ALLEN OBENCHAIN, an old and respected resident of Adams Township, is a native of Botetourt County, Va., born September 17, 1821, one of fourteen children born to John and Elizabeth (Stair) Obenchain, natives of Virginia, where they lived until they came to Indiana in 1837, settling in Tippecanoe County. Our subject was reared on a farm in his native county, receiving a common school education, and at the age of seventeen came with his parents to this State. In 1841 he came to Cass County, where he was engaged in threshing wheat and operated the first threshing machine that was introduced in the county. August 1, 1848, he married Eliza Obenchain, a native of Clark County, Ohio, born September 25, 1828, and a daughter of Thomas and Susan (Chapman) Obenchain, natives of Virginia. By this union he is the father of twelve children: An infant, which died unnamed; Thomas E., born July 13, 1850, died September 21, 1857; Martha J., born August 10, 1852; Charles P., born June 16, 1854, died May 13, 1855; William A., born October 30, 1856; Allen B., born June 28, 1858, died March 29, 1860; George W., born January 22, 1860; John E., born May 28, 1862, died June 3, 1872; Henry G., born May 14, 1864, died November 17, 1865; Elder F., born February 12, 1867; Ginevra L., born September 29, 1869; and Elmer F., born July 13, 1872, died March 11, 1873. Mr. Obenchain has passed the greater portion of his life thus far engaged in agricultural pursuits, in which he has been successful, now owning two good farms in Adams Township, which have been secured entirely by himself and wife, and, what is far more desirable and commendable, an honest name and unblemished reputation. Himself and wife are members of the Christian Church, and he is a Democrat in politics.
The Third Generation

Children of Johnathan and Elizabeth (Stair) Obenchain

I.I.2.1.6.6. Allen Stair Obenchain was the sixth son of Johnathan and Elizabeth Stair Obenchain.

Born September 7, 1821 in the Mill Creek area of Botetourt County, Virginia. He was raised on a farm and had a common school education.

In 1836 his parents moved the family to Indiana. For his service in the War of 1812, his father had been awarded 160 acres in Tippecanoe County. Allen was fifteen when they went to Indiana. Five years later when he was twenty he moved to Cass County, Indiana, to operate the first harvesting machine introduced to that area. During the harvesting of grain season, he traveled from farm to farm getting the crops in. The rest of the time he farmed his own land in Adams Township, Cass County.

In 1848 he married Eliza Obenchain, a cousin from another branch of the Obenchain tree. Her parents were natives of Virginia who had lived in Clark County, Ohio. Eliza was born September 25, 1828, the daughter of Thomas Obenchain and Susan Chapman, in Ohio.
Eliza married Allen on August 4, 1848. They had twelve children. Five lived to adulthood. Seven of their sons died at ages from newborn to ten years and are buried in the Skinner Chapel graveyard about a mile from their home. Their first child to live was Martha Jane, born in 1852 and named after Allen's sister, Martha Jane Oberchain, who was especially well liked in the family. Eliza and Allen's three sons who lived were William, born 1856 and George, born 1860, followed by Elder F (Frank), born 1867 and finally nineteen years after their first daughter, Genevieve SSDore was born in 1869.

As a farmer, Allen had prospered and built up two fine farms before he retired at seventy-two. Eliza and Allen moved to town, Mexico City, Indiana, for a much less strenuous life than farming. Their sons were left to maintain the farms.

Eliza died in 1900 and Allen lived until 1904. Both are buried, with their seven little boys, in the Skinner Chapel graveyard.
The Third Generation:

Children of Johnathan and Elizabth Oberchain

11.21.6.13 Martha Jane's Oberchain was the thirteenth child of Johnathan and Elizabeth. Born January 30, 1838 she was so popular in the Oberchain and Erbaugh families that it is said the tradition became after her death to name the first-born girl in a family "Jane." Martha Jane was the last of the two girls born to Johnathan and Elizabeth after they left Virginia and settled in Tippecanoe County Indiana. In that family there were seven girls and five boy brothers of Allen Oberchain the sixth child.

Martha Jane married James Van Atta December 23rd 1859. Their only child Carrie Van Atta was Isadore's cousin.

Their farm called "Engleside" was near a small town called Otterbine near Lafayette in Tippecanoe County.

Isadore's children recall the many stories she told of the enjoyable times she had visiting her Aunt and Uncle and her cousin there.

