George Adams Found

George Adams played 4 games for Syracuse in 1879. That's a very common name and it was a very long time ago, but Peter Morris, after twenty years of searching, finally managed to track him down. This is our Find of the Month, and I am copying here Peter’s story on how he was finally able to solve the mystery. This is a long story; in fact, Peter wrote it to me in 3 separate emails and it was just like reading a mystery novel. I hope you enjoy this fascinating story.

George Adams's major league career consisted of four National League games with Syracuse in 1879, but his career was more substantial than that. A player named Adams played for a town team in Milford called the Eagles in 1872 Eagles; there is no proof that this is George Adams, but Tom Shea thought it was. His first incontrovertible club was the Webster (Mass.) Clippers, whom he joined in June of 1873. The Clippers had already played several games when Adams made his debut, but Dixie Tourangeau found no comment on the new player in the local papers, suggesting that he was probably already known in the area. The Clippers boasted a strong lineup that included the likes of Jeremiah Turbidy and several other who went on to professional careers, but Adams immediately established himself as a regular on a team that won the championship of central Massachusetts. Adams then went on to play for Grafton (Mass.) in 1874, Grafton and the Lynn (Mass.) Live Oaks in 1875, Syracuse in 1876, Lynn Live Oaks and the Rhode Island Reds in 1877, and the Syracuse Stars in 1878 before his 1879 National League cameo. Those were strong teams and Adams was a regular for most of them, so he could easily have had a longer big league career if he had been in the right place at the right time.

I began researching Adams in the 1990s and with help from (among others) Bob Richardson, Joe Simenic, Tom Shea, Dick Thompson, Richard Malatzky, and Bill Carle's write-up in the May 1996 Mystery of the Month, I assembled these notes:

Lynn Evening Item, 3/25/1878: “George Adams who is to leave Lynn today to play with the Syracuse Stars was presented with a handsome cameo ring Saturday evening by his friends who assembled at Pike’s cigar store. Mr. Adams has many friends in Lynn both as a ballplayer and a gentleman.”


Another note in 1881 in the Clipper suggested that Adams was in Montana, but this note makes that look like a case of mistaken identity: Helena Independent, 10/7/1881, reprints note from Clipper and adds, “Adams, who captained the D. R. V. G. Club of Syracuse, N. Y., in 1880 … is none other than Captain [John] Tickner, of the Helena Base Ball Club.”

Syracuse Standard, 9/7/1882, “The Stars play the bartenders at Newell Park this afternoon at 3 o’clock. Among the latter team are Mike Dorgan and George Adams, two old Star players.”

Syracuse Journal, 9/9/1882: Arrest warrant sworn out against George Adams, the noted ball player for assault on a streetcar, but matter settled amicably.

Syracuse Daily Standard, 11/4/1884, “A novel bet: Frank Scherff of the Fire Dept and George Adams made a novel bet last night. In the event of Cleveland’s election. Scherff is to wheel Adams around twice from the latter’s place of business in East Water St to Salina to Washington to Montgomery to East Water.”

Syracuse Daily Standard, 11/16/1884, “Scherff pays his bet. A man of stupendous proportions dressed in the uniform of the fire dept wheeled thru Salina St yesterday a man half as large as himself. The occupant of the wheelbarrow was
George Adams once the famous ball player and the uniformed fireman at the handle was Frank Sherff tillerman of Hook and ladder truck number 1 …"

Syracuse Journal, 11/17/84: former ballplayer George Adams won a bet on election of Cleveland and was wheeled around town in a wheelbarrow by fireman Frank Scherff.

Sporting Life, 3/17/86: “Utica Glints”: The names of Geer, Young and Adams of Syracuse……are mentioned as candidates for umpire in the New York State League. Is this George Adams?

Several subsequent notes in various Syracuse papers suggest he is still in Syracuse as a bartender, the last of which appears on June 29, 1886.

Syracuse Standard, 3/14/1887, “George Adams, formerly of the Stars of Syracuse, is a depot policeman in Chicago.”

Worcester Spy, 3/3/1889: “‘Partridge’ Adams, old Syracuse ’79 outfielder who had graduated from the old Graftons.” [Note: This is the only known source of the nickname listed in the Baseball Encyclopedia.]

And Syracuse Evening Herald, [can’t read date], 1894, “of the famous Stars of 1876, Adams is in business in Chicago.”

