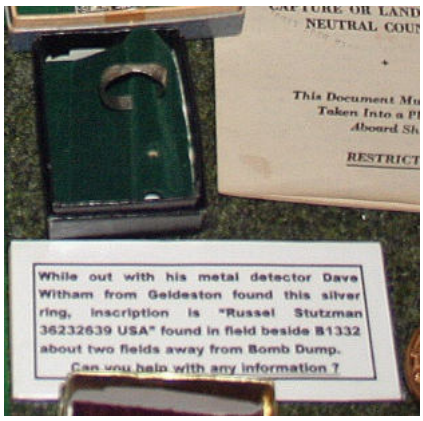
"Finding Russell Stutzman"

When researching something you need to have a reason.

In this case my curiosity was aroused by a photograph in our personal collection, which was taken about ten to twelve years ago in response to a request to record the exhibits in the old Control Tower on Seething Airfield.

This photograph was of a ring accompanied by a request for information along with the name of the person who found the ring. The inscription on the ring was given as "Russel Stutzman" and a number, along with where it was found.

Where to start? The number was possibly a service number given that it was found close to a disused USAAF WW2 airfield namely Station 146, the home of the 448th Bombardment Group (H). The airfield bomb store had not been too far away, so could someone whose military occupation has taken them to this place have lost their ring? Over time the fields had been reclaimed by agriculture and the ring could have been ploughed into the soil?



I commenced on the assumption that the number on the ring was a USAAF service number and hoped that I could match it up with a name that would confirm the identity of the man. It did! He was an American service man, and I found his U.S. WW2 draft card and his enlistment details. He was Russell Stutzman born 1919, in Black Creek, Wisconsin, USA. The time between completing his draft card and his enlistment was fifteen months. He enlisted at Fort Sheriden, Illinois and it was here that he was given his service number.

Just a brief explanation of the USA World War 2 Registration dates.

The **first** registration took place on 16 October 1940, this was males who had reached the ages 21 to 35 "within the continental United States."
The **second** registration took place on 1 July 1941: this was for males who had reached the age of 21 since the first registration.
The **third** registration took place on 16 February 1942: males between the ages 20 and 45 who had not previously registered.
The **fourth** registration took place on 27 April 1942: males between the ages of 45 and 65 "not eligible for military service."
The **fifth** registration took place on 30 June 1942: males between the ages of 18 and 20.
The **sixth** registration took place between 10-31 December 1942: those males who reached the age of 18 after 12 November 1942.
Additional registrations between 16 November and 31 December 1943: citizens living abroad between the ages of 18 and 45.

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Now, what avenue should I explore to find out who Russell was? My usual approach is to look back into the family. Who were his mother and father? Did he have any siblings? Did they enter the services? I traced the family back to 1794 using varied records including the census. When looking at the questions on the American Census they make remarkably interesting reading and help understand the origins of some of the American servicemen's surnames linked to their ancestors' roots.
This was just the start of my journey to "find" Russell Stutzman, a member of the USAAF who served at Station 146, Seething, Norfolk, England, UK or did he?

Russell

The first time we meet Russell is on his registration form (commonly known as the draft). This document was completed on 16th October 1940 in Black Creek, Outagamie, Wisconsin as did three of his brothers. It gives his name as Russell Stutzman, and he is living in Black Creek. He has no telephone at his address, his age is given as 21 years being born 1 April 1919 in Black Creek, and he is a citizen of the USA. His mother is Mrs Emma Stutzman and is recorded on the registration card as "the person who would always know his address." She too lived in Black Creek and Russell was employed by K & B Auto Company situated in Black Creek. His race is given as white, he is 5'2" tall, weighed 110lb, had grey eyes, brown hair, complexion light brown and had no physical characteristics!

I am now going to introduce you to Russell's family as we travel back in time from 1940. The first time Russell appeared on any official document I was able to find, was in the Census of 1920. He was the eighth child born into the family of John George Stutzman Snr and Emma L Stutzman. John was born in 1881 in Wisconsin, his father was born in New York and his mother in Germany. Emma was born in 1885 again in Wisconsin as was her father and her mother born in Germany. As well as Russell their children were Earl born 1905, John H Jnr born 1906, Selvia born 1908, Rose born 1911, Ralph born 1913, Willard born 1915, Wallace born 1917. They all lived in Burdick Street, Black Creek.

