

**A Collection of Documents  
About Members  
Of  
The Conger Family**

Compiled  
By  
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And  
Robert Guilinger

30 Jun 2008

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**Abraham Conger  
Pension File Documents**

**Marriage:**

The State of Ohio, Franklin County, SS.

I Certify That I this day solemnized the **Marriage of Abraham Conger with Elizabeth Brintlinger.**

Witness my Hand, this 21st day of Dec A.D. 1871  
s/Wm G. Heyl J.P.

The State of Ohio, Franklin County, SS.) Probate Court.

I, SAMUEL L. BLACK, Judge of the Probate Court, within and for the County of Franklin, and State of Ohio, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a full and correct copy of the Certificate of Marriage of the parties therein named, as the same appears of record and on file in said Court, to-wit:

Marriage Record, No. 12 Page 91

In Testimony Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and seal of said Court, at Columbus, this 17<sup>th</sup> day of June 1905.

s/Samuel L. Black, Probate Judge.

s/Alexr Carpenter, Deputy Clerk.

(Source: Civil War Pension Record - furnished by Robert Guilinger - extracted by Richard E. Henthorn)

**Abraham Conger  
Pension File Documents**

**Soldier's Declaration for Pension:**

Under Dependent Act of 51st Congress, Approved June 27, 1890.

State of Ohio, County of Franklin, ss:

On this 14th day of July A.D. one thousand eight hundred and ninety, personally appeared before me, W.P. Dunlap, Notary Public in and for said County and State aforesaid, Abraham Conger aged 54 years, a resident of Columbus County of Franklin State of Ohio, who, being duly sworn according to law, declares that he is the identical Abraham Conger who served the full period of ninety days in the military service of the United States in the War of the Rebellion, 1861-1865, who enlisted first for three months in Co "G" 15th Ohio Inf't Vols; then 3 months in Co. K 86th Ohio then at Bucyrus Ohio, on the 8th day of September 1863, as a Saddler (Boyfol) in company "A" in the 12th regiment Ohio Cavalry vols. , and was honorably discharged as a Corporal or Saddler at Nashville, Tenn on the 14th day of November 1865.

That his personal description at the time he last enlisted was as follows: Age 27 years; height 5 feet, 7 3/4 inches; complexion light; color of hair Sandy; color of eyes Brown; was born at Seneca County Ohio; occupation when enlisted, a Saddler.

That he is at this time afflicted with a disability which is not the result of his own vicious habits, and as he verily believes is permanent in character.

That said disability is first a Sunstroke at Parkersburg, W Va while in the Service, effecting him ever since also piles since his return, and these diseases so debilitate him that he cannot labor much.

That by reason of said disability he is incapacitated from the performance of manual labor, which renders him unable to earn a support about three fourths disability at least.

That he makes this declaration for the purpose of being inscribed upon the Pension Rolls of the United States as a disabled ex-soldier of the last war, being incapacitated from performing manual labor to earn his support as provided for under the act passed by the 51st Congress of the United States for disabled soldiers and sailors, approved June 27, 1890, and hereby constitutes and appoints, with full power of substitution and revocation,

T.W. Tallmadge, of Washington, DC

his true and lawful attorney to prosecute this claim and obtain a certificate for pension under the act foresaid.

That he has not received or applied for a pension under the laws of the United States.

That he has ever been a loyal citizen of the United States and will support the Constitution of the United States.

That his post-office address is at Columbus County of Franklin State of Ohio or at Mifflinville, Franklin Co, Ohio.

Attorneys fee to be ten Dollars.

s/Abraham Conger (Signature of claimant)

s/Joel L. Skillen

(Two persons who can write sign here.)

(Source: Civil War Pension Record - furnished by Robert Guilinger - extracted by Richard E. Henthorn)



**Abraham Conger**  
**Pension File Documents**

**Pension Questionnaire:**

Certificate No. 935504

**Name: Abraham Conger**

Department of the Interior Bureau of Pensions.

Washington, DC, January 15, 1898

Sir:

In forwarding to the pension agent the executed voucher for your next quarterly payment please favor me by returning this circular to him with replies to the questions enumerated below.

Very respectfully,

s/Melay Evans; Commissioner

First. Are you married? If so, please state your wife's full name and her maiden name.

Answer. Mrs. Elizabeth Conger, Elizabeth Brintlinger

Second. When, where, and by whom were you married?

Answer. Dec. 21st 1871. Columbus O.Squyre Kyle

Third. What record of marriage exists?

Answer. Franklin Co. O. Probate Court

Fourth. Were you previously married? If so, please state the name of your former wife and the date and place of her death or divorce.

Answer. No.

Fifth. Have you any children living? If so, please state their names and the dates of their birth.

Answer. Yes

Grant Conger born Oct. 12th 1872

Letta Conger " Sept. 14 1875

John Conger " Dec 19 1877

s/Abraham Conger (Signature. )

Date of reply, June 4, 1898.

(Source: Civil War Pension Record - furnished by Robert Gullinger - extracted by Richard E. Henthorn)

**Abraham Conger  
Pension File Documents**

**Drop Order and Report :**

Department of the Interior Bureau of Pensions Finance Division.

Washington, DC, June 23, 1905

Pensioner: Abraham Conger

Certificate number: 93550

Class: Invalid

Soldier: Act of June 27, 1890

Service: A-12-O.V.Cavy

U.S. Pension Agent: Columbus

Sir: You are hereby directed to drop from the roll the name of the above - described pensioner who died May 31, 1905.

s/V. Warner (Commissioner)

Commissioner of Pensions:

Sir: The name of the above - described pensioner, who was last paid at \$10 per month to 4 Mar, 1905, has this day been dropped from the roll of this agency.

s/illegible signature; U.S. Pension Agent

June 27, 1905

(Source: Civil War Pension Record - furnished by Robert Gulinger, extracted by Richard E. Henthorn)

**Abraham Conger (1836-1905)  
and  
"Frank" The War Horse (1860-1886)**

Everyone has read at least one story about a man's devotion to his dog but this is a true story about a man's devotion to his horse.

Abraham Conger was born in Seneca County, Ohio on 21 Jul 1836, the son of John Baker Conger (b. 1805) and Beulah Carson. He grew up in Ohio and at the time of the Civil War was a Saddler, one who makes, repairs, or sells saddles for horses.

Abe, as he was known, enlisted on 8 November 1863 at Bucyrus, Ohio in Company A of the 12th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry as a Corporal/Saddler. He was then assigned a three-year old horse named "Frank" as his Cavalry mount. The 12th O.V.C. served under General William T. Sherman throughout most of the Civil War, including the famous March to the Sea in Georgia. Abe and Frank were also under the command of General George Stoneman in the campaign that fought behind enemy lines. You might say that Abe's life literally depended on Frank getting him back safely to the Union lines on several different occasions.

Abe was promoted to Sgt. in 1864 and both Abe and Frank survived their war service without any wounds. Abraham Conger was discharged with his unit, at Nashville, TN on 14 Nov 1865. Abe was then offered the opportunity to purchase his mount, which he did. He took Frank back to a farm he owned in Eden Twp., Wyandot Co., Ohio. Abe and Frank lived alone on the farm until Abe married Elizabeth Brintlinger on 21 Dec 1871 at Columbus, Franklin Co., OH. Three children (Ulysses Grant on 12 Oct 1872, Lettie Leora on 14 Sep 1875 and John Curtis on 19 Dec 1877) were born to Abe and Elizabeth while they lived at Nevada, Wyandot Co., OH.

Certainly the children looked on Frank as a member of the family while growing up. Abe Conger took care of Frank for over 20 years, until the horse died in 1886. Abe, with the help of some of his Civil War friends, buried Frank on a farm in adjacent Crawford County, Ohio and erected a monument to Frank's war service. After 112 years this monument is in need of restoration.

It is rather ironic that shortly after Frank's death Abe's health began to fail and he was forced to sell his farm and move to the small community of Lewis Center, in Delaware County, Ohio

Abraham Conger received a pension in 1890 for his Civil War service. He died at Lewis Center, Ohio on 31 May 1905.

[Note: Doris Ann Conger supplied some of the material in this article and some came from Conger Family in America, Vol. II. The author, Robert R. Guilinger, is the grandson of Margaret (Conger) Guilinger (1863-1927)  
(Source: Written by Robert R. Guilinger, January 1998)



**Daniel Lampson Conger  
Will**

**CONGER, D. L.**

[Daniel Lampson Conger, REH]

I, D. L. Conger of Mills County, being of sound mind, and while in the full possession of all my mental faculties, and being desirous of seeing that my beloved wife have a sufficiency (to) properly care for and support her during the remainder of her natural life, I do make publish and declare this to be my last will and testament, hereby revoking and canceling all former wills by me made. That is to say after my death and respectable burial, and the full and final payment of all my debts, I give and wil to my said beloved wife, Nancy C. Conger the following described property, for the full period of her life only, as follows.

The West Half of the East Half, of the South East Quarter of Section 2, and the East Half of the North East Quarter, of Section 2, and the West Half of the West Half of the North West quarter of Section 1, all in Township 72, Range 42, in Mills County Iowa, and my said wife is to have all of the rentals, as well as profits arising from said lands absolutely in her own right, for her own use, as she may from time to time elect. The intention as well as purpose on my part, being to fully invest her, with the income from said lands absolutely for her own use, and support as long as she shall live, and at her death said lands to go to my surviving children, share and share alike.

I give and will to my said wife all of my Household goods of every description as her sole property.

I nominate and appoint my wife as my sole Executrix, of this my last will without bond.

Dated at Glenwood, Iowa, this 30th day of June A.D. 1914. Signed D. L. Conger

The foregoing will was by the Testator, signed in our presence, and we at his request, and in his presence, and in the presence of each other have signed our names thereto as witnesses, and have caused to be written our respective places of residence.

Witnesses

Jno. A. McClusky, Glenwood, Iowa

W. S. Lewis, Glenwood, Iowa

Mills Documents maintained by Cay Merryman with the WebBBS 4.33 Genealogy Modification Package by WebJourneymen.net  
(Source: Posted By: Cay Merryman [caym@infowest.com](mailto:caym@infowest.com), Date: 2/7/2004 at 12:50:17)

### **Albina Leslie (Conger) Butler**

The family of Silas Conger, 1800, moved to Steuben county, Indiana and settled on a farm near Salem Center, Steuben Co., IN.

Albina Leslie Conger, a daughter of Silas, was born on xxxx. She married Seymour Stevens Butler on 25 Nov 1858. He was the son of Jesse and Fannie Stevens Butler, who came to Steuben county, Indiana from North Hero, VT in 1849.

Albina and Seymour Butler lived on the Butler homestead with Seymour's parents until 1867 when they bought their own place close to Salem Center. Seymour was drafted and served as a Private in Co. K, of the 29th Indiana Regiment of the Union Army in 1864. He served 8 months until a substitute was found to take his place. He returned to his farm and his growing family.

The couple had eight children, 4 of whom survived childhood: Roelif (Ruly), b. 7 Jun 1860; Loren, b. 2 Mar 1869; Silas Ora, b. 9 Sep 1871 and Fred H. Butler, b. 15 Sep 1873.

Seymour Stevens Butler died on 19 April 1882 at the age of 50.

Albina continued the farm with the aid of her sons.

Ruly married, Dora Spears, and their eight children were born in Albina's home before they purchased another place nearby. Loren, never married and Ora married Lou Stoddard after Albina's death. Fred H. became a telegrapher with the railroad and married (1) Blanche Woodford. They were the parents of Mildred and Don Butler (the father of my husband, Fred A. Butler). When Blanche died, 28 May 1907, Grandmother Albina opened her home and Mildred and Don lived on the farm until Fred H. married (2) Mae McClellan on 4 Oct 1910. There was no issue.

In 1891, Albina (Conger) Butler began her 25 years of daily diary entries to record the comings and goings of her family and her neighbors. The diaries sketch a picture of a small town in northeast Indiana at the turn of the century. Albina (Bina) recorded births, marriages and social activities of a farm community, "the Burg," as she called Salem Center, Indiana. Someone wrote in the diary everyday even if "Grandma" was ill. The diary continued until 4 days before her death on 3 Aug 1916 at the age of 79 years.

A copy of the earliest diary, 1891, is at the Fort Wayne, IN library. The rest of them, 1892-1916 were loaned to her grandson, Don Butler, in Riverside, CA while copies were typed and indexed. They were returned to her namesake granddaughter, Emily Albina (Bina) Butler Cool, born on 31 Jan 1891, who lived in Salem Center, Indiana. The diaries were later given to Emily's son, Kay Cool, and then to his daughter, Janet (Mrs. James Persey). Her last known address in 1979 was: 1620 Crescent Ave., Fort Wayne, IN 46805.

Another descendant is: Kathleen Conger Petty: P.O. Box 56, Toledo, WA 98591. She is a descendant of Albina's brother, Pembroke Conger.

Don Woodford Butler, born 3 Mar 1902, lived at: 3477 Sunnyside Drive; Riverside, CA. He had many happy memories of Grandma Butler and the farm. He was 89 years old at the time this was written.

(Written by: Betsy A. Butler; 6240 Riverside Ave.; Riverside, CA 92506 - p. 677-678 of Conger Confab - furnished by Robert Guilinger)

**Albina Leslie (Conger) Butler**  
**RECOLLECTIONS: Some Diary Entries**

The following excerpts from the diary of Albina (Conger) Butler pertain to her brothers, Casper Karlinski, 1827; Pembroke Sommerset, 1839; Selwyn LeRoy, 1841 and (Silas) Delmar, 1855. Mentioned often were her sisters: Nancy Bodley and Marissa Markle.

