

Beyond Peter's Grave – as told by Bill Kivett at the 2019 PKFA Meeting

[Lightly updated in Nov 2019 to also include backup Internet links]

I have a story to relate to you today. Now, be aware that I'm just a story teller. That has been my job – Historian – a story teller with this organization for over 20 years – collecting stories, saving them, and sharing them with all who would listen. This one may well be the last one you hear from me, so I hope you will pay attention, and maybe think it was worth hearing, even if it seems far too long.

This one was brought to me by two folks you may never have heard of. But they are both proud to be connected to Peter and Anna who have rested out there in that nearby old cemetery for over 220 years. I know that Peter and Anna are my immigrant ancestors. How, because Peter left a will naming his 8 children and wife, but not her maiden name. On that will was his signature – not an “X” – but a handwritten name on that original document, now safe in the archives at Raleigh. And that signature is a match to the one on a list of passengers who got off a ship in September 1749 right after it arrived in Philadelphia from Rotterdam. We know that Peter Kivett did come to America on that ship because we also have a copy of that list. That's an already much told and believed story. This is another one.

In July of this year I was first alerted about this story by Dr. Robert Merrill Black of Toronto Canada. How is he related to these folks? Well, his Canadian born mother was named Barbara Ruth Moore. Her mother was Louretta Ethel Davis who was born in Kansas. Ethel's mother was Lenora Estella Woody, born in nearby Chatham County. Then “Stella's” mother was Leanna Lydia Cox, born in Guilford County. Then Lydia's Mother was Levinia Eunice Brower from right here in Randolph, whose mother was Lydia Scotten from Randolph. And guess who this Lydia's mother was? None other than Elizabeth Kivett – daughter of Anna Barbara and Peter Kivett. How did this Canadian clinical psychologist know about all this? He cared enough about his past to not give up looking for Peter and Anna's ancestors to have his own female line DNA tested. His mt-DNA story can be found here: <http://www.pkivfa.org/Female%20Genealogy.pdf>

Then there's a lady who resides about 70 miles south of London by the name of Susan Jane Robinson. But that's her married name. Guess what her maiden name

was? Surprise! This English born lady's father was Jack Hill Kivett, who was born in 1930 in Joplin Missouri. While serving with the US Air Force in Lakenheath, England, he met and married an English girl. His Kivett line goes back through Peter and Anna's son John Matthew, as do so many of you – and me.

Why is she worth mentioning with this story? She is the tireless researcher who unearthed, copied, and shared images of transcribed official records with me – to help bring a measure of honor to her proud Kivett past, and to make today's story more believable.

Maybe you are already too bored with where it came from to even hear the story now. But for those who chose to remain just about 7 minutes more, I would really appreciate you hearing this last story I will be telling here:

Way back in the late 1600's in a part of far western Europe a man named Simon got married and began having children with his first wife we might call Wilma. Their second, a son nicknamed Jan was born in 1687. Old Simon would go on to father a total of 22 children with this wife and two others. He really knew how to pave the way for the future! This second son, Jan, grew up in the same town where he was born, and on January the 12th of 1723 married a young lady named Anna. She gave birth on the 5th of October that same year to his first child, a daughter we would call Wilma – like Jan's mother. But just 4 days after giving birth, mother Anna died on the 9th of October 1723.

I did not say this was going to be a happy story, but one with some meaning is about to be revealed. So, what was Jan left to do but find another foster mother for his baby girl Wilma. That he did, but it took him until the 15th of August 1724 to marry his second wife named Volkie. Maybe a strange sounding name to you, but it's one which might begin to give you a clue where they lived. Well, 10 months later his baby girl by his first wife would be joined by a new baby sister named Anna – maybe after Wilma's mother. This time the mother did not die right after her first child was born. Happiness must have returned to the home of Jan and Volkie, for there is an official record in the archives of the City of Rotterdam, The Netherlands that on 24 November 1726 a son named Pieter born to Jan and Volkie was baptized.

