

# Mary Eckel Ruplin: La Crosse's First Born?

When Mary Eckel Ruplin died in November 1945, the page 1 headline for the story read: "Mrs. Mary Ruplin, First White Girl Born In La Crosse, Dies." The first sentence of the article states that Mary "was the first white child born in La Crosse." If only it were so.

What becomes the history that we think we know when historical evidence is fragmentary, entirely missing, or even contradictory? Lack of primary source evidence sometimes allows unsubstantiated claims to become the history we read.

Mary Eckel Ruplin's story, and the story of the actual (we think) first child born in La Crosse, is a complicated tale involving two pioneer families in La Crosse history.

In November 1841, an 18-year-old from New York named Nathan Myrick, accompanied by Eben Weld, built a log cabin on Barron Island (current home to Pettibone Park) to serve as a trading post with the Native Americans. It was the first permanent white presence in what would later become the city of La Crosse.<sup>1</sup>

During the winter, Myrick and Weld decided that the east side of the river would be a better location for their trading post. They dragged logs across the frozen river and used them the following spring to build a cabin at what is now "the southeast corner of Front and State streets."<sup>2</sup> Thus was born Prairie La Crosse, and eventually, the city of La Crosse.

While on a visit back to his home in New York in 1843, Nathan Myrick married Rebecca Ismon.<sup>3</sup> While on a visit back to his home in New York in 1843, Nathan Myrick married Rebecca Ismon. Their first child was a son born in 1844, but the boy died in 1845 and was buried in La Crosse; his remains were later reinterred in what became Oak Grove Cemetery. In October 1847, Nathan and Rebecca Myrick became parents of twins. But none of these children were born in La Crosse; they were born in Prairie du Chien. The older town down the river was the county seat of Crawford County, which at that time encompassed what is now La Crosse County. It was also the place where the traders and explorers, including Nathan Myrick, obtained their supplies.<sup>4</sup>

The last name of the first child born in Prairie La Crosse was not Myrick, and not Eckel; it was Miller.

After Eben Weld left for other opportunities in Minnesota, Nathan Myrick formed a business partnership in early 1842 with a fur-trading acquaintance named Harmon J. B. ("Scoots") Miller.<sup>5</sup>

When Nathan and Rebecca Myrick had traveled to La Crosse from New York after their marriage in 1843, they brought along Louisa Pearson. Pearson made the journey to visit some relatives in Illinois, but she ended up going all the way to La Crosse and spending the winter with Mr. and Mrs. Myrick.<sup>6</sup> Louisa was Rebecca Myrick's cousin.<sup>7</sup> Rebecca Myrick and Louisa Pearson were the first white women to live in La Crosse. When spring came, Pearson went back to Illinois. In 1844, Harmon J. B. Miller took a trip to Galena, Illinois, and returned to La Crosse with his new bride, Louisa Pearson.<sup>8</sup>

According an 1881 history of La Crosse County, the first birth in La Crosse, in 1847, "was a daughter to the family of H. J. B. Miller, named Martha."<sup>9</sup> Louise Parry, Martha's daughter, later said it was written in their family Bible that her mother was born in Prairie du Chien, not La Crosse. It also showed Harmon

and Louisa's first child, Irwin or Irvine, who had died in infancy in Illinois in 1846.<sup>10</sup> Martha (Miller) Parry's obituary states that she was born in La Crosse in 1847.<sup>11</sup> Her death certificate, however, shows that she was born in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, on October 20, 1847. The person who supplied this information was her daughter, Louise Parry.<sup>12</sup> One wonders if Louise had forgotten about the family Bible and told the undertaker that her mother's birthplace had been a three-part, French-sounding name in Wisconsin. Then the undertaker looked at a map or list of cities in Wisconsin and saw Fond du Lac first. We can only speculate.



HARMON J. B. MILLER

(Sanford & Hirshheimer, *A History of La Crosse, Wisconsin 1841-1900*, page 23)

The 1850 federal census shows Harmon J. B. Miller, then 45 years old, farming at Bad Axe in the present-day Vernon County. His wife, Louisa, was 27 years old, and daughter, Martha, born in Wisconsin, was three years old.<sup>13</sup>

Myrick and Miller, as original settlers of La Crosse, were responsible for most the "firsts" recorded at Prairie La Crosse. Miller built one of the first two hotels in 1851, "a two-story log and frame house, at Front and State streets, called the La Crosse house." Miller's farm was located at the former site of the La Crosse Country Club on the east side of the city at the base of the bluffs. Harmon J. B. Miller died in 1862, at the age of 56, and is buried in Oak Grove Cemetery.<sup>14</sup>

"Herman J. B. Miller," 50 years old, is in the 1860 federal census living alone in La Crosse.<sup>15</sup> The age recorded by the census taker is inconsistent with his birth year (1806) given in a *La Crosse Tribune* article on October 9, 1949, and the plaque on his gravestone in Oak Grove Cemetery.

Harmon and Louisa Miller apparently separated because Martha (Miller) Parry's obituary states that Martha "crossed the plains in 1853" on the way to California.<sup>16</sup> Louise Parry, her daughter, claimed in the October 9, 1949, *La Crosse Tribune* article that her grandmother and mother made the trip to California together.<sup>17</sup> The 1881 history of La Crosse County mentioned that Martha Miller lived in Illinois at some time.<sup>18</sup> If Louisa and Harmon Miller separated after just a few years of marriage, it would make sense for Louisa to go to Illinois first because she had relatives there.



