

The Klein Family History

At High Noon on April 2, 1815, in the small town of Grossniedesheim, Germany, Theodore Klein's great-grandparents, Frederick Klein & Maria Maragetha Heilman, both 26 years old at the time, were married. Maria was the widow of Johannes Ott. Frederick & Maria's son, John George Klein (1817-1901), left Germany in 1848 and immigrated to the United States at the age of 27.

Upon arriving in Cincinnati, Ohio, John George met wealthy industrialist Nicholas Longworth, who was sponsoring German immigrants from the Rhine Valley grape-growing region to work with him in his vineyards. At the time, Cincinnati was considered the "frontier" of the U.S. winemaking wilderness. Longworth had been experimenting with growing an unusual kind of grape, the Catawba, which had never been grown before in this part of the country.

During his time with Longworth, John George met his future bride Henrietta P. (1829-1876). The two were married in Cincinnati in June 1853 and eventually had six children: George Otto (b. 1854); Richard (b. 1855); Augusta (b. 1857); Eugene (b. 1859); Rudolph (b. 1862); and Alexander (b. 1864). As fate would have it, in 1853 a fungus, the "black rot," hit the grape-growing industry, and along with the start of the Civil War in 1861, which took the labor out of the fields, grape growing was suspended and John George found himself without work. He set up a distillery in Cincinnati which unfortunately burned in 1864. Thereafter he was faced with the decision of where to move his family next.

John George ultimately took his family to Cullman, Alabama, although it's not certain when he moved there or how long he and the family stayed. We do know that his wife passed away during their time in Cullman. The first indication that John George left Alabama to live in

Kentucky was in 1879 when an advertisement for nursery stock was run in Pewee Valley, Kentucky.

According to the Oldham County Deed Book #1, page 276, John George bought 130 acres in Buckner in the spring of 1886 and named it Sunny Mount vineyard and nursery. John George's vineyard became Oldham County's first commercial winery. The Ives seeding is a grape that originated in the Cincinnati area that Klein grew successfully in Oldham County, selling as many as 50 barrels at a time. Barrels were shipped to Louisville, Frankfort and Lexington. John George also established one of the first nursery and florist businesses in Oldham County. What would eventually become the Klein family home was built out of stone on this property by Andreas Koehnlein before the Kleins purchased the property.

John George was 69 years old when he bought the homestead in Buckner; presumably some of John George's children, who would have ranged in age from 22 to 32, moved with him to help him with his vineyard.

George Otto Klein (1854-1940), at the age of 32, met Mary Koehnlein (1879-1954) while delivering milk and vegetables by wagon from Buckner to her workplace in Pewee Valley. He was one of John George's and Henrietta's first children to leave home to marry and start his own nursery operation. Mary Koehnlein Klein's family had been residents of Oldham County for quite some time. Her family owned the original parcel of land that the Floydsburg Cemetery is located on today (2005). They lived at the Buckner home with John George & Henrietta while they constructed their home, barn, and greenhouse on their new land in Camden Station (now Crestwood) directly across from Yew Dell. They did not wait until their property was habitable to start a family. George and Mary had seven children, five of whom survived to adulthood:

George Klein, Jr. (b. 1890); Otilla Klein Grinder (b. ?); Henrietta Klein Kent (b. ?); Helen Klein Edds (b. 1897); and Theodore Roosevelt Klein (b. July 16, 1905).

Theodore was George and Mary's first child to be born after construction of their home was finished. Theodore was frequently left in the care of his sisters while his mother was kept busy helping Theodore's father and the older children run the florist and farming businesses.

When Theodore was around the age of six, his parents increased their land holdings to approximately 100 acres by adding land in Camden Station, a community which was one mile east of Crestwood on Highway 146 at the time. The land consisted of four non-connected tracts. The house the family lived on sat on 50 acres. The family home had few conveniences. It was a two-story frame house with no plumbing or running water, and the toilet was located out back. It was heated in the winter with coal burning stoves. All of the water was carried in from either the cistern in the rear or from the well out front. In the winter the downstairs rooms were heated, but the bedrooms upstairs, even in the coldest weather, were not. Theodore remembered sleeping under his feather bed.

Mary and George and their two oldest children, George and Otilla, raised cut flowers and bedding plants. They were sold locally and some were shipped out by mail. They also ran a small farming operation. There were several horses, cows, hogs, sheep and chickens. Most of the farm operation went to raising food for the family. The horses furnished transportation as automobiles had not come into general use at this time. Deliveries were made to customers by horse and spring wagon. Sometimes deliveries were made as far as Louisville. Theodore often rode with his dad on the spring wagon to deliver flowers, fruits and vegetables, as well as milk, butter and eggs to customers in Crestwood, Pewee Valley and Anchorage. Pewee Valley had

affluent customers ready to buy; it was also the location of the Old Confederate Home which bought much of the Klein's produce.

Theodore was a sickly child and didn't start school until 1912 when he was seven years old. The old two-room schoolhouse he attended had been converted from a Baptist Church and was just outside of Crestwood on Floydsburg Road. He and his sister Helen had to walk a mile and a quarter to get there as there was no public transportation at that time. They passed only one house, owned by the Crum family, on their long walk to school.

There were high ceilings and coal burning stoves in each of the school's two rooms. The children would sit around the stove and study until the room heated up. The front room held the four upper grades while the rear held the four lower grades. There were two teachers, Miss Hawkins and Miss Spillman. If Miss Hawkins had trouble, Miss Spillman, who taught the upper grades, was called in and the switches were used.

