

## The Darr Family

When Jacob Holdcraft did his inventory of tombstones in the Old Berlin Cemetery in 1959, he found only one with the name Darr on it – **William E. Darr**. And that is the case today as well. *However*, according to Findagrave.com, there are three other members of that family who are buried in this cemetery, whose names will be in **bold print** as we follow the story of the Darr family in Berlin/Brunswick.

Like many other early settlers of Berlin, **Norval Frederick Darr** came from across the river in Loudoun County, VA, where he was born in 1825, the son of Conrad Leonard Darr and Mary Musgrove. He married 17-year old Mary Margaret Winning on 25 May 1853 in Frederick County, MD. Mary Margaret was born in Maryland. She *may* have been the daughter of Abraham Winning, the only Winning (or Weaning) in the 1840 census of Maryland with children of that age. Three years before her marriage to Norval, she was living with William and Elizabeth Sigafoose and their young family in Berlin.



The Darrs took up residence in Berlin, and Norval's occupation, as recorded in the census records, was listed as "laborer" (1860), "farm hand" (1870), and "laborer" (1880). They had four children:

1. **Florence Mary "Kate" Darr** (1855-1904)
2. **Ann Elizabeth Darr** (later Sigafoose) (1858-1883)
3. **William E. Darr** (1862-1889)
4. Charles Henry Darr (1867-1948).

In 1870, Norval was living in Berlin with all 4 of his children. His wife was not listed, and his youngest child was 2 years old, suggesting that his wife had died during the previous 2 years. We have no information regarding the circumstances of her death or where she is buried.

The 1880 census shows Norval living in Berlin with three of his four children (Ann, age 22, was married and living away from home by this time): Florence (25), William E. (15), and Charles H. (13). Also at home were two grandchildren: Anna L. (6) and John (1), although John's name, curiously, was crossed out. Anna *may* have been Florence's daughter, as other sources indicate that she had a child (Alberta) who would have been that age. (None of Norval's other children would have been old enough to have borne him a grandchild of that age.)

**Norval Darr** died in 1884, age 58, when Berlin was still a small town with a population of less than 300. He is buried in the Old Berlin Cemetery in an unmarked grave.

*Norval and Mary Darr's 4 children and their families have played a significant role in Brunswick's history. Many of these family members are buried in St. Mark's cemetery in Petersville, as well as other local cemeteries:*

- **Florence Mary “Kate” Darr** (26 May 1855 – 17 Sep 1904) was still living with her father and her younger siblings at the age of 25. There is no mention of her husband that I could find anywhere, but she had 4 children:
  - Alberta (“Bertie”) Darr (23 Jan 1874 – 29 Jan 1946) married John Eugene Meadows, a clerk on the railroad who eventually became dispatcher, then yardmaster in Brunswick. He retired from the railroad in 1912 and became merchant of a general store, later proprietor of a grocery store, most likely located on the first floor of the house where they lived. They is the large house on the Square Corner (often referred to as “Mommers”). A picture of that building, dated 1907, displays the sign: “Miss Birdie’s Cash Millinery.”
  - Robert Lee Darr (Mar 1883 - ?). Was living in Brunswick with his brother Louie and his family in 1910. He was 28 years old and single at the time, working as a street laborer. I was unable to find him in any subsequent records.
  - Claude Darr (3 May 1888 – 17 Oct 1959). In two places (death certificate and Veterans’ Service and Compensation Record), his parents are listed as Mary Kate Darr and Norval (or Narvel) Darr. He married Nora Belle Black in 1919. They had 3 children, the last of whom died as an infant. He served in a field artillery unit in France during WWI. He then returned to work in a stone quarry in Pennsylvania, working himself up to foreman, then superintendent before retiring.
  - Louie Edward Darr (20 Aug 1890 – 15 Feb 1956). Married Mary B. Ayers in 1908, establishing their home in Brunswick on N. Maryland Ave. Had two daughters. He initially worked milling grain, but soon took on work with the railroad as a car inspector. He died of a heart attack on his way to work.

Kate died of cancer at the age of 49. Her obituary listed her as Kate Darr, again raising the question of her husband, if she had one. She was buried in the Old Berlin Cemetery, according to Findagrave.com, but there is no headstone today.

- **Ann Elizabeth Darr** (31 Mar 1858 - 1883). First wife of **John Scoll Sigafoose**, a Civil War Veteran who was working as a canal boatman at the time. She died 3 years after the birth of her second daughter, at the age of 25 years. She is buried in the Old Berlin Cemetery in an unmarked grave. Children:
  - Lottie Mae Sigafoose (29 May 1878 – 11 Mar 1953) married John Nelson Davis. They had 5 children.
  - Olcival A. “Olca” Sigafoose (4 Jan 1880 – 20 Sep 1970) married Thomas Grant Moreland. They had three children.

John Scoll subsequently remarried Agnes Anna Staub, and they had 8 more children. You can read more about this family on his page. He is buried in the Old Berlin Cemetery.