Mrs. Harmon J. B. Miller

(Sanford & Hirshheimer, *A History of La Crosse, Wisconsin 1841-1900*, page 58)

Louisa (Pearson) Miller and daughter Martha Miller journeyed to California with some friends to visit Louisa's brother in California. They must have liked it there because they stayed in California.<sup>19</sup>

On August 10, 1869, Martha Miller married George Parry (1834-1927) in Butte County, California.<sup>20</sup> George was a carpenter who had been born in Pennsylvania.<sup>21</sup> They lived in [Chico, California](#), before moving to Redlands, California, in 1902. After a brief stay in Redlands, they moved to Los Angeles in 1903. Martha Parry was active in the women's suffrage movement and the [Woman's Christian Temperance Union](#). At the time of Martha's death, they were living at 235 North Soto Street in Los Angeles.<sup>22</sup>

Martha (Miller) Parry, the first white child supposedly born in La Crosse, died on June 10, 1917, at the age of 69. She was buried in Evergreen Cemetery in Los Angeles, California.<sup>23</sup>

While living in northern California, Martha Parry had her only child, a daughter named Louise. Louise Parry, then living in Los Angeles, visited La Crosse in October 1949. Miss Parry was the only descendant of Harmon J. B. Miller.<sup>24</sup> She was a teacher in a public school.<sup>25</sup>

Martha Miller was not around to dispute the claim of another “first born” who lived in La Crosse most of her long life---Mary Eckel Ruplin.

Adam Eckel was born in Hamburg, Germany, on June 24, 1824. When he was sixteen years old in 1840, Eckel emigrated to the United States. He settled in Pittsburgh where he met Mary Lais, and they were married in 1851.<sup>26</sup> His bride was born in Spielburg, Germany, on May 27, 1827.<sup>27</sup>

Most modern couples take a honeymoon trip after their marriage, but Mr. and Mrs. Eckel took a trip by boat in 1851 to La Crosse, Wisconsin, where they were among the early settlers in a village situated on a sand prairie on what could be characterized as the western frontier.<sup>28</sup> In November of 1851, La Crosse consisted of “seventeen dwellings and business buildings.”<sup>29</sup> The population of the village of La Crosse was only 285 people.<sup>30</sup>

Just months later, on March 1, 1852, their first child, a daughter also named Mary, was born. At the time of her birth, the Eckel family lived in the only frame house in Prairie La Crosse.<sup>31</sup>

The Eckel family later claimed that young Mary was the first child born in La Crosse, and this was repeated in several newspaper articles in the 1900s.

Martha Miller would have been about five years old at that time, and it is hard to believe that the Eckel family did not know about her in such a small community. But, if Louisa Miller and her daughter, Martha, really did go to California in 1853, and maybe Illinois even before that, any acquaintance may have been fleeting or nonexistent. Her father, Harmon Miller was still in La Crosse until his death in 1862. After that, the first claim (found by the author) about Mary Eckel being first born in La Crosse was made more than 40 years later.

La Crosse already had a hotel, the Augusta House, but Adam Eckel built another one just a short distance away. The Eckel family lived in the hotel along with boarders who were some of the prominent men in early La Crosse---Taylor, Levy, Rose, and Losey. The hotel was one of about 36 buildings destroyed in a massive downtown fire in March 1862. In a 1932 interview, Mary (Eckel) Ruplin, who was just shy of ten years old at the time of the fire, said: “I believe I was one of the first to notice the fire. There was a blizzard raging, and as I looked out of the hotel window, I saw the August (sic) House on fire. I summoned my father, who was one of the officials of the old [fire] brigade organization, and the alarm was sounded.”<sup>32</sup>

The fire started in the Augusta House about 5:00 p.m. on March 18, 1862. What were described as gale-force winds fanned the flames for five hours as they consumed building after building in downtown La Crosse.<sup>33</sup> Five acres of businesses in the area of Pearl and Front streets were just ashes the next morning, among them Adam Eckel’s American House hotel. It was the worst catastrophe in La Crosse up to that time.<sup>34</sup>

The Eckel family had lost their home as well as their business. Fortunately for them, Adam Eckel owned a house at 2<sup>nd</sup> and Jay streets where they lived after the fire.<sup>35</sup>

Adam Eckel was the alderman for the Second Ward in the city of La Crosse in 1864.<sup>36</sup>

By 1868, Adam Eckel was back in business as the owner of the La Crosse and Alma Stage Company. They were then living at 14 South 2<sup>nd</sup> Street.<sup>37</sup> The 1870 census lists his occupation as teamster. By this time,

Adam and Mary Eckel had five children: Mary, Henry, John, Minnie, and Alfred.<sup>38</sup> The 1873 city directory shows his occupation as blacksmith and residence as 44 South 2<sup>nd</sup> Street.<sup>39</sup> He had the same address (2<sup>nd</sup> and Jay streets) and the occupation in 1876, and he was listed as a teamster in 1878.<sup>40</sup> His address and occupation was the same two years later in 1880.<sup>41</sup>

Adam Eckel had moved to 808 South 5<sup>th</sup> Street by 1885. Adam was still working as a teamster.<sup>42</sup> His occupation and address were the same in 1888<sup>43</sup> and 1890.<sup>44</sup> He still lived at 808 South 5<sup>th</sup> Street in 1895, but his occupation had changed to “dealer in forest trees.”<sup>45</sup> Mary (Eckel) Ruplin said her father planted trees in many of the city’s parks and recreational areas.<sup>46</sup>