In the course of growing up Theodore remembered:

"My parents never believed in giving their children spending money. If we wanted spending money, we had to earn it. From the time I was ten or eleven years, I had to earn my own. I guess that the first money that I remember earning was for helping a neighbor trimming corn and chopping weeds out of the corn. This would pay about a dollar a day for a nine hour day. The best source for earning money was trapping which was done in the fall and winter. I could get from 15¢ to 25¢ for fresh rabbits. Possums would bring as much as 35¢. More money could be made from trapping fur bearing animals, but they were harder to catch."

There were various other odd jobs that a boy could get. Theodore worked for his brother-in-law in the greenhouses where he fired the boilers that heated the greenhouses.

As the family matured, the nursery operated as a family compound with members being able to alternate from one job to the next. When one member had to go to town for supplies, there were still greenhouses to be maintained, fields to be plowed, cows to be milked and fed, and customers to be waited on.

Theodore, 11 years old and in the fourth grade, was delighted when in 1916 the county built a new four-room, red brick schoolhouse just a little east of Crestwood. This school was very modern for that time: it had indoor toilets in the basement, a central heating system which was heated by steam boilers, and all of the desks in the new schoolhouse were singles, instead of doubles like in the old schoolhouse – no more getting in trouble for talking with a desk mate. The new school was about a half mile closer to where Theodore lived. Theodore rode his bike to the new school. Since there still weren't school buses, most children either walked if they lived close enough or they came by horse and buggy if they lived further away. There was a shed in back of the schoolhouse for the horses.

It was at this time that Theodore's oldest sister, Otilla, decided to marry Reece Griner, whom she had met in Florida while on vacation. His second oldest sister, Henrietta, had the same idea about getting married. Henrietta had been dating John T. Kent, a telegraph operator. The sisters were married on January 12, 1916, in a double ceremony. Theodore's brother, George Otto Jr., was also thinking about marriage and on December 2, 1917, he married Anna Reibel.

Theodore's father was in his mid-sixties and had been hoping to retire. However, with family members suddenly heading in all directions, he had to reconsider his plans. Theodore's father ultimately persuaded George Otto Jr. and his wife, Anna, to form a partnership with Henrietta and her husband, John, to take over the family business. The two couples were to move into the old family home which had been converted into two apartments. A contractor was hired and a new home was built for Theodore's father and mother. The partnership barely lasted a year and did not work out well.

Theodore's father then persuaded Otilla and her husband Reece to take over the business. This arrangement worked out well until a fire broke out in the building that housed the heating system. The heat was cut off and everything in the greenhouse froze.

In 1923, Theodore rode the electric Interurban Railway to LaGrange to go to Funk Seminary High School. He did not particularly like high school, but managed to get through. He was voted class poet. After graduating high school, he was faced with the decision of what to do. There had been no plans for further higher education. His dad had retired and Theodore thought he would try his hand at farming. He ran a small dairy and shipped milk to Louisville. Helen, his youngest sister, was operating a small florist business. Theodore joined Helen growing cut flowers and other plants to sell wholesale locally and to the Louisville trade. With money he earned, Theodore bought a nice car and new clothes and began to take time out to date young ladies occasionally.

A basketball game and a pretty little girl with bangs changed Theodore's life in 1927. Martha Lee Sageser was jumping up and down and cheering at this basketball game when she caught Theodore's eye. He knew right then and there that he wanted to take her out on a date. A friend named Lowell Lawrence invited the Sageser sisters to go on a double date with him and Theodore. Theodore initially ended up with the "wrong sister." By the end of the evening though, Theodore and Martha Lee found themselves together after all.

Theodore and Martha Lee dated regularly from that night on. On Saturdays and Sundays they took afternoon rides through the country. The only break in the relationship was when Martha Lee went to Bowling Green to get her teaching degree from Western State Teachers College. Absence only made the heart grow fonder. The following year she took the job of teaching in a one-room schoolhouse for the sum of \$87 a month at Covington Ridge School.

Theodore took her home to meet his family and all went well. That, however, was not the case when Theodore went to her home. Martha Lee's parents told her "don't marry that German, he will work you to death." Theodore said, "Even though they did not like me very much, they were unable to run me off."

One warm summer night in June 1929, Theodore and Martha Lee crossed the Ohio River on the Harmony Landing Ferry Boat where they met Magistrate Parsley and asked him to tie the knot.

Martha Lee Sageser, originally from Shelby County, was a direct descendant of Edward Boone, who was Daniel Boone's younger brother. In 1780, Daniel and Edward went to the Blue Licks in Kentucky for salt. They were returning to Boonesboro when Indians attacked. The Indians had intended to kill Daniel Boone, but because the Boone brothers looked so much alike, they mistakenly shot and killed Edward.

The old house Theodore was born in was vacant. With \$300.00 he had saved, he furnished two rooms. They were young and quite happy. Theodore remembered,

These were depression times and you would be surprised at what \$300 would buy. We were not living in luxury, but we never wanted for anything to eat. We always kept warm. A dollar would buy a lot in those days, but by the same token, a lot of effort had to be put out to earn \$1.00. I think that our will and determination were well matched for we tried various things to make a dollar. We worked together. We ran a dairy, we even sold bottled milk door to door, we raised and sold cut flowers, we grew perennials. One fall we gathered bittersweet from the fence rows of the county. This was shipped to Chicago by rail. One fall we sold enough bittersweet to buy a brand new Model A Ford Roadster. This cost us \$390 cash. We graduated into growing shrubs and evergreens. From there, we drifted into doing landscape jobs for the real estate dealers. From there into better jobs. We even did yard work for some clients which involved cutting grass, pruning and spraying. As the nursery operation grew, we had to hire help, which was available at a dollar a day.

There were a few rough spots along the way. Sometime in the 1930's Theodore was diagnosed with a tumor on his spine, which partially paralyzed him. He had successful surgery

to remove the tumor, but it took two years for his legs to return to normal, which is a very long time to suffer with so much planting and digging to do.