Tom Shea has a note that there was a lengthy story on the old Grafton Red Sox of the 1870s in the Lowell Evening Leader of 8/25/1925. The team was loaded with major leaguers like Mike Dorgan, Fog Horn Bradley, Hick Carpenter, Asa Stratton, Adams, etc. Apparently there was nothing on Adams in the story other than mention of his name.

Bob Richardson reported that the Syracuse Historical Society has an undated note stating that George Adams was in business in Chicago.

Using these clues in concert with the censuses and city directories, I identified several promising candidates over the years. One by one, however, each of these were eliminated. His common name meant that new possibilities kept emerging, and I continued to pursue each of them until a dead end was reached. One of the biggest difficulties was a player named “Teddy” Adams who played on a top Syracuse team in the late 1860s and whose real name was George E. Adams, which led to considerable confusion.

The note that finally pointed me in the right direction was this:

Syracuse Daily Courier, April 14, 1878, “George Adams, centre field, was born in Worcester, Mass., twenty-four years since. He, however, resides in Millbury, in the same State. He began ball playing as an amateur with the Clippers of Webster in 1873, and in 1874 joined the Graftons, this being his first professional engagement. He continued at Grafton during 1875 but in 1876 played with the Stars. Last season he returned East and what ball playing he did was with the Live Oaks. His forte is peculiarly out-fielding. Adams’ weight is 178 pounds.”

That ruled out many of the George Adamses I had worked on and instead pointed squarely to this man:

1850 census, Worcester
Charles 35 Canada
Lucy 30 Canada
Lucy 8 Vt
Mary 7 Vt
Matilda 2 Mass.

1855 census, Worcester
Charles 43 France
Lucy 33 Canada
Lucy 14 Vt
Mary 12 Vt
Matilda 7 Mass
Ellen 2 Mass
George 4 months Mass

1860 census, Millbury
Charles Adams 45 Canada

May/Jun 2015 Biographical Report
Lucy 35 Canada  
Mary 17 Canada  
Matilda 13 Canada  
Ellen 7 Canada  
George 5 Canada  
Joseph 8 Canada (very sloppy census taking, obviously)

1865 census, Millbury  
Charles Adams 49 Canada  
Lucy Adams 39 Canada  
Mary 20 Vt  
Ellen 12 Mass  
George 10 Mass  
Joseph 8 Mass  
Alexander?? 4 Mass  
Peter 2 Mass

1870 census, Millbury  
Charles 59 Canada  
Lucy 53 Canada  
Joseph 12 Canada  
Peter 7 Mass.  
Delia 5 Mass.

1880 census, Spencer  
Charles Adams 59 Can  
Lucy Adams 56 Can  
Peter 18 Mass.  
Delia 16 Mass.

George seems to be living in a rooming house at 36 Salina, Syracuse, on the 1880 census, but the information provided for him is so far off as to be of little use: he’s a bartender, widowed or divorced, born 1850 New York State. No doubt these represented the landlord’s guesses.

These city directory and voter’s registrations looked like our man as well:

1883-84 Syracuse CD: George H. Adams bartender 36 W Water r 7 E Jefferson  
1884-85 Syracuse CD: George H. Adams 16 Clinton Block  
1885-86 Syracuse CD: George Adams saloon, 16 Clinton Block  
George H. Adams, 16 Clinton Block

1888 Chicago Voters Registration Geo. H. Adams 510 Wabash Ave b Mass (years in state, county, current home) 1½ 2 2
1890 G. H. Adams 510 Wabash Ave Mass 1½ 2 2
1892 Geo. H. Adams 510 Wabash Ave Mass 5 5 5

1887 Chicago CD: George H. Adams ck 510 Wabash thru  
1892 Chicago CD: George Adams baggage 510 Wabash  
1893 Chicago CD: same

He is hard to trace after that, however, so I then looked into his earlier year and found these records:

1892 Worcester CD: Lucy Adams (widow Charles)

Millbury births  
Alica Brown Adams, June 27, 1860, Charles Adams and Lucy Snow

Worcester births  
Joseph, May 15, 1857, Charles and Lucy

Unfortunately, there is no George Adams birth in Mass. to Charles and Lucy
Millbury deaths
Alice, 7, daughter of Charles and Lucy, 1868, b. Millbury
Ellen, 17, daughter of Charles and Lucy, 1869, b. Worcester
Lovina, newborn, daughter of Charles and Lucy, 1859

While there was no perfect match for George Adams on any twentieth-century census, this man was quite close:

