

Munion

The Connections

DOROTHY M. KESSLER REILLY was the daughter of **JAMES H.** and **CATHERINE GEDLING KESSLER**. **JAMES H. KESSLER** was the son of **ALBERT** and **AMANDA MUNON KESSLER**. **AMANDA MUNION KESSLER** was the daughter of **WILLIAM H. MUNION** whose father was also named **WILLIAM H. MUNION**. **AMANDA MUNION KESSLER** was the daughter of **ABIGAIL A. RAINE MUNION** who was married to **WILLIAM H. MUNION**. The parents of **ABIGAIL A. RAINE MUNION** were **JOHN RAINE** and **ABIGAIL A. CHEW**.

The Munion and Raine Generations

William H. Munion

John and Abigail A. Raine

William H. Munion

Abigail A. Raine

Amanda Munion

Albert and Amanda Munion Kessler

James H. Kessler

James H. and Catherine Gedling Kessler

Dorothy M. Kessler

Edward and Dorothy Kessler Reilly

John James Reilly

Edward James Reilly

Amanda Munion Kessler

According to the 1880 U.S. Census Amanda Munion was the daughter of William H. and Abigail Munion. She was 8 years old in 1880 which gives her a birth year of 1872. Amanda had a brother named Webster who was 3 years old in 1880 which means his birth year was 1877.

Amanda	1872
Webster	1877

Amanda is a connecting link between the Munion, Raine and Kessler families'. Her father was a Munion, her mother was a Raine and her husband was a Kessler. The 1900 U.S. Census has Amanda Munion married to an Arthur (Albert) Kessler. They had been married for 9 years which places the marriage in the year 1891. Arthur is 35 years of age and has a birth month of March in the year 1865. Amanda is 27 years of age and has a birth month of May in the year 1873. Arthur and Amanda and their parents were all born in New Jersey. In 1880 Amanda has her mother, Abbie Munyon, and her brother, Webster living with her. Abbie is 46 years old and widowed. Webster is 22 years old. Arthur and Amanda have two daughters:

Linda	age 5	Sept. 1884
Anna	age 1	Oct. 1898

There would be another sibling in the Kessler family when James H. Kessler was born in 1904. James Kessler would marry Catherine Gedling and they would have two daughters:

Dorothy	1926
Verna	1928

Dorothy would marry Edward Reilly and Verna would marry Robert Connelly.

Webster Munion

Webster Munion was the son of William H. and Abigail Munion and the brother of Amanda Munion. According to the 1880 U.S Census Webster was 3 years old which would place his birth in the year 1877. His father is 40 years of age and his mother is 25 years old. He is with his family in Upper Penns Neck Township, Salem County, New Jersey. Each member of the family has been born in New Jersey including the grandparents. In the year 1900 Webster and his mother Abigail Munion are living with his sister Amanda wife of Albert Kessler. Also, living with the Kessler's are their two daughters Linda, age 5 and Anna, age 1. Webster is now 22 years old which gives his birth date as March, 1878. His mother, Abigail, is a widow now at the age of 46. This indicates a birth month of January in 1854. Webster is working as a waiter.

According to the 1920 U.S. Census Webster is now married and living at 2127 Chadwick Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Webster is 43 years of age working as a conductor on a railroad. He is married to Emma, age 40, who was born in Pennsylvania. Her father was born in South America and her mother in Maryland. Living with Webster and Emma Munion is her mother. She has the last name of

Hudson, is 58 years of age and a widow. In 1930 Webster and Emma are living at 2126 South Chadwick, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and renting for \$33.00. They have been married for 24 years which means the marriage took place in 1906. Webster and Emma have one son, John, who is 24 years old. His birth year would be 1906. Living with the family now is Webster's mother, Abigail A. Munion, who is widowed and 76 years of age. Webster is working as a carpenter at a factory and his son, John, is working as a plumber in a department store.

