

1936
Report of Interview
with B.H. Kroger

Mother came from a town called Muenster, Germany, which Mr.

Kroger has since visited. Came with his ^{B.H. Kroger's} grandfather and grandmother and two other children to United States in 1830, and settled at Minster, Ohio. They were farmers.

Both grandparents died within a year from a siege of mosquitoes.

Mother's name was Mary Gertrude Schlede. ^{Schlebe} Was a born leader and manager, Weighed about 105 pounds. Married in 1847. She had come to Cincinnati to live with a family (relatives) named Hueber/after the death of her parents at Minster. Attended St. Trinity church. In 1867, his father went abroad to visit his old homestead, and his mother carried on the business at the dry goods store on Central Avenue, in addition to taking care of her household. His father was gone about six months and during that time his mother made more money than the father made in a year and a half. She was a strict disciplinarian, although had a coaxing way about her that made you want to do things right. During the civil war, she was criticized several times for her favorable attitude toward the cause of the south, having lived there shortly after her marriage long enough to understand their difficulties.

"What little nerve and ability I ever had I received from my mother, and I resemble her."

PAGE 2.

B. Kroger's father came from a little town called Luesky, in Holland or Germany. Came to the United States ^{in 1827} when he was 10 years old with another boy, working their way over on a sailing vessel. Landed in Baltimore ² ~~and finally~~ started ~~was~~ walking over the mountains to the middle west states. Landed a job on a flat boat and came to Covington, Ky. in 1821 with 6¢ in his pocket, earned on the flat boat. Could speak no English. ?

Started work in a cracker bakery in Cincinnati, by the name of Bailey's. He packed crackers in bags and delivered them in baskets. One day he was short one bag and decided to buy a bag of other brand crackers to substitute. Delivering to a customer near Fourth and Race, the lady noticed that the name Bailey was not stamped on the crackers and she refused to accept the substitute, and his father had to go back and get the original package.

Went to Memphis, Tenn. and became interested in a general store which he bought. Traded merchandise with the farmers there. Received anything they grew, cotton, rice, peanuts, and traded it for merchandise they needed. Cincinnati at that time was an important trading center.

Father spoke ~~both~~ German, Holland and English. His parents were farmers. In 1867, after the Civil War, ^{B. H. KROGER} his father visited his old homeland in Luesky.

Married Mary Gertrude Schlebe in 1847 and they went to Memphis to live. Living quarters were above

PAGE 3:

the store his father owned, on a river, overlooking an Arkansas swamp. Mother became very lonesome and induced father to return to Cincinnati. Started a grocery store on Central Avenue, opposite Betts Street. (Central Avenue at that time was called Western Row, and was the connecting link between Ohio and Indiana). His father invested heavily in real estate in this section, and was the cause of his failure in the panic of 1873.

Ran that grocery store a long time and sold it to a man named Dominic Hoppe, father of the present Dr. Hoppe. His next venture was the dry goods business on Central Avenue, or Western Row. Died at the age of 71. Bernard
~~B.H.~~ Kroger was the fifth of ten children born to the Kroger. Four died around infancy. The last two were twins, who died ~~at~~ ~~sg~~ when they were quite young.

Besides B.H., only one of these children remain, a brother Robert. A brother William ~~;~~ died a year ago at Asheville, N.C. All children were born in Cincinnati, and their births are recorded at St. Joseph church. Oldest sister was born in Cincinnati, while ~~one~~ ~~was~~ on a visit here from ~~Cincinnati~~ Memphis.

B.H. Kroger was born January 24, 1860. Home was upstairs from the dry goods store on Central Avenue. One of his older brothers was an unusually successful clothing salesman. At 17 years of age he earned \$25 a week as clothing salesman for Norris Clothing Co. He died rather young, after having made the statement that he wanted a short life and a merry one.

In the early days attended St. Joseph Church, at Laurel and Linn. Mother demanded strict attendance at church services, and sometimes went two and three times on Sunday. Church was never heated at that time. Walked about twelve blocks from home. Religion was considered the most important duty at his home.

Some of the family attended business college. Bernard attended school at St. Mary's school, at 12th and Clay streets. Went to school until he was 13. Finished about the 5th grade, which was the highest grade in parochial schools at the time. A great deal of time was given to religious instruction.

He left school the beginning of 1873, the beginning of the panic. That depression was brought on by speculation in real estate. During the Civil War there was a scarcity of labor and prices soared. Coffee sometimes sold for \$1 a pound, and a lot of people became rich. After the war, speculation caused the nation-wide panic.

Never had much time for play. Recalls that if he had been able to play, would have liked hockey. One Saturday afternoon, while on a shopping trip, saw boys playing hockey, who invited him to join them. Spent very enjoyable two or three hours with them, using borrowed equipment, with the result that he was punished when he returned home for wasting so much time. Used to ice skate on the canal until some relative lost a child by drowning and then mother destroyed all their skates.

Once while skating fell ~~into~~ through a thin place in the ice, and after hurrying home, the maid made him sit in back of the stove to dry his clothes. Naturally he developed a heavy cold. On a very few occasions they played what they called town ball, or scrub, and played a little cricket.

Recalls only party he ever attended. A neighbor girl celebrated a birthday with a party, and he was invited. Lemonade was served, and one of his boy playmates said, "This isn't lemonade, this is vinegar water."

~~xThe~~ Practically the only social affairs were gatherings of relatives on Sunday evenings. Recalls having about two Christmas trees. Practical gifts such as clothes, etc. were given as Christmas presents. No toys were bought by the family. Boys made their own wagons. One Christmas the maid bought a few toys for each of the children. One of his brothers received a set of soldiers, which B.H. converted into equipment for a grocery store which he built out of a wooden cigar box. About the only fruit they had was apples, which were buried in the ground in piles of sawdust to preserve them. The custom of attending midnight mass on Christmas was religiously observed.

After school hours were occupied with many chores around the house. Merchandise had to be delivered for the store, coal brought up from the basement, the store and sidewalk cleaned, etc.