OK, now the story begins to have meaning to some. To bring it into sharper focus, the last name of this family, starting with Old Prolific Simon and the 2nd of his 22 children he called Jan was – you guessed it - Kiviet – spelled then in Rotterdam as K-I-V-I-E-T. This transcribed Dutch baptismal record of this event was sent me on the 8th of July this year by Dr. Robert Black attached to a simple E-Mail:

<https://www.wiewaswie.nl/personen-zoeken/zoeken/document/srcid/60770397>

It caught my attention, and I passed it on to a known diligent researcher named Sue Robinson, who I knew lived just across the Channel from Rotterdam. She jumped all over this and has to date sent me over 500 scanned Dutch records which richly filled in this last part of the story. Listen to this and then you can go.

From what Sue found, this Pieter Kiviet's father Jan was not around for his birth and his probably delayed baptism. Just a few months after his wife became pregnant he was off on a ship voyage around the southern tip of Africa to what is now Jakarta, Indonesia in a 4 year tour of duty with The Dutch East India Company. He returned when Pieter was about 4 years old. He got to see his father for the first time then. But not for long, for Jan left again just 6 months later on another voyage to Indonesia. This time he did not return until over 5 years later, about the time Pieter was 10. Now for a happy family life? Not so - for just 11 months later Jan up and died! So here was a Pieter Kiviet who was born in Rotterdam in 1726 but only had a father with him for a total of 11 months when he was 10 or 11 years old. Then he had to grow up with a widowed mother named Volkie Boers Kiviet and one year older sister. There's no record of this widow marrying again. Oh yeah – his half-sister by Jan's first wife named Wilma died when she was just 5-1/2 years old in 1729 – when Pieter was 3. He probably never remembered her.

Now in the mid 1700's things were also turning bad in Rotterdam, and the once powerful Dutch nation. England was taking over the trans ocean shipping business. The once powerful Dutch East India Company was besieged by corruption. One can surmise that a 23 year old Pieter in 1749 had decided there was no future for him to start a family in this environment.

Word of things being better in the British Colonies across the Atlantic must have been circulating around Rotterdam. The Colony of Pennsylvania was a welcoming one. He certainly was familiar with what must have been involved in a sailing ship voyage. An Atlantic crossing then took only about 3 months. His father had been on two much longer round trip voyages – taking about a whole year each way with required stops in South Africa. His uncles also had served on these ship voyages, and a few had even died on ship. His mother must have had some pension money from her husband Jan's long service – maybe enough to give her dear only son Pieter fare for ship's passage and a little to get him started on a better life in America. Tearful final goodbyes, maybe?

With all that now unearthed by Dr. Black and filled in by Sue Robinson – documented with this paperwork [a 4" 3 ring binder full of records displayed] - and told to you here today, is it not very reasonable to think that this Dutch Pieter Kiviet who was baptized in Rotterdam on the 24th of November 1726 is the same one buried out yonder in McMasters Cemetery with a birth "estimate" of July 1726 engraved on his tombstone? Others have heard family stories about the "Kivetts being Dutch", but who has come this close to actually proving it?

More is left to be done. Sue is still connecting these Dutch family members with more relationship records arriving on my computer almost every day. We're into the late 1800's and early 1900's now, with some of this family now going by the name K-I-E-W-I-T. Sue has begun communicating with a Dutch female in this line whose living father might be coaxed into taking a DNA cheek swab. A test from this would prove (or disprove) absolutely if this was our Peter Kivett. But that's a part of the story for someone else to tell. I'm getting too old to tell stories.

Now you can go. I'm through – with this story, and with my many years of service in this role as Historian on behalf of my Kivett family. Thanks to all who listened today, and to the many cousins I would never otherwise have met. I will be ever grateful that they have helped me learn that I was really far more than just an only farm child, and about how much it means to carry the name Kivett. I just wish more could feel this warmth.

Nell and I are now getting back on the road to our adopted home in South Carolina for a quiet life. So long until maybe we meet again sometime, somewhere.