

Chapter Five: Arthur Died Here; Cy Lived There and “I am The One” *A mysterious place to die, unlikely neighbors and a stunning name game*

Between July 25 and August 5, 2016, I traveled the upper Midwest researching details about the my parents', Roger Lamoureux and Evangeline Bechtel Lamoureux Ravneberg, early lives. Roger's family settled on farms and in towns near Sioux City, Iowa. He was born in Salix and was raised there and in nearby Akron. Evangeline's family spent formative time in the northeast corner of North Dakota. Roger and Evangeline met and married in Keokuk, Iowa and first lived as a married couple in Sioux Falls, South Dakota before moving to towns near the Navy Submarine Base and Shipyards at New London, Connecticut, where they adopted me from a hospital in Hartford, in 1955, when I was 14 months old.

I embarked on a 2,200-mile odyssey to meet people and research places and documents. As a youth, I had visited Sioux City and the farms around the area; I had not been to either Dakotas. I began research in Sioux City. Data I had (previously) collected from the *Akron Register Tribune*, combined with family stories provided context, background and targets for my research. On the Lamoureux side, I was particularly interested in learning the circumstances surrounding my grandfather's (Arthur Lamoureux) death in Sioux City. Long before Roger died in 1985, he told me that he was staying with his father, at an apartment in Sioux City, when he found grandpa Arthur dead on the floor.

Research in his service record and in public documents in Sioux City began to clarify the events: Roger visited his family during, what was supposed to be, a two-week trip from his duty stations in New London, Connecticut and Portsmouth, New Hampshire to Long Beach, California to visit his eldest sister, Lucille, and her family. He stayed with his father for what was

probably intended as no more than an overnight or two. While there, Roger made a quick, one-day, round-trip visit to Omaha Nebraska. Roger wanted to, someday, transfer closer to home; Omaha was the duty station for that part of the country. Returning from Omaha for the night before heading west, Roger found his father dead on the floor. Since Arthur had died, Roger was unable to make the trip to California; he had to wait for the family to assemble for services.

Roger thought that his father was living in Sioux City with Roger's sister, one of Arthur's daughters, Georgette. However, Georgette had thrown her father out of her house because he molested one of his nieces, a little girl of seven or eight years at the time. No one in the family ever mentioned this to me, nor apparently discussed it much with each other. But while I was in Sioux City researching I stayed with Mary Ann and Frank Audino. Mary Ann was the daughter of another of Roger's sisters living in Sioux City, Rachel. Mary Ann took me on a tour of family places in town and when we got to the location of the apartment Arthur moved to and died in, she told me that she had been the subject of the abuse and that Arthur had previously also abused his youngest daughter Bernadette, then in her late teens, once Grandma Victoria died and the boys had all left the farm. When Arthur moved into town, Aunt Georgette warned him that if he did it again, she'd probably kill him. Instead, she threw him out.

Since he could not go to California, Roger headed back to the East Coast after the services. The return trip put a positive spin on what was an otherwise disastrous and disappointing trip.

Because his sister, Corinne (Lamoureux) Davidson lived there, and it was on the way, Roger stopped in Keokuk, Iowa on each leg of that trip. The first time through, heading west for Long Beach—before the death in Sioux City—Roger dated a local girl, Frances Tallarico. On the

way back to the East Coast, while on a double date with Frances and a buddy, he met Evangeline Bechtel. Evangeline was Roger's buddy's date that night. My parents met when they did because Roger's father died, a Navy buddy joined him on the return trip east, and Roger ended up preferring his buddy's date to his own. After clearing up details in Sioux City, I went north with a brief stop in Sioux Falls, South Dakota where Roger and Evangeline made their first home after marrying.

Following a brief tour through Sioux Falls (including taking images of the apartment my parents lived in there), I headed for North Dakota. I planned to start my research with a visit to Cavalier, a small town in the far north-east corner of the state. I'd learned that my great-great grandfather, John Bechtel and his wife, Elizabeth, along with the John Burns family and Charles Cavalier, were among the original founders of Cavalier and that many of the Bechtel forbearers are buried in cemeteries there. There are few services in Cavalier so I arranged to stay at an *AirB&B* apartment in nearby Grand Forks, North Dakota, site of the University of North Dakota. My uncle Jim O'Brien (the husband of mom's only sister, Veronica) attended and graduated from UND; one of mom's brothers, my uncle Richard Bechtel, spent years as a student and cheerleader/gymnast there.