The 1900 Federal Census shows Adam and Mary Eckel owning the house at 808 South 5<sup>th</sup> Street (later Fifth Avenue) and Adam still working as a day laborer at the age of 75. Their daughter and son-in-law, Mary and Jacob Ruplin and their six children, were living with them.<sup>47</sup> Mary and Jacob’s son, Fred, plus his wife and young daughter, were living in the house too.<sup>48</sup>



808 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue South

Four generations of the Eckel family lived in this house in 1900; it is now subdivided into three apartments

(Photo by Jeff Rand, 2022 April 29)

Adam Eckel died on February 21, 1905, after being ill just a few days with influenza that progressed to pneumonia. Besides John M. Levy, Eckel was said to be “the oldest settler in La Crosse [still residing in the city].” A sub-headline in the newspaper stated: “Was Father of First White Child Ever Born in La

Crosse.” Later in the article is this statement: “Deceased was the father of the first white child born in La Crosse, Mrs. J. Ruplin.” He was survived by his wife, two daughters, and two sons.<sup>49</sup> His funeral was in the Ecker-Ruplin home at 808 South 5<sup>th</sup> Street, and he was buried in Oak Grove Cemetery.<sup>50</sup>

The myth of Mary (Eckel) Ruplin as the first white child born in La Crosse was thus established, if it had not already been prior to Adam Eckel’s death. Was this an honest mistake or misinterpretation by a reporter, or was it a false belief or a false representation by the family? Mary (Miller) Parry, by this time in late middle age and living in California for nearly all of her life, was most likely not aware of the Eckel or Ruplin families in La Crosse, Wisconsin.

Mary Eckel joined her husband in Oak Grove Cemetery six years after his death in 1905. She died at the age of 83 on April 29, 1911, at 412 South 4<sup>th</sup> Street. She had lived with her daughter, Mary (Eckel) Ruplin, and Mary’s husband, Jacob, the last six years of her life.<sup>51</sup>



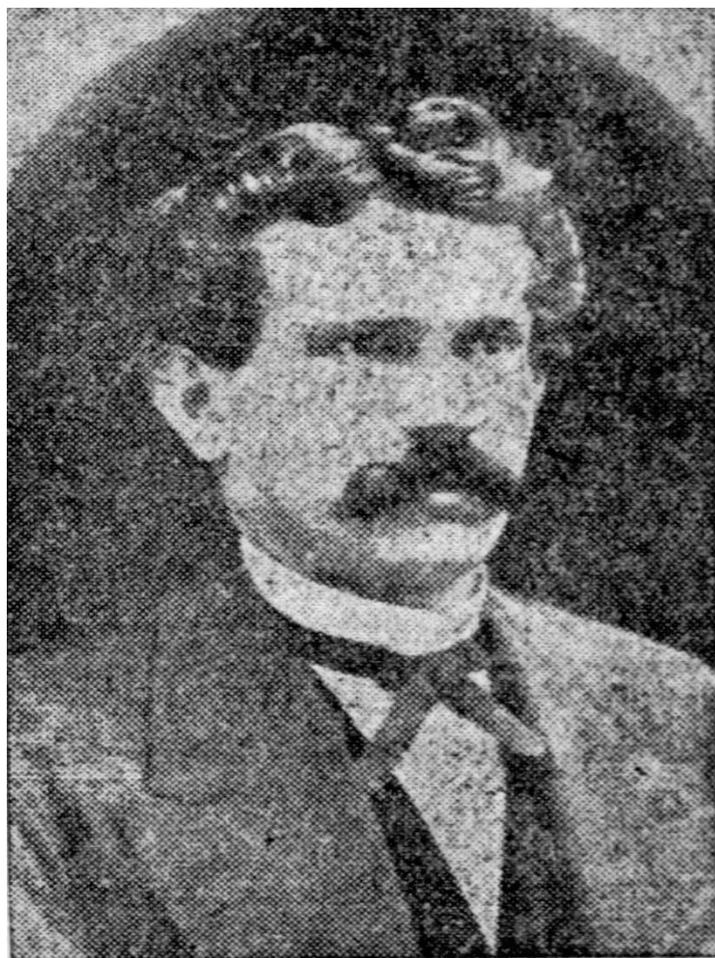
The Eckel gravestone in Oak Grove Cemetery

(Photo courtesy of La Crosse Area Genealogical Society; Find a Grave website)

Mary Eckel had wed 28-year-old Jacob Ruplin on August 24, 1871, when she was 19 years old. They would have six children together: Karl, Emma, Will, Arthur, Walter, and Fred.<sup>52</sup>

Jacob Ruplin was born in 1843 in Schaffhausen, Switzerland, in 1843. He took up the trade of cabinet making. When he was 23 years old, Ruplin came to the United States. He worked briefly in Washington, D.C., from 1866 until the spring of 1867, when he moved to La Crosse. He initially made his living in La Crosse as a contractor and builder.<sup>53</sup> The 1866 city directory shows a “Jack Ruplen” (sic) who is a cabinet maker for Tillman Brothers furniture company.<sup>54</sup>

In 1880, Jacob and Mary Ruplin were living at the northeast corner of 12<sup>th</sup> and Division streets.<sup>55</sup>



Jacob John Ruplin

(*La Crosse Tribune*, 1915 May 21, page 7)

By 1884, their address was shown as 421 South 12<sup>th</sup> Street. Jacob was working as a pattern maker for the John James & Co.<sup>56</sup> This business was located at the southeast corner of Front and King streets--- "Goods of all descriptions manufactured and furnished."<sup>57</sup>

They had moved to 1222 Madison Street by 1888.<sup>58</sup> The city directory in 1890 shows Jacob Ruplin living at that address and still employed as a pattern maker.<sup>59</sup>

Sometime in 1890, Jacob and Mary Ruplin moved to Duluth, Minnesota, where they lived for about five years.<sup>60</sup> In a 1932 interview, Mary Ruplin said, "In 1891, because of the illness of my husband, I suggested we start a bakery. We did, and it is still in operation by members of our family."<sup>61</sup> Perhaps they started a bakery in Duluth, and Mary was referring to when the family started in the bakery business.

