

FAMILY LINE 07 OF 08 • A MATERNAL LINE OF THE RYCROFTS

The Steinkes

*Bette's people — German Lutheran settlers of the Sexsmith
prairie*

*OSSOWKA, CENTRAL POLAND • WINNIPEG 1892 • THE SEXSMITH PRAIRIE • C. 1858
— TODAY*



*A companion to the Rycroft story. The Steinkes reach this family through **Bette Doreen Steinke**, who married Sam Rycroft in 1959. For years the record went no further back than Bette's parents, Henry and Martha, and the chase across the ocean sat on the to-do list. Then a single evening of records work dropped the floor of the story. How deep it now goes — and on the strength of what one document — is what this page tells.*

PROLOGUE

Durchhalten

entral Poland · the Canadian plains · 1858 to today

C There is a German word for what carried families like the Steinkes: *durchhalten* — to hold out, to endure, to keep your grip on a thing through a long hard stretch when letting go would be easier. It is the word for a German Lutheran farm family pinned for generations between two empires, that pulled up its roots, crossed an ocean, and held a corner of cold Canadian prairie until it became home. The Steinkes did that. We now know the names of the parishes they came from, the names of the people who carried the holding forward, and the order in which they crossed.



A German Lutheran farming village in central Poland under the Russian Empire — the world Michal Steinke was born into. (AI-generated period illustration.)

Durchhalten — to hold out.

What follows is the record of as much of them as the documents and the family tree have so far given up. What rests on primary record is told as fact; what rests on memorial-derived or family-tree sources is named as such. The page will keep growing as the German parish registers and the older Canadian records release the rest of what they hold.

CHAPTER ONE

Michał Steinke and Euphrosine Ratz — a Lutheran marriage at Ossowka, 1858

Rybitwy · Bialebloto · Ossowka parish · 1858

The deepest verified record this line yet stands on is a single page of a Lutheran parish register from central Poland — a marriage entered at the parish of **Ossowka** in February 1858. The translation reads in part:



A plain village Lutheran chapel — the kind where Michał and Eufrosine married at Ossowka in 1858. (AI-generated period illustration.)

Through that youngest child the line runs to the family in Grande Prairie.

Michał Steinke, age 31, widower of Ewie Lemke who died the 12/24 of December in the same year at Białebloto, born at Rybitwy to Jerzy and Doroty née Schwartzroc Stejnke, and Eufrozyna Ratz, unmarried girl, born at Białebloto to Jakob Ratz, house owner, and his deceased wife Maryanny Scheffler. She is 22 years old.

That one document carries the line three generations beyond Edward at a single stroke. **Michał Steinke** had been born around 1827 in the village of **Rybitwy**, son of **Jerzy and Doroty (née Schwartzroc) Steinke** — the line of German Lutherans who had been settled in this stretch of central Poland by the eighteenth-century *Lokationsbewegung* and held to it through partitions and wars under the Russian Empire. Learn more about the German

Lutherans of Russian Poland → He had married once before, to **Ewie (Eve) Lemke**, and they had had a son, **Ferdinand** (born 1853, the eldest of all his children). Ewie died at **Bialebloto** in December 1857, and seven weeks later Michał stood at the Ossowka chapel and married **Eufrozyna Ratz** — twenty-two years old, born at Bialebloto, daughter of the house-owner **Jakob Ratz** and the late **Maryanny Scheffler**.

Michał and Euphrosine had six more children together across the next fifteen years: **Emilie** (1859), **Michael Jr** (1862), **Juliana** (1865), **Gustav** (1867), **Mathilde** (1870), and **Eduard — Edward — Steinke**, born **6 September 1873**, the youngest. Through that youngest child the line runs to the family in Grande Prairie.

CHAPTER TWO

Across the ocean — 1891 and 1901

Hamburg · Boulogne · Plymouth · Emerson · 1891 and 1901

The Steinkes crossed in two waves, ten years apart, and it was the children who went first.



A first sod-and-log homestead on the southern Manitoba prairie — where Edward broke his first Canadian ground. (AI-generated period illustration.)



An emigrant ship loading at Hamburg — the crossing the youngest Steinke made first, in 1891. (AI-generated period illustration.)

The youngest first, the parents and a married daughter ten years later, one son lost.