The proprietor was away when I arrived at the apartment, so I used the protocol to let myself in and unloaded my baggage. Before long, the apartment owner, a young woman named Cindy, appeared. I introduced myself as her lodger for the evening and presented my business card. She explained that her boyfriend would be joining us soon and I briefly told her the story of my research trip to Cavalier the next day. She looked at me with excitement saying "I was raised in Cavalier, North Dakota." At the turn of the 20th century, Cavalier's population counted about

700 people. Little over a one-hundred-years later, approximately twice as many people live there. In 2016, about 52,000 of North Dakota's 750,000 people lived in Grand Forks. Therefore, running into one of the 7% from Cavalier, while in Grand Forks, is not implausible. However, the odds that a researcher from Illinois, headed for Cavalier, spends the night in Grand Forks with a native—born and raised in his “target” town—are somewhat low. I remarked about the coincidence; Cindy offered a wry smile. When I mentioned this and similar incidents to other North Dakotans, they generally replied “well, that’s just North Dakota for you.”

The next day I headed for Cavalier with plans to photograph family gravesites and search for the Bechtel family farm. I would then proceed north to the North Dakota State Museum located in Pembina, just south of the Canadian border, in the far northeast corner of the state.

Bechtel family members were buried in one of two cemeteries, one Catholic and one nonsectarian just outside of town. I carried an image of a plat map, on my iPad, indicating the location of the family farm in Cavalier. Of course, old plat maps do not match current topography and/or maps so I needed to locate a knowledgeable local to orient me toward the location of the property.

I entered Cavalier, from the south, via North Dakota State Route 18 and stopped at the *Cenex* gas station to use the facilities. I noticed five small tables with locals eating lunch; the gas station included a pizza and deli operation. Not wanting to disturb their lunch, I proceeded east on Main Street (overlapped, in town, with North Dakota State Route 5) knowing that I would find both cemeteries just beyond the high school, not too far from the center of the small town. As I approached the Catholic cemetery, just out of town on the right side of the road, I passed a senior citizen atop a large tractor mowing the side of the roadway. I proceeded into the Catholic

cemetery and took pictures of relatives' graves and then drove down the highway to the nonsectarian cemetery on the left. I spent another 30 minutes taking pictures in that cemetery then headed back into town.

Just before reaching Highway 18, I saw the mowing equipment off in the ditch to my right; I glanced to the left and saw a farmhouse. Given that it was around noon, I concluded the man mowing the sides of the roadway was in his house eating lunch. I pulled over and waited for him to come out; soon enough he returned and walked toward the tractor-mower. I approached him, proffered my business card, and described the image on my iPad and my quest to find the family farm. He was unable to correlate the image with facts on the ground but said to me:

"I tell you what. You go ask Donald Thompson. Earlier he was at the gas station with a bunch of old guys. His place is across the railroad tracks and over on the right; you'll see his red pickup truck in the driveway. He's been here a long time. You ask him and I bet he can find this place for you."

I thanked the man and proceeded west, across the railroad tracks, on Highway 5/Main Street. After a couple of wrong turns, I pulled up in front of a trailer with a red pickup truck in the driveway. I went to the door, knocked, and offered my business card to the tall man who answered. I quickly explained why I was there and what I was looking for. As I spoke, Donald's eyes grew a little wider. Eventually, in a voice that was a little too loud for the short distance between us, Donald Thompson said:

"Your great-great grandfather and my great-great grandfather farmed as neighbors. His farm was right next to ours." "You've got to be kidding Donald. Do you know where that was?" "Backup!" Startled, I took two steps back on the

porch; Donald opened the screen, stuck his arm out and pointed back across the highway.

“Right over there. Get in the truck and I’ll show you.”

We piled into Donald’s truck and headed to the end of the block, drove directly across the street and down another block or two. Donald stopped the truck and pointed off to our right saying:

“This is the northwest corner of your great-great-grandfather’s farmland.”

I hopped out of the pickup truck, took a few pictures, and then got back in; Donald 50 proceeded further down the road. When he next stopped, he pointed back to the right and behind us saying:

“This is the northeast corner of your great-great-grandfather’s farmland.”

Once again, I got out and took pictures. When I got back in, Donald turned around and headed back toward the highway but instead of going across the street toward his trailer and my car, he turned to the left on the highway and headed south, away from Cavalier. A little-ways up, he took a left, drove a couple of blocks, stopped and pointed to his left saying:

“This is the southwest corner of your great-great-grandfather’s farmland.”

Yet again, I got out and took some pictures, got back in, and sure enough Donald headed straight down the road. All the while he was watching the land out of his left window. I asked:

“Donald what are you looking at? It’s all corn.” “There are marker lines in here; I’ll see them as they go by.”