The family was growing – Marian was born in 1930, Jules was born in 1933, and Joyce three years later in 1936. The nursery business was growing along with the family and more land was needed. Martha Lee and Theodore also longed for a home of their own. Just across the street from the Klein home, the current site of Yew Dell came up for sale. This property was a 40 acre parcel from the Clint Wright Sale. It also would be close enough for the family to watch out for each other. This was a wise choice since Theodore's father had died in 1940 leaving his mother in need of help.

As a boy Theodore had many times gone across the street to see Mrs. Meyers, who rented the property at the time. She would dam up the spring for her goats, keeping the Kleins from having water for the greenhouses. She was abrupt and rude to Theodore and when he actually bought the property in 1941, the family called her their "resident haunt."

The property was originally used for farming and was partially cleared with a frame house and a chicken house. The basement of the old house is under the walled garden of Yew Dell today. Theodore had his work cut out for him. When he was a child, he would eat the hard pears from this property. Little did he know that some day he would be pruning those same hard pear trees.

Theodore planted evergreens, yews and blue spruce. He felt this was where the nursery and landscape market was going. He continued to expand by buying an adjacent 40 acres from Dewey Bryant on December 7, 1941, the day Pearl Harbor was bombed and America entered World War II. After America entered the War, most of the farm labor either went into the service or worked in defense plants supporting the war effort. Theodore was forced to suspend

landscaping, rock gardens and grass cutting services and focus instead upon his nursery stock.

There was still a good market, but the job of growing stock without reliable labor became a problem. His wisest market decision was to invest heavily in the growing of Japanese Yew.

Also during this decade Theodore's fascination with hollies took root. He had always admired holly even as a boy. His dad had a half dozen planted next to their home and the bright berries always intrigued him. He began to collect the opaca variety along with growing pfitzer juniper and the biota aurea nana that had been so popular in the 1930's. Theodore was a master at grafting plants.

In 1944, Theodore bought the 20 acres that the Old Confederate Home sat on in Pewee Valley. He did not keep this property for long, however. He removed the heavy timber from the dormitory for his home at Yew Dell. One year later, in 1945, the war ended and labor became available again. Theodore and Martha Lee were busy taking care of Theodore's mother and anticipating the start of construction of their new home.

There could have been no one better suited for Theodore Klein than his loving Martha Lee. She worked side by side with him and raised their children, at one point taking care of both mother Sageser and Theodore's mother. She never complained about the lack of conveniences while living in the old homeplace. Marian remembers "Mama had a washing machine with a hand-cranked wringer. It sat in the cellar and I was to hang the laundry in full view of the customers on the barberry hedges." Marian and Jules shared the duty of milking the cows. Joyce remembers her and Joanne Moore commandeering an old chicken house to make a simple playhouse out of it. Martha Lee gave the children old dishes, while tending turkeys they were raising next to the chicken house. Her hands were always busy knitting, sewing or crocheting. She was the family baker and made wonderful cakes for everyone's birthday and for special

occasions. Her cakes were even given as gifts. One of the recipes all of the children remember was called “Indians” and resembled brownies with lots of powdered sugar.

Recipe for “Indians”

- Beat together one stick butter & 2 cups light brown sugar
- Add: 3 eggs (beaten), 1 ¾ cups flour, 1 tablespoon baking powder, 2 tsp vanilla, 1 cup chopped nuts*, pinch salt and mix well
 - Bake in 9x 12 pan at 350° for 25 minutes (don’t overcook)
 - Once cool, sprinkle with powdered sugar and cut in squares.

*(*Theodore’s favorite version used black walnuts grown from Yew Dell Trees)*

Theodore brought in lots of fruits and vegetables for her to can. They hated to waste anything. She took her girls to music lessons, gave birthday parties for all their friends, she attended Sunday School and Methodist Church and even made time for homemaker and civic club meetings. At times she even took the cured meat for the family dinner to Merchants Ice & Storage plant in Louisville after Theodore had butchered the beef.

Theodore and Mary Lee began construction on their home in 1947. They hired several good carpenters to put up the main structural framework. Oscar Hays was the stonemason, Nevil Ware did the plastering, the Wagner Brothers put on the slate roof, and the Bohanon Company did the electrical work. Theodore did all of the interior work with some help from the nursery workers.

Theodore was working night and day trying to finish their home. Joyce remembers if she wanted to talk to him, he would be working in the tractor shed on the carpentry he needed the next day for the house. Martha Lee and the children would go across the street daily to see how things were progressing. Frequently she would take dinner so he could work into the night.

Theodore also continued working on the grounds at Yew Dell. The following is an excerpt from Theodore's Diary:

2/4/47	"Moved Taxus to Meyer Place (Yew Dell) with the tree mover. Evergreen very old classifies as tree.
2/12/47	Killed beef, got chicken manure from Bruner.
2/15/47	Grubbed cull trees from nursery blocks & pruned hemlock.
2/19/47	Put a water pipe on Meyer Place (Yew Dell) in the afternoon fixed the fence on the home place.
2/22/47	Laid pipeline from cistern to pond (Yew Dell)
2/25/47	Hauled rock from Greenwood's place at Sulphur. Made 3 loads. Need to get 3 more (Yew Dell).
3/12/47	Dug orders all day.
3/13/47	Worked in greenhouse, went to town to Sears & Federal Building.
3/14/47	Rain all night but dug orders anyway.

Theodore and Martha Lee celebrated the birth of Karl on February 9, 1949. In June 1950, the house was ready to move into. Theodore wanted his mother to move with them, but she wanted to remain in the old home place. Theodore made arrangements for Henrietta and John Kent to move in and care for mother Klein.