In the Erbaugh section of this book there are a few letters to Isadore, one is from Carrie written after Martha Jane's death in 1892. This letter is the only source we have for Carrie Van Atta.
The Third Generation
Children of Thomas + Elizabeth Obenchain

11.22.41. William Alexander Obenchain
was born in the year 1841 in Buchanan,
Botetourt County, Virginia. He married
Lydia Hall. In 1883 when she was twenty
seven. William and Lydia had four children
who were all "remarkable," according to their
mother. Lydia Obenchain was an author;
she wrote many books and articles promoting
equal rights for women. Lydia was a leader in
publishing the early campaign to pass the
E.R.A. (Equal Rights Amendment.) One of her
books is in our collection, (thanks to our
sister Sarah Elineva Erbaugh James.) This
book, now rated as a classic, deals with
the lack of control women had over their
children and their property. This book
"Aunt Jane of Kentucky" was recommended by
Teddy Roosevelt, in a speech at Lansing
Michigan during his second term as a
tract for all families where the men folks
tend to selfish or thoughtless or overbearing
disregard to the rights of their womenfolk.
A very interesting but sad account of her
life is told in an interview (by Living Fellow,
a reporter,) which follows.

As for William Alexander, himself our
our records state that he was an Honorary Graduate of Virginia Military Institute. He was appointed to the Engineers of the Confederate Army and served for a time on the staff of Robert E. Lee.

For twenty three years after that war he was the President of Ogden College at Bowling Green, Kentucky. William was the recipient of many educational honors and was voted the most lovable man in the city.

Ewing Halloway, the reporter, met William, during his interview with the author Eliza Calvert Hall, Lydia's pen name. He described him as "stilted, old fashioned and dignified. Known by his students as "the Major," he was a Confederate gentleman of the old school with remarkably liberal views on women's equality. Read the interview which follows.

The letter by his younger brother, Francis also tells much about William's life and is also next after we follow the first son of the four children of William and Lydia.

William, who was fifteen years older than Lydia, died in 1916 at age 75. Lydia was struggling with arthritis, in the years before she died was still ambitious. "There is still so much work I am capable of and want to do." She died in 1937.
The Third Generation
Children of Thomas and Elizabeth Obenchain
11.2.242

Frances Gardiner Obenchain was born February 15, 1843 in Buchanan, Botetourt County, Virginia. He was only twenty years old when he joined the Confederate Army. Early in his army experience Frances started making maps of fields of battle. In the following letter he tells about being in the battle at Fort Gibson. In Pemberton's army the letter says, he was known as "the little fighting sergeant."

At the siege of Vicksburg, the Confederates were being forced to retreat. All higher rank officers had been carried from the field for either death or exhaustion. The command of the famous "Botetourt Artillery" was given to Frances. He and what was left of the battery were the last to leave the field late in the afternoon. The two guns that he ordered brought with them are now to be seen at Vicksburg National Park. Frances was promoted for "Distinguished Valor and Skill," in covering the retreat of the Confederate Army.

When the Vicksburg Military Park was being
laid out, his maps were judged authentic
and were used along with other valuable
information he supplied. In appreciation
of his help, he was invited to the
formal opening ceremonies as a guest
of the War Department.

In 1875 Frances married Anna
Brown from Memphis. In his letter to
Mrs. Rabby Brugh Jennings, he declares Anna
to be the most courageous woman who
ever lived. They had three daughters,
Jeanette, Maud and Elizabeth. For
more than forty years Frances had
held a large tract of land on Biscayne
Bay in Florida. His family had lived
there and he knew its potential. Many
offers had come to him but he envisioned
some day a city could be built there.
Finally he sold it for $1,375,000. That
land became the city of Coral Gables.

In his letter to Mrs. Jennings
Frances gives us a lot of information about
his older brother William Alexander Obenchain,
and his ancestor Lt. Samuel Obenchain, the
only one of Reinholds's (who was born in
Germany) sons to serve in the American
Revolution, also more about himself. He died 10/6/1926
The Fourth Generation

Children of William and Lydia Obenchain

1.2.2.a.1. William Alexander Obenchain Jr. was called Alex and was the oldest of the four children raised by William and Lydia. He was born first of their children but no date of birth is found in our sources. Nor is there any information about his marriage, if any.

The reporter who interviewed Eliza Calvert Hall describes him as a "handsome young man...who stands six foot three."