- **William E. Darr** (23 Mar 1862 - 9 Jan 1889). First husband of Martha Mary Shilling (1862-1943). They had 4 children (including the first set of twins born in this town after it was incorporated as Brunswick in 1890).
  - **William W. Darr** (26 June 1883 - 28 June 1905) was working for the railroad in Allegheny, PA, when he was killed in a train accident while working in the car

yard there. He was 22 years old. His remains were returned to Brunswick for burial in the Old Berlin Cemetery. He is in an unmarked grave.

- Edward Delaware Darr (1889- 2 Apr 1944). He married Else E. Sigafoose in 1910. They had two children, one of whom died in infancy. The other was E. Donald Darr, “former Brunswick city clerk and one of the principal organizers to the town's annual Potomac River Festival, died Sunday while playing the organ at his church's morning worship service. Darr, 67, served as city clerk from 1954 to 1967. He was the secretary and director of the Brunswick Senior Citizens Center and a member of the Frederick Tourism Council. He also operated a Brunswick florist business until his retirement in June 1976.”
- (twin) Luther Brunswick “Lute” Darr (24 Apr 1891 – 27 Oct 1978). He married Vivian Irena Porter and they were the parents of Betty Lou (Cavalier) who later had a dance studio in town. He opened the popular Darr’s Confectionary on the Square Corner in 1914 (later Darr’s Tavern), earning the reputation of Brunswick’s “best known soda jerk.” He also operated the Quality Food Market grocery store. His colorful history is described in more detail in his nomination as one of Brunswick’s “distinguished citizens.”
- (twin) Lula Brunswick Darr (24 Apr 1891 – 1969) married John A. McMurry. They were parents of Mary McMurry Margrabe, active on the Brunswick History Commission, and chief editor of “Brunswick: 100 Years of Memories.” Like her twin brother, Lula was also honored as one of Brunswick’s “distinguished citizens.” She was very active in real estate development in Brunswick.

[*Note 1:* You may note that the twins were born almost 30 months after their father’s asserted death. Perhaps his date of death was incorrect??].

[*Note 2:* The Brunswick Herald reported the marriage of an *Ina Darr*, “daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Wm. E. Darr” to Charles Schaeffer, a brakeman on the railroad, on 12 Nov 1907. The 1900 census of Brunswick showed Ina Dorr, 20 yo, born in Virginia Nov 1879, working as a servant in the home of Luther and Marry Poterfield, but I am unable to connect her to William and Martha Darr.]

William E. Darr died prematurely at 25 years of age. I was unable to find the details of his death, but he is buried in the Old Berlin Cemetery beside Thomas and Catherine Shilling, his mother’s uncle and aunt. His widow Martha Mary Darr subsequently married Thomas Callary around 1895, and they had two more children, Mary Amanda Callary (1898 – 27 Nov 1971) and John Andrew Callary (1900-1977).

- Charles Henry Darr (7 Oct 1867 – 20 Mar 1948) married Eliza Jane Holmes in 1889. They raised their 9 children in Weverton, MD. He retired after working for 46 years as a brakeman on the B&O Railroad. He was cited for helping to save the Harpers Ferry bridge during the Johnstown flood of 1889 by placing the weight of additional cars on the bridge to stabilize it. He was active in several community affairs. Children:
  - Mary Estella (“Molly”) (18 Dec 1890 – 29 Apr 1966). Married Albert H.Rapp, and they had 4 children. He was a car repairman and inspector for the B&O Railroad 45 years before his retirement at the Brunswick yards.
  - Arthur Lee (29 July 1892 – 20 June 1980). Married Naomi Gordon. They had 3 children. Retired engineer from the B & O Railroad with 47 years of service

- Daisy Dean (March 1894 – 20 Jan 1973). Married Clarence W. Sprigg. In 1930, he was the proprietor of an inn in Adams County, PA, and 10 years later he was operating a road stand in the same area. They had 4 children.
- Elsa Irene (1896 – 1899) met with a tragic death at age 3, as recorded in the Brunswick Herald: “She had a stick in her mouth and it is supposed, fell and run the sharp part of the stick into her throat which threw her into convulsions [sic] from the effects of which he died.”
- Unknown child
- Leva V. (Sep 1899 - ?). Unable to find any information about her.
- Lydia B. (aka, Lilabell or Isabelle) (17 Mar 1902 – 7 Sep 1994). Married George Samuel Holmes, proprietor of Holmes Flower Shop in Weverton. No children.
- Mable Emma (16 Dec 1904 – 4 Oct 1993). Married William Irven Cooper, who worked on the railroad as a brakeman from 1923 – 1968. They had 6 children.
- John Raymond (29 Mar 1907 – 28 Nov 1983). Married Abbie Campbell Longerbeam in 1927. They had at least 6 children (possibly more). In 1930, he was a brakeman on the railroad. In 1940, he was a truck driver for a road project.

As you can see, there are still a few unanswered questions about the Darr family. Perhaps, over time, someone will come forth with additional information to answer these questions. In the meantime, we can appreciate the many contributions that this family has made to Brunswick, especially in its early days.