

BARNABAS DEWITT
TAILOR
SOMERSET, ADDISON CO., PA

(from a work in progress by Alexander Bannerman)

BARNABAS⁷ (“Barney”) DeWITT (*Claes*,¹ *Tjerck*,² *Lucas*,³ *Jan*,⁴ *Ezekiel*,⁵ *Petrus*⁶) was born the youngest of nine known children of Petrus and Rebecca DeWitt on June 6, 1814 in Pleasant District, Roaring Creek, Preston County, Virginia (now part of West Virginia), where he clearly grew to adulthood.¹ As a young adult he successfully learned the tailoring trade and amused himself by learning to play the violin. He was a particularly mobile individual: he was born in Virginia, married in Maryland where he settled for a short time, re-settled in Pennsylvania, then removed to Iowa, moved on to York County, Nebraska in 1875, and finally resided in Colorado, where he remained until his death.

A family compilation (see fn. 1) states that at Allegany County, Maryland, on June 25, 1835 he married Rachael³ Scott (*Samuel*,¹ *William*²), daughter of William Scott and Mary (“Polly”) Heiskell.² Rachael almost certainly was born in the year 1815 in Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania, where her family had lived for some years before. Although marriage records from Allegany County do not reflect that such a marriage occurred there,³ he certainly owned property in that place. Soon after their marriage, the couple removed to Petersburg, Pennsylvania. They became the parents of four sons and four daughters, the families of whom have been at least partially constructed here, primarily based on federal censuses:⁴

1 His birth date and place are according to a handwritten document provided to this author by Jan C. DeWitt of Folsom, California. This document is of particular import to his descendants, as it was authored by Barnabas' daughter-in-law, Flora Belle (Slonecker) DeWitt in about the year 1931, when she was more than 70 years of age. This author is informed by family members who knew her that by the time she was 70, Belle was blind and could no longer write, so she had her son write down her thoughts as she discussed members of the family. The document contains a note that it was "written by Scott DeWitt for Belle DeWitt." The document, in pertinent part, reads as follows:

Barneybus DeWitt, father of Geo. W. H. DeWitt, was born in Preston County, West Virginia, on June 6, 1814. He moved from there to Alligany [sic] County, Maryland, from there to Petersburg, Pennsylvania, and from there to Homer, Hamilton County, Iowa. The family moved from there to York County, Nebraska and finally to Colo. Springs, Colo., where he died, April 1891. He had one brother named William and to the best of our recollections his other brothers were John, Peter, [Paul and James are crossed out], Samuel, Richard and Henry, and a sister Susan. Barneybus DeWitt married Rachel Scott on June 25th, 1835 in Allegany County, Maryland.

While the author has been unsuccessful in proving Barnabas' full birth and marriage dates, there is corroborative evidence for every other statement. The document therefore would seem to have significant value for this part of the DeWitt family.

2 Mary (“Polly”) Heiskell was the daughter of George Heiskell and Eve Gray, and the granddaughter of Benjamin Heiskell, the tinsmith who created the weather vane for the courthouse at Hagerstown, Maryland, known ever after as “Little Heiskell.” This is significant because the weather vane is now in a local museum, but its likeness appears on the badges of office of the local authorities, has been reproduced on commercial goods (such as dishes), and has even been the subject of a children’s book of the same name, written in 1928 by Isabelle B. Hurlbutt, and published by E.P. Dutton & Company, New York.

3 The Allegany County courthouse was destroyed by fire in the late 1800s and unfortunately many records were lost. Some marriage records were reconstructed through newspaper notices, but according to the county clerk’s office, if the couple did not post a notice in the newspaper, their information was lost.

4 The names of their surviving children are initially culled from the 1850 Somerset County, Pennsylvania census, which enumerates *Baramus D. Witt* as head of household, includes James P. Gump, a tailor, who probably partnered with Barnabas in his business, and Maria *Grover*, who may be a relative.

Mary Sarah Catherine b. June 20, 1836 at Allegany County, Maryland; m. (1st) Dr. C. [or Mel ?] Snyder; m. (2nd) William Hardin (b. c. 1847 in Pennsylvania); ch. (1st marr.) Sally Elender (d. young); ch. (2nd marr.) Kitty, Rachel and Belle.

Susan Rebecca b. c. 1837 at Selbysport, Maryland; d. c. 1839 as infant at Selbysport, Maryland.

Francis Marion b. 1840 at Selbysport, Maryland; d. *aet* 19 days at Selbysport, Maryland.