When Karl was born, all of his siblings were already teenagers. Marian, 19, was attending the University of Cincinnati studying to be a graphic designer. She went on to work for Dickey Graphic Design Associates and then to the Courier-Journal as a staff photographer. Jules was 16 and finishing at Eastern High School. He was also working summers for Theodore. Joyce was 13 and babysitting for her new baby brother and helping her mother while attending high school.

After the move into the new home, Theodore had a little more time to spend on horticulture, his favorite topic. He named the new home place Yew Dell. Theodore didn't have any college education so he had to learn through the school of hard knocks, and that was exactly what he did. As early as 1950, he put Marian, Joyce, Jules, and Martha Lee in a car and drove

them to Quebec, Canada. On the way they stopped to see Fairview, a large nursery operation located in Pennsylvania. During 1951-52 there were many trips to greenhouses in various states where Theodore learned from their operations and shared his own information with them.

In 1951, Theodore bought 60 acres from Mary Johnston at Brownsboro. It was at this time that Theodore began collecting and planting the opaca variety of holly on this property. The Holly Society of America had come into existence in the late 1940's. Interest in hollies had been slow in coming. There had been no demand, possibly due to the Depression, and the public wanted less expensive and better holly that had not come from the wild.

Theodore started by doing cuttings wherever he could. When Jules was a senior in high school, Theodore made a deal with him to go down to the Jewish Cemetery and do cuttings for him and he would pay 15¢ to root them for him. He got them into the field and realized that they did not have good foliage. Theodore's reason for experimenting with different varieties was to see what would work best in Kentucky's soil and climate. Theodore said:

I started my collection of varieties. Wilfred Wheeler, Elizabeth White, Earl Dilatush, Henry Hohman, and the Tingle Nurseries were about the only ones that were offering named varieties of hollies. From these people I ordered all the varieties that they had to offer. My first shipment came from Earl Dilatush, young Tom delivered them in person. Other shipments soon followed from the other people, these came by Railway Express.

My hobby planting or holly orchard that I called it, for I did have visions of selling cut holly at Christmas time, was started in the fall of 1951. This was on a seven acre tract of rolling land. The trees were planted 20 feet apart each way. More trees were ordered and planted from other sources as new varieties became available in the trade. At the same time that these were growing and developing I was also having a look at the hollies in Cave Hill Cemetery. I found that some of the clones found there looked better than some that I had bought. From the trees in Cave Hill I selected about a dozen that I propagated from and named for my own identification. The two that I liked the best I named Cave Hill No. 1 and Judy Evans.

It was some time in the mid 1950's that Jess Rankin over in North Carolina got started on his project of collecting all of the Xanthacarpa clones. And I can tell you that these have afforded me much pleasure. Through Jess I secured most all of the ones that he dug up. A few I found on my own in the woods of West Virginia. A few I secured from other sources. I now have over 40 of the yellow fruited clones. As an experiment I grew almost a thousand seedlings from yellow fruited varieties, but out of the lot only one yellow fruited plant appeared. They all reverted back to the red.

In my attempt to get improved types I have grown many seedlings from the best named varieties, in order to get improvement by selection. This project has shown quite little promise.

I would like to stress that my holly collection is strictly a hobby, and in no way do I intend to flood the country with endless varieties of which there are now far too many. A commercial grower would do well with less than a dozen varieties. I have gotten much pleasure from my hobby and I feel that I have learned a few things about holly. Yet, I still meet up with some unanswered questions that are yet to be answered. For example, why would a normal 10 or 15 year old tree suddenly want to commit suicide? I have had an occasional tree that would set so many berries that it would die in an attempt to support them. Cutting back severely is the only way to save the life of the tree. Most every venture at sometime offers a challenge, I guess that is what makes it interesting.

By 1953 Theodore's holly orchard was in full swing and at its peak he had 200 varieties.

The genus *Ilex*, and in particular *Ilexopaca*, had been an important part of his business and hobby. His holly orchard contained one of the largest collections of *Ilexopaca* in the country and included most if not all of the yellow berried *Ilexopaca* found and named by Mr. Jessie D. Rankin. Theodore spent many years selecting, evaluating, introducing, and promoting the holly.

As Theodore and the family prospered, they decided to start taking some vacation time. The nursery was worked up so it could be left for two weeks and they would give the nursery workers two weeks vacation in August and close down the sales department. The Kleins traveled throughout Kentucky and took trips to several nearby states.

After one trip, Martha Lee, Jules, and Joyce all contracted hepatitis. Joyce only had a mild case but Jules and Martha Lee both endured serious bouts. Jules was hospitalized and at one point they thought they might lose him. Martha Lee had to spend over a month in bed at

home. It was thought they had contracted the virus from a restaurant in a state park on vacation. This worry was only heightened by the sorrow over the loss of Theodore's mother in 1954 at the age of 90. Everyone eventually recovered and that same year, Jules went into the Army (the Korean War ended in 1953, the year before Jules enlisted).

Theodore's reputation as a horticulturist was growing and he was becoming quite well known. Towards the end of 1954, he was asked to come to Alton, Illinois, near St. Louis, to give a talk to the service clubs and show his slide collection of odd, unusual, and historic trees. Joyce announced her engagement to her high school sweetheart, Mel Gregory, in 1955, about the same time Theodore and Martha Lee were planning their first trip out of the country to Mexico. Joyce had attended Spencerian Business School and at the time was working for a lawyer. On September 9, 1955, the wedding took place at Crestwood Methodist Church. Mel was well liked by all of the Kleins, however, Theodore had one reservation about Mel. He considered his future son-in-law's interest in basketball to be a waste of time. Ironically, it was Mel's interest in basketball that earned him a scholarship to Stetson University in Florida where Mel and Joyce moved after high school. After graduating from Stetson, Mel ultimately became very successful in the insurance industry, showing the same determination young Theodore had. Mel and Joyce had to relocate frequently because of Mel's work, but they made it back home several times a year while their children were toddlers, especially for Easter. Easter was an annual family event at Yew Dell with Easter eggs nestled among the Taxus and boxwood trees. After they moved back to Louisville, Mel and Joyce would often bring the children out – Susan, Scott, and Beth – to visit their grandparents on Sundays for pot luck dinner.