20 Apr 1891, It has been a nice warm day. Vina and I have done a large washing. Vina and I went over to see Lige tonight after supper. He says he feels the best that he has since he has been sick. Cal Myers came today, to help build slat and wire fence. Loren got done plowing, down on the Marsh tonight. Ruly has gone to Turkey Creek to Regulators meeting. It is nine years today since Seymour (husband) died. Oh how long the time seems since he went away. I don't think, or when I do think of that day -- I can't think of it as I do of the other days of my life that are passed but "that" day seems like a horrid nightmare. I can't describe it.

13 Jul 1891, Toledo, OH, Here at Delmar's. Nancy and I came over here this morning. It has been a splendid day, just warm enough to be comfortable in the house but the sun was hot. I am getting my share of strawberries, I think, for we have them every meal. We had the "best" potatoes for supper. Delmar went calling this afternoon, had a business meeting this evening but we put in a good long evening of visiting when he got home. He showed us some relics that he got in different places when he went to Europe.

13 Aug 1891, Today it looked some like rain. It is getting so dry they can hardly plow. Vina and I picked 22 quarts of blackberries today. When we got back to the Burg I got a letter from Selwyn and he has got his pension. Gets \$12 a month, drew pay from June 4, 1890, and he just got a letter from Pembroke and he has got his pension too. I am so glad. Selwyn needs it so bad I expect he needs it worse than Pembroke.

13 Nov 1891, Ruly packed a barrel to send to Neb to Selwyn -- we put in a large candy pail of Apple Butter and a small candy pail of Sweet Apple Jell, a bushel of walnuts and about three pecks of Hickory nuts - a few dried apples - a few dried peaches -- and then all the green apples he could get in. I am going to send some Apple Butter to Delmar and Nancy (Bodley) tomorrow.

12 Jul 1904, (Was the first time Bina mentioned her brother, Casper (C.K.). It seems he never wrote, but later his two younger daughters did. Bina wrote, "Pembroke is going to start for CK's tonight. Selwyn is going to take him to Inman, (Neb).

17 Jul 1904, Selwyn went to Inman this morning and got Pembroke, he found CK quite well and he does considerable work too, does all his chores with his wives [sic] help. His two girls (Jane and Margaret) was away to school.  
(Furnished by Robert Guilinger)

## Everton Judson Conger and John Wilkes Booth

Some say there was blood on the moon that awful April. President Lincoln's martyred body lay in a black coffin. Men wept and cursed in Washington's muddy streets. Flags draped at half staff. Bells tolled.

Panic stricken officials send soldiers and secret service men scurrying off in all directions on a hell-bent hunt for a crazed actor who had assassinated the President at Ford's Theater the night of April 14.

Somewhere in southern Maryland John Wilkes Booth was hiding. His flight with a co-conspirator, David Herold, was delayed by a broken leg, smashed when he arose from the kill in the Lincoln box and jumped to the stage.

### *Peace, then Rage*

Five days before a triumphant nation had hailed a peace at Appomattox. Now an enraged North was baying like a bloodhound.

Every April, Carmi, Ill., feels close to that scene in the swamps along the Potomac, the winding roads around Port Tobacco, the swollen Rappahannock, a certain tobacco barn near Port Royal, Va.

There's a house on Carmi's Main Street to remind folks of that hunt for John Wilkes Booth. There's a Carmi family bearing the name of the man who caught Lincoln's assassin.

### *Used Reward Money*

Remodeled and beautified; the house at 302 West Main Street was built 105 years ago by Col. Everton J. Conger. He paid for it with part of the money he received as a reward for commanding the troops who cornered and killed Booth.

Col. Conger lived in Carmi for 11 years, from 1869 to 1880. Here he studied law in the office of a brother, the late Judge Chauncey S. Conger. Here he was admitted to the bar in 1871, elected police magistrate. He practiced law in Carmi until 1880, when President Rutherford B. Hayes appointed him to the Federal bench in Montana territory.

### *Was Ohio Dentist*

When the Civil War started, Everton Conger was a 26-year-old dentist in Fremont, Ohio. He enlisted, raised a company in his state, was commissioned captain and attached to the West Virginia cavalry. He was a handsome, slender, black-bearded man with high forehead, large expressive eyes and a dashing mustache.

He was his hardest fighting at Petersburg and during the Richmond campaign, being wounded several times. In one battle he was on the ground when an enemy attacked with a broad sword. He raised an arm to ward off the blow and his arm was cut off.

Recovering from his wounds, Conger returned to duty and was promoted to lieutenant colonel. He was with the First District of Columbia Cavalry when Lincoln was assassinated. His chief was Col. LaFayette C. Baker.

### *Human Ferret*

Col. Baker, brown-haired, grey-eyed, was a human ferret; more of a spy or secret agent than he was a military man. He had served with the San Francisco vigilantes. When war came he was sent to Richmond to spy for Seward's State Department. He was so successful as a detective

that he was taken over by Secretary Stanton and made chief of the War Department's large force of secret agents. It was then that he was given a Colonel's commission.

And so, the stage was set that fateful April.

Booth and Herold escaped into Maryland on horseback. They crossed the Navy Yard bridge over the Anacostia River, hoping to reach Virginia. Booth's broken leg was swelling in his boot. The throbbing pain forced the fugitives to turn from their escape route and make for the Maryland home of Dr. Samuel Mudd.

### *Capitol in Chaos*

When Lincoln died the morning of April 15 Washington was in chaos. Secretary Steward was unconscious from knife wounds inflicted by another conspirator, Lewis Paine. War Secretary Stanton took command as a dictator, ignoring the new President, Andrew Johnson. Stanton issued orders to soldiers, policemen and secret service agents. The hunt was on. Col. Baker rushed back from New York on orders from Stanton, who greeted him tearfully with these words: "My entire dependence is upon you."

After Lincoln's funeral train started wending its way back to the Illinois prairies, Stanton seemed to get a grip on himself. The hunt for the conspirators had been a frustrating farce. April 20 Stanton offered rewards totaling \$100,000, a sum of \$50,000 for Booth and \$25,000 each for Herold and John H. Sturatt.

### *Col. Baker Ignored*

Lack of coordination between the hunters in their hopes to grab the rewards enabled Booth and Herold to make their way to the Potomac. Col. Baker was ignored at General Christopher Augur's military headquarters. For a week he made little progress, while certain Army sleuths were in full cry on a hot trail in Virginia.

By Monday, April 24, Col. Baker received secret information that Booth and Herold had crossed the Potomac and that Major James R. O'Beirne's search party was closing in on the fugitives.

### *Conger On Trail*

It was then that the wily Baker pulled strings which put him and Col. Conger on the trail. Major O'Beirne was suddenly recalled and Baker was put in charge of the hunt.

He sent for Col. Conger and Lieut. L.B. Baker, a cousin, both of whom were in the First Cavalry. Conger and the lieutenant watched while Col. Baker showed them a map, pointing out where the fugitives had crossed the Potomac and the route he believed they would take.

He ordered Conger and Baker to leave at once and to search the area around Port Royal, Va. Col. Baker asked Stanton for some troops to support his two officers and he was assigned a detachment of Sixteenth New York Cavalry.

### *Trail Grew Hot*

Mindful of the huge reward, Col. Baker placed Conger in command of the expedition. By evening of the 24th, Conger's hard riding horsemen were warm on the trail in the swamps of St. Mary's County, Maryland. On April 25 they found a Confederate officer who had helped Booth and Herold cross the Potomac. It was he who hinted where Booth might be found.

It was after midnight. There was an April chill on the night air. Horses and men were bone tired, but there was no time to lose. Guided by the Confederate captain, the weary horsemen hurried toward the farm of Richard Garrett.

It was 2 a.m. when the troops halted at Garrett's gate. Col. Conger gave quiet orders for the cavalrymen to surround the ... When the soldiers were in place their carbines poised, Conger told Lieut. Baker to rap on the kitchen door. He knocked and gave a loud halloo.

#### *Hiding in Barn*

In drawers and nightshirt. ... man Garrett opened the door looked into the night, and the of Baker and Conger. He said and Herold had left, but his John, spoke up and blurted out the fugitives were hiding in the barn.

#### *Trooper Seized Young Garrett*

They held cocked pistols at and led him toward the Soldiers surrounded the hide Conger and Baker went up to barn door. Calling out loudly told those inside that they sending Garrett's son into get their weapons; that they the fugitives to surrender arms and come out or they set the barn on fire.

#### *Herold Seized*

Pushing the boy inside, Conger and Baker heard Booth curse and refuse their proposal terrified boy retreated After haggling for a few minutes with Booth, they heard him call that Herold wanted to surrender. Unarmed Herold came through door. He was seized and handcuffed. When he started whining innocence, Conger threatened to have him gagged.

While Booth was still arguing a chance to make a run for his Col. Conger slipped around the and set it afire. The barn ablaze inside when Conger looked through a crack. He saw Booth standing in the glare of the flames his broken, infected leg supported by a crutch. Booth held a carbine intent on shooting the man who had set fire to the barn.

#### *Corbett Disobeys*

Suddenly he turned, rifle and made a dash for the determined to shoot it out. Just Sergeant Boston Corbet disobeyed orders. Peering though a hole in the barn, he raised his and shot Booth, the bullet entered the back of the neck.

Booth collapsed in the burning barn. Col. Conger and sergeants rushed in, picked Booth and carried him outside placing him on the grass.

"Bring water," Col. Conger ordered. They threw some on the assassin's face. He opened his eyes for the last time. His lips moved, "Tell mother.. I did.. for  
(Furnished by Robert Guilinger)

## **Casper Karliniski Conger**

### **Aged Pioneer Passes Away**

#### **C.K. Conger Prominent When Tekamah Was Young Dies at 96**

Casper K. Conger, who was an early pioneer in Tekamah, died at his home near Valentine, Nebraska, September 14, 1923, aged 96 years, 4 months and 5 days.

Mr. Conger's ancestors were among the Pilgrim fathers, a record of which he had in his family Bible dating back to 1700. He was of Scotch-English parents, born in Hannibal, Oswego County, New York, May 9, 1827.

In his school days he began to prepare himself for the ministry, but had to abandon his chosen profession owing to the death of his mother and engaged in farming. His uncle, Rev. Enoch Conger and brother, Rev. Delmar Conger, became prominent as Presbyterian ministers. The Conger family moved to Plymouth, Ohio, where on May 2, 1850 he was united in marriage to Marietta Conklin of English-Irish descent, as her forefathers came over on the Mayflower. Mr. Conger in the early fifties moved to Salem, Indiana and later to South Bend, Ind., where he engaged in business, also in farming.

Four daughters and two sons were born to Mr. and Mrs. Conger: Mrs. Mary Sutherland, Tekamah, Nebr.; Mrs. Carolyn Hawks, Chloride, Ariz.; Mrs. Evelyn Ludwick, and Mrs. Florence Caister in Los Angeles, Calif.; Chas. M. Conger, Cody, Wyo. and Chester W. Conger, Riverside, Calif., all of whom are left to mourn the passing of a loving and devoted father.

Mr. Conger came to Nebraska with his family from South Bend, Ind. locating in Tekamah, May 6, 1869, and engaged in the hotel business in the old blockhouse, where for a time it was the stage station on the Omaha - Sioux City route, and he was the express agent and postmaster. Later he sold the hotel and bought a farm northwest of Tekamah where Mrs. Conger passed away September 17, 1879, which caused Mr. Conger to sell his farm and return to Tekamah. In the spring of 1883 he was married to Miss Maria Norris of Flint, Michigan and later in that year he moved to a farm near Valentine, Nebraska. Two daughters were born to this second union, Mrs. Jane Weich and Mrs. Margaret McCormick, both whom survive their father and were with him during his last illness their mother having passed away November 9, 1913.

The burial of Mr. Conger was made at Valentine much to the disappointment of his many old time friends in Tekamah, where his activity and wholesome influence for the uplift of humanity left monuments to his memory. He was the founder of the Presbyterian church in this city in 1869 and contributed a good share of the funds to erect the first church building in Tekamah.

Mr. Conger was also an active factor in organizing the Masonic lodge in Tekamah in November 1869 and was its first worshipful master. He was a Knights Templar Mason before he left South Bend, Ind., and became a charter member in organizing Mount Calvary commandry in Omaha, the first in Nebraska.

Mr. Conger was the first chairman of the town board of trustees in its re-organization after the Civil War, which had caused the little hamlet to become almost de-populated and had let its municipal charter lapse which was granted in 1855 by the territorial legislature.

He was also an active factor in organizing Tekamah's Cemetery in 1874 which has since become such a beauty spot. He had frequently expressed his desire to be laid to rest there beside his two wives and many friends.

The Masonic lodge in Tekamah had expected to confer special honor at the burial of its first master, but since interment occurred in Valentine, Monday, floral offerings were sent to that city for the funeral as silent tributes of respects for the worthy old pioneer.

(Source: undated obituary clipping, p. 692, Conger Confab - furnished by Robert Guilinger)



## Charles Leslie Conger

Charles Leslie Conger compiled the bulk of the Conger material now existing. It appears that he spent thousands of dollars to have research done, and it is said he died a poor man, although he had been a banker. He died in 1934 when the country was still feeling the effects of the 1929 "Crash". His only son, William Lloyd Conger, had but one child, Jean, who died unmarried.