By the 1930 Census it appears that Earl H, John H jnr, Selvia, Rose and Ralph have all moved out of the family home in Black Creek, which now is just given as dwelling No 95. There are two new members of the family, Ruth born 1922 and Dorothy born 1927 making them numbers nine and ten.

We can glimpse a small piece of Russell's life as reported in The Post-Crescent (Appleton, Wisconsin) in June 1936 that he was part of a class of twelve including his sister Ruth who were confirmed at Black Creek Methodist Church by The Rev. Lorenz Knutzen, the pastor.

By the time of the 1940 Census the Stutzman household consists of John George, Emma, Russell, Ruth, and Dorothy. They are still living in Black Creek. John George is a labourer in a stone quarry. Emma is not given an occupation. Russell is listed as a labourer in a car garage, Ruth as a housekeeper in a private house and Dorothy as in education. Other information from the Census is that Emma answered the questions, they rented their home for $15 per month, Russell had an elementary education and is not now attending school and in the last week of March 1940 he worked sixty hours. In 1939 he worked twenty-eight weeks and had an income of $150.

At this stage I wanted to see if I could find any evidence that his brothers registered for the draft. Earl Herman the eldest in the family registered on 16 October 1940. His address was given as Shiocton, Outagamie, Wisconsin. He was 35 years old, born 25 June 1905 and his place of birth

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was Black Creek. His father John George was given as "the person who would always know his address." His employer was Edward Schultz of Shiocton, Outagamie. (The name of the company was not readable). Earl is described as white, 5'8" tall and weighed 148lbs, grey eyes, brown hair, light complexion, and no physical characteristics. He registered in Bovina, Shiocton, Wisconsin at the Local Board No 2. In the Census of 1940, he is recorded as a farm labourer working for Edward Schultz. In 1939 he worked 12 weeks, in the week before the Census, he worked 99 hours and his income was $45 in 1939. I could find no evidence that he enlisted for service to his country.

John

The next brother I found was John Henry Jnr. He registered on 16 October 1940. His address is recorded as Black Creek R 2 and his mother Emma is given as "the person who would always know his address". He is 34 years old, born 25 October 1906 in Black Creek. His employer was George Dunham of Black Creek R 2 Farm, Black Creek. He is described as white, 5'8", 145lbs, blue eyes, brown hair, light complexion, and no obvious physical characteristics. He married Lucille Strong on 19 October 1940. He enlisted on 28 December 1942 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin into the US army. His service number is given as 36292887. At present I have no other information about where he served.

I could not find any information on as to whether Willard registered or enlisted.

The final brother I found was Wallace Stutzman. He registered at Center, Outagamie, Wisconsin on 16 October 1940. His address was given as Appleton R 2, Centre, Outagamie. He did have a telephone, but no number given, his age was given as 27 years of age and he was born on 12 March 1912 in Black Creek. The person "who would know his address always" was his father-in-law William Bergholg (Bergholz) who had the same address as Wallace. His employer was Louis Stecher of the same address as Wallace. Wallace was described as white, 5'6" tall, 145lbs in weight, eyes grey, hair brown and light complexion. In the Census of 1940, he was recorded to be 23 years old, married Irene on 3 March 1936 in the Town of Center, and had two daughters, Joyce born 1937 and Doris 1938. Wallace was a farm labourer and the family lived in rented accommodation. In 1939 he worked 52 weeks and the week prior to the Census he worked 50 hours and his income was $375 and he did have another source of income. I cannot find any records to show that he enlisted in the service of his country.