1900 census, Madelia, Minnesota
George H. Adams b. 1/57 Mass Vt Vt grocer
Alsa V. b. 2/63 Mn NY NY m. 3 years, no children

1910 census, Deer Creek, Nez Perce County, Idaho
George H. Adams 55 Mass Vt Vt retail grocer
Alice B. 43 Mn NY NY m. 10 years, no children

1920 census, Clarkston, Washington
George H. Adams 65 Mass Vt Vt none
Alice B. 45 Mn Mn NY

The big problem is that this man parents are listed as being born in Vermont in all three censuses. This was a significant discrepancy, but we know that the family had lived in Vermont prior to arriving in Massachusetts, so it was possible that George was confused or misinformed. Moreover, a careful check of the 1860, 1870 and 1880 censuses did not turn up any Vermont natives who had a child named George Adams born in Massachusetts around 1856, nor anything remotely close. So this seemed like a strong candidate to be the ballplayer, yet the evidence was not conclusive.

The case grew stronger when I discovered that George and Alice Adams had married in February of 1897 in Elgin, Illinois, just outside of Chicago, where the ballplayer had last been known to be living. His wife’s maiden name was Alice Vena Trowbridge and she had been working as an attendant at the state asylum in Elgin. Sadly, her sister had also been an attendant at that institution until being fatally shot by a disturbed former inmate the previous year in front of Alice.

I stopped in Elgin and looked at the three local papers for coverage of his marriage, but the articles didn’t have anything that helped. Bruce Allardice contacted the Elgin Public Library, and they sent him a notice of the marriage that appeared in the Every Saturday newspaper on 2-20-97, page 5, col. 1. The article said that he worked for the Elite Restaurant, but provided few additional details, and I have not been able to locate a marriage certificate.

The next step was to search for a death certificate for the man who was living in Clarkston, Washington, on the 1920 census. I turned out that he died in Clarkston, on October 11, 1920, and a summary can be found here: https://www.digitalarchives.wa.gov/Record/View/E009112E51A64A7D8CA6C08FBE9790B0

The information strongly suggested that this man was our ballplayer. His name was listed as George Henry Adams, which matched the middle initial of the ballplayer. His age was given as 64 years, 8 months, 2 weeks, 2 days, which would correspond to a birthdate of January 26, 1856 (possibly give or take a day). The ballplayer was in fact a year older than that, since he was listed on the 1855 Massachusetts State Census. That census was taken on June 1, however, and George was listed as four months old, corresponding to a birth month of January. So there was a one-year discrepancy in the year of birth, not uncommon, and the month of birth appeared to match. Best of all, George’s widow provided his father’s name as Charles, again matching the ballplayer. Unfortunately, she did not provide his mother’s name, apparently not knowing or remembering it. That meant that there was now a very high likelihood that this man was our ballplayer, but a trace of doubt still remained.

The next step was to try to locate an obituary. Clarkston didn’t have its own paper, as far as I can tell, but there were at least two Lewiston papers that reported news from Clarkston. An obituary in the Tribune the next day identified him as a former Lewiston merchant who was to be buried in Normal Hill Cemetery in Lewiston, but did not give a lot of additional details. It did indicate that other than his wife, he had no relatives in that part of the country. Dixie Tourangeau found an obituary that appeared in the Morning Journal on that same date under the headline “George H. Adams Dead.” But it too just stated that he was a merchant, described him as a resident in Clarkston for two years after being in Idaho for many years, and added a few burial details.

Adams’s widow died the following year, so I next searched for an obituary for her in the Tribune. The paper did publish a slightly longer obituary for her, but it had no new information. She was buried alongside her husband.
I then contacted Lewiston sportswriter Matt Baney, who passed my request along to Lewiston historian Steven Branting. Mr. Branting provided me with this burial record: October 12, 1920; Normal Hill Cemetery, Division 2, Row 45, Plot 139, Grave 2; Funeral home: Merchants, Clarkston WA; Officiating Minister: Dr. David J. Watson Somerville. He added, “That would mean that the Adams were Episcopalian. There is no Episcopalian congregation in Clarkston, so they attended the Church of the Nativity in Lewiston. The church building had been moved from 11th & Main Street to Normal Hill (8th Avenue at 8th Street) in the summer of 1920. Mr. Branting also searched the Lewiston Morning Tribune for the period 1918-1920, the last two years that the Adamses lived in Lewiston, but found no reference to them. Another

ton researcher, Jill Nock, kindly contacted the Merchants Funeral Home in Clarkston and reported that their record said that George was born in Boston and that his father was either Chas. or Chase Adams.

