to America. In a letter of May 17, 1869, we learn

John Jacob has moved to Minnesota where letters begin to arrive in Madison from St. Cloud, Stearns County; Niggeler Settlement in Pelican River and Elisabeth Township in Otter Tail County; and, Norwood, Carver County in late 1881. Finally, John Jacob moves to West St. Paul, Minnesota, on April 1, 1885, where his correspondence continues until a letter written April 21, 1914, to his nephews and nieces in Saanen, Switzerland.

Of the ninety-three letters and postcards, eighty-six are personally penned by John Jacob: five to Swiss relatives, the remaining eighty-one to his brother Christian Frautschi. Additionally, there are three letters from John's brother, Hans Peter Frautschi, who followed him and Christian to America in 1872 and settled in Elisabeth, Otter Tail County, Minnesota. These letters from Hans Peter were included as enclosures in letters to his brother Christian. Lastly, there is one letter written in April, 1865, from Abraham Frautschi to Christian; one letter from John Jacob to his sister-in-law, Elizabeth (Kuntz) Frautschi (December 8, 1909); one letter to John Jacob from his Swiss niece, Elise Frautschi (August 11, 1910); and, one letter written on June 11, 1900, from John Jacob's daughter, Ida Nell, to her uncle Christian thanking him for a table.

The letters have been arranged in sequential order for the most part though there are exceptions where earlier written letters John Jacob received from other relatives, i.e., his brother, Hans Peter Frautschi, appear non-sequentially as they originally would have as enclosures. Furthermore, the letters are placed in order of the actual letter (with envelope or postcard, if they exist), the German transcription, then the English translation. It is my strong belief that the letters were originally in the possession of Lowell Emil Frautschi (1905-2000), having come to him through his father Emil John Frautschi (1871-1959), the eldest son of Christian F. Frautschi. The letters within this collection were given by Lowell Frautschi to Robert (Bob) S. Spaeth, a grandson of John Jacob Frautschi, who was in the process of assembling and reconstructing information on his branch of the Frautschi family. In some fashion they divided up the correspondence with Bob Spaeth getting most of the originals of the correspondence that his grandfather John Jacob had written to his brother Christian. Today the Max Kade Institute at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, is the home for a smaller portion of the letters that were donated by Lowell Frautschi and comprise what is referred to as the *Frautschi Letters*

*Virtual Archive.*¹ The letters of John Jacob Frautschi presented here are largely new and "undiscovered" and were all translated over ten separate sessions in 1993 and 1994 by Roger P. Minert, Ph.D., an Accredited Genealogist and German language specialist, who resided in Woods Cross, Utah, until the Summer of 2003 whereupon he assumed a professorship at Brigham Young University. The cataloging by capital letter designations, i.e., "QQQ", "AA", etc., are those of Robert S. Spaeth and Dr. Minert in their attempt to organize the letters for translation.

I began this foreword by saying that only a small portion of a family's history is ever brought to light. Work as we may to preserve our family history there is always more to discover, more to accomplish. This discovery is an essential part of understanding where we as a family have been and where we as a family might go. These letters are a family treasure beyond belief. They tell a story of fifty years in the life of our family. We owe our thanks first to John Jacob Frautschi and the others for having written these letters; Christian Frautschi and his family for having saved them; Lowell Frautschi for giving them to Bob Spaeth in their joint quest to explore the connections within the branches of our family; and, Janet Spaeth West for having preserved them for us to treasure and enjoy. It has been my extreme pleasure in having been able to further study and organize these valuable documents into this current format. It is with deep sorrow that after two months in my possession they leave me. I am profoundly thankful for having been able to work with them. I am indebted to Cousin Janet for her trust in loaning them to me.

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March 23, 2003

¹ The Frautschi Letter Virtual Archive can be located at <http://csumc.wisc.edu/FLVA/FLVAhomed.html>. The collection consists of a total of 29 separate documents, mostly letters from the 1850s to 1900s and a translation of Christian Frautschi's 1905 travel diary to Switzerland. Interestingly, there are seven documents the Max Kade Institute holds copyright to that are among the originals in this collection. They are the letters dated: July 15, 1863, January 1, 1865, November 13, 1865, December 27, 1881, January 12, 1900, August 24, 1910 and a letter dated August 11, 1910 from Elise Frautschi in Switzerland that is included as an enclosure for the August 24, 1910 letter.