In 1891, **Edward** — eighteen years old, the youngest of his father's seven living children — sailed for Canada. He travelled in the company of, or close behind, his uncle **Ludwig Steinke** and his aunt **Juliana (Steinke) Kreutz**, both of whom also arrived in 1891. They were part of a wider chain of Volhynian and Russian-Polish Lutheran emigration that crossed through Hamburg in those years and entered the Canadian plains at **Emerson, Manitoba**, on the rail line up from St. Paul. Augusta Woitt came in the same wave. The two of them stood in front of a Winnipeg clerk on **27 November 1892**, and were married. The registration sits in the Manitoba Vital Statistics index as marriage number 1892,001370. From that one entry the entire Canadian arc of the Steinke line proceeds.

Michał Sr did not come for another ten years. On **25 October 1901** he arrived at Ellis Island aboard the *S.S. Pennsylvania* — Hamburg to Boulogne-sur-Mer to Plymouth and across — together with his daughter **Mathilde**, her husband **Julius Rentz**, and Julius's parents Anna and August. From New York the party made their way to **Emerson, Manitoba**, where Edward had already been a homesteader for ten years and his uncle Ludwig had settled the year of his own crossing. Michał and Euphrosine spent their last years in the Steinbach district of southeastern Manitoba, among other German Lutheran families from the same Russian-Polish settlements. Michał died there in **1908**, aged eighty-one, and was buried in an unmarked grave at the **Friedensthal Zion Lutheran Church Cemetery, Friedensthal, Manitoba** — funeral record page 345 number 9. Euphrosine outlived him; the family tree carries her death some years on.

One son did not cross. Michał and Euphrosine's **Gustav** (born 1867) is recorded as having died around 1891 and was not known ever to have reached Canada. The pattern of the migration — the youngest first, the parents and a married daughter ten years later, one son lost — is the shape this story takes.

CHAPTER THREE

Edward and Augusta — the prairie years, 1892 to 1940

Franklin · Wetaskiwin · Webster · 1892 to 1940

Edward and Augusta began their married life in the **Rural Municipality of Franklin**, in southern Manitoba near the Emerson border, where Edward had homesteaded since his arrival. Learn more about prairie homesteading and the Dominion Lands Act → Their first children were born there. A son **Albert Steinke**, born at Emerson on **4 January 1899**, is on the Manitoba vital index — primary confirmation of the family's southern-Manitoba years. Fourteen more children would follow, across two more provinces.



Edward and Augusta at the farm, late in the road — the couple the 1892 Winnipeg registry joined.



A homestead in the Peace Country bush near Webster — the last farmable ground the family came to rest on. (AI-generated period illustration.)



A Volhynian-German Lutheran farm settlement near Wetaskiwin — the foothold the family built before the Peace. (AI-generated period illustration.)

Augusta bore those graves and nine living children, and held the line.

By about 1905 the Steinkes had moved west to **Wetaskiwin**, south of Edmonton, where a Volhynian-German settlement had taken root. The 1911 census finds Edvard (in the enumerator's hand) and Augusta in Strathcona Sub-Districts 33 to 52 with seven children at home: Ludwig 17, Wilhelm 13, Albert 12, August 10, Augusta 5, Gustave 3, and **Henry, age 2** — the son through whom the line runs to Bette.

The full count of Edward and Augusta's children, as the Find a Grave memorial sets it down, is **fifteen**: Ludwig "Louis" (1893–1937), Wilhelm "Bill" (1897–1971), Albert (1899–1987), Helena (1899–1899), August (1901–1912), Bertha (1902–1903), Mathilde (b. 1904), Rudolf (b. 1905), Augusta (1906–1936), Gustave (1908–1975), **Henry (1909–1984)**, Frederick (1910–1990),

Herman (1912–1969), Martha Mae (1916–2008), and a daughter **Lydia** — who, the memorial text records simply, “was to have drowned, however dates are unknown.”

Five and possibly six of those children — Helena, Bertha, Mathilde, Rudolf, August, and Lydia — did not live to grow up. That was the rate of child mortality a Russian-Polish farm family was still meeting on the Canadian prairie in the first decade of the twentieth century. Augusta bore those graves and nine living children, and held the line.