Charles L. Conger wrote a letter dated, 23 Feb 1932, to Clement Ellis Conger in which he said he intended to place his records with the New Jersey Historical Society. He added, "I have not done much to add to the records in the past twenty years and there are other sources of information that I would like to tap, but I guess it is out of the question. Among my other so-called troubles is my eyesight that is failing me so much that I can hardly see to read large print (can not read newspapers, except the headlines) and glasses will not help. However, I am not kicking. My race is nearly over and I have had a very good time on this earth until recently." He died two years later at the age of 65.

Another letter to Clement Conger, dated 20 Mar 1932, reads, in part, "I wish the first time that you go to The Congressional Library in Washington that you would ascertain for me whether or not they would be interested in unpublished manuscripts such as I have, regarding the Conger family. I have three copies of my work, one which I have always wanted to place with The Historical Society of New Jersey, one copy in the Newbury Library in Chicago and if there is a genealogical department in the Congressional Library at Washington I should like to place a copy there. I have a large amount of data all classified and in fairly good condition."

Clement E. Conger adds a note of humor to this as he wrote on 26 May 1970, "It would amuse you to know that when I took the Conger genealogy book to the head of the Genealogy Section of the Library of Congress many years ago, he asked me how many Congers were in the book. I made a trivial remark that we Congers were like rabbits because in ten generations there were 25,000 people in the book. The head of the Genealogy Department replied the Congers had not done their duty. In ten generations the average American family is 35,000 people. He was so delighted with all this work that the book was placed in the Rare Book Section where, I presume, it may be consulted at any time.

(Source: The Conger Family of America, Vol. 1, p. 2a – Maxine Crowell Leonard)

## Clement Ellis Conger

### APPRECIATION

#### Clement Conger, Furnishing History

By Patricia Dane Rogers  
Special to The Washington Post  
Thursday, January 15, 2004; Page H01

A visit to Clement Conger's Georgian-style home on Alexandria's Mansion Drive revealed a lot about the man who led a lifelong crusade to elevate the Diplomatic Reception Rooms at the State Department, the White House and Blair House to a level of elegance and authenticity that would do them proud.

"After all," he told me in a 1975 interview for Architectural Digest, "kings, queens and prime ministers should see something beside planes and airports when they come to Washington."

His own formal living room -- Oriental rug, grand piano crowded with photographs and invitations, a tall Chippendale-style tea table and a leggy blue damask camel-back sofa -- clearly reflected the period look this purist sought for those grander venues: porcelain owned by the Washingtons and Mr. Jefferson (as Conger inevitably referred to him); silver made by Paul Revere; chairs once owned by Francis Scott Key. All were pieces that bespoke grace, beauty and the nation's history.

His own home also held a clue to his enduring disapproval when history was ignored, such as the wall-to-wall carpet installed in the private quarters of the White House during the Reagan years. The yellow Oval Room on the second floor, he said, was "an extremely beautiful room," decorated by Jacqueline Kennedy with fine French antiques, which the Nixons augmented with "even finer furnishings" appropriate to the Federal era.

"Mrs. Reagan and her decorator, Ted Graber -- who knew nothing about American period houses -- turned the Yellow Room and most of the second floor into 'California rooms,'" Conger wrote to me in 1992. "They replaced many antiques with 20th-century overstuffed sofas, which are not correct for the room, and, as everybody knows, are too low and hard to get out of."

Conger, who died Sunday in Florida at age 91, began his work to transform the State Department's motel-modern Diplomatic Reception Rooms during the Kennedy administration, and served as curator there until 1992. His work drew the attention of the Nixons, who tapped him to add the White House curatorship to his duties in 1970. He served in that capacity until 1986, when the Reagans replaced him, rather unceremoniously, with chief usher Rex Scouten. From 1970 to 1992, he was also curator of Blair House, the president's guest house, and worked with then-chief of protocol Selwa "Lucky" Roosevelt to totally refurbish it.

Once dubbed the "Grand Acquisitor" by the Wall Street Journal, Conger was legendary for his ability to ferret out, bargain for and solicit museum-quality 18th- and early-19th-century cabinetry, porcelain, rugs, paintings and silver that now adorn the Diplomatic Reception Rooms as well as the offices of the Secretary of State -- a collection of nearly 5,000 pieces currently valued at more than \$100 million.

His work also gave him a unique perch from which to watch the parade of first families who made their home in the White House. "I probably have more of a bird's-eye view of what can happen with changes of administration than anyone," he said in an interview with me seven years after he'd left the White House.

He particularly admired Pat Nixon, "who really completed what Mrs. Kennedy started at the White House in the public rooms as well as the private quarters." According to Conger, he and the first lady shared a fondness for coconut cake with lemon filling as well as fine antiques. "She

would give a birthday lunch for me and I would give one for her and we always had this cake."

He recalled how his work at the State Department first caught her husband's eye. "President Nixon had seen what I had done there," he said in one of our many conversations over the years. "One day, I bumped into him in the lobby and he said, 'Would you take Pat up to the eighth floor and show her the Diplomatic Reception Rooms?' Then he joined us and we went through in a flash and the president turned to her and said 'What did I tell you? This place looks better than the White House.' And that's how I got to shuttle back and forth between the White House and the State Department for the next 16 years."

He admired the Fords and Carters as well and had high praise for the senior Bushes. "They and their decorator, Mark Hampton, returned some of the antiques the Reagans had banished."

The arrival of the Clintons -- and more specifically their cat Socks -- gave him cause for concern, which he expressed when I interviewed him about changes they might make to the White House. "Tell me," he asked, "does Chelsea's cat have claws? It does? Uh-oh. Amy Carter's cat scratched the legs of tables and chairs upstairs and down . . . . The danger that Chelsea's cat could do to chairs and settees worth tens and in some cases hundreds of thousands of dollars is irretrievable."

At State, his office was modest and crowded, filled with rolled-up rugs, tall case clocks, Pembroke tables and "always piles and piles of papers," said Gail F. Serfaty, Conger's longtime deputy curator and, as director of the Diplomatic Reception Rooms and curator of Blair House since '95, his successor. He had no formal training in antiques; in fact, he once described himself as an "advanced amateur." But he lectured coast to coast, brought in specialists and worked with classically inclined architects such as Edward Vason Jones of Albany, Ga., and Allan Greenberg of Washington, to create historically correct settings, especially at State, for the furnishings he acquired.

"He was a perfectionist. The extraordinary thing was not only his enthusiasm but his sense that it was possible to do the impossible," said Serfaty. "The State Department rooms were ugly and sterile, but he had the self-confidence to make things happen. He never claimed to be an expert himself, but he went to experts like Berry Tracy, curator of American Decorative Arts at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, great dealers like Harold Sack and great collectors. His optimism was extraordinary. He was able to bring out in people a sense of national pride." One of his greatest coups, she said, was "to acquire the Gilbert Stuart portrait of John Jay at auction and, of course, the Treaty of Paris desk, the desk on which the final Treaty of Paris was signed in 1783, ending the American Revolution."

In the early years, Serfaty, Conger and Pat Heflin -- then his personal secretary and now manager of development under Serfaty -- spent most weekends working on the State Department Americana project.

"He could be intimidating," Heflin recalls. "He had been a court stenographer, took impeccable shorthand, and he'd come out of meetings and dictate without a pause. He also had this old rat-a-tat-tat manual typewriter, and he'd always be banging out drafts."

On many of those weekends, said Serfaty, "we would also have small luncheons for people with great collections and he would ask them what they thought the rooms needed." He reasoned correctly, she says, "that most collectors over collect, so he often tapped into their patriotic and family pride and they were thrilled to give. What I respected most," she said, "was his own love for the project. At State, all the furnishings were loaned or donated." He was proud that the rooms were open to the public, and that they hadn't cost taxpayers a cent.

As a fellow resident of Alexandria, I sometimes ran into Conger in less than formal circumstances. At the neighborhood Safeway one day a few years back, I noticed he was limping; he told me that too many years of walking on marble floors at State and the White

House had hurt his feet. Another time, I was surprised to realize that the tall, somehow familiar man climbing out of the swimming pool at the Army Navy Country Club was none other than Conger; I had never seen him in anything but a dark blue suit and striped tie.

In a conversation after his death this week, Serfaty said she and Conger had stayed in touch. "We had a long chat on Christmas Eve," she said. He was planning to attend the "Becoming a Nation: Americana From the Diplomatic Reception Rooms," the traveling exhibit she organized and that is now in Palm Beach. "But then we learned that he had developed pneumonia and realized he wasn't going to make it. He always considered us a team," she said. "We were family."

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## Clement Ellis Conger

### **Curator Clement E. Conger Dies at 91; Beautified Nation's Diplomatic Spaces**

By Adam Bernstein  
Post Staff Writer  
Monday, January 12, 2004; Page B04

Clement E. Conger, 91, the State Department curator who transformed the "motel modern" look of its diplomatic reception rooms into a showcase for early American craftsmanship, died Jan. 11 at a hospital in Delray Beach, Fla. He had pneumonia.

Mr. Conger's career, which married the worlds of diplomacy, politics and fine arts, was chronicled extensively in print. Seemingly every Chippendale table, every Gilbert Stuart portrait, every Duncan Phyfe cabinet he obtained became cause for a story.

He raised millions of dollars to refurbish State Department rooms for visiting dignitaries and then did the same at the White House and Blair House, the presidential guesthouse.

Although Mr. Conger was long enamored of antiques and fine art, he was a bit of an anomaly in his high-profile job.

A tall, chatty, energetic Shenandoah Valley native with roots in Colonial Virginia, he held no college degree in decorative arts, never worked in a museum and had no scholarly record.

His entry into curating, in the early 1960s, was largely accidental. He was at the State Department helping coordinate visits by foreign officials when the wife of Secretary of State Christian A. Herter approached him worriedly about additions that had been made to the State Department building. She was distressed to see the new hospitality suite looking so sterile. According to Mr. Conger, she "burst into tears," knowing that she soon had to entertain the Queen of Greece there.

He fixed the problem with three borrowed French paintings and then got to work forming a committee of wealthy citizens with a healthy interest in history and antiques.

He sent letters nationwide explaining the benefits of lending beautiful objects to the State Department: "national pride, family pride and tax deductibility."

On weekends, he visited auction houses and private estates for vintage Americana while working full time during the week as an assistant to top arms-control officials.

Over the years, he overhauled more than 15 main reception rooms as well as the Treaty Room suite and the offices of the secretary and deputy secretary of state.

The furnishings are now valued at more than \$100 million, said Pat Heflin, his former assistant.

The Nixons admired his work and invited him to be the White House curator. Curating became his main job, and he divided his time between the executive mansion and the State Department.

He raised millions to renovate much of the White House, including the Red, Green and Blue rooms.

In 1986, first lady Nancy Reagan reportedly dismissed Mr. Conger because of artistic differences and replaced him with a Reagan friend, White House chief usher Rex Scouten.

Mr. Conger retired from the State Department in 1992 and then spent two years doing consulting

work at Christie's auction house.

Clement Ellis Conger was born in Harrisonburg, Va., where his father was a doctor. He was a graduate of Strayer College and attended George Washington University.

Early on, he worked in Washington as an office manager and correspondent for the Chicago Tribune and office manager for U.S. Rubber Co.

During World War II, he served in the Army and became assistant secretary for the United States and British combined chiefs of staff.

He joined the State Department after the war and became deputy chief of protocol in the late 1950s. He helped oversee visits by foreign officials, among them the shah of Iran, Soviet Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev, French President Charles de Gaulle and Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

Although he began curatorial work as a volunteer, he attacked the job with vigor. He earned the nickname "the Grand Inquisitor" for his singular pursuit of certain objects.

At a State Department party, he heard about a man in Philadelphia selling a desk once used by Thomas Jefferson. He rushed that day to meet the owner and dissuaded him from selling the desk to a museum. Giving it to the State Department, he explained, would mean that it would be seen by presidents, prime ministers, kings and queens.

The job also had its foibles.

"Marshall Field V's wife didn't like antiques," he said in 1972, referring to the Chicago newspaper publisher. "But he couldn't stop collecting them, so he lent them to us. But a funny thing happened. He changed wives, and his new wife just loves antiques. So the other week, all the antiques he had lent us went to their home."

Mr. Conger, a member of the Senior Executive Service, was a recipient of the State Department's Distinguished Service Award and the Distinguished Service Medal.

In 1992, Winterthur, the Delaware-based museum of American decorative arts, gave him the Henry Francis DuPont Award for distinguished contribution to the American arts.

He was a former chairman of the Virginia Trust for Historic Preservation and a former vestryman and senior warden at Episcopal Christ Church in Alexandria.

A longtime Alexandria resident, he lived briefly in Arlington before moving to Delray Beach in 2002.

Survivors include his wife of 55 years, Lianne Hopkins Conger of Delray Beach; three children, William Conger of Maurertown, Va., Jay Conger of Manhattan Beach, Calif., and Shelley Conger of Sherman Oaks, Calif.; and two grandchildren.