At a dead end once again, I now returned to researching George Adams’s family back in Massachusetts. I had worked on the family before, but they all seemed to disappear after the 1880 census. This time, however, I discovered a family tree that explained their apparent disappearance: Charles Adams’s real name was Charles DeLorme and he and his wife had reassumed that name in the 1880s. This new information allowed me to pinpoint the death dates for both of them and to identify and trace many of George’s siblings, Dixie Tourangeau and I looked up obituaries for all of the family members we could locate, but none of those obituaries said anything about long lost George.

There was only one clue about him left to pursue, a note in the original family tree indicating that George’s older sister Lucy had received a letter from him in 1909. By then the family had not heard from him in many years and believed that he had gone to the Klondike during the gold rush and died there. In fact, he was living in Idaho! This finally provided the direct link that I had been seeking for so many years!

I contacted family historian Lisa Zajkowski and she generously provided me with a copy of the 1909 article describing the letter. The article appeared in the Worcester Daily Telegram on December 3, 1909, under the headline “NOT DEAD IN KLONDIKE BUT IS ALIVE IN IDAHO; Mrs. Lucy Hart of Spencer Hears From Her Brother, George H. Adams, After Absence of 22 Years.” The article described how the family had last heard from George when he went off to the Klondike to seek his fortune more than a decade earlier, and when he was never heard from again, they assumed he had died. “We were all fond of George,” she told a reporter, “and have always mourned his supposed death.” Then to her shock she received a letter from George letting her know that he was very much alive and living in Idaho. Additional details were few, however, because Adams’s letter read, “Dear sister. Write me a letter. Your brother, George.”

While Lucy Hart did not mention her brother’s baseball career, she did tell the reporter: “The last time he was in the East he lived in Syracuse, where he ran a restaurant. He took a notion to go to Chicago, where he worked as a baggage checker for a while, and then came the Klondike fever, and we learned that he had gone to that country. That was the last we ever heard of him ...” That eliminates all doubt about the identity of the 1879 major leaguer. He is:

George Henry Adams
born January 26, 1855 Worcester, Massachusetts
died October 11, 1920 Clarkston, Washington
buried Normal Hill Cemetery, Lewiston, Idaho, Division 2, Row 45, Plot 139, Grave 2

Ed Coughlin

Ed Coughlin played one game with Buffalo in 1884. We currently show no birth or death information for him. According to the Philadelphia Times, he was an amateur from Hartford. The Buffalo Morning Express and Buffalo Daily Courier said he was from Chester. He played with Hartford and Youngstown in 1884. Chester papers have nothing on anyone named Coughlin nor does anyone show up in the census. Find a Grave shows a man born in 1861 and died in 1952 from Hartford and lists him as the player. This is apparently incorrect, so who is the correct ballplayer? We may never know his correct identity so this is our Mystery of the Month.
Birthday List

Here are the nonagenarians celebrating birthdays in July and August.

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
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<td>Chuck Stevens</td>
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<td>July 16</td>
<td>Len Okrie</td>
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<td>July 18</td>
<td>Windy McCall</td>
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<td>July 22</td>
<td>Jim Rivera</td>
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<td>July 24</td>
<td>Clint Conatser</td>
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<td>July 25</td>
<td>Marv Rackley</td>
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<td>July 26</td>
<td>Milt Welch</td>
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<td>August 11</td>
<td>Luis Olmo</td>
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<td>August 20</td>
<td>Larry Miggins</td>
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<td>August 26</td>
<td>Billy DeMars</td>
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<td>August 30</td>
<td>Paul Hinrichs</td>
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Scoreboard

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<td>Deaths</td>
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New Monthly Data