When they returned to La Crosse in 1895, Jacob and Mary bought Christian Bayer's bakery at 4<sup>th</sup> and King streets.<sup>62</sup> It was on the northwest corner of the intersection, and the family lived in "an adjoining house."<sup>63</sup>

Under their ownership, the business was so successful that they built a new bakery building in 1900 at 412 South 4<sup>th</sup> Street. They lived in a house next door to the bakery, at 414 South 4<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>64</sup> That house was already on the 171-foot-by-60-foot lot when they purchased the property, and the house was moved a short distance to the south to make room for the new bakery building. Members of the Ruplin family lived on the second floor of the bakery building too.<sup>65</sup>

In the early years, the Ruplin Bakery sold bread and pastries throughout the city. Bakers worked from 6 p.m. to 5 a.m. At 5:30 a.m., a horse-drawn wagon was loaded and sent out into the city where the baked goods were transferred to carts operated by delivery boys. When the boys came by ringing their bells, housewives walked out to the carts to make their selections. In 1911, the company purchased its first car, for a little over \$1,000, to expedite deliveries to the north side of the city. William Ruplin drove the car, which had a top speed of just 15 miles per hour. The retail store at the bakery was open from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. every day of the week. The second ward school was just north of the bakery, and children eagerly bought rolls for 10 cents a dozen or two cookies for a penny.<sup>66</sup>



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Ruplin Baking Co. and their delivery car that was purchased in 1911; a small portion of the Ruplin home can be seen on the left; the building on the right may be the Second Ward School

Their son Fred first suggested the bakery become a wholesale distributor to stores. Apparently, Jacob Ruplin rejected the idea at first but eventually changed his mind.<sup>67</sup> Twenty years after they first went into the bakery business in La Crosse, the Ruplin Bakery was operating ten hours a day producing 5,000 loaves of bread per day that were distributed to stores in parts of Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa.<sup>68</sup> Their baked goods were sent by train to all points of the compass. As business grew, the original bakery building that was 100 feet long increased in length to 171 feet after two additions.<sup>69</sup>

Just over a year after the Ruplin Bakery celebrated 20 years in business, Jacob John Ruplin died on October 1, 1916. A week following an appendicitis attack on September 22, Ruplin's heart, which had plagued him for several years, started to give out. He lapsed into unconsciousness on September 29, and never awoke. He was 73 years old.<sup>70</sup> Jacob Ruplin's funeral was held at their home at 414 South 4<sup>th</sup> Street, and he was buried in Oak Grove Cemetery.<sup>71</sup>

Mary Ruplin and her sons kept the bakery in business after Jacob's death.<sup>72</sup> Along with the Ruplin children, Fred Ruplin's wife, Maud, and Karl's wife, Jessie, also worked there over the years.<sup>73</sup>

Jacob's widow, Mary (Eckel) Ruplin, had a long life after her husband died and outlived some of her children. At several milestone birthdays, she was featured in the local newspaper and celebrated as the first person born in La Crosse.



(*La Crosse Tribune*, 1937 March 1, page 8)

On the occasion of her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, the headline read: “Mrs. Mary Ruplin, First White Girl Born In La Crosse Eighty Years Ago, Observes Her Birthday Next Tuesday.” This article reviewed all the changes and progress in La Crosse that she had seen from the frontier days to that time. The reporter wrote, “She is modest telling the story of her life. She warned the reporter she has always shirked publicity and to ‘make the article short if you must say anything at all about it.’”<sup>74</sup>

Five years later, the headline was: “First White Child Born In City Celebrating 85<sup>th</sup> Birthday Today.” The article goes on to state, “Mrs. Ruplin was born here March 1, 1852, the first white child to claim La Crosse as a birthplace. Her parents were Mr. and Mrs. Adam Eckel.”<sup>75</sup>

On March 1, 1939, the local newspaper noted her 87<sup>th</sup> birthday this way: “Mrs. Mary E. Ruplin, (above), said to be the first white girl born in La Crosse, is celebrating her 87<sup>th</sup> birthday today.” It mentions her parents coming to La Crosse in 1851, and her birth one year later.<sup>76</sup>

When she turned 91 in 1943, E. H. Hoffman, of the *La Crosse Tribune*, wrote this: “She is a native of La Crosse which gives her the distinction of being *the oldest resident who was born in the city.*” [emphasis added]. If Martha Miller was truly the first white child born in La Crosse, then this description of Mary Ruplin is the most technically correct because Martha Miller had lived most of her life in California and died more than 25 years prior. Hoffman goes on to mention some of the changes Ruplin had seen in her lifetime and how her “keen memory” allowed her to recall “many events that occurred when she was a mere child.”<sup>77</sup>

Mary Ruplin’s long life came to an end two years later. In May 1945, she became ill and then died in her home on November 7, 1945, at the age of 93. The headline for the front-page announcement of her death read, “Mrs. Mary Ruplin, First White Girl Born in La Crosse, Dies.”<sup>78</sup>



Grave marker for Mary (Eckel) Ruplin in Oak Grove Cemetery

(Courtesy of the La Crosse Area Genealogical Society; Find a Grave website)