By the late 1920s the family had moved one more time, north to the Peace Country, settling at **Webster**, the German-Lutheran district just west of Sexsmith. Learn more about the Peace River Country → The 1931 census, taken at Grande Prairie sub-district on 1 June, finds Edward at the head of a household at section NW 9 of township 76, range 4, west of the sixth meridian, with Augusta and a clutch of the youngest children still at home — including Henry, then twenty-one and single, working alongside his father. A second Steinke household, almost certainly one of Edward’s married sons, sat on the very next quarter section. The clan had pulled itself together again on the last farmable ground the prairies had to offer.

Edward died at Webster on **22 November 1940**, aged sixty-seven — the Province of Alberta death certificate is record number 2698. Augusta outlived him by twenty years and died at Sexsmith on **12 May 1961**, aged eighty-seven. Both are buried at the **Emmaus Lutheran Cemetery, Teepee Creek** — the German Protestant burying-ground earlier drafts of this page had already named as the family’s likely ground, before the records confirmed it.

CHAPTER FOUR

Henry Steinke (1909 to 1984) — the son who carried the line into the Peace

Alberta 1909 · Sexsmith 1932 · Grande Prairie 1984

Henry Steinke was born on **20 April 1909** in Alberta — the eleventh of Edward and Augusta’s fifteen children, and one of the first to be born after the move west of Manitoba. He spent his boyhood through the family’s last migration, from Wetaskiwin up to the Peace, and his early manhood working the Webster farm.



Henry and his button accordion — the photograph the family memorial carries.



A prairie Lutheran burying-ground — the kind of ground at Teepee Creek where Edward and Augusta came to rest. (AI-generated period illustration.)

Henry and Martha had five children.

In **1932**, in the same Sexsmith district where the family had finally come to rest, he married **Martha Mildred Gouchey**, born 1911. Together they raised **five children**. Among them were the eldest, **Allan Henry Steinke** (born at Sexsmith 31 July 1934, died 15 September 2020); and **Irvin Edward Steinke** (1935 to 2011). The remaining three were daughters. The middle of those daughters was Bette.

Henry died on **24 May 1984**, aged seventy-five, and was buried in Grande Prairie. Martha outlived him by fifteen years and died in **1999**. *Henry and Martha had five children* — and that, in the end, is the shape of their life together.

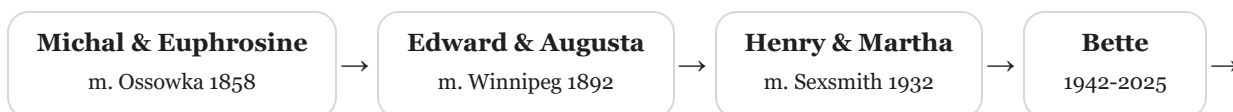
CHAPTER FIVE

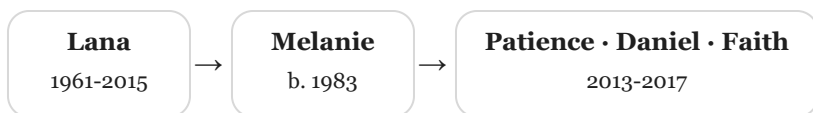
Bette Doreen Steinke (1942 to 2025) — into the Rycroft line

Sexsmith 1942 · married 1959 · Grande Prairie 2025

Bette Doreen Steinke was born at Sexsmith on **26 April 1942** — the middle of Henry and Martha’s three daughters, and the fourth of their five children. She came of age in the post-war Peace Country, and on **30 October 1959**, at Sexsmith, she married **Samuel Eric John “Sam” Rycroft** — the grandson of a man born under a Hawaiian sky. A Russian-Polish-German Lutheran farmer’s daughter and the descendant of a Honolulu soda-maker, married in a small prairie town: a meeting the Canadian west was built to make.

Not a name in an archive, but Nana Bette — remembered.





Sam and Bette raised four children — **Lorne, Lana, Vance, and Clark** — in the Grande Prairie country.

Bette outlived Sam by ten years. She died at Grande Prairie on **19 January 2025**, aged eighty-two — recent enough that she is not a name in an archive but **Nana Bette**, remembered, photographed holding each of her great-grandchildren in turn.

THE LIVING LINE

Where the Steinke line joins the others

Grande Prairie · the confluence

The Steinke line runs through **Bette Doreen Steinke** to her daughter **Lana Lyn Rycroft** (1961 to 2015), and through Lana to her daughter **Melanie Lyn Haiste** (born 1983), and through Melanie — with **Thomas Cheesman**, the parents of three children — to **Patience, Daniel, and Faith**, raised in Grande Prairie.

