

GEORGE SIMMONS PIKE- PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION

George Simmons Pike, the photographer of this collection, was born December 7, 1877 on the Simmons' homestead in section 30 of Olive township, Clinton county, Michigan, a son of Millard Filmore and Ella Rosalind (Simmons) Pike. He was raised in a family unusually aware of its distant past (his father was a direct descendant of Roger Williams, founder of Providence, Rhode Island) and appreciative of the accomplishments of more recent generations (his mother's grandparents, Atwell and Lovina [Knapp] Simmons, were the first settlers of Riley township, Clinton county). His family's commitment to its local heritage was exhibited in its deep involvement with the Clinton County Pioneer Society and the DeWitt post of the Grand Army of the Republic. His family's commitment to the extended family is now evident by the gatherings that are now preserved in this collection.

The life style of the Pike family centered about the working farm and the farms of their neighboring relatives. They were moderately prosperous in comparison to other area families, lived well within their means yet, afforded themselves a comfortable existence. Their means also afforded them the pleasure and social necessity of frequent social interaction with freinds and family both in the DeWitt area and across the state.

George and his sister Agnes (his only sibling to survive to adulthood) attended the nearby Simmons school (both would later teach there) followed by Clinton County Normal school. Unusual for their time and place, both George and Agnes continued their education with college; George attending Michigan Agricultural College and Agnes, Ferris Institute. It is thought that George acquired his camera during his years at M. A. C. (or slightly earlier) and began to capture the

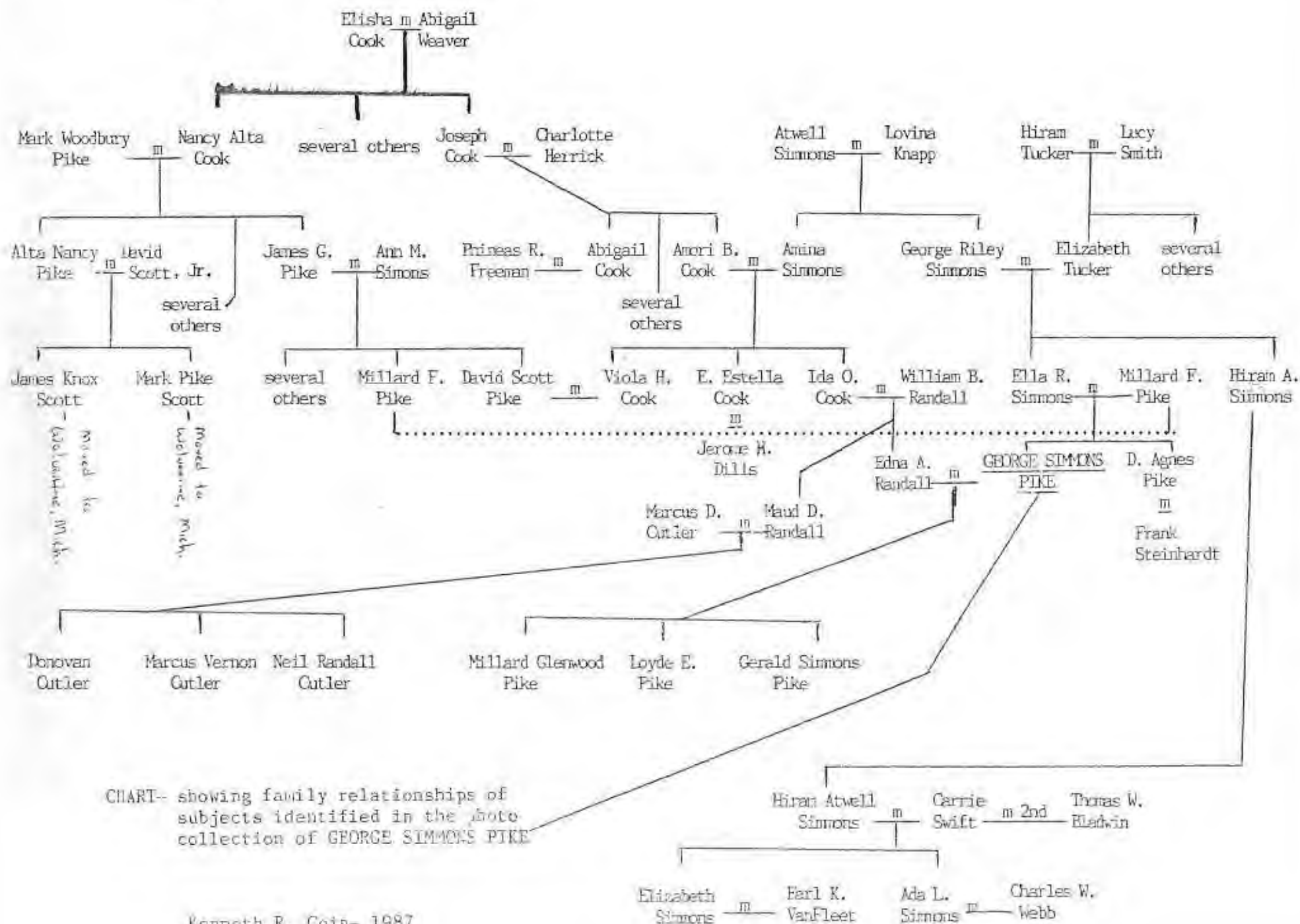
the scenes and people of his changing world.

On December 13, 1905 George married Edna Amina Randall. Besides being a neighbor and childhood friend, she was George's second cousin on his mother's side and his third cousin on his father's side. To add further to this tangled family network, George's father, after being left and orphan at an early age, was raised by Edna's maternal grandparents, Amori B. and Amina (Simmons) Cook.

Following their marriage, George and Edna continued living with George's parents on their Olive township farm (the parents would soon retire to ^A family home in the village of DeWitt). Three sons were born to George and Edna; Millard "Glenwood", Loyde E. and Gerald S. The happy life, apparent in his photographs, was, however, to be short-lived. After only about six years of marriage George's health began a serious decline. He had developed rheumatoid arthritis, a disease which had plagued the families of both George and Edna for generations. He died as a result of this condition after four years of suffering on July 15, 1915 at the young age of 37 years.

Following the death of Edna Pike on February 17, 1936, her husbands collection of glass-plate negatives came into the possession of their youngest son, Gerald Simmons Pike. It was thru him that the Clinton County Historical Commission was able to reproduce the negatives and develop prints.

While George Pike sought to preserve the image of his family in photographs, his sister Agnes sought to record the family history in words. Her voluminous genealogies of the Pike, Cook, Simmons, Knapp, Tucker, Scott and other allied families are an excellent supplemental text to this visual collection. Her works are presently being edited and indexed for public use and should be available to researchers at the Faye Hanson Public Library (DeWitt, Michigan) by the spring of 1987. Another excellent supplemental source of information



of primarily the Cook, Pike and Simmons families is a collection of several hundred letters and miscellaneous papers dating from 1840 to the end of the 19th century. These Cook family papers were collected and preserved by Edna Pike's sister, Maud D. (Randall) Cutler, and are partially available in original form at the State of Michigan Archives or in their entirety in transcribed form at the Faye Hanson Public Library (DeWitt, Michigan). Also available at the Faye Hanson Public Library are a number of other photographs of the homes and members of these allied families.

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1987