Now we will look at John George Snr, Russell's father. He too registered to serve his country on 23 April 1942. He gave his name as John George Stutzman and he lived in Black Creek, he had no telephone, and his age was given as 61 years with the date of birth as 8 October 1881 in Outagamie County. Emma his wife was given as "the person who would always know his address." His employer was W.P.A of Black Creek. He was described as white, 5'8" tall and 160lbs with brown eyes, black hair, and a light brown complexion. John George snr had also registered on 12 September 1918. He then had the serial number of 1497, gave his name as John George Stutzman, residing in Black Creek, gave his birth date as 8 October 1880 and was white, native born. His present occupation was that of a labourer employed by G L Maas of Black Creek. Emma his wife was given as his nearest relative. He was described as of medium height, medium build, brown eyes, and black hair and was physically fit. I doubt very much if he did serve his country as WW1 ended two months later 11 November 1918 and I did not find any records of him in the service of his country. One anomaly is that on the 1942 registration document he records his year of birth as 1881, whereas on the 1918 registration document this is recorded as 1880, I then

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found a photograph of his headstone in the cemetery where he is buried which shows his birth date as 1880.

In the Census of 1910 John George Snr is age 29 living in Black Creek with Emma aged 25 and their three children Earl aged 4, John George Jnr age 3 and Sylvia age 1 all in Burdick Street. His occupation is given as labourer conducting odd jobs. John George Snr and Emma married on 24 March 1903. His father Henry was born in New York, his mother Elizabeth had been born in Germany. She is living with George and his family and is listed as 68 years of age. She was also recorded as living with them in the Census taken on 1 June 1905 and it details John George and Emma having no children, but they have a lodger named Charles Herzog. Both in the Census of 1905 and 1910 I found no details of Henry, Elizabeth's husband, and John Georg Snr's father. What had happened to him?

I will say that in researching Russell I received the biggest surprise when I came to "look" for Henry. In the Census of 1850, he is recorded as living in Buffalo Ward 4, Erie, New York, USA, with his father Frederick age 31 years and his mother Rachel age 34, (or is she, his mother? This will be covered in the story of Frederick) his brother Jacob age nine and Henry himself is age 8. By the Census of 1860, the family is living in Buffalo Ward 7, Erie, New York. His father Frederick age 42 is a labourer and it states he was born in Prussia; his wife Rachel age 44 given as born in Bavaria, Jacob age 19 and Henry aged 18 are listed as born in New York. Somewhere between 1860 and 1870 Henry moved to Black Creek, Outagamie, Wisconsin. In the Census of 1870, he is listed as a farmer aged 28, with his wife, Elizabeth aged 26 and three children, Catherine aged 4, Mary aged 2 and Henry only a few months old.

As to why he moved I can only speculate. He could possibly have moved sometime between 1860 and 1862 (the American Civil War 12 April 1861 to 9 May 1865). Records show that he was mustered in Wisconsin on 21 August 1862 and was mustered out on 23 August 1865. He was enlisted into G Company, 28th Wisconsin Infantry with the rank of private and his length of service had been 3 years and 2 days in the Union Army. His residence was given as Germantown, Wisconsin. Records suggest he received some kind of pension. I did find some more information on the 28th Wisconsin Infantry which made interesting reading and I will say that to find Henry took part in this war was quite a surprise. I would have loved to explore this part of his life more, but Henry and his life are not the principal subjects of this story.

By the Census of 1880 Henry aged 39 is living in Black Creek, Outagamine, Wisconsin with Elizabeth his wife aged 38, Mary 12, Henry 10, Libbie 9, Louise 4 and Caroline 1. Henry's occupation is given as a labourer. It was recorded in the Appleton Post on Thursday 6 December 1883 that Henry gave evidence in a murder trial and details of this covered three full columns in the newspaper. A later piece published by The Appleton Crescent on Saturday 15 February 1896 was a report covering the suicide of Henry. This tragedy happened on 6 February at 8 o'clock in the morning in his home. It makes sad reading for a man who fought in the Civil War.

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Henry, for many years, suffered from asthma and he was heard to say many times that he would take his life to end his suffering. The weather that morning was damp and foggy, and he could not breathe, and he could not take it anymore. His funeral service was held from the Lutheran church, and he was buried in the Black Creek Evangelical Cemetery. To mark his final resting place is with a stone which says Father, the second is a stone with his name and 28th Wisconsin Infantry and the third marker is a round large badge type with inscription of the American Legion.

