

# THE CHRYSLER FAMILY

By Clarice Tate Uhlmeier

Joseph Freeman and Cynthia Jane Chrysler came to the west from Ontario Canada. Joseph came in 1863, hoping to make enough money within a couple of years to go back to his wife and four small children and buy more land in the deep forest adjoining their small farm in Listowel. He first went to New York to take ship around the horn, but laid over long enough to hear a sermon by Henry Ward Beecher. The Chryslers were my grandparents.

After a rough voyage he landed in San Francisco. Work was plentiful but having been raised a strict



Henry J. Chrysler and Larry Whorton, a great-grandson - 1938

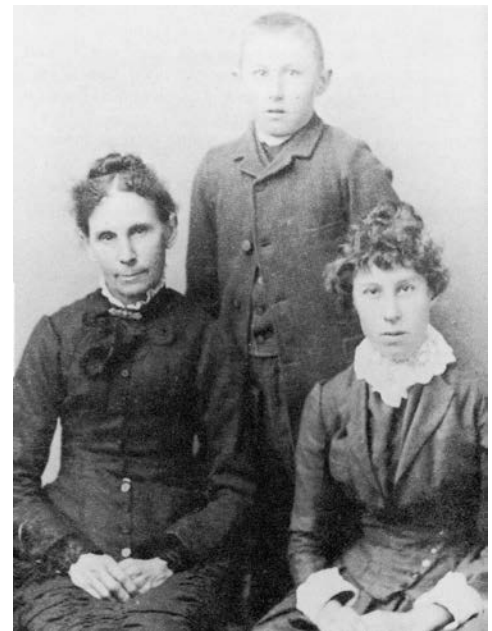
Methodist, he considered the Sabbath the Lord's day and a day of rest; so, having procured them, he lost job after job because he refused to work on Sunday. Months and years went by and he was never able to save enough money to go home as he had planned, nor to send for his family. After seven years he and Grandma decided that she should sell the farm that he had cleared, pack up the family and come west. In 1870, she came west on an early Transcontinental Train.

Grandpa had procured a place for them at the San Antone Stage Station. He would take care of the stage horses, and look after a few range cattle on shares. Grandma would feed any passengers that were traveling or anyone else that wanted meals. Three more children were born in Nevada.

In his riding the range after the cattle Grandpa came across an abandoned homestead which had a one-room brick house. He filed on this land, went into the hills and cut logs, from which he built two more rooms, and even the furniture. These were all put together with hand made wooden pegs. For the seats of the chairs he interwove rawhide strips. On this place was water. Here the family lived for the next twenty-five years.

In 1900, Robert, the youngest son married Lottie Butler, the stepdaughter of Jim Butler. Robert bought twenty acres in Big Pine for his parents, in exchange for the ranch in Smokey Valley. On this place there was a farm house. They moved as soon as the deal was made.

This was the first home Grandma had had since she was a bride, where she could walk to church or attend regularly. It was a common sight on Sundays to see this couple coming through the meadow - a short cut to the church - Grandpa in the lead, English fashion, tromping sturdily along with Grandma following, tripping daintily through the grass, holding up her long skirt. When they arrived at church they never sat together. He chose a central location. At that time there were only rows of chairs in the Methodist Church at Big Pine. From the ceiling hung kerosene



About 1887

L/R Cynthia Jane Chrysler, Robert Chrysler (youngest son of Joseph Freeman and Cynthia Jane Chrysler), Bertha Chrysler Inman

lamps on which yellow jackets often clung, and sometimes fell. Grandma sat on the front row, to the left. She had been deaf for half her life time and wore around her neck a hearing tube, on one end of which was a speaking horn, on the other a piece to fit into her ear. She would sit with this in place with the horn end toward the pulpit. An expression of utmost serenity would light her face. Whether she could hear anything the pastor said or not, she had the satisfaction of trying.

On the farm Grandpa had a fair-sized orchard, a vineyard, a large garden plot, a corn field and enough alfalfa for his own milk cows, horses, a couple of calves a year and some to trade or sell. He kept hogs as well and Grandma had chickens, turkeys, and sometimes ducks and geese. Besides drying apples, Grandpa dug a root cellar where they kept bins of fresh apples, carrots, parsnips, cabbage, onions and turnips. He made sauerkraut each fall, cured pork, and made sausage which was put down in crocks of lard. Grandma made crocks of jams and preserves, pickles and relishes. Whenever fruit was ripe, their daughters came to help cut and dry it. It was spread on sheets on the roof and had to be turned occasionally. In addition to everything else Grandma always had an abundant, old fashioned flower garden. She also kept several hives of bees.

Family gatherings at Grandpa's were frequent. I have seen as many as thirty-five people around their tables. Two of their daughters had preceded them to Big Pine, and one came about the time they did - all with growing families, and some with grandchildren. Their youngest daughter was a widow, so had to find work wherever she could. She left her daughter with them during the school terms.



Chrysler Family at Old Smokey Valley home – circa 1899  
L/R (back row): Robert McDonald, Bertha Chrysler Inman, George M  
L/R (front row): Freeman, Dorothy Inman, Jane Crowell Chrysler

Grandpa had one habit that he kept all of his life: reading the Scriptures after breakfast each morning. The meal would begin with his saying a silent "Grace" with his hand over his closed eyes. As soon as the meal was finished - no matter who was present - he took the Big Book from its shelf behind him. With a stern look around the table, indicating that he expected silence, he chose a chapter and read aloud. That over, the day's work began.

Having lived so many years so far from people, their social life was mostly the things they did with their own

family. They both had strong political views, and Grandpa religiously exercised his right to vote, as most naturalized citizens do (one thing that Grandma never was able to do, as women's voting rights came after her death.) They attended day time church functions, and Grandma loved to dress up in her Sunday finest and go with her daughters to other affairs, even though she could not hear. Grandpa considered things not having to do with work, a waste of time.

These were sturdy, pioneer folk, and lived the good Christian life as they saw it. They are buried at Big Pine with their sons and daughters.



Family of Joseph Freeman and Cynthia Jane Chrysler — at home of Thomas Tate, Big Pine, July 4th, 1909. *Back Row, Seated:* Frank Inman, Bertha Inman, Elizabeth Hamilton, Joseph Freeman Chrysler, Cynthia Jane Chrysler, Clara Mitchell, Alice Robinson, Bob Robinson, Esther Tate, Thomas Tate, May Smith, Fay Smith (*on lap*), Bud Smith. *Back Row, Standing:* Dorothy Inman Freeman, Millard Smith. *Front Row, Standing:* Howard Smith, Elva Tate Willis, Clarice Tate Uhlmeier, Enid Robinson Yandell, Bessa Robinson Brooks, Dottie Robinson Willson, Gertrude Smith, Alvin Smith *on lap above*, George Mitchell, Bertha Mitchell, Mitchell children (Frank, Bernice, Mildred, Mark), Robert Smith *on railing*.