Albert and Amanda Kessler

According to the 1900 U.S. Census Albert and Amanda Kessler were renting a house at 414 Second Street, Camden, New Jersey. They were the parents of:

Linda	1884
Anna	1898
James	1904

The census states that Albert and Amanda had been married for 9 years which means the marriage took place about 1891. Linda was 5 year old and Anna was just 1 years old; James had not been born yet. Albert's birthday was March of 1870 and Amanda's May of 1873. Albert is employed as a carpenter. Living with the Kessler's is Amanda's mother and brother: Abbie Munyon and Webster. Amanda's mother was Abigail Raine Munion; her father was William H. Munion. This census report helped to locate the Munion side of the family. Abbie is 46 and has a

birthday of January 1854. She married very young and was widowed when her husband, William H. Munion, a Civil War veteran, died not many years after the end of the war leaving Abigail to raise two small children. Webster, one of her children is with her at the Kessler's. He is 22 years of age and his birthday is given as March, 1878. Webster is employed as a waiter. No other information about Albert and Amanda is available; only what is in the 1900 U.S. Census. Abigail A. Munion (nee: Raine) married William H. Munion. According to a newspaper death notice kept in Dorothy Kessler Reilly's bible since 1939 and William H. Munion's Civil War Pension Records Abigail A. Raine Munion was a daughter of John Raine and Abigail A. Raine (nee: Chew) of New Jersey.

Linda Kessler Bender

Linda Kessler married a Jacob F. Bender and according to the 1920 U.S. Census they were both 19 years old when they married 1912-1913. In 1920 they were living at 146 South Thirty Second Street, Camden, New Jersey and owned their own home. Jacob and his parents were all born in Pennsylvania and Linda and her parents were all born in New Jersey. Jacob worked as a Mechanical Draftsman; Linda was at home. In 1920 they had three children:

Jacob B. (Edward) 7 years old

Robert A. 4 years and 9 months old

Ada L. 6 months old

In 1930 the Bender's were still living at 146 South Thirty Second Street and their home was valued at \$6500. Jacob was 38 and Linda was 37 and their children:

Edward, Robert and Ada were 17, 14 and 10 years of age, respectively. Jacob was a Draftsman at a Radio Factory and his son, Edward, was an apprentice draftsman. Living with the Bender family at this time was Jacob's, father, Chas. E. Bender age 60 and widowed. He was a machinist at a Naval Shipyard.

Anna Kessler Reign

Anna H. Kessler married a Walter Reign according to the 1920 U.S. Census. At this time they lived at 226 Milton in Camden, New Jersey. Walter in 1920 was 30 years old and Anna was 21 which would make his birthday about 1890 and her birthday about 1898. His occupation is listed as woodman. Anna and Walter and both their parents were all born in New Jersey. The Reign's were married about 1915. In 1920 there were two daughters: Rebecca age 4 and Amanda and 11 months old. Perhaps Amanda is named after her grandmother Amanda Munion Kessler who was the mother of Anna, Linda and James. Living with the family is Albert Kessler, age 50, and widowed. He is the husband of Amanda Munion Kessler and the father of Linda Kessler Reign. The place of birth for both of his parents is listed in the 1920 U.S. Census as Germany. The immigration of his parents brought the Kessler family to America. Being 50 in 1920 puts Albert's birth about 1870. This information also indicates that Amanda Munion Kessler died sometime after 1904 when her last child James was born and before 1920 because Albert is then a widower.

Walter and Anna Reign

By 1930 Walter and Anna had moved to Penns Grove Township in Salem County, New Jersey. According to the 1930 U.S. Census they are living at 15 Fralie Woods Grove and renting for \$8.00. Walter's occupation is fisherman: Shad fishing. He is now 39 years of age and was married at age 24. Anna is 32 and married when she was 17. This means they were married in 1915. Albert Kessler is no longer living with them. Walter and Anna now have 6 children:

Rebecca	14	(1916)
Amanda	11	(1919)
Walter	8	(1922)
Doris	5	(1925)
Harold	1 yr 4 mos.	(1928)
Hubert	1 month	(1930)

James H. Kessler

James H. Kessler, the son of Amanda Munion Kessler, and Catherine M. Gedling would marry sometime in 1924. According to the 1930 U.S. Census in 1930 James H. was 28 and Catherine M. is 22. He was 22 years old and she was 16 years old at the time of their marriage.