As stated, previously when talking about John George Snr, Elizabeth the wife of Henry is living with them, the previous story of Henry, is the sad reason. Elizabeth passed away in 1919. She too is buried in the same cemetery as her husband Henry.

We can now look at the details regarding Henry's father Frederick. It is he who was born Ottweiler, Rhineland-Palatinate, Prussia, Germany on 24 January 1819. His father was Johann Friedrich (born 1794) age 24 and his wife Louisa Konrad (born 1797) age 21. Documents are limited and not easy to confirm, but Johann and Louisa married on 7 October 1814 in the land of their birth. It is unclear when the family arrived in America.

However, on 30 January 1840 Frederick marries Katharina Weber born 1818. They have three children Jacob born 24 August 1840, Henry born 24 June 1841 and Katharina Maria born 1 November 1843. Then tragedy strikes, Katharina dies 1 November 1843, baby Katharina Maria is baptised on 12 November 1943 and sadly died on 28 November 1943.

Frederick remarried on 1 February 1844 in Buffalo, Erie, New York to a lady named Rachel Gemar who was born 1815. On 9 August 1846 she gives birth to Frederick (1) however just over a year later on 16 August, this little boy dies. She then gives birth again to a boy whom they named Frederick (2) in December 1850 or January 1851. The record is not clear on this. What the deaths of Katharina, Baby Katharina, and baby Frederick (1) show is that childbirth could be dangerous and for small babies' life was fragile. Frederick Snr appears to have married quickly but in practical terms he had two young children who needed a stepmother to care for them.

We have now arrived at the point where we know that Johann and Louisa with a young Frederick left the country of their birth for a new life in American and so began the family story for Russell Stutzman. It was these people who settled in and around Buffalo, Eire, New York. As to why there, we will never know. Now we will travel forward to 1942 and pick up Russell's story.

It is early on Monday 19 January 1942 and selectees of the three districts of Outagamie county left from the Zuelke Building, the headquarters of the draft board. Russell was in the selectees from the second division. They would all be travelling to Fort Sheridan, Illinois. On the 20 January 1942 Russell was enlisted in the army, given the service number of 36232639, he is described as white, residence Outagmie Country, Wisconsin, his civilian occupation under the heading of an unskilled garage labourers and car washers and greasers. Single, without dependants, birth 1919, birthplace Wisconsin, height 62, weight 110, rank private. No details are given as to where he will be serving or what his military occupation would be.

From a newspaper report titled "Uncle Sam's Nephews" published on Saturday 30 January 1943 we find out what Russell's military occupation was and possibly where he was. The report states that Private Russell Stutzman is in the army and in the Medical Corp and was stationed in England. Also, his brother John Stutzman Jnr is in the army and stationed at Camp McCoy, Wisconsin. We now have the first clue as to his military occupation and he is stationed in England, it still does not tell us where he was stationed. Was it with the 448th Bombardment Group (H) at Station 146, Seething, Norfolk? If he was in the Medical Corp, was he attending a medical emergency near the bomb store and his ring had slipped off his finger?

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We now find Russell on the "Queen Mary" listed on a New York City passenger list of 1945, to be precise, on 20th June 1945. This I had to decipher as with the military they seem to be in code, he was listed a Pfc - Md which I interpreted as private first class and a medic. Then followed his service number, it is the same one which was given at his enlistment back in 1942. Then followed a number 657 in a column headed MOS - SSN which meant military occupation specialities. 657 was a medical aidman. Lastly was his home which was Black Creek, Wisconsin. In his Reception Station No 7 (I took this to be a cabin allocation on the ship) I found a medical technician, writer-military subjects, message centre clerk, clerk general, clerk typist, radar mechanic bombardment, medical NCO, communications chief, and a captain -AC-Group leader. However, no clue as to which groups, they all belonged to.

The next reference to Russell was in the newspaper the Post-Crescent (Appleton, Wisconsin) on Wednesday 26 September 1945 under the heading of Uncle Sam's Nephews. Twenty-two men from the Appleton area were discharged from Fort Sheriden, Illinois Separation Center between the 20 and 22 September according to Brigadier General John T Peirce, Fort Sheriden's commanding officer. Among this group was Private First-Class Russell Stutzman. He returns to work at K & B Auto Company for fourteen years and then had employment with Fox Tractors until his retirement.