Alex was in command of a Battalion of Artillery in France during the Second World War with the rank of Major in Chief of Artillery. Later in civilian life he was a highway engineer in Kentucky and Texas.

His life would be shadowed by melancholy and a weakness for alcohol. There is a question of whether his mysterious death at age fifty was murder or suicide.

Annotations in the interview present a sad story about three of Lydia and William's four children. The other children of William and Lydia were Maegery Obenchain (M. Arthur Winston), Thomas Hall Obenchain (M. Scotta Goodwin) and Cecelia Obenchain. Cecelia died in 1937.
Mrs Ruby Brough Jennings - Nace Virginia wrote a letter to Francis Obermacher - Frances G. Obermacher replied on 10/2/1926.

She was inquiring about a relative, Samuel Obermacher's service in Revolution War as a "lieutenant".

To qualify for the D.A.R.?

Ruby Brough Jennings was likely a daughter of George Obermacher b. 1827. George married Maria Brough 9/5/1853 (Enniscastle marriage book) George's father, Reinholdt b. 1524, signed the pledge to the Colonies in Douglassville, Pa., on July 28, 1777. Certified by Mary Ellen Frescoln, Book D, pg. 10 in the "Oath of Allegiance and Fidelity", Berks Co. Hist Society. Which entitled descendants of Reinholdt Obermacher to membership in the D.A.R. (Obermacher pg. 19, SAR).

Reinholdt's eldest son, Samuel Obermacher, fought in the Revolutionary War. He was a lieutenant in the 5th Company, 4th Battalion, Berks County Militia.

Samuel took the Oath to the Colonies on May 24, 1778, and his signature, certified by the same Secretary, is on pg. 57, Book D, Volume 1, Berks Co. Historical Society. His appointment to Lieutenant by Capt. Samuel Sands is recorded in Pennsylvania Archives 1783-1787 pg. 331.
LETTER FROM FRANCIS G. ORNICHAIN

Marion, Virginia
October 2, 1926

Mrs. Ruby Brugh Jennings
Nace, Virginia.

My dear Cousin:

I received your last letter but the terrible happening at Miami, Florida, has prevented me from attempting to reply until now. One of my daughters, her maid, and a large German police dog were at the time in our home; it was the dog who saved both women from being lost in the tornado, and the huge tidal wave that brought the water to the second floor — in height 15 feet above the ground.

Learning of the storm, I began sending telegrams. Sometimes as many as three a day but could get no replies to my messages. In the meantime my wife, who was at the time in Hot Springs, Arkansas, wired me she was starting to land. Still no word from Miami and not until she reached there did I get a telegram from them that she had arrived and that our daughter had escaped death. But when her telegram came, intense worry had caused me to collapse. I was in bed for five days. I am old, feeble, and paralyzed from my hips down, and in no condition to hold up under great trials. I am up now and have received many telegrams from my heroic wife, and a more heroic woman does not exist.

The damage to our home is considerable but that caused no worry as long as our daughter came through safely and there was a narrow escape. The damage to our house will be about $10,000 and we will repair it but will require two weeks or more. All on our first floor, seven rooms, all furniture was destroyed. Carried by the huge tidal wave out and presumably into the ocean. Our house is on the bay, and in that part of the bay got the worst of the tidal wave. The destruction of property and loss of lives, my wife writes me, was very great and also appalling. A letter from my wife this morning states that the people are now barely able to work to repair the damage. So you will understand from what I have written why I have not answered your letter sooner. I will say that the second floor of our house, seven rooms is intact — the furniture unhurt, so it is just as comfortable as before the storm. Many windows broken out but no cold weather down there.

As for the Archives of Pennsylvania giving names of those who served in the Revolution from that State, I carefully went through it two years ago, and also Archives of New York, New Jersey, Penn., Maryland, and North Carolina, and our name does not appear and the reason that Samuel is in controversy is that he and three brothers came to Botetourt, Virginia, shortly after the Revolution, and families of Virginia took more interest in keeping advertised their own relatives and their close relations than in looking to the interest of the entire people of the State. Take for instance those multitudes from
this part of the state, all volunteers, to fight the battle of
King's Mountain and the winning of which turned the winning of
the Revolution in our favor. Of this there is no question and
yet those in control in East Virginia never made any effort to
gather and record the names of those heroes.