Jules wasn't discharged from the Army until 1956 so he missed Joyce and Mel's wedding. Jules asked Theodore for a job after he was discharged from the Army, which

Theodore agreed to, and he also agreed to pay Jules \$45 per week with room and board. Jules was 25 years old when he returned to Yew Dell where he worked happily doing what he knew best for the next eleven years.

When they began in 1956, Jules and Theodore became very interested in grafting Blue Spruce to the plants for the market. For the first crop of Blue Spruce they potted 5,000 Norway Spruce to use as understock. They got almost 70% take. They also started grafting Pines, Japanese Maple and Dogwoods, as well as many others. Two whole greenhouses were full of grafts and the other two greenhouses were filled with Taxus and some American Holly.

Jules' constant presence at Yew Dell made it possible for Martha Lee and Theodore to travel more frequently. Martha Lee and Theodore decided to take a trip to Europe for the World's Fair in 1956, the same year Jules returned. They visited Rome, Venice, Paris, and London. The highlight of their trip was their visit to Steinbach, German and the house where Theodore's mother was born. They ate lunch with the descendants of the family that his grandparents sold the home to in 1880.

Where reconnecting with his roots was the highlight of the trip, Theodore unfortunately also came down with leg pain similar to the pain he had before his surgery in the 1930's. The pain made the trip less enjoyable than it might have been otherwise and upon their return home, Theodore checked into the hospital to have surgery to remove scarring left over from his first surgery. Theodore recovered quickly and he was soon back overseeing his crew.

During the height of Theodore's Yew Dell success story, he purchased an additional ten acres from his sister Helen Klein Edds and thirty-five acres from the Decker Estate. At the time he had ten employees and 125 acres in nursery stock.

1957-1963 were exciting years as the Klein family continued to grow. Jules and Barbara Nelson married in May 1958. Joyce and Mel had three children: Susan (b. 1958); Stephen Scott (b. 1959); and Lisbeth Ann (b. 1962). Jules had adopted Barbara's son Robert, born in 1957, and Barbara gave birth to Page Klein in 1959. Marian married too and also had three children: Julie Lee (b. 1958); Holly Dan (b. 1959); and Robert Barry (b. 1961). During this same time "little" Karl was in high school and digging nursery stock for Theodore in the spring and working for Jules in the summer.

It was during their visit to England when Theodore's fascination with history and architecture took over. He had always wished he could have been an architect. His new role as grandfather brought out his whimsical side and prompted him to design and build his own castle. While visiting the Blarney Castle Theodore picked a piece of ivy which he then brought back home in his shoe in order to get it through customs. The ivy encircling the castle in 1998 had been grown from that one little piece of ivy brought back from Europe. Theodore also had a swimming pool built in front of the castle for the grandchildren.

The following excerpts from Theodore's diary give us insight into his activities at this time.

From Theodore's Diary – 1963	
Jan 1	Weather rather cloudy. Took tobacco to market. Temp low about 25° - High 35°
Jan 28	Very cold. Grafted spruce – worked on plastering and mantle in castle. Had trouble with gas system due to (?) up regulators – went to see Bettie Ostrander at Funeral Home. High 14°, Low 15° below zero. Record = 69° (1914) / Low - 15° (1963)
Mon, Feb 4	Grafted Corotys, Pink Viburnum Tomentosa, worked on Camden Acres House and Castle. High 47° / Low 17°. 7 = 1890 and -5 = 1912, record

Feb 6	Worked on septic tank laterals for Camden Acres Home No. 2. Worked on fence for new tobacco patch. Jules & crew did pruning in nursery. Went to town in afternoon to dentist brought back motor and electric motors. High 63 / Low 23. Record 68 – 1904 / 3 – 1906.
Feb 13	Worked on Camden Acres house. Put in slate floor of castle – picture tiles in lower tower room. Went to nursery meeting in evening. High 34 / Low 22; Record 73 – 1938 / -10 – 1899.
Feb 19	Did plastering in castle. Worked on Camden Acres No. 2 house. High 52 / Low 35; Record 76-1939 / 0 – 1936.
Feb 20	Worked in castle plastering. Also worked on Camden Acres No. 2 house. Built section of bench in No. 1 – went to town to see dentist in afternoon. Electric Co. put in electricity in Camden Acres No. 2 house. High 60 / Low 23; Record 72 – 1891 / 0 - 1885. Snowed after dark; 31 degree drop in 5 hours.
Feb 21	Grafted Thompson Blue Spruce. Gas went off during the night in greenhouse. Gas Co. cut in gas in Camden Acres house. Worked on castle. High 15 / Low 5; Record 70 – 1930 / 4 - 1896.
Feb 23	Worked on castle and Camden Acres house No. 2 Tile man put in bathroom tile in same. Grafted Beech from A arboretum [<i>possibly Arnold arboretum?</i>] High 43 / Low 5; Record 70 – 1906 / old record 7 in 1887, new record 5 in 1963.
Feb 25	Went to town got tile from Metzker. Worked on shelves in closets of Camden Acres No. 2 house. Overhauled field mower (new _____ plates?). Finished plastering in castle. High 51 / Low 31; Record 74 in 1930, 0 in 1900.
Feb 26	Weather – cold & rain. Worked on castle shower and preparation for tile base. Paid Decker \$2,000. Signed up for water with 4 applications. High 25 / Low 8; Record 73 in 1917, 5 in 1934.
March 6	Worked in castle on concrete based. Started digging Taxus in afternoon. High 45 / Low 32; Record 77 in 1910, -1 in 1960.
March 8	Dug orders all day. Weather very nice.
March 19	Weather warm and windy and wet – worked on grafts in greenhouse and cattle pens.
March 24	Weather warm & beautiful. Sowed apple, hazel, hornbean and Jap. Maple seed. High 75 / Low 38; Record 88 in 1929, 17 in 1896.
March 27	Dug orders all day. High 70.
March 28 & 29	Dug orders all day.
April 1	Very warm – everything budding out fast. Dug hill order for Capalata's. Record High 85 / Low 58; Record 85 in 1963, 22 in 1923.

