

One of the intriguing aspects of family history research is unraveling the life story of a “surname cousin” whose ancestry and connections are not known. The gravestone photo and death record of Daniel Eisenhart, who is buried in the Old Oroville Cemetery in Butte Co. California, is a case in point. He died 16 Dec 1877 at age 48, meaning that he was born about 1829. This information shows up on several California historical websites and databases, but we were never able to link him up with any of the many Daniel Eisenharts in any of our family files. This is an irresistible challenge to those of us who enjoy digging. The tombstone appears to read “Born in Ohio”, which sent me on a wild goose chase. Absolutely nothing fit with Daniel being an Ohioan by birth. Perhaps there was confusion among those who buried him since he lived in Ophir, a very small town in Butte Co. (Oroville post office) where he was a saloonkeeper. (1870 Census)

The 1870 Census states that he was born in Louisiana, which propelled the research in an entirely different direction. There was an Eisenhardt/Eisenhart couple living in New Orleans and its suburbs at the time in question, Daniel and Catharina nee Wolf Eisenhardt. One undocumented online source states that they were both born in “Germany.” According to Catharina’s death record, Daniel and Catharina were married about 1821 in New Orleans. Daniel was born in 1800 and Catharina in 1802. They had 3 children recorded in the New Orleans birth index between 1823 and 1827, Johann, Frederick, and Catharina. Mother Catharina (Mde D. Eisenhardt nee Wolf) died on October 27, 1829 and there can be speculation that she died in childbirth or of childbirth complications associated with the birth of Daniel Jr. His birth was not officially recorded, possibly as tragedy overwhelmed the family with the death of the wife and mother.

Daughter Catharine Eisenhardt “of New Orleans” married Henry Heck, originally from Butler Co. Pennsylvania, as described in a family history piece posted on Ancestry.com. Apparently Henry met Catharine through her brother Daniel with whom Henry crossed the Isthmus of Panama (prior to the excavation of the Panama Canal) and then sailed up the Northern California coast to work in the gold fields. The story relates that Daniel died in California. Henry eventually married Catharine, who died in 1856. I’m thus fairly certain that Oroville Daniel was from this New Orleans Eisenhardt family.

Two further bits of information may contribute to this story. Daniel Eisenhardt of New Orleans was naturalized on 20 Jan 1853 and listed his place of birth as “France.” Could this have referred to the Alsace/Alsatz region, a border area in which French and German culture commingled? The names of the children in the family suggest Germanic origins. This area is very close to the Eisenhardt strongholds in Württemberg, which could mean that the New Orleans Eisenhardts might well be genetic cousins in the Dachtel Eisenhardt descendant group. Perhaps in French-speaking New Orleans it was more acceptable to be from France rather than Germany, or at least advantageous to be bilingual, so that an Eisenhardt from the border area might have chosen to list his place of origin as France? Presumably this naturalization document was for Daniel Sr. I have not found immigration information on Daniel Sr., specifically, but there was a Melchior Eisenhart, age “above 40”, on the 1830 Census in New Orleans who was perhaps Daniel Sr.’s

father? There were many Melchior Eisenhardts and Johann Melchior Eisenhardts in Württemberg in that era, although none that I can find who emigrated legally to the U. S.

There were and continue to be Eisenhardts living in the New Orleans area, including a Frederick Eisenhardt who was in the Confederate Army in the Civil War. There remain missing puzzle pieces to be located for Daniel and his family group. Anyone with additional information on Oroville Daniel or the New Orleans Eisenhardt family is invited to add to our knowledge of this group.



DANIEL EISENHART

Born in Ohio

DIED

Dec. 16, 1877.

aged 48 yrs

DANIEL EISENHART
Born in Ohio

DIED

Dec. 16, 1875.

Aged 48 yrs.