1930 U.S. Census

In 1930 the Kessler family was living at 1033 Segal Street in Camden, New Jersey, and was renting a place for \$15.00. Dorothy was now 4 years 2 months old and Verna was 1 year 4 months old. James H. was working as a staker at a leather factory which was located at the end of Segal Street. Catherine was not working having two small children at home. All members of the family were born in New Jersey and the parents of each were born in New Jersey, with the exception of Catherine's father, Harry Gedling, who was born in Delaware. This fact helped trace the Gedling line. James and Catherine lived just two doors down from her mother, Rhoda Gedling, who was now married to a George Wilson, at 1037 Segal Street. There was a cousin, Clarence Dougherty, living with them in 1930. He was 28 and single, worked as a riveter in a shipyard.

Two Tragic Events

The years 1930 and 1931 would be tragic years for the Kessler family, especially for the two little girls, Dorothy and Verna. Two events took place that would affect the girls for the rest of their lives.

First, Catherine Kessler would leave James Kessler for another man. This would take place sometime between April 1930 and September 1931. For a short time Dorothy and Verna would be with their mother and her new husband. There is some question as to whether they were ever married. The children's grandmother, Rhoda Gedling Wilson would at some point turn her daughter, Catherine, into the authorities, for some illegalities involving support payments from the State of New Jersey. Dorothy and Verna would become wards of the state and eventually Rhoda

Gedling Wilson would be given custody of the children. She would raise them in a very strict home environment until they graduated from high school. Catherine would raise a whole new family with Monroe, while the girls were abandoned by their mother and would have contact with her only sporadically in the years to come. The girls would be haunted by the questions of why their mother left them and why they could not have a regular family like their half brothers and sisters. (For more details of this time period please read the section of Dorothy's early life in the Reilly Family history.)

Skillman Village for Epileptics

Second, the father, James H., whose Grand Mal epilepsy would worsen, also, he developed mental problems apparently in response to Catherine's leaving. This would result in James being institutionalized for the rest of his life at the Skillman Village for Epileptics in Skillman, New Jersey.

James H. Kessler was living at 545 Cedar Street in Camden, New Jersey with one of his married sisters, Anna Reign in 1931. On September 15, 1931 James was courted ordered by Judge Samuel M. Shay of Camden to be committed to Skillman Village. At the time he was 27 years, 5 months and 28 days old according to the Register of Admissions ay Skillman. Dorothy was about 5 years old and Verna about 3 years old when this happened.

Admissions Record

Searching for more information about James as a patient at Skillman Village contact was made with the New Jersey Division of Archives and Records

Management and a copy of Kessler's admission papers were obtained, but not without a lot of effort because the medical records of all patients who were at Skillman are sealed. A wealth of information was gleaned from just the one page admissions document. It was noted on the admissions form that James had "very little" education, his habits were "cleanly" and that he was in good physical condition when admitted; also that he was Protestant. Kessler's occupation at the time was as a glazier. An Alfred Kessler and an Amanda Munion are listed as his parents. His sister Anna Reign was the contact person in case of sickness or death. He was living with her and her family when he was sent to Skillman Village. James was diagnosed with Grand Mal epilepsy the cause of which was unknown. (Epilepsy was still at this time considered a mental disorder and family would send the person to Skillman to remove the financial burden on themselves and the stigma of a family member being epileptic) It was further determined as he was admitted to Skillman his mental condition was that of a "low grade moron, possibly psychotic." During this whole process he had been examined by two doctors, an Alexander Ellis and a Berry Wrotlenski of Camden and at Skillman he was referred to a Dr. R.K. Adams. Two Camden City detectives, Richard Donnelly and Louis Schlam accompanied James Kessler to the Village for Epileptics. It was 6:15 p.m. on September 15, 1931 when James began his stay at Skillman; a stay that would last 24 years, 4 months, and 6 days. Until the end of his life, and even in death, James would never leave Skillman Village.