As regards the Samuel, the oldest of the four brothers, there is
no question that he was a Lieutenant in the Revolution for I saw
the document that was in possession of his son Samuel. This Sam-
uel lived on a farm about two miles from what we then knew as
Blue Ridge on the macadamized road eight miles west of Buckman.
A Samuel O. lived there and was called "Little Sam" because he was
much smaller than the one who owned a farm two miles from Blue
Ridge.

Get the Samuel I mean fixed in your mind and drop "Little Sam".
There ought to be old men and women in that neighborhood who in
the gone-by days knew Samuel as well as I did and I knew them
well enough to visit their home many times in young days. This
Samuel married a Miss Toler from near Richmond. He certainly was
son of Samuel to whom was issued the appointment as Lieutenant.
His mother was living and as a small boy I saw her. She was very
old, blind, and in her dotage. This Samuel was unquestionably a son
of the first Samuel who came to Botetourt. He had three sons, Wil-
liam never married, Alfred, Colonel of Cavalry, was killed during
the Civil War, and A. T. Obenshain who came in possession of the
Lieutenant appointment. Had it with him when living in Dallas, Tex-
as. Unfortunately sent the document to be exhibited at a fair held
in Sherman, Texas, and the booth in which it was placed caught fire,
and all within was destroyed. This you can rely on as being facts
but what I state may not pass muster to determine your eligibility
to become a U.A.R. Of course, as you understand, it does not concern
me as I am descended from his brother who was only a small boy dur-
ing the Revolution. Dr. Simmons could give you information concern-
ing this Samuel I mean. Perhaps the Doctor was a member of the Blue
Ridge Rifles that became a part of the 28th Virginia Infantry.

Coming back to the appointment as a Lieutenant above mentioned and
whether or not it would be recognized, I would make an affidavit of
its existence.

I had ancestors who were in the Revolution but were not mentioned by
the then authorities of Virginia but they have been noted by other
authorities and had to be authenticated by those empowered to decide
upon such matters. Two of my ancestors were with General George Rog-
ers Clark in winning the West from the English—all that Northwest
section and one of them was a Captain in General Clark's Army.

Two of my daughters are members of the U.A.R.

As for the article you mentioned reading in the September number of
the Shrine Magazine, I never read or saw a copy of that publication.
I am the man that it mentioned concerning the $1,300,000 but I was never a professor.

My brother Major William Alexander Obenheim, became an educational man devoting his life to that calling. To begin with, he was an honorary graduate of Virginia Military Institute, and was selected for the Engineer Corps, serving in that capacity, was made an officer in the Confederate Army. A part of the time he was on General R.E. Lee's Staff. His last position was as president of Ogden College in Bowling Green, Kentucky, and was its president for 23 years. He died in 1916 and is buried in Bowling Green. Had many friends and was rated as the most lovable man in that city. Stood high as an educational man receiving many honors, was a man of profound knowledge and received honors from many colleges and universities. One of his sons, also named William Alexander Obenheim, commanded a Battalion of Artillery in France during the World War with the rank of Major in Chief of Artillery. My brother's wife is the author of many books, one of them, "Aunt Jane of Kentucky" is rated as a classic, also the author of many other books. Her home is now in Dallas, Texas, and she is still writing. Her writings are under a nom-de-plume, -- Eliza Calvert Hall.

The foundation of my fortune was laid in Florida nearly forty years ago. Time and again I could have sold my holdings but I held on believing as did others that a city would be built on Biscayne Bay. I had numerous offers, some very large, yet I held on. I was obliged to sell until I could get my price. My wife, a noble woman, went there, and made the sale. Infirmities prevented me from attending to the matter. We knew Florida and the possibilities. The family lived there for many years. I am old and infirm and need very little for remainder of my life. Too old for pleasures of any kind. However, my children are amply provided for and that is some consolation for me.

I have informed you about my brother's career during the Civil War and now will try to tell you of mine. I was the last Captain of Bottetourt Artillery and after surrender of General Lee's Army at Appomattox disbanded the company at Christiansburg and then organized a body of cavalry—a company and mounted on my battery, horses and all men equipped with cavalry arms and went to Johnston's army reaching there a few days before he surrendered. That was my end in the war. I was in many battles. While a Lieutenant, I commanded the company in 90 percent of its battles. I gained favor at the battle of Fort Gibson, Mississippi, and because of that was made a Lieutenant in the Regular Confederate Army for "valor and skill". I was in all the battles of that campaign and at the siege of Vicksburg command a long part of the line. My command consisted of Infantry, Field Artillery, a mortar battery, and a Siege Gun Battery. Because of my action at the battle of Fort Gibson some of the officers in Grant's army visited me the day after we surrendered. Among them was Major General Smith of the Federal Army who confronted our battery in that battle. All of which has been a matter of history. And in which history I had nothing whatever
Letter from Francis G. Obenschain (cont.)

to do in its writing. I had gained a reputation in our army and was afterwards offered a staff position but declined it as I wished to continue on the firing line.