Russell then crops up again in the local paper on Monday 29 June 1946 amongst the applicants to obtain marriage licenses from the county clerk John E Hantschel. He and his fiancé Helen R Strong both of Hortonville were wishing to get married. I feel here that Russell is slowly dropping clues for me. The next is a report on his wedding to Miss Helen Strong on Saturday 17 August 1946 at 2.30pm in the Bethlehem Lutheran church in Hortonville. There then follows the normal type of list of who was taking part in the church service. Then they partake of a "5 o'clock wedding dinner" for the immediate family in the bride's home after which there was a dance held in the Black Creek Auditorium. Russell and Helen had a short wedding trip and then they set up home in Hortonville. The report also gave information that the bridegroom was in the service in the medical corps and was overseas for thirty-four months. I have calculated that from January 1942 when he enlisted to about September/October 1942 he was training to be a medical-aidman. The description of a medical-aidman is as follows:

"To perform various duties to assist technicians in medical department activities. Administers first-aid treatment to sick, injured or wounded. Treats minor injuries and wound, such as cuts, blisters, contusions, and lacerations, applying medicants and bandaging wounds. Makes and applies arm or leg splint, treats patient for shock and stops bleeding by approved methods. Lifts onto litter and carries to first aid station, ambulance loading point or collecting stations. Performs routine duties in the care and treatment of patients, taking temperature and pulse readings, bathing and feeding patients and preparing patients for operations. Makes beds, cleans, and washes equipment and floors and assists in sterilizing instruments. Performs related duties as directed. Must have received medical basic training." (The Military Yearbook Project – Medical Aidman [657])

Posted overseas to England from then and returned to USA via New York City on 20 June 1945 that makes thirty-four months.

We now are being given glimpses into his life after leaving the army but still no nearer to discovering where he served in England. A report in the local paper on Wednesday 22 January 1946 we discover he was a member of the Black Creek Legion Post and served on the committee who were planning a party on 8 February.

At this point if any person reading this in the USA and could explain about the Legion Post or American Legion, I would be incredibly grateful.

Another glimpse into Russell's life is that on Tuesday 15 June 1948 the local newspaper reported under the heading of "Young people meet at Church Parlors" that Mr & Mrs Russell Stutzman entertained at their home on Friday evening in honour of their daughter Sandra Lee's first birthday. There followed a list of those that attended.

We then arrive at a report on Wednesday 24 February about a fire which caused loss of $100 at Black Creek. A fire in an overheated chimney caused the damaged at the Menzo Pierce apartment and the Russell Stutzman apartment upstairs received smoke damage. The Black Creek firemen attended.

I still have not yet found any clues as to where Russell was stationed as I reach a report on his passing on Saturday 15 September 2001 aged 82. Russell was a member of the Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran church in Black Creek and the Appleton VFW Post 2778. His funeral was held on Tuesday 18 September 2001 at 11.30, complete with military rites. He was laid to rest in the Highland Memorial Park, Appleton, Outagamie, Wisconsin. Helen his wife passed on Friday 14 December 2012 aged 83 and was laid to rest with Russell.

As I read down the report my eyes rest on the last clue Russell has left me. "Russell was an Air Force Veteran, serving in the 93rd Bombardment Group (H) during World War 2". Thank you, Russell, for imparting this information but what was your ring doing at Station 146, home of the 448th Bombardment Group (H), Seething Norfolk?

For those of you who do not know the 93rd Bombardment Group (H) was based at Station 104, Hardwick, Norfolk. There is about five miles from airfield to airfield. The 93rd Bombardment Group (H) were part of the 20th Combat Wing and functioned as the senior Bombardment Group with the 448th Bombardment Group (H) and the 446th Bombardment Group. All flying B24 Liberators.

I hope you, the reader, have enjoyed my quest to find out who Russell Stutzman was. He was an ordinary man called to serve his country in time of war. He went back home and picked up his life in Black Creek, working at the same garage he left in 1942. However, his experiences serving overseas and the effects it would have had on him, and his family would possibly have changed them.

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