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Correction: The obituary for Clement E. Conger, that ran Jan. 12, 2004, incorrectly reported the nickname he received. The nickname was the "Grand Acquisitor." REH

## **Edwin David Conger**

Edwin Burn Conger wrote of his father, Edwin David Conger: He was born in Bellville, Ontario and as a very young man went to St. Paul, [MN], I think, to see if he would like to be a druggist, like his cousin there.

From there, with his cousin Eddie, on to New Orleans, New York and Cuba. I understood they played the stock market, and at one time my father told me he made more money in those few years than the rest of his life.

Going back to Ontario, he hit the road again and this time to Alberta where he homesteaded. The farm prospered very well and then he sold it and we moved to Vancouver, B.C. where he purchased a hotel. They did not tell him that with the coming of Prohibition it would not be profitable -- so after a short time he joined the Army.

My brother, Roger, could not take the climate, so we moved back to Alberta -- Phillips, to be exact. After my mother died Dad moved to Mercoal where he lived until his death. As there were five of us all under ten, my sisters and I went to Toronto to live with his sister, and my brothers lived with a cousin in Alberta for a number of years. We all ended up in boarding school in Edmonton. When I was 17 Dad remarried and it was a very happy marriage. I am as fond of my half family as the full.

## Elijah Conger

### RECOLLECTIONS:

I am sixty-four years of age, having been born in November 1873 on a little farm near Fort Smith, Arkansas, and now live on Route 2, Oktaha, Oklahoma.

Father: Tom Conger, white man born in Kentucky. Mother: Anna Harmon-Conger, born in Indiana.

I came along with my parents in 1886 from Arkansas and we first settled on a farm in the Sugarloaf mountain region near the town of Cameron, Choctaw Nation, Indian Territory, and began farming with one mule and a single stock. The next year we moved near Texanna, Cherokee Nation, Indian Territory.

The school and church buildings in these localities (The Choctaw and Cherokee Nations) were of native lumber construction and some few were of slab construction, the slabs being set up end-wise. The residences occupied by the Indians and some whites were principally of log construction with rock fire places built of native stone. Roofs were of shaped shingles and some of these cabins had dirt floors and no windows.

The English language was taught in the schools and the church I attended was of the Baptist faith.

We raised cotton and corn. We did not pick cotton in sacks as they do now but we used baskets that held about two bushels. The gin at Cameron was operated by horsepower and likewise the one in Texanna. The man who operated and owned the gin and mill at Texanna was named John Pierce. Cottonseed in the late eighties were of no value. People did not feed them to their stock or send them to a cotton oil mill as they do today to get the lint, hulls, meal and oil.

We gave one-eighth of the corn for toll. Out of two bushels of shelled corn, shelled by hand, with toll out, we would get back a two-bushel sack full of seed.

The cost of ginning cotton, a horse-power gin, we would have to pay three dollars a bale, which included ginning, bagging, and ties. It was tied by hand.

Our social affairs consisted of barbecues, camp meetings, horse racing, foot racing and poker games. Our camp meetings usually would last for two or three weeks at a time. The meetings usually would start along in the fall and we would take our bedding & provisions and just camp near the meeting grounds until the meeting time. There were old arbors. They were constructed of poles, limbs and brush. Seats were usually logs rolled into position.

There were lots of wild berries and fruits such as blackberries, dewberries, hawberries, grapes, plums and a few seedling peach trees. There was plenty of nuts, namely hickory nuts, walnuts, chinquapins and pecans. All kinds of game haunted the sections of these parts of Choctaw and Cherokee Nations, such as black bear, panther, wild cat, wild turkey, deer, quail, rabbit, squirrel, possum and raccoon. The first deer I ever saw was in the big Sugarloaf Mountains, in the now LeFlore County, Oklahoma; and the first black bear was about four miles north of the South Canadian River, near Texanna, now McIntosh county.

All the streams, large and small, were full of all kinds of fish. The Indians used to catch lots of fish and the prize fish among the Choctaws was the Sun-Perch. They would cook them brown and eat them bones and all.

In the now LeFlore County and near the towns of Cameron, Bokoshe and Panama, coal was just beginning to be mined and when the Kansas City Southern Railroad came through that section, little mining camps sprang up every few miles.



There were herds of wild horses in the Sugarloaf Mountain region. They would come down on the plains to graze and take refuge in the mountains. There was lots of wild hogs in the low lands and woods on the South Canadian near Texanna. If a man could show that he had turned out some three or four gilts and a boar he had what they called a hog title and that would permit him to kill a wild hog for food when he so desired. These hogs were never fed by anyone, as they lived on the moss, acorns, hickory nuts, pecans, chinquapins, roots, grass and herbs. They usually hunted and killed these hogs for meat in the late fall for at this time they would be fat on the moss.

There was considerable stock raising, cattle. The market was Fort Smith, Arkansas. However, some were driven north on the Texas road for points in Missouri. The cattle grazed on the open range, herded by cow hands or sometimes called cowpunchers. These cowpunchers were men of very little education, but they were all jolly good fellows, honest and square in all their dealings, and law-abiding citizens.

I might say more than law-abiding citizens, for their six shooters were the Law. A thief in their midst meant if they knew him to be guilty, that is caught in the act, of rustling cattle or horses, that he be left dangling at the end of a rope tied to the limb of a tree with his body riddled with bullets. They would pull their cow ponies off a few paces after the thief was hung and with their six-shooters and saddle guns, rifles, which they carried to protect themselves, and fire volleys of shots into the body of the thief. The reason they always carried these weapons was not only to protect themselves but to protect their herds from cattle rustlers, coyotes and other wild animals.

The Kansas City Southern Railroad built into what is now LeFlore County in the early '80s. I can't recall the exact year. The old steamboat landing at Skullvill was missed by the railroad and the town of Spiro sprang up, back a few miles from the river. When grading through this section for the railroad hundreds upon hundreds of human bones were excavated, supposedly those of Indians who had died years before from some epidemic as they were buried side by side in long trenches, and it was nothing unsightly to see hundreds of skulls in a pile together that the railroad men would pick up on their shovels and pile back. I never did know why the steamboat landing was called Skullville, but it was a very appropriate name for it for nothing more than the above named reason.

In the early 1900's, I think it was in 1903, the Midland Valley Railroad and the Fort Smith and Western Railroad built through the towns of the present Panama, Bokoshe and Coal Creek and at this period the coal industry was in full blast as these railroads traversed the present large coalfields.

The first and only store for a long time was owned by John Pierce. John Pierce furnished nearly all the Indians as he was the first settler and better known. Months and years he furnished them and individual families owed him thousands of dollars. He depended upon the Indians receiving their government pay and they paying him. I am a white man but I give the Indian credit of being honest for I don't believe that Mr. Pierce lost a single dollar they owed him.

(Source: This interview with Elijah Conger was taken for the *Indian - Pioneer History of Oklahoma*, and is in Indian Archives of the Oklahoma Historical Society)

Maxine (Crowell) Leonard Note: Elijah's father, Tom, could be Ira T. (Thomas) Conger, 1848, a son of Elisha Conger, 1820, of Crittenden county, Kentucky. Ira T. and his family moved to the Oklahoma Indian Territory. The main question that arises is that there is a marriage record for Ira T. Conger and Mary E. Felker on 22 Dec 1872. This Elijah was born in November of 1873. He stated his mother was Anna Harmon; there were Hammons near the Congers in Kentucky.

It is also possible that he could have been the son of Elisha's brother, John, 1820, who had a son, Toby (Thomas?) born around 1856. This family lived at Johnson county, Arkansas, but there is no record of their being in Kentucky.

Note: This account of life in the Oklahoma Territory was probably written about 1937 if Elijah Conger was 64 years old and born in November of 1873. A number of place names in the Oklahoma Territory were mentioned in the piece. To assist the reader in understanding where these places are located they are listed again here with the counties in which they lie according to the 1995 Rand McNally Commercial Atlas. Richard E. Henthorn

Fort Smith, Sebastian Co., AR  
Oktaha, Muskogee Co., OK  
Texanna, McIntosh Co., OK  
Cameron, LeFlore Co., OK  
Bokoshe, LeFlore Co., OK  
Panama, LeFlore Co., OK  
Spiro, LeFlore Co., OK  
Coal Creek, LeFlore Co., OK

## Elijah Hagens Conger

Elijah Hagens Conger, born on 22 Oct 1878 in either Shiloh, Randolph county, AL or Dempsey, Clay county, AL was another person who was very interested in Conger genealogy and history.

He learned that the papers of Charles Leslie Conger, including the correspondence, was in the Rare Book Division of the Library of Congress. In 1941, while living in Caliente, Nevada he made these records available to the public.

In a letter to Maxine Leonard dated, 4 Mar 1963, Elijah's wife, Carrie, wrote, "My husband did so much research and received so much information from so many different people. I am quite sure that he received the information from Charles L. Conger's widow that he had deposited these eight volumes in the Library of Congress in Washington, DC. I know he wrote to the Library and made arrangements to have the eight volumes microfilmed. Cost \$32.00. Then he had to buy a reading machine, \$75.00, so that we could type them back into book form. As my husband was practicing his profession (dentistry) at this time we could only do this typing in our spare time, it took us three years to complete the assignment. As you can see the spelling is far from correct. That was one thing my husband just couldn't master. He wrote a beautiful hand, though. When we finished typing the films my husband deposited them in the Genealogy Library in Salt Lake City, UT."

In another letter Carrie explained that Charles Leslie Conger's eight volumes were made into four books in re-typing the records, and that there were 990 pages. They made two sets -- the original and one carbon. One set was given to Dan Conger (nephew, Dan Lewis Conger?) and after Elijah's death the other was given to his sister, Era (Conger) Jones of Overton, Nevada. (Of the 990 pages, much space was wasted by so many indentations. Copies of all correspondence was included also. [Probably a comment by Maxine Leonard. REH])

Era (Conger) Jones later let Maxine (Crowell) Leonard copy the books one at a time.

Elijah Hagens Conger died on 2 Dec 1950 at Las Vegas, Clark county, NV. His wife, Carrie lola (Braden) Conger, who was born on 19 Apr 1880 in Wildwood, Randolph Co. AL, died on 5 Jun 1966 at Oakland, Alameda Co. CA.

### **Ethel (Conger) Heagler**

Ethel (Conger) Heagler, born on 12 Jan 1881 in either Bloomington, McLean county, IL or Towanda, McLean county, IL was another Conger researcher who published her work.

She wrote to Maxine Leonard on 18 May 1962 and told of attending a DAR National Conference in Washington, DC the previous year, at the age of 80. She wrote, "I went to the Rare Books Department of the Congressional Library to see the seven volumes of typed bound books left by Charles Conger of Minnesota. You have to almost swear your life away to get in. A guard sits at the door with a rope across the opening. I told him what I wanted and he said, 'What references do you have?' I said, 'I am here as a delegate to the DAR Conference,' and I gave him my membership card. That didn't mean anything. 'What else do you have?' I showed him my cards of the Pen Women of America, Farm Bureau and Home Bureau of McLean Co., Illinois. He then asked to see all my cards, and what did he take, but the credit card from the Chicago Motor Club! A young girl stood by me and said she had no reference with her, and they would not let her in.

"Then I went in and they brought me the seven books and sat me down in front of the desk and that lady never took her eyes off of me all afternoon."

Mrs. Heagler published her line in 1941, through the help of Charles Leslie Conger who had established her lineage.

(Source: The Conger Family of America, Vol. 1, p. 2a – Maxine Crowell Leonard)

## Harold Henry Conger

### RECOLLECTIONS:

My dad [Harold Henry Conger] was born in 1890 so was one of the young men taken up the the advent of the automobile. He became a mechanic at a very early age and soon had his own garage. I think it was about 1914 at Keeseville, NY. He later had more garages in more metropolitan cities such as Schenectady. He wasn't a good business man but he became widely known for his tool making ability.

Among the people he worked for was Thomas Edison. In 1917 he built an engine for Henry Ford. It was the first six cylinder motor in America and it was tested in 1918 with a car my dad built for Ford.

Ford, Edison, Stimety and Firestone took an Adirondack vacation in this car in 1918. My father drove the men all over the Adirondacks. Mr. Ford didn't want the engine but he sold the design to the Dodge family. So we Congers never drive Fords!

My mother taught in rural schools and never got more than \$4 a day -- and sometimes a lot less. Her family were Finneys and they apparently were merchants for century after century.

My grandfather, Earl Allan Conger, 1856, was a mountain man that my mother thought was lazy. He was fire warden for a PA-Co. ... moonshine moutain for a great many years. He loved to hunt and supplied the road crews and line men for the first power lines in [the] mountains with deer meat.

His big farm was at Port Kent on Lake Champlain. Teams of oxen and horses drew hugh loads of logs across the lake to Burlington, VT on winter ice. It was a trip of thirteen miles. My grandpa, being a mountain man, was a great storyteller too.

My younger brother, Robert, died at the age of 59. He was a tool maker and mechanic. He had a good service record in World War II.

My brother, Walter, owned a bottled gas plant which, incidentally, my dad invented the regulator for in the 1930's. Walter was responsible for hundreds of volunteer fire departments in New York State and is a good local civic citizen.

My older sister, Vera, had a son who died and a daughter who has a large family. Vera worked at many things and was a baker for the state of New York. She is just one fine person.

My sister, Dorothy, had one son and is now a retired school teacher. She is another of what I perceive to be a Conger trait; steadfast citizen, more Republican than Democrat; more Dutch Reformed Church than Catholic.