April 4	Weather very windy and cold. Dug orders all day. High 56 / Low 40. Record 87 in 1934, 27 in 1944.
April 6	Weather warm. Lined out shrubs in afternoon. Record 87 in 1873, 28 in 1945.
April 7	Weather warm and sunshiny. Root pruned all day. High 71 / Low 37; Record 87 in 1959, 28 in 1950.
April 10	Weather hot and windy. Filled orders in morning. Lined out nursery stock in afternoon and overtime. High 85 / Low 69. Record 90 in 1896, 21 in 1875.
	Throughout April and into May was busy digging orders and lining out stock.
Sunday, May 5	Weather sunny & warm. Planted veg. and flower garden. High 82 / Low 55; Record 94 in 1949, 36 in 1954.
May 6	New riding mower delivered (Nana's handwriting?)
May 7	No entry.
May 8	Hot / Dry. Went to town to get paint and paper for tenant houses. High 87 / Low 54. Record 91 in 1896, 33 in 1923.
May 13	1½ inches rain in morning. Potted understock, moved Blue Spruce, etc. High 79 / Low 54; Record 91 in 1902, 38 in 1930.
May 15	Had fairly good rain. Repotted and moved grafts.
May 16	Warm light showers and drizzle. Repotted and moved grafts. High 70 / Low 57.
May 19	Went to Frankfort & Lexington. Visited houses on tour. High 77 / Low 49; Record 93 in 1951, 38 in 1894.
May 20-22	Dug orders.
May 30	Begins the "chopped weeds" entries. Entries continue into July.
	[Researcher note]: On rainy days, he's potting in greenhouses. July 31 – Aug. 1963: still chopping weeds & cultivating nursery. Some orders being dug as well.
August 9	Chopped weeds. Worked on trouble in Electric system and put in new motor on water pump.
August 12	Fixed water pump, chopped weeds, good rain at night. Cut hay in morning.

Theodore's passion for history came fully to the surface when he became a founder of the Oldham County Historical Society. He designed their logo and the first meeting was held in 1959. Theodore had developed a hobby of securing pieces of lumber from historic buildings that were being razed at the time, one being an old hotel in Crestwood and another was the Washburn

House in Shelbyville. He would create a mallet made from the timber and place on the mallet's handle the name and location of its origin. His mallet making was not limited to historic properties. His mission was to create a mallet from every tree native to Kentucky, which he did. He was also responsible for beautiful photographs of these locations and properties. His father had been an avid photographer and this had made a great impression upon Theodore. His father's many glass negatives have unfortunately been lost, destroyed in a fire.

From its beginnings, one of the concerns to the members of the Oldham County Historical Society was the preservation and publication of inscriptions from headstones in Oldham County cemeteries for future generations. In 1973, Theodore and Martha Lee copied over 3,000 inscriptions and made photographs of many of them. A book of cemetery inscriptions was published in 1974 and was timely considering the growth the county has undergone since. The Society's work of gathering and documenting headstone inscriptions continued after Theodore became President of the Oldham County Historical Society in 1976.

On one of Theodore and Martha Lee's infamous cemetery trips, they were strolling through the Cincinnati cemetery when Theodore came face to face with a witch's broom. He took his pocket knife and took some scions (cuttings). Taking cuttings from the witch's broom's dense, bushy and sometimes contorted growths (which appear on woody plants in response to fungal and mite infestations) is a time honored way to propagate odd and often valuable ornamental plants and this was just what Theodore enjoyed. This particular cemetery was also gifted with a small leafed holly Theodore created from cuttings from his arboretum.

Theodore also had a keen interest in Oldham County's mills and covered bridges as well as the mills and bridges in the surrounding counties. While Theodore lived with his parents he began collecting mill stones. Mill stones were made from a stone called "French Burr" which

was imported from France. During the writing of *History and Families, Oldham County, Kentucky*, he was hard at work explaining the difference between overshot and undershot mills as well as showing his mill stone collection which is extensively displayed at Yew Dell today. He knew the previous location of many of the mills in Oldham County.

One of his most distinguished finds was the mill stone that Abraham Lincoln's mother, Nancy Hanks, ate bread made from grain ground on this mill stone. The mill stone came from a water powered mill, known as "Ryan's Mill," on the farm of Richard Berry. The mill was situated on the Chaplin River in South Central Kentucky. Nancy Hanks was working for the Berry family at the time when she met and married Tom Lincoln. Nancy Hanks was Mrs. Berry's niece and she was also her seamstress. Theodore had heard that the mill was going to be razed and purchased the stones. He and Martha Lee had traveled the county tracking down and photographing mill stones along the way. Many of the artifacts Theodore collected from his travels in Oldham County and from private individuals were given to the Oldham County Historical Society.

