

## **Sources of Information on the Origin of George Webber (1896-1980), of McGraw, East Freetown, McGraw, Linlithgo, and Valatie, N.Y.**

### **I. Article in the *New York Times*, September 24, 1901:**

FIVE-YEAR-OLD BOY DESERTED.

Unknown Man Left Him in the Rooms of the Hebrew Sheltering Guardian Society.

Agents of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children are seeking the parents of a five-year-old boy who says his name is George Webber, who was abandoned in the reception room of the Hebrew Sheltering Guardian Society, Broadway and One Hundred and Fifty-first Street, Sunday afternoon. An unknown man brought the little boy there and asked to see Mrs. Fardwick, the matron. The pair were left alone then, and when the attendant returned a few minutes later the man had gone away. The following letter was found upon the child:

Kind Friend: The little boy who has this letter is an orphan, and I wish to ask a favor of you, to give him a home, as I am out of work and cannot keep him, and I don't want to put him out on the street. I am a friend of yours; you know me well from One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street, and also from Cincinnati. I do not care to say my name, but you will call me to your mind. I hope and pray you will take him in, and I will be of many thanks to you. I will come to see you as soon as I get work.

A FRIEND.

New York, Sept. 22.

Policeman Flahive of the West One Hundred and Fifty-second Street Station was called and took charge of the boy, who was turned over to the care of the society yesterday by Magistrate Crane, in the Harlem Police Court, pending a further examination on Friday. The child gave his name and age, and said he thought his father was alive, but nothing else could be learned from him that would help the authorities to return him to his legal guardians.

### **II. Data from the archive of the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children:**

On Sunday, the 22nd of September, 1901, at 10:50 at night, an officer of the 33rd precinct of the New York City municipal police informed The Society (NYSPCC) that he had in charge a child who gave his name as George Webber who by every indication did not know where he lived. The child, whose age was estimated to be about five years, based upon his appearance, identified his parents as Will and Hattie and said his father worked on the trains system. The officer stated that based upon the child's description, "trains" probably referred to the elevated system.

George had been left at the reception rooms of the Hebrew Guardian Society by a person unknown, who departed shortly thereafter without speaking to anyone. Attempts to obtain additional information from the little boy were unsuccessful. On the child's person was a letter, the contents of which were provided to and published by the newspapers in an effort to elicit further information or to facilitate contact with the parents or other relatives. [This letter, referred to as being contained in the NYSPCC file, is no longer in that file, so it is fortunate that it has survived in a newspaper file.]

The little boy was brought before the magistrate on the following day at which time the matter of the child's disposition in the matter of having "no proper guardianship" was

adjourned for hearing on Friday, September 27th, and the child was committed temporarily to the care and custody of the NYSPCC. No further information about the child or his parentage or relations was ever discovered. Officials of the Hebrew Guardian Society additionally expressed doubt that the boy was Jewish since upon a physical examination it was discovered that he was uncircumcised. Attempts to locate the father in connection with the railroad proved fruitless.

After several adjournments, the matter was finally concluded on Thursday, October 3rd, 1901, when the magistrate committed the care and custody of the child to the Missionary Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis. The boy was brought forthwith to the reception house of that order by an officer of the NYSPCC and subsequently brought to reside at St. Joseph's Home in Peekskill, NY.

In December of 1902, with the approbation of the NYSPCC, George Weber/Webber was referred by the Bureau of Dependent Children of the New York City Department of Public Charities to the Catholic Home Bureau for Indenture with a suitable family.

The NYSPCC file contains nothing further.

*Provided by Joseph T. Gleason, Director of Archival and Administrative Services, The New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, 161 William Street, New York, N.Y., March 6, 2012.*

### **III. Data from the archive of St. Joseph's Home of Peekskill, New York:**

George Webber

Age 5

Admitted: October 3, 1901 – New York City

Father & Mother: unknown

“Child was found in the street. Whereabouts of parents unknown. No proper guardianship.”

Discharged: November 9, 1911

Mr. C. Finnerty, Main Street, Peekskill, N.Y.

*Provided by Sister Alice Flood, Recorder, St. Joseph's Home of Peekskill, N.Y., Inc., 250 South Street, Peekskill, N.Y., January 25, 1980.*

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In his later teen years, George Webber “ran away” from Mr. Finnerty, and went to central New York with a band of cattle drivers. He himself eventually became a cattle buyer. In early adulthood George assumed “Franklin” as a middle name, in honor of his friend Franklin Van Herp. Also in early adulthood he adopted October 19, 1896, as a “date of birth.” In his later years George did not remember anything about his life before his residency at St. Joseph's Home.

George Franklin Webber married Rexa Lorie Wavle on February 28, 1917, in East Freetown, N.Y. She had been born on June 6, 1898, in Solon, N.Y. They had one child, Donald Milton Webber, who was born on March 13, 1918, in East Freetown, and who died on March 21, 1976, in Orlando, Fla. Rexa died on December 5, 1972, in Valatie, N.Y., and George died on April 10, 1980, in Philmont, N.Y. George and Rexa are buried in the Kinderhook Cemetery in Kinderhook, N.Y.