Looking back at Conger families is looking back at America being built into a great nation. The great many steadfast citizens are truly the building blocks. Each one is adding a little to each community in which they lived. None of them is taking away anything but each is leaving a piece of themselves.

The world is changing, but your pulling the floating and scattered families together may be the greatest contribution of all!

Sometimes when one looks at an old and lonesome graveyard, we say, "Look at all the forgotten people." Well, we can just look over at the nice hospitals, the town hall, the school and the business community and "then" you know that only these dead ancestors did this by staying in the community until they died.

[Note: On 25 March 2008 I searched the entire Conger file and could not find this family. Where do they fit in to the Conger family tree? Richard E. Henthorn)

## Ivan Albert Conger

Ivan Albert Conger wrote on 23 Aug 1969:

I was the one who gathered all the information for the first copy of our *Conger History -- Descendants of Job A. Conger*. It was published in March of 1959 after about two years of gathering information. Some of the chapters were written by members of that particular branch and then I put them all together and had them published. Seven of us advanced the money for printing and then we got our money back as they were sold. We still have approximately 30 copies left and with the proceeds from these we plan on getting a family tree made up for distribution.

Genealogy is very interesting and can also be very nerve - racking, due to the many sources of information and the many different dates for one single part. I enjoy it very much but do not have much time for it. I am especially interested because I now am the president of our Shiawasse County Historical Society. This all ties very closely with genealogy. I think it is just wonderful that there have been so many members of the family over the years who have had so much of an interest in getting this information all put together."

On 28 October 1970 he reported that, the descendants of Job Conger and Harriet Jewell met at his house in June for the 8<sup>th</sup> year in a row. He wrote, "The first year (1963) we had not been 20 people present -- an increase of 8 over 1962. We had 76 this year, an increase of 20 over last year. I had put in a swimming pool. We had many new ones for the first time and many who hadn't been to a reunion for a good many years. I was just overjoyed! They all love to come her to our home. We have a large back yard and plenty of shade. Have a park right behind me if some want to go play there. Everyone really has a ball and says, 'they didn't know what they were missing but will be back again.' Each year they vote to come back without even asking if they can. They just insist! We love it even if it is a lot of work. Besides, with results like that -- 20 to 76 -- how could we ever think of refusing?"

## **Jerry Conger**

### **Rosiclare, Illinois Man, 36, Writes (Hard Way)**

Jerry Conger, 36, is a writer.

He also is a quadriplegic. For the past 20 years he has not walked, played basketball, turned the pages of a book with his fingers. When he was 15, he dived to the bottom of the Ohio River and broke his neck.

He has no use of his legs or the fingers of his hands. His vehicle is a wheelchair. He can move his arms to some extent and is able, with the help of arm splints, to feed himself.

In the ensuing years the Rosiclare native has discovered his goal in life - to become a published author. He always has been interested in writing, but he became seriously interested about 10 years ago.

He devotes his afternoons to long sessions at his carriageless electric typewriter which is stationed in the living room of the home he shares with his mother, Mrs. Hazel Conger. Conger types by using a mouthstick.

The mouthstick is a quarter inch dowel stick capped with a teeth-moulded acrylic mouthpiece and tipped with an eraser. It was while he was in therapy at the Institute of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation in Peoria, IL that an occupational therapist suggested the mouthstick.

The instrument has opened up a new world for Conger. It is the world of the mind. It is a world where he can go anywhere he wants, do whatever he feels like, and create a universe all his own. In the past 10 years he has written novels, a few dozen short stories, and a number of poems, as well as numerous other articles. It is with the articles and poems he has had success. An article he did on himself appeared in the June 1971, issue of "The Exceptional Parent." This is a magazine for parents of children with disabilities.

In the article he told of his mouthstick and his love for writing and his philosophy about himself. He does not live in the past, although the past is an important part of life for him and he draws some of his fiction from it. But this is not his dwelling place. He writes and his writing keeps him geared toward the future.

Conger was in the hospital for three months after his accident but he was able to receive his diploma with the rest of his graduating high school class. After high school, he took a number of correspondence courses through the University of Illinois. The courses included rhetoric, literature, and psychology.

Serious fiction is what interests Conger the most. He turns out an average of 2,000 words each afternoon. So far he has not been successful with having his fiction published. Fiction is the hardest market to break into and, with so many magazines folding, Conger finds the obstacles on the road to being published are large.

But he keeps writing. Two more articles have been accepted by "The Exceptional Parent." He received mention in recent issues of "Time" and the "Saturday Review" in connection with the new magazine. "Time" carried a quote from his article -- "One Adjusts to Realities. I Try to Forge Ahead."

Although fiction is his first love, Conger also writes articles which require a good deal of research. Although the Rosiclare library is small, there is a good library system in Illinois which allows libraries to borrow from larger libraries such as the one at Springfield. The research for his articles also comes from government books and brochures.

A writer must be willing to accept any assignment. Perhaps the oddest assignment Conger



tackled was an article on the louse. Robert Burns wrote a poem on the louse, so Conger decided maybe there was a louse market somewhere out there in publishing land. To his dismay one magazine informed him that it had already published an article on the louse.

Like Ireland's famed Christy Brown, the author who is completely paralyzed and types out joyous novels such as "Down All the Days" with his left foot, Conger has overcome numerous obstacles. He is not bitter. He is not angry over what has come to be his fate. He adjusts as best he can.

In his article for "The Exceptional Parent," Conger wrote: "One does not accept the unacceptable. One adjusts to realities, living always with hope. I try to forge ahead as everyone else does, fully aware that life may never be full, but determined never to accept less than I must. This doesn't mean I never despair. Depression, a sense of frustration and failure, lurk just outside conscious thought, ready to spring when something goes wrong."  
(Source: Conger Family of America, Maxine Crowell Leonard)

## Job Conger IV

People study the stars without ever getting into a rocket and traveling to them. And you don't have to fight in a war to be an expert on military history.

So it's not all that unusual that Job Conger IV, one of Springfield's foremost authorities on aviation, can't fly an airplane.

"I've always wanted to learn," Conger says, "but I've never had the time or money."

Nevertheless, he probably knows more about airplanes than many pilots do. Conger's two-story home is crammed with aviation information, most of it filed on thousands of index cards he painstakingly wrote out by hand. There are files on every aircraft imaginable, complete with photos and diagrams.

There's the aircraft name file, the magazine index file, the aircraft data file and the "point in time" file. The point in time file tells what happened on a particular day in aviation history.

"Pick a date." Job says.

"May 10."

"Let's see, May 10. Here it is. On May 10, 1911, the first Army officer was killed in an aircraft. On this day in 1929 was the first flight of the Boeing XP-12A. In 1942, the Mustang's first combat sortie was flown for the Royal Air Force against German occupied France."

There's more. Much, much more.

An upstairs closet contains 5,000 model aircraft kits, dating back to the early 1930s. Some are constructed; others are still in their boxes. Every era is represented, from the space shuttle to the World War I - vintage Sopwith Camel.

The next room has piles of files. And there's yet another room beyond that, containing aviation magazines, more files, photos, facts and figures about anything that flies, flew or falls from the sky.

There are more models in Job's basement, including one of Han Solo's Millennium Falcon ship from the "Star Wars" movie trilogy. Other models are just figments of Job's imagination and sense of humor - like the one in which he grafted a World War II bomber's nose gunner turret onto the modern B-1 bomber.

All of the models and information are part of Job's "AIRCHIVE" project. AIRCHIVE is a library for anyone who needs information on aircraft. Job says he gets four or five requests a month, some from foreign countries.

"We're known in Venice, Italy, we're known in Prague, Czechoslovakia," Job says. "But we're very little known in Springfield, [IL] -- and those who do know about us are not inclined to support us."

Job's dream is someday to take all of his AIRCHIVE files and models out of his house and put them on display somewhere, like museum or an airport. Last year, he had some of his collection on display at the Sangamon County Fair. He has done slide shows and speeches for local organizations to promote his idea. But, so far, it remains just a dream.

"Only one person from the airport authority board has even visited and that was for about 10 minutes," Job says, "even though they've been invited several times."

Maintaining the AIRCHIVE library is what Job calls a "labor - intensive operation." Some days he spends up to 10 hours putting information into his files.

"It's easier for me because I don't punch a clock," he says. "Not that I wouldn't want to."

Job supports himself by doing freelance writing, including a weekly aviation column. For three years, he put together the souvenir program for Air Rendezvous. Most of the material he collects, such as aviation magazines, is donated to him.

Financially, it's a losing proposition. But if a guy's got a dream...

"This is what I'd like to do with my life if I could just find a way to support it," Job says.

Job, 39, developed his aviation fascination early in life.

"When I was 4, I could draw a picture of an F-86 Saber faster than any kid on the block," he says. "The first time I remember enjoying a plane ride was in the 9th grade."

Naturally, Air Rendezvous is just about Job's favorite time of the year. He burns up film that weekend like a fighter burns up fuel.

Job took his favorite plane ride at Air Rendezvous in 1985. He went up in a B-25 bomber to shoot photographs of Rudy Frasca's P-40 in flight. He had the run of the bomber as he scrambled about to get different photographic angles of Frasca's plane.

The article that he eventually wrote about the P-40 was published in "Air Show Journal," along with one of his photographs.

Even moving to a different house didn't dent Job's dream. He moved every pound of his files with him and then issued an "AIRCHIVE Update" press release, announcing the move. At the end of the update he says: "The saga continues at AIRCHIVE. The dream is undiminished. The horizon is blue."

(Source: Written by Dave Bakke in an unnamed paper and republished in "Conger Confab" p. 578, Vol. XIV, No. 4, Dec 1988 - Maxine Crowell Leonard)

## H. Maxine (Crowell) Leonard

In Volume I, of "**The Conger Family of America**," H. Maxine (Crowell) Leonard wrote of her involvement in Conger genealogy.

"You could say these records [f Charles Leslie Conger which had been filmed at the Library of Congress for Elijah Hagens Conger] were handed to your compiler on a "Silver platter," thanks to Era (Conger) Jones [sister of Elijah Hagens Conger], who let me copy the books one at a time. Why did I, Helen Maxine Crowell Leonard, get involved, when I am not a Conger -- my closest relationship is that of my great grandmother, Mary (Conger) Croel, born 1814, in Monroe county, Ohio?

I have been "*Conger Conscious*" since about the age of eight. I, with my folks, visited the cemetery in Monroe county, Iowa, where Mary is buried with her son, Wilbur, and his wife, Margaret, my grandparents. As I stood beside her grave I had the strongest feeling about her -- the urge to know her. I liked the sound of the name CONGER. I knew that in some way she was very special.

In 1956, I was stricken with Rheumatoid Arthritis and was bed ridden for three months, as stiff as a board. Through prayer, food supplements, exercise and diet I was able to assume a fairly normal life. Five foot operations alleviated a lot of pain, and both hands and wrists were restored to good use through surgery. Through all this I needed something to occupy my time and mind and genealogy seemed to be the answer.

I "met" Era Jones through correspondence, and in 1962 we had the opportunity to visit her. It was then I began copying her books. When I finished I thought, "Someone should index all this," for it was impossible to find anything specific. And so, I made file cards for everyone, and recorded the Conger spouses. Every place my husband's Army travels took us, I looked for Congers and interviewed them.

My husband retired from the service in 1967 and we settled in Janesville, Iowa. I had no idea what to do with the records, for I really didn't know any Congers. I thought of typing all the material and sending copies to the Library of Congress and the Genealogical Library in Salt Lake City, UT and keep a copy for myself.

Then in July 1968 I received a letter from Beach Conger of Pleasantville, New York. He was planning to update his line, that of Job, which Charles Greenwood Barker Conger had published in 1903. He heard of me through correspondence and wondered if I could help him. When he learned what I had, he offered to finance the publication if we worked together to put all the Conger material into one book.

Since Beach lived near a large library, I suggested he search telephone directories for Congers throughout the country. This he began to do and contacted about 150 people of this name. For six months he sent material to be cataloged -- and then he died on 6 Jan 1969. Marion, his widow, sent me his files, which contained the booklets of "Job A. Conger and his Descendants, by Ivan Albert Conger and the story of "Norman Hurd Conger," by Roger N. Conger (included in Volume One of CFA, with their permission).

Lauren Tenney Conger of Lake Forest, Illinois, came to my rescue by helping with the telephone directory search in Chicago -- and my slipping me a couple of \$10.00 bills to help defray the gigantic postage costs. Later, I spent an entire day in the St. Louis library to finish the project. About a 1,000 Congers were contacted; over 2500 letters have been written. In this way the past three or four generations have been added to the existing records.

Special credit goes to the following people for many hours of research -- reading census reports on microfilm, checking courthouse records, writing letters and personally interviewing people: Marion Barton for checking all the Vermont Vital Statistics and libraries; Geneva Clark, finding

and identifying the Congers of Marion county, Kentucky; Willa Dean Eaves for research in Georgia; Beulah Frehner and daughter, Connie Money for finding the missing link to establish Jonas Conger in Georgia; Leona Robertson and Lesba Thompson for finding the descendants of Jonathan Conger of Pike county, Indiana and proving him for DAR; (William) Russell Conger for further search of the Ohio branch; and Geary H. Worth and Don Ruth Merritt for checking Tennessee census films.