**Questionnaires Received:**

None

**New Information Received:**

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<th>DEBUT YR</th>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>CHANGE OR ADD</th>
<th>SOURCE</th>
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| 1879     | Adams, George H.              | Name: George Henry Adams
B: Jan 26 1855
D: Oct 11 1920 Clarkston, Washington
Cemetery: Normal Hill Cemetery, Lewiston, Idaho | (M4)                          |
Source: Seattle Times                                           | (C1)                          |
| 1910     | Blanding, Frederick James     | D: Jul 17 1950
Source: Death certificate                                           | (R4)                          |
| 1891     | Breitenstein, Theodore P.     | Name: Theodore J. Breitenstein
Source: 1910 census, St. Louis city directories                    | (C1)                          |
| 1965     | Brown, Ollie Lee              | D: Apr 16 2015 Buena Park, California
Cemetery: Forest Lawn Memorial Park, Cypress, California
Source: Long Beach Press Telegram                                   | (C1)                          |
| 1935     | Bryant, Claiborne Henry       | Name: Henry Claiborne Bryant
B: Nov 16 1911
Source: Questionnaire, cemetery                                     | (Q1)                          |
| 1909     | Bushelman, John Frank         | B: Aug 29 1886
D: Fairlawn, Pulaski County, Virginia
Source: WWI draft registration, death certificate                    | (H4)                          |
| 1942     | Eschen, Lawrence Edward       | D: Jun 9 2015 Gainesville, Georgia
Source: Funeral home                                                  | (C1)                          |
| 1961     | Gladding, Fred Earl           | D: May 21 2015 Columbia, South Carolina
Cemetery: Woodhaven Memorial Gardens, Powell, Tennessee
Source: Funeral home                                                  | (C1)                          |
| 1988     | Hamilton, Darryl Quinn        | D: Jun 21 2015 Pearland, Texas
Source: Houston Chronicle                                             | (C1)                          |
| 1956     | Hicks, Clarence Walter        | D: Dec 8 2014 St. George, Utah
Source: Daughter                                                       | (S3)                          |
| 1879     | Houck, Sargent Perry          | B: Feb 29 1856
Source: Cemetery                                                        | (M3)                          |
| 1930     | Kahn, Owen Earle              | B: Jun 15 1903
Source: Birth record                                                   | (R4)                          |
| 1952     | Kell, Everett Lee             | D: May 28 2015 Newport, Arkansas
Cemetery: Swifton Cemetery, Swifton, Arkansas
Source: Funeral home                                                  | (C1)                          |
| 1923     | Kopshaw, George Karl          | B: Jul 27 1896
Source: WWII draft registration                                        | (C1)                          |
| 2009     | Latos, Mathew A.              | Name: Mathew Adam Latos
Source: Birth record                                                   | (C1)                          |
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<th>Place of Death</th>
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<td>1960</td>
<td>Maestri, Hector Anibal (Garcia)</td>
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<td>Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Cemetery, Miami, Florida</td>
<td>El Nuevo Herald</td>
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<td>1901</td>
<td>McKinney, Robert Francis</td>
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<td>Hanover, Pennsylvania</td>
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<td>Merullo, Leonard Richard</td>
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<td>May 30 2015</td>
<td>Reading, Massachusetts</td>
<td>Forest Glen Cemetery, Reading, Massachusetts</td>
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<td>1976</td>
<td>Mora, Andres (Ibarra)</td>
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<td>Jun 12 2015</td>
<td>Saltillo, Coahuila, Mexico</td>
<td>Panteon Santiago, Saltillo, Coahuila, Mexico</td>
<td>El Diario de Coahuila</td>
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<td>Murray, William Jeremiah (MGR)</td>
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<td>Pattee, Harry Ernest</td>
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<td>Jul 16 1971</td>
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<td>1929</td>
<td>Rhodes, John Gordon</td>
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<td>Salt Lake City, Utah</td>
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<td>1994</td>
<td>Rodriguez, Alex Emmanuel</td>
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<td>Alex Emmanuel Rodriguez</td>
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<td>1952</td>
<td>Segrists, Kal Hill</td>
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<td>Jun 26 2015</td>
<td>Lubbock, Texas</td>
<td>Hico Cemetery, Hico, Texas</td>
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<td>1915</td>
<td>Shorten, Charles Henry</td>
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<td>Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania</td>
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<td>1932</td>
<td>Taylor, Harry Warren</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>Terdoslavich, Joseph T.</td>
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<td>1875</td>
<td>Terry, Walter W.</td>
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<td>1925</td>
<td>Thomas, Clarence Fletcher</td>
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<td>Mar 19 1952</td>
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<td>1926</td>
<td>Thomas, Myles Lewis</td>
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<td>Vaughn, Clarence LeRoy</td>
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<td>Welch, John Vernon</td>
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<td>1903</td>
<td>Wilhelm, Irvin Key</td>
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<td>Jan 26 1877</td>
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<td>1880, 1900 census</td>
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<td>1906</td>
<td>Wilson, William</td>
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<td>Jan 7 1885</td>
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<td>Birth records</td>
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