Dorothy and Verna

His two little girls would only be able to visit him at Skillman a few times over the years. Dorothy only remembers only making three visits to see her father at Skillman. Two times when she was young and her great grandmother Munion took her. She was the mother of Amanda Munion who married Albert Kessler, the parents of James H. Kessler. During one of those visits James became very belligerent and said some horrible things to Dorothy and Verna who were barely in their teens at the time. Years of being in an institution had taken their toll on him. The last time that Dorothy and Verna saw their father was when Edward and Dorothy Reilly and Bob and Verna Connolly visited him was some time before he died. They took a train, a bus and then a cab in order to get to Skillman Village. James was very sick, bedridden and did not even know that his girls were there. The only thing that Dorothy and Verna have from their father is a letter he wrote to them April 4, 1940. It is all that remains of his life. At the time Dorothy was 14 years old and Verna was about 12 years of age. Dorothy kept the fading, worn, dog-eared letter from her father in her bible for over 60 years. He was 55 years, 10 months and 4 days old when he died on January 11, 1958.

The Sacred Grounds Cemetery

James H. Kessler would be buried at The Sacred Grounds Upper Cemetery of the Skillman Village for Epileptics. For over 45 years the location of James H. Kessler's grave was unknown to the family. In 2002 the Upper Cemetery as it was called was

rediscovered. John Reilly, a grandson who never knew his grandfather, began searching for where James Kessler was buried as part of his genealogical research. With only a name and a small notation in his mother's bible which read "James Kessler, Foote Cottage, Village for Epileptics, Skillman, New Jersey," a Google search found a reference to Skillman Village and the Epilepsy Foundation of New Jersey. This led to a woman who had just a few months earlier had compiled a database of the cemetery using a grid system with aid in locating a particular grave. The database includes the names, birth and death dates and the location of each person buried in the three sectioned graveyard. A total 467 unwanted or forgotten souls were buried in the cemetery from 1904 and 1960. An examination of the 10page database found the name of James H. Kessler listed along with his date of birth and date of death. James H. Kessler was indeed buried at the Skillman Cemetery. He is in grid location is B10@. His grave is toward the back right corner of the cemetery as you enter.

"Forgotten in Death, Remembered in Life"

The cemetery was in such bad condition the local Rotary Club was asked to help clean up the deteriorated cemetery; removing fallen trees, clearing out the overgrown brush and fixing and setting upright any fallen or broken headstones. Today the Rotary Club maintains the cemetery on a yearly basis; bush hogging and cutting the grass around the graves. Their motto for this project is "Forgotten in Life, Remembered in Death." The rediscovered Upper Cemetery was renamed The Sacred Ground Upper Cemetery of Skillman Village for Epileptics. There are a few

articles giving information about the cemetery and its history and one article about the trip John and Edward took to find the grave of a long lost grandfather they never knew.

A Thanksgiving Day Visit

On Thanksgiving Day in 2002 John Reilly and his son, Edward, traveled to Skillman in order to be shown by a local resident the location of this obscure and long forgotten cemetery. Aerial photos reveal the close proximity of the cemetery to the Village. On a remote knoll there is a large, square clearing surrounded by woods and farmland not far from the large, pretty homes that make up much of upscale Montgomery County. It is a quiet place where only the sounds of birds, the rustle of squirrels through the leaves and the mournful cry of a distant cow can be heard. It is a place of deer and turkey. A serene place. A Sacred Place. The cemetery is located on the south side of Rock Brook off of Burnt Hill Road. Turning from Burnt Hill Road into a corn field there is a dirt road that meanders its way through two other corn fields. The dirt road seems to be more of a path for farm tractors. But following the path to the top of the hill, going through a canopy of tall trees that opens to the entrance of the hidden cemetery; which bears a sign proclaiming you have arrived at The Sacred Grounds Upper Cemetery of the Village for Epileptics at Skillman.