(Joseph) Clyde Conger went that extra mile to round up the descendants of Lucius Lee Conger in Mississippi; Sidney Conger Mendenhall has kept records of James Westfall Conger's descendants from Kansas. Mary E. Woods has done a splendid job in preserving the records of the descendants of Abijah Conger from Athens, Georgia. Many letters were written by Noel William Conger to find the descendants of Colvin Conger of New York. Ivan Albert Conger kept the descendants of Job A. Conger together by an annual family reunion at his home in Owoso, Michigan.

Although Abraham H. Conger, 1810, of Lowndes county, Georgia, cannot be linked to John Belconger, his prolific posterity has kept in close contact and John Robert Conger prodded them into submitting their records.

There are many others too numerous to mention.

Now, after 120 years, several thousand dollars, and the devoted efforts of many kinsmen, "**THE CONGER FAMILY OF AMERICA**" is assembled into one cover. I personally have not done much research; I make no claims of any kind. I have compiled the existing material, which undoubtedly contains errors. In many instances additional children have been found, so the reader must bear in mind that these records are not necessarily complete; none probably ever will be. When known, the religious denomination is given as an aid in directing further search and verification.

This is only the beginning! There should be a supplement every five years, giving additions and corrections. The family should become "Conger Conscious" and make sincere efforts to keep individual records henceforth. There should be more family reunions to preserve our rich heritage. Seek out your Conger cousins wherever you go. Unless there is another volunteer, I promise to continue in the roll of "compiler" so long as I am able. If I have no successor, the records will be donated to the Genealogical Society of Salt Lake City, UT.

(Source: Volume I, of "**The Conger Family of America**")

## Omar Dwight Conger

BIOGRAPHY: **Omar D. Conger - Michigan's Forgotten Favorite Son** by Bruce A. Rubenstein.

Omar Dwight Conger, born 1 April 1818 in Cooperstown, New York, was the second of the ten children of the Reverend and Mrs. Enoch Conger. In 1824 the family moved to Huron County, Ohio. Young Conger attended the common schools, continued his education at the Huron Institute in Milan, Ohio, and in 1842 graduated from Western Reserve College, then considered one of the finest institutions of higher learning in the West.(1)

For the three years following his graduation, Conger studied law. In 1845 he joined Douglass Houghton's geological survey of the Lake Superior copper and iron country. During his three years in the Keweenaw, he was in charge of the supply depot at Copper Harbor. His duties included distributing necessities to exploration parties and recording barometric and temperature readings five times a day. His most noteworthy contribution occurred in July 1846, when Henry Rowe Schoolcraft's brother was slain and Conger "exercised his engineering skill by making a diagram of the scene of the murder."(2)

Leaving the Upper Peninsula in 1848, Conger moved to Lakeport, near Port Huron, where he worked in a sawmill. During this period, he renewed his legal studies. He was admitted to the Michigan Bar in March 1852, two years after he had been elected St. Clair County judge. In 1855 he became a law partner of Judge Edward Harris. He remained a member of the firm of Harris & Conger until 1869, when he went to Washington, DC to take his seat in Congress.(3)

In 1850, Conger married Emily Barker. The couple had five children, three of whom -- Franklin, Chilion and Florence -- lived to maturity. Emily died in 1866, and Conger remained a widower until 1874, when he remarried amid what newspaper reporters called a "storybook romance."

While attending college, Conger had fallen in love with Stella Humphrey, whose father was a prominent justice of the Ohio State Supreme Court. They became engaged, but when Conger reproached her for being a flirt, she broke off the relationship. She later married Jeremiah W. Sibley, a land speculator who became one of the wealthiest men in St. Paul, Minnesota. Following Sibley's death, his widow traveled for several years and, in 1874, visited Washington, DC. According to one version of the story, while viewing a session of Congress she recognized her old beau and sent him her card. After a brief meeting, their romance bloomed anew and within months they were married. While the Congers appeared physically mismatched, with the groom a wiry skeleton and the bride a robust, formidable two hundred pound figure, it was said that there was not a "happier and more loving couple in Washington, DC."(4)

Conger's physical appearance always attracted attention. He was small boned, of medium height and blue eyed. His head and face were small. His sharp, hawk-like nose fell to meet a protruding chin and dwarfed his mouth. His complexion was jaundiced, giving him a perpetual dirty color, and his voice was harsh and shrill. During his years in Washington, DC, his jet-black hair and beard turned to bristling iron grey. He always wore a swallowtail coat, and at meetings he sat impassively with a grave, melancholy countenance that led observers to remark that he could pass for an old school Presbyterian deacon. To look at Conger, no one would have guessed that he possessed, as the Washington correspondent of the "New York Herald" wrote in 1872, "a poet's soul, and artist's eye, and a lover's heart." He was called a "precious little bundle of a man" and was a charming, delightful addition to the capital's social scene because of his wit and stories.(5)

Conger's political career began in 1855 when he entered the Michigan Senate. He was reelected and served as president pro tempore during his final year in office. A colleague recalled that during his terms in the legislature, Conger ranked "among the most active and able of the Republican Senators."(6) In 1862, Conger was appointed to the State Military Board, which was in charge of furnishing Michigan's quota of soldiers and supplies to the Union war effort. Two

years later, he was a Lincoln delegate to the Republican National Convention. He also made unsuccessful attempts to gain the Fifth District Republican congressional nomination in 1860, 1864 and 1866.

Conger's political star began to rise in 1867 when, as a member of the convention elected to revise the state constitution, he emerged as the leading radical champion of human rights. When opponents of American Indian suffrage claimed that drunken, ignorant "savages" should no longer be allowed to retain the right to cast ballots, a right granted them in the 1850 State Constitution, Conger rose in defense of the Indians. He related that during his years in the Upper Peninsula he had "never found the majority of them were drunken and ignorant." He acknowledged that politicians used whiskey to influence Indians to vote for their party, but added:

"They love whiskey and drink it. But shall we condemn them because politicians bribe them. ... Let us be manly and honorable to this class. They are not all barbarians and murderers of the plains; they are as harmless as any in the State of Michigan. You do not find their names on the records of our courts, they are not prosecuted therefore with a few exceptions they are not drunken, as I know to be a fact. They are an industrious, laborious set of people, dying out from the land. Let us give them this last boon of civilization."(7)

Conger saved his most telling efforts for black suffrage. In an impassioned speech, he told his colleagues that it was his earnest desire to "extend the right of suffrage to the African race, ... boldly and manfully, without a slur and without a reproach." If that could not be done, he preferred to "withhold the right from them altogether." He added that if, as alleged, there were Republicans who opposed black voting, they should withdraw themselves quietly and unobtrusively from the party. ... they have no place in the ranks of that large army of Republicans who have marched along to the tune to progress for so many years; and they had better go where they belong. ... I say it is a slur upon any Republican, standing by the great national party which enforces impartial suffrage, to say nothing of granting it, when you say that he will oppose Negro suffrage in the Constitution of Michigan."(8)

Conger proved to be the best debater at the convention, and his positions triumphed. In 1868, using his newly acquired reputation as a champion of radicalism, he defeated incumbent Republican Rowland E. Trowbridge for his party's congressional nomination. The campaign was based almost entirely upon racial prejudice, with Conger's opponent, Byron G. Stout of Pontiac, warning voters of the dire consequences of black suffrage. The Democratic "Detroit Free Press" characterized Conger as the African's "friend and protector," while the "Mt. Clemens Press" labeled him "The Negro Suffrage Candidate." The "Free Press" went so far as to state, "Every opponent of negro equality and suffrage in the Fifth District can only maintain his honor and self-respect by casting his vote against the election of O.D. Conger to the Congress of the United States."(9) Despite such appeals, Conger easily triumphed, defeating Stout by nearly 2,000 votes.

In Washington, Conger quickly earned a reputation as a skilled debater, an eloquent spokesman for the lumber and shipping industries, an ardent foe of southern Democrats, and a brilliant parliamentarian. It was his ability to block legislation through adroit use of the rules that gained him the title of "The Great Objector" among Democrats. Among Republicans, however, he was affectionately referred to as "The Great Commoner" because of his close ties to the people.

Conger was reelected to Congress six times, becoming the most influential and popular member of the Michigan congressional delegation, "recognized all over the country as one of the leaders of the House."(10) His base of strength was St. Clair County and Port Huron, where many Democrats voted for him in appreciation of his tireless labors on behalf of the city that Conger proudly called one of "the most beautiful places, ... on God's footstool."(11) During the twelve years in the House of Representatives, he obtained for Port Huron a post office, a customs house, the land for Lakeside Cemetery and Pine Grove Park, and all but fifteen acres of the Fort Gratiot Military Reserve. He was also responsible for the erection of a harbor of refuge at Sand Beach and for the dredging of the St. Clair River Flats to facilitate shipping.

Jealous Michigan politicians, especially from Detroit, derided Conger for having such a limited vision that it "was never known to extend beyond the city limits of Port Huron and the lake shore towns." (12) On the national level members of Congress bemoaned that Conger's role in the Committee on Commerce was so great that "every saw-long stream over Michigan" received large sums in the River and Harbor Appropriation Bill, while waterways in the interior of the country received little, if any, support from the Michigan representative. (13)

Such criticism notwithstanding Conger's constant efforts to improve the state's rivers and harbors won him the respect of Great Lakes shippers. In May 1882, the Port Huron Ferry Company christened its newest excursion ship the "Omer D. Conger" to pay "a just compliment to the most intelligent and truest friend of our American commerce we have in our Senate." (14) William Bancroft, a prominent local Democrat and Conger's brother-in-law, spoke for most Port Huron Democrats when he praised the congressman for leaving "the imprint of his clear, sound, and liberal views upon the commercial interests of the whole country" and assured him that local Democrats would willingly continue to "swallow their friend and townsman Judge Conger." (15)

The Congressman's fidelity to the state's lumber interests was best demonstrated following the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. When an amended bill was introduced to aid fire victims, Conger strongly urged that it be recommitted to the Ways and Means Committee unless a provision that would allow Canadian lumber to enter the United States duty free was deleted. He claimed that as written, the bill would be "injurious to the lumbermen of Michigan and the laboring people of Michigan," and that the fire damaged pine from Michigan, which would be worthless if not used within a year, should be used to rebuild Chicago. The offensive section was removed and the measure passed. (16) Acts such as this earned Conger the political support of lumbermen's associations across the state.

Conger rapidly advanced in party leadership and became House Republican whip. His duty was to maintain party discipline, and one associate recalled, "No man ever cracked it [the whip] louder than Mr. Conger did." Conger was a fighter and a resourceful leader who always kept his wits. His audacity and courage when dealing with matters within his expertise were limitless. His knowledge of parliamentary procedures enabled him to obstruct efforts by Democrats to pass legislation aimed at reconstructing the war-torn South. (17) For his efforts, Conger became recognized as the "watchdog of the Treasury," and Speaker of the House James G. Blaine admiringly said that Conger "illustrated the virtue of persistence in its highest degree, and had the art of annoying his opponent in discussion to the point of torture." When the Republicans regained control of the House in 1880, Conger was a leading candidate for Speaker and possibly would have obtained the coveted position had he not been elected to the U.S. Senate. (18)

Much of Conger's national prominence was a result of his famed ability to ridicule Democrats. He was a fierce partisan and attacked the opposition party on every issue. Yet, his jibes were always confined to politics, and outside the halls of Congress, he numbered many of his political enemies as personal friends. His methods were legendary. The Washington correspondent of the "Cincinnati Commercial" wrote:

"Other Republicans shirk, sleep, grow listless at times; Conger never. He watches a Democrat, out of his deep set eyes, as long as he can see him. With his head on his breast, his beak-like nose reaching nearly to his chin, his shoulders elevated, he has reminded me of a stork dozing by the waterside, motionless as if painted on the glassy wavelets. A fish -- a Democrat -- one dart, and he has himself one gulp, and he is gone."

In like fashion, the Washington correspondent of the "Detroit Evening News" noted Conger had been assigned, by unanimous consent, the duty of "stirring the Democratic animal up with a long pole" and that "as a stirrer up with a long pole Conger is a success. He can cause a Democrat to get mad and make a fool of himself quicker than any other man in the business." (19)

Democrats admitted that Conger was a thorn in their sides, and they responded by making



personal slanders against him. Typical of this tactic was a diatribe in the "Philadelphia Times" in which Conger was described as having an acrid voice, atrabilious face, harlequin form and dirty brown fingers. He was said to be a "testy truculent inveterate mischief-maker" who was a beady-eyed "backwood Cato." To the "Times" Conger "was born sour, achieved sourness, and then thrust it, as a snake does venom, upon all who were unfortunate to come within reach of its spittle."(20)

Conger's political career, however, would have never reached such a pinnacle had it not been for the efforts of John P. Sanborn, collector of customs at Port Huron since 1867. As holder of the major federal appointment in the district, "King John," as he was known by friend and foe alike, doled out patronage with a deft touch and created a coterie of loyal followers who gained renown as the "Port Huron Custom House Ring." Sanborn's machine was reputed to be as strong as that of Senator Zachariah Chandler in Detroit, and in every election he used his influence to support his protégé, Omar D. Conger. Potential opponents were silenced, either by bribery or threats, in order to maintain Conger and his growing influence in office. Sanborn was Conger's political father -- he sired, nurtured and demanded absolute loyalty from his creation. Conger, who neither liked nor understood the intricacies of political dealings, was entirely willingly to allow Sanborn to run his campaigns. As long as Conger toed "King John's" line his success was assured.(21)

In late 1880 the Sanborn machine put in motion a scheme to elevate Conger to the United States Senate. Sanborn's strategy was to cause a deadlock between the two main contenders, incumbent Henry P. Baldwin and former Governor John J. Bagley, and then to have the legislative caucus turn to Conger as a compromise candidate. Sanborn and the Baldwin managers allegedly struck a deal by which the candidate who trailed after the first ballot would withdraw and support the other in order to stop Bagley.(22) Baldwin lost, and the overwhelming majority of his followers joined Conger's forces.

