



Why leave home? For family

Why would anyone make the decision to leave family and friends, town and country – home? Why leave all that you know?

More than a hundred years apart, two different men made that difficult decision. One man, James G. McVicker, was a member of a Scottish family living in Northern Ireland in 1867; the other man, Luis Canahui Solar, was born in Guatemala in 1961. Both decided to leave their countries involved in deep political and economic shifts to provide for their families.



Kate Snyder Freeman's family came from Scotland and Ireland.

The 'promise of land' sent her family to U.S.

Kate Snyder Freeman:
Scotland/Northern Ireland, 1867

Kate Snyder Freeman, reference librarian at Keene Memorial Library, is of Scottish descent and enjoys "haggis" now and then, especially during family celebrations. "Haggis" is Scottish blood sausage made from sheep, intestines and all.

Kate's Scottish heritage comes from her mother's side of the family. Her Scottish roots are strong, particularly as she thinks of her mother, Margery McVicker Snyder, who recently died at the age of 94. She was the last surviving sibling out of seven who grew up on the land that was homesteaded by Kate's great-grandfather, James G. McVicker, just 10 miles northwest of North Bend.

In 1867, McVicker was living in Northern Ireland with his mother, three brothers and a sister. They were a Scottish Protestant family with roots in Argyll, Scotland. The McVickers were weavers in Argyll, which is on the western coast of Scotland known for its many wool mills. Once in Ireland, they became road builders and farmers.

While it is unclear exactly why and when Kate's family relocated from Scotland to Ireland, Scotland's history indicates that beginning in 1605 and continuing periodically until 1650, many Protestant Scottish clans from the lowlands were forced to migrate to Catholic Ireland for the political and economic benefit of the King of England. Some historians believe land was a benefit which was then given to the King's supporters; some believe forcing Protestants and Catholics to live together in Ireland kept Ireland busy with its own internal religious strife so Ireland would not be interested with its neighbors. Some histories have found that the latter migrants left Scotland because of religious prosecution.

Once in Northern Ireland, land became more and more scarce. And in 1867, McVicker, along with his brothers, made

the decision to move the family to the United States because of the "promise of land." The Homestead Act of 1862 provided 160 acres to a settler for a small fee.

Reflecting on her great-grandfather's decision to move the family to the United States, Kate echo's his sentiments, "To a Scotsman, the promise of land is very important. A piece of land, a piece of land to pass on to your sons is very important."

The McVickers sailed to the United States in 1867 first landing in New Jersey. While in New Jersey, James married his wife and together the whole family planned to move to Kansas. But a cholera epidemic broke out in Kansas and so instead, the family moved to North Bend which had been settled by Scottish families in 1856 (Miller and Young families). The McVicker family lived with the Sloss family during their first Nebraska winter and then secured land from the government and eventually the railroad, homesteading 10 miles northwest of North Bend in the "Purple Cane" area named for its raspberry bushes.

Kate's great-grandfather worked the land for many years and provided for his family; his brothers also homesteaded in the area. Their families grew large; James and his wife had four children, three sons and one daughter. George G. McVicker was the only son who stayed on the land to farm; his siblings left the land to pursue jobs and education in other areas of the United States. At the end of his life, James G. McVicker regretted somewhat that he had only one son to pass on his land. But today, James G. McVicker has a great-granddaughter, Kate Snyder Freeman, who lovingly speaks of his thick Scottish brogue and looks up to sky when she describes the beauty of the "Purple Cane" area northwest of North Bend, the land that was passed on to her.

He wanted to provide for his daughters

Luis Canahui Solar: Guatemala, 2001

Luis Gerardo Canahui Solar was born in 1961 in Guatemala City, the capitol of Guatemala and today a large metropolitan area. Luis was born the year after the start of Guatemala's 36-year civil war.

He grew up with the civil war and watched as his country's political and economic systems were weakened and 200,000 people killed.

In 1969, while the civil war continued, Luis was 8 years old when his father lost his job after speaking up in favor of a union. His father made the decision to leave and go to the United States.

However, his father "forgot that his primary motive for going to the U.S. was to help us," remembers Luis. Once he moved to the United States, his father did not send any money or help his family left back in Guatemala City.

Luis continued to grow up in Guatemala City with his mother and older brother and sister, graduating from high school in 1979 with a major in the sciences. He dedicated himself to helping his mother and helped her run a food sales business at the University of San Carlos. In 1982, his mother helped him to enroll in the university to study civil engineering. He studied for three years and almost completed his civil engineering degree when his first of two daughters was born. Needing to provide for his family, at the age of 24, Luis left his studies and began working as an assistant engineer.

During this time, Luis was able to continue to work in Guatemala City and provide for his family, which now included two daughters. He worked as an assistant engineer for the next 16 years, until 2001, when his construction company went broke. Luis laments the chain of corrupt governments that led to Guatemala's continuing inability to support a stable economy.