“We Have Remembered”

John and Edward stood silently at the grave looking at a marker. It was painted white with black lettering long ago, but 5 decades of being exposed to 50 harsh winters, the paint has chipped off in spots and rust has appeared on the metal

tombstone. There was the name. James H. Kessler. The search had spanned a year and took a 1200 mile journey in order to stand before it. Pictures were taken and the words: "We have remembered" were spoken. Prays were made for James. Reverend John Reilly stood on a Thanksgiving morning with the biting November wind that swept through the trees and across the silent rows of grave stones. Father and Son stood together before James Kessler's final resting place. Reverend Reilly then read a portion of the United Methodist committal service which was offered in love, compassion and grace "for someone who has suffered a tragic or untimely death." The committal service contained a prayer spoken to God which said: "O God, no mortal life you have made is without eternal meaning. No earthly fate is beyond your redeeming. Amen." This was our hope and prayer for James; that through God's love James Kessler's life had meaning and that no situation that is faced in life, even a life which has spent 27+ years in obscurity, unknown to the rest of the outside world, that life is not beyond God's redemption.

Skillman Village 1898-1998

Skillman Village for Epileptics is located in Skillman, New Jersey, about 18 miles north of Trenton. The Skillman Village began in 1898. At the time until the early decades of 20th century The Village was considered an innovative residential center and one of the first to separate epilepsy patients from the insane. Historically, people with epilepsy were considered mentally ill. The facility was designed to function like a small, self-contained "town." There was a powerhouse, several residential units, a theater, hospital/medical facilities, agricultural areas, landfill or dumps, a wastewater collection system and treatment plant. The Skillman Village is

now an abandoned ghost town closed in 1998. The Village fell on hard times following World War Two with loss of funding, dramatic increase in patients and deteriorating condition of the facilities. From the 1940 through the 1960's New Jersey State newspapers called Skillman Village "the snake pit of New Jersey," because conditions there were so horrifying. There is a history of the Skillman Village written by a Walter Baker, several newspaper articles and a video that are available for more information on the Skillman Village for Epileptics of New Jersey.

James Kessler had two sisters both older than him. Linda, who was born in September, 1894 and Anna, who was born in October 1898, according to the 1900 U.S. Census. James was born in 1904.

William H. and Abigail A. Munion

In the 1870 U.S. Census there is a William Munyon and an Abigail who live in the Upper Penns Neck Township of Salem County, New Jersey. He is 32 years old and she is 16 years old. They have no children at this time. The year 1870 could be the year they were married. It is interesting to note that the Munyon's are living 3 houses away from Abigail's parents, John and Abigail A. Rain. The 1870 U.S. Census indicates that William can not read or write. According to the 1880 U. S. Census William H. and Abigail A. Munion are still living in Upper Penns Neck, District 2, Salem County, New Jersey. He is 40 years old and she is 25 years of age. This puts his birth year as 1840 and her birth year as 1855. His occupation is listed as laborer and to the census question: "Is this person sick or temporarily sick so as

to be unable to attend to ordinary business or duties? If so, what is the sickness or disability?" The answer is "yes" and the word "weakness" is the notation. Abigail's occupation is listed as housewife. All in the family and their parents were born in New Jersey. There are two children:

Abigail	age 8	(1872)
Webster	age 3	(1877)

William H. Munion's Father?

In the 1880 U.S. Census there is a listing for a William H. Munion who is a 77 years old widower and living by himself in Upper Penns Neck, Salem County, New Jersey. He was born in New Jersey as were his parents. He works as a laborer. At 77 years old William's birth year would be 1803. There is at this time no direct evidence that shows that the William H. Munion born in 1803 is the father of the William H. Munion born in 1840. It is interesting to find in the 1860 U.S. Census that there is a William Munion living in Upper Penns Neck, Salem County, New Jersey. William is 54 in 1860 which places his birth year close to 1803. His wife is Ann, age 59 and his son John B. Munion is 18 years of age. William and John B. work as farm laborers and Ann's occupation is listed as "Housewifery." The value of William's personal estate is noted as \$50.00. Again, there is no direct evidence that links the William Munion of the 1860 U.S. Census and the William H. Munion of the 1880 U.S. Census as being the father of William H. Munion born in 1840. In 1860 William H. Munion would have been 20 years of age and not living with his family for the William of the 1860 U.S. Census to be his father.