Democrats rejoiced to see their nemesis leave the House and to the Senate, where his raucous style would not be tolerated. The "Washington Post" predicted that Conger's "House manners and his raspy roar will be as much out of place as a clown in a graveyard. He will be refrigerated." The "Genesee Democrat" expressed pleasure in getting "a bull-dog out of the House and a rat-terrier in the Senate."(23)

Republicans greeted Conger's promotion with mixed feelings. Statewide, most party leaders believed Conger to be a worthy successor to Zachariah Chandler, but worried that his loss to the House might more than offset his potential value in the Senate. Local Republicans feared that without Conger as the nominee, Democrats would capture his seat in Congress. Even Conger seemed to be uncertain about his new position. Addressing a gathering at his home in Port Huron, he told his listeners:

"There is no post held out to the ambition of men greater than that of a senator of the United States, and it is only the sense of its great responsibility and of the possibility that I might fail that has almost made me shrink and withdraw from the contest. ... should I fail, ... what a sad ending to the hopes and confidence which you have placed in me. But I shall go with your assurances, trusting to a heartfelt desire to perform to the best of my ability the duties and trust imposed upon me."(24)

Conger's fears were well founded: his senatorial career was a personal and political disaster. His style was not suited to the Senate, and he was ostracized by his colleagues whenever he broke the decorum of the "American House of Lords." A "Chicago Times" reporter wrote that Conger sat "as subdued and silent as the grave." Another correspondent said, "Conger, dear old Conger, is here, cooled down to the polite frigidity which constantly pervades the Senate."(25)

During his first year in office, the sole contribution of the new senator was to speak in favor of the American Red Cross. Clara Barton, founder of that organization, was a personal friend of Mrs. Conger's, but the senator initially seemed cold and aloof to the Red Cross. However,

when Barton informed him that she had nursed his wounded brother after the Battle of Spotsylvania, he became, in her words, the "first official advocate and tireless friend" of the organization. In early May 1881, an organizational meeting for the Red Cross was held in Conger's Washington home.(26)

When fire ravaged Michigan's Thumb that summer, Conger urged Barton to prove the worth of her organization by aiding the victims of the tragedy. The success of the Red Cross in distributing more than \$80,000 in food, clothing, and medicine made it a fixture among American charities. Its first annual report noted, "Our cases [in Michigan] were all marked with the Red Cross and consigned to Senator Omar D. Conger, of Port Huron, who led the call of the Michigan committee and to whom, as well as to his kindhearted and practical wife, we are indebted for many timely suggestions and words of grateful appreciation.(27)

Conger's senatorial career might ultimately have blossomed had he not tried, for the first time in his life, to assert his political power. In 1883, under pressure from the civil service reformers urging "rotation of office," Conger rejected John Sanborn's application for a fourth term as collector and named his own protégé, Port Huron Postmaster William Hartsuff, as Sanborn's successor. This infuriated Sanborn and split the local Republican Party. Sanborn's supporters called the senator a liar, while the collector pledged to destroy both Conger and Hartsuff and "follow them to their political graves."(28)

By mid-1884 the Conger-Sanborn feud was at its height. Conger was "swearing mad" at his one time benefactor and Sanborn was systematically outwitting the senator at every turn. Finally, at the Republican National Convention, Conger met his old friend, extended his hand in a gesture of reconciliation, and said, "How are you, Sanborn?" The ex-collector paled, kept his hands in his pockets, and loudly proclaimed, "Don't want to have anything to do with you sir!"(29) This snub became common gossip and obviously embarrassed Conger.

Conger's chagrin was no doubt heightened in 1886 when, in response to pleas by Michigan Republicans for party unity, he and Hartsuff agreed to campaign for Sanborn in his bid for Congress.(30)

Sanborn lost, but he gained the satisfaction of publicity triumphing over his intraparty foes.

The feud was all the more humiliating to Conger because in 1883 he had been mentioned as a possible presidential contender. In March, Judge Jeremiah Black, a prominent Pennsylvania Democrat boosted Conger for the presidency saying, "he has the elements of a leader. He is not an elegant or brilliant man, but, ... Conger has no enemies."(31) Conger's chances for the presidency or vice-presidency were enhanced because Michigan, a doubtful state, might be carried by the Republicans if he were their candidate. In July 1883 Conger's name was among those listed in a "New York Times" presidential poll, but he lagged far behind the favorites.(32)

The "Conger boom" was soon over as the race narrowed to the incumbent, Chester Alan Arthur, and Secretary of State James G. Blaine. In the late summer 1883 a weak attempt was made to boost Conger as Arthur's running mate, but neither the senator nor his friends supported the effort.(33)

By late 1886 it was obvious that Conger's chances of re-election were dim. With the election of Thomas W. Palmer of Detroit in 1883, both of Michigan senators were from the eastern half of the state. Western members of the state legislature rallied behind Francis B. Stockbridge, a millionaire lumber baron from Kalamazoo. Stockbridge's biggest advocate was another millionaire, James McMillan of Detroit, who wanted a westerner in the Senate so that he could succeed Palmer. Accusations of buying the Senate seat arose. A writer to the "Detroit Free Press" summed up the question well by saying the Conger was not "immensely rich" and that in choosing a senator, "Ability is nothing. Geography is everything. Conger -- rude as he is -- is the ablest Senator in debate since the days of Jacob M. Howard, but he must go."(34) Stockbridge, according to the "Port Huron Tribune," spent more than \$30,000 to assure the election of

legislators favorable to his candidacy. Because Conger could, and would, not compete with the "boodle" used against him, he was defeated, even though he was still immensely popular among the citizens of the state.(35)

Though deeply disappointed Conger took his first political defeat in twenty years philosophically, opening a Washington law office with two former Michiganians, Rufus Thayer and Fred Coldren. Friends urged him to return to Port Huron and reclaim his congressional seat, but he refused, primarily because his wife disliked the city.(36)

Although Conger's apolitical wife loved him, she seriously hurt his career. She refused to allow his lifelong Port Huron friends to stay in her house in Washington because they talked politics, smoked cigars and drank whiskey, which offended her sense of social amenities. This, coupled with her refusal to visit Port Huron, removed Conger from his once solid political base. The former senator was mentioned as a possible member of the Interstate Commerce Commission of the cabinet when his old friend Benjamin Harrison became president, but no offers were made.(37)

When Conger's wife died in 1889, she left her entire fortune to her brother, and provided only a \$100 per month allowance to her husband. Friends of the couple said that this was done because she disliked her stepchildren and did not wish them to ever receive her estate. Unfortunately, her brother often refused to give Conger his money, and the former senator was forced to spend many painful hours in court trying to collect his meager income.

Conger became extremely lonely, as few of his old friends visited him. Members of the Michigan delegation ignored him and did not seek his advice. On his eightieth birthday, when the Michigan delegation called upon him, he broke down and "cried like a child" at finally being remembered by his political friends of the past.(38)

On 11 July 1898, Conger died. Perhaps "Port Huron Times" editor Loren Sherman best characterized the tragedy of the senator:

"Fifteen years ago the death of Omar D. Conger would have brought public mourning to Port Huron. Today it arouses only indifferent interest. ... If his ability as a politician had been greater he would have avoided many mistakes which weakened him with his party and prevented his re-election to the Senate in 1887. Thereafter his personal supporters made no further efforts in his behalf, and as he did not return to his former home he soon fell into obscurity at Washington. The latter years of his life were saddened and embittered by neglect and financial troubles, and his old friends in Port Huron were given no opportunity to show him sympathy or favor."(39)

Omar D. Conger, once Michigan's most noted politician, had become a forgotten man.

Footnotes:

1 P.C. Headley, "**Public Men of Today**" (Techumseh: A.W. Mills, 1882), p. 119.

2 George W. Thayer, "**From Vermont to Lake Superior in 1845**," "Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections 30 (1905): 563 (hereafter referred to as MPHIC); Joseph H. Steere, "Sketch of John Tanner, Known as the 'White Indian,'" *ibid.* 22 (1893): 248-49.

3 "History of St. Clair County, Michigan" (Chicago: A.T. Andreas & Co., 1883), pp. 409, 565; Jane M. Kinney, "Pioneers of St. Clair County," MPHIC 29 (1899-1900): 171; J.M. Robertson, "Michigan in the War" (Lansing: W.S. George & Co., 1880), p. 5.

4 "Cincinnati Commercial" in "Port Huron Daily Times" (hereafter referred to as PHDT), 27 May 1874; "St. Paul Dispatch" in PHDT, 28 May 1874; "Cleveland Leader" in PHDT, 23 July 1884.

5 "Boston Globe" in PHDT, 12 April 1872; "New York Herald" in PHDT, 19 April 1872; "Washington Republic" in PHDT, 4 January 1879; "Detroit Evening News" in PHDT, 20 March

1884 and 6 July 1886.

6 E. Lakin Brown, "**Autobiographical Notes**," MPHC 30 (1905): 483.

7-8 **Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of the State of Michigan**," 1867 (Lansing: W.S. George, 1868), pp. 265-66, 78 and 788-89)

9 "Detroit Free Press, 4, 11, 23 August 1868.

10 "Detroit Evening Telegraph" in PHDT, 14 February 1878.

11 PHDT, 14 June 1872.

12 "Detroit Free Press, 10 January 1881.

13 "Congressional Globe, " 42nd Congress, 2nd Session, 15 Apr 1872, p. 2445, "Congressional Record," 43rd Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 6 June 1874, pp. 4648-49.

14 PHDT, 8 May 1882.

15 Ibid., 14 June 1872.

16 "Congressional Globe," 42nd Congress, 2nd Session, 21 March 1872, pp. 1868, 1873.

17 David S. Barry, "Forty Years in Washington" (Boston: Little Brown, and Co., 1924), pp. 110-1, 117.

18 "Detroit Post and Tribune" in PHDT, 21 January 1879; James G. Blaine, "Twenty Years of Congress from Lincoln to Garfield," vol. 2 (Norwich: The Henry Bell Publishing Co., 1886), p. 433; "New York Times," 11 December 1880.

19 "Detroit Evening News" in PHDT, 26 October 1877; "Cincinnati Commercial" in PHDT, 1 March 1881; "Detroit Evening News," in PHDT, 1 May 1879.

20 "Philadelphia Times," in "Detroit Free Press," 10 January 1881.

21 PHDT, 9 October 1872; "Port Huron Commercial," in PHDT 6 September 1872; PHDT, 19 September 1884.

22 "Detroit Free Press," 12 and 20 January 1881; William Stocking, ed. "Under the Oaks," (Detroit: Detroit Tribune Co., 1904), pp. 126-27; PHDT, 7 January 1881.

23 "Washington Post" in "Detroit Free Press," 12 January 1881; "Genesee Democrat," 9 January 1881.

24 PHDT, 8 January 1881.

25 "Chicago Times" in "Detroit Free Press, 2 April 1881.

26 Percy H. Epler, "**The Life of Clara Barton**" (New York: MacMillan, 1915), p. 232; Foster Rhea Dulles, "The American Red Cross" (New York: Harper & Row, 1950), p. 15.

27 Daniel Griesemer, "**American Red Cross in Michigan**," "Michigan History 22 (1938): 7.

28 "Washington Evening News" and "Detroit Free Press" in PHDT, 1 Mar 1883; PHDT, 3 and 4 June 1884.

29 "Detroit Journal" and "Detroit Evening News" in PHDT, 4 June 1884; PHDT, 7 June 1884; "Port Huron Sunday Tribune," 7 Jun 1884.

30 "Detroit Tribune," 24 September 1886; "Port Huron Tribune," 24 September and 15 October 1886; PHDT, 22 October 1886.

31 PHDT, 22 March 1883; "Lansing Republican," 28 March 1883.

32 "Port Huron Sunday Commercial," 9 Apr 1883; PHDT, 17 Jul 1883.

33 "Port Huron Sunday Commercial," 20 August and 24 September 1883.

34 "Detroit Free Press," 15 November 1886.

35 "Port Huron Tribune," 21 January 1887; "Detroit Free Press, 20 January 1887.

36 PHDT, 11 January 1887; "Detroit Free Press," 13 January 1887; Omar D. Conger to Benjamin Harrison, 26 Jun 1888, Presidential Papers of Benjamin Harrison, MSU Library; "Kalamazoo Gazette," 8 January 1887; "Detroit Tribune," in PHDT, 21 January 1887; "Lansing Republican," 8 January 1887.

37 "Port Huron Weekly Times," 21 March 1889; "Detroit Journal," in "Port Huron Weekly Times," 29 November 1888; PHDT, 24 January, 10 February, 24 March 1887; "Detroit Free Press, 10 February 1887; "Mt. Clemens Press," 27 January 1887; "Lansing Republican," 22 January 1887.