I saw corn; Donald saw property line markers. Eventually, he stopped the truck and pointed back to the left indicating that:

“This is the southeast corner of your great-great-grandfather’s farmland.”

Again, I took pictures, got back in the truck, and we headed toward his trailer and my car. But when we got to the end of the lane, rather than cross the highway and head toward his place, he stopped the truck and said:

“Now you look across the street: Look to the left where the church is and then look all the way past where my trailer is. That was all part of your great-great grandfather’s property but when they put the highway in they redid the property lines.”

I thanked Donald for telling me about that and fully expected that we would cross the highway so that I could get into my car and he could return to his trailer. But instead he took a right turn, crossed the railroad tracks and headed toward “downtown” Cavalier. After just over a block, he pulled into a parking space on the right and stopped the truck. Pointing to the vacant lot in front of us, Donald said:

“This is where the Bechtel house once stood.”

I got out and took a picture of the vacant lot then got back in and thanked him as he drove back to his trailer. Once back at his place, we chatted and in the course of our conversation I told Donald that I was going to check out the State Museum up north at Pembina. At that he remarked:

“Do not waste your time going up there. There’s nothing about Cavalier or your family in that museum. It’s just exhibits for tourists. I’ll tell you what you do: You are headed for Devils Lake anyway so you just drive west on Highway 5 and in less than 10 minutes

you'll see the *Icelandic State Park* off to your right. You pull in there; they've got a much better local exhibit than up in Pembina."

I thanked Donald for his help, exchanged contact information with him, and headed west toward the museum and, eventually that day, Devils Lake North Dakota.

A young state park ranger greeted visitors at the front counter of the *Icelandic State Park*.



Bechtel House-Cavalier, original home 1876 with later additions.

I handed her my business card and told her the story of my family's role in founding Cavalier and a little bit about my research. Not long into my presentation, her eyes began to glaze over so I cut the story short. She invited me to enjoy the displays and explained which parts were inside the building and what I would find outside. I thanked her, turned, and headed through the displays, toward the far end of the building.

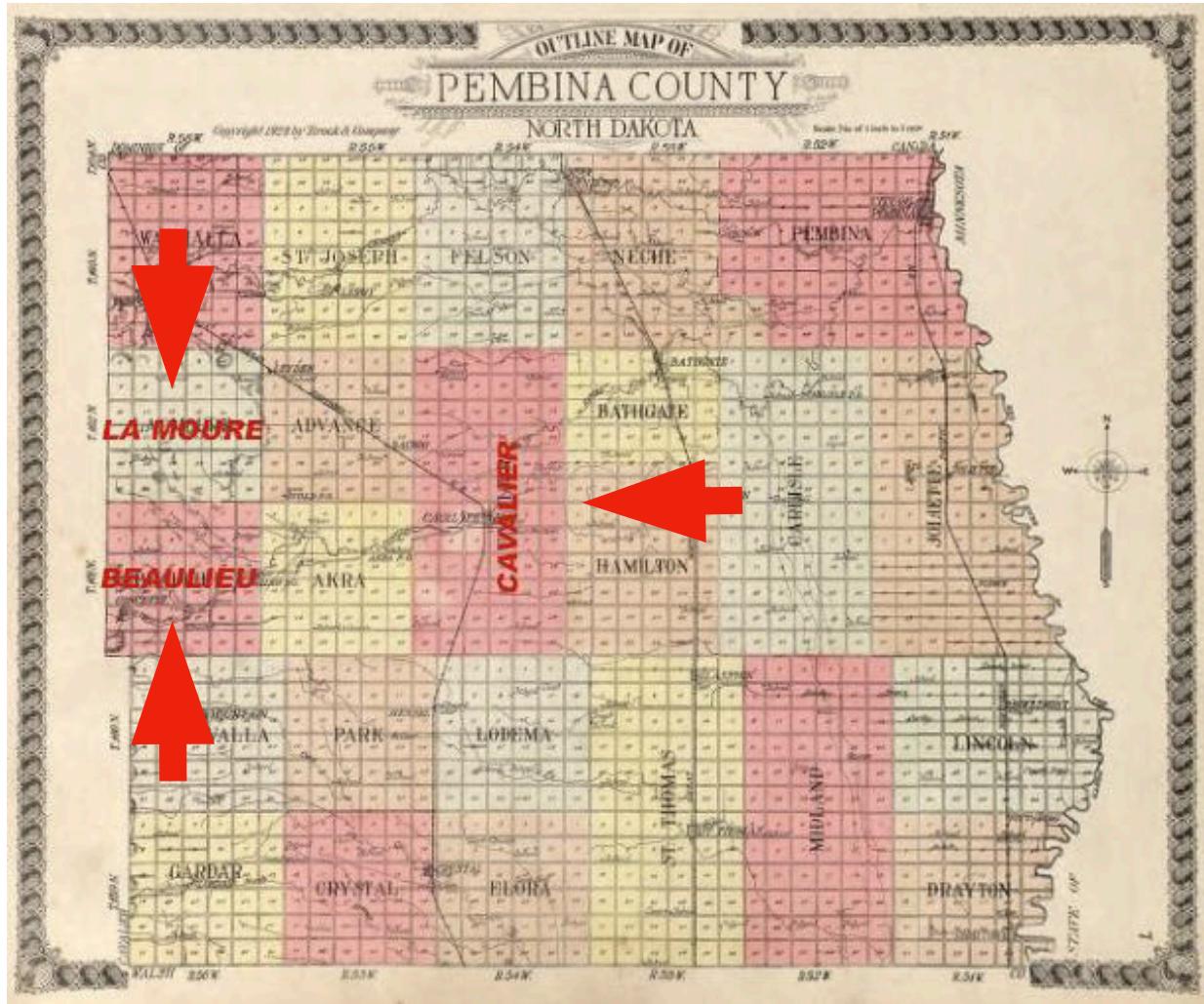
The displays were arranged on both sides of two walkways; each display had a walled-off booth dedicated to a particular subject. There were descriptions of native peoples and their ways of life, of the first explorers from Canada in the north and from the United States to the south. There were descriptions of, and displays about, the homes, farms and tools of early homesteaders and settlers. As I walked the length of the room there was little that struck me as key to my research. As I reached the end of the room I looked up at the wall and saw a very large black and white photograph of a two-story family home.