You mentioned a Dr. Simmons who you stated was a member of the 28th Virginia Infantry. If so he was certainly in first Manassas Battle. Ask him, should you see him, if he remembers all our regiments in that battle, the 28th Virginia. How we double-quicked four miles to get to our left and how we went in line a little west of the Henry House. How the 13th Virginia Regiment, commanded by Colonel Withers, just on left of us fired the last round into a Federal Regiment, and routed them. That ended the battle in our favor. Our Colonel— that brave man...Colonel Robert Preston, started us in pursuit of the enemy and when we reached the bridge at Bull Run there came one of Joseph Johnston's staff officers and stopped our pursuit. Ask Dr. Simmons if he recalls how Colonel Preston swore and swore. That action on part of Johnston—his plan of warfare ultimately caused us to lose the war. We should have gone into Washington and had Stonewall Jackson been permitted he would have gone into Washington. Jackson was a fighter and Joe Johnston was not and never won a battle.

That you can see that I am not a young, I enclose a picture of myself taken by my daughter while she was on a visit to Marion during the summer. Compare this with Dr. Simmons when you see him or any other old Confederate soldier you may know to find out how much better looking they may be than I am.

I have been several days trying to write this letter and if you find it hard to read charge the defects to my old age and other infirmities.

With greatest respect, I am

Francis G. Obenschain
effort of the enemy to advance in their front.

About 12 o'clock, Colonel [D. R.] Hundley, having ventured too far in front of his line in search of a better position nearer to the enemy, was severely wounded, and the command devolved on Lieutenant-Colonel [T. M.] Arrington, a copy of whose report is herewith submitted.*

In order that no means should be spared to resist the advance of the enemy, I sent Adjutant Smith to the rear, to bring up the two pieces of artillery belonging to Captain Johnston's battery, which had been ordered to retire, as before stated. Lieutenant Peters had bravely fallen while at his post in the desperate fight in the morning, and Captain Johnston, who had with undaunted courage and true heroism skillfully managed his artillery, had been borne from the field completely exhausted. Adjutant Smith found Sergeant [Francis G.] Obenchain in command of the two remaining pieces, delivered to him the order, and caused them to be planted on a hill some 600 yards in our rear, and directed that they should be ready for any emergency. Sergeant Obenchain, who had in the forenoon exhibited uniform coolness and unflinching nerve, promptly brought forward what was left of his command and took position as directed.

Learning from Colonel Shelley and Lieutenant-Colonel Pettus that the enemy were about occupying a high hill to the right of our center, from which our men had been driven by an overwhelming force, they were ordered to retire with their commands and take a new and strong
Western Kentucky University

From the Selected Works of Lynn E. Niedermeier

December 2004

A 1908 Interview With the Author of "Aunt Jane of Kentucky"

Obenchain home, 1353 Chestnut St., Bowling Green Ky.

"Lydia said "this is the house that Aunt Jane bought.""
Hi Mom,

After our call today I checked the internet and found that when Teddy Roosevelt recommended people read Aunt Jane of Kentucky in 1908 he was the President and in his last year of his second term. It wasn't until 1912 that he ran for president again as the Progressive Party candidate. The Progressive Party was nicknamed the Bull Moose Party.

The actual quote from his speech in 1908 was “I cordially recommend the first chapter of Aunt Jane of Kentucky as a tract in all families where the menfolk tend to selfish or thoughtless or overbearing disregard to the rights of their womenfolk.” The chapter he references is Sally Ann's Experience.

Below is a brief summary about Ms. Obenchain and her background.

I was pleased to read here that President Theodore Roosevelt was a fan of Edith Calvert Hall. In May of 1907 before a large audience in Lansing, Michigan, he proclaimed that “Aunt Sallie’s Experience,” a story in Aunt Jane of Kentucky, be made required reading for men who tended to selfish and thoughtless overbearing disregard of the rights of their women-kind. Aunt Sallie herself said it is “Better to be a Kentucky horse than a Kentucky woman.”