Minerva E. b. 1841 in Pennsylvania; d. 1873 in Iowa; m. April 28, 1859 at Hamilton Co., Iowa, as his 2nd wife, to Edwin Shove (b. August 11, 1825 at Rush Twp., Susquehanna Co., Pennsylvania; d. June 12, 1894, prob. Dawes Co., Nebraska); ch. Nancy Matilda (*illeg.*, d. young), Edwin Barnabas, Levi Lincoln, Rachel Catherine, Mary Minerva, Alvin William, Susan Rebecca and John (d. young).

Winfield Scott b. 1843 in Pennsylvania; removed to Colorado with his father and brother; prob. never married.

Rachel M. b. c. 1847 in Pennsylvania; m. (1st) May 5, 1864 at Hamilton County, Iowa to John W. Kimberlin (b. c. 1842 in Indiana; d. c. 1876); m. (2nd) c. 1877 in Nebraska, as his 2nd wife, to James H. Hamblin (b. 1848 in Ohio); ch. (1st marr.) Izitta, Nellie R., Jessie M. and Lillie R.; ch. (2nd marr.) May and James M.

George Washington Hyskell b. March 28, 1849 in Petersburg, Pennsylvania; d. October 8, 1921 at Colorado Springs, Colorado; m. (1st) June 5, 1870 at Boone County, Iowa to Elizabeth S. Fout (b. 1848 in Indiana); m. (2nd) June 21, 1877 at Seward County, Nebraska to Belle Flora Slonecker (b. June 15, 1859 in McDonna County, Illinois;⁵ d. September 1950 in Colorado Springs, Colorado); ch. (2nd marr.) George Washington Barneybus, Scott Gray, Grace Rachel A., Leonard Grover Cleveland, Laura Belle, John R., Clinton (d. young) and Virginia Thelma.

Hudson B. b. 1850 in Pennsylvania; prob. d. young.⁶

Their residence in Webster County, Iowa is evidenced by the appearance of Barnabas DeWitt's family on the State farmers' census for that county in 1856, which indicates they had been in Iowa for only one year. Later in the year 1856, Hamilton County was formed from Webster County, and it is evident from land records that the family remained there for the next several years. Over the course of their time in Hamilton County, Barnabas and Rachael acquired considerable property in the village of Homer, much of which eventually was disposed of in deed transfers by them to their children. Of particular interest to our project is a deed filed September 28, 1867 that states that Rachael and Barnabas sold 30 acres of land to Minerva E. Shove for the sum of \$100.⁷ By May 1875, Rachael and Barnabas had disposed of all their land and moved westward to York County, Nebraska, where Barnabas' name can be found among those who homesteaded in that place.⁸ Their travels ultimately took them to Colorado Springs, Colorado in the year 1880, and there they lived out the remainder of their lives.

Throughout Barnabas' life, he engaged in several occupations. According to the 1850 Pennsylvania federal census, by that time (and probably for many years before) he was occupied as a tailor. He continued in the textile industry for at least a decade, as evidenced by his enumeration in the 1856 and 1860 Iowa censuses. By 1870, still in

5 Her birth place is shown as Pennsylvania in the marriage record of George W. H. DeWitt and Belle Slonecker found in Seward County, Nebraska marriage book 1, page 382. It is she for whom the notes were taken from the diary, referred to above.

6 He is possibly the person named "Frank B. DeWitt" (b. c. 1851), enumerated as a laborer with this family in the 1880 Webster Township, Hamilton County, Iowa census. If so, he married Lydia ___; and had a son Clarence; but if this be true, it is odd Frank does not also appear with this family in the 1856 State Census for Webster County. More likely he is a near DeWitt relative who stayed with this family for some years, working with them or for them.

7 Hamilton County Deed Book 5, pp. 493-4.

8 See Janet Finley and Rose Marie Hulse, *York County Nebraska Homesteaders* (Lincoln, NE: Nebraska State Genealogical Soc., 1991).

Iowa, he had re-established himself as a plasterer, perhaps responding to better job opportunities. Together with his son Winfield, he remained engaged in that occupation once he had settled in Colorado. By the time Barnabas had reached his 70s, no doubt he found plaster work too physically taxing, so again alongside his son Winfield, he engaged in the fruit-growing business, as indicated in the 1880 Colorado federal census.

The date and place of Rachael³ (Scott) DeWitt's death have not been learned; however, Barnabas DeWitt died April 29, 1891 in Colorado Springs. The brief notice of his death appears in the *Colorado Springs Daily Gazette* of May 14, 1891. It reads:

DEWITT-- At Colorado Springs, April 29, 1891, B. DeWitt.