The Parents of Abigail A.

In the newspaper obituary for Abigail A. Munion, who was married to William H. Munion, her maiden name is given as Rain. William H. Munion's pension records name John and Abigail A. Rain as her parents. It seems that the daughter was named after her mother. In a search of the www.ancestry.com website's Ancestry World Tree Project for the name 'Rain' produced a marriage record between a John Rain born 1826 and an Abigail Ann Chew born 1831. They were married November 9, 1848. Also at Ancestry.com there is a listing in New Jersey Marriages 1684-1895 for the marriage of a John Rain and Abigail A. Chew on November 9, 1848. Her parents are listed as Jonas C. Chew born February 22, 1807 and Lucretia M. Pierce born October 22, 1808. Among the 9 children born to John and Abigail A. Rain was an Abigail A. Rain born 1854. This is the Abigail who married William H. Munion.

John and Abigail A. Rain

According to the 1860 U.S. Census John and Abigail Rain are living in Upper Penns Neck Township, Salem County, New Jersey. John is 34 years old and Abigail is 29 years old. He is a laborer and she is in "home duties." The value of their personal estate is \$50.00. There are five children:

Rebecca	age 10	(1850)
William	age 9	(1851)

Abigail A. age 6 (1850)

John age 5 (1855)

Jonas C. age 1 (1859)

The 1870 U.S. Census has John and Abigail located as before in Upper Penns Neck Township, Salem County. Their personal estate is now valued at \$100.00. In 1880 the Rain's status is unchanged; however, they now have two more children:

Elmer C. age 13 (1867)

Amanda age 2 (1878)

John is 54 years old and Abigail is 49 years old. They have been married for 32 years. Abigail has borne 7 children over a 28 year period with an 11 year difference between the births of the last two children. Jonas C. is now 21, single and working on a nearby farm as a laborer; though he had been unemployed during the year for 4 months. Elmer C., age 16, is also working as a farm laborer.

Linking the Generations

The conclusion that links Abigail A. Rain Munion as the daughter of John and Abigail A. Chew Rain extends the generations for the Rain and Chew families. Through the Ancestry World Tree Project on Ancestry.com is found a submission under the "Swedish Longacre's and Related Families" that traces the Rain family line beginning with Abigail A. Rain who married William H. Munion and was the

daughter of John Rain and Abigail A. Chew. This genealogical work extends the Rain descendants beyond Abigail A. Rain by 5 generations to just before the Revolutionary War. The generations of the Chew family extend back even further from France to England to Virginia and finally Gloucester and Salem counties. The descendants of Abigail A. Chew reach back 29 generations. Genealogical work submitted to the Ancestry World Tree Project of Ancestry.com can be found at “The Robert D. Taylor & Shirley O’Del Snyder Family Tree” and “The Large Version of the Chew Family Tree” which both present details of these generations. The primary source for the Chew Family is the book “Genealogy of the Chew Family” by Robert L. Chew. This work covers almost 400 years of the Chew family in America and gives detailed genealogical information on over 2,000 members of the Chew family. This book is available from the Gloucester County Historical Society in Gloucester County, New Jersey.

The Civil War Military and Pension Records for William H. Munion from the National Archives provides a wealth of information and insight for William and Abigail Munion. There were 125 pages of military and pension records obtained

from the Civil War Era dating back 120 to 140 years ago. A summary of pertinent genealogical information is provided for William H. and Abigail A.

Military Record of William H. Munion

William H. Munion

Abigail A. Raine Munion