In 2001, Luis states that it was impossible for a 40-year-old man to find a job in

Guatemala's economy. Yet, he had to pay a mortgage and provide for his family. So he decided to leave his daughters and mother to go to the United States. He moved to Nebraska in April 2001 because a friend knew others working in Nebraska. After renewed contact and the help of his biological father, who had become a U.S. citizen, Luis was able to secure a green card to stay and work in the U.S. and eventually become a U.S. citizen.

For the past nine years, Luis has worked a variety of construction jobs, sending some of the money back to Guatemala for his family. In 2006, Luis successfully got his present job in Columbus. Today, his house is paid off and he is ensuring both of his daughters get a university education. One daughter is studying psychology and the other physical therapy. Unfortunately, his mother who had been sick for some time, died last year. Luis had to take out loans to pay for her medical expenses. He is now working to pay off those loans.

But Luis's daughters, who continue to live in Guatemala, live with the country's common corruption, unstable economy, violence and poverty. Organized crime has taken advantage of the turmoil to infiltrate the police. There has been an increase in trafficking of poor women and children for sexual exploitation. The judicial system is still considered ineffective; in 2008, only 2 percent of the 6,200 murders were prosecuted.

In February 2009, Luis became a U.S. citizen after nine years of waiting. He slipped and slid through the biggest snow storm of 2009 to make it on time for the Omaha ceremony. The immigration process can be expensive and take years, but some day Luis hopes to be able to bring his daughters to his home in Nebraska. Like his father, Luis decided he had no choice to come to the U.S. to get a job. But unlike his father, he was able to fulfill his promise providing for his family.



Luis Canahui Solar came to the U.S. to help support his family.

Kloke files for election

Alvin J. Kloke of Ames filed Wednesday for re-election to the Maple Township board.

All township seats will be on the general election ballot in the fall.

Township board incumbents have until July 15 to file for re-election. Non-incumbents have until Aug. 2.

Other Maple Township board members are Verne T. Thompson of Ames and Jack L. Aspy of Fremont.

Author plans book signings

Former Craig resident Joel Williamson, now of Alexandria, Pa., will give a presentation of "The Real People and Places of 'Barrelhouse Boys'" from 6-8:30 p.m. Monday at Oakland Public Library.

The event is a benefit and all proceeds will go to the library. A book signing will follow.

Williamson also will have a book signing from 7-9 p.m. Wednesday at Hastings Books, Music and Videos store in Fremont. The public is invited.

Williamson's historical novel features various Nebraska towns including Fremont, Hooper and Scribner.

Retirees plan luncheon

Hormel Retirees will meet at noon Tuesday at the Union Hall in Fremont for a potluck luncheon. All retirees and widows are invited.

POLICE BEAT

Police probe FPS burglary

Tribune staff

Fremont Police are continuing to investigate a Thursday morning burglary to the Fremont Public Schools Main Street Education and Administration Center.

Deputy Chief Jeff Elliott said a window was damaged to gain access to the building and several offices were ransacked. The loss has not been determined.

Anyone with information about the incident is asked to call CrimeStoppers at 727-4002 or Fremont Police at 727-2677.

Police look into iPod theft

Tribune staff

Fremont Police are investigating the theft of an iPod from a locker at Fremont Middle School.

Deputy Chief Jeff Elliott said the theft was reported shortly before 3:30 p.m. The loss was estimated at \$300.

Anyone with information about the incident is asked to call CrimeStoppers at 727-4002 or Fremont Police at 727-2677.

Man faces assault charge

Tribune staff

A 25-year-old man was arrested Thursday afternoon after Fremont Police were called to apartments in the 300 block of West 23rd Street.

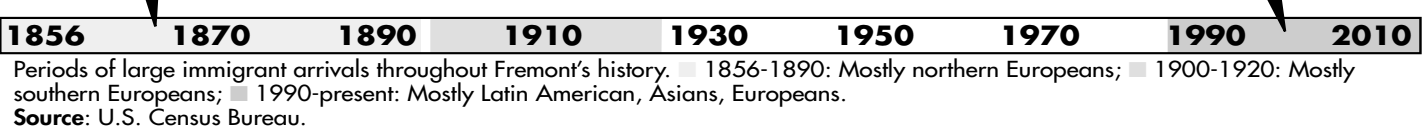
Jonathan Lech of Fremont was charged with third-degree domestic assault. His bond had not been set as of press time.

Deputy Chief Jeff Elliott said officers went to the apartments for a civil standby while a woman was trying to get her possessions.

Officers noticed injuries on the woman and were told that Lech had caused them while trying to prevent the woman from leaving.

1867: Kate Snyder Freeman's great-great grandfather arrives in the North Bend area.

2001: Luis Canahui Solar arrives in Nebraska from Guatemala.



"Building Fremont: Immigrants 1856 to present" is a special four-week project of the Fremont Tribune, Fremont Area Art Association, United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 22 and Nebraska Is Home Fremont. It features photography by Dean Jacobs. Personal stories were compiled by Nebraska Is Home Fremont.