The Ruplin Bakery was still in operation at this time. A third son, Walter, had taken over management of the family business.<sup>79</sup>

After 55 years in business, it all came to an end on April 1, 1950, when the Ruplin Baking Co. building was sold to Clark-Bracken, Inc., an electrical contractor and retail dealer of electrical equipment. Clark-Bracken had been in business for 30 years in La Crosse, the first four in the Rivoli building and 26 years at another location on Fifth Avenue. The company was a distributor for Westinghouse products and employed 25 people.<sup>80</sup>



Aerial view of the former Ruplin Bakery building from the south; this photo was taken after the building had been sold to Clark-Bracken, Inc.; the wooded area to the right is Cameron Park

Clark-Bracken, Inc. remained in business in the former Ruplin Baking building on South 4<sup>th</sup> Street for 15 years. Jessie Ruplin, Karl's widow, was the last person to live in the house at 412 ½ South 4<sup>th</sup> Street. The last time they are listed in the city directory at that location is in 1965.<sup>81</sup> In the 1966 city directory, the even numbered side of the 400 block of South 4<sup>th</sup> Street shows: 408, vacant; 410, Commercial Credit Plan Inc.; 418, Julie Obrecht.<sup>82</sup> Presumably, the former Ruplin Baking building and the adjoining house that had been home to Ruplin family members had been torn down.

By 1967, 408 South 4<sup>th</sup> Street had become Your Uncle's Place Nite Club, Commercial Credit Plan Inc. remained at 410, 418 had been torn down, and 426 was Eversole Rogers Inc. New & Used Cars.<sup>83</sup>

The building at 408 had been built in 1923 for the Bergh Auto Company and was later the R. C. Cheney Co. Chrysler and Plymouth car dealership. On August 29, 1942, the USO ([United Service Organizations](#)) opened its doors to servicemen and women. It was a popular destination during World War II for thousands of men and women in uniform, especially from Camp McCoy near Sparta, until it ceased operation on March 31, 1946.<sup>84</sup> The Veteran's Administration opened a regional office in the building after that. When that closed, the building was vacant for a few years until an automotive and electronics distributor called SM Supply Co. moved in. Then it was vacant in the late 1950s until it was occupied by Alden's Mail Order House.<sup>85</sup> When it became Your Uncle's Place nightclub in 1967, that was just the first of many names this popular downtown night spot went by. Through the years, it was known at the Macamba Club, the Mississippi Queen, Scruples, Silver Bullet, Carp's Rock Bar, Carp's Country Bar, the Varsity Club, and The Excalibur until it was torn down in 1997 to create a car lot for Eversole Motors.<sup>86</sup>

The Eversole Motors property also saw changes through the years. The original Eversole-Rogers Co. was started by A. E. Rogers and Les Eversole at 123 South 6<sup>th</sup> Street in La Crosse before it moved to 4<sup>th</sup> and Cass streets in 1966. In June 2006, Peter Eversole sold the dealership to Lithia Motors, Inc. of Medford, Oregon.<sup>87</sup> After just a couple years of operation as Lithia Chrysler Jeep Dodge of La Crosse, Rahn Pischke, owner of Pischke Motors in West Salem, bought the dealership and renamed it Pischke Motors of La Crosse as of October 1, 2008.<sup>88</sup> Pischke Motors occupies the entire east half of the 400 block of South 4<sup>th</sup> Street to this day. This includes the area where the Ruplin Bakery and Ruplin house once stood.



Approximate location of the former Ruplin Baking Co. as it looks today

(Photo by Jeff Rand, 2022 April 29)

So, we come to the end of a long story about competing claims for the prestige of being acknowledged as the first child born in the then frontier city of La Crosse.

Ironically, Mary I. Miller, great-niece of Harmon J. B. Miller, campaigned in the late 1930s for her great-uncle to be given credit as the co-founder of La Crosse with Nathan Myrick instead of Eben Weld. She presented her theory at a meeting of the La Crosse County Historical Society on May 27, 1938.<sup>89</sup> Miller also wrote about it in the La Crosse County Historical Society's *Sketches, Series 5*. Solid historical evidence, in the form of three ledger books labeled "Myrick and Weld" in the Wisconsin Historical Society, disproves her claim.<sup>90</sup>

Similarly, a controversy involving birth should be simple to mediate with the aid of official records, such as birth certificates. But birth certificates were not required in the state of Wisconsin until 1907, so documentation of births before that year is spotty.<sup>91</sup>

Birth certificates have been routine for so many years that we seldom think about them except when they are needed for legal matters or to obtain other documents. Yet these official records establish the legitimacy of the time and place of the beginning of our lives. And, sometimes, they can even settle an argument. The stakes may be higher than just an isolated claim to fame.

For many years, there was a controversy about the constitutional qualifications of an American president. Rumors swirled that this man had been born in a foreign country and, therefore, was ineligible to be president of the United States. The key piece of evidence that should have finally ended this farce was a birth certificate completed in 1961 in the state of Hawaii. Even that did not satisfy some people.

Everyone, not just historians, needs to be aware that our neighbors might mis-remember or even "make" history. In a time when disinformation, misinformation, myths, and lies threaten to smother the facts, we should not be afraid to say, "Show me the evidence."

Jeff Rand  
La Crosse Public Library (retired)

#### Sources & notes:

<sup>1</sup> Albert H. Sanford and H. J. Hirshheimer, *A History of La Crosse, Wisconsin 1841-1900* (La Crosse, Wisconsin: La Crosse County Historical Society, 1951), 11-15.

