

## **Mary "Mollie" Zeiler Zerkel**

b. March 21, 1845 Fayetteville, PA

d. July 4, 1933 Luray, VA

Mary, daughter of Ferdinand and Caroline Dobmarer Zeiler, resided at 9346 N. Congress St, in New Market, Va. Ferdinand and Caroline emigrated from Lisberg, Germany, arriving in Baltimore, MD on July 6, 1842 on the ship Rebecca.

Ferdinand received his USA citizenship in 1847. By the summer of 1852, the family had migrated from Pennsylvania to New Market, where Ferdinand, a veteran of the Prussian Army, set up his watchmaking and silversmithing business.

After the battle of New Market, May 15, 1864, the Zeilers and nineteen-year old Mollie nursed many wounded Union soldiers, including Captain William B. Bonacker of the 54th

Pennsylvania Infantry. Capt Bonaker had been officially classified as mortally wounded, but with the care of the Zeilers, he survived his shot near the heart. For their kindness and care of the Union soldiers, the Zeilers received a letter of commendation from Assistant Surgeons William Hall and Charles Allen and Captain Bonacker stating that the Zeiler "property and rights ought to be sacred to every Union soldier."

On August 8, 1872 Mary "Mollie" married Lemuel Zerkel at her home.



## **Lemuel Zerkel**

b) August 2, 1848 - Shenandoah County, VA

d) October 30, 1928 - Luray, Page County, VA

Lemuel was the 7th and last child born to Moses and Lydia [Kiser] Zerkel. He had 4 brothers and 2 sisters. His father owned and operated a tan yard on the waters of Crooked Run, near the community of Rinkerton (which is just west of the Town of Mt. Jackson, Shenandoah Co.). Not able to qualify for the general Amnesty offered to civilians (in the South) at the end of the Civil War, Moses applied for (due to the high value of his property) and received a Presidential Pardon from Andrew Johnson.

Lemuel is descended from the pioneering Zirkle family. His great-grandfather, Andrew Zirkle, Sr., moved to the Shenandoah Valley in 1755 with his widowed mother, Maria Eva Zirkle, 4 brothers, and 2 sisters. They were one of the founding families of the village of Forestville, Shenandoah Co., VA. It was Andrew who built the flour mill in Forestville which still stands there today (one of the few surviving the Civil War).

By 1868, Moses had moved his family down to Fishersville in Augusta County, VA. Though a young adult by then (age 20), Lemuel moved down there with them. He kept a journal for 1869 and in it describes the building of the brick home, the daily chores, the harvesting of crops, and the social life that he enjoyed. He also mentions his occasional trips north to New Market, VA to visit family and friends.

As a result of those periodic trips, Lemuel met and fell in love with a beautiful young woman named Mary "Mollie" Zeiler.

Being a young married couple they took up house in a section of her parent's home. After the war, Mollie's father, Ferdinand, became Postmaster of New Market for

nearly 20 years. During that time she clerked for him and at one point became Asst. PM. Meanwhile Lemuel had taken up the skilled trade of being a telegraphic operator and set up an office within the Post Office (which was attached to the house). Lemuel succeeded his father-in-law as Postmaster. He was appointed on May 22, 1885 and served till March 19, 1890. He also was elected as a Town Councilman during that time.

Having been offered a new job as Superintendent of the newly discovered (1888) Luray Caverns, Lemuel and Mollie moved over the mountain to Luray, Virginia in the summer of 1890. He served in that position until 1904. Mollie started a museum of local artifacts

Lemuel died at his home on Main Street in Luray on October 30, 1928. Mollie died July 4, 1933. Mollie's parents and husband are buried alongside her in the St Matthew's Cemetery, located behind Reformation Lutheran Church in New Market.

They had two children, Mary Ela (who became an accomplished singer/performer), and Lemuel Ferdinand Zerkel (a respected realtor, businessman, and co-founder of the Shenandoah National Park).

Lemuel Ferdinand Zerkel married Helen Elizabeth Mims (whose brothers built the Mimslyn Inn) and had 3 children (Lenferd Brooks Zerkel, Sr., Douglas Brooks Zerkel, and Elizabeth [Zerkel] Coty).



Mollie and Lemuel Zirkle by their museum in Luray.  
Photograph provided by Chester Ramey.

*Information provided by Chester Ramey, a descendant of Mollie and Lemuel Zirkle, to Betty Karol Wilson*