

There are many gaps in the Ebert family history. Dates and names are frequently incorrect (or can be assumed incorrect) in federal or local data. For this reason, I have included as much information associated with the family name as possible. One of the most common issues is the misspelling of the Ebert family name, which is sometimes spelled “Abert” (1860 census)<sup>1</sup>, “Elbert” (1900 census)<sup>2</sup> or “Ebart” (1910 census)<sup>3</sup>, and “Eberts” (newspaper obituary circa 1930)<sup>4</sup>. Some research done by Josef W. Rokus in his unpublished December 1st draft of *The Germans in Fredericksburg, Virginia at the Time of the Civil War* identifies an “Abert” family with nearly identical information to the Ebert family<sup>5</sup>. Given the frequently misspelled surname, I suggest that this may in fact actually be the Ebert family, as the “Abert” family never appears in another available census after 1860<sup>6</sup>. Both the married Sophia and Henry “Abert” have the exact name, birth date, occupation, residence, and homeland of Sophia and Henry Ebert, as well as two Fredericksburg-born daughters<sup>7</sup>. The census shows Henry and Sophia “Abert” as having a five year old daughter named Anna who was born in Prussia and emigrated along with her family<sup>8</sup>. Anna never appears in another available census<sup>9</sup>. In the 1900 census, Sophia Ebert indicates that she has birthed two children with two surviving<sup>10</sup>, which one would assume are her

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<sup>1</sup> “Ancestry Census Data.” n.d. <https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/>, Ancestry, <https://www.ancestry.com/>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., “Ancestry Census Data”

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., “Ancestry Census Data”

<sup>4</sup> Rokus, Josef W. n.d. *Fredericksburg's German Heritage: The Germans in Fredericksburg, Virginia, at the Time of the Civil War*, unpublished, pp 73.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, pp 9.

<sup>6</sup> “Ancestry Census Data.” n.d. <https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/>, Ancestry, <https://www.ancestry.com/>.

<sup>7</sup> Rokus, Josef W. n.d. *Fredericksburg's German Heritage: The Germans in Fredericksburg, Virginia, at the Time of the Civil War*, unpublished, pp 9, 19, 20.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, pp 9.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, pp 9.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, “Ancestry Census Data”

two listed daughters Mary and Doretta (sometimes also known as Dorothy). In the 1910 census, Sophia Ebert (misspelled as “Ebart” in records) indicates that she has birthed five children, with only four surviving<sup>11</sup>, yet there is no grave marked “Anna” alongside her family’s graves in the Fredericksburg Confederate Cemetery<sup>12</sup>. If we assume that the otherwise identical information certifies the incorrect “Abert” family as the *Ebert* family, it is safe to estimate an immigration year around 1855/56, (1860 census minus Anna’s age of five at the time of record). Anna is not the only mystery child to appear in census records alongside the Ebert family. In the 1860 census, a “Louisa” is mentioned at 8 months old<sup>13</sup>. She shares the family name, and is listed as younger than both five-year-old Anna and three-year-old Doretta<sup>14</sup>. In all following census data, she does not appear at all. This “Louisa” could be the one Ebert child that died, but she is not named alongside her family’s graves. I have searched all available records for a Louisa or Anna Ebert, also substituting the common misspellings of the surname as “Abert”, “Elbert”, and “Ebart”, with no success. The 1910 census shows Sophia to have birthed 5 children with only 4 survivors<sup>15</sup>, but there are only records of an Anna, Doretta (Dorothy), Louisa, and Mary<sup>16</sup>. There is yet another mystery child listed alongside the Ebert family in the 1900 census, named Mary Pfaff. She is 17 at the time of the survey, fathered by a man born in Virginia, and said to be the granddaughter of the head of the house, a widowed Ms. Sophia Ebert<sup>17</sup>. This Mary Pfaff never shows up again alongside the family, and despite searching her name in every available database, no more information appears to be available on her. Both Doretta and Mary lived their entire

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<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, “Ancestry Census Data”

<sup>12</sup> Personal physical research: I went to this site.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, “Ancestry Census Data”

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, “Ancestry Census Data”

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, “Ancestry Census Data”

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, “Ancestry Census Data”

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, “Ancestry Census Data”

lives single. They are listed as single on all available censuses, maintain their family name of Ebert on their gravestones, and are buried with their parents instead of a spouse. This presents the question of how Sophia could have had a 17 year old granddaughter listed in the 1900 census if her two consistently listed daughters were always listed as single and childless? This led me to expand my research pool, which resulted in a theory for these lost daughters. In Sophia Ebert's will, Louisa is shown to have married a man by the last name of Franklin<sup>18</sup>, and an "Annie" is shown to have married a man by the last name of Pfuff<sup>19</sup> (misspelled as "Pfaff" in the newspaper index<sup>20</sup>). A "Louise" is also mentioned a number of times in the indexes of the Fredericksburg Daily Star as an honor roll student<sup>21</sup>. Perhaps the mystery girls did not die as children. "Annie" could be a nickname or changed spelling of "Anna". Perhaps Louisa and Anna/Annie are buried with their husbands in another grave site. Another discrepancy is the incorrect date of birth listed on the tombstones of Henry and Sophia Ebert. The 1870 federal census shows a 37 year old Henry (alongside two men who were likely his brothers) as living in Fredericksburg and working as grocers. Basic math according to this census data would indicate that Henry was born in 1833, which is written on his tombstone, but Sophia's tombstone reads 1822. Given our earlier functioning assumption that the "Abert" family from the 1860 census is in fact the Ebert family, this information appears false. Both Henry and Sophia also list their ages as 28 on the 1860 census, meaning they would have both been born in 1832. This also further solidifies the evidence that the "Abert" family mentioned in Rokus' research is actually the Ebert family.