<sup>2</sup> R. H. Sanford, "Myrick, Weld Started Trading Here In 1841; Built First Log Cabin South Of State Street," *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1948 June 13, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Sanford and Hirshheimer, *A History of La Crosse, Wisconsin 1841-1900*, 25.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 28.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 23.

<sup>6</sup> Sanford, "Myrick, Weld Started Trading Here in 1841," 1948 June 13.

<sup>7</sup> Anita Taylor Doering, "Oak Grove Pioneers: Harmon Miller," 2008 November, unpaginated, 2<sup>nd</sup> page. Ephemera file in the La Crosse Public Library Archives.

<sup>8</sup> "Lone Descendant Of A City Founder Visits Local Scene," *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1949 October 9, p. 12.

<sup>9</sup> *History of La Crosse County Wisconsin* (Chicago: The Western Historical Company, 1881), 368.

<sup>10</sup> Doering, "Oak Grove Pioneers: Harmon Miller," 2008 November.

<sup>11</sup> "Mrs. Parry Funeral Set For Tomorrow," *Los Angeles Evening Express*, 1917 June 12, p. 5.

- <sup>12</sup> Ancestry, *Find A Grave*, database with images (<http://www.findagrave.com> : accessed 2022 May 10), memorial 213958184, Marth (sic) L A Miller Parry (1847-1917), Evergreen Cemetery, Los Angeles County, California; death certificate image uploaded by Mark Goebel. On the website, her mother's last name is spelled incorrectly as "Louisa M Plerson."
- <sup>13</sup> Doering, "Oak Grove Pioneers: Harmon Miller," 2008 November. The author searched the 1840 United States Federal Census, which did include the Wisconsin territory, but did not find any Harmon Miller in Wisconsin.
- <sup>14</sup> "Lone Descendant Of A City Founder Visits Local Scene," *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1949 October 9.
- <sup>15</sup> 1860 U.S. census, La Crosse County, Wisconsin, population schedule, La Crosse, p. 37, dwelling 353, family 300, Herman J. B. Miller; image, *AncestryHeritageQuest.com* (<http://www.ancestryheritagequest.com> : accessed 2022 May 10); citing NARA microfilm publication M653, roll 1417.
- <sup>16</sup> "Mrs. Parry Funeral Set For Tomorrow," *Los Angeles Evening Express*, 1917 June 12.
- <sup>17</sup> "Lone Descendant Of A City Founder Visits Local Scene," *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1949 October 9. The author searched the United States Federal Census for California and found no listing for a "Martha Miller."
- <sup>18</sup> *History of La Crosse County Wisconsin*, 368. The author searched the United States Federal Census for Illinois and found no listing for "Martha Miller."
- <sup>19</sup> "Lone Descendant Of A City Founder Visits Local Scene," *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1949 October 9.
- <sup>20</sup> *Find A Grave*, memorial 213958184, Marth (sic) L A Miller Parry (1847-1917), death certificate uploaded by Mark Geobel. Martha's obituary states that she was married in 1868.
- <sup>21</sup> 1870 U.S. census, Butte County, California, population schedule, Oregon city, p. 127B, dwelling 142, family 141, George and Martha Perry (sic); image, *AncestryHeritageQuest.com* (<http://www.ancestryheritagequest.com> : accessed 2022 May 10); citing NARA microfilm publication M593, roll 70.
- <sup>22</sup> "Mrs. Parry Funeral Set For Tomorrow," *Los Angeles Evening Express*, 1917 June 12.
- <sup>23</sup> Ancestry, *Find A Grave*, database with images (<http://www.findagrave.com> : accessed 2022 May 10), memorial 213958184, Marth (sic) L A Miller Parry (1847-1917), Evergreen Cemetery, Los Angeles County, California; death certificate image uploaded by Mark Goebel.
- <sup>24</sup> "Lone Descendant Of A City Founder Visits Local Scene," *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1949 October 9.
- <sup>25</sup> "Mrs. Parry Funeral Set For Tomorrow," *Los Angeles Evening Express*, 1917 June 12.
- <sup>26</sup> "Adam Eckel Dead," *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1905 February 21, p. 1.
- <sup>27</sup> "Aged Residents Called By Death," *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1911 May 1, p. 6.
- <sup>28</sup> "Adam Eckel Dead," *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1905 February 21.
- <sup>29</sup> Sanford and Hirshheimer, *A History of La Crosse, Wisconsin 1841-1900*, 36.
- <sup>30</sup> "Growth of City Cited in Colman Museum Account," *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1927 March 20, p. 9. In this article, it states that the population of the village had grown to 1,500.
- <sup>31</sup> "Mrs. Mary Ruplin, First White Girl Born In La Crosse, Dies," *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1945 November 8, p. 1. The first mention of the "first child" claim found by the author was in the *La Crosse Tribune*, February 1905, article about the death of Adam Eckel.
- <sup>32</sup> "Mrs. Mary Ruplin, First White Girl Born in La Crosse Eighty Years Ago, Observes Her Birthday Next Tuesday," *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1932 February 28, p. 2. There are discrepancies in the year that fire destroyed the Augusta House and many other surrounding buildings. This article states that it was 60 years ago, and that would make it 1872. Mary Ruplin's obituary in the November 8, 1945, *La Crosse Tribune* states that the fire was 70 years ago, and that would make it 1875. An article in the *La Crosse Tribune*, April 21, 1920, announcing the death of John Levy, who owned the Augusta House, stated the fire was in 1862. The author confirmed that this fire occurred on March 18, 1862, by viewing articles in the March 19, 1862, and March 21, 1862, editions of the *La Crosse Tri-Weekly Democrat*.
- <sup>33</sup> "Destructive Fire!! Loss \$125,000!" *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tri-Weekly Democrat*, 1862 March 19, p. 2.
- <sup>34</sup> "Particulars of the Fire," *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tri-Weekly Democrat*, 1862 March 21, p. 1. This article lists the buildings destroyed, which included six owned by John M. Levy, and the estimated dollar loss of each. Levy's four-story Augusta House was valued at \$20,000; the American House owned by Adam Eckel was valued at \$1,000. The writer of this article was very critical of the tactics employed by the chief engineer of the fire company and called him "incompetent for his position." According to Sanford and Hirshheimer in their book, *A History of La Crosse, Wisconsin 1841-1900* (page 78), was eighty feet by eighty feet and had one hundred rooms.