That is what durchhalten was for.

THE STEINKE DESCENT

Jerzy Steinke × Doroty Schwartzroc

RYBITWY

Michał · Ludwig · Julianna

- Named as Michał's parents in the 1858 Ossowka marriage akte — the deepest primary record the line stands on
- German Lutherans of **Rybitwy**, central Poland, under the Russian partition
- Their other known children, Ludwig and Julianna, both reached Canada in 1891

Jakob Ratz×**Maryanny Scheffler**

BIAŁEBŁOTO

Euphrosine

- Jakob was a **house-owner at Bialebloto** — the akte records his standing
- Maryanny had already died by her daughter's 1858 wedding
- Named in the same 1858 akte that anchors the whole line

Michał Steinke×**Euphrosine Ratz**

M. OSSOWKA 1858

Ferdinand (*by Ewie Lemke*) · Emilie · Michael Jr · Juliana · Gustav · Mathilde · **Edward**

- Married at the Rumonki Wola chapel, parish of **Ossowka**, 2/14 February 1858
- Michał was a 31-year-old widower — his first wife Ewie Lemke had died seven weeks before
- Crossed in 1901 via **Ellis Island** on the S.S. Pennsylvania, in his mid-seventies
- Died 1908; buried unmarked at Friedenthal Zion Lutheran, Manitoba — funeral record p. 345 #9

Edward Steinke×**Augusta Woitt**

M. WINNIPEG 1892

Ludwig · Wilhelm · Albert · Helena · August · Bertha · Mathilde · Rudolf · Augusta · Gustave · **Henry** · Frederick · Herman · Martha Mae · Lydia

- Edward crossed alone in **1891**, aged eighteen; Augusta came in the same wave
- Married before a Winnipeg clerk, **27 November 1892** — Manitoba registration 1892,001370
- Fifteen children across three provinces; six did not grow up
- Farmed Franklin, Manitoba → Wetaskiwin → **Webster in the Peace** by 1928
- Both buried at Emmaus Lutheran Cemetery, **Teepee Creek**

Henry Steinke×**Martha Gouchey**

M. SEXSMITH 1932

Allan · Irvin Edward · **Bette** · and two more daughters

- Henry was born **20 April 1909** in Alberta — still in his parents' household at the 1926 and 1931 censuses
- Married **Martha Mildred Gouchey** in the Sexsmith district, 1932
- Five children; Bette the middle of their three daughters
- Henry died 24 May 1984, buried Grande Prairie; Martha followed in 1999

Bette Steinke×Sam Rycroft

M. SEXSMITH 1959

Lorne · **Lana** · Vance · Clark

- Married at Sexsmith, **30 October 1959** — a Steinke daughter into the Rycroft line
- Raised four children in the Grande Prairie country
- Sam's line carries the Hawai'i-born grandfather — told in the Rycroft story
- Bette died in 2025, aged 82 — **Nana Bette**, photographed holding each great-grandchild

Lana Rycroft

1961–2015

Melanie

- The second of Sam and Bette's four children
- Through her daughter Melanie, the Steinke line reaches the three kids
- **Faith carries her name** — Faith

Melanie×Thomas

M. 2016

- Married **2 July 2016** in Calgary
- The parents of Patience, Daniel, and Faith

Patience · Daniel · Faith

GRANDE PRAIRIE

- Born 2013, 2015, and 2017, all in Grande Prairie
- Heirs of all eight family lines — the confluence this whole site is built around

That is what *durchhalten* was for.

Notes on the records ▾

This page is no longer the thinnest-traced of the eight family lines. As of 11 June 2026 it rests on a combination of verified primary records, two record-derived cemetery memorials with attached translations, and a well-sourced community family tree — and the tiers are named here so a careful reader knows which is which.