In the early 1960's, Theodore bought 500 redbud seedlings from a Tennessee nursery and put them out in the field on the property Karl Klein now owns (2005). They were hoeing this field when they first spotted the "Silver Cloud." Many years later Monrovian nursery became interested in patenting the Silver Cloud and then selling it on the wholesale market. Monrovian eventually backed out of the contract on October 9, 1989, because Theodore's generosity with sharing the Silver Cloud made a patent impossible. Money was not as important to Theodore as friendship, as any of his nursery friends will tell you.

Theodore's generosity with his plants was legendary. Theodore and Clarence "Buddy" Hubbuch, chief horticulturalist for Bernheim Arboretum and Research Forest in Clermont, began

planting the world-famous holly collection in Bernheim in 1965. More than half of the collection came from Yew Dell or from Theodore's private holly orchard, which was an irreplaceable inventory of genetic stock. Paul Cappiello, the former horticultural director of Bernheim (1998) and the current director of Yew Dell, said at the time, "that in just the past year Klein provided 100 pounds of budwood from his weeping katsura tree free to U.S. and European growers."

"That's vintage Theodore," Cappiello said. "Here's a person with a plant that will sell one million in the next 5 years, and he gives it away. He didn't worry about a national reputation, but he got it anyway."

Theodore began to start feeling his age in 1970 and so he concentrated upon the things that interested him most at the time. He stopped planting nursery stock in front of the house and began planting an arboretum among the remaining stock.

On May 25, 1970, Karl married Juliana Williams Hudson. They had two sons, George Byron (b. September 9, 1975) and Andrew Todd (b. October 1, 1977). Karl had graduated from Rose Hulman Technical with an engineering degree. He found that the family working environment was too difficult to leave, so he returned to Oldham County and worked for his brother Jules until he went out on his own as Karl Klein Nursery. Theodore had built a tenant house on the property where Juliana and Karl currently reside. Karl has truly returned to his roots and is trying his hand at grape growing.

Between 1958 and 1973 the Kleins vacationed extensively in the U. S., Hawaii, Europe, South America, and Russia. The family vacations all had a familiar and recurring theme: looking for interesting plant material, historic trees or record breaking trees, and unusual

architecture. Theodore's studies took him to forty-nine states and thirty foreign countries where he photographed and documented historic trees.

One such trip was to California in 1966. Theodore and Martha Lee had taken Tom Clark as a companion for Karl. Tom remembered this trip as a voyage of discovery. Part of the reason for this trip was to track down different types of plants. On their journey they returned through Texas to see the largest example of the North American Red Cedar. Tom Clark remembered that trip well.

"We drove for what seemed like ten miles down this old dirt road off of what I suppose was a county highway, and finally wound up in the yard of a two or three room tar-paper shack. It had a rudimentary front porch and on this porch was a swing with this old guy sitting there picking a guitar, with a big old woolly Shepard dog beside him. Papa got out of the car and introduced himself and told the old fella what we were doing there, that we were looking for this tree. The old guy said 'yeah, the U.S. Forestry people came down and put a plaque on it, and that it was down in the lower forty. If y'all will just follow me down on the tractor, I'll take ya' down and you can see it.' So we followed him down to the 'lower forty' and sure enough there it was. This was the biggest cedar tree that I'd ever seen. As I recall, I believe the trunk was seven or eight feet in diameter. I don't remember how tall it was, but it was one big cedar tree. We took pictures and all shook hands, got back in the car and took off for the next adventure."

Upon returning from various vacations, Karl remembered Theodore emptying the trunk of the car. If there were rocks, plants, cactus and seeds, it had been a successful trip.

Theodore was 69 when he retired and wrote his autobiography. Retirement, however, didn't slow Theodore down. During his first year of retirement, Theodore disassembled and rebuilt a log cabin on the Yew Dell grounds that had been previously owned by George Parrish in Brownsboro. Theodore had the cabin moved to Yew Dell – where it remains today – for his life-long friend Sanford Lawler, who seemed to spend most of his time with the Kleins and often helped out by keeping an eye on Karl. Theodore had known Lawler since school days and Theodore felt he had made himself a part of their family. Creating something from old materials had always been very important to Theodore.

In 1974, at the Shelby County Historical Society dinner, a gentleman named Stan W. Lemaster was invited to speak. Theodore was introduced to him and they found that they both shared the common interest of gathering seeds and cuttings from trees associated with famous people from around the world.

Mr. Lemaster, originally from Owensboro, Kentucky, had been transferred to Columbia, Maryland in 1971, which, fortuitously, put him very near Washington D.C. which abounded with historical trees and the potential for developing his hobby. Lemaster returned to Kentucky during the recession of 1979 and he brought with him about two dozen seedlings.

Lemaster contacted Theodore upon his return with the idea of forming a joint collaboration on a truly unique project. Theodore's willingness to join the project, plus the addition of Theodore's nursery facilities and knowledge, enabled the pair to lay the foundation for creation of a series of "tree museums" across the United States. Lemaster's inventory of two dozen historic seedlings eventually grew to approximately 600 trees. The first tree museum was developed in Storm Lake, Iowa, with two Johnny Appleseed trees. More trees were eventually planted including ones with connections to George Washington, Ulysses S. Grant, and the Ming Dynasty. The Storm Lake Tree Museum has since grown to more than fifty trees and has led to the development of several other tree museums around the country. Their preservation hobby was truly a labor of love. They accepted no monetary support for their time and expenses. They donated the trees to help teach future generations their heritage.

After his so-called retirement, Theodore started giving portions of his land holdings to his children. He deeded to Jules 66 acres (the Johnson property at Brownsboro) and 75 acres to Karl next to Yew Dell (Dewey Bryant property). With less to maintain and both of his sons running

their own businesses, Theodore had more time to enjoy the historic tree project he had undertaken.

