

James Lebbius Switzer's

Reminiscences

Enjoy this series of 15 articles published in the *Union Bridge Pilot*, a Carroll County, Maryland, newspaper, in 1910. J. L. Switzer looks back more than 50 years to recount events of his childhood and the people living in and around his hometown of Union Bridge.



The articles were reformatted from the original newspaper versions by the following members of the Carroll County Genealogical Society:

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Contents

Biography of James Lebbius Switzer

Series of Reminiscences from the *Union Bridge Pilot* of 1910

By J. L. Switzer

May 6

May 13

May 20

May 27

June 3

June 10

June 17

June 24

July 1

July 8

July 15

July 22

July 29

August 5

August 12—Valedictory

Index to Names and Places in “Reminiscences”

By Diana Larson and Ron Tschippert

“Double Somnambulism on a Railroad Train” from *The Carroll News*

By William Christopher

Introduction to the “Reminiscences” of

James Lebbius Switzer (1837-1930)

James Lebbius Switzer was born November 15, 1837, in Union Bridge, Maryland, the son of John Switzer and Elizabeth Wolfe who were married November 24, 1836, in Frederick County. John Switzer listed his occupation as “miller” in the 1850 census and his birthplace as Pennsylvania, although he may have been born in Frederick County, Maryland. Elizabeth Wolfe was born in Maryland, probably in the area of Union Bridge where there was a well-known family named Wolfe. James was the oldest of their children. His siblings were, in birth order, Susan, Sarah, Jacob Carroll, Abraham, John David, Charles E., Margaret E., Joshua P. and Joseph E., all born in Carroll County.

In 1857, the entire family journeyed by train to settle in Johnson Co., Iowa, where some Switzer relatives were already established. The family had a scary adventure on the trip west as the train traveled through Ohio that was described in an article that appeared in an 1893 Carroll County newspaper. (See accompanying article “Train Trip to Iowa.”)

James’s father, John, died in 1860 in Iowa, supposedly of malaria. When the Civil War began, the three oldest boys, James, Jacob Carroll, and Abraham, enlisted in the Union Army in Iowa. Elizabeth and the other children spent the war years in Carroll County, but were living back in Iowa by 1870.

After his return from service in the war, James L. Switzer married an English girl, Eliza L. Kaye, in Iowa in 1867. They had one child, a daughter, when the 1870 census was taken in Johnson Co., Iowa; his mother and some of his siblings were living next door. In the 1880 census, James and Eliza were living in Jewell, Kansas, with three sons and one daughter. James’s occupation was farming. By 1900, he listed his occupation as a Kansas newspaper publisher, but by 1910, he and Eliza had moved to Jasper Co., Missouri, and he was retired. He died in Jasper Co. in the autumn of 1930, just a few days shy of his 93rd birthday. Eliza died in 1931.



In 1910, the *Union Bridge Pilot*, a Carroll County newspaper, received a series of 15 “Reminiscences” that Switzer wrote from his home in Missouri which were published between May and August. They offered an interesting, often humorous, but also poignant look back at the first twenty years (1837-1857) of Switzer’s life spent in the Union Bridge area. His family was well-known in that part of western Carroll County and in eastern Frederick County and many people with the surname Switzer continued to live in Union Bridge after the departure of the John and Elizabeth Switzer family.

1895 photo of James L. Switzer taken in Parsons, Kansas.