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<sup>18</sup> <http://gis.fredericksburgva.gov/HistoricCourtRecord/?searchoption=wills>

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Fredericksburg Daily Star Index, 1884-1885, pp 25.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, pp 25.

Now that all of the contradictory information and discrepancies have been outlined in as much detail as possible, I will lay out family history and information in chronological order according to my research. The Ebert family story starts in Prussia, 1832/33, when both Henry and Sophia were born. Sophia's maiden name is unknown, but she gave birth to the Ebert's first daughter Anna while they still lived in Prussia. The family immigrated to the United States circa 1855/56 when both Henry and Sophia were 23 and their daughter Anna was likely less than a year old. In the 1860 census, their family name is misspelled as "Abert", possibly an attempt at anglicization. In this listing, Henry is 28 and works as a grocer, Sophia is 28, and the pair has three listed daughters: Anna, Dorothy (Doretta), and Louisa. The children are five years, three years, and eight months respectively. In 1861 at the beginning of the American Civil War, Henry Ebert is mentioned in military records as having enlisted in the confederate army. The following excerpt is obtained from Rokus' unpublished research.

Henry Ebert: Company A, 30th Virginia Infantry Regiment. Enlisted on July 26th, 1861. Reported sick in November 1861. Detailed as a baker in April 1862. Hospitalized at Chimborazo Hospital with edema of the legs from June until July 1864 and again from January until March 1865 with pneumonia. Furloughed from the hospital on March 3rd, 1865<sup>22</sup>.

This introduces the details of how the American Civil War, namely the infamous Battle of Fredericksburg impacted the Ebert family and their house. Another excerpt from Doretta's obituary in Rokus' unpublished research indicates how the family spent the day(s):

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., Rokus, pp. 70.

The (Ebert) home is situated on the corner of Sunken Road and Apex Street and contains what is believed to be the last of the original stone wall on the east side of the famous road from which the Confederate forces practically won the Battle of Fredericksburg. During the war, Miss Ebert, with her parents and other members of the family left the home just prior to the Battle of Fredericksburg but returned the day before bombardment commenced. Aroused by the heavy firing at 4 o'clock in the morning on the day of the bombardment, they hooked up the family team and in the darkness of a cold December morning left town in a hail of shells. Returning after the battle, the family again took up their residence in the home, and Miss Ebert continued to live there quietly until her death

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I decided to go to the historical site referenced in the article, and discovered another house very close to the original Ebert house (which by the late 1940s seems to have been destroyed and is now outlined by stone blocks) called the Innis (or Ennis) house. This Innis house, unlike the Ebert house, is still standing, with historical markers detailing the damage the area endured. Both houses sit at the bottom of the hill on which Brompton House stands. One historical marker on the Innis house says "Confederate General Lafayette McLaws wrote that the house 'had no space as large as two hands on it that had not been pierced.'" , so it is easy to imagine that the Ebert house, about 80 meters (260 feet) away<sup>24</sup>, received much the same damage.

Significant changes to census data include when Sophia is first listed as head of the household in the 1900 census after Henry's 1896 death, when Mary is first listed as head of the household in the 1920 census after Sophia's 1913 death, and when two married boarders are first

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., Rokus, pp 74.

<sup>24</sup> ibid. Personal physical research.

listed in the 1920 census along with the family<sup>25</sup>. The boarders are named John Evans and Mollie Evans, 53 and 40 respectively<sup>26</sup>. I later found their double grave alongside the Ebert family listing their full names as John Marshall Evans and Mollie Pfaff Evans, having died in 1950 and 1977 respectively<sup>27</sup>. The couple is seemingly unrelated to the Ebert family, and may have been buried with them because they lived with them as boarders for as long as the house stood according to census data.

There are two men listed alongside Henry Ebert in the 1870 census named August and William, who may be his brothers<sup>28</sup>. Their ages are listed as 30 and 27 respectively, and they are not ever mentioned again in federal census data, indicating that they may have returned to Germany. The Ebert family consisted of Henry, his wife Sophia, their (likely) four surviving daughters Anna (Annie), Doretta (Dorothy), Louisa (Louise), and Mary. Louisa married a man by the last name Franklin, Annie married a man by the last name Pfaff and seems to have had a daughter named Mary Pfaff. The family ran a grocery supply store from the time they settled here until Mary's death in 1944<sup>29</sup>, and Mary seems to have made the house a boarding house in an effort to increase revenue. The Ebert house no longer stands, but the family's impact does.

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<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, "Ancestry Census Data"

<sup>26</sup> Personal physical research: I went to this gravesite and gravestone.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.* Personal physical research.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, Rokus, pp.19.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.* Personal physical research.