Primary record — verified

- **Michał Steinke × Eufrozyna Ratz**, married **2/14 February 1858** at Rumonki Wola in the parish of Ossowka (Evangelical Augsburg Church), Russian Poland — Lutheran parish register, contextual translation contributed by Gerald “Jerry” Frank, F.A.G. #136789949. The akte names Michał’s parents (Jerzy Steinke × Doroty Schwartzroc), Euphrosine’s parents (Jakob Ratz × Maryanny Scheffler), Michał’s first wife Ewie Lemke (d. 12/24 December 1857 at Białebloto), Michał’s birthplace (Rybitwy), and Euphrosine’s birthplace (Białebloto).
- **Edward Steinke × Augusta Woitt**, married **27 November 1892**, Winnipeg — Manitoba Vital Statistics marriage registration 1892,001370.
- **Albert Steinke**, son of Edward and Augusta, born **4 January 1899**, Emerson, Manitoba — Manitoba Vital Statistics birth registration 1899,22921154.
- **Edvard and Augusta Steinke, 1911 Census of Canada**, Strathcona Sub-Districts 33 to 52, Alberta, with seven children at home including Henry, age 2.
- **Edward Steinke household, 1931 Census of Canada**, Peace River district, Grande Prairie sub-district, NW 9-76-4-W6 — Henry, then 21, still at home and single; the 1926 prairie census had already placed him there at eighteen.
- **Edward Steinke’s death** — Province of Alberta death certificate, Record No. 2698 (Find a Grave memorial 137777141).
- **Bette Doreen Steinke’s parents** named as Henry and Martha Steinke (Bear Creek Funeral Home obituary, 2025).
- **Allan Henry Steinke’s parents** named as Henry and Martha Steinke (Bear Creek Funeral Home obituary, 2020).

Memorial-derived — high confidence

- **Find a Grave memorial 137865383** for Henry Steinke (1909 to 1984), naming parents Edward Steinke and Augusta Woitt, his fourteen named siblings, his wife Martha Mildred Gouche (married 1932), and stating “Henry and Martha had five children.”
- **Find a Grave memorial 137777141** for Edward Steinke (1873 to 1940), naming parents (Mihael Sr × Euphrosine Ratz), siblings, the Manitoba 1901 census reading the birth as October 1874 and the gravestone as 1875, the SGGEE St. Petersburg Files (Film 1895621/1, Page 330, Register 491) supporting the 6 September 1873 date, and “fifteen children” including a daughter Lydia “was to have drowned.”
- **Find a Grave memorial 108662270** for Michał (Mihael) Steinke Sr (1827 to 1908), with the contextual translation of the 1858 Ossowka marriage akte (above), the family’s emigration via Hamburg → Boulogne-sur-Mer → Plymouth → Ellis Island, 25 October 1901 (with daughter Mathilde and the Rentz family), the Friedensthal Zion Lutheran Church funeral record (page 345

#9), and a note that Michał's brother Ludwig and sister Julianna (Steinke) Kreutz also arrived in Canada in 1891.

Family tree — to be verified

- **Augusta Woitt**'s parents — Gottlieb Woitt × Anna Rosalina Nast — and her own birthplace and birth date; per WikiTree both parents are said to have died at Wetaskiwin, Alberta.
- The deeper generation on the Woitt and Nast sides, back to Gottlieb Woitt × Anna Maria Schultz and Andrzej Nast × Marianna Huff.
- The youngest brother of Edward, **August Steinke** of Winnipeg (b. ~1888 Russia, immigrated 1892, carpenter at 676 Ross Avenue in the 1931 census), is **not** among the six siblings on Mihael's memorial — the kin relationship to Edward is not yet established and the earlier draft's claim that they were brothers has been pulled.

Still to chase

- **Bette's 1959 Sexsmith marriage record** — orderable now by a descendant through Alberta Vital Statistics, with proof of death and the relationship chain Lana → Melanie. Names Martha Gouchey's parents.
- **Martha Mildred Gouchey's family** — parents, siblings; not yet on this page at all.
- The **SGGEE St. Petersburg Lutheran files** in full (Film 1895621/1) — would give Edward's recorded birthplace alongside his birth date.
- **The Ossowka parish register itself**, for Michał's own 1827 baptism — would push another generation back, behind Jerzy and Doroty.
- **The 1901 Ellis Island manifest** for the *S.S. Pennsylvania*, 25 October 1901 — would give Michał's stated origin village and full names of all travellers in the party.
- The **Pomeranian / East-Prussian end** through the Woitt and Nast surnames, on Augusta's side.

This page now stands on what the records support, and names the rest as the work still to do.