38 PHDT, 12 Jul 1898

39 Ibid., 14 July 1898

(Source: Author, Bruce A. Rubenstein was a professor of history at the University of Michigan - Flint, he is co-author of "**A History of the Great Lakes State**" 1981 and is working on a book on Republican machine politics in Michigan during the Gilded Age. - The piece appeared in the September/October issue of "**Michigan History**," p. 33-39 and was republished in **CFA II**, p. 173. No date of the issue listed in CFA II.)

#### COMMENT:

Just by chance, Ivan A. Conger of Owosso, MI learned about a meeting to be held in Port Huron, MI on 12 Apr 1980 by the Lake Huron Lore Marine Society. Although a two-hour drive, he and wife, Dorothy, went to the meeting held at the Museum of Arts and History.

The speaker was Dr. Bruce A. Rubenstein, a former resident of Port Huron and a student of the life of the late senator, Omar D. Conger. The program focused on the accomplishments of senator Conger for whom a steamship was named.

A scale model of the St. Clair River excursion steamer and ferry, Omar D. Conger, built by Harvey Nissley of Grosse Isle, was presented to the museum. Four crewmen died aboard the steamship when it blew up at it's Black River berth 58 years ago. Frank Crevier, Algonac, who helped organize the program was pictured with the model in the "Times Herald." Over 200 people were present.

#### COMMENT:

In a letter dated, 1 January 1981, Dr. Rubenstein gave his permission to use the text of his speech in "**The Conger Family of America, Volume II.**"

He also wrote:

"My interest in Omar began when I realized that he was the only United States Senator ever to come from Port Huron. So, while working on my doctorate at Michigan State University, I 'relaxed' by indulging in my hobby of collecting information on my hometown hero.

As my interest became known, several of my professors kindly began to jot down bits on Conger which they happened to find during their research on other topics. Soon my files were bursting on Omar (40 to 45,000 different items) and I realized that my hobby had become an obsession.

I do intend to write a book on Omar, using his career as an example of Republican politics and politicians during the so-called 'Gilded-Age.'

You might be interested to know that after six years of struggle, I, along with others in Port Huron, have convinced the city to erect a monument to Omar, which will be placed in his beloved Pine Grove Park. I will keep you posted on the details.

Also, it may please you to know that Omar, his first wife, Emily, sons Franklin and Chillion, and daughter Florence and daughter-in-law Susan are all buried in Port Huron, and for the past ten years I have planted flowers on their graves – Port Huron's 'most favorite son' is therefore never completely forgotten.

## George Poindexter

### Hidden Treasure

"The Poindexter Collection of Modern American Masters," on display at the Denver Art Museum from October 1998 through May 16, 1999, in the Close Range Gallery was the brainchild of Montana - born New York commodities broker named George Poindexter. How it wound up at the Montana Historical Society, of all places, and the shameful way it's been treated since make for a ripping yarn.

Poindexter was born in 1900 in Butte, Montana, into a prominent family; his father was a respected lawyer and later a federal judge. He grew up in Montana, moved to New York to attend Columbia University, graduated in 1922 and founded his own business, Commodity Brokers, Inc. Poindexter was a whiz in the commercial world, but he had an interest in painting as well. This was perhaps inspired by his wife, Elinor, who had studied art history at New York's prestigious Finch College.

After World War II, Poindexter took some time off from his business to learn to become an artist. He went to study in Paris with Elinor, but according to show curator, Nancy Tiekens, "he was terrible at it." Back in New York, he took a class from abstract artist Jack Tworkow, whom he had known since his college days. "Tworkow suggested that instead of trying to make art, Poindexter should buy it. Nobody was collecting wildly experimental paintings when George started in 1956. This kind of work was available at the time for a small price and right from the source.

Though Elinor Poindexter had opened the Poindexter Gallery in 1955 (the year before George started collecting), the curator established through research and interviews that the Poindexter Collection was George's individual creation. Elinor put together her own modernist painting collection, which she donated to the Yellowstone Arts Center in Billings, Montana.

In 1960, George began to cede his collection to the Montana Historical Society, giving an abstract painting in memory of his father. (The gift caused some consternation for his relatives, who had little affection for abstraction.) By 1963, the 100 plus piece collection was ensconced in the historical society in Helena, Montana then Montana's only museum of any kind. Prior to its current appearance at the DAM, it was displayed only twice -- once on the occasion of the gift in 1963 when it traveled statewide, and again in 1965 at the then new Yellowstone Arts Center, the second museum to open in Montana. In the more than thirty intervening years, the Poindexter Collection has been put away -- and that's what makes this current show such a rare, exciting treat.

Poindexter was an adventurous collector, and his choices "provide a snapshot of art on the cusp from the late Fifties and early Sixties," the curator said.

After he gave the collection to the Montana Historical Society in 1963, Poindexter apparently lost interest in it, since correspondence in the files after that time remains unopened. It's unclear why Poindexter suddenly dropped his hobby. (Source: Extracted from "Hidden Treasure," by Michael Paglia, which appeared in the 22-28 October 1999 "Westwood" section of a Denver paper - furnished by Robert Gullinger)

## Joseph Boyd Poindexter

### BIOGRAPHY:

Joseph Boyd Poindexter was born on April 14, 1869 in Canyon City, Oregon, the son of Thomas W. Poindexter and Margaret Pitken. He attended Ohio Wesleyan University in Delaware, Ohio and graduated with an LLB (Bachelor of Laws) degree from Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri in 1892. He was admitted to the Montana Bar Association in 1892 and practiced law in Dillon, MT from 1892 to 1897.

He married Margaret Daisy Conger, the daughter of Judge Everton J. Conger and Emma Kate Boren on April 22, 1897. Two children were born to this union, E.G. (George) in 1899 and Helen in 1902.

Joseph served as County Attorney for Beaverhead County, MT from 1897 to 1903 and then returned to private law practice in Dillon from 1903 to 1909. He was then appointed District Federal Judge for the 5th Judicial District and served on the bench from 1909 to 1915. He was then elected Montana Attorney General in 1915 and served until appointed U.S. Federal Judge for the District of Hawaii by President Woodrow Wilson on March 16, 1917. He served in this post until he retired to accept the appointment as Territorial Governor of Hawaii by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on January 30, 1934. This posting became effective in March 1934 for a period of four years. Poindexter was appointed to a second four year term as Territorial Governor in March 1938 and it was the latter part of this term that cause him the most mental and physical anguish.

Seventy-two year old Governor Joseph B. Poindexter was at his official residence, Washington Place, in Honolulu when the first Japanese bombs fell on Pearl Harbor on Sunday morning, December 7, 1941. His residence and his nearby office at the Iolani Palace were rocked by explosions on the ground. However, these explosions were not Japanese bombs, but rather U.S. Navy antiaircraft shells that were mis-fired in haste and fell to the ground and exploded on impact.

At mid-day on December 7th, Lt. General Walter Short, Commanding General, U.S. Army in Hawaii, came to see Governor Poindexter and said the Territory of Hawaii should be placed under martial law. Poindexter then called President Roosevelt by phone to verify this and Roosevelt supported martial law. Nothing like this had been known on American soil since the Civil War and then only in rebellious or captured Confederate states. Governor Poindexter said later that he, "never hated doing anything so much" as imposing martial law on the people of Hawaii.

Governor Poindexter's second four-year term expired in March 1942 but he was not replaced until the inauguration on August 24, 1942 of Ingram M. Stainback.

Ex-Governor Poindexter remained in Honolulu for the rest of his life and died on December 3, 1951 at the age of 82. His body was returned to Dillon, MT for final burial.

Joseph B. Poindexter was a life-long Democrat, Episcopalian, 32nd degree Mason, Shriner, and a member of the Bar Association of Hawaii and the American Bar Association.  
(Written by Robert Guilinger, 11 Nov 1998)



## **John Remember Daniel Conger**

### **Oldest Painting of Tacoma Shown**

John Remember Daniel Conger was the name of a man who often appears in the history books of Tacoma, Washington.

He was the deputy city comptroller and deputy city assessor. He was adjutant of the Soldier's Home at Orting. He was adjutant general of the Custer Post, Grand Army of the Republic.

Conger was a major in the Civil War. He lived to tell about some narrow escapes while on expeditions in the South.

The colorful person of Tacoma's past died many years ago at the age of 69. But, just last week, renewed interest in his life has occurred.

It has come to light that Maj. J.R.D. Conger was a painter in addition to all of his other activities which also included being a lime company superintendent and a Lewis County farmer. A painting by the major now hangs in the Washington State Historical Museum during the historical societies showing of the latest additions to its permanent collection.

Not only is the painting artistically appealing, it also happens to be the oldest known painting depicting any site in Tacoma.

Bruce LeRoy, director of the society and museum, said there are a number of sketches of Tacoma predating this painting but no paintings that he knows of that are this old.

The Conger painting depicts the DeLinn Mill in 1869. The mill, said LeRoy, was the first industrial structure in Tacoma. It was built in the 1850s. The present site of the painting is about East 28th Street at the Puyallup River, he said.

The painting was given to the museum by Mrs. Molly Conger, of Tacoma, the major's daughter-in-law.

LeRoy said there may be other Conger paintings that are earlier than this one. However, it might be difficult to tell that these paintings were by Conger. LeRoy said the DeLinn Mill picture was not signed by Conger and the others -- if there are any -- probably don't bear his name either.

### **Samuel Hayes Conger**

It appears that the first Conger family genealogist was Samuel Hayes Conger, born on 10 Dec 1796 at Newark, NJ. Records reveal, "An attempt being made in 1845 to utilize the old burying ground in Newark, by appropriating it to other purposes, Mr. Conger's interest in the remains of his ancestors therein deposited, led him to take an active part in the opposition to the so-called improvements; and extended researches into the genealogies of the families interested were the result.

"He became a member of the New Jersey Historical Society in May 1848, and was appointed librarian in 1852, an office for which his tastes rendered him particularly well qualified. The genealogies which he contributed to the volume issued by that society in 1866, in commemoration of the bi-centennial celebration of the settlement of Newark, added material to its interest; and he also took an active part in editing the town records published by that society in 1864." He wrote many articles in the "Newark Daily Advertiser."

Although Samuel Conger spent a good deal of time recording his ancestry, there is no record of posterity. There is no record in the Conger files of his son, Henry, born 15 Aug 1835 and died 21 Feb 1904.

## Andrew Ival Conger, son of Ival Conger

### Congers Keeping Walking Stick Tradition Alive by Glennis Nagel

Some children are born with a silver spoon in their mouths, but Andrew Ival Conger, son of Mr. and Mrs. Ival Conger, Newark, Ohio, was born June 12, [1970 at Newark, Licking Co., OH] with a walking stick in his hand.

Of course, no one expects Andy to walk with the stick. The walking stick hasn't been used as a walking stick in more than 105 years. The walking stick is a part of Conger tradition.

"In the last 105 years, at least, it hasn't been used as walking stick, but it has been handed down through the family," Andy's grandfather, Robert Conger, 802 W. 27th St., said.

Through the years, the walking stick has been handed down from oldest son to oldest son.

Although Mr. Conger doesn't know how far back the tradition goes, he said, "I think that you may assume this was made in the early 1800's."

"A lot of the story is probably folklore, but the story is that the walking stick was made for one of my great grandfathers by Joseph Tibbles, who was called Uncle Joe," Mr. Conger said. "It was made with the stipulation that it was to go to the oldest son in each generation." However, the tradition was in danger of dying out.

"My father, Finis, was the oldest of eight boys. Out of eight boys, there were only four boys born and I was one of those boys. And from those four, there was only one boy, my son Ival, and he was born 27 years ago," Mr. Conger explained.

"My oldest brother had two daughters, so I got the cane because I did have a son. Of the Congers, there is only my brother, my son, and now my grandson left. Nowhere in the United States is there any more of our family line except us," he said.

Just which great grandfather the walking stick was made for Mr. Conger doesn't know. It could have been made for Finis' father, Sigel, or Sigel's father, Elias, or for Elias' father, Enos.

Whoever it was made for, Uncle Joe reputedly was very particular.

"It is a hickory stick. He hunted all over the woods until he found the branch he wanted, then he tied it. And in two or three years he returned to it, and it had grown straight by that time." Mr. Conger said.

"After he had cut it, he threw it up in the barn and left it for a year. After that year was up, he went and got it. He peeled the bark off of it and threw it up there for another year.

"The next year he began to whittle. The walking stick was carved into four separate segments with each segment made in the form of a different tool handle: a hammer, ax, adz and mall." he said. "Once each of the handles was carved, the wood was smoothed with a piece of broken glass. There was no sandpaper in those days."

"Some people say I should redo it, sand it and refinish it, but I think it should be handed down in its original form," Mr. Conger said.

In keeping with the tradition of handing down the walking stick, r. Conger has made an old-fashioned baby cradle for each of his four daughters and his son. The cradles are to be handed down from generation to generation.

"I made the first one for our son's wife, Almeda. Hers is made of walnut and the others are of

cherry wood. We had hoped that the first baby would be a boy," Mr. Conger said.

However, the first two grandchildren to use the walnut cradle were girls, Sherry, who will be four years old this fall, and Tammy, a year and a half old.

To encourage his daughter-in-law to provide the Conger family with a son to carry on the family name, Mr. Conger offered her a \$100 bill and a gold plated baby cradle.

"Knowing her blowing it twice, I didn't think I'd have to make one," he said with a smile. "I haven't figured out how I'll gold plate it yet."

The Congers left for Newark, Ohio, this week to take the walking stick and \$100 to the new arrival.

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