<sup>35</sup> “Mrs. Mary Ruplin, First White Girl Born in La Crosse Eighty Years Ago, Observes Her Birthday Next Tuesday,” *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1932 February 28.

<sup>36</sup> *History of La Crosse County Wisconsin*, 499.

<sup>37</sup> F. A. Ketchum, compiler, *F. A. Ketchum’s La Crosse City Business Directory for 1868—69, Embracing a Classified List of All . . .* (La Crosse, Wisconsin: Democrat Book and Job Printing Office, 1868) 81, for “Eckel Adam.”

<sup>38</sup> 1870 U.S. census, La Crosse County, Wisconsin, population schedule, La Crosse, p. 13, dwelling 72, family 76, Adam and Mary Eckel; image, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestryheritagequest.com> : accessed 2022 April 25); citing NARA microfilm publication M593, roll 1721.

<sup>39</sup> *La Crosse City Directory For 1873—74. Comprising a Complete List of the Citizens . . .* (La Crosse, Wisconsin: Campbell & Davison, 1873) 65, for “Eckel Adam.”

<sup>40</sup> *Pryor & Co.’s La Crosse City Directory 1876-7 Comprising An Alphabetical List of Citizens . . .* (La Crosse, Wisconsin: Pryor & Co., 1876) 68, for “Eckel, Adam.” See also Adam’s entries under “Eckel” in Pryor & Co. directories for subsequent years, specifically: (1878) 69.

<sup>41</sup> *Morrissey & Bunn’s La Crosse City Directory 1880-81 Comprising An Alphabetical List of Citizens . . .* (La Crosse, Wisconsin: Morrissey & Bunn, 1880) 77, for “Eckel, Adam.”

<sup>42</sup> *Urban Publishing Company’s La Crosse City Directory for the Years 1885-1886, Comprising An Alphabetical List of Names. . .* (La Crosse, Wisconsin: A. B. Lamborn, 1885) 154, for “Eckel, Adam.”

<sup>43</sup> *Bunn & Philippi’s La Crosse City Directory 1888-9 Comprising An Alphabetical List of Names. . .* (La Crosse, Wisconsin: Bunn & Philippi, 1888) 189, for “Eckel, Adam.”

<sup>44</sup> *Spicer & Buschman’s La Crosse Directory 1890 Comprising An Alphabetical List of Names. . .* (La Crosse, Wisconsin: Spicer & Buschman, 1890) 86, for “Eckel, Adam.”

<sup>45</sup> *Philippi’s La Crosse City and County Directory Comprising An Alphabetical List of Names . . .* (La Crosse, Wisconsin: L. P. Philippi Co., 1895) 123, for “Eckel Adam.”

<sup>46</sup> “Mrs. Mary Ruplin, First White Girl Born in La Crosse Eighty Years Ago, Observes Her Birthday Next Tuesday,” *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1932 February 28.

<sup>47</sup> 1900 U.S. census, La Crosse County, Wisconsin, population schedule, La Crosse, p. 3A, dwelling 44, family 51, Adam and Mary Eckel; image, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestryheritagequest.com> : accessed 2022 May 11); citing NARA microfilm publication T623, roll 1795.

<sup>48</sup> 1910 U.S. census, La Crosse County, Wisconsin, population schedule, La Crosse, p. 1B, dwelling 12, family 14, Fred and Maude Ruplin; image, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestryheritagequest.com> : accessed 2022 May 11); citing NARA microfilm publication T624, roll 1716. This confirms the names of Fred’s wife and daughter, who are listed as boarders with Adam and Mary Eckel in the 1900 census.

<sup>49</sup> “Adam Eckel Dead,” *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1905 February 21.

<sup>50</sup> “Funeral of Adam Eckel,” *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1905 February 22, p. 1.

<sup>51</sup> “Aged Residents Called By Death,” *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1911 May 1.

<sup>52</sup> “Mrs. Mary Ruplin, First White Girl Born in La Crosse Eighty Years Ago, Observes Her Birthday Next Tuesday,” *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1932 February 28.

<sup>53</sup> *History of La Crosse County Wisconsin*, 789.

<sup>54</sup> A. Bailey and J. M. Wolfe, compilers, *A. Bailey’s La Crosse Directory For 1866-67 Comprising A Complete List of all Residents in the City . . .* (La Crosse, Wisconsin: A. Bailey, 1866) 83, for “Ruplin Jack.”

<sup>55</sup> *Morrissey & Bunn’s La Crosse City Directory 1880-81 Comprising An Alphabetical List of Citizens . . .* (La Crosse, Wisconsin: Morrissey & Bunn, 1880) 144, for “Ruplin, Jacob.”