There, hanging on the wall before me, was an enlarged image of the very house that at one time stood in the vacant lot Donald Thompson showed me less than an hour earlier. The impressive two-story home featured a wrap-around porch with ornate decorations topping 10 wooden pillars and an upstairs balcony/porch. Blurry images of adults and children (one of the kids was probably my grandfather, Cyrus Edward Bechtel) seemed to stare directly out at me.

After taking pictures of the Bechtel House photograph/reproduction, I moved down the second aisle toward the front of the museum, noting the exhibits along my path. Again, nothing caught my attention until I reached the end of the room, closest to the entrance/exit. A display, on the right, explained how farm land is divided into parcels, indicating the various shapes and sizes and naming/numbering conventions. The display combined verbal descriptions with the creative use of blocks of wood as puzzle-piece icons. City-boy that I am, I'd not known the differences among parcels or how their names indicated measurements and so I read, and took many pictures of, the display.

As I turned to leave the museum, I noticed one last exhibit on my left. An oversized book, opened to the first pages, was laid out on a table. The book contained a series of laminated plat

maps. Having, a couple of days earlier, photographed plat maps in the Sioux City library, I decided to have a closer look before leaving the museum. I paged through the entire book and when I got to the last map I found the *Outline Map of Pembina County, North Dakota, 1928*. The map indicates the county's townships by location and name, in 1928.



Three areas in North Dakota are named Cavalier: a small city, a township, and a county. The city of Cavalier is in Cavalier Township; Cavalier Township (and therefore, the city) are in Pembina County. Cavalier County is just to the west of Pembina County.

Both Cavalier city and township could have been named *Bechtelville*; after all, great-great grandfather John Bechtel was one of the original settlers and was, for a time, its primary land-owner. But Mr. Cavalier was the area's first white settler and served as its postmaster, so when a decision about naming the town and the township had to be made, Mr. Cavalier submitted Cavalier.

As indicated by the 1928 map, Pembina County was divided into twenty-four township (there are now thirty-three). The city of Cavalier, in Cavalier Township of Pembina County, is roughly ten miles from two other Pembina County townships (to the west): *LaMoure* Township and *Beaulieu* Township.

On this plat map, I found that *my two last names, my adopted name LaMoure* (sans the final ux) and my birth name, *Beaulieu*, designated places hardly ten miles from where my adopted mother's family was centered: Cavalier, aka *Bechtelville*. You can bet your bottom dollar that the first hour I spent driving in the car after leaving the *Icelandic State Park* was filled with the following self-talk:

“I don’t care what the Wachowskis claimed in the *Matrix* films, Neo is not ‘*The One*.’
I AM!”

[To Table of Contents](#)