

The Mendham Story*

Benjamin Mendheim migrated to the United States from his native Prussia in 1841, along with his brother Isidor. They joined their brother Emil who had immigrated here in 1838 as the "check-it-out" man for the Mendheim family. They were then followed by the rest of the family who migrated here between 1849 and 1850.

Benjamin spent some time in New York before settling in the Columbus, Georgia area in the mid-1840's. While in New York he met and eventually married Adeline Simmons. In Columbus, he was part of a dry goods store called Mendheim & Brothers which burned in 1847. The Mendheim boys couldn't get the business up and running again and disposed of it in early 1852. In the meantime Benjamin had looked for greener pastures in Missouri where he spent about 4 years between 1851 and 1855. While there, Benjamin was part of a court case that went all the way to the Missouri Supreme Court. His son Louis Phillippe Mendheim was born in 1853 in Missouri and they then moved on to Tennessee. They lived in Tennessee about 10 years (1855-1865) and the family grew with the addition of Maurice B. and Ada Pauline Mendheim. During this period Benjamin sold goods to the CSA among others.

From Tennessee the family relocated back to Augusta where Benjamin conducted business in Georgia and South Carolina. Apparently the reconstruction period was a good time to make money as Benjamin started (or continued) to amass a small fortune. It appears that Adeline may have had enough of the South as the family moved back to New York around the early 1870's. Benjamin continued to maintain a residence in the area and returned often to Georgia and South Carolina to conduct business.

During the mid-1870's the family name was still referenced as Mendheim. As the boys, Louis and Maurice, began their company (Mendham Brothers) in the mid-1880's they dropped the reference to Mendheim and went by the name Mendham. All of Benjamin's children and his wife lived, and died, with the name Mendham. After Benjamin's death Ada's permanent residences were hotels (she died in The Wellington) and the children were also well off financially. Maurice and Louis' brokerage and banking company was very successful and they were well known in Manhattan, particularly on Broadway. Of the three children, only Louis had children although all were married.

A web search for "Maurice B Mendham" finds many interesting facts including his marrying a ward of his named Frances Cartwright just months before his death. From what I read, I would say he pushed his way around New York. Ada Pauline married Henry McCobb (for a relatively brief period) and she traveled extensively. In 1925 she was beaten to death with a hammer in a boarding house in San Antonio, Texas by a lady who was after her reported "fortune of gems". Louis had two daughters, Lucille Phyllis and Alice Coe Mendham. Lucille died at a young age in 1935 leaving a 10 year old daughter (Dorsey or Dorothy Germaine/German) that I have not been able to find her circumstances. Alice Coe married Webster Powell who was a professor at Dartmouth and later a part of our diplomatic corps. In 1934 Alice started a well known school in Maryland called Green Acres. Most of her career Alice carried her maiden name in her professional life. They had two daughters, Nina and Gail.

And as they say...the rest is history....

*I have used many assumptions in the recording of this story but the majority is based on facts. DEM

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