While some of the plant material in Yew Dell is a Klein discovery, some of it is simply old varieties that have been removed from the trade because they are hard to propagate or because they take longer to grow to marketable size which didn't suit the "hurry up and make a profit" nurseries. Theodore had always had a gift for sensing the direction of the market, but now he didn't have to worry about the speed of delivery or the market's direction any longer and he could simply take his time and develop Yew Dell.

Theodore once said "To one who has spent a lifetime in association with the horticulture world and enjoyed the bounties of the world of nature, there is something that becomes instilled . . . that causes one to regard his subjects as almost fellow beings."

In 1975 he and Martha Lee enjoyed letting a group of students from Anchorage take advantage of the unusually beautiful Yew Dell castle to make a junior version of "Taming of the Shrew." The play later aired on KET Public Television.

Theodore remained active and busy during the 1980's and was particularly involved in the lives of his children. He was excited to see his son Jules move a log cabin from the rear of the LaGrange Reformatory and be reconstructed as a garden shop for the Jules Klein Garden Center. At times in this cabin's history, it was used as a stage coach stop, school house, and a home. Jules was following in the Klein tradition of making something old seem new again.

Theodore also oversaw the construction of his eldest daughter's Marian's home on an 8.3 acre tract at the rear of Yew Dell that he had deeded to her. The stone for her home came from the Washburn House built in Shelbyville in 1790. Theodore acted as contractor on this project until its completion.

Theodore and Mary Lee hosted many dinner events at the castle and on its grounds. The Shelby County Historical Society and the Oldham County Historical Society both enjoyed their hospitality.

The book *In Appreciation* was published and written by Theodore in 1988 and commemorates the manner in which many of the specimens from his 50 year old arboretum were acquired “without money or barter . . . as valued tokens of friendship.” The book lists 75 gardening friends from Oklahoma to Boston who provided a stunning selection of horticultural curiosities and rarities including yellow & orange berried hollies, weeping European Larch, white flowered red bud, cut-leaf sumac, fern leaf beech, variegated yucca and various mutant dwarf evergreens and conifers, historic fruit trees and antique roses.

In 1988 Clarence “Buddy” Hubbuch nominated Theodore for the William F. Kosar Award, which is given annually by the Holly Society of America to an outstanding plantsman for contributions to the hybridization, evaluation, selection, or introduction of hollies. Hubbuch described Theodore as “. . . the person most responsible for the Holly collection at Bernheim Forest, and in the Arboretum being named an official holly arboretum by the Holly Society of America.” Theodore’s generosity and help provided the nucleus for the Bernheim holly collection. The draft of the new *Ilexopaca* checklist by Dr. Fred C. Galle lists 37 cultivars selected, named and introduced by Theodore.

Theodore devoted many hours during his final years teaching his fellow nurserymen, sharing his plants and trees with interested gardeners, and giving guided tours of the arboretum and castle with the aid of an old battered golf car that helped him get around.

In 1995, at the age of 90, Theodore had open heart surgery. Although he was still weak following the surgery, on July 15 Theodore made it to the dedication of his very own tree

museum on the grounds of the South Oldham High School, and which is sponsored by the Kentucky Nursery Association, the Louisville Nursery Association, his sons Jules and Karl, and his friends. As his recovery continued, he even found time to supply trees to Michael Hayman for the Seneca Arboretum which had been damaged in a storm.

Martha Lee Klein passed away on August 4, 1996, at the age of 88 after a long illness. Theodore had always called Martha Lee his “angel,” which he had inscribed on her gravestone. The loss of his beloved wife was a wound he would not recover from and it prompted Theodore to tell his friends and family it was time for him to go, too.

Theodore spoke of Martha Lee often up until his own passing on October 20, 1998. On that day, the world lost a true Renaissance man: horticulturalist, artist, historian, preservationist, photographer, architectural designer, husband and father – a man who exhibited generosity beyond measure throughout his life. His loss was so deeply felt.

Courier-Journal columnist Bob Hill wrote in October 1998: “He was buried alongside Martha Lee in the Floydsburg Cemetery, in a piece of ground that had once been part of Martha Lee’s family farm. Above them both like an umbrella from God – are the spreading limbs of a beautiful black gum tree.”

There sits a sundial on the grounds of Yew Dell which Theodore, with his strong hands, carved his philosophy of life into: “Time is too long to those who mourn, too short to those who laugh, but to those who love, time is eternity.”

Theodore’s knowledge of horticulture was accumulated and dispensed across almost the entire span of the 20th Century. And while that personal knowledge and living history may now be lost to us, due to his tireless and generous efforts in the propagation of so many species of ornamental plants and historic trees, as well as the preservation of his and Martha Lee’s beautiful

estate, Yew Dell, Theodore Klein's legacy will continue to flourish in Kentucky and throughout the United States for many, many years to come.

Organizations to which Theodore Klein belonged

American Holly Society	Filson Club
Great River Nursery Association	Order of Kentucky Colonels
Kentucky Nursery Association	Kentucky Historical Society
Louisville Nursery Association	Oldham County Historical Society
International Propagators Society	Shelby County Historical Society
The Great River Chapter Holly Society	Crestwood Christian Church
International Society of Arboculture	Pewee Valley Masonic Lodge #29

Honors

Michigan State University Gold Clover Citation
Certificate of Merit from the National Arbor Day Foundation
Ambassador Award from the City of Carrollton, Kentucky
William F. Kosar Award from the Holly Society of America
The Great Rivers Holly Society “Joseph C. McDaniel” Award (1989)
American Holly Society Created the “Theodore Klein” Award in his name
Theodore Klein Plant Award established in 1999 by the University of Kentucky