<sup>56</sup> *Jan. 15, 1884 Bunn & Philippi’s La Crosse City Directory Comprising An Alphabetical List of Names. . .* (Winona, Minnesota: Jones & Kroeger, 1884) 199, for “Ruplin Jacob.”

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 122, for “James John & Co.”

<sup>58</sup> *Bunn & Philippi’s La Crosse City Directory 1888-9 Comprising An Alphabetical List of Names. . .* (La Crosse, Wisconsin: Bunn & Philippi, 1888) 355, for “Ruplin Jacob.”

<sup>59</sup> *Spicer & Buschman’s La Crosse Directory 1890 Comprising An Alphabetical List of Names. . .* (La Crosse, Wisconsin: Spicer & Buschman, 1890) 220, for “Ruplin Jacob.”

<sup>60</sup> “Jacob J. Ruplin Dies Peacefully In Short Illness,” *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1916 October 2, p. 1.

<sup>61</sup> “Mrs. Mary Ruplin, First White Girl Born in La Crosse Eighty Years Ago, Observes Her Birthday Next Tuesday,” *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1932 February 28.

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- <sup>62</sup> “Jacob J. Ruplin Dies Peacefully In Short Illness,” *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1916 October 2.
- <sup>63</sup> “Peanut Roll, Bread-Like-Mom Made Soon Will Be Memory As Ruplin Baking Co. Sells Plant,” *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1950 March 26, p. 13.
- <sup>64</sup> “Jacob J. Ruplin Dies Peacefully In Short Illness,” *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1916 October 2.
- <sup>65</sup> “Peanut Roll, Bread-Like-Mom Made Soon Will Be Memory As Ruplin Baking Co. Sells Plant,” *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1950 March 26.
- <sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>68</sup> “Ruplin’s ‘Staff of Life’ Keeps Us Two Decades,” *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1915 May 21, p. 7.
- <sup>69</sup> “Peanut Roll, Bread-Like-Mom Made Soon Will Be Memory As Ruplin Baking Co. Sells Plant,” *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1950 March 26.
- <sup>70</sup> “Jacob J. Ruplin Dies Peacefully In Short Illness,” *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1916 October 2.
- <sup>71</sup> “Master Baker Is Buried From Home With Simple Rites,” *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1916 October 3, p. 6.
- <sup>72</sup> “Karl H. Ruplin, Supervisor, Dies,” *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1941 June 14, p. 1. Even this article states: “His parents were Jacob and Mary Ruplin, his mother being the first white girl to be born in La Crosse.”
- <sup>73</sup> “Peanut Roll, Bread-Like-Mom Made Soon Will Be Memory As Ruplin Baking Co. Sells Plant,” *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1950 March 26.
- <sup>74</sup> “Mrs. Mary Ruplin, First White Girl Born in La Crosse Eighty Years Ago, Observes Her Birthday Next Tuesday,” *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1932 February 28.
- <sup>75</sup> “First White Child Born In City Celebrating 85<sup>th</sup> Birthday Today,” *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1937 March 1, p. 8.
- <sup>76</sup> “87 Years Old,” *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1939 March 1, p. 2. This article incorrectly states that Mary Ruplin had lived her entire life in La Crosse; there were those five years in Duluth.
- <sup>77</sup> E. H. Hoffman, “Curbstone Pickups,” *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1943 March 5, p. 6.
- <sup>78</sup> “Mrs. Mary Ruplin, First White Girl Born In La Crosse, Dies,” *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1945 November 8.
- <sup>79</sup> *Wright’s La Crosse City Directory 1941* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Wright Directory Co., 1941) 482, for “Ruplin Baking Co.” See also Ruplin Baking Co. entries under Ruplin in Wright directories for subsequent years, specifically: (1948) 491.
- <sup>80</sup> “Peanut Roll, Bread-Like-Mom Made Soon Will Be Memory As Ruplin Baking Co. Sells Plant,” *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1950 March 26.
- <sup>81</sup> *Wright’s La Crosse (La Crosse County) City Directory 1965 Including: French Island and Onalaska* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Wright Directory Co., 1965) 9, for “412 4<sup>th</sup> Street South.”
- <sup>82</sup> *Wright’s La Crosse (La Crosse County) City Directory 1966 Including: French Island and Onalaska* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Wright Directory Co., 1966) 9, for “412 4<sup>th</sup> Street South.”
- <sup>83</sup> *Wright’s La Crosse (La Crosse County) City Directory 1967 Including: French Island and Onalaska* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Wright Directory Co., 1967) 9, for “412 4<sup>th</sup> Street South.”
- <sup>84</sup> Doug Connell, “Former bar was a USO,” *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1997 July 18, p. A-4.
- <sup>85</sup> Mike Starling, “Building’s legacy included more than just music clubs,” *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1997 August 7, p. E-3.
- <sup>86</sup> Mike Starling, “From disco to rock, legacy of downtown club lives on,” *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1997 July 17, p. E-3.
- <sup>87</sup> Steve Cahalan, “Eversole Motors sold,” *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 2006 June 28, p. A1.
- <sup>88</sup> Steve Cahalan, “Pischke buying Lithia dealership in La Crosse,” *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 2008 September 18, p. D1.
- <sup>89</sup> “Historical Society Meets Friday Night,” *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, 1938 May 22, p. 5.
- <sup>90</sup> Sanford and Hirshheimer, *A History of La Crosse, Wisconsin 1841-1900*, 30.
- <sup>91</sup> The author searched Pre-1907 Vital Records on the Wisconsin Historical Society website and did not find a birth record for either Martha Miller or Mary Eckel.